



Dissertation

Master in International Business

The determinants of customers' trust and perceptions in the fast food industry

Zindy Bertrand Velásquez

Dissertation developed under the supervision of Doctor Cátia Crespo, professor at the School of Technology and Management of the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria.

Leiria, July of 2018

This page was intetionally left blank

Dedication (optional)

This page was intentionally left blank

Acknowledgements

The present research is a result of days of effort, time, work and dedication, first I want to give thanks to God, creator of wisdom and science, and secondly, I want to give thanks to my teacher and advisor Cátia Crespo who was always patient, available and understanding to guide me through every moment.

In a special way, I would like to give thanks to the team of Cruz Del Sur, who was the program that granted me a scholarship to take my first year of my master's degree. I would also like to express my appreciation to Ana Cecilia Boa Aventura for being an unconditional support throughout my stay here, as well as to the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria for having accepted me as their student.

Biggest thanks to my family, my mother, my father, my sisters Iberia, Bianka and Karen. They have been my most important base and my best team who have always motivated me to get to the end. Special thanks to Mauricio Lang who helped me build the graphs and everything related to their formatting. I express my sincere gratitude to my friends who in one way or another helped me with this work.

This page was intetionally left blank

Resumo (in Portuguese)

Palavras-chave: (máximo 6 palavras)

This page was intetionally left blank

Abstract

Nowadays the fast food restaurants have reached in a massive way penetrate the whole world, and the demand of the customers continues growing based in their need, lifestyle and wishes. This fast expansion is impacting the economy since fast food franchise is positioned in the market as one of the most significant business positioned not just in United States also around the world (**Dant, Kacker, Coughlan, & Emerson, 2007**). Every day is higher the demand of people to consume this type of food and this increase has originate a special interest of many researches concerning about health issues, who consider that it is necessary explore the most important indicators of the consumption of fast food among people which in their majority can be influenced by beliefs, cross cultural values, marketing strategies, reference groups and purchasing behavior (**Haven, 2015**).

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of customers trust toward a fast food brand, influence by brand equity dimensions (brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and other brand associations) and on customer perceptions and behavior (customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth). In order to examine this prediction, the questionnaire was conducted among Nicaraguan respondents in Nicaragua, The statistical analysis of the survey data was run through the PLS program since the model has structural equations. Our findings indicate evidence for the influence of brand equity dimensions namely brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and other brand associations, and on customer perception and behavior (customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth). Which significantly influence in the relationship and trust of the respondents regarding with their favorite fast food brand. Based on these findings we suggest that fast food brand can strengthen their customer's trust by focusing on improving these mentioned dimensions.

Keywords: Fast Food Restaurant, Customer Satisfaction, Word of mouth, Brand Loyalty, Brand image, Brand equity (Brand Awareness, Brand association, perceived quality).

This page was intentionally left blank

List of Figures

Figure 1: Fast food restaurant chain McDonald's	5
Figure 2: Fast food restaurant chain Subway.....	6
Figure 3: Brand Equity Model	10
Figure 4: Customer Based Brand Aaker's Equity Framework	16
Figure 5: Conceptual Model	26
Figure 6: Reliability and Validity of the Model	34

This page was intentionally left blank

List of Tables

Table 1.....	11
Table 2.....	22
Table 3.....	28
Table 4.....	33
Table 5.....	35
Table 6.....	36
Table 7.....	37

This page was intentionally left blank

List of Acronyms

- AMA**- american market association
AVE - average variance extracted
BAS - brand associations
BAW - brand awareness
BE - brand equity
BL - brand loyalty
CBBE customer based brand equity model
FFR - fast food restaurant
OPA - other proprietary assets
PQ - perceived quality
QRS - quick service restaurant
SEM - structural equation modelling
SPSS- statistical package for the social sciences
WOM- word-of-mouth
eWom - word-of-mouse

This page was intentionally left blank

Table of Contents

DEDICATION (OPTIONAL)	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
RESUMO (IN PORTUGUESE)	VII
ABSTRACT	IX
LIST OF FIGURES	XII
LIST OF TABLES	XIII
LIST OF ACRONYMS	XV
TABLE OF CONTENTS	XVII
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Scope of the Investigation	1
1.2. Research Aims	3
1.3. Contribution Proposed	3
1.4. Dissertation Structure	3
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	4
2.1. Contextualization of the Fast Food Industry	4
2.2. Customer Satisfaction	6
2.3. Brand equity	8
2.3.1. Perceived Quality	10
2.3.2. Brand Associations	13
2.3.3. Brand Awareness	13
2.3.4. Brand Loyalty:	14
2.4. Word-of-Mouth	16

2.5.	Brand Image	18
2.6.	Customer Trust	20
3.	CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES	21
4.	METHODOLOGY	27
4.1.	Sampling Procedure	27
4.2.	Questionnaire development and Pre-test	27
4.3.	Measures	28
4.4.	Sample profile	30
5.	DATA ANALYSIS	32
5.1.	Descriptive analysis	32
5.2.	Validity and Reliability of the Measures and Structural Evaluation	33
	5.2.1. Reliability of the Items	34
	5.2.2. Convergent validity	35
	5.2.3. Discriminant validity	36
	5.2.4. Evaluation of the Structural Model	36
5.3.	Results Evaluation	37
6.	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	39
6.1.	Main Findings	39
6.2.	Theoretical and managerial implications	42
6.3.	Main limitations and suggestions for further research	42
	REFERENCES	43
	APPENDIX	54
	SURVEY	54

1. Introduction

1.1. Scope of the Investigation

According to a research conducted by **Metin & Kizgin (2015)** fast food markets are changing their methods of international marketing, and adopting new strategies that can be closer to the consumer preferences. Fast food companies are aware that the differences among countries around the world are very big, and these contrast of tastes and needs are the key to “think global”. Since there are a lot of differences among society and nationalities, the way of food preparation may be modified, and therefore adapted to each individual community. In addition, we can understand that in order to meet the goal of providing quality service and responding to customer needs, fast food restaurants chains must have knowledge of the economic, religious, and cultural reality of the consumers who live in other countries.

According with **Pingali (2007)** we live in a world of constant change, and fast food industry has been influenced by this evolution; the process, preparation, production, and also the consumption of fast food, are affected by this reality. Nowadays people are adopting new eating preferences; in this context, it is remarkable that urbanization is one of the main factors related with the change in lifestyles, the independence of young people, and increased income. Therefore, we can observe that these set of factors influence the habits of the population, increasing their frequency and preferences towards this type of food, specially pizzas, burgers, snacks and fizzy drinks. Marketers of fast food chains continue to identify which are the main needs of customers and since one of their most important goals is to find the way to retain and satisfy customers, many fast food businesses are incorporating better marketing strategies. For instance, they are changing their schedules and diversity in the menu. The centers that before had the business open just for lunch now are opening early in the morning for breakfast, and for dinner, and they are offering a wide variety of food in the menu, in order to the customers to have access to different types of meals. One important example of these new strategies is McDonald’s which started to implement on-line ordering, coupons and arranging concerts inside of the fast food restaurant in order to capture the attention of young people, and conditioning a play area for children which has been very attractive (**Baig & Saeed, 2012**).

As we already know, marketing strategies play a fundamental role in fast food industry, first, to be able to create and apply suitable marketing strategies, it is necessary to understand the customers’ perceptions and preferences. Customers have different preferences and their choices are influenced by their cultures and countries. Therefore, marketing strategies have to be concentrated in the environment, needs, and perceptions of the customers, and since fast food restaurants preferences vary widely, the promotional campaigns that they use should be adjusted and adapted to individuals cultures and countries (**Kara, Kaynak , & Kucukemiroglu , 1995**).

It is noticeable that multinational fast food chains face high levels of competition, and it is not new that price is one of the usual strategies that this type of companies manipulate to increase market share, however price is not the only factor in the eyes of marketers. Nowadays, due to the diversity in customers' expectations and the changes in multicultural markets, fast food industry has considered to focus their market strategies in the individual needs and desires, with the objective to be more productive in creating customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, in order to apply more viable branding strategies, multinational fast food restaurants have to be aware of the different demands and requests of every individual customer, and work by offering products and services quality, providing a set of functional benefits, able to fill their preferences and expectations **(Mohammad, Barker, & Kandampully, 2005)**.

The fast expansion of fast food chains is growing around the world, and it has aroused interest of many analysts especially concerning health issues. Since the demand of people to consume, this type of food is every day higher, and particularly among young people, it is noticeable that the concerns of a negative impact in the health of consumers has significantly increased. In addition, many researchers consider that in order to understand more deeply the reasons of the consumption of fast food, it is necessary to analyze some of the main determinants of consumer behavior, such as the influence of cross-cultural values and beliefs, purchasing behavior, reference groups and marketing strategies **(Haven, 2015)**. The fast food consumption habit is influenced by many factors such as income, education, age, and family characteristics that influence customers' behavior. , Additionally, the price of the fast food, the concerns about health issues, and child tastes, are considered to be other critical factors, able to influence fast food consumption **(Akbay, Tiryaki, & Gul, 2007)**.

Young people are the category of people with the highest tendency to visit fast food businesses, since a significant part of young people are in a hurry, don't like to cook and are not concerned about food preparation, consequently preferring to eat out, and to go to fast food places, especially when they don't have none who cook for them, particularly when they study or work far of home. It is important to highlight that in most of the cases they have the required knowledge about the importance of eating well, of having a healthy life, and about the nutritional value of food. In addition, since young people are frequently identified with low incomes, lack of time, and need to visit places out home to interact with other people, fast food chains are able to connect their services and products to young peoples' expectations **(Untaru & Ispas , 2013)**.

1.2. Research Aims

The main objective of this study is to analyze, into a deeper extension, the impact of the brand equity dimensions (brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and other brand associations) on brand equity, as well as their relationship with customer satisfaction and to evaluate the consequent impact of brand equity and customer satisfaction on consumers' trust and word-of-mouth, in the fast food sector.

Consequently, the current investigation examines the perceptions and behaviors of customers from Nicaragua, regarding international fast food brands. We look into in the past theory and literature backing up the most important variables and indicators that sustain our research. The practical part of the present investigation will be conducted through a survey on a national level, which took a period of two months to gather the information required and with one additional month to analyze the responses of the participants in the survey.

1.3. Contribution Proposed

The main contribution of this study is to identify which are the main factors that influence in customers' trust regarding to a fast food brand based on the brand equity dimensions (brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and other brand associations) and on customer perceptions and behavior (customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth). The following research will contribute both to the academic and managerial level, interested in understanding the main determinants of customer's trust especially when it is influenced by different cultures and different way of life.

1.4. Dissertation Structure

The structure of this investigation is the following: first we explore the past literature related with the main aim of this dissertation, second, based on the literature review, the hypotheses and conceptual model will be proposed, third the methodology is presented, followed by the data analysis. Finally, we will describe the main results and implications, as well as limitations and future research orientations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Contextualization of the Fast Food Industry

Fast food restaurants have expanding around the world with more growing every day. The need of people, their lifestyle, the culture, the work status, and the socio - economic changes are some of the factors related with this increase. Fast food restaurants (FFR) are known as quick services restaurant, which are distinguished by some characteristics, namely time required, the easy way to eat with fingers, making it a “finger food“ and usually the take away service. “Fast food “is a concept that was recognized in a dictionary by Merriam – Webster in 1952 **(Salami, 2012)**. The growing of a franchise business represents an important meaning to the economy, franchising is growing with immeasurable speed, and has been positioned as one of the most successful modes of retailing not just inside in the U.S (United States), but all around the world **(Dant, Kacker, Coughlan, & Emerson, 2007)**. According to the Federal Trade Commission in FTC Rule 436 (which was amended effective July 1, 2008) U.S., franchise is defined with the presence of three conditional elements, which represent a business connection, namely: 1.The right or use of a common trademark or name; 2. Providing of “significant assistance”; and 3. A demanding payment in the first six months of operation by the franchisee (including initial fees, royalties, advertising fees, training fees, or fees for equipment **(Siebert, 2015)**).

In general, a franchise business has many advantages and disadvantages that are very important to consider, for example franchisees can identify as one of the main advantages the use of a recognize brand, less uncertainty because the business is based on approved idea, the support of the franchisor which usually provides training and assistance, financing can be easier with the banks, the risk is reduced and shared by the franchisor. On the other hand, there are many disadvantages such as the payment of royalties and the franchising agreement, which generally includes restrictions about the management of the business **(Ronsen, 2015)**.

Today the culture of eating out is very common among people and this trend has allowed the increase of fast food restaurants. This type of food is usually prepared and processed, follows a series of steps, with some methodical systems and stereotyped ingredients. Although internationally fast food restaurants can be perceived as possessing similar characteristics of its products and services, they can include different variations regarding to preferences, culture, and local taste **(Nasheen, 2017)**. Nowadays, eating out of home (eating-out) is increasing in every culture and this habit is more common in teenagers and young adults. Additionally, eating out is associated as one of the most influential factors responsible for the choice to eat less nutritious and healthy food, as well as with high fat consumption **(Lachat, et al., 2012)**.



Figure 1: Fast food restaurant chain McDonald's

There are many reasons for which people decide to eat fast food. The most common reasons are: the quick service, restaurants of fast food have a strategic geographic position, which mean they are easy to get, the environment of fast food restaurants, the taste of the food, and the desire of not preparing food at home (Rydell et al., 2008) Fast food sector development is huge, the trend of people to eat out, and to visit this type of restaurants is day by day more popular. Moreover, the consumer of fast food prefer this type of places, for socialization, convenience, and hang out activities (Aysha & Munazza , 2012).

Further, fast food is increasing its demand in the world because of the low prices and taste. One important weakness in the fast food industry is related to the new tendency of healthy food, which is an emerging orientation, that is being highlighted in the marketplace (MacGowan, 2012). Additionally, this new line that includes different type of healthy diet, contributes to the health care and the well-being of customers, which makes a difference in, compared with some fast food restaurants. (Lesser et al., 2013). Nowadays, the leading healthy fast food restaurant is SUBWAY, which is considered “the world’s biggest submarine sandwich Franchise”. SUBWAY offers different types of fresh sandwiches, Subs, wraps and soft drinks. They also have the service of take away to guarantee a better service for the customers, and one of the most competitive advantages of this food industry is the fresh food that they offer.

Because of the interest that customers have on this type of healthy food tendency, there is an important advantage of Subway against competitors such as MacDonal’d’s or Burger King, Therefore, Subway is creating an important and different value for people aware of taking care of their health and body in food consumption (Zhou, 2016). Fast food industry are aware that service quality is decisive for the impact among the behaviour of their consumers and for its business successful development (Namin, 2017). Therefore, if they provide a high and variety food quality, they will ensure customer satisfaction. Further, food quality is crucial for any restaurant, including some important indicators such as the good taste of the food, the decoration of the dishes, freshness, cleanness, and healthy food Law, Hui & Zhao, 2004).



Figure 2: Fast food restaurant chain Subway

2.2. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a result of the customers' expectations and evaluations, and it is dependent of the degree of expectation that customers have during the acquisition of goods and services and of the impression of the company and the trait received, since they are experiences that stay in the customer's mind and are the base for which they create their own perceptions (Alshurideh, Masa'deh, Alkurdi, 2012). For every company that wants to increase the values and assets of its customers, customer satisfaction plays a crucial role and influences directly the business performance; therefore, for any company customer satisfaction levels are a crucial indicator of success, so that they are commitment to provide them the best quality and conditions (Glowa, 2014).

On the other hand, customers' perceptions of satisfaction in many cases may provoke different points of view and can be influenced by the culture, environment and the individual's orientation concerning the appreciation of services and products (Patterson, 2008). Customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction has a close link with the individual's expectations and with the experience that customers obtain from the service or product offered, which means that customer's responses will depend on the grade that their expectations were reached (Bamford & Xystouri, 2005). Further, the different services evaluation that customers build are determined by the diverse beliefs and cultural norms that they possess, which means that each customer may create different perspectives of a particular service and all these appreciations vary from one customer to another and are depend on their prejudgments (Patterson & Smith 2001).

In restaurants, customer satisfaction has a strong relationship regarding the repeat purchase process. Today, the restaurants industry is a very competitive business, and there are several services factors as food quality, waiting time, space, food variety, and staff behavior, which have a special connection with customers satisfaction and with the action of repurchase (Law et al., 2004). Eating is the most important survival need that every individual has, each consumer has different motives to choose a particular restaurant to eat at, and it has been recognized that consumers' choosing intentions are influenced by all the attributes that the restaurants possess. (Warraich, Ahmad, & Qureshi, 2013).

Therefore, most of successful companies are engaged with providing high quality services in order to increase the customers' satisfaction level and to ensure the customer's loyalty. This means that the companies that want to attract more customers and maximize the performance need to develop a unique value of quality, perceived by their customers as differentiated from other companies (Namin, 2017). Consequently, the service quality is closely connected with the customer satisfaction and it can be perceived in relation of some elements such as the treats provided, specifically the relationship between the staff and the customers the environment, type of infrastructure and physical conditions (Lehtinen, 1991). In other words, depending on the quality of the services provided perceived by the customers, the image of the company may be created in a positive or negative way, and regarding to it, customers will transmit a favourable, or not, word- of-mouth of the company (Ladhari, 2007).

According to Chang & Chen (1998) service quality is one of the most important indicators of productivity and allows companies to have a special advantage to compete in the global market place. Thus, companies need to enhance their marketing strategies to increase positive customer's responses. Another important element in the restaurants industry is the brand. Restaurants managers are improving their marketing strategies focused on the creation of a strong branding orientation (Warrach et al., 2013). Therefore, when a brand is able to accomplish with all its promises, it creates a positive consumers associations and increases the preference towards the brand. In other words, when the brand fulfils with all its commitments and consumer's expectations, managers ensure the loyalty and satisfaction of their customers edifying long- term relationships (Hanif, Hafeez, & Riaz, 2010).

In previous literature, Glowa (2014) has identified the role of the companies' employees as one of the most important factors to achieve high customer satisfaction levels. Therefore, the attention, the treat and the engagement received are vital factors, which have a high influence on the conduct of the customers, and are responsible for building strong relationships, desires to repurchase and edify high levels of commitments. Thus, restaurants should enhance their service constantly in order to achieve a positive recognition of their customers (Jaini, Ahmad, & Zaib, 2015). Consequently, according to Kahn (2000) the contact with customer face to face, on internet, by phone, or whatever type of relationship, must be improved and centralized in order to discover and to respond to customer preferences and increase customer's loyalty.

On the other hand, according to Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha & Bryant (1996) consumers associate the degree of the quality provided with the price that they have to pay, which means that customers tend to relate the product or service they received with the amount of money they paid for. Therefore, for customers the price-value ratio is an important element and it contributes to create expectations regarding the company and the desire of the customers in terms with "return intention" (Ribeiro Soriano, 2002). Hence, we can understand that consumers experiment different degrees of satisfaction according to the needs and preferences they have, and these levels of satisfaction are influenced by the service quality and price, which are crucial elements on customer purchase decisions (Duchessi, 2004).

Continuing with the literature, we have to underline that other special indicators that impacts on customer satisfaction is related with the restaurant atmospherics. According to **Heung & Gu (2012)** atmospherics refers to the design of a comfortable space that may be able to provide to consumers a pleasant stay and stimulate their willingness and purchase intention. Therefore, atmospherics show an important influence on customer's satisfaction and affect their wish to return to visit the local again, to communicate a positive opinion to other people and to recommend the place. The incorporation of several design factors such as colour, style, lighting, layout, and furnishing are the main elements that shape atmospheric dimensions (**Countryman & Jang, 2006**).

In addition, the perception of atmospheric and service function are crucial factors that impact on customer responses, thus, it means that when customers feel comfortable and satisfy in a good environment they will be encouraging to evaluate the visit to the restaurant as a positive experience (**Jang & Namkung, 2009**).

To conclude, nowadays one of the most important concerns of the customers is about the hygiene of the products and with the awareness of the importance of eating safe. The perspective of food safety has a close relationship with the physical, technological, biological and chemical dangers, therefore the food industry has the commitment of decreasing the use of this type of food dangers in order to provide food safety and strengthen high standards on customer's satisfaction (**Fatimah, Booa, Sambasivanb & Salleh, 2010**).

2.3. Brand equity

Brand equity means much more for a company than advertising, good graphic arts, or the logo, it is a continuously work and effort, that allows companies to create wealth and increase their potential. In particular, a brand is a total sum of what people feel, think, believe and know of your company's products and services. For companies to get successful brand equity is not a task of one day to other, it is a process that takes time to build, including the efforts and work that company conducts to understand the need of the consumers and choices, the time that the company spends designing the products and services according to the demand and need of the consumers, the credibility of the brand and the integrity of the company's promises. Therefore, all these attributes help the company to improve sales, enhance the profitability, impose a competitive advantage, and leverage the opportunities to charge premium prices and open the way to new markets (**Brothers, 2011**).

In the case of the restaurant industry, the approach is the same, since a restaurant brand is much more than an attractive name. A strong brand possesses concrete characteristics, merits and advantages for their consumers (**Muller, 1998**). For instance, an important characteristic to highlight is that global successful brands, such as McDonald's, KFC and Pizza Hut are companies that have invested in branding strategies and marketing research, in order to ensure that their brand value was aligned with the goal stablished to achieve (**Tan, Devinaga & Hishamuddin, 2012**). A research conducted by **Wood (2000)** stated that in terms of brand management the concept of brand equity is very determined. Therefore, we can appreciate that for each company, brand management is a continuous work that has to be enhanced and innovated with a continuous monitoring, in order to determine the relationship between customers and the brand, which will edify the visualization of brand equity.

Brand equity is a combination of four important dimensions, namely brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. It has been identified that one of the most important aspects that influences a restaurant brand equity, is quality, which is perceived and evaluated simultaneously when costumers acquire a service or product (**Hyun & Kim, 2011**). Further, brand equity is considered as the difference that exists between the consumers' preference regarding a product with an established brand and another unbranded product with the same features standards. Consumer based brand equity has emerged because of the marketing activity, consumption experience, brand knowledge, environmental factors and corporate image (**Yoo Donthu & Lee, 2001**). Quick-service restaurant (QSR) chains are among the particular business, that need to construct strong brands, but this is an objective that is not easy to meet, especially because many quick-service restaurants possess services and products difficult to differentiate from the rivals. Therefore, given this competitive scenario, consumers frequently have only the brand equity and price, to distinguish one brand from its competence. In addition, building a strong brand equity able to impose a critical difference in the creation of an emotional affinity with customers is a goal to pursue for fast food industry (**Kim & Kim, 2004**). Brand equity is a gap through which companies can increase consumer's preferences and purchase intentions. Therefore, due to this significant impact, it is important to manage brand equity in an efficient and optimal way (**Cobb-Walgren, Ruble & Donthu, 1995**).

An early finding of **Hanaysha (2016)** established that customers tend to do comparisons from one brand to other, especially in terms of quality and price. Those different comparisons contribute to select and choose the brand they prefer, taking into consideration the relationship between the costs and benefits that the brand offers. Therefore, restaurant brands have to maintain a proper relationship between the services and products provided and the price stipulated, in order to be succeed and increase brand equity.

Further, **Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2009)** define Brand Equity (BE) as a series of assets and liabilities which are connected to a specific brand, that further enhance (or detract) value to (or from) the customers. Based on this theoretical approach, BE consists of Brand Loyalty, Brand Awareness, Brand Associations, Perceived Quality and Other Proprietary Assets.

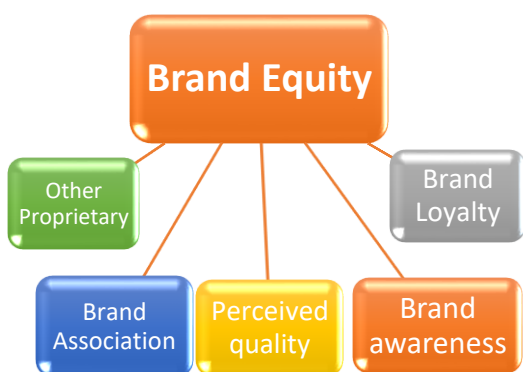
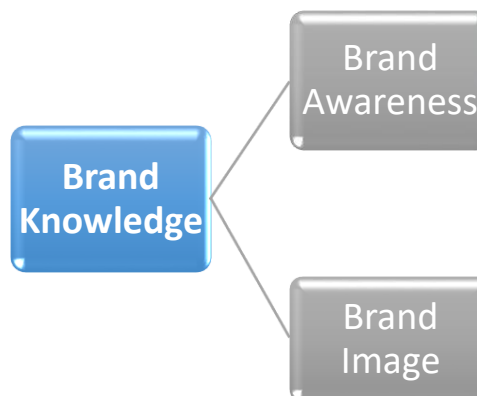


Figure 3: Brand Equity Model
(Aaker, 1991)



B: Brand Equity Model
(Keller, 1993)

2.3.1. Perceived Quality

There are some important clues that influence customers' quality perceptions, namely humanic clues, that include service and appearance offered, mechanic clues, including the tangibles factors related with the service and functional clues, incorporating the technical performance of service. The customers' perceptions are affected through the service experience they had. (Berry, Wall & Carbone, 2006). Quality is a crucial factor that will affect decisively how customers perceive the value provided and influence the level of customer satisfaction (Kivela & Chu, 2001). Perceived quality is shaped by elements tied to the emotional interaction in the moment of services and products purchase and through some aspects related to specific technical features (Nicolini & Salini, 2006).

According to Sanyal & Datta (2011) intrinsic characteristics of a product, conduct to increase perceived quality, and perceived quality is a precursor that contribute to increase brand equity. Therefore, since perceived quality is a set of assessment of the costumers with respect to the quality of any product that they perceived based in their appreciation, companies have to focus and improve the quality of their products, to be on the same line of the expected perceived quality and the real quality provided.

The term of quality is recognized as "conformance to specifications", constituting a factor that must be, considered and well delivered in any business area (Rashid, Abdullah & Yusuf, 2014). Service quality is an element able to make the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful business, being a great differentiator for the companies.

One of the main indicators of customer satisfaction is service quality, because it makes customers satisfied and contributes to their intention to revisit the restaurant. It is important to highlight that responsiveness is an important factor, which could be understood as the degree that service providers are prepared and willing to provide to their customers timely services. Thus, in the fast food industry it can be considered that there is an increase in customer satisfaction when employees are able and willing to attend the need of their customers when required (Aftab, Sarwar, Sultan & Qadeer, 2016).

Every business needs to build and enhance customer satisfaction, because a company's competitive advantage depends on its customers satisfaction and brand loyalty. Quality is a vital factor that works to edify the relationship between the company and its customers. This strong link adds an important value for the company, increasing the profitability and sustainability of the organization over a long period of time (Ojo, 2010). Further, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1988) have classified a five dimensional model of service quality, namely: reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and tangibility. These five dimensions are a measurement instrument known as SERVQUAL, which has been used as a standard way to measure service quality. Each element of SERVQUAL has been used twice: to measure the perceptions and the expectations of service quality. Further, the main idea of this model is that service quality results in different scores regarding the expectations and perceptions.

These five dimensions include:

Table 1
SERVQUAL Model Parasuraman et al., (1988)

Tangibles	Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel
Reliability	Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
Responsiveness	Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service
Assurance	Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence
Empathy	Caring and individualized attention that the company provides to its customers

Delivering high quality service for customers is a crucial goal of companies, able to strengthen their competitiveness. Restaurants business is an industry that faces strong competition and challenging customer demands that need to be fulfilled through high service quality. Nowadays, restaurants chain face continuing changes regarding the consumers' needs, forcing restaurants to improve their service and food quality (**Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2012**).

According to **Kalra (2001)** dinning out today is a characteristic of consumers' routine, being part of their lifestyles. In a globalization era, customers have many new and different expectations in relation to the meaning of quality. For them well cooked food, good service, and clean interiors are some of the most important attributes that characterize a service quality. In addition, consumers' perspectives vary from one to another; there are many factors that customers taking in to consideration when selecting a restaurant- High quality has been and continues to be a crucial factor to gain customers' satisfaction. Service attributes also contribute for gaining competitive advantages in the food industry. Additionally, it is important to highlight that the service quality dimensions may vary across different service types (**Marković, Raspor, & Dorčić, 2011**).

Restaurants are aware of the need to manage their resources more efficiently, specially paying special attention to the quality attributes, which is a crucial factor to increase customer's satisfaction. As we have discovered in previous literature there are many characteristics that contribute to cementing high satisfaction levels of consumers, for instance: appealing food presentation, a fascinating and attractive interior design, pleasing background music, a reliable service, a responsive service, tasty food, spatial seating arrangement, and competent and friendly employees. These elements can work as a precursor to distinguish highly satisfied diners from non-highly satisfied diners (**Namkung & Jang, 2008**).

According to **Prakash & Mohanty (2012)** higher levels of service quality, generate higher levels of customer satisfaction, and for companies, customer satisfied represent an opportunity to increase sales and increase repurchase intentions. One important merit of service quality is that it is very difficult to imitate, therefore building a more enduring competitive advantage. Further, service quality is a challenge for any business, and every consumer demand more efficiently and professional services. It means that companies need to develop new approaches and strategies in order to provide high quality services, able to fulfill the need of the customers. Additionally, due to the strict competition, an important evaluation emerges for companies regarding to the knowledge about how to acquire and retain customers. It is essential to identify which are the main elements that influence directly customer's satisfaction (**Shukla, 2013**). Nowadays managers of food restaurants have an extensive knowledge about the meaning of service quality, every consumer has different desires and restaurants need to improve continuously service quality, to achieve optimum customer satisfaction (**Aftab et al., 2016**).

Consumers make a positive evaluation if a product or service fulfils their demand, and if they are enough satisfied they will be loyal customers favoring brand equity. One important indicator that contributes to the assessment of customers' satisfaction is the price, since it plays an essential role in the selection of a product. Therefore, the price has to be in accordance with consumers' perceived expectation (**Sabir, Irfan, Akhtar, Pervez, & Rehman, 2014**).

In addition, perceived quality is considered as a customer's judgment about the product and service itself, based in the attributes provided and satisfaction is evaluated more in an emotional base since satisfaction triggers different emotions, feelings and responses of customers (**Schneider & White, 2004**). Finally, the main priorities of companies are the customers and it is evident that in today's world, customer manage more information and are better educated and therefore more demanding regarding the expectations of quality. Consequently, companies have to be more prepared to fulfill these different requests, in order to satisfy them and meet their expectations (**Zangmo, Liampreecha, & Chemsripong , 2015**).

2.3.2. Brand Associations

According with **Keller (2004)** customers' associations with the brand creates the brand image in their mind, which means therefore the formation of favorable brand associations in the customers' mind will generate significant advantages to the brand. Thus, brand associations come through the appreciation of customers regarding brand's quality. It is connected with the thought, ideas and psychological emotions that come to their mind regarding a brand (**Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2006**). In addition, brand associations are used by marketers to position, to formulate positive attitudes, feelings and to recommend the benefits of buying (**Low & Lam, 2000**). Nowadays one of the main goals of companies is to develop the more suitable marketing strategies and to identify the reasons for global customers to choose a brand, in order to create positive brand associations (**Chen, Yeh, & Jheng, 2013**). Brand associations explain the reasons for which customers buy or acquire a product or service, representing the base of consumers purchase intention and brand loyalty (**Wright, Millman, & Martin , 2007**).

2.3.3. Brand Awareness

The creation of a brand name is a significant marketing issue for any company, since the brand name is influential at the moment of choice. In many cases, the brand name captures the attention of the consumers therefore, brand names can be considered with an effective impact toward brand equity (**Alamgir, Nasir, & Shamsuddoha, 2010**). The most important characteristics of naming a brand should be creating a name that is easy to remember, attractive to customers, unique and difficult to imitate, in general when the consumers want to buy a product they use their previous experience regarding to product quality, performance and aesthetic appeal. Therefore, brand awareness trigger emotional ties in the consumers toward a brand and these emotions stay and recall in the mind of the customers influencing at the moment to choose and detect a particular brand of another (**Keller, 2008**).

In fact, brand awareness is a result of brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition represents how the consumers can “recognise” a brand, while brand recall refers when consumers can recall a particular brand in the course of their decision-making choice, therefore, brand recall is the extent to which a brand name is recalled as a member of a brand, product or service class (**Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012**).

2.3.4. Brand Loyalty:

The intention of customers to repeat the purchasing of a product or service is what is known by brand loyalty, which means that loyalty affects the choice and commitment of the consumers towards a specific brand, and for this reason the purpose of generating all the conditions and strategies to raise this behavior on the mind of consumers is a main priority for companies (**Kumar & Advani, 2005**). According to previous researchers, brand loyalty is identified as the customer desire to choose and prefer a brand as the first option, in other words when consumers tend to prefer a particular brand without paying attention to others brands they demonstrate a special loyalty towards the brand (**Yoo et al., 2001**).

In **Oliver (1999)**, loyalty has been defined as the dimensions of commitment that a customer keeps with respect to acquire permanently a product or service. Brand loyalty is an essential opportunity for companies, because companies which maintain high levels of customer loyalty are able to decrease cost related to marketing communication, for instance by minimizing the requirement of sales promotion and advertising, in compared to the brands that keep low degree of loyalty, so that, maintain high levels of brand loyalty ensure a window of opportunities for companies (**Drennan et al., 2015**).

Ovidiu (2005) explored the same borders of Aaker’s model, analyzing other proprietary brand assets that include patents, trademarks and channel relationships, which can provide strong competitive advantage. A trademark will protect brand equity from competitors who might want to confuse customers by using a similar name, symbol or package. A patent can prevent direct competition, if strong and relevant to the purchase decision process. Finally, a distribution channel can be indirectly controlled by a brand as customers expect the brand to be available.

To understand more deeply these dimensions, we can review the Aaker’s equity model, which has different interconnections that represent the four dimensions discussed above; we can observe that Aaker has connected the four dimensions, in relation to customers’ perceptions and responses to the brand and every dimension was examined following the more appropriate particular effects of brand equity., Therefore the model could work as a base to the understanding of brand equity.

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA), a *brand* is a “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition.” For companies, that work to create different types of strategies to retain customers, brand loyalty has a critical importance, since the brand is the most important element that a company possesses to differentiate from others (**Pourdehghan, 2015**). Therefore, brand loyalty is a very important instrument for any company because it has been identified as having a special contribution to reduce companies’ operational costs, like for instance promotion, cross-selling, and up-selling costs (**Shobri, Wahab, Ahmad & Ain, 2012**).

Brands are the core of companies, because a brand can trigger a set of emotions and feelings in the consumer’s minds, causing consumers’ identification with the brand as well as brand loyalty. In many cases, brand loyalty is influenced through cognitive, affective and conative backgrounds (**Dick & Basu, 1994**). Companies need to create trust with customers. The real trust could mean the credibility in two elements, namely care and congruency. Another important element is keeping promises, thus, the position of a brand and the commitment in practicing a transparent and an efficient model of operation generates customer satisfaction and therefore contributes to increase customer loyalty and trust, allowing customers to have the desire to return to the brand again (**Mckinney & Benson, 2013**).

Chanda (2010) highlights the importance of a strong brand, and the potential that it has to expand into new foreign markets. The creation of a successful brand means an essential source to face the competitors and an expected decrease in the volatility of returns. In addition, according to **Doyle (2001)** the second most relevant asset in a company after the customers, is the brand effect which means that brand provokes different impact on consumers and helps to increase the stakeholder value, adding a particular merit to the business.

A brand represents an intangible asset that may be the pillar of competitive advantage and contribute to future successful growth of the companies (**Aaker , 1991**).

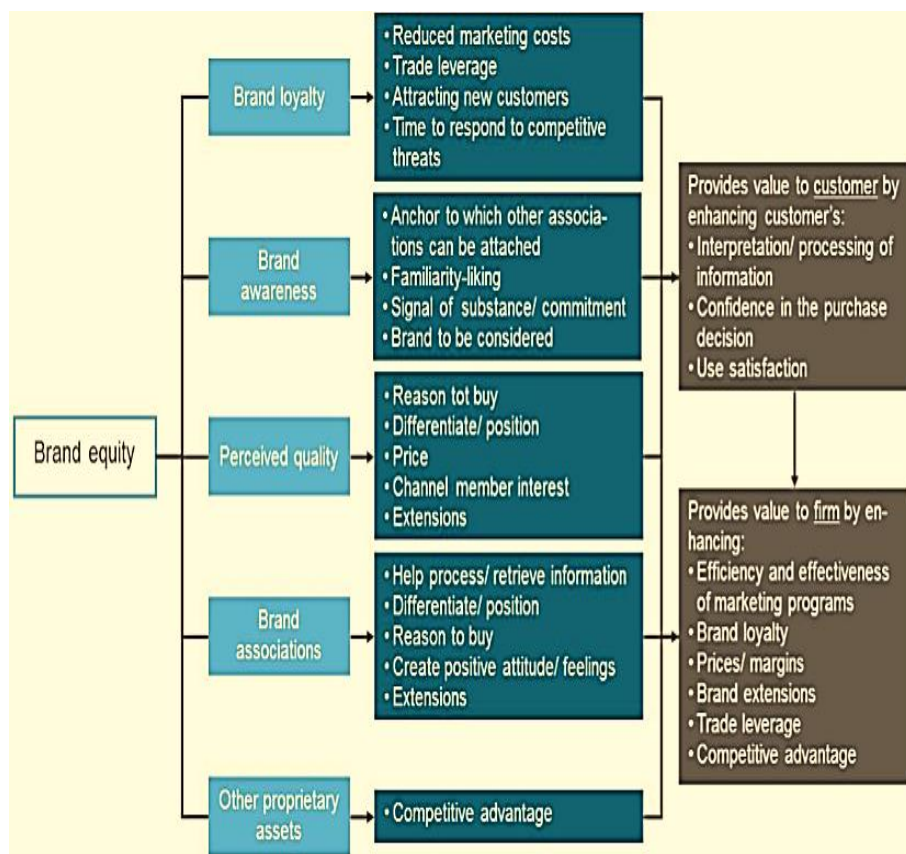


Figure 4: Customer Based Brand Aaker’s Equity Framework

Source: Aaker’s (1992, 1996)

2.4. Word-of-Mouth

Word-of-mouth (**WOM**) has been identified as a major force with a high impact in business and which influences directly what people do, feel and know (**Buttle , 1998**). Marketers have identified the power of word-of-mouth, which is based on customer’s information exchange about a product or services according to the experience that they have had, therefore influencing the purchase decision of other customers (**King , Racherla , & Bush, 2014**). Hence, for companies the most important valuable customers are the ones that are able to bring new potential customers, through the spread of a positive word-of-mouth to other customers (**Kumar, Petersen, & Leone, 2007**).

According to **Casielles, Álvarez, & Lanza (2013)** customers who spread their experience to other (senders) may use different way of expression to transmit the message to other individuals, and these ways of expression are considered on base of some elements: usage of words, and language usage, which capture the attention of people. Therefore, we can understand that for companies WOM Is the main bridge of communication between the sender and other people. Senders transmit their experience and image that they have of a company, including different way of expression, words, and language that express the level of satisfaction they have regarding to the company, so that, if they are satisfied their message, will include a set of positive expression and language which will be beneficial for the company and if they are dissatisfy the messages that they will communicate will be

negative, for example, a message usefulness is considered for the way that the sender spread the information and the strength of expression, this communication is considered on base of some elements: usage of words, and language usage, which capture the attention of people. In addition, according to **Bansal & Voyer (2000)** WOM is perceived as the main bridge of language, possessing a strong influence on the field of communication in comparison with other communication channels. Therefore, for business this important link of communication should be managed with good strategies, and control, in order to increase the sales gain and the profitability of the company (**Khuong, Phuong, & Chau, 2016**). We can consider as a main precursor of word-of-mouth, the customer satisfaction, because the level of satisfaction that customers create and maintain in their mind will definitely influence the exchange that they will have with other individuals (**Liang & Wang, 2007**).

In the case of restaurants, word-of-mouth plays a role very important since it is considered one of the most important channels of communication, able to contribute to the success of restaurants. Some attributes such as food quality, service quality, price, physical environment quality, are meaningful elements regarding to purchase decision that can be shared through word-of-mouth (**Basri, Ahmad, Anuar, & Ismail, 2016**). Further, WOM is a relevant element to get and retain more customers. The core of word-of-mouth for any company is customer satisfaction, since when customers feel satisfied and have enjoyable service experiences, they will feel motivated to encourage their family and friends to visit the place and buy the products. Therefore, we may consider that WOM and customer satisfaction have a special relationship (**Babin, Lee, Kim, & Griffin, 2005**). Building good relationships with customers in order to gain their loyalty should be a crucial approach of companies, because it guarantees their commitment to transmit a positive image of the business regarding the attributes of the products and services. Thus, we can considered that satisfied customers are the key to attract more new customers through a positive word-of-mouth communication (**Zamil, 2011**).

For the restaurant industry, it is very important to discover which services or products are the most satisfying for the consumers, because when a customer feels satisfied with the services or products provided, they will increase the loyalty towards the company and will feel motivated to recommend the company to other people (**Taghizadeh, Taghipourian, & Khazaei, 2013**). According to **Oslen (2012)** restaurants, in general, have their own strategies to be competitive in the marketplace. Each restaurant has to increase the customers' retention, which is always a result of the quality of the service provided. If the restaurants are not able to maintain this attribute it could cause the lack of loyalty of the customers and therefore the unwilling to come back.

There are important associations that customers make when dinning out. Usually when people go out, they want to be relaxed and to pass a good moment with their friends or family. In general, they habitually go to celebrate a special day, and all these moments are connected with a diner's emotions, therefore, the food quality and services are the builders of customer satisfaction and future perspectives towards restaurants. In addition, the effectiveness and speed of the service order are relevant indicators that increase customer satisfaction, and therefore increase the willingness to transmit a favorable word-of-mouth (**Ha & Jang, 2012**).

Additionally, the time customers wait when they order and the quality provided by restaurants are crucial elements associated with the level of customer satisfaction (**Adiele & Kenneth-Adiele, 2017**). Therefore, managers in the fast food industry must improve their brand equity, by offering unique services and products, and understand how important word-of-mouth is, which works as a key communication strategy that influences directly brand equity and ensures a company's success (**Hanaysha, 2016**). For the restaurant industry WOM is an effective promotion tool for the success of the business, but it needs time to spread and develop, especially when it is a positive word of mouth message (**Gehrels, Kristanto, & Eringa, 2006**). In addition, for any company a negative word of mouth represents a high disadvantage **Assael (2004)** identified that the impact of a negative word of mouth can be more significant than a positive word-of-mouth. That is why it can be considered that a negative WOM is spread faster than a positive WOM and can be destructive for the image of the company. Therefore, if a customer is dissatisfied will share his frustrations and negative experience with a larger number of people, than when he is satisfied, causing the refuse of the products and services offered by the company in the customer's mind.

On the other hand, nowadays there is a new important tendency of word-of-mouth that has grown with the online social media, and which is present in the entire world. The new WOM communication called eWOM, or word-of-mouse, is a new global online channel, where any company can have the opportunity to listen more carefully about the customers' needs, in order to promote their services and products, and above all, to have more online business opportunities in relation to interpersonal impact (**Yang, 2013**).

2.5. Brand Image

Crompton (1979) states that the image represents "The sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination". *pp* 18. This means that we connect with the brands we like the most, on different ways, for instance we demonstrate brand loyalty when we wear our preferred clothes or when we use the technologies we are more interested in or when we use our favorite accessories, that represent all the set of emotions when we connect to a brand which we identify to regarding our likes and wishes (**Keller, Parameswaran & Jacob, 2008**). Additionally, **Fichter & Jonas (2008)** defined image, as all the different types of stereotypes that individuals shape and create toward a particular brand and suggest that the effect that image has on consumer behavior is similar to stereotypes in social cognition. Additionally, we can understand that stereotypes take place when people think "categorical" with respect to other (**Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000**).

Further, it is common that people choose a particular brand inspired by others, especially when people belong to a specific member group or wish to be part of a particular group in the society (**Escalas & Bettman, 2003**). Today, marketers are aware that brand image is built by ideas, emotions or attitudes that consumers form based on all the elements provided during the visit in dining restaurants. Three important dimensions have identified, namely "ambient conditions"; "spatial layout and functionality" and "signs, symbols, and artefacts (**Jin, Lee & Huffman, 2012**). Because of the fast growing of fast food and the strong competition in this sector, where every day new variety of offers for customers appear, fast food companies should improve their competitive advantages by focusing

in providing a really competitive brand equity, in order to create strong a relationship with the customers (**Mackay, et al., 2013**). According to **Pavesic (1989)** Brand image is for restaurants industry a strong indicator of the success of food service, due to its importance in helping consumers to visualize and in creating positive attitudes of the services or products prior to purchasing.

According to **Keller (2008)** the management of consistent brand names, symbols, and positioning issues contribute to establish a consistent brand image. Able to get to different countries and cultures in a successful way. Restaurant image form the reputation that the company has, and which play an important role in the interest of the group of various audiences, that are known as stakeholders, The main stakeholders of the companies are: customers, government regulatory agencies, distributors and retailers, shareholders, general public, and employees, social action organizations, financial institutions and analysts, therefore, image represents the way a company is perceived by the people, especially in the eye of stakeholders image is fundamental and will impact in their future decision to either or not provided the support to the company (**Schulz, 2012**).

Lindstrom (2005) states that nowadays most successful companies utilize their marketing campaigns to capture the five senses on consumers. Therefore, we can understand that spreading branding messages that involve all five senses are vital to connection emotionally the brand and the customers. Therefore, visual, touch, sound, smell, and taste are main sensory elements that must be considered to ensure the interest of customers towards the brand. Additionally, companies need to build long-term strategies specially pointed on brand identities. For example, colour is able to improve the ability to identify brands and the sight memory of brands. Further, colours can revive, shape and stimulate different emotion on people (**Perry & Wisonm, 2003**). Consequently, the use of different colours is a crucial resource to capture the attention of people, guiding customers to recognize the brand, and to shape the perspectives of image (**Chang & Lin, 2010**).

On the other hand, to advertising represents a main instrument to build successful brands and to build a strong global brand image, particularly in new markets. When companies want to launch a brand, they have to examine the target audience and to identify which are their preferences, and their individual decision – making, as well as to determinate their best marketing strategy to compete with the different types of brand existing in the market (**Teichert, Effertz, Tsoi & Shchekoldin, 2015**). Consequently, related with fast food companies, managers are focusing on advertising especially to children, and on promoting food through television, newspapers, and radio. In other words, the different communication channels are crucial for companies to take advantage to promote and to spread global messages (**Tim, Beevi & Yeap, 2014**).

In order to communicate positive brand messages managers, have to pay special attention to religion as a crucial factor that can trigger important feeling on people. Therefore, brands have to be adapted in relation to the different beliefs and convictions that customers possess (**Lindstrom, 2005**). In this regard, it is clear that for many individuals the religious values include emotional experiences, conduct, belief and behaviours and all these

spiritual orientations play a significant role that build social behavior and influence the choice, attitudes and consumption about any particular brand image or product (**Torlak, Tiltay, Doğan & Özkara, 2013**).

2.6. Customer Trust

For every segment of business, the customer's trust is a crucial point. In this changing world, one important practice that has been put into practice is the construction of good connections with the customers. It can be considered as an easy and less expensive strategy, because a few customers may purchase a large amount of products. It has been identified that dimensions, as brand predictability, brand competency, and brand reputation are agents that influence the consumer's trust on a brand. It is noticeable that consumers' trust in a brand is created at the moment that consumers use that brand and collect data about brand reputation and its predictability. If a brand reputation is good, it achieves the predictability of consumers and it is able to satisfy the consumer's needs, allowing the development of customer trust on the brand. When companies implement effective advertising methods, brands edify their image, which benefits customer's trust and credibility (**Afzal et al., 2009**).

The definition of trust has been widely explored. **Lau & Lee (1999)** consider that trust is the result of consumers' willingness to believe and rely on the brand in the face of risk, because the perspective of the brand will produce positive results. When one party has confidence in another party, it will cause favorable behavioral intentions in relation to the other party. In the consumer environment, there exists frequently a large group of anonymous customers, making hard for companies to develop a personal relationship with each customer. Therefore, customers are forced to rely on the symbol of the brand to build that connection thus, in this case the brand works as a substitute for human communication between the company and its customers and therefore developing customer trust is vital to maintain sustainability.

Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001) state that trust is able to minimize the feeling related with customers uncertainty, specially in situations where consumers feel at risk. Therefore trust the decisions of every customer. **Swaen & Chumpitaz (2008)** stated that there are three important elements that define customer trust, namely perceived benevolence, perceived integrity, and perceived credibility and these perceptions play a determinant role to visualize the extent of customers trust regarding a particular company or brand. Further, **Patrick (2002)** considers customer trust as the combination of feeling, emotions, and thoughts or behaviors, expressed by the consumers in the moment that they feel that they can rely in the providers. **Goyal & Singh (2007)** stated that in the food industry it is crucial to provide customers important information regarding hygiene, food variety, quality and nutrition value, in order to build and maintain customer trust. Further, due to a more aggressive competition, there are some attributes such as service quality, perception of price fairness and food quality, which have been discovered as having a positive impact on customer trust (**Haghighi, Dorosti, Rahnama & Hoseinpour, 2012**). Therefore, improving the above mentioned attributes in relation with the need and wishes of the customers is a pivotal way that can lead to an increase in customer's trust.

For the restaurants business to achieve and maintain customers' trust it is a goal on a priority scale. For overall customers the issues of food safety are very significant. There are four dimensions identified as connectors of consumer confidence in the safety of food, such as, the credence in regulators and actors in the food restaurant, consumer recall of food safety incidents, the perceptions in relation to the safety of products, and customers' characteristics (**Jonge, Van Trijp, Renes & Frewer, 2010**). Further, **Abdullah & Kanyan (2013)** reveal that, since in today's market, the competence of the foodservice has become a challenge, it is necessary to find a balance between the way to be more productive and creative and the way of finding proper methods to keep customer's trust. Trust, communication and commitment are evident determinants of a valuable relationship between the customers and the company able to increase strong customers' connections.

For overall companies, trust is influenced by the company' image, therefore the interrelation between image and trust is very relevant. Consequently, companies need to achieve long-term relationships with their consumers in order to obtain an advantageous position in the market. Therefore, first it is necessary to develop and keep a good brand image, which influences the building of trust (**Madura, Stecko & Mentel, August 2016**). **Eisingerich & Bell (2008)** reveal that enhancing customers' service knowledge intensifies customer trust in companies. Consumers who trust in a particular company expect that the declared promises are respected, and the company to work on the base of their interests (**Nguyen, Leclerc & LeBlanc, 2013**).

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

In this chapter, we will explore the conceptual model of our study, in order to examine the main topic of our research. As a next step, we will propose a theoretical explanation for the hypotheses formulation, which are based and elaborated following the previous literature.

Table 2

Investigation Hypotheses

Proposed Hypotheses
H1: Brand loyalty is positively associated with brand equity
H2: Brand awareness is positively associated with brand equity
H3: Perceived quality is positively associated with brand equity
H4: Brand associations are positively associated with brand equity
H5: Perceived quality is positively associated with customer satisfaction
H6: Brand image is positively associated with customer satisfaction
H7: Customer satisfaction is positively associated with brand loyalty
H8: Brand equity is positively associated with word-of-mouth
H9: Brand equity is positively associated with customer's trust
H10: Customer satisfaction is positively associated with word-of-mouth
H11: Customer satisfaction is positively associated with customer's trust

Hyun & Kim (2011) defend that brand equity is composed of a set of four significance extensions including brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Therefore, brand loyalty is considered an important dimension of brand equity. In addition, as stated by **Kumar and Advani (2005)** customer's loyalty impacts in the commitment and choice towards an individual brand, since when customers contemplate the idea to repeat the purchasing of any product or service is when they keep high levels of brand loyalty. In addition, a finding made by **Yoo et al. (2001)** shows that brand loyalty influences extremely the customer's decisions allowing them to keep the fidelity to prefer a specific brand as the first option without paying attention to other brands. Similarly, in **Chanda (2010)** is recognized that brand loyalty is a factor that leads companies to excel with a unique value. Therefore, brand loyalty is considered an important dimension of brand equity. Thus, we propose that:

H1: Brand loyalty is positively associated with brand equity

According to **Keller (2008)** brand awareness provokes different emotional connections in the consumers toward a special brand and these set of emotions stay and recall in the mind of the customers persuading at the moment to choose between one brand and another. According to **Huang & Sarigöllü (2012)** we can appreciate that brand awareness is divided in two important connections brand recognition and brand recall. The first one mean how consumers can "recognize" a brand, and brand recall refers when consumers can recall a brand during their decision-making choice. **Aaker (1996)** states that brand awareness is an important dimension of brand equity. Therefore, we propose that

H2: Brand awareness is positively associated with brand equity

According to **Sanyal & Datta (2011)** perceived quality is an important indicator that contributes to increase brand equity. One of the reasons for which perceived quality is positively associated with, brand equity is because consumers make evaluations of the quality of a product or service received, and if the product or service fulfils their desires and demand, they will become loyal to company contributing to the development of brand equity (**Sabir et al., 2014**). Therefore, we can deduct that perceived quality leads to the growth of brand equity because when customers are pleased with the product or services provided by the companies, they will keep favorable experiences that will benefit brand equity.

Similarly a finding conducted by **Prakash & Mohanty (2012)** states that when a company generates higher levels of service quality, it will create and increase higher levels of customer satisfaction, and as we know for any company customer satisfaction represents the main weapon to the success. When companies are prepared to delivery services quality they will maintain a value very difficult to imitate. In todays' world every consumer demand more efficiently and professional services and products, therefore, if companies delivery high service quality in all its dimensions, customers will perceived it and through perceived quality any company can walk towards success. Thus, we propose that:

H3: Perceived quality is positively associated with brand equity

In **Keller (2004)** it is expressed the importance of brand associations towards brand equity. The associations that come in the mind of customers regarding a brand, contribute to shape the brand image of the company, which means that the formation of beneficial brand associations in the customers' mind will generate meaningful advantages to the brand. Brand associations come through the appreciation of customers regarding to brand's quality; brand associations have a link with the different thoughts, ideas and psychological emotions that come in the consumer's mind regarding to brand.

Additionally, brand associations play an important role when consumers buy or acquire a product or service, since they work as a significant base that influences consumers purchase intention (**Wright et al., 2007**). According to **Low & Lam (2000)** brand associations are a pivotal key, which is used by marketers to create positive attitudes, feeling and to recommend the benefits of buying, suggesting that brand associations are a strong determinant of brand equity. To conclude based on all those arguments that connect brand associations to brand equity, we can consider that convenient brand associations lead to a growth of brand equity. Therefore, we propose that:

H4: Brand associations are positively associated with brand equity

Kivela & Chu (2001) explore the meaning of quality, indicating that quality is an essential element able to determine how customers perceive the value received and to affect highly the level of customer satisfaction. In addition, **Nicolini & Salini (2006)** state that perceived quality is built by a series of elements linked to the emotional communication that customers perceive in the moment of product and services purchase and through some attributes related to particular technical features.

According to **Sanyal & Datta (2011)** nowadays companies have to pay attention and improve the quality of their products because it is necessary to be able to offer the best for their customers reaching their expectations and aspirations in relation to the expected perceived quality and the real quality provided. Since perceived quality consists in a combination of appreciations towards the quality of any product and or service, based in the judgments of every customer, service quality is crucial to define customer satisfaction. **Ojo (2010)** states that the role played by service quality is crucial to cultivate the relationship between the company and customers, based on customer's satisfaction. Thus, we propose that:

H5: Perceived quality is positively associated with customer satisfaction

Fichter & Jonas (2008) identified the meaning of image, as the combination of diverse types of stereotypes that people build toward a particular brand. **Pavesic (1989)** states that brand image is conceived in the eye and in the mind of customers helping to create a positive view of the products and services before buying. **Teichert et al. (2015)** consider that for companies, which want to launch a brand, need to explore the target audience and to identify which are their wishes and preferences, in order to fulfill with their expectations and to achieve and maintain customer's satisfaction in every moment. As we can appreciate image is very significant for customers. Moreover, customers may create a positive or a negative image of a company depending on the quality provided and perceived by them, therefore if customers capture a positive image of any particular company they will be satisfied and thus it is noticeable the influence that exists between brand image and customers satisfaction (**Ladhari, 2007**). Therefore, we propose that:

H6: Brand image is positively associated with customer satisfaction

McKinney & Benson (2013) evidence that when a brand maintains its promises and works with an efficient and transparent model of operation, the probability of achieving customer satisfaction is very high, therefore increasing customer loyalty and trust. Consequently, in an early research, **Namin (2017)** identified that through the increase of customer's satisfaction level, companies assure customer's loyalty. In addition, when customers feel satisfied, they will create a perspective of trust in their mind that will increase their wish to visit the local one more time, and recommend the place, and as a result, customers will edify loyalty to the company (**Hanif et al., 2010**). Therefore, according with all those statements, we can state that there is a positive relationship between customer's satisfaction and brand loyalty. Thus, we propose that:

H7: Customer satisfaction is positively associated with brand loyalty

A research made by **Casielles et al. (2013)** states that WOM is an essential bridge of communication between one person to another, and customers who transmit their experience to other (senders) may use different ways to express and communicate their message to others. For instance, they may include words, and language that express the level of satisfaction they have regarding the brand equity of a company. If a company is able to provide a high service quality to its customers, consumers will be willing to spread an advantageous and positive WOM to other consumers. Through brand equity, companies can increase consumer's preferences and purchase intentions. Therefore, if the brand equity is managed correctly and in a smart and efficient way, companies will

ensure customers satisfaction, and therefore they will spread a positive word of mouth to other customers (**Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995**). Therefore, we propose that:

H8: Brand equity is positively associated with word-of-mouth

Brand equity is a very wide meaning for a company than the logo, good graphic arts, or advertising, it is a work created day by day, in order to increase the brand potential. A brand is a set that involves the feeling of people, it is a total sum of what people think, believe and know of your company's products and services. To get and maintain brand equity it is necessary to make an effort every day in order to understand and recognize the need and choice of customers (**Brothers, 2011**). **Wood (2000)** stated that in terms of brand management, the concept of brand equity is very significant, for each company, and brand equity needs to be monitored and improved continuously in order to determine the relationship between customers and the brand.

Nowadays in every channel of business, companies are using the best methods to operate in a competitive market and one important practice that has been used is the formation of good relationship with the customers, it is notifiable that if a brand reputation and image is positive and able to satisfy the consumer's needs, it will allow the develops of trust of customer on brand, and therefore if it there is an increase of customer trust it will become in a differentiator of the brand among other competitive brands (**Afzal et al., 2009**). Further, **Yoo et al. (2001)** considered brand equity as the difference between the consumers' preference with respect to a product with an established brand and another unbranded product with the same features standards. Therefore, following these statements we can find that brand equity act as a strong determinant of customer's trust. Thus, we propose that:

H9: Brand equity is positively associated with customer's trust

Liang & Wang (2007) defend the existence of a relationship between customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth. In addition, **Zamil (2011)** concluded that customer satisfaction impacts on word-of-mouth, allowing the opportunity to attract more new customers to the business. Therefore, supported by the previous literature, we can understand that when customers feel satisfied, they will communicate a beneficial word-of-mouth for the company, encouraging their family and friends to visit the place and giving the company a beneficial prestige (**Babin et al., 2005**). Consequently, **Kumar et al. (2007)** found that for companies in general, the most valuable costumers are the ones that contribute to attract new consumers, through a beneficial word-of-mouth. Therefore, a company able to maintain and generate high customer's satisfaction gains a crucial advantage, since when customers are satisfied with the services or product received, they will feel willing to spread a positive word-of-mouth, generating the visit of new customers to the company. Therefore, we propose that:

H10: Customer satisfaction is positively associated with word-of-mouth

According to previous literature, we can recognize that customers are the main value that a company possess. A research made by **Glowa (2014)** indicates that customer satisfaction is a key of success for any type of business due to its influence in the business performance. In addition, in the fast food industry, the role that customer's satisfaction plays is very important, because when customers are satisfied, they will repeat the purchase process, contributing to the profitability of the business (**Law et al., 2004**). Similarly, **Jang & Namkung (2009)** highlight the meaning of customer satisfaction for fast food industry, due to its influential effect on the moment of evaluating

the visit to the restaurant as a positive experience. It means that if customers are satisfied, their evaluations about the company will be favorable and positive. Thus, regarding to all these benefits of customer satisfaction, we can denote the significant positive relationship that exists between customer' satisfaction and customer's trust. Thus, we propose that: **H11**: Customer satisfaction is positively associated with customer's trust

Consequently, the following figure presents the theoretical framework proposed which is composed by the eleven previous hypotheses.

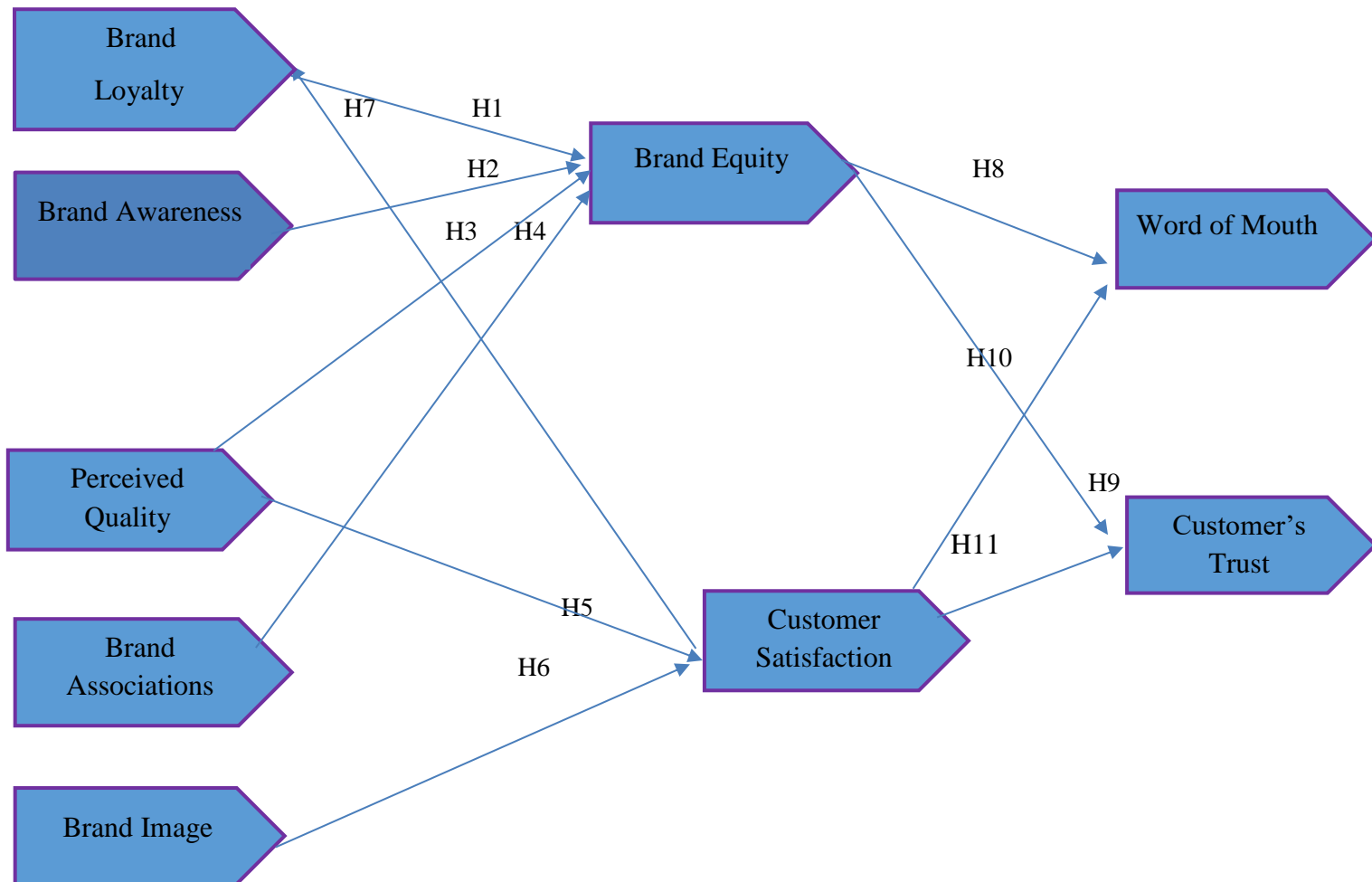


Figure 5: Conceptual Model

4. Methodology

4.1. Sampling Procedure

For the perform of this investigation we first spread a number of ten pilot surveys on line, in order to see the behavior of the people, we tested that for the respondents the questions were clear, and it was easy to answers all the questionnaire. After that, our first method for the expansion of the survey was to spread the survey on line, through the different social networks channels such as Facebook, Gmail and through the app of WhatsApp. The on line program that we used to create the survey is called Survey Online, this is a very useful tool for surveys because have many options that allow you to create a good survey. It is a program free, and let us place an unlimited number of questions, also we can review each response individually or collectively, you can redact your own questions, upload images and always have the opportunity to edit and modify the questions. It also offers the possibility to download all your responses collected as Excel or CSV file at any time. The second method that we used was doing a personal interview to the people following the questions of the survey. The questions were translated from English into Spanish. We spread 350 surveys of which were completed correctly 300. The survey contains all the variables, which were needed for the conceptual model analysis; we did the survey with the objective to explore the impact of customers' trust on a fast food brand on the brand equity dimensions (brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and other brand associations) and on customer perceptions and behavior (customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth). All the mentioned variables were gathered from Literature Review. The survey was launched on the previously mentioned on line Survey platform, on February 2018, with the main target of 300 answers.

4.2. Questionnaire development and Pre-test

The questionnaire that we used in the survey, was based in existing scales of similar papers of our research topic, We utilized the five-point *Likert Scale* system for the question section of our survey (1 – Strongly Disagree; 2 – Disagree; 3 Neutral; 4 – Agree; 5 – Strongly Agree) in order to facilitate to the participants have different options to answer in an easier way. The first question of the survey was (please indicate a brand of fast food franchise that you have visited in Nicaragua) and then follow a set of questions based in the existing variables and previous literature. At the end of the survey besides of the main question, the respondents were asked for minimal personal information in order to be able to investigate the target group, such as: Gender, Age, Income, and Occupation, the last question of the survey was to ask: (It has been easy for you to answer this survey).

4.3.Measures

The variables used in this study were identified and selected through a deeper analysis of existing academic literature specific focus in the impact of customers' trust on a fast food brand on the brand equity dimensions (brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and other brand associations) and on customer perceptions and behavior (customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth). We utilized the five-point *Likert Scale* system for the question section of our survey (1 – Strongly Disagree; 2 – Disagree; 3 Neutral; 4 – Agree; 5 – Strongly Agree).

The current investigation was developed based on the following variables:

Table 3

Variables and its measures

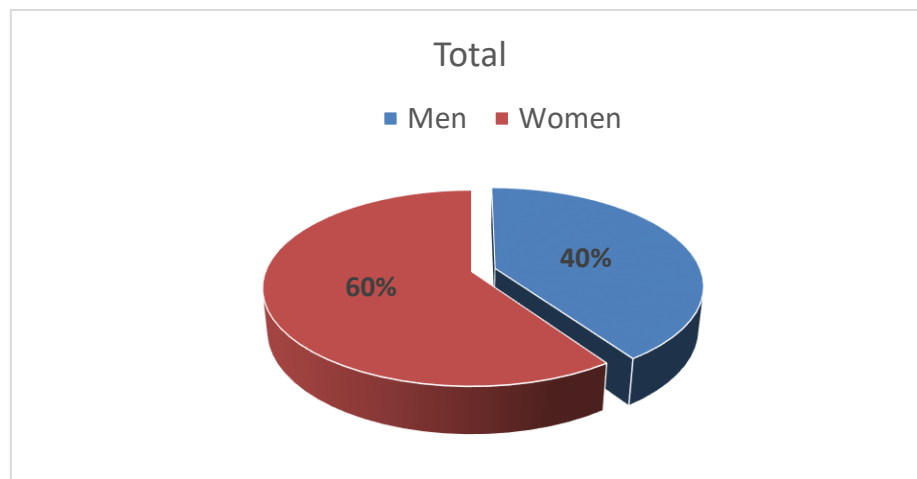
Variable	Item	Adapted from
Customer Satisfaction	1.Has clean tables 2.Has ease of access to the menu 3.Has a staff friendliness 4.Has a reasonable wait time 5.Has easiness of ordering and payment 6.Has a fast service 5.Has easiness of ordering and payment	Revisiting customers' perception of service quality in fast food restaurants Aidin Namin <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i> 2017, V 34 pp 70-81
Fast food trust	1.I feel quite confident that my fast-food restaurant will always try to treat me fairly 2.My fast-food restaurant has been frank in dealing with me 3.My fast-food restaurant would never try to gain an advantage by deceiving its clients	Can fast-food consumers be loyal customers, if so how? Theory, method and findings Miguel A.Sahagun, ArturoZ. Vasquez-Parraga <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i> , 2014 V 21 168–174
Brand Awareness	1.I am aware of the restaurant brand 2.I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of the chain restaurant brand 3.Some characteristics of the chain restaurant brand come to my mind quickly 4.I can recognize the chain restaurant brand among other competing brands	An Examination of Selected Marketing Mix Elements and Brand Equity Boonghee Yoo,Naveen Donthu, Sungho Lee <i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i> , 2000 V 28; pp 195
Brand Association	1.I like the company which makes this brand 2.The company which makes this brand has credibility	Factors influencing brand association Tser-Yieth Chen, Tsai-Lien Yeh, and Wun-Sin Jheng <i>African Journal of Business Management</i> , May 2013 Vol. 7(19), pp. 1914-1926

Variable	Item	Adapted from
Brand Loyalty	<p>1.I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it saves me time in food preparation</p> <p>2.I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it offers a wider menu compared to other fast food outlets</p> <p>3.I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it conveniently located and accessible</p> <p>4.I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it offers good and fast customer service</p> <p>5.I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because I believe I get good value for money</p>	<p>Factors Influencing Consumer Choice of Fast Food Outlet: The Case of an American Fast Food Franchise</p> <p>Brand Olabanji. A. Oni , Nelson Mandela University Mediterranean <i>Journal of Social Sciences</i> 2014 Vol 5 No 20 PP 802 - 808</p>
Word of Mouth	<p>1.I Would you say positive things about this restaurant to other people</p> <p>2.I Would you recommend this restaurant to others who seeks your advice</p> <p>3.I Would you encourage to friends and family to visit this restaurant</p>	<p>Modeling Consumer Satisfaction and Word-of- Mouth: Restaurant Patronage in Korea</p> <p>Barry J. Babin, Yong-Ki Lee, Eun-Ju Kim, Mitch Griffin, <i>Journal of Services Marketing</i> · May 2005 V 19/3 - pages 133–139</p>
Brand Image	<p>1.The brand of this restaurant has a fashionable and trendy image</p> <p>2.The brand of this restaurant has unique features</p> <p>3.The brand of this restaurant provided me a better lifestyle</p> <p>4.The brand of this restaurant provides good value to its customers</p>	<p>The Importance of Social Media Advertisements in Enhancing Brand Equity: A Study on Fast Food Restaurant Industry in Malaysia Jalal Hanaysha International <i>Journal of Innovation, Management and Technology</i> 2016 Vol. 7, No. 2 pp 46-51</p>
Brand Equity	<p>1.Even if another brand has the same price of this brand, I would still buy this</p> <p>2.If there is another brand as good as this brand, I prefer to buy this</p>	<p>Does image of country-of-origin matter to brand equity?</p> <p>Norjaya Mohd Yasin, Mohd Nasser Noor, Osman Mohamad <i>Journal of Product & Brand Management</i> V 16/1 2007 38–48</p>

Variable	Item	Adapted from
Perceived Quality	1.The restaurant staff gives customers individual attention 2.The staff members have clean, neat, appropriate dress and appearance 3.The staff provides prompt service within the promised time frame 4.The staff handles customers' complaints effectively 5.The staff is always willing to help customers 6.The staff has knowledge and confidence 7.The food quality of the restaurant is good 8.The restaurant insists on error-free service	Dimensions of Brand Equity in the Chain Restaurant Industry Wansoo Kim <i>Cornell Hospitality Quarterly</i> , 2011 V 52(4) pp 429– 437

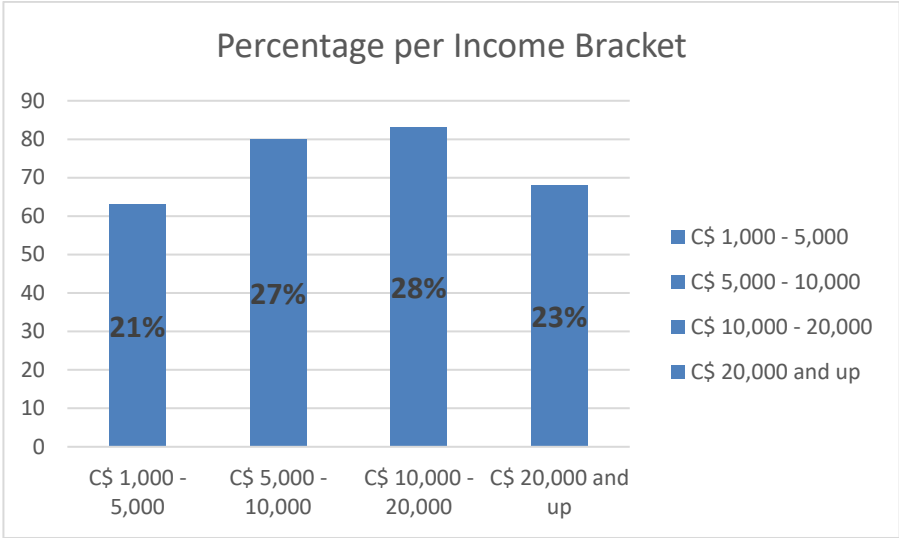
4.4. Sample profile

The following graphs show the percentages related to the variables gender, income, age and occupation. In the first graph, we can observe 60% of the respondents are women and 40% men.



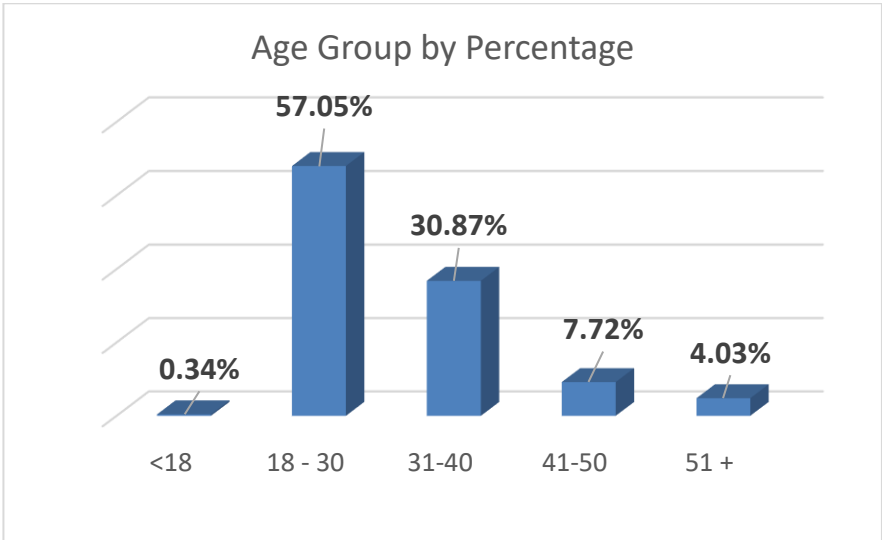
Graph 1 - Sample Profile by Gender

The present graphic shows that the highest percentage, 28%, represents the salaries between 10,000 to 20,000 CS, 27% represents the salaries between CS 5,000 and 10,000, 23% shows the salary of the respondents between 20,000 and over, and the lowest percentage 21% represents the salary between CS 1,000 and 5,000.



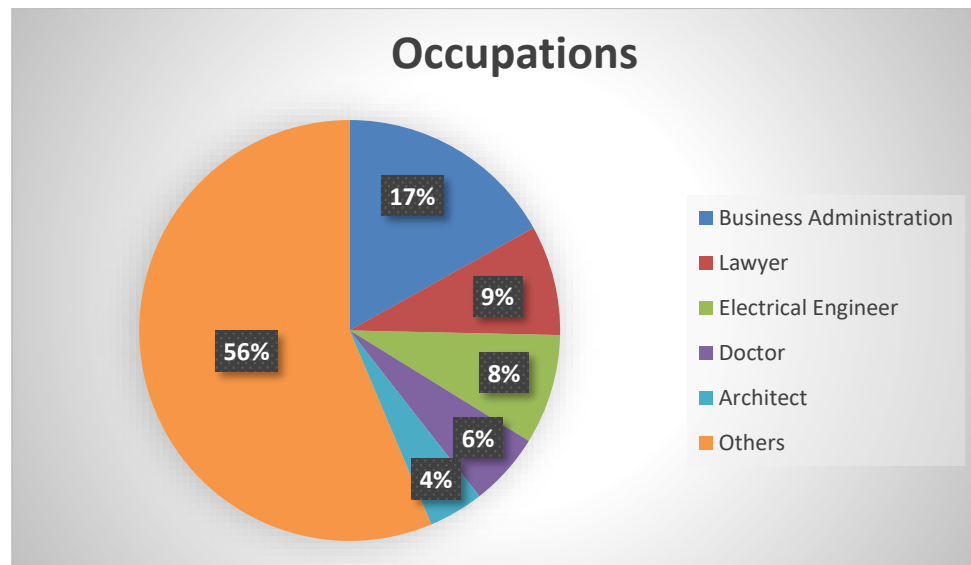
Graph 2 - Sample Percentage per Income

The next graphic show the age of the respondents, we have the highest percentage 57.05% corresponding to ages between 18 and 30 years old, the lowest percentage of 0.34% corresponding to 18 years old, 30.87% with the age between 31 and 40 years old, 7.72% between 41 and 50 years old, and 4.03% corresponding to participants between the ages 51 and over.



Graph 3- Sample Profile by Age

The last graphic indicates the main occupation of the participants, the 17% represents the occupation of Business Administration, 9% represents the occupation of lawyers, 8% shows the occupation of Electrical Engineer, 6% represents the occupation of Doctor, 4% represents the occupation of Architect and the 56% represents other occupations.



Graph 4 - Sample Profile by Occupation

5. Data Analysis

5.1. Descriptive analysis

We start this chapter with a descriptive analysis for each variable and its items. The mean and standard deviation for each variable were calculated with the support of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To evaluate the internal consistency of the variables we used Cronbach's Alpha. The Cronbach's Alpha evaluates how well a set of indicators measure their corresponding construct. The internal consistency measure depends on the correlation between different items to measure the same construct.

According to **Churchill (1979)** and **Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham (2009)** s the Cronbach's Alpha values should be above 0.7, in order to prove that the inner consistency is acceptable. In this study, as we can observe the information displayed below in Table 5 and Table 6, all the variables have Cronbach's Alpha's values over 0.7, which indicates that the internal consistency is acceptable.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistic Analysis of the Constructs

Variable	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Customer Satisfaction	1.Has clean tables	4.0167224	0.77916749
	2.Has ease of access to the menu	4.0468227	0.85401633
	3.Has a staff friendliness	3.9765886	0.86084889
	4.Has a reasonable wait time	3.8461538	0.77918189
	5.Has easiness of ordering and payment	4.0267559	0.69943878
	6.Has a fast service	3.8327759	0.82665087
	<i>Cron bach Alpha 0,821</i>		
Fast Food Trust	1.I feel quite confident that my fast-food restaurant will always try to treat me fairly	3.6789298	0.75790522
	2.My fast-food restaurant has been frank in dealing with me	3.7157191	0.71145026
	3.My fast-food restaurant would never try to gain an advantage by deceiving its clients	3.4548495	0.76881428
	<i>Cron bach Alpha 0,8217</i>		
Brand Awareness	1.I am aware of the restaurant brand	3.7257525	0.6891092
	2.I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of the chain restaurant brand	4.1939799	0.72987349
	3.Some characteristics of the chain restaurant brand come to my mind quickly	4.2107023	0.81043064
	4.I can recognize the chain restaurant brand among other competing brands	4	0.80684987
	<i>Cron bach Alpha 0,7846</i>		
Brand Association	1.I like the company which makes this brand	3.6555184	0.81824496
	2.The company which makes this brand has credibility	3.735786	0.74213344
	<i>Cron bach Alpha 0,8391</i>		
Brand Loyalty	1.I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it saves me time in food preparation	3.4749164	0.99758412
	2.I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it offers a wider menu compared to other fast food outlets	3.0668896	0.94240555
	3.I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it conveniently located and accessible	3.6220736	0.84403615
	4.I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it offers good and fast customer service	3.7056856	0.78171283
	5.I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because I believe I get good value for money	3.548495	0.87479014
	<i>Cron bach Alpha 0,7961</i>		
Word of Mouth	1.I Would you say positive things about this restaurant to other people	3.7558528	0.69315265
	2.I Would you recommend this restaurant to others who seeks your advice	3.7926421	0.77100086
	3.I Would you encourage to friends and family to visit this restaurant	3.8160535	0.7833908
	<i>Cron bach Alpha 0,9137</i>		
Brand Image	1.The brand of this restaurant has a fashionable and trendy image	3.5819398	0.8369457
	2.The brand of this restaurant has unique features	3.6488294	0.84767168
	3.The brand of this restaurant provided me a better lifestyle	2.9397993	1.02144191
	4.The brand of this restaurant provides good value to its customers	3.4949833	0.86455652
	<i>Cron bach Alpha 0,7582</i>		
Brand Equity	1.Even if another brand has the same price of this brand, I would still buy this	3.3043478	0.93998491
	2.If there is another brand as good as this brand, I prefer to buy this	3.1839465	0.90650695
	<i>Cron bach Alpha 0,8056</i>		
Perceived Quality	1.The restaurant staff gives customers individual attention	3.6220736	0.87142234
	2.The staff members have clean, neat, appropriate dress and appearance	4.083612	0.61006573
	3.The staff provides prompt service within the promised time frame	3.7792642	0.71285285
	4.The staff handles customers' complaints effectively	3.3812709	0.79540441
	5.The staff is always willing to help customers	3.7558528	0.70752726
	6.The staff has knowledge and confidence	3.8461538	0.72102434
	7.The food quality of the restaurant is good	3.9598662	0.75422389
	8.The restaurant insists on error-free service	3.90301	0.75125687

5.2. Validity and Reliability of the Measures and Structural Evaluation

The statistical research of the present investigation was based on structural equations modelling (SEM) – general statistical modelling technique, that is extensively used in the behavioral sciences. SEM associates complex path models with latent variables (factors). We decide to opt for this method, because it possesses many pros that allow specifying and estimating more complicated path models with intervening variables between independent and depending variables, as well as latent factors. We performed the analysis with the support of Partial Least Squares (PLS) software, by Smart PLS 2.0 M3. We can attribute the choice of this software due to the broad benefits that it possesses, in special with these two important interests, first this software gives us the possibility of creation complex Path Models with no

estimation prejudices, and second the facility to identify the relations between measures through a number of entries (latent variables). Hence, in order to have a clear assessment and examine the PSL model, we followed the practice used by **Hulland (1999)**. First, we explored the reliability and validity of the model, and as a next step we evaluated the structural model (Fig 1).

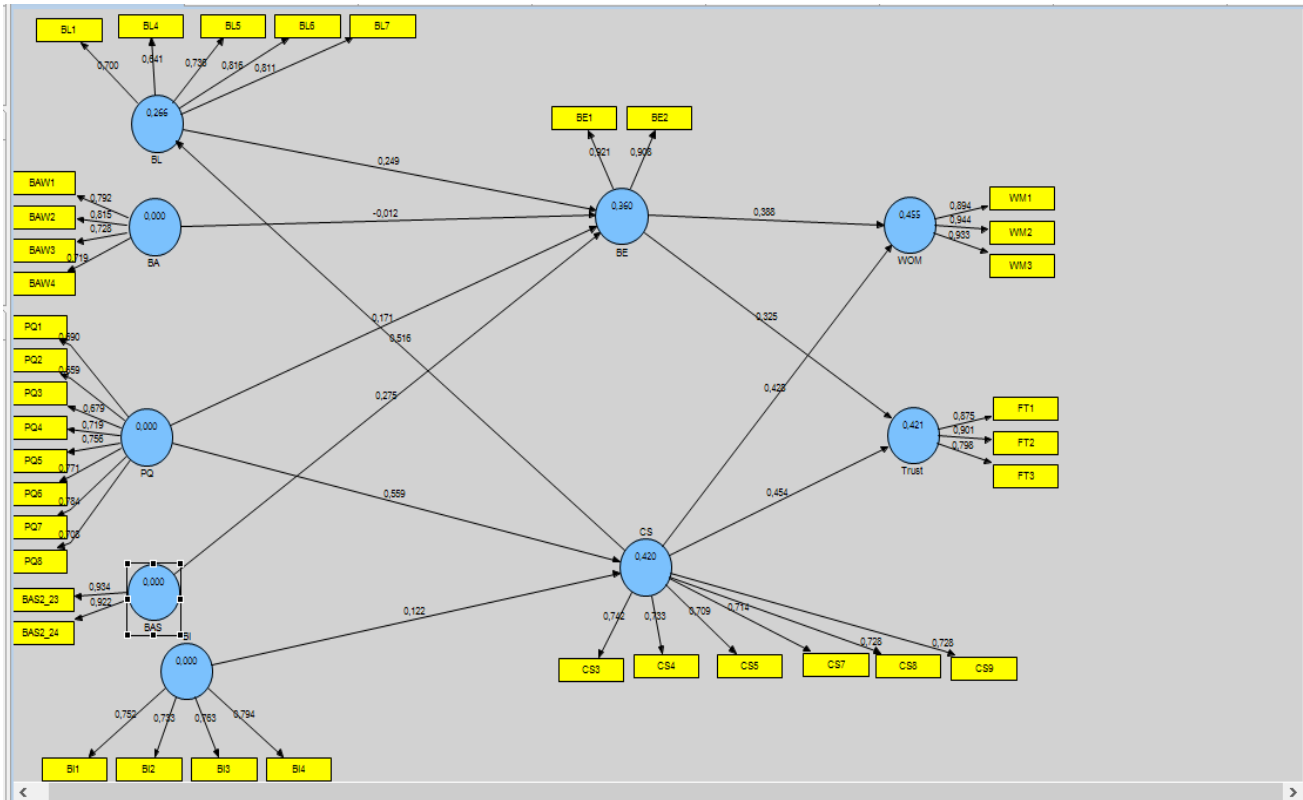


Figure 5: Reliability and Validity of the Model

5.2.1. Reliability of the Items

In order to explore the evaluation of the model, we started with the individual evaluation of all items, which is performed through the view and consideration of the simple correlations between the observed and latent variables. The values of factor loadings are the linear regression coefficients that can be found on the arrows from the factors to variables. According to **Bagozzi & Yi (1988)**, items with loadings equal or superior to 0.6 indicate the existence of more variance shared between the construct and its measurements than the error variance. As we can see in the Table 7 and Table 8, all items have loadings that exceed the limit of 0.6. Therefore, from the above-mentioned figured and previously stated data we can deduct that they are reliable (**Barclay, Higgins, & Thompson, 1995**).

Table 5

Reliability of Items

Construct	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	R2
Brand Association	1. I trust the company which makes this brand	0,9338	0,8391	0,9254	0,8612	-
	2. I like the company which makes this brand	0,9222				
Brand Awareness	1. I am aware of the restaurant brand	0,7919	0,7846	0,8486	0,5843	-
	2. I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of the chain restaurant brand	0,8145				
	3. Some characteristics of the chain restaurant brand come to my mind quickly	0,728				
	4. I can recognize the chain restaurant brand among other competing brands	0,7188				
Brand equity	1. Even if another brand has the same price of this brand, I would still buy this	0,9214	0,8056	0,9113	0,837	0,3598
	2. If there is another brand as good as this brand I prefer to buy this	0,9083				
Brand Image	1. The brand of this restaurant has a fashionable and trendy image	0,7524	0,7582	0,846	0,5788	-
	2. The brand of this restaurant has unique features	0,733				
	3. The brand of this restaurant provided me a better lifestyle	0,7627				
	4. The brand of this restaurant provides good value to its customers	0,7938				
Brand Loyalty	1. I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it saves me time in food preparation	0,7001	0,7961	0,86	0,5534	0,266
	2. I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it offers a wider menu compared to other fast food outlets	0,6412				
	3. I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it conveniently located and accessible	0,7362				
	4. I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it offers good and fast customer service	0,8163				
	5. I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise	0,8106				
Customer Satisfaction	1. Has clean tables	0,7421	0,821	0,8699	0,5271	0,4202
	2. Has ease of access to the menu	0,7333				
	3. Has a staff friendliness	0,7092				
	4. Has a reasonable wait time	0,7144				
	5. Has easiness of ordering and payment	0,7283				
	6. Has a fast service	0,7284				
Fast food trust	1. I feel quite confident that my fast-food restaurant will always try to treat me fairly	0,8754	0,8217	0,894	0,7381	0,4206
	2. My fast-food restaurant has been frank in dealing with me	0,9007				
	3. My fast-food restaurant would never try to gain an advantage by deceiving its clients	0,798				
Perceived Quality	1. The restaurant staff gives customers individual attention	0,6897	0,8681	0,8967	0,5213	-
	2. The staff members have clean neat, appropriate dress and appearance	0,6593				
	3. The staff provides prompt service within the promised time frame	0,6794				
	4. The staff handles customers' complaints effectively	0,7187				
	5. The staff is always willing to help customers	0,7565				
	6. The staff has knowledge and confidence	0,7709				
	7. The food quality of the restaurant is good	0,7839				
	8. The restaurant insists on error-free service	0,7076				
Word of mouth	1. I would say positive things about this restaurant to other people	0,8938	0,9137	0,9457	0,8532	0,4552
	2. I would recommend this restaurant to others who seek your advice	0,9439				
	3. I would encourage to friends and family to visit this restaurant	0,9327				

5.2.2. Convergent validity

According with Cronbach (1951), the Cronbach Alpha, permits to test the reliability of the constructs and to evaluate the feasibility through the consistency of each construct. Additionally, the composite reliability, evaluates the internal consistency of all indicators of the latent variables (Aaker & Bagozzi, 1980); and Fornell & Larcker (1981), argue that the average variance extracted (AVE), represents the extent to which the group of the items variances is explained by the latent variable. As is depicted in Table 7 and Table 8 all the values of Cronbach Alpha are above 0.7. This indicates that the scales are reliable and that the used measures have content validity (Churchill, 1979; Hair et al., 2009; Malhotra et al., 2012). The composite reliability for each construct is above the minimum limit (0.70) (Aaker & Bagozzi, 1980; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Furthermore, the AVE in each construct is superior to the reference value of 0.5. Based on this previous information, we can to conclude that at least 50% of the variance is explained by the latent variable (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

5.2.3. Discriminant validity

For the evaluation of this model both discriminant validity and convergent validity are important indicators. The discriminant validity assesses if the items that are supposed to be unrelated are not related. It evaluates if the items used to measure a construct are different from the items used to measure the other constructs in the model. Hence, in order to evaluate discriminant validity, we followed a series of steps used by **Fornell and Larcker (1981)**, based on the matrix of correlation that evidences the correlations between the different constructs. We can observe that in the main diagonal the AVE values' square roots are be higher than the elements outside the diagonal in the correspondent lines and columns (**Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Shook, Ketchen, Hult. & Kacmar, 2004**).

Table 6

Reliability of Items

	Brand Awareness	Brand Association	Brand equity	Brand Image	Brand Loyalty	Customer satisfaction	Perceived Quality	Fast food trust	Word of mouth
Brand Awareness	0.7643								
Brand Association	0,6402	0.9280							
Brand equity	0,392	0,5305	0.9148						
Brand Image	0,5434	0,6368	0,6323	0.7607					
Brand Loyalty	0,5177	0,634	0,5332	0,648	0.7439				
Customer satisfaction	0,5748	0,506	0,3664	0,5	0,5157	0.7260			
Perceived Quality	0,5771	0,6139	0,5019	0,6753	0,6789	0,6419	0.7220		
Fast food trust	0,5886	0,6022	0,4918	0,5354	0,539	0,5736	0,6209	0.8591	
Word of mouth	0,5779	0,6642	0,5447	0,671	0,7142	0,57	0,7146	0,5985	0.9236

Note: The scores in bold on the diagonal are the square root of AVE.

5.2.4. Evaluation of the Structural Model

It is important to notice that the Smart PLS 2.0 software does not provide a measure that summarizes the quality of the adjustment of the model. Due to this model limitation, it is recommended to make an evaluation of the structural model through the use of R^2 , the coefficient of determination of the latent variables, which represents the level of explained variance of each dependent variable. According to **Falk & Miller (1992)**, it should be superior to 10% and as we can see from the Table 7 and Table 8 the value of every dependent variable R^2 is above the mentioned minimum level.

5.3. Results Evaluation

Table 7

Hypotheses Verification

Hypotheses	T-value	Path coefficient (β)	Result
H1: Brand loyalty is positively associated with brand equity	3,1487***	0,2487	Supported
H2: Brand awareness is positively associated with brand equity	0,1733	-0,0115	Not supported
H3: Perceived quality is positively associated with brand equity	2,412**	0,1706	Supported
H4: Brand associations are positively associated with brand equity	3,9056***	0,2755	Supported
H5: Perceived quality is positively associated with customer satisfaction	7,8484***	0,5593	Supported
H6: Brand image is positively associated with customer satisfaction	1,8083*	0,1223	Supported
H7: Customer satisfaction is positively associated with brand loyalty	10,6833***	0,5157	Supported
H8: Brand equity is positively associated with word-of-mouth	7,2094***	0,3879	Supported
H9: Brand equity is positively associated with customer's trust	6,0667***	0,3253	Supported
H10: Customer satisfaction is positively associated with word-of-mouth	6,3368***	0,4279	Supported
H11: Customer satisfaction is positively associated with customer's trust	8,1117***	0,4543	Supported

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$; We used a one-tailed test for all hypotheses.

Table 7, shows the T- values and path coefficient (β), allowing to appreciate the results for each hypothesis. We can observe that all of the hypotheses, with the exception of **H2**, are supported. Additionally, we can observe that for all the supported hypotheses the path coefficients are positives, which means that effect of the independent variable in the dependent variable is positive.

- **Hypothesis one (1)** presents the following values: $(\beta) = 0.2487$; $p < 0.001$, $t\text{-value} = 3,1487$. Therefore, the result confirms that brand loyalty is positively associated with brand equity.
- **The third hypothesis (3)** is supported with the following values: $(\beta) = 0,1706$; $p < 0.01$, $t\text{-value} = 2,412$. Thus, this results evidences that perceived quality is positively associated with brand equity.
- **Hypothesis (4)** is sustained with the following values: $(\beta) = 0,2755$; $p < 0.001$, $t\text{-value} = 3,9056$. Therefore, according with this result, we can stablish that brand associations are positively associated with brand equity.
- **Hypothesis (5)** has gained the following values: $(\beta) = 0,5593$; $p < 0.001$, $t\text{-value} = 7,8484$. Hence, evaluating the results we can state that perceived quality is positively associated with customer satisfaction.
- **The next Hypothesis (6)** is also supported with the following values: $(\beta) = 0,1223$; $p < 0.05$, $t\text{-value} = 1,8083$. Thus, the results indicate that brand image is positively associated with customer satisfaction.
- **Hypothesis (7)** denote the following values: $(\beta) = 0,5157$; $p < 0.001$, $t\text{-value} = 10,6833$. Hence, again the results demonstrate that customer satisfaction is positively associated with brand loyalty.
- The values gathered for the eight **Hypothesis (8)** shows the following values: $(\beta) = 0,3879$; $p < 0.001$, $t\text{-value} = 7,2094$. Therefore the result confirms that brand equity is positively associated with word-of-mouth.
- **Hypothesis (9)** is sustained by the following values: $(\beta) = 0,3253$; $p < 0.001$, $t\text{-value} = 6,0667$ evidencing that brand equity is positively associated with customer's trust
- **The following Hypothesis (10)** is also supported with the following values: $(\beta) = 0,4279$; $p < 0.001$, $t\text{-value} = 6,3368$. Consequently, the results demonstrate that customer satisfaction is positively associated with word-of-mouth .
- **The last Hypothesis (11)** is supported with the following values: $(\beta) = 0,4543$; $p < 0.001$, $t\text{-value} = 8,1117$. Therefore, the results confirm that customer satisfaction is positively associated with customer's trust.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

6.1. Main Findings

This research aimed to investigate how is the impact of customers trust toward a brand specifically in the case of a fast food brand on the brand equity dimension (brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and other brand associations) and on customer perceptions and behavior (customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth). For this precise purpose, we developed a conceptual model based on the main elements related with our main topic; the model used was consistent and valid.

In a research conducted by **Lachat et al. (2012)** is detonated that eating out of home is every day a more common phenomenon in the society, and this habit is increasing rapidly in every culture especially between teenagers and young adults. For international fast food brands, it is crucial to adopt new strategies and methods in order to be able to fill consumer's preferences and expectation which vary from one customer to other, the differences that exist among countries society and nationalities around the world are huge and it is necessary to adapt toward a global change. Therefore, fast food restaurants are forced to understand the reality of every individual community, and to be aware about the economic and religious environments, to be able to modify and habituate the food preparation and taste according to the needs of the target market (**Metin & Kizgin, 2015**). In the case of fast food consumption habit, there are many elements such as concerns about health issues, education, family characteristics, income, age, and price of the food, that we can consider influential in the consumer mind at the moment of buying and to choosing fast food.

Results supported that brand loyalty is positively associated with brand equity. According to **Chanda (2010)** brand loyalty is a significant element which allows companies to get a superior position in the market since brand loyalty add a special and unique value to the company. Also in a contribution made by **Kumar and Advani (2005)** is founded that if customers keep high levels of brand loyalty they will practice to repeat of purchasing of any product or service, impacting brand equity. Brand awareness has been previously conceptualized by **Keller (2008)** as one of the most important pillars able to solidify brand equity. Brand awareness is able to cause a huge variety of emotional connections in the customers' minds regarding to a specific brand, and all these combinations of emotions stay and recall in the mind of the customers causing a persuasive effect when they choose between one brand and another. Consequently, **Huang & Sarigöllü (2012)** found that brand awareness is divided in two important connections, brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition consists in the way that customers are able to "recognize" a brand, and brand recall indicates when consumers can recall a brand during their decision-making choice. Although previous literatures confirm the relationship between brand awareness and brand equity, the **H2** of our study was not empirically supported, suggesting that in our specific sample, brand equity is fundamentally leveraged by brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand associations

The impact of perceived quality on brand equity was empirically supported (**H3**) **Sabir et al. (2014)** highlighted that one of the main deductions that confirms that perceived quality has a positive impact on brand equity is related to the fact that customers usually do evaluations of the quality of a product or service received, and when this service or product meets their expectations, they will become loyal to company, leading to maintain a strong brand equity. Following the same line of literature **Prakash & Mohanty (2012)** deducted that if a company causes higher levels of service quality, it will contribute to increase and create higher levels of customer satisfaction, and as we already know, customers' satisfaction is the main pillar to success for any company.

Brand associations were proved to be positively associated with brand equity (**H4**). We can strengthen this affirmation based in the previous finding of **Keller (2004)** where it is stated that brand associations arise from the assessment of customers regarding to brand's quality; brand associations have a special interconnection with the feeling and psychological emotions that come in the consumer's mind regarding to brand, and therefore these associations shape the brand image that consumers have of the company. Also, brand associations were found by **Low & Lam (2000)** as a fundamental key, used to marketers to generate positives attitudes, and emotions in the customers, that allow recommending the benefits of buying.

Perceived quality and its connection with customers satisfaction has been study before by **Nicolini & Salini (2006)** supporting our **H5**: perceived quality is positively associated with customer satisfaction. These authors found that there are different elements associated with emotional communication that contribute to create perceived quality before of product and services purchase. Therefore, for any company it is crucial to improve the quality of their products and services in order to exceed customer's desires, if customers perceived a satisfactory quality they will increase their levels of customer satisfaction (**Sanyal & Datta, 2011**).

The impact of brand image on customers satisfaction was also supported (**H6**), following a research made by **Ladhari (2007)** who stated that the image of a brand can be created in a positive or negative way, depending on the quality provided and perceived by the costumers according to their needs and wishes, and increasing or decreasing their levels of satisfaction. In addition, in a research conducted by Pavesic (1989) it is highlighted that brand image is perceived in the eyes and the mind of customers affecting the process to create a positive view of the products or services before the moment of purchase.

According to a research conducted by **Namin (2017)** it is clear that when the levels of customer's satisfaction increase companies can assure customer's loyalty. The study reinforces the result supported by our **H7**: customer satisfaction is positively associated with brand loyalty. **Hanif et al. (2010)** sates that customers can create a position of trust regarding to a special brand if they experience high levels of satisfaction, and therefore their wish to visit one more time the local and give good recommendations of the place will increase, and as a result, customers will create more steams of loyalty to the company.

Results confirmed our **H8**: brand equity is positively associated with word-of-mouth. In a research lead by **Casielles et al. (2013)** was found that WOM is a pivotal key for the success of any company. When costumers are satisfied with the quality of services and products provided, they will communicate this experience to other customers, therefore is clear that if the services and products deliver to customers high levels of quality able to fill and exceed their demand, it will be the main reason that will lead them to express a favorable and beneficial WOM for the company. Therefore, we can conclude that if the brand equity is managed in a competent way, companies can wait good results regarding to the messages that their customers will transfer to others (**Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995**).

Our findings also supported **H9**: brand equity is positively associated with customer's trust. Afzal et al. (2009) conceptualized the importance of brand equity for every type of business. Nowadays companies are implementing better methods and strategies to be competitive in the market. To construct a successful brand equity it is significant to pay attention to the creation of good relationships with customers, because when customers have a good perception of a particular brand they will develop higher levels of trust on brand, and thus it is noticeable that if there is an increase of customer trust, companies can obtain an unique competitive advantage among other competitors brands.

Results also supported **H10**: customer satisfaction is positively associated with word-of-mouth. **Zamil (2011)** found an influential role of customers satisfaction on word-of-mouth, contributing in a special way to the company to attract more new customers. As it has been stablished in other previous literature, we can argue that when customers feel happy, they will spread a convenient word-of-mouth for the company, inviting and encouraging their friends and family to visit the local giving to the company positive prestige (**Babin et al., 2005**).

Results also validated our last **H11**: customer satisfaction is positively associated with customer's trust. **Glowa (2014)** stated that customers satisfaction is a pillar that impacts in the business performance. The levels of customers satisfaction will work as an important indicator of customers trust. The more satisfied customers are, the more likely they are to increase their trust on the company, therefore it is clear that to ensure customer satisfaction should be a priority that must be worked day by day for those companies which want to increase customers trust. Similarly, **Law et al. (2004)** highlighted that satisfied customers are synonymous with happy customers and when it happens, customers will be willingness to repeat their purchase process and will increase their levels of trust contributing to the profitability of the business.

To conclude, our international research proved certain connection between the impact of consumers trust based on brand equity dimensions, and the effects of these streams on their purchase intention and trust toward a certain brand they follow. We were able to indicate the effects of each measurement of the brand equity on the consumer perceptions.

6.2. Theoretical and managerial implications

The relationships between the brand equity dimensions perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness, and other brand associations on customer perceptions and behavior (customer satisfaction, customer trust and word-of-mouth) has been widely discussed for many researches. Moreover, most of the existing studies in relation with this topic, have used a sample collected in just one country therefore, is noticeable that the magnitude to which the results are cross-culturally is limited. Our research pretends to contribute to the existing literature regarding to this field emphasizing the relationship and the effect that exists between brand equity dimensions and customer perceptions specifically focused in customer trust on a fast food brand. It is very important to consider that through this finding it is possible to examine an international point of view of customers.

The managerial implications of these results are as follows:

1. Our findings sustain that customer's trust is affected by the perceptions and experiences that customer have based on brand equity dimensions namely perceived quality, brand loyalty, and other brand associations and on customer perceptions and behavior (customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth).
2. Since the streams of brand equity have a direct influence on the customers behavior, managers should consider about how significant it is to improve brand equity and to develop more effective and suitable strategies and methods focused on the main needs and wishes of the customers in order to maintain a positive brand equity in their mind able to exceed their expectations, ensuring this way the increase of customer's trust.
3. It is noticeable that customer trust is influenced by the nature of culture of target market' perceptions such as beliefs, associations, lifestyles, and the influence of family and friends. Therefore, for international fast food franchises it is critical to explore all this set of factors carefully, adapting to this new foreign market, in order to be successful.

6.3. Main limitations and suggestions for further research

The results of this study were limited to one country Nicaragua; therefore, future research could consider expanding this study by including other countries, to extend the research to a cross boarder segment of nationalities, especially to inquire in the extensive dimensions that cover the differences of culture in the perceptions and behaviors of customer's trust toward a brand. It is also important to denote that the sample of the survey is composed by 300 respondents; therefore, it would be interesting to have a sample with more respondents in order to obtain more accurate results. It is also noteworthy that the semantic linguistic structures regarding to the questionnaire could have been a barrier in the aspect of understanding from languages, in this case from English to Spanish.

References

- Acuff, D., & Reiher, R. (1997). *What Kids Buy and Why*. New York: Free Press.
- Aaker, D. (1991). *Managing Brand Equity*. New York London Toronto Sydney: Free Press. Retrieved from 10 11, 2017 [https:// www.SimonandSchuster.com](https://www.SimonandSchuster.com)
- Aaker, D., & Joachimsthaler, E.(2000). *Brand leadership*. New York: Free Press.
- Abdullah, F., & Kanyan, A. (2013). Enhancing Customer Relationships in the Foodservice Industry. *Business Management*, 67 (9), 40-44. doi: 10.7763/IPEDR
- Adiele, K., & Kenneth-Adiele, N. (2017). Service Speed and Patronage of Quick – Service Restaurants in Port Harcourt. *International Institute of Academic Research and Development*, 2(1), 32-38. Retrieved 28 9, 2017 from [https:// www.iiardpub.org](https://www.iiardpub.org)
- Aftab, J., Sarwar, H., Sultan, Q.-u.-a., & Qadeer, M. (2016). Importance of Service Quality in Customer Satisfaction (A Study on Fast Food Restaurants). *Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management Journal*, 4 (4), 161-171. Retrieved 1 2, 2017 from [https:// www.absronline.org/journals](https://www.absronline.org/journals)
- Alam, A., Arshad, M., & Shabbir, A. (2012). Brand credibility, customer loyalty and the role of religious orientation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistic*, 24 (4) 583-598. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13555851211259034>
- Alamgir, M., Nasir, T., & Shamsuddoha, M. (2010). Influence Of Brand Name On Consumer Decision Making Process An Empirical Study On Car Buyers. *Va Trimitem Atasat*, 10 (2), 2-13. Retrieved 10 3, 2018 from <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1778163>
- Alshurideh, M., Masa'deh, R., & Alkurdi, B. (2012). The Effect of Customer Satisfaction upon Customer Retention in the Jordanian Mobile Market: An Empirical Investigation. *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, 47 (12), 69 -78. Retrieved 2 4, 2018 from <https://www.eurojournals.com/EJEFAS.htm>
- Akbay, C., Tiryaki, G. & Gul, A. (2007). Consumer characteristics influencing fast food consumption in Turkey. *Food Control*, 18(8), 904-913. doi: 10.1016/j.foodcont.2006.05.007
- Arredondo, E., Castaneda, D., Elder, J., Slymen, D., & Dozier, D. (2008). Brand Name Logo Recognition of Fast Food and Healthy Food among Children. *Community Health*, 34 (1), 73-78. doi: 10.1007/s10900-008-9119-3.
- Asgarpour, R., Hamid, A., Sulaiman, Z., & Asgari, A. (2015). A Review on Customer Perceived Value and Its Main Components. *Global Journal of Business and Social Science Review*, 2 (2), 632-640.
- Assael, H. (2004). *Consumer behavior: A strategic approach*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Aysha, K., & Munazza , S. (2012). Review of Trends in Fast Food Consumption. *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, 48 (2), 1-10. Retrieved 3 2,2018 from <http://www.eurojournals.com/EJEFAS.htm>
- Afzal, H., Khan, M., Rehman, K., Ali, I. and Wajahat, S. (2009). Consumer's Trust in the Brand: Can it be built through Brand Reputation, Brand Competence and Brand Predictability. *International Business Research*, 3 (1), 43-49. doi: 10.5539/ibr.v3n1p43
- Babin, B., Lee, Y-K., Kim, E.-J., & Griffin, M. (2005). Modeling consumer satisfaction and word-of-mouth: restaurant patronage in Korea. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 19 (3), 133–139. <https://doi.org/10.1108/08876040510596803>

- Bagozzi, R. P., & Yi, Y. (1988). On the Evaluation of Structural Equation Models. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 16, 74–94. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF02723327>
- Baig, A. K., & Saeed, M. (2012). Review of Trends in Fast Food Consumption. *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*. 48. 77-85.
- Bamford, D., & Xystouri, T. (2005). “A case study of service failure and recovery within an international airline”. *Managing Service Quality*, 15 (3), 306-322. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09604520510597845>
- Bansal, H., & Voyer, P. (2000). Word-of-mouth processes within a service purchase decision context. *Journal of Service Research*, 3 (2), 166-177. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/109467050032005>
- Barclay, D., Higgins. C., & Thompson. R. (1995). The Partial Least Squares (PLS). Approach to causal modeling: personal computer adoption and use as an illustration. *Technology Studies*, 2, 285–309.
- Basri, N., Ahmad, R., Anuar, F., & Ismail, K. (2016). Effect of Word of Mouth Communication on Consumer Purchase Decision: Malay upscale restaurant. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 222, 324 – 331. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.05.175>
- Bengtsson, A., Bardhi, F., & Venkatraman, M. (2010). How global brands travel with consumers. *International Marketing Review*, 27 (5), 519-540. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02651331011076572>
- Berry, L., Wall, E., & Carbone, L. (2006). Service Clues and Customer Assessment of the Service Experience: Lessons from Marketing. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 20(2), 43-57. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2006.20591004>
- Brothers, B. (2011). *Your Brand Is Your Business: Creating Value in Your Brands and Branding Strategies*. Bob Brothers.
- Buttle, F. (1998). Word of mouth: understanding and managing referral marketing. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 6 (3) 241–254. <https://doi.org/10.1080/096525498346658>
- Casielles, R., Álvarez, L., & Lanza, D. (2013). The Word of Mouth Dynamic: How Positive (and Negative) WOM Drives Purchase Probability: An Analysis of Interpersonal and Non-Interpersonal Factors. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 53, 43-60.
- Chanda, P. (2010). *A Requiem for a Brand*. New Delhi : The Lotus Collection . Retrieved from www.rolibooks.com
- Chang, T., & Chen, S. (1998). Market orientation, service quality and business profitability: a conceptual model and empirical evidence. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 12 (4), 246-264. <https://doi.org/10.1108/08876049810226937>
- Chang, W.-L., & Lin, H.-L. (2010). The impact of color traits on corporate branding. *African Journal of Business Management*, 4 (15), 3344-3355.
- Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, M. (2001). “The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: the role of brand loyalty”. *Journal of Marketing*, 65 (2), 81-93.
- Chen, T.Y., Yeh, T.L., & Jheng, W.S. (2013). Factors influencing brand association. *African Journal of Business Management*, 7 (19), 1914- 1926. <https://doi.org/10.5897/AJBM11.2462>
- Cobb-Walgren, C., Ruble, C., & Donthu, N. (1995). Brand Equity, Brand Preference, and Purchase Intent. *Journal of Advertising*, 24 (3), 26-40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1995.10673481>

- Countryman, C., & Jang, S. (2006). The effects of atmospheric elements on customer impression: the case of hotel lobbies'. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 18 (7), 534–545. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09596110610702968>
- Crompton, J. (1979). An Assessment of the Image of Mexico as a Vacation Destination and the Influence of Geographical Location Upon That Image. *Journal of Travel Research*, 17 (4), 18-23. doi: 10.1177/004728757901700404
- Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, 16 (3), 297- 334.
- Churchill, GA. (1979) A paradigm for developing better measures of marketing constructs. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 16 (1), 64-73. Reviewed 6 4, 2018 from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3150876>
- Dabholkar, P., Shepherd, David, C., & Thorpe, D. (2000). A Comprehensive Framework for Service Quality: An Investigation of Critical Conceptual and Measurement Issues Through a Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Retailing*, 77 (2), 139. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359\(00\)00029-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359(00)00029-4)
- Dant, P., Kacker, M., Coughlan, T., & Emerson, J. (2007). Cointegration Analysis of the Correlates of Performance in Franchised Channels. *Economics and Management of Networks*, Physica-Verlag, 169-189. doi: 10.1007/978-3-7908-1758-4_9
- De Matos, C., & Rossi, C., (2008). Word-of-mouth communications in marketing: a meta-analytic review of the antecedents and moderators. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36 (4), 578–596.
- Dick, A., & Basu, K. (1994). Customer Loyalty: Toward an Integrated Conceptual Framework. *Journal of the Academic Of Marketing Science*, 22 (2), 99-113. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070394222001>
- Dlagic, J., & Kezman, E. (2014). Exploring Relationship Between Brand Equity And Customer Loyalty On Pharmaceutical Market. *Economic And Business Review*, 16 (2), 121-131.
- Drennan, J., Bianchi , C., Cacho-Elizondo , S., Louriero, S., Guibert, N., & Proud, W. (2015). Examining the Role of Wine Brand Love on Brand Loyalty: A Multi-Country Comparison. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 49 (1), 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2015.04.012>
- Doyle, P. (2001). “Shareholder-value-based brand strategies”. *Journal of Brand Management*, 9 (1), 20-30. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.bm>
- Duchessi, P. (2004). *Crafting customer value*. Purdue Univ Pr.
- Eisingerich, A., & Bell, S. (2008). Perceived Service Quality and Customer Trust
Does Enhancing Customers' Service Knowledge Matter?*Journal of services research*,10 (3), 256-268
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670507310769>
- Escalas, J., & Bettman, J. (2003). You are what they eat: The influence of reference groups on consumers' connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 13(3), 339–348. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327663JCP1303_14
- Falk, R.F., & Miller, N.B. (1992). *A Primer for Soft Modeling*. University of Akron Press, Akron.
- Fatimah, U., Booa, H., Sambasivanb, M., & Salleh, R. (2010). Foodservice hygiene factors—the consumer perspective. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 30 (1), 38-45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2010.04.001>
- Fichter, C., & Jonas, K. (2008). Image Effects of Newspapers How Brand Images Change Consumers' Product Ratings. *Journal of Psychology*, 216 (4), 226–234. <https://doi.org/10.1027/0044-3409.216.4.226>

- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Structural Equation Models with Unobservable Variables and Measurement Error: Algebra and Statistics. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18, 382–388. Retrieved 6 11, 2017 from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3150980>
- Fornell, C., Johnson, M., Anderson, E., Cha, J., & Bryant, B. (1996). The American customer satisfaction index: nature, purpose, and findings. *Journal of Marketing*, 60 (4), 7–18. doi: 10.2307/1251898
- Gale, B. (1994). *Managing Customer Value*. New York: The Free Press. Retrieved from <http://www.SimonandSchuster.com>
- Gehrels, S., Kristanto, S., & Eringa, K. (2006). Managing Word Of Mouth Communication In Michelin Starred Restaurants In The Netherlands. *Jurnal Manajemen Perhotelan*, 2(2), 47-56. <https://doi.org/10.9744/jmp.2.2>.
- Goyal, A., & Singh, N. (2007) "Consumer perception about fast food in India: an exploratory study", *British Food Journal*, 109 (2), 182-195. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00070700710725536>
- Glowa, T. (2014). *Measuring Customer Satisfaction: Exploring Customer Satisfaction's Relationship with Purchase Behavior*. Bookbaby.
- Ha, J., & Jang, S. (2012). 'The effects of dining atmospherics on behavioral intentions through quality perception. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 26 (3), 204 - 215. <https://doi.org/10.1108/08876041211224004>
- Haghighi, M., Dorosti, A., Rahnama, A., & Hoseinpour, A. (2012). Evaluation of factors affecting customer loyalty in the restaurant industry. *African Journal of Business Management*, 6 (14), 5039-5046. <https://doi.org/10.5897/AJBM11.2765>
- Haider, M., Jan, D., Jan, M., & Jan, M. (2010). Factors Effecting Brand Preferences: A Comparative Study of McDonald's and KFC. *Abasyn Journal of Social Sciences*, 5 (2), 28-42.
- Hair, JF., Black, WC., Babin, BJ., Anderson, RE., & Tatham, RL. (2009). *Multivariate Data Analysis*. Prentice Hall.
- Hanaysha, J. (2016). Examining the Link Between Word Of Mouth And Brand Equity: A Study On International Fast Food Restaurants In Malaysia. *Journal of Asian Business Strategy*, 6 (3), 41- 49. Retrieved 8 1 2018, from <http://aessweb.com/journal-detail.php?id=5006>
- Hanaysha, J. (2016). Restaurant Location and Price Fairness as Key determinants of Brand Equity: A Study on Fast Food Restaurant Industry. *Business and Economic Research*, 6 (1), 310-323 <https://doi.org/10.5296/ber.v6i1.9352>
- Hanaysha, J. (2016). The Importance of Social Media Advertisements in Enhancing Brand Equity: A Study on Fast Food Restaurant industry in Malaysia. *International Journal of Innovation, Management and Technology*, 7 (2), 46-51. doi:10.18178/ijimt.2016.7.2.643
- Hanif, M., Hafeez, S., & Riaz, A. (2010). Factors Affecting Customer Satisfaction. *International Research Journal of Finance and Economics*, 60, 1450-2887. Retrieved 8 2, 2018 from <http://www.eurojournals.com/finance.htm>
- Haven, A. (2015). Consumer Behavior and the Growth of the Fast Food Industry in a Small Emerging Country. *International Journal of advances in Managements and Economics*, 4 (3), 180-189 Retrieved 9 2,2018 from <https://www.managementjournal.info>
- Herklots, T., & Sampogna, N. Zagat releases 2011 fast food survey. Retrieved 8 7, 2018 from <http://www.zagat.com/press/2011-fast-food-survey-results>.

- Heung, V., & Gu, T. (2012). 'Influence of restaurant atmospherics on patron satisfaction and behavioral intentions'. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31(4), 1167–1177. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2012.02.004>
- Hoyer, W., & MacInnis, D. (2001). *Consumer behaviour*. Boston MA: Houghton-Mifflin.
- <https://www.subway.com.au/About/FAQs>. (2016, February 24). Retrieved from Subway, EAT well GO live life: <https://www.subway.com.au/About/FAQs>
- Huang, R., & Sarigöllü, E. (2012). How brand awareness relates to market outcome, brand equity, and the marketing mix. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(1), 92–99. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.02.003
- Hulland, J. (1999). Use of partial least squares (PLS) in strategic management research: A review of four recent studies. *Strategic Management Journal*, 20 (2), 195-204. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-0266\(199902\)20:2<195::AID-SMJ13>3.0.CO;2-7](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199902)20:2<195::AID-SMJ13>3.0.CO;2-7)
- Hyun, S., & Kim, W. (2011). Dimensions of Brand Equity in the Chain Restaurant Industry. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 52(4), 429–437. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1938965510397533>
- Jaini, A., Ahmad, N., & Zaib, S. (2015). Determinant Factors that Influence Customers' Experience in Fast Food Restaurants in Sungai Petani, Kedah. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Business*, 3 (1), 60 - 71. Retrieved 12 8 2017, <http://fkp.umk.edu.my/journal/download/5-v3>.
- Jang, S., & Namkung, Y. (2009). Perceived quality, emotions, and behavioral intentions: Application of an extended Mehrabian–Russell model to restaurants. *Journal of Business Research*, 62 (4), 451- 460. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2008.01.038>
- Jin, N., Lee, S., & Huffman, L. (2012). Impact of Restaurant Experience on Brand Image And Customer Loyalty Moderating Role Of Dining Motivation. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 29 (6), 532–551. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2012.701552>
- Johns, N., & Howard, A. (1998). Customer Expectations versus Perceptions of Service Performance in the Food Service Industry. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 9 (3), 248-265. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09564239810223556>
- Jonge, J., Van Trijp H, Renes RJ., & Frewer LJ. (2010). Consumer confidence in the safety of food and newspaper coverage of food safety issues: a longitudinal perspective. *Risk Anal*, 30(1), 125-42. doi: 10.1111/j.1539-6924.2009.01320.x. Epub 2009 Dec 11
- Kahn, B. (2000). "That elusive customer loyalty: how to build it, learn from it and profit from it". *White Paper*. Retrieved from [http:// knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/](http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/)
- Kalra, R. (2001). Please please me. *Restaurant Business*, 100 (4), 22.
- Kara, A., Kaynak, E., Kucukemiroglu, O. (1995). "Marketing strategies for fast-food restaurants: a customer view", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 7 (4), 16-22, <https://doi.org/10.1108/09596119510146823>
- Keller, K. (2008). *Strategic Brand Management* (3rd ed. Upper Saddle River ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Khuong, M., Phuong, N., & Chau, T. (2016). The Effects of Travel Service Quality on Organization Perceived Value, Satisfaction and Word-Of-Mouth—A study in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. *Review of European Studies*, 8 (3), 36-48. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/res.v8n3p36>
- Kim, W., & Kim, H. (2004). Measuring Customer-Based Restaurant Brand Equity. *Cornell Hotel And Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 45(2), 115-131. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0010880404264507>

- King, Racherla, & Bush. (2014). What We Know and Don't Know About Online Word-of-Mouth: A Review and Synthesis of the Literature. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(1), 167-183. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2014.02.001>
- Kivela, J., & Chu, C. (2001). Delivering quality service: Diagnosing favourable and unfavourable service encounter in restaurants. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 25 (3), 257-271. doi: 10.1177/109634800102500302
- Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2010). *Principles of marketing*: Pearson Education.
- Kremer, F., & Viot, C. (2012). How store brands build retailer brand image. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 40 (7), 528-543 <https://doi.org/10.1108/09590551211239846>
- Kumar, I., Garg, R., & Rahman, Z. (2010). 'Influence of retail atmospherics on customer value in an emerging market'. *Great Lakes Herald*, 4 (1), 1-13.
- Kumar, S., & Advani, J. (2005). Factors affecting Brand Loyalty: A Study in an emerging market on fast moving consumer goods. *Journal of Customer Behavior*, 4(2), 251-275. doi: 10.1362/1475392054797223
- Kumar, V., Petersen, A., & Leone, R. (2007). How Valuable Is Word of Mouth? *Harvard business review*, 85 (10), 1-9. Retrieved 20 1 18, from [https:// www.hbrreprints.org](https://www.hbrreprints.org)
- Lachat, C., Nago, E., Verstraeten, R., Roberfroid, D., Camp, J. V., & Kolsteren, P. (2012). Eating out of home and its association with dietary intake: a systematic review of the evidence. *Obesity Reviews*, 13 (4) 329-346. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-789X.2011.00953.x>
- Ladhari, R. (2007). The Effect of Consumption Emotions on Satisfaction and Word-of-Mouth Communications. *Psychology & Marketing*, 24 (12), 1085-1108. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20195>
- Lau, G., & Lee, H., (1999). Consumers' Trust in a Brand and the Link to Brand Loyalty. *Journal of Market - Focused Management*, 4 (4), 341-370
- Law, K Y., Hui, Y.V., Zhao, X., (2004). Modeling repurchase frequency and customer satisfaction for fast food outlets. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, 21 (5), 545-563. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02656710410536563>
- Lehtinen, U., & Lehtinen, J. (1991). Two approaches to service quality dimensions. *The Service Industrial Journal*, 11 (3), 287-303. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069100000047>
- Lesser, L., Kayekjian, KC, Velasquez, P., Tseng, CH., Brook, R., & Cohen, D. (2013). Adolescent Purchasing Behavior at McDonald's and Subway. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 53 (4), 441- 445. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.02.014>
- Liang, C., & Wang, W. (2007). An insight into the impact of a retailer's relationship efforts on customers' attitudes and behavioral intentions. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 25 (5), 336-366. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02652320710772998>
- Lindstrom, M. (2005). *Brand Sense: Build Powerful Brands through Touch, Taste, Smell, Sight, and Sound*. 15 (1), New York. NY: Free Press. A Division of Simon and Schuster Inc.
- Low, G., & Lamb Jr, C. (2000). The measurement and dimensionality of brand associations. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 9 (6), 350-368. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420010356966>
- MacGowan, I. (2012). IBISWorld Industry Report G5125a: Fast Food in Australia. *IBISWorld*.
- Mackay, N., Spies, H., Williams, C., Jansen, L., Rensburg, V., & Petzer, D. (2013). The influence of service brand equity on the strength of brand relationships in the fast food. *Southern African Business Review*, 17 (2), 67-92.

- Macrae, C., & Bodenhausen, G. (2000). Social Cognition: Thinking Categorically about Others. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 51, 93–120. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.51.1.93>
- Madura, B., Stecko, J., & Mentel, G. (2016). Brand Image Vs. Consumer Trust. *Actual Problems of Economics*, 8 (182), 237-245.
- Marković, S., Raspor, S., & Dorčić, J. (2011). What are the Key Dimensions of Restaurant Service Quality? An Empirical Study in the City Restaurant. *Sustainable Tourism: Socio-Cultural, Environmental and Economic Impact*, 4 (7), 235-249. Retrieved 5 7, 2018 from <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2165742>
- Matzler, K., & Füller, J. (2008). The Impact of Satisfaction and Image on Loyalty: The Case of Alpine Ski Resorts. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, 18 (2), 163-178. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09604520810859210>
- Metin, I. & Kizgin, Y. (2015). Multinational fast food chains' "Global Think, Local Act Strategy" and consumer preferences in Turkey. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 7 (1), 106-116.
- Mohammad, T., Barker, S., & Kandampully, J. (2005). Multicultural Student Perceptions of Fast Food Restaurant Brands: An Australian Study. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, 12 (4), 93-117. doi:10.1300/J150v12n04_06
- Mckinney, M., & Benson, A. (2013). The value of brand trust. *Journal of Brand Strategy*, 2 (1), 76-86.
- Muller, C. (1998). Endorsed Branding: The Next Step in Restaurant-Brand Management. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 39 (3), 90-96. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-8804\(98\)80303-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-8804(98)80303-0)
- Naina, R., & Daud, M. (2012). The impact of religious sensitivity on brand trust, equity and values of fast food industry in Malaysia. *Business Strategy Series*, 13 (1), 21-30 <https://doi.org/10.1108/17515631211194599>
- Namin, A. (2017). Revisiting customers' perception of service quality in fast food restaurants. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 34, 70-81 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2016.09.008>
- Namkung, Y., & Jang, S. (2008). Are highly satisfied restaurant customers really different? A quality perception perspective. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 20 (2), 142-155. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09596110810852131>
- Nasheen, R. M. (2017). Determinants of eating at local and western fast-food venues in an urban Asian population: a mixed methods approach. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 14 (1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-017-0515-x>
- Nguyen, N., Leclerc, A., & LeBlanc, G. The Mediating Role of Customer Trust on Customer Loyalty. *Journal of Service Science and Management*, 6 (1), 96-109. doi: 10.4236/jssm.2013.61010
- Nicolini, G., & Salini, S. (2006). Customer Satisfaction in the Airline Industry: the Case of British Airways. *Quality and Reliability Engineering International*, 22 (5), 581–589. <https://doi.org/10.1002/qre.763>
- Ojo, O. (2010). The Relationship Between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in the Telecommunication Industry: Evidence From Nigeria. *Broad Research in Accounting, Negotiation, and Distribution*, 1 (1), 88-100.
- Oliver, R. L. (1999). "Whence consumer loyalty? *Journal of Marketing*, 63, 33-44. doi: 10.2307/1252099
- Olsen, S. O. (2002). Comparative Evaluation and the Relationship Between Quality Satisfaction, and Repurchase Loyalty. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 30 (3), 240-249 doi: 10.1177/0092070302303005
- Ovidiu, I. (2005). The concept of brand equity - A comparative approach. *Munich Personal RePEc Archive*, 212-219.

- Pappu, R., & Quester, P. (2015). How does Brand Innovativeness affect Brand Loyalty? *European Journal of Marketing*, 50 (1/2), 1- 44. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-01-2014-0020>
- Pappu, R., Quester, P., & Cooksey, R. (2006). Consumer-based brand equity and country-of-origin relationships. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40 (5/6), 696-717 <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560610657903>
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V., & Berry, L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A Multi-Item Scale for Measuring. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12- 40.
- Patterson, P. & Smith, T. (2001). “Modeling relationship strength across service types in an eastern culture”. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 12 (2), 90-113. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09564230110387470>
- Patterson, A. S. (2008). An examination of the impact of cultural orientation and familiarity in service encounter evaluations. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 19 (5), 662-681. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09564230810903514>
- Patrick, A.S. (2002). Building trustworthy software agents. *IEEE Internet Computing*, 6(6), 46-53
- Pavesic, D. (1989). Psychological aspects of menu pricing. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 8 (1), 43-49. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0278-4319\(89\)90030-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0278-4319(89)90030-3)
- Perry, A., & Wisonm, D. (2003). *Before the Brand: Creating the Unique DNA of an enduring Brand Identity*. McGraw Hill Professional, 1-228
- Petzer, D., & Mackay, N. (2014). Dining atmospherics and food and service quality as predictors of customer satisfaction at sit-down restaurants. *African Journal of Hospitality*, 3 (2), 1-14. Retrieved 5 10, 2017 from <http://www.ajhtl.com>
- Pham, L., Nga Do, H., & Phung, T. (2016). The Effect Of Brand Equity And Perceived Value On Customer Revist Intention: A Study In Quick Service Restaurants In Vietnam. *Acta Oeconomica Pragensia*, 24 (5), 14-30.
- Pingali, P. (2007). Westernization of Asian diets and the transformation of food systems: Implications for research and policy. *Food Policy*, 32(3), 281-298.
- Pourdehghan, A. (2015). The impact of marketing mix elements on brand loyalty: A case study of mobile phone industry. *Marketing and Branding Research*, 2, 44-63.
- Prakash, A., & Mohanty, R. (2012). Understanding service quality. *Production Planning & Control*, 24 (12), 1-16. doi: 10.1080/09537287.2011.643929
- Ramseook-Munhurrun, P. (2012). Perceived Service Quality In Restaurant Services: Evidence From Mauritius. *International Journal of Management And Marketing Research*, 5 (3), 1-14.
- Rashid, I., Abdullah, M., & Yusuf, B. (2014). Impact of Service and Food Quality on Customer Satisfaction Among Generation Y for the Fast Food Restaurant in. *Journal of Social Sciences Research*, 5 (2), 784-793.
- Ribeiro Soriano, D. (2002). Customers’ expectations factors in restaurants: the situation in Spain. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, 19 (8/9), 1055–1067. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02656710210438122>
- Ronsen, A.-M. (2015). *How to Start a Franchise*. Smash words. Retrieved 12 5, 2017, from <http://cqx.sagepub.com>

- Rydell, S., Harnack, L.J., Oakes, JM Story, M Jeffery, RW ., French, SA . (2008). Why Eat at Fast-Food Restaurants: Reported Reasons among Frequent Consumers. *Journal of American Dietetic Association*, 108 (12), 2066-2070. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2008.09.008>
- Sabir, R., Irfan, M., Akhtar, N., Pervez, M., & Rehman, A. (2014). Customer Satisfaction in the Restaurant Industry; Examining the Model in Local Industry Perspective. *Journal of Asian Business Strategy*, 4 (1), 18-31. Retrieved 12 02, 2017, from <http://aessweb.com/journal-detail.php?id=5006>
- Salami, R. A. (2012). Costumer Perceptions about Fast Food Restaurants in Asaba. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 12 (1), 21- 8.
- Sanyal, S., & Datta, S. (2011). The effect of perceived quality on brand equity: an empirical study on generic drugs. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 23 (5), 604-625. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13555851111183057>
- Schneider, B., & White, S. (2004). *Service quality: research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schulz, R. N. (2012). Effects of Branding On Restaurant's Image: A Case Of Selected Restaurants In Nairobi, Kenya. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 1 (8), 56-66. Retrieved 27 3, 2017 from <http://www.ejbss.com/recent.aspx>
- Shamsuddoha, M., Alamgir, M., & Nedelea, A. (2010). Influence Of Brand Name On Concuemer Decision Making Process An Empirical Study On Car Buyers. *Va Trimitem Atasat*, 10 (2), 1-12.
- Shobri, N. D., Wahab, S., Ahmad, N. L., & Ain, N. R. (2012). The Influence of Consumer Socialization on Brand Loyalty: Survey on Malaysian Fast Food Consumer. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 65, 523 – 529. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.11.159> .
- Shook, C., Ketchen, J., Hult, M., & Kacmar, K. M. (2004). An Assessment of the use of structural equation modeling in strategic management research. *Strategic Management Journal*, 25 (4), 397–404. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.385>
- Shukla, L. (2013). Case Study on Customer Acquisition and Retention on the Airline Service Industry. *Journal of Business and Management*, 9 (4) 15-33. Retrieved 12 6, 2018 from [https:// www.iosrjournals.org](https://www.iosrjournals.org)
- Siebert, M. (2015). *Franchise Your Business: The Guide to Employing the Greatest Growth Strategy Ever*. Entrepreneur Press.
- Swaen, V., & Chumpitaz, R. (2008). Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility On Consumer Trust. *Journal of Marketing*, 23 (4), 7-34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/205157070802300402>
- Taghizadeh, H., Taghipourian, M., & Khazaei, A. (2013). The Effect of Customer Satisfaction on Word of Mouth Communication. *Journal of Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology*, 5(7), 2569-2575. doi: 10.19026/rjaset.5.4698
- Tan, T., Devinaga, R., & Hishamuddin, I. (2012). The Common Challenges of Brand Equity Creation among Local Fast Food Brands in Malaysia. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 8 (2), 96-106. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v8n2p96>
- Teichert, T., Effertz, T., Tsoi, M., & Shchekoldin, V. (2015). Predicting Brand Perception for Fast Food Market Entry. *Theoretical Economics Letters*, 5, 697-712. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/tel.2015.56081>
- Tim, L., Beevi, Z., & Yeap, R. (2014). Effects of Fast-Food Branding on Children's Taste Preferences. *Southeast Asia Psychology Journal*, 2, 39-56. Retrieved 8 11, 2017 from <http://www.cseap.edu.my/sapj>
- Torlak, Ö., Tiltay, M., Doğan, V., & Özkara, B. (2013). The Effect of Brand Image and Religious Orientation on the Attitudes towards Religious Brand Names: A Study on Youth Consumers. *European Marketing Academy (EMAC)*, 5 (3), 37-46. Retrieved 12 12, 2017 from <http://www.isarder.org>

- Untaru, E., & Ispas, A. (2013). Why do young people prefer fast - food restaurants? An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Tourism, 15* (15), 27-34
- Vázquez, R., Álvarez, L., & Lanza, D. (2013). The Word of Mouth Dynamic: How Positive (and Negative) WOM Drives Purchase Probability: An Analysis of Interpersonal and Non-Interpersonal Factors. *Journal of Advertising Research, 53* (1), 43-60. doi: 10.2501/JAR-53-1-043-060
- Warrach, U., Ahmad, N., & Qureshi, F. (2013). Customer Retention in Fast Food Industry. *Journal of Marketing, 1*, 41- 47.
- Whiteley, B. (1991). *The Customer Driven Company*. Business News Publishing.
- Wood, L. (2000). Brands and brand equity: definition and management. *Management Decision, 38*(9), 662- 669. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740010379100>
- Wright, L., Millman, C., & Martin, L. (2007). Research issues in building brand equity and global brands in the PC market. *Journal of Marketing Management, 3* (1), 137-155. <https://doi.org/10.1362/026725707X178602>
- Yang, F. X. (2013). Effects of Restaurant Satisfaction and Knowledge Sharing Motivation on eWOM Intentions: *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, 41* (1), 93-127 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348013515918>
- Yasin, N., Noor, M., & Mohamad, O. (2007). Does image of country-of-origin matter to brand equity? *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 16* (1), 38–48. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420710731142>
- Yoo, B., Donthu, N., & Lee, S. (2001). Developing and validating a multidimensional consumer-based brand equity scale. *Journal of Business Research, 52* (1), 1-14. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963\(99\)00098-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963(99)00098-3)
- Yu, C., & Tang, X. (2010). The Construct and Influence of Word of Mouth: Receiver Perspectives. *Journal of Chinese Marketing, 3*, 13-18.
- Zamil, A. (2011). The Impact of Word of Mouth (WOM) on the Purchasing Decision of the Jordanian Consumer. *Research Journal of International Studies, 20*, 24-29.
- Zangmo, M., Liampreecha, W., & Chemsripong, S. (2015). The Impact of Service Quality On Customer Retention In Airline Industry of Buthan. *International Business Management, 9* (6), 1281-1284.
- Zeithaml, V. A., & Bitner, M. J. (1996). *Services Marketing*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Zhou, N. (2016). E-business Strategy for SUBWAY Restaurants.

This page was intetionally left blank

Appendix

Survey

The present survey is a study part of a master dissertation; in the field of International Business, all the data collected will be treated strictly anonymous.

1. Please indicate a fast food restaurant brand that you have visited in Nicaragua: *

2. Regarding the fast food brand you have mentioned above please indicate your degree of agreement with the following statements: *

3. Has a good Interior decoration and design *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

4. Has a convenient parking place*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

5. Has Clean tables *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

6. Has Ease of access to the menu *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

7. Has Staff friendliness *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

8. Is a Relaxing place to eat *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

9. Has a Reasonable wait time *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

10. Easiness of ordering and payment *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

11. Has a fast service *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

12. Has a good Price in the food *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

13 I consider that the food has a good size *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

14. Freshness of ingredients *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

15. I feel quite confident that this fast-food restaurant will always try to treat me fairly*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

16. This fast-food restaurant would never try to gain an advantage by deceiving its clients*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

17. I feel quite confident that this fast-food restaurant will always try to treat me fairly *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

18. This fast-food restaurant is trust worthy*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

19. I am aware of the restaurant Brand *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

20. I can quickly remember the symbol or logo, of this brand restaurant chain*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

21. Some characteristics of the chain restaurant brand come to my mind quickly*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

22. I can recognize the chain restaurant brand among other competing brands*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

23. I like and trust the company, which makes this brand *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

24. The brand of this restaurant has a repute reputation for quality*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

25. I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it saves me Time in food preparation*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

26. I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it tastes better Than home-cooked food *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

27 I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it is nutritious*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

28. I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it offers a wider menu compared to other fast food outlets *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

29. I prefer to purchase fast food from this franchise outlet because it conveniently Located and accessible *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

30. I prefer to buy fast food from this franchise, because it offers a good and fast customer service*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Strongly Agree

31. I prefer to buy fast food from this franchise, because I think there is a good relationship with respect to quality-price*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

32. I would you say positive things about this restaurant to other people *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

33. I would you recommend this restaurant to others who seeks your advice t to others who seeks your advice*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

34. I would you encourage to friends and family to visit this restaurant*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

35. The brand of this restaurant has a fashionable and trendy image

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
-

36. The brand of this restaurant has unique features *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Disagree

37. The brand of this restaurant provides me a better lifestyle *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongy Agree

38. The brand of this restaurant provides good value to its customers *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

39. Even if another brand has the same price as this brand, I would still buy this brand *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

40. It makes sense to buy this brand instead of any other brands, even if they are the Same*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
-
-

Agree

Strongly Agree

41. The restaurant staff gives customers individual attention*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

42. The staff members have clean neat, appropriate dress and appearance *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

43. The staff served food in promised time*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

44. The staff handles customer complaints *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

45. The staff is always willing to help Customers *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
-

Agree

Strongly Agree

46. The staff has knowledge and confidence *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

47. The food quality of the restaurant is good *

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

48. The restaurant insist on error-free service

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Gender *

- Man
- Woman

Age *

What is your occupation *

What is your monthly salary *

- C\$ 1,000 – 5,000
- C\$ 5,000 – 10,000
- C\$ 10,000 – 20,000
- C\$ 20,000 and up

It has been easy to answer this survey *

-
-

Yes

No

I don't know

More or less

This page was intetionally left blank