

**THE TOP PRIORITY OF FACTORS AFFECTING THAI
FAST FOOD CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THAILAND**

PORNPCHAN BUSAYARUANGRAT



**A THEMATIC PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MANAGEMENT
COLLEGE OF MANAGEMENT
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY
2014**

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Thematic paper
entitled
**THE TOP PRIORITY OF FACTORS AFFECTING THAI FAST
FOOD CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THAILAND**

was submitted to the College of Management, Mahidol University
for the degree of Master of Management
on
January 4, 2014



Miss Pornphan Busayaruangrat
Candidate

Asst. Prof. Vichita Ractham,
Ph.D.
Advisor

Assoc. Prof. Sooksan Kantabutra,
Ph.D.
Committee member

Assoc. Prof. Annop Tanlamai,
Ph.D.
Dean
College of Management
Mahidol University

Asst. Prof. Winai Wongsurawat,
Ph.D.
Committee member

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To complete this research, I would like to pay sincere gratitude to my advisor, Asst. Prof. Dr. Vichita Ractham, who gave me a lot of valuable advice and time. I would like to thank her kindly attention, encouragement and patience whilst instructing me. This research could not have been completed without her.

In addition, I would like to thank all fifteen respondents for their excellent information and willingness to help me to conduct this research.

Next, I would like to thank all of my friends; part-time students in 15A and 15B program in sharing their knowledge, information, and encouragement during the research. I really appreciate their help and friendship.

Finally, I would like to pay sincere gratitude to my family, who encourage and support me graciously.

Pornphan Busayaruangrat

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PORNPCHAN BUSAYARUANGRAT 5549047

M.M. (ENTREPRENEURSHIP MANAGEMENT)

THEMATIC PAPER ADVISORY COMMITTEE : ASST. PROF. VICHITA RACTHAM, Ph.D., ASSOC. PROF. SOOKSAN KANTABUTRA, Ph.D., ASST. PROF. WINAI WONGSURAWAT, Ph.D.,

ABSTRACT

Due to a high competitive market in fast food industry, fast food restaurants are more concerned about customer satisfaction. Therefore, the purpose of this research paper is to prioritize the top three factors affecting fast food customer satisfaction and also to investigate their perception and expectation.

In order to study fast food customer satisfaction, the theory of this research is based on the concept of relationship between perception and expectation. The research uses a qualitative approach and the data was collected by in-depth interview. The interview was conducted at KFC restaurant with 15 Thai respondents in the age group of 15-29 years old.

This study revealed that “taste of food, fast service and cleanliness” were considered as the most important factors to the customer satisfactions in fast food restaurants. Seat availability was viewed as the second rank, followed by price as the third rank.

KEY WORDS: Customer satisfaction / Fast food restaurant / Perceptive dimension / Customer expectation / Thailand

40 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The rapid changes of economics and society for over 30 years affect on Thai consumers' eating behaviors. Since Thai society is very highly competitive, continuously especially in Bangkok and many women have to work outside of their homes, Thai consumers look for food services providing them convenience, good taste and standard services instead of cooking themselves at home. The food service business called "Fast Food Restaurant - FFR" or "Quick Service Restaurant – QSR" is one of the answers serving consumers' need in widely segments. It is judged as broad market nowadays due to the changing society and the business capability itself. The fast food business gets the opportunity of a huge and profitable potential market. The market value of fast food restaurants have continuously and rapidly increased throughout the years referring to the market value of Thai fast food industry in each 10 years. In 1986 the market value was only 500 MB. And at the end of 1997, the market value moved to 8,700 MB (Thitimeth Phokchai, 2002). In 2013 fast food market had the market value of about 26,000 MB (Prachachat Turakij, 2013). However, although QSR is a high competitive market with definitely many competitors, the business still has a lot of growing market opportunities due to the change of consumer behavior. The cause is from busy lifestyles, small family and urbanization, and also the market-value gap of fast food business compared to market value of Consumer Food Service. Kasikorn Research Center informs that in 2013 the market value of Consumer Food Service in Thailand is around 669,000 MB. Consumer Food Service is categorized into 2 groups which are Independent Consumer Foodservice and Chained Consumer Foodservice. The market value of Independent Consumer Foodservice is around 488,370 MB and the market value of Chained Consumer Foodservice is around 180,630 MB including fast food restaurant chains. Market value of fast food restaurant chains selling chicken and burger products get around 20,750 MB and selling Pizza products get around 8,180 MB (Than Sethakij, 2013). According to the vice-president

of Chester's Food Co., Mr. Suwat Songphatanayothin, the market value of Thai fast food restaurant in 2013 is more than 20,000 MB and its average growth rate is around 10 percent-15 percent, the same as previous years (Banmuang, 2013).

According to the fast food market in Thailand, it is separated into 3 main groups which are chicken products (50 percent), Pizza products (30 percent) and Burger products (20 percent) (Banmuang, 2013). According to Mrs. Waewkanee Assoratgoon, CMO of Yum Restaurant International (Thailand) Co., Ltd, Thailand is the strategic market of Yum branches around the world. Nowadays Yum Restaurant International (Thailand) Co., Ltd is the QSR leader in Thailand which KFC, Kentucky Fried Chicken, is a brand leader of QSR which gets the most market shares at 47 percent and Pizza Hut gets market shares at 8 percent of QSR Thai Market at 26,000 MB. Also, KFC gets 493 branches which are regarded as the highest number of fast food branches in Thailand. The Head Office of Yum Restaurant believes in the high potential of fast food market in Thailand because they found that the average ratio of 8 QSRs per a million Thai residents while United States gets 60 QSRs per a million USA residents. With this possibility in the remaining huge market, they use marketing budget for expanding their business at 1,500 MB (Prachachat Turakij, 2013). The main consumer target of KFC is family group followed by teenagers aged 15-19 years old. Below is the ratio of customers' visit of KFC outlets in 2012 (Brandage, 2012)

Table 1.1 The ratio of customer's visit at KFC outlets in 2012

Customer Group	Age (year old)	Ratio of visit
Family with kids	0-15 (for kids)	44 percent
Workers with no kids	30-59	31 percent
student	15-24	14 percent
Young adult	20-29	11 percent

In 2013, many fast food restaurant chains plan to expand their branches, to create new distributor channels, and to create new menus. For example, Chester's Grill will expand 15-20 branches with the budget at 170 MB in community malls, hypermarkets and petrol stations. KFC starts to do KFC Drive Through and Pizza Hut focuses on expanding delivery branches. Moreover there are many new competitors joining in fast food market. For example, Oishi group has launched the Japanese fast food restaurant named Kakashi in 2012 because fast food is becoming the big market and the return of investment is within 3 years which is shorter than buffet business.

Due to tighter profit margins and high competition, the fast food restaurant chains cannot compete only in terms of product and price as before. Nowadays the QSR's success depends heavily on its ability to retain customers by increasing customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction with a fast food restaurant's service, product and price is often regarded as the key to success and long-term competitive advantage in order to maintain the existing royal customers and to gain new customers. Based on the expectation and perception concept, the study will prioritize the 3 main crucial factors affecting fast food customer satisfaction in accordance with customer's perceived dimension. Then focusing on these 3 main factors, the study will find method to fulfill the gap of customer's satisfaction from levels of customer's existing experience to achieve the desired level of customer's expectation.

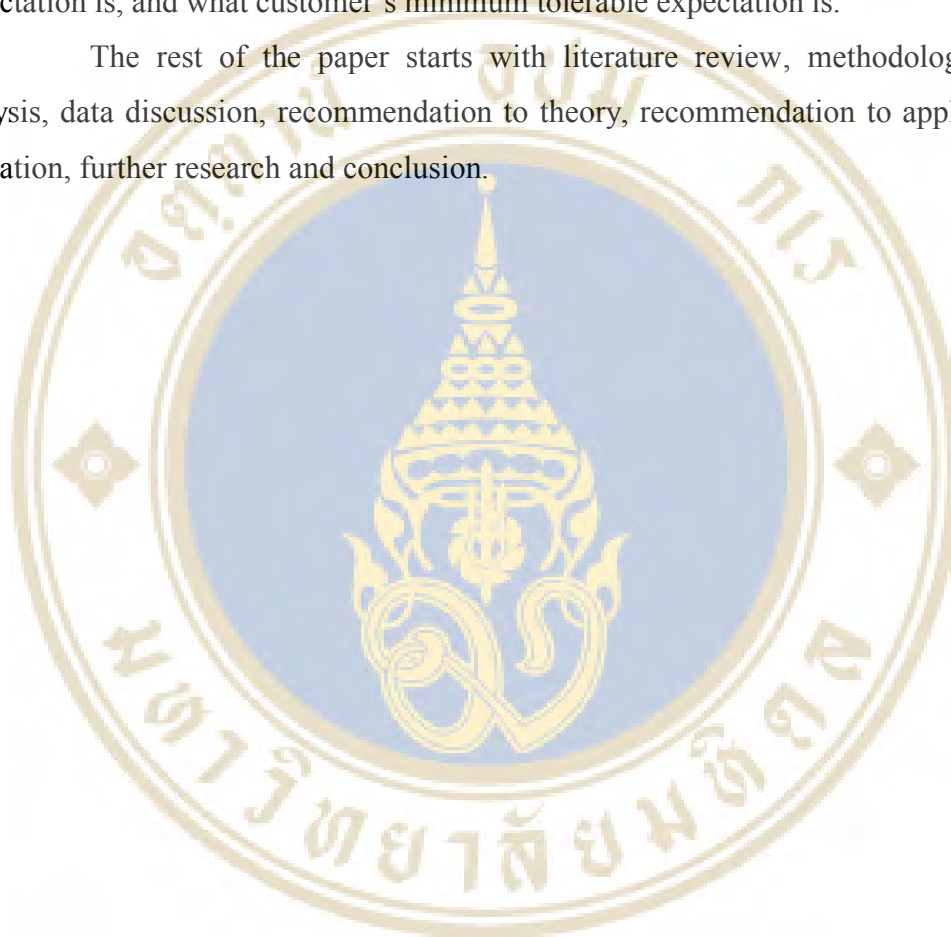
According to above data, the objective of this study is to prioritize the critical 3 factors in order to increase customer satisfaction of the target group age of 15-29 years old in Thai fast food restaurant chains. The paper is conducted by in-depth interview method. The case study is KFC. The reason to choose this target group is because this group is in the range of the second main targeted customer of KFC but the rate of visit is quite low. This group is the potential customers because fast food matches with their lifestyle, they tend to change brands often. With this finding, the QSR owners can use this data to increase this target group's satisfaction in order to make them become the royal customers or at least increase their frequency of visits. Moreover, this finding can enhance QSR's competitive, increase the market share and save marketing cost in the same time.

There are 2 research questions which are as below.

1. Which factors are the top 3 among all factors of perceptive dimension (service, product, and price) affecting the fast food customer satisfaction in ages between 15-29 years old in Thailand?

2. Based on these above 3 main factors, how customers experience these factors nowadays, what customer's standard expectation is, what customer's desired expectation is, and what customer's minimum tolerable expectation is.

The rest of the paper starts with literature review, methodology, data analysis, data discussion, recommendation to theory, recommendation to application, limitation, further research and conclusion.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The fast food industry is a very high competitive market in every country around the world because it serves customers need of food in the wide ranges of society. So the fast food industry provides a huge growing market opportunity and the market value continuously grows every year. Nowadays the fast food restaurant chains have already changed from food industry into service industry because consumers need something more than food. This change makes customer satisfaction turns to be a key success. Savvy marketers today realize that in order to outperform competitors, company must deal with customers as a part of a customer relationship, not as a transaction. One of three drivers of successful relationships between companies and customers is high level of customer satisfaction (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). Companies must focus on “customer-oriented” in order to increase their competitive advantage because customers’ overall satisfaction with service is based on how companies contact and interact with customers in a real life activity. Moreover, to gain more satisfied and loyal customers, companies must understand what factors influence customer satisfaction and repurchase behavior. Then try to improve these critical areas (Law, Hui, & Zhao, 2004). For this reason, several researchers in many countries are interested in finding the critical factors affecting on customer satisfaction in fast food industry in their country. To make customers impressed and satisfied with service, product, price of fast food restaurant chains, fast food restaurant owners need to understand their customer perception and expectation through customer behavior. By using the effective data, the fast food restaurant owners can efficiently choose the right marketing strategy to enhance their customer satisfaction in each target group and expand their market share.

2.1 Customer Behavior

Theories that are focused in this research are customer satisfaction, customer perception and customer expectation. These will be discussed within the framework of consumer behavior.

“Customer satisfaction” is the relation between the individual’s expectation and individual’s perception of the performance in terms of service, product and price. A function of customer expectation is the concept of customer satisfaction. A customer will be dissatisfied if his or her experiences fall below expectation such as cold fries served at a McDonald’s. A customer will be satisfied when his or her experiences match expectation. A customer will be very delighted if he or she is served beyond their expectation such as a well-designed playground for children at a McDonald’s outlet. Based on the linkage between level of customer satisfaction with customer behavior, 6 types of customers are identified as below.

- *Loyalists* are completely satisfied customers. This group gets high rate of repurchase frequency.
- *Apostles* are the customers whose experiences exceed their expectation. Also this group provides very positive word of mouth about the company to others.
- *Defectors* are the customers who feel neutral or rarely satisfied. Also they tend to stop doing business with company.
- *Terrorists* are the customers who have unpleasant experiences with the company. Also this group provides negative word of mouth.
- *Hostages* are the unhappy customers who still use the company’s product or service because of a monopolistic environment or low prices. This group gives their frequent complaints so it is difficult and costly for company to deal with.
- *Mercenaries* are very satisfied customers but are not the real royal customers. This group may defect because of lower price or other impulse and may resist the satisfaction-loyalty rationale.

The researchers recommend that companies should try hard to create apostles, increase the defectors' satisfaction and move them to loyalists group, avoid making terrorists or hostages, and decrease the number of mercenaries (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004).

“Perception” is how we see the world around us. It is the process which an individual selects, organizes, and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. Under the same stimulus and same condition, two persons will recognize, select, organize and interpret this stimulus differently. It is because they have their own highly individual process based on each person's needs, values and expectations (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004).

Sensation is the instant and direct reaction of the sensory organs to stimuli. Any unit of input to any of the senses such as products and brand names is called “Stimulus”. The human organs (the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin) that receive sensory inputs are called “Sensory receptors”. The sensory functions such as see and feel are used in the evaluation and use of most consumer products. The quality of an individual's sensory receptors and the intensity of the stimuli are the variable factors for sensitivity to stimuli. The absolute threshold is the lowest level at which an individual can gain a sensation. Each person will have their own person's absolute threshold for that stimulus. It is the point at which a person can notice a difference between “something” and “nothing”. (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004).

“Expectation” is a strong belief about how somebody should behave or the way something should occur because it is likely to be (Hornby, 2000). According to www.BusinessDictionary.com (n.d.), consumer expectation means something that perceived-value customers look for from the purchase of a product or service. Customer expectation is usually based on familiarity, previous experience, or preconditioned set. (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). To summarize, customer expectations are beliefs about service delivery that they desire to be served as their standard or reference points against which performance is judged. Customers evaluate service quality by comparing their perceptions of performance with their reference points. In addition, the level of expectation of each customer is different because it depends on the reference point which each customer holds. Although customers hold different types of expectation about service, this paper will focus on only 2 types which are

“Desired service” and “Adequate service”. The highest is “Desired service” which is the “wished for” level. Customers hope to receive service in this level. This level of service regards as a mix of what the customers believe “can be” and “should be”. If customers feel that they can not received what they expect, they probably don’t buy this product or service. The bottom level of performance acceptable to customer is called “Adequate service”. It is the minimum tolerable expectation that customers will accept. In this level, customers still purchase product or service although it is not exactly what they desire to get. They are willing to change their level of expectation a little bit. These levels of expectation explain the reason why two organizations in the same business such as fast food restaurants and expensive restaurants can offer totally different levels of service but still keep customers satisfied (Wilson *et al.*, 2012).

The gap between “Desired service level” which customers recognize and “Adequate service level” which customers are willing to accept is called “the zone of tolerance”. If service drops below adequate service, the minimum level considered acceptable, customers will be dissatisfied. If service is higher than the level of desired service, the exceeding level of expectation, customers will be very delighted and surprised. To conclude, the zone of tolerance is the range which customers do not particularly notice service performance. When performance is very low or very high outside the range, the service gets the customer’s attention. It might be either a positive or a negative outcome. As an example, if most customers hold a range of waiting time between 5-10 minutes. If they wait only 3 minutes, they will appreciate with quick service. And if they wait for 7 minutes, they probably don’t notice to the wait. But if they wait 15 minutes, they will complain the service. The more service below the bottom line, the more customers get frustrated. In addition, different customers own different tolerance zone. This tolerance zone can also expand or contract within the same customer. Customer’s tolerance zones varies for a number of factors including company-controlled factors such as price and for different service factors. The more important the factor, the narrower space the zone is. (Wilson *et al.*, 2012)

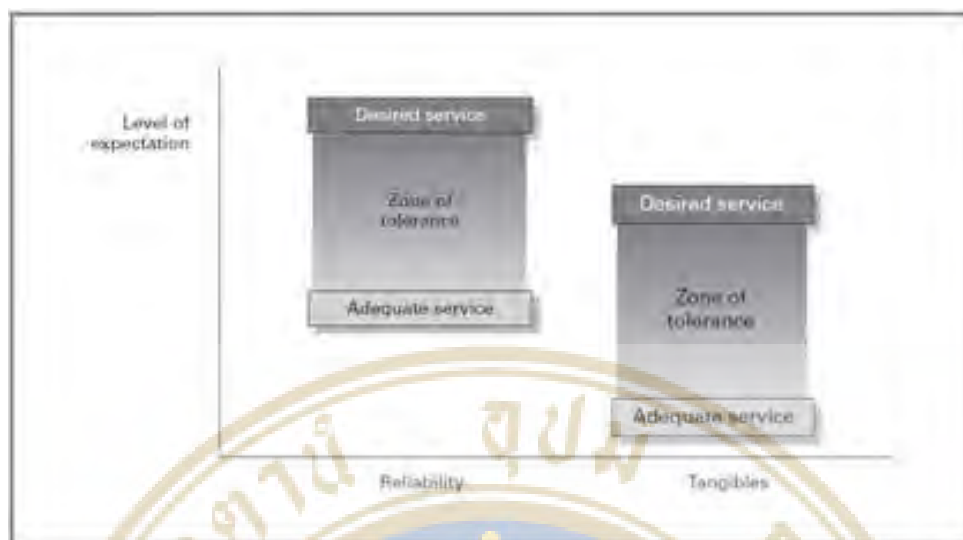


Figure 2.1 Zones of tolerance for different service dimensions (Berry *et al.*, 1993)

2.2 Scope of Study

Due to study and prioritizing the factors to increase the customer satisfaction, this paper is interested in “The gap Theory”. Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985, 1988, 1991) who has proposed a gap theory cited that the degree and direction of the gap between customer expectation and perception of performance levels determined the customer’s assessment of overall service quality.

All 3 perceptive factors that have a direct and positive relationship with satisfaction in fast food restaurants are service quality, food quality, perceived value. Then it influences behavioral intentions (Qin *et al.*, 2010). The perceived service quality is crucial for the company’s success because it directly links with customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Due to service is intangible, consumers rely on surrogate cues to evaluate service quality. Although the actual quality of service is varied by many factors such as service employee and customer, companies try to standardize their service in order to provide consistency of quality. The tool which is designed to measure the gap between customer expectation of services and their perception of the actual service is “the SERVQUAL scale”. There are 5 dimensions which are reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibility (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). Besides service quality, product quality and price also affect on customer satisfaction (Andaleeb and Conway, 2006; Parasuraman

et al., 1994). Food quality is linked to satisfaction in fast food restaurants (Johns and Howard, 1998). Consumers use both intrinsic cues and physical characteristics (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). Also, the perceived values impact to customer satisfaction because of its ability to either attract or repel customers (Monroe, 1989). How a consumer perceives a price has a strong impact on both purchase intention and purchase satisfaction. For example, “on sale” tends to increase customer perception of savings and value. However, the perceived value depends on individual’s reference prices. A reference price is any price that customers use as a basis price in order to compare and judge another price (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004).



Figure 2.2 Model of perceptive factors affects customer satisfaction

According to consumer’s needs, Blackwell *et al.*, (2012) classified into 9 categories which are physiological needs, safety and health needs, the need for love and companionship, the need for financial resources and security, the need for pleasure, the need to possess, the need to give, the need for information, and the need for variety. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is a useful concept to remind us that some needs take precedence over other needs. However, although Maslow’s ordering may match the priorities of majority of people, it absolutely does not reflect everyone’s priorities in all situations. Difference in needs influences how customers evaluate products for purchase and consumption. Customers who have different needs will search for different product benefits. Due to these variations in consumers’ motivational priorities, companies should use “Benefit segmentation” in order to design their marketing efforts more effectively and efficiently to a segment’s needs.

Benefit segmentation is to divide customers into different market segments depending on the benefits they look for.

After investigating relevant studies about critical factors of customer satisfaction in fast food restaurants, the study finds 8 interesting research journals which accord with this paper. First topic of journal is “Service quality, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in fast-food restaurants” conducted by Qin and Prybutok (2009). They collected data by using the online survey format. 305 respondents who dined at fast-food restaurants in the last month before doing survey were college students in a large southwestern university in the USA. The respondents whose age between 21 and 25 years were more than 55.7 percent. The findings revealed that “Service quality” and “Food quality” were 2 main determinants of customer satisfaction in fast-food industry. Among 5 dimensions of service quality (tangibles, reliability/responsiveness, recovery, assurance and empathy), reliability/responsiveness and recovery were more significant. The lowest importance was empathy dimension. Recovery encouraged to build a reliable customer relationship and to response in a prompt manner to customer’s requests and complaints. Also, to provide fresh, tasty and a variety of food and beverage remained an important criterion for customer satisfaction.

The second study examined is Min and Min (2011) who researched the topic of “Benchmarking the service quality of fast food restaurant franchises in the USA”. They collected customer feedback through the questionnaire survey during the period of January 2008 through November 2009. The sample was 262 fast food restaurant customers who had dined at 10 different fast food restaurants situated in the southeastern and midwestern of USA. According to the results of survey, they divided 15 service attributes that were relevant to fast food restaurant service quality into five distinctive service criteria which were service image, menu selection, location, accessibility and customer drawing power. The results of comparative performances of fast food restaurants revealed that each restaurant concerned on each service attribute differently. The most important service attribute to the fast food restaurants customer’s impressions of service quality which had not been changed over time was “taste of food”, followed by “competitive price”.

For the third study, Lee and Ulgado (1997) researched the topic of “Consumer evaluations of fast food services: a cross-national comparison” by using questionnaires. This study compared the expectations and perceptions of the US and South Korean fast food consumers towards an international fast food chain. McDonald’s was selected as the study case. The sample groups were students enrolled in business courses at major metropolitan universities in the USA and South Korea. Total respondents were 104 US and 89 Korean samples whose age mostly between 20-30 years old (95 percent of total respondents). The study investigated customer evaluations based on 5 service dimensions (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy), food prices, service time and location. The result found that customer’s evaluation towards international fast food chain of each country varied based on their cross-cultural implications. Low food price followed by assurance dimension were the crucial factors in US customers’ evaluation, while, reliability and empathy dimension were the important factors in South Korean customers. South Korean customers perceived McDonald’s as an “American experience” not typical fast food.

For the fourth study, Law *et al.* (2004) studied the topic of “Modeling repurchase frequency and customer satisfaction for fast food outlets”. The collected data was conducted by a diary type survey. The sample group was the students on the campus of City University of Hong Kong. 241 purchase behavior record books (PBR) were done in 1999 and 2000. The result indicated that the significant factors affecting customer satisfaction in the fast food industry were waiting time, staff’s attitude, food quality and food variety. Besides, critical factors that influence customer’s satisfaction might or might not influence return purchase, based on the time period and the characteristics of fast food restaurants.

For the fifth study, Goyal and Singh (2007) researched the topic of “Consumer perception about fast food in India: an exploratory study”. Sampling unit was Indian college students in the age group of 20-27 years. 171 respondents contributed to the collection of data by questionnaires in India. The findings revealed that the highest important factors affecting the choice of fast food restaurants of Indian young consumers were food taste and quality, followed by ambience and hygiene, service speed, price, variety of food and location respectively. Furthermore, their

passion for visiting fast food restaurant was for fun and change. Friend was the most effective individual influencing decision.

For the sixth study, Qin *et al.* (2010) researched the topic of “Perceived service quality in fast-food restaurants: empirical evidence from China” by using the questionnaires. The sampling framework was college students in China which had 182 respondents. About 72.5 percent were around the age of 21-25 years old. The findings revealed that all 3 factors which were food quality, perceived value and service quality have a direct and positive relationship with satisfaction. This would impact on behavioral intentions. Also, the fourth important dimensions of perceived service quality in the fast food restaurants in China were “Reliability, Recoverability, Tangibles and Responsiveness”.

For the seventh study, Ehsan (2012) researched the topic of “Factors important for the selection of fast food restaurants: an empirical study across three cities of Pakistan” The total of 447 questionnaires were randomly distributed among university students both undergraduate and graduate studying in 3 cities of Pakistan. Based on ten factors for the selection of fast food restaurants used in this study, the findings revealed that the important factors were price, variety of food, promotional deals and timely service. Besides, the choice and selection criteria of customers from different cities might vary although they were in the same country. The customer’s motivations to visit fast food restaurants were a change of taste and having fun in order to have a memorable experience.

Lastly, Patcharanukulkit *et al.* (2002) researched the topic of “the variety seeking behavior of Thai fast food consumers in the Bangkok metropolis”. The respondents were 400 Thai people age between 13-60 years old in Bangkok by using questionnaires in December 2001. The finding revealed that the most 3 important factors for visiting the fast food restaurants of Thai people were convenience, taste and social meeting place. The other factors were price, avoiding boredom of food and location, variety of menu, popularity and promotion. In addition, Thai fast food consumers had a tendency to be variety seeking because their motivations to visit fast food restaurants were to experience something new and to add more experience to their food choice.

To conclude, although satisfied factors vary depending on customer perception in each country, “Food taste” and “Price” are the mentioned factors in every country in above 8 journals. 8 critical factors mentioned in the reviewed journal are food taste, food quality, price, waiting time, variety of food, convenience, social meeting place and recoverability. Besides, “Recoverability” is concerned as the new important service dimension from both US and China consumers. Furthermore, the motivations for visiting the fast food restaurants of Asian customers such as South Korea, India, Pakistan and Thailand are to experience the new food taste and to have fun.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Here is the conceptual framework of this paper

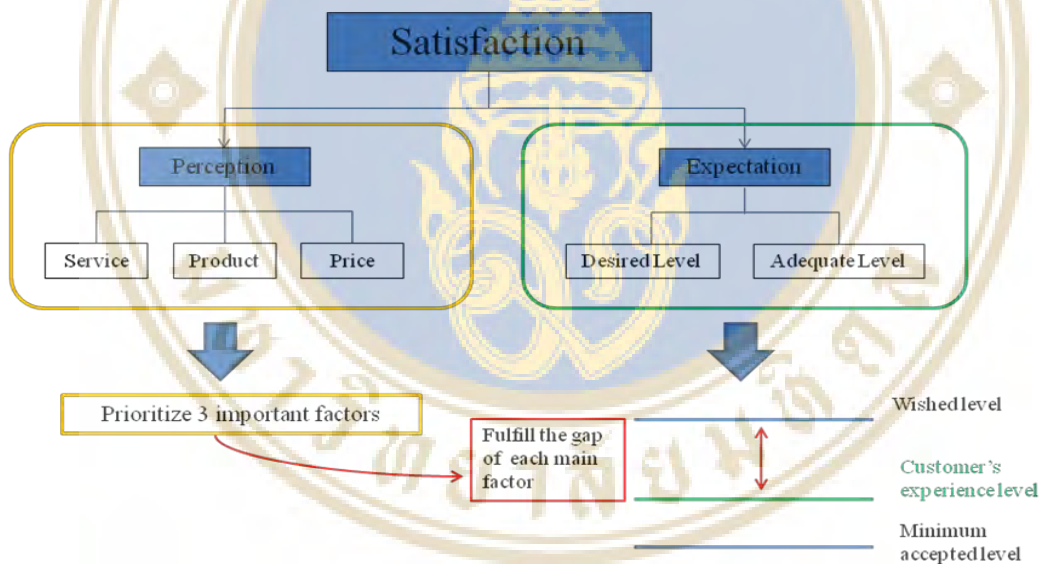


Figure 2.3 Conceptual framework

This paper concerns factors based on the fast food restaurant's success model includes 6 dimensions of perceived services quality and the perceptions of food quality and perceived value (see table 2.1) (Qin et al., 2010). Based on these factors, the researcher assumes that 5 main factors that affect young Thai consumer's satisfaction are “taste, price, service time, seating availability and convenient location”.

Table 2.1 Sources of interview items

Constructs/dimensions		Items	Sources
Service quality: the service quality construct is composed of five dimensions of SERVPERF (i.e. tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy) and recoverability	Tangibles	Clean dining area	Cronin and Taylor (1992);
		Well-dressed employees	Johns and Howard (1998);
		Using disposable gloves and hair net	Kara et al. (1995)
		Seating availability	
		Parking availability	
	Reliability	Providing service as promised	Cronin and Taylor (1992)
		Sympathetic and reassuring	
		Dependable on-schedule service	
		Accurate charge	
	Assurance	Trust employees	Cronin and Taylor (1992)
		Feel safe for financial transactions	
		Friendly employees	
		Knowledgeable employees	
	Responsiveness	Telling exact service time	Cronin and Taylor (1992)
		Employees available to requests	
		Prompt service	
		Employees willing to help	
	Empathy	Availability of Kid's	Added based on discussion with Chinese faculty and students
		Happy Meal	
		Kid Entertainment Center	
		Availability of sauces, etc.	Cronin and Taylor (1992);
		Convenient operating hours	Johns and Howard (1998)
		Convenient locations	
		Completely packaged food	
	Recoverability	Employees quickly apologize for mistakes	Olorunniwo et al. (2006)
		Cares about customers' complaints	
		Skills and ability to deal with complaints	
		Employees empowered to provide compensation	
Food quality		Fresh	Johns and Howard (1998);
		Presentation	Kivela et al. (1999)
		Well-cooked	
		A variety of food and beverages	
Perceived value		Competitive price for food	Kim and Kim (2004); Kara et al. (1995)
		Competitive price for beverages	
		Value worthy of price	

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This paper uses data from both secondary data and primary data. Secondary data is relevant to this paper in terms of current market growth situation of fast food industry, market strategies, and market share of fast food products. Besides, this paper cites about concepts of satisfaction, expectation and perception, and critical satisfaction factors of fast food restaurants affecting the customer satisfaction. All secondary data are derived from consumer behavior books, researched journals from Emerald database and business news from websites. (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004; Wilson *et al.*, 2008; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985, 1988, 1991; Qin *et al.*, 2010; Prachachat Turakij, 2013; Brandage, 2012; Qin and Prybutok, 2009). Due to secondary data, it is not collected directly and purposely for the study under consideration (Hair *et al.*, 2007). When secondary data are not enough to answer the research questions, the researcher must collect the primary data which relate to the particular study and research problems by themselves (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2002). There are 2 methods of primary data collection which are “Qualitative” and “Quantitative” (Hair *et al.*, 2007).

3.1 Primary Data Collection Method

“Qualitative method” is decided to use as primary data collection method. This paper collects narrative data by using case study. The method of data collection is an in-depth unstructured interviewing approach. The face-to-face interview is conducted without an interview sequence in order to allow the researcher to explore in depth issues raised during the interview (Hair *et al.*, 2007). To identify what factors are causing customers to be more satisfied, the in-depth interview is appropriate for this study because an interviewer needs to gain an insight into the individual

evaluation of specific issues. This method can provide very precise and specific answer including exhaustive and unexpected various knowledge about individual determined experiences, opinion and motives, which other methods cannot provide. In addition, the respondents have time to develop and give reason for their individual point of views without any influences of other respondents. It provides more comfortable discussion (Megafon, n.d.).

“Open-ended question” approach is selected to conduct qualitative interviewing because it allows the respondents to elaborate their answers more openly and honestly. The open-ended question encourages others to provide information including their ideas, concerns and feelings (Mind tools, n.d.). In addition, it helps to minimize variation in the question posed to the respondents. (Berry, 1999)

3.2 Interview Process

Kentucky Fried Chicken, KFC, was selected to be a case study. This interviewing survey was administered to teenagers and young adults who were in the age range of 15-29 years old in Thailand. These two groups were selected as subjects because they are the important segment groups of fast food restaurant chains (FFRs). Also, based on their lifestyle, they frequently eat at FFRs. The total of 15 respondents surveyed had eaten at KFC outlets within the last 30 days before participating in this interview. The interviewing period was conducted during November 2013. Each respondent was interviewed about 30 minutes with 6 main questions.

According to marketing strategy of KFC, KFC concerns teenagers in the age group of 15-19 years old as the second rank of target group and try to encourage young adults to visit KFC outlets more. However, the visiting rate shows that the group of age between 15-24 years old visit only 14 percent and the group of age between 20-29 years old visit only 11 percent (Brandage, 2012). This research methodology focuses on how to find out the 3 important factors which young Thai consumers in the age range of 15-29 years old concern the most in terms of their

satisfaction and how to raise their current satisfaction level toward these important factors into their desired level.

A list of open-ended questions are provided below the concept framework that the fast food owners should know exactly what the most important factors that fast food customers concern about, what their desired expectation and their current perception toward each main factors are. In knowing that, the owners can create the efficient marketing strategy in order to fulfill customer's satisfaction and to increase their competitiveness.

Questions

1. Based on factors of services, product and price, what are the standard factors that you expect and concern in general from fast food restaurant chains? Please prioritize the most three essential factors and explain the reason.
2. Based on your experience in visiting KFC outlets, please explain your standard expectation and satisfaction in current, desired, and bad levels toward each three main factors in detail.
3. Why do you choose KFC?
4. What do you dislike in KFC? Why?
5. What kind of service, product and price of KFC that you look for in the future?
6. Normally what is your purpose to visit KFC outlets?

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

This research is a study of “The top priority of factors affecting Thai fast food customer satisfaction in Thailand”. This section concerns the analysis of general data in order to present the research outcome in terms of young Thai customer’s top three main satisfied factors, their current satisfied experience and their desired level. Data used in the analysis is based on 6 interviewing answers from 15 correspondents. This research reveals many results:

4.1 Demographic Data

The total of 15 respondents is divided into 10 females and 5 men. The youngest respondent is 15 years old and the oldest respondent is 29 years old. There are 8 respondents who are between 15-20 years old and 7 respondents who are between 21-29 years old. 12 of them are students from grade 12 to master-degree level. The remaining 3 are office workers.

4.2 Data Analysis

Regards to general factors in the dimensions of service, product and price that 15 young Thai consumers concern in terms of their satisfaction in fast food restaurant chains are divided as below.

Table 4.1 General relevant factors towards customer satisfaction

Services	Product	Price
Staff's service attitude	Type of food	Reasonable price
Seat availability	Food availability	Promotion deal
Quick services	Taste	
Accuracy of order and bill	Quality	
Atmosphere, Layouts, Decoration (including Type of seat and private zone)	Packaging	
Cleanliness (food, outlets, staff)	Variety of food (including set menu)	
Amenity (ex: utensil, sauces, water)	Quantity of food	
Can sit for a long time		
Convenient location		
Parking availability		

The first rank of general factors that respondents referred the most was “atmosphere”. The second rank was taste, fast service, cleanliness, staff’s serviced-mind, and price. All of them got the same rating. The third rank was food quality and seat availability.

Although mostly factors based on table 3 were mentioned from respondents in various ages, there were some attributes that only young adults or teenagers concern. The factors that only respondents aged between 20-29 years old mentioned were price and order accuracy, food availability and parking availability. The factor that only respondents aged 15-19 years old mentioned was the quantity of food. Also, although all respondents knew that this was the fast food services, they still concerned on both staff’s serviced-mind and food quality.

After collecting the 3 main satisfied factors that respondents concern the most (See in table 4.2), the first rank was “Taste”, “Fast service” and “Cleanliness”. The second rank was “Seat availability”. The third rank was “Price”.

To compare with the rank of general relevant factors in Table 4.1, although “Atmosphere” was mentioned the most in the general items; it was not in the top three

ranks because it was the supportive factor. Moreover, “Seat availability” in the third rank was concerned as the second important factors; meanwhile, “Price” in the second ranking was concerned as the third important factor.

The study notices that all respondents prioritize their main factors based on the existing problems they experience and their financial status. If the fast food restaurant chains provide these main factors below the respondents’ standards, the respondents will change their mind and choose another fast food restaurant immediately. The most important factor among top three factors is taste. Every respondent visits KFC because they love the unique taste of KFC fried chicken. Below is the factor list that each respondent made their priority.

Table 4.2 The respondents’ prioritized factors

Respondents	1st Ranking	2nd Ranking	3rd Ranking
1	Taste	Fast service	Staff's serviced-mind
2	Taste	Variety of food	Price
3	Fast service	Taste	Price
4	Cleanliness	Seat availability	Variety of food
5	Type of food	Price	Seat availability
6	Atmosphere	Fast service	Price
7	Atmosphere	Seat availability	Price
8	Quality	Price	Staff's serviced-mind
9	Fast service	Seat availability	Price
10	Cleanliness	Convenient location	Type of food
11	Fast service	Seat availability	Taste
12	Cleanliness	Staff's serviced-mind	Price
13	Price	Food quality	Seat availability
14	Taste	Fast service	Convenient location
15	Variety of food	Atmosphere	Convenient location

Besides, these top 3 ranks, other interesting factors were staff’s services, variety of food and convenient location. Regards to service, the respondents didn’t expect any high services from staffs because this was the fast food business. But they

still looked for the staffs that were friendly and service-minded. They also expected that staffs could recommend menu for them including informing about the area of available seat and self-service counter. They felt bad when staffs showed their annoying face expression, showed insulting eye contact and checked them during having meal. Sometimes staffs interrupted respondents' eating by cleaning the floor under their sitting table. Regards to variety of food, there is no respondents concerning about dessert and snack. All dessert and new menus didn't affect on their visit. The food products that respondents concerned for variety were chicken, french fries and beverage. They wanted KFC to launch new flavor of fried chicken because now there are only two flavors which are original and spicy. It can be either new flavor or new cooking technique. The french fries should be provided with various types of dipping sauces. Soft drinks should be provided more choices. One respondent wanted to get low-calorie menu such as chicken salad. Another factor was convenient location. All respondents said that KFC outlets are located everywhere they hung out especially in department stores. However, some respondents complained that they could not find KFC outlets at night after department stores close. So they would like to see 24-hrs outlets and drive-thru outlets the same as McDonald's. The main topics that respondents complained about was dirty tables, taste consistency, a few choices of set menu, crowded seat layout and staff's service-mind. The new factors that respondents wished to have from KFC outlets were free service of power bank or plug for charging mobile phone, WIFI service, private zone, and party room. One respondent requested for one-stop fast food service by combining KFC and Pizza together. Another suggested order machine on each table. Furthermore, the main purpose for eating at KFC outlets was to have party with friends, followed by to eat KFC fried chicken, and to wait friends or parents. The motivation matches with the fast food research in Pakistan that university students' motivations to visit fast-food restaurants were to have fun and to change food taste (Ehsan, 2012). An interesting reason why respondents love to arrange party at KFC outlets is because the set menu is easy to order and fried chicken is easy to share among friends.

4.3 Data Discussion

By doing in-depth interview based on the sources of interview items (Qin *et al.*, 2010), the factors are focused into 3 dimensions which are service, product, and price. The findings for answering the research questions are covered into these 3 dimensions. Fast service, cleanliness and seat availability are in service dimension. Taste is in product dimension. Competitive price is in price dimension. This finding reconfirms the finding of Qin *et al.* (2010) that food quality, perceived value and service quality have a direct and positive relationship with satisfaction. According to their experience in visiting and eating at KFC outlets, the respondents explain their satisfied perception towards each main factor in standard level, current level, desired level and adequate level as follow.

Taste is the first-ranking factor affecting to respondents' satisfaction. This finding is a correlative of the Indian consumer perception about fast food study in terms that "Food taste and Quality were the highest important factors affecting the choice of fast food restaurants of Indian young consumers (Goyal and Singh, 2007). Especially, tasty is the important criterion for customer satisfaction (Qin and Prybutok, 2009). Based on the interviewed data, the standard level of taste was defined that the taste should be more delicious and distinguishing than other general outlets. The taste should come from the secret recipe. The taste should provide the standard taste that everyone could eat, not too sweet, too salty and too spicy. Their standard of fried chicken was crispy, hot, fresh, and original KFC taste that they used to eat before. Respondents shared their current experience towards taste that in general taste was ok but most of them were not highly satisfied with taste because there was no system consistency to control taste including food quality in each branch. Also some menus provided too strong taste such as too sweet or too sour. Moreover some snack menus put too much monosodium glutamate. Here are the examples of respondent's negative experiences.

1. French fries are not delicious. It is not crispy, too hard, cold, and has less potato meat. They agree that french fries at McDonald's are more delicious. The more french fries are delicious, the more they enjoy eating fried chicken.

2. Sometimes respondents are served with fried chicken which is oily, not hot, and not crispy. Moreover they feel that fried chicken is fried and left outside for many hours before selling to them. The taste is not fresh.

3. Egg tart is too sweet for everyone. They cannot eat more than one piece.

4. The rice menu has no taste consistency. Each branch serves the different taste.

The respondents' desired level is to solve these above problems. Also the respondent who loves KFC burger requested the bread of burger getting more fragrant. To focus on this taste factor, the study finds that respondents care the taste of fried chicken the most. The customer satisfaction of KFC taste is measured by taste of fried chicken as the main product. Although they are not satisfied with other menu, they still enjoy visiting and eating fried chicken. Also they agree that fried chicken is more delicious than grilled chicken.

Another first-ranking factor is fast service. Law *et al.* (2004) indicated that waiting time was the most significant factors affecting university students' satisfaction in fast food industry. Besides, when customers chose fast food restaurants, speed was the most significant factor considered by customers. Waiting time consists of queuing time and service time. Waiting time is recorded from when the customers arrive at restaurant until their food is delivered (Dharmawiryal *et al.*, 2012). Based on the interviewed data, the standard waiting time is 5-10 minutes. The range of waiting time that respondents feel unsatisfied and denies to wait is from 15-30 minutes. The average experience of waiting time is about 5-20 minutes. If respondents come alone, the maximum waiting time is 15 minutes. But if they come with friends, their maximum waiting time is 30 minutes. The desired level of fast service is within 5 minutes. The result is similar to the findings of Dharmawiryal *et al.* (2012) where 5 minutes of service time is reasonable among their survey respondents in Indonesia. The study finds that if the respondents get a staff's apology for keeping waiting or staffs provide the serving service on the table, they intend to satisfy for waiting. No respondents can wait more than 30 minutes.

The last first-ranking factor is cleanliness. Knutson (2000) indicated that cleanliness was the top factor of colleague students for selecting fast food restaurants. Chow *et al.* (2007) determined restaurant cleanliness by focusing on physical

environment such as restaurant interior or staff's appearance such as hair style or neatness of uniform. Based on survey respondents of this study, the standard level of cleanliness relates to table, chair, floor, food, staff, counter service, packaging, sauce container, straw, plates with forks and rag. For example, the table and chair must be clean and ready to sit. Food must look clean and no adulterated things such as hair. Staffs should dress properly and have clean nails. Rag for cleaning table should be clean, not too dirty. The respondents were satisfied in overall cleanliness. Red and white is the clean color in their perception. By the way, they still share the negative experience that they used to meet as below.

1. Table is not ready to sit. Many times the respondents see many types of rubbish such as remaining chicken scraps and water on the table. Sometimes staffs have already clean the table, but the table, chair and floor are still dirty. The most complaint is food scraps especially fried chicken drop at the seat and floor. Sometimes there are chicken bones and scraps leaving under the table.

2. One respondent finds a small cockroach on the floor.

3. Food containers such as plates, fork and sauce container are not clean in some branches. The free drinking water is contaminated with a lot of dust.

4. The floor is quite wet and there are a lot of shoe stains.

In order to make the respondents reach their desired satisfaction, the respondents suggested that KFC should hire cleaning staffs more for taking care for only cleanliness. Also each branch should provide more than one washbasin.

The second-ranking factor is seat availability. Law et al., (2004) indicated that seat availability impacted on the customers' return frequency. This factor also relates to seat zone, type of seat, size of seat, and layout of seat. Although some respondents ranked seat availability was their main factors, all respondents agreed that without seat availability, they would change to a new fast food restaurant because eating chicken requires a place to sit. The standard level of seat availability that respondents expected to find was one seat available for them with the table for 4 people so they could have enough space for eating and placing their belongings. If they walked one round in the outlets and could not find the available seat, they normally moved to a new restaurant, rather than waiting. Based on the respondents' experience, most of the time they always found seat availability. Also they were

satisfied that they could sit as long as they want. By the way they still have many topics to concern which are as below.

1. There are some chairs or sofas broken.
2. The layout of seat is too crowded at some branches. There is no space for walking and no private feeling to eat chicken.

The seat type that they wished is a comfortable sofa or soft chair with backrest available for 4 people. Also, the layout should be set not too crowded and separate into private and normal zone. Some respondents required a long table for 6 people because they always had party with their friends here. The interesting point is that the perception of private zone. The private zone means there is a partition separating each table. They did not like the seat located in the small hidden corner. Also the seat at counter bars is not good because there was no privacy and no space during their meal.

The third-ranking factor is price. Competitive price are the most second important factor to the fast food consumer's impressions of service quality which had not been changed over time (Min and Min, 2011). Many researches revealed that price was one of important factors affecting the choice of fast food restaurants (Goyal and Singh, 2007; Ehsan, 2012; Patcharanukulkit *et al.*, 2002). All respondents perceived that KFC price was as same as general fast food price. So they did not concern in priority. But all respondents said that if the price was higher than 300 THB, they would move to dining at the real restaurants instead. The price attribute is reverent to competitive price, promotion set menu, and value worthy of price. The range of standard price was between 60-200 THB per person. The range of expensive price was 200-300 THB. The range of cheap price was 35-99 THB because they compared with the price of street food. Based on the respondents' experience, they paid about 70-150 THB per person. All respondents always ordered the set menu because the price was cheaper. By the way sometimes they felt that the set menu was not value worthy of price because they did not like some menus in the set such as egg tart. They requested for the customized menu with the range not over 199 THB. The example of small set was a piece of fried chicken, a set of french fries and a coke in the price 70 THB. Another option could be 2 pieces, 1 snack such as dessert, french fries or

nuggets, and a coke provided at 160 THB. Besides, if any menu could not make their stomach full, they evaluated that menu is not value worthy of price.

To conclude, although many previous researches had already revealed the critical factors that made customer satisfaction in fast food restaurants, the dimension that respondents in each country concerned the most are different. It is based on their cross-cultural implication. For example, US surveyed respondents concerned the most about food price and assurance dimension especially the knowledgeable employees. Korean respondents concerned the most about reliability and empathy (Lee and Ulgado, 1997). And Thai respondents concerned the most about dimension of reliability and Tangibles. Furthermore, regards to the ASIAN countries such as India, China and Thailand, they are collectivism and their concept of fast food is to get a new food experience. Although they concern about the similar dimensions such as reliability, tangibles and responsiveness, they still concern in the different factors of each dimension. For Indian people, they prioritized their top three factors as food taste and quality, followed by ambience and hygiene, and speed respectively (Goyal and Singh, 2007). Chinese people concern the most on waiting time, followed by staff's courteous and food quality (Law *et al.*, 2004). Thai people concern the most on food taste, fast service and cleanliness. It reveals that customer expectation toward fast food restaurants in each country varies according to the cross-culture implication. Therefore, fast food restaurant chains have to play different roles in each country.

4.4 Recommendation

Although 3 dimensions of perception, which are service, product and price, definitely impact on customer satisfaction in fast food restaurants, it is impossible that all 3 dimensions are equally important. Also, although there are many factors in each dimension, all cannot be the key factor. The conclusion part says that fast food consumers in the range of age 15-29 years old prioritize top 3 significant factors that affect their satisfaction in having fast-food meals. The first rank gets 3 factors because there is the same score. These are taste, fast service, cleanliness (1st rank), seat availability (2nd rank) and price (3rd rank) respectively. Hence, in order

to make recommends to the referring theories in this paper and to a fast food owners on how to run a business more effectively and efficiently in terms of maximizing the satisfaction of consumers, the recommendations are based on these below.

4.4.1 Recommendation to Theory

First, the theory cites that all 3 dimensions which are service, food and perceive value are the same important factors for affecting the customer satisfaction. Based on the findings, these 3 dimensions do not have the same important levels. Consumers give priority to food, followed by service and perceived value respectively. “Food” and “Service” are 2 main determinants of Thai customer satisfaction in fast food restaurant chains. The findings show that taste, fast service and cleanliness are in the first rank. And the most important factor which consumers visit is to dining the unique taste of fast food product. As Min and Min (2011) indicated that taste of food was the most important service factors which had not been changed over time. Furthermore, although consumers concern price as the third rank but the range of affordable price is quite high from 35-300 THB. It shows that as long as consumers are satisfied with taste and service, they are willing to pay for this average fast food price. Moreover price of fast food normally is in the average price that every class of society can afford. For this reason, we can less concern about “perceived value” as the main factor affecting the customer’s satisfaction.

Second, marketers often segment consumers by age. The basic logic is that people in the same age usually go through similar life experience which may lead to similar consumption behavior (Hoyer & MacInnis, 1997). However, Thai consumers in age range between 15-29 years old have the similar common perception towards their satisfaction in fast food restaurant. Although the age gap of survey respondents is quite large, their tolerant zone in each main factors are similar. Hence, teenagers and young adults can be the same group of benefit segmentation to design the marketing strategy. For example, the standard of fast service is between 5-10 minutes. And the maximum time they can wait is 30 minutes. However, individual’s zone of tolerance toward each factor might be different a little bit depending on purpose of visit as well. The young adults might concern more about fast service than teenagers, but if their purpose is to wait someone, they don’t care much about this factor. Besides, the zone

of tolerance can be extended by adding stimuli during a time interval. Hogan (1978) assumed that simple stimuli such as easy-listening music might decrease perceived duration. But complex stimuli such as a difficult task might increase it. According to Pruyn & Smidts (1998), television entertainment during the wait extends the perceived waiting time. The stimuli added in each situation can change the individual's perception. For example, the zone of tolerance in fast service is between 5-10 minutes. But if on that day, a consumer comes with her friend; her zone of tolerance can be extended to 20 minutes without any dissatisfaction.

Third, in order to make consumers visit and become royal customers, a fast food restaurant chain doesn't need to completely make customers reach their desired level in each main factor or in 3 dimensions of perception. If fast food restaurants can make customers highly satisfied their key factor and control its consistency, meanwhile, they still keep other factors in the medium standard consistency. It is enough to make fast food business succeed. Desired consistency is very important to the success of any chain restaurant. Consistency between units and between visits reassures customers that they will meet the food, service and atmosphere as their expectations based on past experiences. Consistently positive experience at a restaurant helps to increase brand value and often lead to future visits (WD partners, 2012).

4.4.2 Recommendation to Application

To maximize the fast-food customer satisfaction, this paper would like to recommend the fast-food owners in 4 points.

First, fast food owners should emphasize on "food consistency". Lack of food consistency can be implied to losing sight of unique core strength (WD partners, 2012). For Thai customer perception, taste is one of the 3 most important factors (Patcharanukulkit *et al.*, 2002). If customers are not impressed with the taste, they might move to other restaurants without concerning other factors. Based on interviewing data, although respondents are satisfied with the taste of fried chicken, but they complain about the food consistency in all menus including fried chicken. Therefore, if the restaurants can manage this problem, it will increase level of

customer satisfaction by reaching their desired expectation. Then they will choose to buy and have a meal at this fast food restaurant more often.

Second, Thai fast food consumers have a tendency to be variety seeking. Their motivations to visit fast food restaurants were to experience something new and to add more experience to their food choice (Patcharanukulkit *et al.*, 2002). Besides, some survey respondents concern about the food variety. Hence, fast food owners should emphasize on creating new taste or new products continuously. However, customers always order the signature menu of each fast food restaurants more than to taste the new products. For example, all survey respondents always order fried chicken at KFC because it is the main reason why they visit KFC. Other menus such as dessert and snack are not concerned by them. Therefore, to create a variety of food should mean to develop based on the signature dish in order to get more choices such as new taste or new cooking method for fried chicken. It is better than to create new desserts or new milk shakes that affect customer satisfaction slightly. Except the signature menu, fast food operators should focus on the products which help to increase customer's appetite during dining the main dish. Based on interview data, french fries is the side dish that make customers enjoy eating fried chicken. And now french fries in KFC is not delicious. If fast food owners can find the right side dish, they can increase both customer satisfaction and sales amount at the same time.

Third, speed is one of the most important factors to service industry. To increase customer satisfaction of perceived waiting time, this paper recommends using the waiting time guarantee. Kumar *et al.* (1997), suggested fast food owners to offer customers with waiting time guarantees. Customers were satisfied if the waiting time was actually shorter than the guaranteed time limit. Dharmawiryal *et al.* (2012) introduced two common approaches in dealing with service time. First was to design new operation flow that help minimize actual queuing and service times. Second approach was to manage customer perception. Based on interviewing data, respondents are quite satisfied if staffs will serve food at their table instead of waiting food in long queue. For this data, the fast food restaurants can create the quick-service perception by serving food in customer's seat if they have to wait for food or wait a long queue. Besides, Sulek and Hensley (2004) suggested that furnishing and decoration impact on customer's perceived waiting times. The more uncomfortable

furnishing and non-appealing decoration, the more customers perceived longer waiting times. Moreover, Davis & Heineke (1994) suggested that while queuing, customers who were occupied tend to perceive shorter waiting time than the customers who were unoccupied. Therefore, this paper recommends occupying customers by turning on audio-visual or television sets in the queuing locations to minimize their perceived waiting time.

Fourth, restaurant cleanliness is considered one of the most significant factors when fast food consumers decide their levels of satisfaction. According to the interview data, all respondents emphasize on physical environments such as table, floor and food containers because it is the easiest way to notice. However, according to the perception of Asian people regarding a restaurant's cleanliness, Seung (2012) prioritized the most 3 significant dimensions. The server's behavior such as contact with food by using bare hands was ranked as the most important dimension. The second most important dimension was restroom appearance. Cleaning signage and restaurant inspection score were ranked the third position. Hence, the study would like to recommend fast food owners to focus on these 3 dimensions, especially restroom hygiene. Survey finds that restroom cleanliness leads to fast food restaurant success. A dirty restroom in a fast food restaurant can result in lost revenue, fewer guests, and a poor reputation. Moreover, a clean restroom can lead to reduce staff turnover and an improved guest experience. Employees working in fast food restaurant with clean restrooms feel good about their working environment and more likely to be proud of their jobs (QSR magazine, 2013).

CHAPTER V

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Limitations and Further Research

This research has some limitations. The first limitation concerns the sampling frame. Since this study used only KFC as a representative of fast food restaurant chains in Thailand, this is a possibility that some variables from other brands of fast food restaurants may be missed. Although KFC takes the number one market share in fast food restaurant chains in Thailand, it is hard to generalize KFC to represent all fast food restaurant chains in Thailand. In addition, KFC provides heavy meal such as fried chicken and rice, the respondent's expectation toward KFC might not be applied for fast food restaurants where provide light meal such as ice-cream and bakery. Hence, for the further research, this study should be conducted in various brands of fast food restaurant chains such as McDonald's, Chester's Grill, Burger King, and Swensen's.

The second limitation concerns the interviewing time period. The data was collected at KFC in the afternoon and evening. The findings of this study cannot represent an entire expectation of fast food customers who dine fast food at a different time. Different time periods may lead to different customer's needs and expectations. Fast food customers who buy fast food in the morning hours and peak hours during lunch time may have different expectations. They might emphasize on different factors affecting to their satisfaction which are not mentioned in these findings. For further research, the data should be collected in various time periods from morning to night time.

Regarding other recommendations for further study, the further research should investigate different age group to see whether other age groups emphasize on the same factors affecting their satisfaction in fast food restaurant chains or not. This research will provide better understanding about different factors among each age group in choosing fast food restaurants.

Also, further research should investigate the expectation of teenagers and young adults separately in terms of fast food customer satisfaction. This research will provide better insights into each group's expectation and satisfaction.

In addition, further research should investigate and prioritize the main factors of each dimension such as taste dimension, cleanliness dimension and fast service dimension in scope of service quality, food quality and perceived value. This research will provide better understanding about each dimension affecting the fast food consumer's satisfaction.

5.2 Conclusion

This research prioritized the factors affecting customer satisfaction in fast food restaurant chains in Thailand. The target group is people in the age range of 15-29 years old which are the potential customers for fast food industries. 3 perceptive dimensions that have a direct and positive relationship with customer satisfaction in fast food restaurants are service, product and price. All dimensions consist of 36 items implemented as sources of interview items. In addition, conceptual framework consists of perception and expectation. In order to make customers extremely impressed with a fast food restaurant, a fast food owner must fulfill customer perception until it reaches customer's desired expectation.

However, since there are 36 items, it is necessary to prioritize the top 3 key factors. With this finding, fast food owners can create marketing strategies and enhance their customer satisfaction effectively and efficiently. This research uses qualitative method for collecting data. By interviewing fifteen respondents in aged 15-29 years old at KFC restaurant, the finding is that "taste, fast service and cleanliness" were ranked in the most important factors, followed by seat availability and price respectively. It shows that all three dimensions are concerned by fast food customers. In general, customers are satisfied in each main factor but there is not any factor that their satisfaction reaches the desired level. Taste is viewed to be the most crucial factor that leads customers to dine at KFC.

Results of this study inform fast food restaurant owners that to increase the level of customer satisfaction, they should manage consistency of all factors especially taste, fast service and cleanliness. Moreover, this study can provide valuable information to fast food owners who seek to improve their fast food restaurants' quality and to satisfy customers especially the age group of 15-29 years old in the Thai market.

To conclude, the research provides a better understanding of the crucial factors that the target group concerns the most. Also, it indicates how customers currently perceive fast food restaurants and what their desired expectations are.



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