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NEGATIVE ONLINE CUSTOMER REVIEWS IN RESTAURANT DINING EXPERIENCE: WHAT ARE THE DETERMINING FACTORS OF SERVICE FAILURE AFFECTING BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS?

*Original
Research*

Keywords

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Abstract

Present study empirically examined the determining factors of service failure in restaurant dining experience leading to negative online reviews and, thus, behavioral intentions (i.e., repeat purchase and recommendation to others). The findings underline that (1) any service mishap with regard to food quality and cleanliness triggers customer participations in negative online reviews, switching intentions and discouragement for potential customers to purchase; (2) service quality is a strong and important determining factor of service failure affecting behavioral intentions and is superior relative to other significant predictors; (3) frontline staff attitude is likely to prompt dissatisfied customers to engage in negative online reviews and cause an effect on price sensitivity, however it does not necessarily influence behavioral intentions; (4) contrary to prior research, price-value significantly affects behavioral intentions. In the presence of dissatisfaction influenced by poor food quality and frontline staff attitude, price sensitivity increases; therefore, it stimulates behavioral intentions. Further elaboration of the findings is also discussed therein with insights for marketing practice.

INTRODUCTION

Customer's post-purchase study directs its main focus on the repeat-purchase behavior that includes the second or the n -time purchases; and puts away its attention toward the initial stages of decision-making (Oliver, 1993). Both business and academic spheres are particularly interested in this topic due to the fact that customer retention is generally more cost-effective than customer acquisition, moreover, the former can also be a strong driver of the latter i.e., through positive referrals. Conversely, it may demolish customer loyalty that can be recognized by customer-switching behavior (McCollough *et al.*, 2000; Roos, 1999) as well as negative word-of-mouth communication (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004; Sundaram *et al.*, 1998; Blodgett *et al.*, 1993). To this end, researchers have indicated close linkage between customer's post-purchase processes and satisfaction. Level of satisfaction is evidently being the mediating factor of customer attitudes and behavioral intentions (Kim *et al.*, 2009; Chow *et al.*, 2007; Cronin, Brady & Hult, 2000; Oliver, 1999).

The recent growing interest in post-purchase evaluation is also intensified by the widespread utilization of web 2.0 which emphasizes the easiness of participation, collaboration and content creation for the end users. The emergence of web 2.0 specifically online customer reviews (OCRs) has altered the dissemination of information among businesses and customers considering its extended global reach. As a result, today's customers are more empowered. Dissatisfaction toward a product or service can lead to dire results for the businesses (Lee and Lee, 2006) as it can fail both its customer retention and acquisition strategies. Dissatisfied customers who participate in OCR platforms are likely to engage in complaining behavior, speak unfavorably about particular businesses, dissuade their peers to try and give a low star rating.

The increasing important roles of OCRs in influencing customer attitudes and behavioral intentions makes it imperative to understand from a customer perspective, how they utilize OCRs to push information and to express negative feelings post-purchase evaluations in the restaurant industry, given that this industry is predominantly sensitive to customer evaluations through online reviewing. In the absence of technical expertise on top of inability to detach from immediate feelings, customer's lay judgments in this industry are observed to be more persuasive as opposed to the professional reviews; yet this topic has been largely overlooked. Stems from the circumstance, this research intends to address the gap by building it upon an empirical method in the form of an in-depth analysis of review content.

Discussion of the study centers on determining which primary attributes become the main concerns of service failure on OCR platforms in the context of eating out experience; subsequently it proceeds to establish if dissatisfaction of these attributes draw a particular attention to influence behavioral intentions toward repeat-purchase and recommendation to others. The contribution of this study is twofold. First, it contributes to the services marketing literature by incorporating the utilization of OCRs as a complaint tool for today's customers. However, this study does not seek to provide a comprehensive and exhaustive review of the services marketing literature in general or pertaining this topic in particular. Second, in addition to the literature contributions, this study presents insights and implications for marketing practice to optimize OCRs as a part of their branding strategies by identifying the key elements of OCRs in increasing brand online visibility, thus persuading brand multi-channel footprint and communication.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the restaurant industry, the service encounter determines overall satisfaction of the dining experience. Any mishaps in perceptions and expectations between service providers and customers during service encounter may result in service failure. According to Bitner *et al.* (1990), service failure occurs when service is not fulfilled or fails to deliver to customer satisfaction. Further, exit-voice theory by Hirschman (1970) explains the outcomes of customer behavior post service failure encounter. Based on this theory, dissatisfied customers have two options: 'to exit' or 'to voice'. 'To exit' means that customers are decided to disengage in business activities with a particular service provider while 'to voice' indicates that customers tend to participate in activities that enable them to express their complaints. While the impact and function of a customer's exit in the online market and traditional market do not seem to be different, the impact of dissatisfied customer's voice in the online market is more vigorous, profound and obstructive than in the traditional market. In the online market, the target is extended as customer's voice can reach both the particular service providers and a wider range of potential customers with which can lead to negatively influence these potential customers to enter the initial stage of relationship with the service providers.

Nowadays, businesses optimize their interactions with customers through multiple touchpoints; that includes the web 2.0. Businesses of which the transactions are mainly completed offline in nature

can now reach online audience, allowing an increased opportunity for these businesses to improve their level of awareness and communication, but at the same time it also makes them more vulnerable at the risk of losing a greater number of potential customers. Negative word-of-mouth communication on OCR platforms can reach larger audience across the globe as compared with the traditional word-of-mouth. In addition, as the barriers to articulate the negative experiences on OCR platforms are low, OCRs have become more popular as a complaint tool. OCRs will not only enable dissatisfied customers to avoid direct confrontations with the businesses when a complaint is raised (Hong and Lee, 2005), but also enable customers to receive the conformity from their peers who have experienced similar problems. Previous studies have also noted the source credibility of OCRs (e.g., Ruiz-Mafe *et al.*, 2018; Kim *et al.*, 2017; Beuscart *et al.*, 2016; Elwalda and Lu, 2016). It is also found that OCRs are more credible and trustworthy than professional reviews or even firm-generated information (Senecal and Nantel, 2004; Bickart and Schindler, 2001). Further, several studies report that OCRs are considered a crucial new element of the marketing communication mix (Chen and Xie, 2008) and an essential form of word-of-mouth (Sen and Lerman, 2007). Aligned with the exit-voice theory, empirical evidence confirms that OCRs have a great impact on behavioral intentions as well as customer loyalty (Chen, Wang & Xie, 2011). Based on the variance of positive and negative reviews, it is indicated that the intensity of positive reviews does not necessarily have any influence on purchase intentions (Kim *et al.*, 2017), whereas the intensity of negative reviews on OCR platforms proliferates instantaneously among potential customers and will likely hinder purchase decision (e.g., Kim *et al.*, 2017; Floh *et al.*, 2013; Yen *et al.*, 2011; Lee *et al.*, 2008). It is also supported by the negativity bias theory that customers tend to value negative information than positive information (Lurie and Chen, 2013; Lee and Youn, 2009; Herr *et al.*, 1991). Four out of five potential customers have switched their initial buying decisions based on negative online reviews in eating-out context (Cone Communication, 2011; cited in Olson and Ro, 2020), yet when a restaurant responded to negative online reviews, behavioral intentions increased.

Given the importance effects of OCRs in influencing customer attitudes and behavioral intentions, number of studies have paid much attention to examine different dimensions of OCRs (i.e., volume, valence, dispersion, intensity, length, duration, quality, sequence, anonymity, attribute-specific vs. abstract information, constructive vs. destructive, functional vs. ethical). Focus of this study is drawn to look into the most salient

attributes that negatively affect customer retention, therefore it mainly explores the attribute-specific information: cognitive vs. affective attributes. According to Wang, Chan, Chen, Chen & Wang (2015), in making purchase decisions, customers often need to make tradeoffs between cognitive or utilitarian and affective or hedonic features. One may need to make a decision between a restaurant with good quality of food and moderate price (positive cognitive features) without a view (a neutral or even negative affective feature) or a restaurant with a great view (a positive affective feature), but with high price and standard quality of food (negative cognitive features). Dubé and Cantin (2000) further proposed that “liking” is influenced by affective attributes, while “consumption” is influenced by cognitive attributes. This construct is of particular interest in the present study due to the effect of OCRs in the hospitality industry — specifically restaurant — is particularly strong (Jeong and Jang, 2011) and the distinct characteristics of services that set it apart from tangible products, which also confirmed by Zeithaml (1981) that service intangibility in nature makes the determining attributes of service experience are difficult to identify.

Drawing on insights from the existing foodservice literature, it has been agreed by numerous researchers that other attributes aside from food quality are also taken into account in the context of restaurant dining experience. Food quality is eminent as the most essential factor in relation to customer satisfaction; however, food quality *per se* does not suffice for a holistic experience in which the other attributes are also entailed. Despite the fact that food is a tangible element, it falls into experience goods category and has several credence attributes that are impossible to discern before purchase or moreover, after consumption (Zeithaml, 1981; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). In a service setting, customers are involved in the creation of the end results together with the service providers; to the degree that services are consumed and produced simultaneously (Iglesias and Guillen, 2002). With this in mind, such variability of service can cause different results in each experience. When customers are involved, previous scholars have suggested that it is important to include affective attributes in measuring customer satisfaction (Pfaff, 1977; Westbrook, 1987). Moreover, although the cognitive evaluation is argued to be the common approach—in recent years—scholars have marveled over affective attributes in evaluating brand as well as consumer behavior toward a product or a service (e.g., Keller, 2003; Aaker, 1997; Burk and Edell, 1989; Holbrook and Westwood, 1989). As an outcome, the scope of consumer behavior study has been broadened to integrate both cognition and affect as

these factors could occur at the same time (Keller, 2003; Peter and Olson, 1999).

Number of research results have pointed commonly accepted attributes to measure restaurant dining experience, namely food quality, service quality, atmosphere as well as price and value (Yi, Zhao & Joung, 2017; Jeong and Jang, 2011; Stevens *et al.*, 1995; Bojanic and Rosen, 1994) that suggested the interaction between cognition and affect. This study attempts to develop a better understanding toward the determining factors of service failure and investigate the hierarchy sequence between cognitive and affective attributes as proposed by Oliver (1997) and Franzen and Bouwman (2001) that the sequence between cognition and emotion in measuring customer satisfaction is likely to occur; subsequently, it may lead to the overall evaluation and thus lead to behavioral intentions. For this reason, in the second phase—the impact of both cognitive and affective attributes on repeat purchase and recommendation to others in the context of dining experience is explored. Formally, research objectives of this study can be formulated into:

Objective 1. To identify the determining factors (cognitive and affective attributes) of service failure influence dissatisfied customers to participate in OCR platforms.

Objective 2. To test if these attributes affect behavioral intentions toward repeat-purchase and recommendation to others.

The second objective leads to the following hypotheses (*H*):

Cognitive attributes as the antecedents of service failure that lead to behavioral intentions

For decades, cognitive attributes (i.e., tangible brand attributes) have been used in consumer behavior research (Malhotra, 2005). Consumer behavior research is mostly cognitive in nature as consumers usually focus on the rational part of a product or service before progressing to the emotional level. Aaker (1996) further suggests that cognitive elements could be primary drivers of a product or service evaluation. In other words, a product or service needs to demonstrate that its hygiene factors are in place. Some scholars (e.g., Chan and Baum, 2007; Mullins, 2001; Maddox, 1981) argue that Herzberg's Hygiene/Dissatisfiers factor theory can be applied to customer satisfaction and has become the most frequently proposed theory in measuring the dimensionality of customer satisfaction. A brand hygiene factor is considered to be the basic set of values (i.e., the generic or given elements) that the customers expect to exist in a product or service. Jensen (2004) and Crompton (2003) conceptualized

Hygiene attributes in hospitality industry as tangible elements such as food; cleanliness of restrooms, kitchen, utensils; and parking spaces.

In restaurant dining experience, food quality is considered to be a core competency of a restaurant and has been recognized as a fundamental element of the overall restaurant experience (Sulek and Hensley, 2004; Raajpoot, 2002; Kivela *et al.*, 1999). Jeong and Jang (2011) empirically examined which restaurant experience attributes that provoke customers to engage in positive electronic word-of-mouth and found that food quality was superior in spreading positive electronic word-of-mouth. The finding supports Namkung and Jang (2007) study that food presentation and taste significantly affected customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions. It is also indicated by Bojanic and Rosen (1994) that restaurants should pay more attention to the way the food is presented. Yi *et al.*, (2017) investigated restaurant selection attributes and their impacts to restaurant image. The result suggested that food quality is an important element of a restaurant and should be continuously monitored to align with the restaurant's overall concept and customer perceptions and expectations. Oh (2000) further found a strong impact of food and beverage quality on customer satisfaction and retention. Accordingly, hypothesis 1 is thus posited:

H1. Dissatisfaction toward cognitive attributes such as Food Quality and Cleanliness have significant negative effects on repeat-purchase and recommendation to others

Affective attributes co-exist with cognitive attributes to influence behavioral intentions

Literature reviews on consumer behavior have suggested that both cognitive and affective attributes are crucial for customer evaluation of a product or service (Brown, 1998; De Chernatony, 2002; Keller, 2003; Argawal and Malhotra, 2005; Malhotra, 2005; cited in Da Silva and Alwi, 2006). At present in service industry, service quality has been measured with respect to customer expectation, evaluation and satisfaction toward the offered service. According to Cronin and Taylor (1992), service quality is conceptualized as "an attitude that is defined by an individual's importance-weighted evaluation of the performance of the specific dimensions of a service". Further, prior research has emphasized customer's perceived service quality as an important predictor of customer behavioral intentions, such as word-of-mouth communication, repeat purchase, increase frequency or volume of purchase, complaining behavior, price sensitivity (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996; Boulding *et al.*, 1993).

In addition, bearing in mind that dining out at a restaurant is considered quintessential to fulfill

social needs of today's customers; service quality becomes a key element in the restaurant businesses. Several studies carried out by Inkumsah (2011); Yuksel and Yusel (2002); Bojanic and Rosen (1994) found that service quality plays a more vital role than food quality. Potential customers might consider cognitive attributes as the most critical in restaurant selection, but service quality is essential for the return patronage. Serhan and Serhan (2019) studied different foodservice attributes and their impacts on customer satisfaction at a rural university cafeteria. The study showed that customer satisfaction is affected by service quality as the main predictor, followed by food and beverage quality, cleanliness as well as price and value. Derived from these arguments, the following hypothesis is then proposed:

H2. Dissatisfaction toward affective attributes such as Service Quality, Frontline Staff Attitude, Restaurant's Image, and Atmosphere have significant negative effects on repeat-purchase and recommendation to others

Service quality plays a subordinate role relative to food quality

To align with the brand hygiene factors theory—given this present study focus is more on the service failures and negative OCRs—if customer expectations toward a product or service's basic set of values are not met, other differentiating values such as service quality, atmosphere, restaurant's image would not compensate for the losses that the customers experience. This assumption is derived from the following two lines of research:

One line of research has demonstrated that food quality was a superior predictor for customer satisfaction as well as in triggering behavioral intentions. Jeong and Jang (2011) found that food quality attribute has shown a great impact on positive word-of-mouth communication as compared with service quality and atmosphere attributes. Another line of research on the relationships between service quality, food quality, customer satisfaction and customer retention in limited-service restaurants in the neighborhood of universities in Jordan by Al-Tit (2015) also supported the notion that service quality plays a subordinate role relative to food quality. The result showed that food quality has a great influence on customer satisfaction relative to service quality. More formally:

H3. Dissatisfaction toward Food Quality causes a greater negative effect on repeat-purchase and recommendation to others in comparison with Service Quality

The relationship of service failure and price sensitivity

The relationship between service failure and price sensitivity can be elucidated by exploring the construct of customer satisfaction as an outcome of experience and the dimensions of behavioral intentions (i.e., word-of-mouth, customer loyalty, customer feedback). Customers generally measure their degree of satisfaction toward a product or service by the perceived value and the cost incurred in acquiring such product or service, that is usually done by comparing it with similar purchase. With that being said, greater level of satisfaction implies lower price sensitivity. In most cases when dissatisfaction occurs and the perceived price is high, customers may terminate the initial commitment to the current purchase or even, future purchases. As a result, price sensitivity increases. Conversely, if customer satisfaction was high, customers would be inclined to commit more, thus the perceived price increases. In other words, price sensitivity decreases (Low *et al.*, 2013). Further, prior studies have regarded that loyal customers are price insensitive to the price changes (Wernerfelt, 1991; Brown, 1974; Webster, 1965). An empirical study carried out by Low *et al.* (2013) indicated that for tangible products, satisfied customers are less likely to seek bargains, but for intangible services, customer satisfaction does not have any impact on price sensitivity. Satisfied customers in service industry are likely to also seek bargains. Against this backdrop, the following hypothesis is then developed:

H4a. Overall dissatisfaction toward restaurant dining experience affects customer price sensitivity

H4b. Price-value attribute has a significant negative impact on repeat-purchase and recommendation to other

STUDY DESIGN

In accordance with the objectives and hypotheses proposed in this study, relevant empirical study with the use of a content analyses was undertaken in the restaurant industry, specifically restaurants operating in larger cities located in Hungary. During the sampling and data collection phase, restaurants were methodically selected. First, they were categorized according to the review valence on Google reviews as well as the volume of received reviews. Masłowska, Malthouse & Bernritter (2017) and Cui *et al.* (2012) suggest that review valence generally refers to the average star rating of a product or a service. Further, review valence remains critical for potential customers as demonstrated in a study conducted by Masłowska *et al.* (2017), that also found with an average star

rating of around four to 4.5 stars out of five, the probability of purchase increases.

Taking service failures as the main focus into consideration, an upper-bound 3.9 for the highest star rating was then set. A total number of 39 full-service restaurants ranging from premium casual to fine-dining which had a star rating equal to or lower than 3.9 were identified. Individual average star rating was aggregated from a minimum of 200 reviews. Of the 200 reviews, only reviews with a smaller than or equal to three stars were analyzed. There were a total of 6180 reviews with a smaller than or equal to three stars out of 18,065 reviews by both local and foreigner customers. All selected reviews were coded and computed into the data set using Excel based on the written verbatims and then analyzed using SPSS Statistics 24. Each complaint case mentioned in the written verbatims was further grouped into different types of service failures. If a customer complained about more than one service failures, each issue was counted as one case. To identify the determining factors of service failure, descriptive analysis with a frequency table was used in the first phase of data analysis. The frequency table was displayed in descending order, together with the number of times each case occurs in the respective data set as well as the relative proportions and percentages.

In order to further understand the variables that best explain customer dissatisfaction by analyzing the influence of the determinants, this study also run the analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multiple regression using SPSS Statistics 24. For determining what factors are considered as the most important in a construct-forming process, multiple regression analysis is a suitable procedure (McDaniel and Gates, 1999). In addition, to analyze the external consistency of the multiple regression model the value of the coefficient determination (R^2) and the F -test level of significance were undertaken. The likelihood of R^2 being significant indicates the goodness of fit of the regression model (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Internal consistency of the regression model in the present study was verified through the Durbin Watson (DW) statistic to test for autocorrelation in the residuals from a statistical regression analysis. A rule of thumb, the values in the range of 1.5 to 2.5 are relatively normal. In other words, it shows there is no autocorrelation between the independent variables, which could cause bias in the regression coefficients. Further, the regression model predicts the dependent variable statistically significantly well if $p < .01$. Relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable as well as the differences within the predictor variables are defined as significant when the p -value is less than the alpha level 0.05.

RESULTS

The determining factors of service failure leading to negative OCRs

In order to analyze the first objective, determining those types of service failures which lead to customer participation in negative online word-of-mouth communication, descriptive statistics analysis was carried out through a frequency table, summarized in Table 1. To aid in comprehension, the scores in the frequency table were reorganized into lists of cognitive attributes and affective attributes and displayed in descending order.

The results of the descriptive analysis revealed that among all attributes, negative OCRs about food quality represents the highest service failure in the restaurant industry in Hungary with a total of 1634 cases. Food quality attribute is the sum of complaints mentioning about food taste, texture, presentation, temperature, serving size, freshness, cleanliness, ingredient quality, authenticity, consistency and menu variation. Price-value and service quality come in a close second and third in the list which comprise 20% and 18% of negative reviews respectively. Price-value defines as the perceived value of the overall dining experience in comparison with the price, whereas service quality includes negative reviews about restaurant's management, reservation system, order-error, product knowledge of waiters, unavailability of waiters, inaccurate billing and payment system. Based on the frequency table, there is not much different in the total number of complaint cases between cognitive (53%) and affective (47%) attributes.

Frontline staff attitude is treated as an individual variable considering its high score which makes up 14% of negative reviews. All negative reviews concerning the frontline staff rudeness behavior were tallied and analyzed separately from the service quality variable. An interesting finding that in every restaurant observed in the analysis, there were mentions about the arrogance of the frontline staff from customer side of the experience. It is also worth noting that some reviews were indicating these behaviors as the common or standard practice in service industry in Hungary. Table 2 demonstrates some of the examples of negative reviews in a context of frontline staff attitude.

10% cases mentioned about dissatisfaction toward the timeliness of service at the following basic time periods: time taken to be seated; to order drinks or meals; to receive the food at the table once the order has been placed; and to make the payment. Customers were also complaining about the additional service tax/gratuity. 5% said they felt dissatisfied and even deceived of the 12% additional service tax imposed at some restaurants in Hungary as well as the extra gratuity for the waiters that were automatically included in the bill.

The remaining cases were the complaints about the cleanliness associated with the kitchen, equipment, utensils, toilet and unhygienic behavior of staff; atmosphere; and restaurant's image with a small base for each attribute.

Dissatisfaction toward service failure and its influence on behavioral intentions

Multiple regression analysis with seven predictor variables representing the determinants of service failure was performed to test the influence of each construct on the intentions of repeat purchase and recommendation to others. Timeliness was integrated into service quality construct, while additional service tax/gratuity was combined into price-value construct for phase two of the analysis. The output of the R^2 and the ANOVA analyses show the regression model had a good fit ($R^2 = 67.4\%$, $F(7, 38) = 9.171$, $p\text{-value} < .01$). The DW statistic outcome verified that the level of internal consistency for each predictor variable was acceptable and the predictor variables were properly measured for autocorrelation in the prediction errors, with the value lies in the acceptable range 1.5 to 2.5 (DW = 1.602).

Table 3 presents the results of the significance of the relationship between the predictor variables and the observed variable. Among the seven relationships measured, two were found to be significant at the alpha level of 0.01, and two predictors were significant at the alpha level of 0.05. Dissatisfaction toward food quality had a significant negative effect on repeat purchase and recommendations to others, with $\beta = .258$, $t = 2.526$, $p = .017$. Dissatisfaction toward cleanliness also significantly negatively impacted behavioral intentions ($\beta = 1.026$, $t = 2.789$, $p = .009$), confirming that both food quality and cleanliness as cognitive attributes were the antecedents of behavioral intentions after service failure, thus providing support for H1. H2 predicted significant relationship between affective attributes (e.g., service quality, frontline staff attitude, atmosphere, restaurant's image) and behavioral intentions. The regression results show that dissatisfaction toward service quality had a strong negative effect on behavioral intentions ($\beta = .349$, $t = 3.590$, $p = .001$), however other predictors did not have significant effects on repeat purchase and recommendation to others, providing only partially support for H2. These results suggest that relative to other service failure constructs measured in this study, service quality plays a superior role as an important determinant of behavioral intentions after service failure, therefore H3 was not supported. In addition, the highest contribution to service quality and its significance on behavioral intentions was the timeliness of service. When timeliness was added to service quality construct, the significance increased.

To determine whether to reject the null hypothesis in favor of H4a, an additional multiple regression analysis was conducted with seven predictor variables and the price-value attribute being the observed variable. As shown in Table 4, dissatisfaction toward food quality ($\beta = .314$, $t = 2.086$, $p = .045$) and frontline staff attitude ($\beta = .458$, $t = 2.134$, $p = .041$) were found to be the significant predictors of price sensitivity. These results indicate that when customers feel dissatisfied toward food quality and frontline staff attitude during service encounter, it also lowers the perceived value of a service they experience relative to the price they are willing to pay, hence price sensitivity increases. As an outcome (also described in Table 3), the perceived price and value fairness underlined a significant relationship with repeat purchase and recommendation to others ($\beta = .239$, $t = 2.680$, $p = .012$), providing sufficient evidence to declare H4b is true.

The statistical results generated some key take-outs, which also outlined in Table 3 and 4: (1) any service mishaps with regard to food quality and cleanliness in the context of eating-out experience triggers customer participation in negative OCRs, switching intentions and discouragement for potential customers to purchase the service; (2) service quality is a strong and important determining factor of service failure that leads to behavioral intentions; (3) frontline staff attitude is likely to trigger dissatisfied customers to engage in negative OCRs and to cause an effect on price sensitivity, however it does not necessarily lead to directly influence behavioral intentions; (4) Perceived price and value fairness is directly affected by food quality and frontline staff attitude, and when it changes it impacts price sensitivity and, subsequently, it prompts behavioral intentions.

DISCUSSION

What are the determining factors of service failure on OCR platforms that lead to behavioral intentions? In case of restaurant dining experience in Hungary, the answer is service quality, cleanliness, price-value and food quality, in a sequential order. Several factors are reported to have influenced customer satisfaction in the service sector. Existing literature have provided a thorough reference connected to customer satisfaction, however there are still some insufficient information related to a lack of satisfaction. Present study responds to this call by taking into account multiple factors affecting customer dissatisfaction and behavioral intentions after service failure. The research contributes to the services marketing literature by empirically examining the negative OCRs toward restaurants in Hungary. Study findings are consistent with prior research (e.g., Jeong and Jang, 2011; Ryu and Han, 2010; Ha and

Jang, 2010; Liu and Jang, 2009; Namkung and Jang, 2007; Chow *et al.*, 2007; Bojanic and Rosen, 1994) that service quality co-exists with food quality to affect customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions. However, prior research had indicated that service quality plays a subordinate role relative to food quality; based on current study's findings, it is the service quality that plays a superior role compared to food quality and other restaurant dining attributes.

Further, the findings with regard to perceived price and value fairness contradict the result of Iglesias and Guillen (2004) who found that price did not subsequently affect customer satisfaction postdining experience, but had an effect in the restaurant selection phase. Their finding supports those of Jeong and Jang (2011); Li and Hitt (2010); Chen *et al.*, (2003) whose findings indicate that price has no significant impact on review valence and motivation to engage in eWOM. This result may reflect the nature of the present study which focused on dissatisfaction and service failure. According to Jahandideh *et al.* (2014), universal pattern in customer complaint behavior is nonexistence in different markets as individual customers from diverse cultures have unique needs and expectations. Liu and Grunert (2020) also explained that the higher the price or the cost that a customer needs to pay, customer expectations toward food quality and overall dining experience will also increase. As this study samples are the local and foreign customers who have experienced dining out at premium casual to fine dining restaurants, customer expectations could be higher and also wide in variations, the mismatch could hence, increase the risk of service failure.

Taking the number of complaint cases into account, authors expected to find that concerns about frontline staff attitude would demonstrate a significant relationship with behavioral intentions, but the staff rudeness was not identified as a key determinant for customers to switch to a competitor or discourage others to purchase the service. This finding challenges the common wisdom that the role of frontline staff in maintaining customer retention and acquisition is important (e.g., Gaur *et al.*, 2017; Cambra-Fierro *et al.*, 2014; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1991; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1988). There is a possible reason for the surprising finding. It could be associated with the perceived common practices in the country by both local and foreign customers that stem from two assumptions: first, it was drawn on similarity-attraction paradigm by Byrne (1971) that local customers are more tolerable of frontline staff rudeness and the absence of courteous. The paradigm suggests that cultural similarity enhances interactions and consequently reinforces customer satisfaction. The second relied on Sharma *et al.* (2014) observation that foreign customers have a

better understanding toward cross-cultural diversity with different needs, perceptions, expectations and evaluations about the service quality standard. These customers may understand that the service staff is familiar to a mono-cultural service environment; hence it is more difficult to deliver a suitable service that caters multicultural customers.

Other important service feature apart from the main factors is cleanliness, which was not mentioned frequently as the complaint cases, yet did have a significant impact on behavioral intentions. It supports the study of Trafiałek, Czarniecka-Skubina, Jurgita & Vaitkevičienė (2019) whose findings revealed that customers in Poland and Lithuania experienced the unhygienic behavior of waiters (e.g., touching tableware, kitchen utensils and equipment). In addition, customers from Poland strongly appreciated service quality in restaurants for its hygiene of the table and plates.

From a managerial perspective, the results provide insightful practical applications for restaurant businesses that seek to improve their service quality. By recognizing the specific reasons for complaints can help restaurant managers to find solutions to the problems indicated. Service quality is crucial to attract potential customers, retain existing ones and remain competitive. Service quality defines as an alignment process between customer satisfaction and service delivery, pre-during-post service encounters (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). With regard to competitive advantage, service quality is what sets a restaurant apart from the competition. As nowadays eating out at restaurants is considered as a form of leisure, customers often dine out for social reasons: restaurant dining is an enjoyable activity; therefore, the experience has become a necessity. Restaurant businesses should pay more attention on their organization approach and heave in mind that the entire structures of the business think customer-first rather than business-first.

Customer-centricity is substantial in marketing, yet it is often being taken for granted. This study found that, in service quality construct, the wait time during the dining service contributed highly to affect customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Each restaurant establishment had its own dynamic, but generally customers would need to wait excessively at these basic time periods: to be seated; to place an order; to receive meals and drinks; and to make the payment. Therefore, to optimize the timeliness, restaurant businesses should define service fragments of their restaurants to observe how the service dynamics play out during service encounters. It could be helpful to investigate which errors keep recurring and which procedures are redundant or insufficient.

As the research findings suggest, food quality was mentioned the most frequent and had a significant influence on repeat purchase and recommendation

to others, indicating that food quality has the ability to either contribute to business growth or failure. It is similar to the study results of Jeong and Jang (2011); Ryu and Han (2010); Namkung and Jang (2007) which suggest that food quality is the antecedent of customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions toward restaurants. Multiple elements affect customer satisfaction toward food quality, such as flavor, texture, presentation, temperature, serving size, ingredient quality, freshness, cleanliness and safety, consistency, authenticity and variety of options. To remain profitable, managers should implement quality control procedures to assure the quality of food and ingredients up to consistent standards, safe and reliable for customers. In maintaining food consistency, restaurants need to lay the groundwork and keep each step of the process in written documentations (e.g., ingredient specifications, recipes, safety and sanitation methods). Additionally, concerning food sensory attributes, both internal and external food tasting should be performed at the restaurants to achieve market norms and standard ingredients in order to meet or even exceed customer satisfaction; as an example, adjusting flavor, amount of ingredients per serving as well as portion size to customer relative palatability of the food.

While frontline staff attitude did not have a direct significant effect on behavioral intentions, it had a direct effect on customer price sensitivity of a purchased service and, consequently, it led to behavioral intentions. In addition, it also triggered customers to participate in OCR platforms that could potentially hinder businesses to attract new customers and generate future sales. On that account, it does not suffice for managers to only train, motivate, supervise and reward the frontline staff to produce excellent customer experiences, but it has to be the effort of everyone in the team without exception (Saravanan and Rao, 2007). Managers have to encourage customer-centric mentality and an outside-in perspective over inside-out approach to the entire team to be able to speak the language of customers and translate customer needs into solutions that will better serve them. A shift in perspective will lead to a new mindset, create good manners, more appropriate practices and accordingly, a better service quality.

To maintain the consistency of restaurant dining experience quality over time, mystery shopping method could be useful to provide management with an objective information that describes a situation at a particular time. The mystery shoppers will methodically observe the food quality, service quality, frontline staff attitude, cleanliness and all other tangible-intangible elements in restaurant dining experience while being undercover as customers. Detailed information can be aggregated or compared over time through a compiled report

of the observed service encounters which generally include numerical data (Lynn and Wang, 2013).

Beyond the research findings, it is central to note that as the non-transactional activities such as intense negative OCRs could have a dire impact on future sales, customer complaints should be moderated by bringing service failures to the attention of managers who thereafter have a responsibility to resolve the issue to customer satisfaction. Restaurant businesses should also accept point-of-sales (POS) feedbacks to manage complaints, for example by providing comment cards; customer satisfaction survey; and frequent checks of any service issues during service encounters by the frontline staff. The management, on the other hand, should enhance their response to customer complaints with constructive and actionable solutions, both at POS in general and online in particular. These behaviors can help strengthen restaurants' reputation considering that customers tend to trust the recommendations of their peers who are more knowledgeable in purchasing the service. As the service recovery paradox suggests that customers are likely to think more highly of a service provider after a service failure is done and justified compared to how customers would regard had a non-faulty service been delivered the first time (Krishna *et al.*, 2014).

This study has some limitations. First, the results cannot be generalized to other markets considering this study only measured service failure cases in the restaurant industry in Hungary. Second, this study limited its scope of observation from a single OCRs platform hence the data may not represent the total universe. It would be interesting to replicate the study in different markets to determine the extent to which the cultures, needs, perceptions, expectations and evaluations of the market may influence service failure and behavioral intentions. Future research could also examine complaint cases on multiple OCR platforms as well as those dissatisfied customers whose opinions are not covered on OCR platforms, such as those who engage in other activities (i.e., switching to other restaurant establishments without raising a complaint or informing their friends and families as opposed to participating in negative OCRs).

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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1

Frequency table of negative OCRs by type of service failure

No	Type of Service Failure	N	Number of cases (in absolute number)	%	Proportion to total number of reviews (1 to 3 stars) – %	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
	Base		6180				
	Cognitive Attributes						
	1	Food Quality	39	1634	25	26	41.90
2	Price-Value	39	1314	20	21	33.69	32.32
3	Additional service tax/gratuity	39	351	5	6	9.00	8.50
4	Cleanliness*	39	224	3	4	5.74	5.30
		Total	3523	53			
Affective Attributes							
5	Service Quality	39	1156	18	19	29.64	17.04
6	Frontline Staff Attitude	39	884	14	14	22.67	14.32
7	Timeliness	39	631	10	10	16.18	13.93
8	Atmosphere*	39	180	3	3	4.61	4.19
9	Restaurant's Image*	39	156	2	3	4.00	8.19
		Total	3007	47			
TOTAL CASES			6530				
Average number of cases vs. number of reviews			1,06				

Note: *small base

Table 2

Example of negative OCRs indicating frontline staff attitude

1	The place is pretty and clean. For that 4 stars. The staff is extremely rude though. They asked me to open the bag at the entrance, I asked why, instead of explaining I was told that if I don't open, they will not let me in. Again, I asked why does he want to see my bag. At that moment the guy got extremely annoyed, he became aggressive and verbally-abuse.
2	Staff was rude, went only for a few drinks and staff kept asking us to leave. Would not recommend, did not eat, but food look VERY overpriced.
3	When I visited, the host asked whether I have a reservation or not. When I responded that I don't have a reservation, despite the plenty of open seats, I was told that the wait is about 40 minutes. Funnily enough, some random men behind me who looked more like Hungarians got the seats right away. Apparently, that's not an uncommon experience in Hungary.
4	I ordered one Caesar salad here. The chef put a least five times more Caesar sauce than usual. It basically tasted like a Caesar sauce soup rather than a salad. Once I complained, the waiter immediately took away the dish and refused to even apologize. So not only did I not get a solution offered, or apology, I also only got one bite of the badly made salad. What kind of restaurant take away food and suggest you to leave once they heard a complaint?!
5	The worst point by far is the staff. They are very unfriendly and make fun of tourists by treating them as if they are dumb. I would not recommend this restaurant to anyone.
6	The waiter asked me multiple times whether I wanted to eat without giving me time to think. For context, the tables were only 25% filled so there really wasn't any rush. When I didn't answer fast enough, he kept saying louder "Do you understand?" when I said I wanted only to drink where he flippantly said "I had asked you so many times if you were eating". and then I saw the 12% fee when I asked for the cheque. I asked what the fee was for and waiter angrily responded that it was for seating at the table, as if I should've known better. The waiter hovered over me while I counted my money when I paid, he then proceeded to grab the money from my hands and counted it for me. That is completely inappropriate under almost all circumstances. I wouldn't recommend this place. The view is nice but not worth trying to please the staff.

Table 3

Results of multiple regression analysis illustrating the significant impacts on behavioral intentions

Attribute	β	<i>t</i> -Statistic	<i>p</i> -Value
Food quality	.258	2.526	.017*
Cleanliness	1.026	2.789	.009**
Service quality	.349	3.590	.001**
Frontline staff attitude	.244	1.130	.267
Atmosphere	.134	.329	.744
Restaurant's image	.180	.380	.707
Price-value	.239	2.680	.012*

Note: Goodness of fit index: $R^2 = .674$, $F(7, 38) = 9.171$, p -value < .01, DW = 1.602

** p -value < .01

* p -value < .05

Table 4

Results of multiple regression analysis illustrating the significant impacts on price sensitivity

Attribute	β	<i>t</i> -Statistic	<i>p</i> -Value
Food quality	.314	2.086	.045*
Cleanliness	-.051	-.374	.711
Service quality	.111	.467	.643
Frontline staff attitude	.458	2.134	.041*
Atmosphere	.195	1.367	.181
Restaurant's image	.123	.838	.409
Timeliness	-.274	-1.609	.118

Note: Goodness of fit index: $R^2 = .467$, $F(7, 38) = 3.886$, p -value < .05, DW = 2.173

* p -value < .05