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A Study on the Relationship Among Brand Image, Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, and Customer Loyalty – Taking 'the Bao Wei Zhen Catering Team' As an Empirical Study

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Abstract

This research focused on the industries of catering services and took the Bao Wei Zhen Catering Team, for example, to explore the relationship between 'brand image', 'service quality', 'customer satisfaction', and 'customer loyalty'. It was meant to found out the important factors affecting consumer satisfaction and the words of mouth. From this research, it could be found that service quality exerted very important influence on the culture of traditional catering services. That was to say when service quality was good, not only the brand image could be improved but also customer satisfaction would be enhanced. Therefore, if it was necessary to further improve the competitiveness of traditional catering service industries, the improvement of service quality was required. Through the improvement of service quality, the current plight faced by the culture of catering services could be effectively improved.

Keywords: brand image, service quality, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, catering team

1. Introduction

In 2004, the Culture and Development Commission considered folk customs of outdoor catering to be the most culturally significant dietary achievement in Taiwan. The importance of outdoor catering in Taiwanese culture was easily recognizable. In the events of the traditional outdoor catering, there were shelters and tents set up on along streets. In the past, because tents were always marked with the sign of the Black Pine soda drink, it was commonly known as the Black Pine Hotel (Wu Jing-yi, 2008). Despite the changes happening with times, the culture of outdoor catering activities still existed in different scenes on street and alleys. No matter in the events of weddings, funerals,

temple festivals, the parties of new homes and other activities, outdoor catering still played a pivotal role.

Additionally, for the past few years, large hotels and restaurants had been mushrooming everywhere to continuously develop customer groups. To cater to the preference of the public, almost every restaurant or restaurant provided catering services for the events of weddings and festivals. Such catering events had become the very important strongholds for every competitor to occupy the markets of traditional catering services. From the standpoint of the operators of traditional catering services, such a trend was the inevitable fever for the catering services among restaurants. As Wu Wuz-hong, Fan Shi-ping, and Zhu Ting-jia (2006) found, restaurants and hotels often used services, tastes and atmosphere to serve as marketing ways. These marketing ways directly threatened the business of traditional catering service industries to cause them losing their leadership in these markets. In addition, many restaurant chefs turned their focus on the industries of catering services. Because of the low cost to enter such catering services, the competition was mainly centered on cooking skills. These new comers started to threaten old operators.

As consumers demanded higher value in consumption, current meal services were not only focused on filling stomachs, but also meeting the purpose of entertainment. Therefore, in addition to the consideration of dish characteristics, operators had to consider the on-site facilities to meet customer needs as well. In view of this, the industries of traditional catering services were now facing the fierce challenges from the competitors in food and beverage markets. How to perceive the changes on market structure to further adjust their own business strategies had become an important task. Therefore, based on the sustainable operation of the business of catering services, operators necessarily improved their products, services, and equipment actively while consolidating the brand image in the mind of consumers. Fang Hui-qin and Cai Chang-qing (2013) also discovered the increasing emphasis on quality when the operators of catering services were attempting to meet consumer demands with the changes happening to the business climate of catering service markets. Wang Ming-yuan and Ye Zong-qi (2015) also indicated as environment changes, the operators of catering services had to adjust and innovate to meet consumer demands. Through qualitative researches, experts found that catering services had the advantages in prices and fresh ingredients. However, they still faced some issues like the right to use venues on streets, inconvenient preservation of food ingredients, event times focused on holidays, manpower lack and service quality, etc.

As the business climate became much more competitive and customers showed the demands on higher quality, they were facing the business climate with more severe challenges. Service products and customer satisfaction had long been considered as the main factor affecting the winners emerging from competitive markets. As many scholars had indicated, quality and satisfaction were related to customer loyalty. These factors could reduce customer complaints but expand the words of mouth from customers. The aforesaid researches indicated the important relationship between the effectiveness of customer services and business success. For the industries of catering services, every scenario for providing services was different and service scenarios actually affected the service quality perceived by customers. Therefore, service providers should be more attentive to the ways how to improve customer satisfaction under different service scenarios. Furthermore, because the industries of traditional catering services were featured with the significance of family heritage, brand image was also highly meaningful for the industries of catering services. Therefore, this research was mainly meant to explore whether service quality and brand image could improve customer satisfaction and deepen customer loyalty from customer perspectives to further provide effective suggestions for the improvement of the competitiveness of the industries of traditional catering services.

The aforesaid research background and motivation about the ways how to grasp repeated consumption willingness among consumers would profoundly affect the sustainable business of the operators of catering services. This research focused on the industries of catering services and took the Bao Wei Zhen Catering Team for example to explore the relationship among "brand image", "service quality", "customer satisfaction" and "customer loyalty". It was meant to found out the important factors affecting consumer satisfaction and the words of mouth. As such, it was helpful for the industries of catering services to create more niche and competitive advantages. The purposes of this research were organized as below:

1. It was meant to explore the influence on customer satisfaction exerted by the service quality and brand image of the industries of catering services.

2. It was meant to explore the influence on customer loyalty exerted by service quality and brand image.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition and history of catering services

The pronunciation of "pān-toh" meant catering services in the Minnan dialect and in Mandarin, it was pronounced "Waihui" (Lai Yingxiu, 2014). It meant the operators dealing with the business of catering services. Banquets were prepared by a chef (the general chef or the handling chef) at the locations designated by customers. This chef arranged a complete set of banquet services different from routine procedures to provide food and beverage. These banquets of catering services were normally arranged for lifelong important events or occasions served as important activities available for hosts to hospitalize guests (Lin Heng-li, 1999; Zhu Ting-jia, 2004). Zhang Yu-xin (2007) proposed from the perspective of current management science, catering services meant "outside meals" referring to the events with the operators of catering services sending chefs to designated locations and having meals ready for customers. The contents included a whole set of the activities available for banquet services featured with 3 points, namely unfixed times, unfixed locations and unfixed manpower. Zeng Pin-chang (2010) defines catering services meant the banquet events to hospitalize guests at home or private places. It was one of the main ways for the Han tribe of Taiwanese to entertain guests. In the past, the literatures also referred to "catering services" as "banquet setup" to hospitalize guests. Catering services were often informally called the "Black Pine Hotel" among Taiwanese. Zeng Pin-chang (2010) contended s that since the Qing Dynasty, the Han Tribe of Taiwanese had invited guests with their own meals prepared. Additionally, professional chefs (called "Zongbosai") were hired to make meals at home. Therefore, this term meant "chefs were hired to hold banquets at home" different from the occasions with guests hospitalized at restaurants.

Zhu Ting-jia (2004) also indicated that the industries of catering services in Taiwan had shown different styles changing with social and economic development. They had developed from "workout" to "the professional contracting work". In recent years, restaurants and hotels had plundered the markets of traditional catering services by providing high quality services, atmospheres and tastes posing the great threat to the industries of traditional catering services. Based on the aforesaid challenges, the industries of traditional catering services also changed their concept of traditionally simple cooking services. They started to pay attention to customer demands gradually concerned about the issues such as the selection of utensils, the changes in dishes, staff quality, hardware equipment, food safety and hygiene.

2.2. Service quality

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985, 1988) defined that service quality was a comparison between the quality actually perceived or experienced by customers (experience quality) and the service desired by customers. It was called a gap analysis and later developed into the SERVQUAL Scale with 22 question items. It was mainly to conduct subjective measurement on service quality in 5 dimensions including tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

Tangibility meant the places of providing service, together with the equipment and the persons providing service. Reliability meant the capability to provide customers with promised service correctly and reliably. Responsiveness meant the willingness of service personnel help customers and provide service immediately. Assurance meant the professionalism, politeness and reliability of service personnel.

Empathy meant service suppliers care about customers and also provide other special care. Therefore, the SERVQUAL Scale used the gap between customer expectations and actual service received to measure service quality. Bitner and Hubbert (1994) defined service quality as the overall impression of the customer on positive and negative matters onto a particular organization and its services. Lethinen and Lethinen (1991) viewed service quality as the interaction between customers and service providers. It could be categorized as process quality and output quality. The former meant the subjective evaluation on service given by customers. The latter meant the evaluation on overall service activities given by customers.

In addition, service quality should be viewed as an important concept in the industries of catering services and it was closely related to whether the industries of catering services could continue their business forever. By providing the service quality satisfied by customers, it helps the operators of catering services survive from fierce competition. Higgins (1995) contended service quality was a subjective cognitive quality. In other words, service quality was subjective trust yet not subjective evaluation. Parsons (1992) viewed service quality as the overall attitude or behavior of the customers continuing their consumption after consuming a particular service. Shen and Chen (2006) also contended service quality played an important role in the competition of the operators of catering services. When operators could not effectively remedy customer dissatisfaction or service failures, they would cause the betrayal actions of customers. According to the proposal of Parasuraman and his crews (1985) including 31 items and 5 aspects of the SERVQUAL Scale, Knutson, Stevens, Patton and Thompson (1993) also proposed the LODGSERV Scale for the service quality of catering services.

By focusing on the characteristics of the industries of catering services, there were 5 items added to form the LODGSERV Scale including 5 dimensions and 36 options. Subsequently, through confirmatory factor analysis, the scale was further revised into 5 dimensions and 26 question items for measuring the service quality of the industries of catering services. Finally, the LODGSERV Scale included 5 dimensions, namely tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. This research would also use the LODGSERV Scale to measure the service quality of the industries of catering services. By summarizing the aforesaid literatures, this research contended service quality was the subjective perception of customers rather than the objective evaluation. Additionally, it meant the remarks on service providers given by customers when making the comparison between desired quality and actual quality.

2.3. Customer satisfaction

Russell, McColl, and Coote (2007) defined customer satisfaction as the predecessor of brand opinion, brand intention and customer loyalty after customers experience services. Joewono and Kubota (2007) indicated customer satisfaction was the evaluation for customers to measure a particular product or service and overall consumer experience. Lin (2007) mentioned if the industries of catering services could provide excellent service quality, they indeed met the different needs of customers in the industries. Chih (2007) also strongly believed customer satisfaction was originated from the purchase and use of specific services conducted by customers. If better services were provided, customers would feel more satisfied. Ostrom and Iacobucci (1995) uses multiple items to define customer satisfaction including product prices, service efficiency, attitude of service personnel, the overall performance of a company and the closeness toward the ideal company. Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) indicated customer satisfaction meant the overall evaluation of customers onto products and intangible services. Service quality was only a measurement onto a single dimension. However, customer satisfaction meant the measurement of multiple reconfigurable dimensions including service quality, product quality, institutional factors, individual factors and price factors. The relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality had existed for a long time (Negi, 2009). Parasuraman and his crews (1985) believed the higher perception onto service quality from customers also improves customer satisfaction. In addition, scholars conducting relevant researchers also found that service quality could improve customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction depended on the quality of service provided by service providers (Saravana and Rao, 2007, Lee, Lee, and Yoo, 2000).

Luo Junxian and Huang Shihao (2014) indicated there was usually a positive causal relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in food and beverage industries. Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996) also found service quality could positively affect the behavioral intentions of customers. The behavioral intentions of customers were probably stimulated by the satisfaction of a service plan. Therefore, good service could improve customer satisfaction (Keaveney, 1995).

2.4. Customer loyalty

Customer loyalty was an important factor in helping service providers to create profits (Reynolds, Darden, and Martin, 1974). Generally, loyal customers bought more by spending less service time. They were less sensitive to prices but bring with new customers (Reichheld and Schefter, 2000). Fornell (1992) contended s customer loyalty could be measured through purchase intention and price tolerance from customers. Oliver (1997) contended customer loyalty was the promise created for a certain product or service and the customer would continue consuming this product and be loyal to the products or services of this the brand range. Also, customers would not change brands under the influence of the changes happening to market conditions and market competitiveness. They could be subdivided into attitude loyalty and behavior loyalty. Neal (1999) proposed customer loyalty meant the ratio of customers choosing original products or services after comparing with those provided by other competitors. Singh and Sirdeshmukh (2000) contended customer loyalty meant the behavioral tendency continuing to maintain their relationship with suppliers including 2 dimensions, namely behavior and attitude. Reichheld and Schefter (2000) indicated loyalty meant winning the trust of customers. Gronholdt, Martensen and Kristensen (2000) classified customer loyalty into 4 dimensions including repurchase intention, the recommendation of a company or a product to others, price tolerance and cross-buying intention.

Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol (2002) propose customer loyalty should include two parts, behavior (the purchase behavior of customers) and attitude (the emotional perception of customers). Auh, Bell, McLeod and Shih (2007) indicated loyalty should embrace attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty. The former meant the tendency of customers still supporting providers, while the latter meant customers would repeatedly consume products and services from original providers.

2.5. Brand image

In addition to prices, brand image plays an important role in the decision process of consumer purchase. Generally, higher brand image meant product quality had beyond a certain level. Contrarily, lower brand image or no brand existing meant consumers had no confidence on products. Jacoby, Speller and Berning (1974) found brand image and prices were the valuable informational clues in the decision- making process of consumers. Park, Jaworski, and Macinnis (1986) classified brands into 3 categories based on different consumer demands including functional brands, symbolic brands and experiential brands. Kotler (2000) defined brand image as the brand belief developed by consumers based on the attributes of each brand. Perry and Wisnom (2003) contended brand image represents the accumulated experience of consumers. Therefore, the cognition of consumers would affect brand image. Nandan (2005) contended s brand image was a brand concept subjectively constructed by consumers. Magid and Cox (2006) contended brand image represents the consumer responsiveness to a particular brand name, symbol or impression recall and it was also a criterion for consumers to judge product quality.
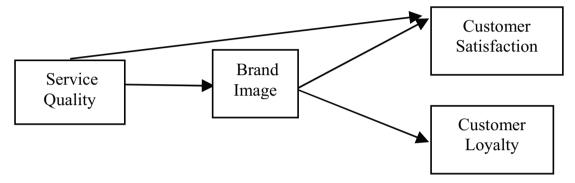
For the researches about brand image, Aaker and Keller (1990) indicated better brand image could make consumers increase their loyalty and purchase willingness. Brand image could be viewed as an intermediary variable in brand awareness and brand loyalty. Dodds, Monroe and Grewal (1991), together with Grewal, Krishnan, Borin and Baker (1998) also found brand image could reduce consumers' perception on features but increase consumers' perception of product quality. Obviously, brand image would affect consumers' evaluation on products. Samiee (1994) contended s better brand image would increase consumers' evaluation on products. Abdullah, Nasser, and Husain (2000) found brand image affected customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Roest and Rindfleisch (2010) take restaurants as research subjects and found the brand image of restaurants would affect the decision made by consumers to choose a restaurant. Therefore, the brand image of a company meant the quality of products, services and the environment provided by a company. Lin Sheng-wei and Li Jun-ru (2006) also indicated the brand image of travel agencies would positively affect customer satisfaction. Ryu, Han and Kim (2008) found that the overall brand image of restaurants would positively affect customer satisfaction.

3. Research Design

This research was mainly meant to explore whether the design of food and beverage products and service quality would affect customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Also, the Bao Wei zhen Creative Cuisine Team was taken for example with research structure illustrated as below.

Finally, complete content and organizational editing before formatting. Please take note of the following items when proofreading spelling and grammar:

3.1. Questionnaire pretest

The questionnaires of this research were aimed at the customers of the Bao Wei Zhen Catering Team to make pretests firstly, and then after unsuitable items were deleted through item analysis, factor analysis, reliability analysis and validity analysis, a formal questionnaire was reachable.

3.2. Collection of formal questionnaires

In this research, the customers of the Bao Wei Zhen Catering Team were served as research subjects and paper- based questionnaires were delivered for testing. Questionnaires were delivered during the period from January 14 to February 14th in 2018. Questionnaires surveys were conducted by using sampling methods. They were delivered to consumers before the end of each banquet. There were totally 600 questionnaires delivered.

3.3. Data analysis method

In this research, questionnaire surveys were adopted. According to the purpose and hypothesis of this research, research questions and variables were defined to generate

research questionnaires. First, item analysis was used to delete unsuitable topics, and then factor analysis was used to test questionnaire validity and conduct reliability analysis. Finally, multiple regression analysis was used to validate research hypothesis.

4. Research Result

There were totally 600 questionnaires delivered with 447 replies received wherein there were 248 males and 199 females. This research used regression analysis to explore service quality, brand image, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

TABLE 1

	β estimation	F	Adj R2
Service Quality → Brand Image	.924***	1054.16***	.712
Brand Image → Customer Satisfaction	.766***	970.09***	.692
Brand Image → Customer Loyalty	.771***	828.15***	.658
Service Quality → Customer Satisfaction	.903***	1726.56***	.799

As it was found from research results, service quality indeed positively affected brand image (β=0.927, $p<0.001$). Brand image positively affected customer satisfaction (β=0.766, $p<0.001$). Brand image positively affected customer loyalty (β=0.771, $p<0.001$). Service quality indeed positively affected customer satisfaction (β=0.903, $p<0.001$)

5. Conclusion

From this research, it could be found service quality exerted very important influence on the culture of traditional catering services. That was to say when service quality was good, not only the brand image could be improved, but also customer satisfaction would be enhanced. Therefore, if it was necessary to further improve the competitiveness of traditional catering service industries, the improvement of service quality was required. Through the improvement of service quality, the current plight faced by the culture of catering services could be effectively improved.

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