EXAMINING THE IMPACTS OF RESTAURANT ATTRIBUTES ON SATISFACTION AND STORYTELLING: THE CASE OF TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

The current research aimed to search the impacts of restaurant attributes on satisfaction, and the impacts of satisfaction on storytelling in restaurants. The data was obtained from 226 academicians and administrators of 8 universities which were both public and private in Gaziantep, Hatay, Şanlıurfa, and Adana provinces of Turkey. The results revealed that food attributes, employees, and physical environment positively affect customer satisfaction. The results also revealed that satisfaction is a significant determinant of storytelling intention.

INTRODUCTION

The cuisines that exist in the world date back to the early civilisations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Hellenic world, China, and Rome with many others (Aydin & Corbaci, 2019). As one of the most respected cuisines, the roots of Turkish cuisine reaches to Mesopotamia, either (Düzgün & Özkaya, 2015). With its multicultural, ethnically diverse, and historically rich background, Turkey has one of the prominent cuisines in the world (Tekiner, 2021). Additionally, climate, geography, trade, synthesis, and interaction of different communities have shaped the Turkish cuisine's distinguished food in terms of variety and flavour (Aydin & Corbaci, 2019). In Turkey, the cuisine varies geographically (Aslan Ceylan et al., 2019). Each region has their own food cultures (Batu & Batu, 2018). Especially Gaziantep, Hatay, Adana, and Şanlıurfa, which are the research areas of this

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study, differentiate themselves from other places in terms of local foods they offer. For example, there are about 600 recipes in Hatay (İflazoğlu & Sahilli Birdir, 2020). In addition, Oğuz et al. (2020) noticed that the cuisine of Adana is an effective element for branding. These destinations have been quite rich aspects culturally and historically. This cultural and historical richness of these destinations' food culture has been formed by different ethnic groups. Furthermore, these destinations have a wide variety of geographically certified products.

Food is not only a basic necessity for human beings (Hsu et al., 2018), it is also a way of having a great time (Şengül et al., 2018). Customers dine in various restaurants to have delicious food and experience pleasurable times (Şengül et al., 2018). Previous studies provide evidences that restaurant attributes influence the customer's restaurant experience (Nemeschansky, 2020). Customers expect restaurants to offer different types of meals, tasty food, service quality, and a welcoming ambience (Wu et al., 2020). The harmony of the restaurant elements, such as service quality, product quality, hygiene, atmosphere (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2003), the friendliness of employees (Medeiros & Salay, 2013), and pricing (Zhong & Moon, 2020) are major indicators of customer satisfaction in restaurants. Thus, it is critical for managers to discover the factors that impact consumers' perceptions (Mathayomchan & Taecharungroj, 2020). Especially today, consumers have many options to eat out. Therefore, in a diversified and expanding marketplace, consumers can simply switch restaurant preferences with ease (Cheng et al., 2021). In addition, the perceived attributes of a restaurant maintain the restaurant's reputation (Danthanarayana & Arachchi, 2020).

The connection between satisfaction and behavioural intention has been investigated by researchers (Lai, 2020). There are different forms of behavioural intentions including revisit intention and word of mouth (WoM) (Han & Ryu, 2007). Storytelling is considered a different type of WoM recently (Zhong et al., 2017), and includes communication instruments, such as stories and social media (Akgün et al., 2015). According to Grębosz-Krawczyk (2020: pp. 74) storytelling 'allows consumers to relive significant moments in their relationship with the brand and encourages them to create their own stories'. People use stories to share different types of information (Grębosz-Krawczyk, 2020). For example, online comments shared by visitors have been considered to be storytelling (Yoo & Gretzel, 2008). Also, any content shared on personal social media accounts can be treated as storytelling (Lund et al., 2018). Storytelling is an enjoyable activity which attracts people's attention (Mei

et al., 2020). Also, people like to share and listen to stories (Bassano et al., 2019). If a story is interesting, it can extend beyond people's personal networks (Lund et., 2018) which may help to enhance restaurant reputation. Although storytelling has an impressive impact on marketing activities, it has received little attention from researchers (Keskin et al., 2016). In one of these studies, Cater et al. (2020) examined the storytelling intention of scuba diving tourists in Turkey. However, limited attention has been devoted to understanding the storytelling intention of consumers in the context of restaurant experience. Since storytelling can lead the development of a restaurant (Mossberg & Eide, 2017), it should be examined further.

Surprisingly, as far as we could tell, restaurant attributes have not been associated with satisfaction and storytelling in Turkey. In this sense, the present research provides a new perspective by examining the influence of restaurant attributes (food attributes, physical environment, employee, and price) on satisfaction and, in turn, storytelling. By doing so, we believe that this study will help us understand the restaurant service in Turkey from the point of view of the local population. Also, restaurant employees can benefit from this research by identifying key factors that satisfy customers, which in turn leads storytelling intention.

The rest of the paper is designed as follows: first, we reviewed the literature on food attributes, physical environment, employee, price, satisfaction, and storytelling, and then proposed hypotheses. This is followed by the presentation of our research method and results. Lastly, we discussed the results and implications of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Food Attributes

Food quality comprises some significant aspects, such as food presentation, preparation, menu design, food variety, safety, appeal, and diet (Hanaysha, 2016; Kala, 2020; Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Raajpoot, 2002; Rozekhi et al., 2016). Food presentation and preparation can be used to attract customers and satisfy their needs. Food presentation means presenting and decorating foods attractively (Namkung & Jang, 2007), and using conventional, traditional, or cultural techniques in the preparation of food (Kala, 2020).

A considerable number of studies have showed that food quality has an effect on customer satisfaction (Al-Tit, 2015; Annaraud & Berezina, 2020; Correia et al., 2008; Ha & Jang, 2010; Han & Hyun, 2017; Kala, 2020; Kala &

Barthwal, 2020; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Meng et al., 2008; Namkung & Jang, 2007; Nield et al., 2000; Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020; Sulek & Hensley, 2004; Wijaya et al., 2013; Zhong & Moon, 2020). For instance, Sulek and Hensley (2004) and Namkung and Jang (2007) indicated that food quality is one of the most influential components in ensuring customer satisfaction. Similarly, Han and Hyun (2017) revealed that high quality of food has the effect of ensuring customer satisfaction. Recently, Zhong and Moon (2020) examined the factors which can affect customer satisfaction and reported that food quality positively affects customer satisfaction. Kala and Barthwal (2020) found that the quality of food contributes to customer satisfaction.

Previous studies also revealed that presenting attractive foods and using traditional or cultural techniques in preparation of food are also important for ensuring customer satisfaction (Babolian Hendijani, 2016; Chi et al., 2013; Erkmen, 2019; Truong et al., 2017). Chi et al. (2013) found that food presentation, one of the components of perceived food image, significantly influences customer satisfaction. Additionally, as Roozbeh et al. (2013) suggested, traditionally prepared foods can affect customer satisfaction. Therefore, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

H$_1$: Food attributes positively affect customer satisfaction.

Physical Environment

Physical environment, in which goods and services are delivered (Ali et al., 2016), is important for influencing customer behaviours in the service industry, as individuals are aware of the physical surroundings of a restaurant (Han & Ryu, 2009). Previous studies found that physical environment is one of the main determinants of satisfaction (Ali et al., 2016; Cullen, 2004; Gunaratne et al., 2012; Han & Hyun, 2017; Han & Ryu, 2009; Heung et al., 2002; Kala, 2020; Kala & Barthwal, 2020; Liu & Jang, 2009; Truong et al., 2017). For instance, Cullen (2004) revealed that cleanliness and the location of restaurant are some of the key variables on decision making for selecting restaurants. Han and Ryu (2009) asserted that physical environment enhances customer satisfaction. Kala (2020) and Kala and Barthwal (2020) confirmed that the physical environment of a restaurant has an important impact on customer satisfaction. Thus, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

H$_2$: Physical environment positively affects customer satisfaction.

The Employees

Employees can be seen as a link between the company and the customers (Alhelalat et al., 2017). Employees, playing a significant role in shaping customers' perceptions (Jeon & Choi, 2012), can develop awareness of customers and respond to their needs (Bulgarella, 2005). This can be critical in generating customer satisfaction (Kala, 2020). Several studies have explored the relationship between employee attributes and customer satisfaction (Babolian Hendijani, 2016; Gunaratne et al., 2012; Han & Hyun, 2017; Heung et al., 2002; Kala, 2020; Keh et al., 2013; Truong et al., 2017). Heung et al. (2002) revealed that employee attributes are important contributors to customer satisfaction. Gunaratne et al. (2012) maintained that employee attributes are significant predictors of overall satisfaction. In another study, Keh et al. (2013) identified that employee attributes (e.g., physical attractiveness, helpfulness) positively influence customer satisfaction. Babolian Hendijani (2016) suggests that employees wearing clothes reflecting regional culture can affect customer satisfaction. Recently, Han and Hyun (2017) reported that a high quality of staff service is very important in enhancing the degree of customer satisfaction. Based on the previous arguments, the current study proposed the following hypothesis:

H_3: Employee attributes positively affect customer satisfaction.

Price

Price is a sensitive factor that shapes consumers' experience and behaviour (Han & Ryu, 2009). For instance, an earlier study conducted in the service industry revealed that price is a significant element in the decision to switch to another company (Keaveney, 1995). Since price is an important factor in determining customer behaviour (Ryu & Han, 2010), it was investigated in different contexts such as hotels (e.g. Ali et al., 2016; Chiang, 2018) and restaurants (e.g. Han & Ryu, 2009; Zhong & Moon, 2020) to determine customer satisfaction. Correia et al. (2008) investigated the satisfaction of gastronomic visitors in Portugal and identified the finding that price and quality have an important impact on customer satisfaction. In addition, Han and Ryu (2009) reinforced the finding that price has a positive impact on customer satisfaction. Similarly, a recently published study showed that price positively influenced customer satisfaction (Zhong & Moon, 2020). Based on the previous arguments, it was hypothesized that:

H_4: Price positively affects customer satisfaction.

Satisfaction

Based on the review of literature, experiences in a restaurant considerably affect satisfaction level (Gupta et al., 2007; Rust & Zahorik, 1993; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2003). Kivela and Crotts (2006) mentioned that satisfaction depends on actual experience during a visit. As for satisfaction with the restaurant, the experiences of service and products' quality, timing with regard to service, menu, price, convenience, and the ambience of the facilities influence customer satisfaction (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006; Kivela et al., 2000; Sulek & Hensley, 2004). The high level of satisfaction would thus be associated with a high level of service quality in the minds of customers (Türker et al., 2019).

The effects of satisfaction on storytelling intention have been examined by a limited number of studies. Cater et al. (2020) investigated the effects of satisfaction on the storytelling intentions of scuba divers. The findings indicated that overall satisfaction positively influences storytelling intentions. Although, the positive impact on satisfaction on storytelling intention has not been investigated in the context of the restaurant business, the effect of satisfaction on WoM/e-WoM intentions has been examined by some previous studies (Jalilvand et al., 2017; Jeong & Jang, 2011; Uslu, 2020; Yang, 2017). Jalilvand et al. (2017) revealed a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and WoM intentions. Additionally, Jeong and Jang (2011) and Uslu (2020) maintained that satisfaction has positive effects on e-WoM. Thus, the current study proposed the following hypothesis:

H5: Customer satisfaction positively affects storytelling intentions.

Storytelling

Storytelling is an important part of the consumer experience (Pearce & Packer, 2013) and can be defined as a way of distributing knowledge and experiences to others through narratives and anecdotes (Keskin et al., 2016). According to reviewed literature, storytelling has two main perspectives as (1) managerial and (2) consumer. From the managerial perspective, it is mainly used for marketing and management activities (Mossberg, 2008). From the consumer perspective, it is the action of transferring information to others (Yang, 2018). In other words, it can be stated that storytelling is a different version of word-of-mouth (Zhong et al., 2017). The main difference between WoM/e-WoM and storytelling is that WOM/e-WOM means reporting facts or providing information about a situation, place, or service, while storytelling is sharing information and experiences (Howison et al.,

2017). Choi (2016) stated that storytelling includes non-verbal genres as a new way of communication (movies, dramas, etc.) as well as the verbal narrative of communication. Rapid growth of internet usage has changed the storytelling behaviour of consumers. Therefore, consumers can share and describe their memories via blogs or social media accounts like Facebook, Instagram etc. (Zhong et al., 2017). For instance, Akgün et al. (2015) found that the storytelling approach in travel writing can affect the behavioural intentions of customers towards destinations. Therefore, Mei et al. (2020) suggested that storytelling is important for the tourism industry, since tourists purchase not only products and services, but they also seek experiences and hedonic benefits.

The five hypotheses proposed determined the conceptual model framework of the research (Figure 1). The dependent variables of the model are satisfaction and storytelling. Food attributes, physical environment, employee, and price are independent variables as they are important influencers of customer satisfaction.

Figure 1. *Research Model*

METHODOLOGY

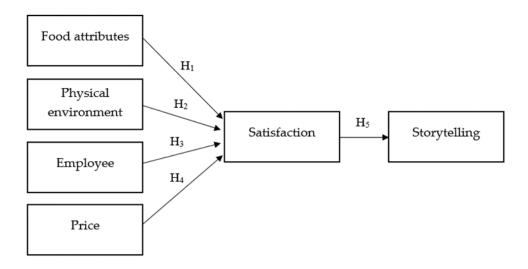### Measurements

The questionnaire has four sections. The first three sections are related to food and restaurant attributes, satisfaction, and storytelling respectively. The fourth section is related to demographic questions. Food and restaurant attributes and satisfaction items were adapted from Kala (2020); storytelling was adapted from Zhong et al. (2017). Respondents were asked to mark

each of the statements using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 'totally disagree' (score=1) to 'totally agree' (score=7). First, scale items were translated from English into Turkish, then translated from Turkish to English by two experts with highly advanced English, whose native languages are Turkish. In this way, the translated items were compared to their original forms to ensure the accuracy of iteration. Thirdly, a pilot test was conducted among 15 academicians to examine the suitability and comprehensibility of the items. In the last step, some modifications were made based on the pilot test's result. Items that needed simplification, rewording, and revision were dealt with. The last version of the questionnaire was developed and consisted of 30 items for the food and restaurant dimension, four items for the satisfaction dimension, and four items for the storytelling dimension.

Data Collection

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic issue, an online questionnaire was developed to collect the data. The sample for this research consisted of academicians and administrators of eight universities both public and private in Gaziantep, Hatay, Şanlıurfa, and Adana provinces of Turkey. E-mail addresses of the sample were compiled from the universities' websites. At the end of the collection period, 3548 e-mail addresses were obtained in total. Invitation e-mails were sent to academicians and administrators including information about the aim of the study and a link to the questionnaire between April and September 2020. This was followed by a reminder e-mail two weeks later. As a result, 226 surveys were received, which was a 6.4% response rate. Child (2006) suggested that the sample size should be five times greater than the number of items in the questionnaire (38 items) in order to perform factor analysis (as cited in Tekin & Özdemir, 2018; Yurdakal & Kırmızı, 2017; 2019). Therefore, the sample size was found sufficient to conduct further analysis.

Research Settings

Gaziantep, Hatay, Şanlıurfa, and Adana were determined as the research areas of this study. Gaziantep can be considered as a gastronomic city in terms of local products. There are 40 products geographically certified by the Turkish Patent Institution in the city, and this is the highest number in Turkey (TPTO, 2021). Additionally, Gaziantep is the first city which received the title of a city of gastronomy within the scope of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in 2015 (Unesco, 2020). Hatay has also been confirmed as a city of gastronomy by the UNESCO Creative Cities Network

for its cuisine in 2017 (Go Turkey Tourism, 2021). The city has nine geographically certified products (TPTO, 2021). Addition to those two, Şanlıurfa can be considered to be a city of gastronomy in the country (Çelik & Aksoy, 2017). The city has 30 geographically certified products (TPTO, 2021). Adana has many gastronomic elements due to long-term cultural interactions, the use of different techniques, and so on, in the region (Dinler, 2019). The city has 15 geographically certified products (TPTO, 2021). Based on aforementioned information, the current study was conducted in these cities.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed in two steps. First, we used SPSS 22 for the normality test, common method bias, descriptive statistics, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Second, PLS-SEM (Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling) was used to assess the measurement and structural models (Chin, 2010). Skewness and Kurtosis values of items were used to test the normality (Hair et al., 2014). All items ranged from -3 to 3 which is indicating normal data distribution (Wells et al., 2015). In order to avoid common method bias, Harmon's single-factor approach was utilised (Min et al., 2016). The results showed that the single factor accounted for 48% of the variance (below 50%), indicating that there is no common method bias issue (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986).

RESULTS

Respondents' Profile

The majority of the respondents were male (55.8%). Based on age, 39.4% of the respondents were between 26 and 35 years old. The majority of the participants were academicians (86.7%), whereas administrative staff represented only 12.8% of the sample (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Participants*

	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	100	44.2
	Male	126	55.8
Age	25 and below	10	4.4
	26-35	89	39.4
	36-45	77	34.1
	46-55	39	17.3
Occupation	Academician	196	86.7
	Administrative staff	29	12.8

Table 2. *EFA Results for Restaurant Attributes*

Factor and Items	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Factor Loadings
Food Attributes (FA)	*14.65*	*24.46*	*0.94*	*5.53*	
FA1				5.64	0.80
FA2				5.85	0.75
FA3				5.26	0.74
FA4				5.66	0.71
FA5				5.63	0.69
FA6				5.82	0.69
FA7				5.91	0.67
FA8				5.5	0.65
FA9				5.31	0.65
FA10				5.54	0.63
FA11				4.77	0.59
Employee (EMP)	*2.26*	*19.88*	*0.94*	*5.36*	
EMP1				5.10	0.81
EMP2				5.35	0.79
EMP3				5.41	0.78
EMP4				5.43	0.77
EMP5				5.50	0.71
EMP6				5.36	0.69
EMP7				5.38	0.51
Physical environment (PE)	*1.88*	*19.68*	*0.92*	*4.87*	
PE1				4.81	0.81
PE2				4.85	0.80
PE3				4.97	0.69
PE4				5.17	0.69
PE5				4.80	0.68
PE6				4.51	0.65
PE7				4.93	0.63
PE8				4.94	0.59
Price (P)	*1.20*	*7.46*	*0.90*	*4.59*	
P1				4.55	0.88
P2				4.63	0.86

Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test = 0.94; Bartlett's test of sphericity = 5839.16 (p<0.001); Total variance explained= 71.50%

EFA

Because the items were translated and modified to Turkish culture, we conducted EFA on the 30 items of the food and restaurant using principal components analysis with varimax rotation. Two items (restaurants which had showcased local socio-cultural objects and the restaurants which offered a variety of menu items) with communality below .50 (Hair et al., 1998) were discarded. A revised EFA was carried out on the remaining 28

items. Four factors were determined, explaining 71.50% of total variance. The factors were defined based on the items they included as food attributes, employees, physical environment, and price (see Table 2).

Measurement Model

Before validating the structural model, it is suggested that the measurement model should be tested (Hair et al., 2014). In order to test the measurement model, we used reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity criteria (Taheri et al., 2020). The reliability was tested by factor loadings and composite reliability (CR). All factor loadings are above the accepted level of 0.6 (Chin, 1998). Also, the composite reliability (CR) values are greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2020), which confirms the items' reliability (see Table 3). Convergent validity was tested by measuring the average variance extracted (AVE). AVE value for each factor ranged from 0.62 to 0.91 (greater than 0.5 threshold values) (Hair et al., 2020). Therefore, convergent validity was maintained.

Table 3. *Measurement Model Assessment*

Factors and Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
Food attributes (FA)		*0.95*	*0.63*
FA1	0.83		
FA2	0.80		
FA3	0.86		
FA4	0.68		
FA5	0.82		
FA6	0.77		
FA7	0.82		
FA8	0.79		
FA9	0.79		
FA10	0.76		
FA11	0.78		
Employee (EMP)		*0.95*	*0.74*
EMP1	0.89		
EMP2	0.83		
EMP 3	0.87		
EMP 4	0.89		
EMP 5	0.83		
EMP 6	0.85		
EMP 7	0.81		
Physical environment (PE)		*0.94*	*0.66*
PE1	0.77		
PE2	0.84		
PE3	0.74		
PE4	0.85		
PE5	0.86		
PE6	0.84		
PE7	0.70		
PE8	0.86		

Price (P)		*0.95*	*0.91*
P1	0.95		
P2	0.96		
Satisfaction (SAT)		*0.94*	*0.82*
SAT1	0.92		
SAT2	0.92		
SAT3	0.90		
SAT4	0.87		
Storytelling (STE)		*0.87*	*0.62*
STE1	0.80		
STE2	0.79		
STE3	0.73		
STE4	0.82		

Regarding discriminant validity, we checked the heterotrait–monotrait ratio criterion (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2015). The HTMT value should be lower than 0.90 (Smartpls, 2021). Table 4 summarises the HTMT values. Since the ratio for the combination of food attributes and satisfaction is 0.89, we additionally checked the HTMT inference criterion as an alternative criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). The HTMT inference value for the food attributes and satisfaction is 0.936 (<1) which establishes discriminant validity (Wells et al., 2016).

Table 4. *Discriminant Validity*

	EMP	FA	PE	P	SAT	STE
EMP						
FA	0.750					
PE	0.771	0.744				
P	0.528	0.548	0.387			
SAT	0.868	0.896	0.790	0.537		
STE	0.376	0.436	0.472	0.215	0.515	

EMP=Employee; FA= Food attributes; PE= Physical environment; P= Price; SAT= Satisfaction; STE= Storytelling

Structural model

The structural model was measured through Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) fit index, path coefficients (β), coefficient of determination (R^2), significance level (t values), and the cross-validated redundancy (Q^2) (Lochrie et al., 2019). The SRMR value is 0.075, which is below the recommended limit of 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Therefore, goodness-of-fit value reflects a satisfactory result. According to bootstrap analysis to test the hypothesis four of the five hypothesis were statistically significant and supported (see Table 5). In particular, food attributes significantly affect satisfaction ($\beta = 0.477$, p< 0.01), supporting H_1. Physical environment significantly affects satisfaction ($\beta = 0.124$, p< 0.05), supporting

H$_2$. In addition, the employees significantly affect satisfaction (β = 0.371, p< 0.01), and satisfaction significantly affects storytelling (β = 0.495, p< 0.01), supporting H$_3$ and H$_5$. However, satisfaction was not influenced by price, therefore, H$_4$ is rejected. The R^2 measure the explanatory ability of endogenous constructs. Satisfaction (R^2= 0.809) and storytelling (R^2 = 0.245) have a substantial and weak explanatory ability, respectively (Hair et al., 2011). Q^2 values of the endogenous variable were calculated to check the predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2020). Q^2 values of satisfaction and storytelling are 0.655 and 0.123, respectively. As it is greater than zero, the predictive relevance is acceptable (Hair et al., 2011).

Table 5. *Structural Model Statistics*

Structural estimates: hypothesis path	Coefficient	t-value	R^2	Q^2	Results
H$_1$ FA → SAT	0.477	8.104*	0.809	0.655	Supported
H$_2$ PE → SAT	0.124	2.275*			Supported
H$_3$ EMP → SAT	0.371	7.264*			Supported
H$_4$ P → SAT	0.024	0.679 (ns)			Rejected
H$_5$ SAT → STE	0.495	8.283*	0.245	0.123	Supported

EMP=Employee; FA= Food attributes; PE= Physical environment; P= Price; SAT= Satisfaction; STE= Storytelling

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to investigate the impacts of restaurant attributes on customer satisfaction, and the impact of satisfaction on storytelling. The results reveal that the three of restaurant attributes (food attributes, employee, and physical environment) were important contributors to customer satisfaction. Therefore, the study reinforces the finding that food attributes, the employees, and the physical environment positively affect customer satisfaction. However, price was not found to be an important contributor to customer satisfaction. This finding differs from previous studies. Moreover, satisfaction is a significant determinant of storytelling intention.

Theoretical Implications

This study indicated that food attributes were significant in ensuring customer satisfaction. One can say that among the food attributes; serving food at the appropriate temperature, freshness, being prepared and presented in a traditional way, and taste have important effects on customer satisfaction. The finding that emerges from this study extends the previous findings that food attributes such as taste, temperature, and freshness

positively affect customer satisfaction (Erkmen, 2019; Kala, 2020; Kala & Barthwal, 2020; Namkung & Jang, 2007; Roozbeh et al., 2013; Truong et al., 2017; Zhong & Moon, 2020).

The current study revealed that restaurants' physical environments affect customers' satisfaction. This finding supports those of earlier research (Han & Ryu, 2009; Heung et al., 2002; Kala, 2020; Kala & Barthwal, 2020; Truong et al., 2017). It was also found that the contribution of ambience and location of the restaurant, the attractiveness of the menu, and the cleanliness of the dining areas were important factors in customers' satisfaction. The findings of an earlier study carried out by Cullen (2004) revealed that cleanliness and the location of the restaurant are some of the key decision variables for selecting restaurants. It was also found that the contribution of quality and cleanliness of basic facilities (the hand-wash facility, the washroom, the car park etc.) to customers' satisfaction was low. The finding corresponds with those of previously published studies (Kala, 2020; Kala & Barthwal, 2020).

The study also indicated the strong effect of the employees on customers' satisfaction. The finding of this research is similar to those of earlier studies (Gunaratne et al., 2012; Heung et al., 2002; Kala, 2020). The interaction between employee and customer has a critical role in the formation of customer perceptions (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2003). This is because restaurant customers observe the behaviours and attitudes of employees before they give their decisions regarding the experience they had (Slack et al., 2020). Specifically, one of the crucial factors to achieve customer satisfaction in restaurants depends on the employees (Alhelalat et al., 2017).

The results further showed that price has no relationship with customer satisfaction which supports the findings of Iglesias and Guillén's (2004) study. Interestingly, customers have the opportunity to check the menu items' prices before ordering them. Thus, it can be concluded that customers develop expectation about the food before having it. After consuming the food, they compare the difference between performance and expectation. Accordingly, the restaurant customers felt they did not receive good value for the money they paid for the food. On the other hand, some studies (e.g. Correia et al. 2008; Han & Ryu, 2009) have suggested that there is a positive relationship between price and customer satisfaction. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a lack of consensus on the relationship between price and customer satisfaction.

The present study discovered that satisfaction positively affects the storytelling intentions of customers in restaurant business. This result differs from the idea of Lin and Kim (2015) who stated that storytelling has an impact on tourism satisfaction. On the contrary, the finding that emerges from this research is similar to that of Jalilvand et al. (2017), Jeong and Jang (2011), and Uslu (2020), who stated that customers' satisfaction with the restaurant has a positive impact on WoM intentions. A possible explanation for this outcome is that satisfaction and storytelling could be interconnected. This is stated in the study undertaken by Son and Kim (2011) who reported that the increase in the level of tourists' satisfaction is related to positive WoM. This suggests a positive correlation may exist between satisfaction and storytelling intentions.

Managerial Implications

The current study also provides useful insights to restauranteurs and restaurant managers. Specifically, this study showed that three components (food attributes, employee attributes, and physical environment) of restaurants are significant contributors to customer satisfaction. The food attributes of the restaurants are the most important component in ensuring the customers' satisfaction. Restauranteurs need to understand the significant role of each element of these attributes and focus on them to increase the satisfaction level of customers.

The findings of this study revealed that employees are another important determinant of customers' satisfaction. Employees play an essential role in satisfying customers' needs in the service industry. Restauranteurs should organise training programmes to improve the employees' professional abilities in order to increase and maintain customers' satisfaction.

The study showed that the physical environments of restaurants affect customers' satisfaction. One may say that nowadays, people are more concerned with the interesting, relaxing, and attractive physical environments of companies. Therefore, physical environments can be used to attract customers and to satisfy their expectations. Restauranteurs should pay more attention to physical environments, such as inside ambience, interior design, seating arrangements, the cleanliness of dining areas, and so on, to increase the customers' satisfaction.

Surprisingly, price was not found to be significant contributor to customer satisfaction. Customers do not see the price in a reasonable range.

Restauranteurs can develop promotional activities to eliminate the perception of high price by customers. This is because negative perception of price may lead negative behaviours (Campbell, 1999). Given the relationship between satisfaction and storytelling, customers who are satisfied with the food attributes, physical environment, and employees are more likely to share their experiences through stories. Therefore, restauranteurs should find ways to encourage customers to share their food experience on social media accounts. In order to encourage customers, restauranteurs can offer discounts for those who share experiences on social media. In this way, restaurants may also overcome perceived high price.

CONCLUSION

This research may be one of a few attempts to assess the relationship of restaurant attributes-satisfaction-storytelling constructs in Turkey. The results of the study have significant implications for the understanding of how restauranteurs deliver desired local restaurant experiences to customers. This study revealed that restauranteurs should pay attention to food attributes, employee attributes, and the physical environment in order to enhance and maintain the customers' satisfaction, and to gain competitive advantages. This study also highlights that some important factors should be improved in order to enhance customer satisfaction.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

The current study has several limitations. First, only four destinations in Turkey – Gaziantep, Hatay, Şanlıurfa, and Adana – were investigated in the study. Other destinations in the country could be examined using a similar approach in future studies. Second, the sample of this research involved academicians and administrators of 8 universities (public and private) in Adana, Şanlıurfa, Hatay, and Gaziantep. Therefore, the results may not be generalisable to other restaurant customers. Future studies should be carried out with different groups with different demographic characteristics. Third, this study does not consider the direct and indirect relationship between restaurant attributes and storytelling. Future studies could identify the relationship between restaurant attributes and storytelling. Additionally, the small sample of 226 participants is another limitation of the study. Future studies should be carried out with a larger sample size.

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