



Relationship Quality in Casual Dining Restaurants in Tshwane

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to report on the factors that influence customers' patronage decisions in the City of Tshwane, the former Pretoria, in the Republic of South Africa. In this quantitative study the researcher conducted a survey by using a questionnaire to collect data. A total of 211 questionnaires were completed and the data were analysed using STATA (v12). This study found that food quality, service quality, physical environment, location and price determine the relationship quality between diners and restaurants in the City.

Keywords: Relationship quality, restaurants, service quality, food quality, guest satisfaction.

Introduction

Maumbe (2012:149) states that casual restaurants are restaurants that serve moderately-priced foods in a casual atmosphere. These restaurants are globally available and typically provide table service and bridge the gap between fast-food establishments and fine dining establishments; they often have a large beer menu and a limited wine menu (Maumbe, 2012:149). These restaurants have experienced rapid a growth trend from the 1990s and into this millennium (Maumbe, 2012:149).

The restaurant industry especially has experienced major re-structuring in terms of conducting business in order to cope with the increased demand for restaurant services (Ntloedibe, 2013:1). With this in mind, it becomes a necessity for restaurateurs to generate and maintain a competitive advantage, to ensure customer retention (loyalty) and drive increases in sales. Key to this however, is relationship marketing, which is viewed by many authors such as Crosby, Evans and Cowles (1990:72), Kim and Han (2008:225) as well as Kim, Lee and Yoo (2006:148) as a customer's perception of how well the relationship fulfils his or her expectations, goals, predictions and desires in the restaurant sector. Relationship quality indicates a service provider's ability to reduce or minimise a customer's apparent uncertainty, ensuring trust on the provider's reliability. The authors Crosby, Evans and Cowles (1990:72) and Kim and Han (2008:225) as well as Kim, Lee and Yoo (2006:148) view relationship quality as the key to customer loyalty and retention which enhances repeat patronage. Restaurateurs must focus on building quality relations with customers in order to generate loyalty and to increase revenue (Hyun, 2010:253).

Relationship marketing

Since the 1960s, product-oriented marketing has been replaced by a more customer-involving form of marketing, known as relationship marketing (Grönroos, 1994:4–20; Hyun, 2010:251). Research in the 1960s by Kotler (1967:20–26) introduced a customer-centred viewpoint and highlighted the importance of meeting the customer's needs.

Extending from Kotler's research was Oliver (1980:460–475) who highlighted the notion that customer satisfaction is a vital ingredient in a successful marketing strategy. His definition of satisfaction is that it is a pleasurable fulfilment. Oliver (1980:465) emphasised that customers should be content when they have



made a purchase, therefore, the marketing strategy used must be more customer focused than product focused.

As time passed, marketers realised that large numbers of satisfied customers were not returning to their brands even though they had reported satisfaction. In essence, even though marketers had adapted this new customer oriented relationship marketing there was still a gap in their marketing strategy (Davis, Buchanan-Oliver & Brodie, 1999:319–325; Hyun, 2010:261).

This led marketers to the realisation that there should be relational bonds between a business and its customers. These bonds create personal and financial switching barriers that result in a firm gaining an advantage over a competitor's actions. These relational bonds are known as relationship quality (Roberts, Varki & Brodie, 2003:169–196).

Relationship quality concerning a business and its customers shows lasting promoting success and promotion usefulness, a bulk number of companies are therefore creating large investments to improve their relationship quality (Kim *et al.*, 2006:148).

Relationship quality

Crosby *et al.* (1990:72) introduced relationship quality in marketing literature as a higher-order construct of salesperson attributes, relational selling. Crosby *et al.* (1990:72) conclude that relationship quality is enhanced through perceived salesperson competency and expertise. It is therefore an important determinant of a customer's perceived trust in the salesperson. Perceptions of salesperson competency influenced sales effectiveness. Therefore, it believed that salesperson–customer knowledge positively influences the relationship quality dimensions of trust and satisfaction.

Relational selling knowledge of the customer refers to the effort expended to understand the customer's needs and learning his/her specific requirements According to this definition, knowledge was a major determinant of service quality. Moreover, the service provider, communication of responsiveness, empathy and assurance has been noted to be relatively important to customer satisfaction (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988:20).

Mutual disclosure plays a major role in the development and maintenance of personal relationships. It leads to fondness towards the service because the recipient feels that he/she has been selected as trustworthy enough to be a candidate for an intimate relationship service provider. As a result, the customer may feel rewarded and in turn, self-disclose to provide a reward, that is, cooperative intention (Crosby *et al.*, 1990:72).

Kim *et al.* (2006:146), however, define relationship quality as a concept of relationship management activities that include both tangible and intangible constructs.

For the hospitality industry in particular Kim and Cha (2002:326) suggest four determinants of relationship quality dimensions: customer orientation, relational orientation, mutual disclosure and the service providers' attributes.

Customer orientation refers to service providers who provide service as promised, and continues to put customers' needs and interests ahead of his or her own (Kim & Cha, 2002:326). Service employees (receptionists, front office staff, the maître d'hôtel and front office staff) have a great opportunity to communicate business benefits to customers. The stronger the customers' perception of what the service employee is communicating to them, the more they will perceive that employees are putting their needs first. In organisations where customer orientation is superior and service representatives of the organisation have effectively communicated their business to their customers, the service image of the organisation will improve and guest satisfaction will increase. Customer orientation appears to have a direct relationship with relationship quality (Kim & Cha, 2002:326).

According to Brady and Cronin (2001:241–243) orientation is the basis for organisational learning that results in superior value attribution and greater customer satisfaction. Customer-oriented firms outperform



competitors by anticipating the developing needs of consumers and responding with goods to satisfy their customers (Brady & Cronin, 2001:241–243).

Relational orientation refers to a behavioural trend to grow the buyer–seller relationship and understand its preservation and growth (Kim & Cha, 2002:328–329). The seller behaviour is focused on the long-term relationship, and has a positive result on the buyers' perception of relationship quality. A relational-oriented and excellent-quality service offered to consumers is regarded as means by which the organisation offering the service can achieve a competitive advantage, and increase customer loyalty, to improve its corporate image and give growth to business profits (Kim & Cha, 2002:328–329).

Mutual disclosure is noted to be essential in creating and sustaining all interpersonal relationships. It is imperative to note that shared disclosure should be a reciprocal interaction. In a interactive sales setting, client disclosure regarding current financial conditions and financial goals is critical and it shows a positive effect on relationship quality (Hwang, Kim & Hyun, 2013:64). Easy reciprocated communication between servers and customers ultimately leads to re-examine intents, and training attendants to develop crucial positive attributes effectively is critical in promoting mutual disclosure between server and patron and in increasing the likelihood of a customer revisiting the restaurant (Hwang, Kim & Hyun, 2013:64).

Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne (2013:1–90) maintain that service providers' attributes and their performance are important to build good relationship quality in the service encounter, for during these encounters , clients receive an overview of the quality of the organisation and each meeting contributes to the shoppers' overall gratification and willingness to do business with the organisation in the future. Between numerous service providers' attributes, physical appearance is an important determinant of guest satisfaction (Christopher, Payne & Ballantyne, 2013:1–9).

Kim *et al.* (2006:154) conceptualised a model that combined relationship management activities and relationship quality. They went on to identify how these affect loyalty, commitment and word of mouth. They further define relationship quality as how well the business fulfils the expectations, desires and goals of the customer.

Relationship quality therefore illustrates the customer's perception of his/her relationship with the business/restaurant as a whole. It is then safe to say that high levels of relationship quality impact on the future performance of the business, because if past performance was good and satisfied customers' needs, the customer will trust and believe in the future performance of the business regularly and constantly (Kim, Lee & Yoo, 2006:149). Clark and Wood (1999:318) postulated that tangible rather than intangible contracts were of importance in gaining customer loyalty in restaurants.

Figure 1 shows Kim *et al.*'s (2006:146) concept of relationship quality as a concept of relationship management activities that include both tangible and intangible constructs. Jarvelin and Lehtinen (1996:245) define relationship quality as a customer's perceptions of how well the relationship fulfils his or her expectations, goals, predictions and desires. Kim *et al.* (2006:148) as well as Kim and Han (2008:225) state that relationship quality shows a service provider's capacity to reduce or minimise the customer's apparent uncertainties, ensuring trust in the service provider.

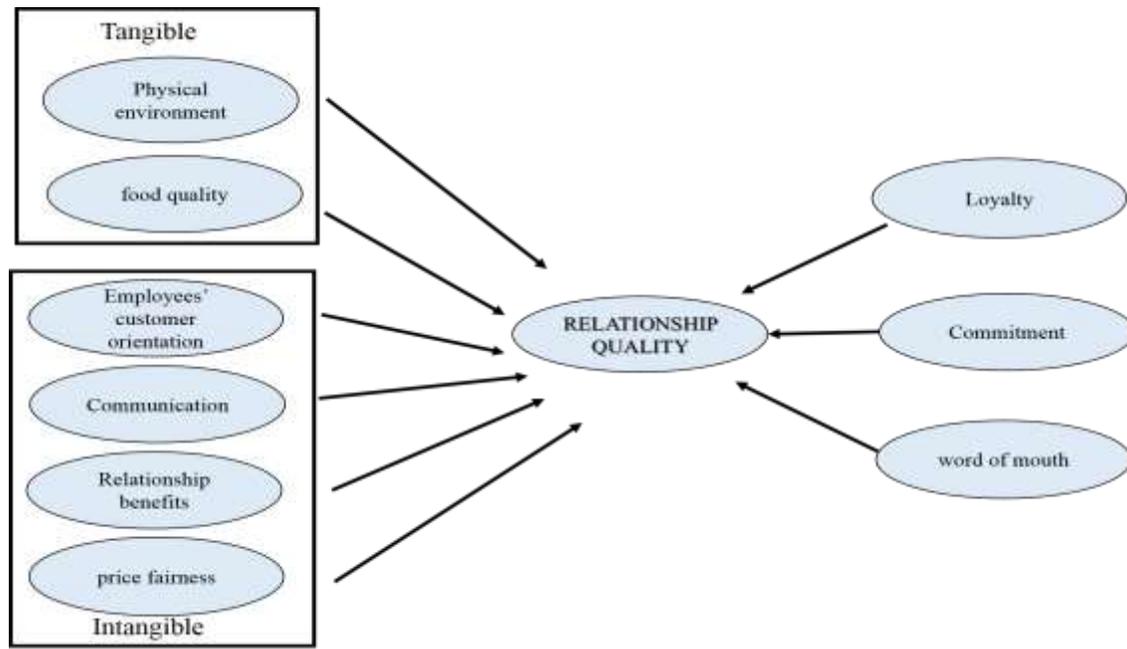


Figure 1: Conceptual model for relationship quality, its predictors and consequences (adapted from Kim, Lee & Yoo, 2006:148).

Authors Crosby *et al.* (1990:72) define relationship quality from a selling point of view as a customer's perception of how well a service seller can reduce a customer's perceived uncertainty, leading to a situation where the customer is able to rely on the service seller's integrity and has the confidence in the service seller's future performance because of satisfactory past performance.

Meng and Elliott (2008:512) propose a similar theory to that of Kim, Lee and Yoo (2006:146) about relationship quality. According to their analysis, customers' orientation showed it had the strongest influence on relationship quality. The individual analysis of items in their model showed that friendliness of service staff was important to customers of luxury restaurants. Restaurants that are able to offer or deliver courteous and quick service are therefore more likely to improve customer satisfaction. Repeated training, constructive reinforcement and providing excellent customer service are critical in the development of relationship quality (Meng & Elliott, 2008:512).

The quality of food and beverage had the second highest influence on the quality of the relationship between the customer and the restaurant. Meng and Elliott (2008:513) findings highlights the importance of food quality in developing customers' satisfaction and loyalty within the restaurant business and further emphasise the importance of individual items, such as food preparation and presentation, as important factors that must be addressed in order to change long-term relations with loyal customers.

Strong relationship benefits were shown to have a positive influence on the level of customer trust and satisfaction. Meng and Elliott (2008:513) state that close personal relationships with restaurant staff have a encouraging effect on the formation of relationship quality. Individual items such as personal recognition, risk reduction, friendliness and special treatment were all shown to have a positive effect on maintaining long-term relations with the restaurant. Luxury restaurants need to deliver high-quality service, and they should make sure that they create a warm and welcoming atmosphere that allows for exceptional treatment of loyal customers (Meng & Elliott, 2008:513).

Meng and Elliott also highlight the importance physical environment for luxury restaurants, namely décor, cleanliness, comfort of the dining area and restrooms. These are all part of the physical environment that affects customer satisfaction significantly. Elegant equipment was shown in their study as a top priority to customers of luxury restaurants (Meng & Elliott, 2008:513).



Meng and Elliott (2008:514) state that communication has been shown as a tool to enhance long-term relationships between a restaurant and its customers. This communication occurs via the Internet or by direct mail and it enriches cooperation and trust during the relationship building process. Restaurants need to be careful, however, as regards the frequency and timing of the communication because consumers today are inundated by junk mail. This implies that less communication can be more beneficial than lots of useless communication.

Perceived price fairness is the last factor presented by Meng and Elliott (2008:514) that influences relationship quality formation, price fairness has an important role in that it influences trust and satisfaction significantly. In their study, customers seemed to use price fairness as means to evaluate customer value. Restaurants that overprice their menus or offer different prices to different customers may negatively affect customer trust and satisfaction (Meng & Elliott, 2008:514). Restaurants must provide customers with fair prices for top-quality food and services. Restaurants that are able to do this are much more likely to maintain and develop loyal customers (Meng & Elliott, 2008:514).

Roberts *et al.* (2003:170) and Hyun (2010:251) view relationship quality as key to customer loyalty and retention. Strong relationship quality indicates that the customer has been satisfied in the past, and therefore trusts the service providers' future performance and wishes to maintain the relationship (Hyun, 2010:251). Satisfaction and trust are discussed as issues of great importance in relationship quality literature (Crosby *et al.*, 1990:72; Kim & Han, 2008:225; Kim, Lee, & Yoo 2006:146).

Andersson and Mossberg (2004:177) go on to conclude that managers must be aware of customers' needs and must produce service that is not only focused on the customers' physiological needs (food and beverage) but must also look to services that are directed at other needs in order to be able to develop an attractive restaurant.

Research Design and Data Collection

This study utilised a descriptive quantitative research design. This type of research involves a large sample and a structured method of data collection. Quantitative research involves the use of surveys and a questionnaire and includes numerical analysis of data (Conradie, 2012:47). The strength of this type of research is that it is more objective compared to qualitative research mainly because it focuses on measuring the phenomena (Conradie, 2012:47).

Population and Sampling

The data for this study were collected from casual restaurant customers in the City of Tshwane and its environs. The City of Tshwane is the capital city of South Africa, with a population of 2.9 million people and it contributes 27% to the provincial GDP (City of Tshwane General and Regional Overview 2013:1) The City of Tshwane also produces 40% of the South African automotive industry output, according to the automotive development centre. The city also houses a number of government departments, tertiary educational institutions and foreign embassies. The municipality also administers the ever-growing tourism sector (City of Tshwane General and Regional Overview 2013:1). The researcher decided to conduct research in this geographical area as it would benefit restaurant owners, restaurateurs and restaurant customers alike. In addition to the reason of convenience, in terms of proximity, the limitation of financial resources required to complete the study was also considered.

A population refers to the group that is targeted for the investigation (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013:162; Henn, Weinstein & Foard, 2009:153). For this study, the targeted population were casual dining restaurant customers in the City of Tshwane. Safarinow.com lists a total of 132 casual restaurants in the city. The intention of the researcher was to approach restaurateurs or owners to get permission to access their establishments to collect data from customers during their dining experience. Due to the refusal of managers to grant permission during the pilot study, the study was re-designed in consultation with the supervisor and co-supervisor to approach customers rather at a random location such as parking bays around malls and shopping centres. Customers were requested to recall their most recent casual restaurant dining experience. The sample was therefore conveniently selected to participate in the study based on their availability and willingness to complete the questionnaire (Bless *et al.*, 2013:162).



A sample is a subset or portion of a population that is deemed representative of the population (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014:134). The sample selected for a quantitative research study must share the same characteristics or traits as the overall population, and for it to be considered adequate, it must be possible to generalise the results to the population from which it was drawn (Bless *et al.*, 2013:164). McNabb (2015:87–88) and Bless *et al.* (2013:166) refer to two general types of sampling procedures, namely random or probability sampling and non-random sampling. McNabb (2015:87–88) and Bless *et al.* (2013:166) state that a random sampling procedure provides the best assurance that those selected for the sample are representative of the entire population. In non-random sampling procedures, the researcher can only hope that the selected participants bear some traits of the population (McNabb (2015:87–88).

In the present study, the sample participants were selected using non-probability convenience sampling techniques. Participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. This form of sampling consists of elements that are known to the researcher or those to whom the researcher may gain access with relative ease.

Research Instrument

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:232), information or data about people's knowledge, behaviour and attitudes can be gathered using a survey or questionnaire. They further highlight the reasons for using questionnaires in research, stating questionnaires or surveys are the best method of data collection for social scientists who wish to study a population where original data are collected to describe a population that is too large to observe well. It is also an excellent way to measure orientation and attitude in a large population. Lastly, they state that it is a good method to get a better representation of the population.

This particular study used a self-administered questionnaire. It simplified and quantified responses and it was a type of survey in which people were willing to participate because it requires one to tick a box rather than writing or typing long sentences (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014:152). Further benefits of using a questionnaire are that it:

- carries a low cost compared to other methods;
- requires fewer administrative staff;
- allows participants to think carefully about the questions posed to them;
- does not require the participants to be computer-literate;
- carries high levels of anonymity;
- allows access to participants who would not ordinarily participate; and
- covers a large geographical area at a fairly low cost.

The questionnaire used in this study was developed based on previous studies related to the study problem. They included studies by Hyun (2010:251–267), Kim *et al.* (2006:143–158) and Meng and Elliott (2008:509–515). It is a common research practice for postgraduate students to simulate studies by other authors or social scientists in similar or different circumstances or environment (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014:152).

The questionnaire used a 6-point Likert-type scale where applicable. Surveygizmo (2012:1) states that a Likert-type scale is an effective tool that can accurately measure the overall opinions about a topic and it's also effective in measuring overall experiences of individuals. The scale used in this study was based on previous research of (Kim *et al.*, 2006:143–158) and Meng and Elliott (2008:509–515) who concurred that relationship quality as a marketing strategy can be implemented to improve the position of a hospitality business, by improving customer satisfaction and generating greater revenue. In this study the researcher utilised matrix questions in the form of a 6-point Likert-type scale, which ranked as follows: SD=strongly disagree, D=disagree, SLD=slightly disagree, SA=slightly agree, A=agree and STA=strongly agree. Secondary data were obtained through an extensive literature review of related topics to the question posed for this study.

To make this study fit the South African context of customers' perceptions of casual dining restaurants, options and jargon used in the study but which are not relevant to the South African market were removed



and replaced with relevant concepts. The questionnaire was divided into four sections each with a specific purpose.

Section 1 was focused on demographic information, and gathered information about the participants' background, such as gender, age, level of education and monthly income as well as two closed-ended questions relating to the number of times participants went to a restaurant and which restaurant.

Section 2 was aimed at gaining insight into the participants' perception of relationship quality attributes, namely food quality, service quality, price, location and physical environment, which were also measured using a 6-point Likert-type scale citing levels of agreement ("strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") with statements.

Section 3 was aimed at assessing the mediators' 'customer satisfaction' and 'trust' and the outcome 'loyalty and commitment'. The mediator 'satisfaction' required participants' level of satisfaction with the offering at the restaurant(s) as indicated, ranging from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. 'Trust' examined participants' level of agreement, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". 'Loyalty' was the measured outcome with measurement levels of agreement ("strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") with statements. The questionnaire utilised matrix questions in the form of a 6-point Likert-type scale. Dixon, Bobo and Stevick (1984:62) justify the utilisation of a 6-point Likert-type scale as a means to avoid neutral biases, which one can find in a 3 or 5-point Likert-type scale. The questionnaire in the present study contained 52 questions in total which had to be answered by the participants.

Responses

In this study the researcher administered a total of 300 questionnaires. A total number of 211 questionnaires were completed to the satisfactory level required by the researcher. The response rate was 70.3% which is above the 50% used by (Mbithi, 2011:68). This rate was influenced by the use of convenience sampling in the study.

Data analysis

The researcher collected the questionnaire on completion by participants. The data were filtered and cleaned using Microsoft excel @2010. STATA V12 statistical software was used to process and data obtained from the questionnaire. The responses were presented using descriptive statistics percentages for frequencies.

Results

The majority of the respondents (51%) were females, and 49% were male. Most of the participants were between the ages of 25-34 with 44% having a diploma as highest qualification.

Table 1: Demographics and dining profile

| Variables | Percentage |
|-------------------|------------|
| • Gender | |
| Male | 49.56% |
| Female | 51.44% |
| • Age | |
| 18-24 | 17.79% |
| 25-35 | 37.98% |
| 36-45 | 25.96% |
| 46-56 | 13.94% |
| 56+ | 4.33% |
| • Qualification | |
| High school | 8.20% |
| Certificate | 20.29% |
| Diploma | 44.93% |
| Bachelor's degree | 19.32% |



| Variables | Percentage |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Post-graduate certificate | 6.76% |
| Other | 0.48% |
| • Household income | |
| R4000 or lower | 7.73% |
| R5000-R9999 | 14.01% |
| R10000-R14999 | 28.50% |
| R15000-R19999 | 20.77% |
| R20000-R24999 | 15.94% |
| Above R25000 | 13.04% |
| • Dining-out frequency | |
| Never | 1.97% |
| 1-2 times | 52.71% |
| 3-5 times | 35.96% |
| 6-12 times | 6.40% |
| 12+ times | 2.96% |

The highest percentage of household income was 28.50% earning between R10 000-R14 999. Most (52.71%) of the participants dined out 1-2 times a month. Therefore it was assumed that the sample reasonably represents the general dining population of South Africa, even though it's leaning towards the youth (Table 1).

Table 2: Degree of agreement for 'food quality' construct

| CONSTRUCT: FOOD QUALITY | TOTAL (n) | SD | D | SLD | SA | A | STA |
|---|---------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| The food presentation is visually attractive | n=100% 208 | 0.48% | 1.92% | 4.33% | 32.21% | 49.52% | 11.54% |
| The restaurant offers a variety of menu items | n=100% 207 | – | 0.97% | 6.28% | 33.82% | 43.96% | 14.95% |
| The restaurant offers healthy food options | n=100% 208 | 0.96% | 3.37% | 7.69% | 34.62% | 41.83% | 11.54% |
| The restaurant serves tasty food | n=100% 208 | – | 0.96% | 2.88% | 24.04% | 45.19% | 26.96% |
| The restaurant offers fresh foods | n=100% 205 | – | 0.98% | 5.85% | 27.32% | 43.90% | 21.95% |
| The food served is at the appropriate temperature | n=100% 208 | 0.48% | 1.44% | 3.85% | 24.04% | 49.04% | 21.15% |

Table 2 shows the food quality results indicating that most of the respondents (96.16%) agreed that the food served at the respective restaurants was tasty, and 94.23% said that it was at the appropriate temperature. The one factor that seemed to lag behind was the restaurant's need to offer healthy food options with 12.02% of respondents disagreeing with the statement (restaurants need to offer healthy food options). Respondents (7.24%) also wanted more variety on the menu which would contribute to a healthy relationship quality with restaurants.

Table 3: Degree of agreement for 'service quality' construct

| CONSTRUCT: SERVICE QUALITY | TOTAL (n) | SD | D | SLD | SA | A | STA |
|---|---------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Employees are always willing to help me | n=100% 208 | 0.48% | 1.92% | 3.85% | 28.85% | 50.48% | 14.42% |
| Employees have knowledge to answer my questions | n=100% 208 | 0.48% | - | 8.17% | 33.65% | 44.71% | 12.98% |
| The meal is served at the promised time | n=100% 206 | 1.46% | 2.91% | 9.71% | 35.92% | 36.41% | 13.59% |
| The restaurant has my best interest at heart | n=100% 207 | 0.97% | 2.90% | 10.14% | 31.88% | 36.71% | 17.39% |

| CONSTRUCT: SERVICE QUALITY | SERVICE | TOTAL (n) | SD | D | SLD | SA | A | STA |
|--|---------|---------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Anything wrong with my meal is quickly corrected | | n=100% 207 | – | 1.93% | 10.63% | 23.19% | 46.86% | 17.39% |
| The restaurant provided me with the correct check /bill | | n=100% 208 | – | 1.44% | 5.29% | 17.79% | 43.27% | 32.21% |
| The restaurant provides quick and prompt service | | n=100% 205 | – | 1.46% | 9.76% | 25.37% | 50.24% | 13.17% |
| The restaurant gives extra effort to handle special requests | | n=100% 207 | – | 1.93% | 8.70% | 26.57% | 47.83% | 14.98% |
| The restaurant personnel makes you feel comfortable in your dealings with them | | n=100% 208 | – | 0.96% | 6.73% | 31.73% | 41.35% | 19.23% |
| The restaurant has personnel who are able to give you information about their menu items | | n=100% 208 | 1.46% | 1.94% | 8.25% | 30.10% | 38.35% | 19.90% |
| The restaurant has personnel who are able to give you information about their ingredients and preparation. | | n=100% 208 | –0 | 0.96% | 2.88% | 24.04% | 45.19% | 26.96% |

With regard to service quality, the majority of respondents were satisfied with the quality of service rendered by the casual dining restaurant (Table 3). 93.75% of respondents said employees were always willing to help, and 92.31% of respondents stated they were made comfortable in dealing with the employees. What was alarming though is that 6.73% of people did not agree that the restaurant provided them with the correct bill. Often these are automated machines, and human error should be minimal. Restaurants ought to pay more attention to aspects such as serving meals on time and to aspects of empathy ensuring that they come across as having customers' interests at heart.

Table 4: Degree of agreement on 'physical environment' construct

| CONSTRUCT: ENVIRONMENT | PHYSICAL | TOTAL (n) | SD | D | SLD | SA | A | STA |
|---|----------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| The restaurant has a visually attractive dining area | | n=100% 208 | 0.96% | 2.88% | 7.69% | 28.37% | 45.19% | 14.90% |
| The restaurant has décor that is reflective of its prices | | n=100% 205 | – | 1.95% | 8.78% | 28.29% | 41.95% | 19.02% |
| The restaurant has a dining area that is easy to move around in | | n=100% 208 | – | 0.96 | 8.65% | 22.60% | 51.44% | 16.35% |
| The restaurant has comfortable seats in the dining area | | n=100% 206 | – | 0.49% | 4.85% | 22.33% | 48.54% | 23.79% |
| The dining area of the restaurant is thoroughly clean | | n=100% 208 | – | 0.96% | 6.25% | 18.27% | 48.56% | 25.96% |
| The restaurant has appropriate music | | n=100% 206 | 0.49% | 4.37% | 6.31% | 22.33% | 44.17% | 22.33% |
| The restaurant has pleasant decorations and sufficient lighting | | n=100% 208 | 0.48% | 0.97% | 7.73% | 19.32% | 44.93% | 26.57% |

Table 4 lists the perceptions of the physical environment; it seemed that most respondents agreed that the seats were comfortable (94.66%) and that restaurants were thoroughly cleaned (92.79%). The restaurants should, however, pay attention to the visual aspects of things, and they need to play appropriate music for that particular setting of a casual dining restaurant.

Table 5: Degree of agreement for 'price' construct

| CONSTRUCT: PRICE | TOTAL (n) | SD | D | SLD | SA | A | STA |
|--|---------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| The food at this restaurant is reasonably priced | n=100% 208 | 0.96% | 5.29% | 15.38% | 24.52% | 45.19% | 8.65% |
| The beverages at this restaurant are reasonably priced | n=100% 207 | 2.42% | 7.25% | 19.32% | 24.15% | 37.68% | 9.18% |
| This restaurant offers food discounts | n=100% 205 | 6.34% | 12.68% | 18.87% | 26.34% | 24.39% | 11.71% |
| The restaurant offers food specials | n=100% 208 | 1.92% | 10.58% | 15.87% | 19.71 | 36.54% | 15.38% |
| The restaurant offers beverage discounts | n=100% 206 | 9.71% | 14.56% | 21.36% | 17.96% | 27.67% | 8.47% |
| This restaurant offers beverage specials. | n=100% 207 | 6.76% | 13.53% | 22.22% | 23.67% | 22.71% | 11.11% |

Of the respondents, 78.73% and 71.01% agreed that casual dining restaurants offer food and beverages that are reasonably priced and they also agreed that restaurants offer discounts and specials of food and beverage (Table 5).

Table 6: Degree of agreement for 'location' construct

| CONSTRUCT: LOCATION | TOTAL (n) | SD | D | SLD | SA | A | STA |
|--|---------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| The restaurant provides safe and secure parking | n=100% 206 | 1.46% | 3.88% | 14.08% | 30.10% | 40.29% | 10.19% |
| The restaurant is located close to my place of residence | n=100% 206 | 5.34% | 6.31% | 11.17% | 33.01% | 33.98% | 10.19% |
| I feel safe when I visit this restaurant | n=100% 208 | 0.97% | 1.94% | 8.25% | 24.27% | 48.54% | 16.02% |

Table 6 reports the perceptions on the location of the restaurant. 19.42% of the respondents did not agree that the restaurant provided enough safe and secure parking. Restaurants should, however, be located closer to people's places of residence because 22.83% of respondents said that these types of restaurants were not located close to the places where they reside.

Table 7 Degree of satisfaction

| CONSTRUCT: SATISFACTION | TOTAL (n) | VD | D | SLD | SS | S | VS |
|--|---------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| Rating the level of satisfaction with the quality of service | n=100% 206 | 0.49% | 0.49% | 6.31% | 40.29% | 44.66% | 7.77% |
| Rating of overall satisfaction with this restaurant | n=100% 207 | - | 0.48% | 5.80% | 35.75% | 48.31% | 9.66% |
| Rating the restaurant compared with other restaurants in terms of overall satisfaction | n=100% 207 | - | 0.97% | 7.73% | 27.05% | 54.11% | 10.14% |

On the factor of satisfaction, respondents seemed satisfied with the restaurant experience, rating it above 93%, but when asked to compare the particular restaurants to other restaurants, 91.3% reported satisfaction (Table 7). In the trust category it seemed that a significant number (13.04%) did not believe that restaurant staff were honest and 12% did not think they were sincere (Table 8).

Table 8 Degree of agreement for trust

| CONSTRUCT: TRUST | TOTAL (n) | SD | D | SLD | SA | A | STA |
|--|---------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| The staff at the restaurant are sincere | n=100% 208 | 0.96% | 1.44% | 9.62% | 34.13% | 46.15% | 7.69% |
| The staff at the restaurant are reliable | n=100% 208 | - | 1.44% | 11.06% | 31.78% | 48.08% | 7.69% |
| The staff at the restaurant are honest | n=100% 207 | - | 1.45% | 11.59% | 32.85% | 42.03% | 12.08% |
| The staff at this restaurant puts customers' needs first | n=100% 206 | 0.97% | 0.49% | 7.22% | 32.52% | 47.57% | 10.68% |

Table 9 reflects the perceptions on loyalty and commitment. Loyalty is viewed as a strong and deep commitment to repurchase or continuous purchase of a preferred product or service in the future, despite potential or actual environmental effects or marketing efforts of competitors to change customers' buying behaviour (Oliver, 1999:34).

Table 9: Degree of likelihood for 'loyalty' and 'commitment' as outcomes

| LOYALTY AND COMMITMENT | TOTAL (n) | VU | U | SU | SL | L | VL |
|---|---------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Are you likely to say positive things about this restaurant to other people? | n=100% 208 | – | 0.96% | 5.77% | 43.75% | 33.17% | 16.35% |
| Are you likely to recommend this restaurant to someone who seeks your advice? | n=100% 208 | 0.48% | 0.96% | 9.62% | 34.62% | 37.02% | 17.31% |
| Are you likely to encourage family and friends to visit this restaurant? | n=100% 208 | 0.48% | 1.44% | 9.13% | 28.85% | 42.79% | 17.31% |
| Are you likely to consider this restaurant your first choice when dining out? | n=100% 206 | 1.46% | 2.91% | 13.59% | 28.64% | 37.86% | 15.53 |

When it comes to loyalty and commitment, 93.63% of respondents said they were likely to say positive things about their experience at a casual dining restaurant. On the other hand, 17.96 stated that the casual dining restaurant would be not be considered their first choice when dining out.

Conclusions

This study concurs with various other studies in the field of restaurants and the quality of their offering that the construct that determines relationship quality in casual dining restaurants are:

- food quality;
- service quality;
- physical environment;
- location; and
- price.

Only when these attributes are met by the restaurant will there be a quality relationship among the parties (customer and restaurant). This relationship consists of both trust and satisfaction. The outcomes of this relationship are loyal and committed customers. The concept of relationship quality is discussed in various studies and in the literature as well as its importance when it comes to the hospitality industry as a whole but in particular the casual restaurant industry. In relationship literature, it is evident that food quality and service quality are the most visible contributors to a quality relationship between parties. This is, however, not surprising because the core offering of a restaurant is food; thus, most customers patronise the restaurant with the need of acquiring food and prompt service.

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