



Article Title

Restaurant Branding Matters: A Quantitative Report on How Brand Image Can Moderate Relationship

Citation

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Abstract

This paper investigates the moderating effect of brand image on relationship quality in the chain restaurant industry. The sample of this study was attained from a single local chain restaurant in Peninsular Malaysia. Survey questionnaires were disseminated to respondents using a stratified random sampling method in 16 selected kopitiam outlets. Findings from the 316 customers were examined using the SPSS statistics application and a partial least square technique. The findings provide strong evidence of the moderating effect of brand image on the relationship between patron dining experience (PDE) and relationship quality, where relationship quality in turn affects customer loyalty. Nevertheless, the findings highlighted the importance for service firms, specifically within the chain restaurant industry to look into ways to increase the brand image of the restaurants in order to foster the relationship building approaches with the customers. This study expanded the study on relationship quality by providing empirical evidence on the moderating effect of brand image towards the formation of relationship quality.

Summary

It was found that the development of the relationship quality's conceptual foundations has not been fully investigated after reviewing the literature. There is no agreement between researchers on the key elements that best explain relationship quality. The elements are also varying from industry to industry.

This paper proposed patron dining experience (PDE) as a set of relationship quality predictor where its formation is based on the common relationship quality attributes used by previous researches in the dining industry.

In addition, although many researchers have attempted to explain on how relationship marketing is developed, they have ignored the importance of brand equity in the context. Hyun (2010) highlighted that in the dining industry, the relationship quality study should be expanded by incorporating the brand equity construct. Specifically, the research done on the moderating effect

of brand image on relationship quality is limited till date. Very few researchers have taken the initiative to investigate the moderating effect of brand image in chain restaurant industry, to the best of the author's knowledge. This is with the exception of the study by Hyun and Kim (2011) and Kim and Kim (2005) where they have empirically examined the influence of brand equity on chain restaurant performance but not on relationship quality itself.

This paper investigated the moderating effect of brand image, specifically on the relationship between relationship quality and its patron dining experience. It is empirically supported by the results of the study that favorable brand image strengthens the relationship between restaurant patrons with their service providers, the better the brand image, the more favorable the relationship. This paper aims to contribute to the brand equity's body of knowledge in the field of relationship marketing by providing additional empirical evidence on its moderating effect, specifically on relationship quality development between the service providers with their customers.

The results of this study have found significance relationship between patron dining experience (pde) and relationship quality which finally lead to loyalty, in addition to the evidence of the moderating effect of brand image on the relationship between pde and relationship quality.