

THE IMPACT OF BRAND IDENTITY AND PRICE ON YOUNGER CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION WITH FOOD TRUCKS IN TERENGGANU

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Abstract: *A food truck is becoming a global business trend and is rapidly growing in Malaysia. Food truck owners are working tirelessly to achieve customer satisfaction through superior brand identity and offering competitive prices to make food trucks more recognizable and interesting to visit, especially among the younger generation. This study aims to analyze the effect of brand identity and price on younger customers' satisfaction. An online survey through Google Form was used to collect data. The convenient sampling was chosen, and 124 samples of the younger generation who visited or purchased from food trucks in Terengganu are involved in this study. The findings provide evidence that brand identity and price had a positively significant impact on younger customers' satisfaction with food trucks. It will assist food truck owners to improve their brand identity and pricing strategies to increase customer satisfaction, encourage existing customers to return, and attract potential customers*

Keywords: *food truck, brand identity, price, younger customer, customer satisfaction*

Introduction

The food trucks phenomenon started in Malaysia in 2014, with newcomers offering a menu similar to the restaurants but at lower prices in Klang Valley (Durai et al., 2016). This new trend has recently become popular among urban culture and countries (Mokhtar et al., 2017). Reference (Shafiqah et al., 2020) stated that the food served at the food truck might influence customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction has consistently been the main factor for organizations' progress and survival in today's competitive market (Chikwawawa et al., 2019). Customers' satisfaction with food truck services can only be achieved when their needs are satisfied (Gopi et al., 2020). According to (Karki et al., 2018), customers will be loyal to a restaurant if they are satisfied with the price, service quality, ambience, and food quality. Furthermore, (Mokhtar et al., 2019) stated that customer satisfaction relates to brand identity. Brand identity has an essential part that will attract the customer because the brand will maintain the personality and highlight customers' sense of belonging. More customers will be attracted by a strong brand identity and equity (Eliel et al., 2019). Meaning, reputation, and pattern can all be developed from an innovative, iconic, and heritage standpoint. The identity of the brand will elevate its status (Kent et al., 2019). Reference (Rodrigues et al., 2019) stated that brand identity would involve several stakeholders, and the key that influenced co-creators, which is the process of staging and managing experience before brand identity, will be made known to the consumers. Reference (Yoon et al., 2017) stated that the younger generation is more adventurous in trying authentic cuisines and ethnic foods and experiencing the fun and unique feeling of easy access and prompt service of the food trucks. Their keen interest in new and viral food products and establishments drives them to food trucks. In the context of this study, the younger generation defined as a generation were born from 1984 to 2010 which are known as Gen Y and Gen Z. According to (Tahir et al., 2020) younger generation was born from 1995 to 2010, from age 16 to 26. Generation Y, known as Millennials, were born between 1984 to 1996, while generation Z was born after 1997 (Bresman et al., 2017).

Reference (Xiao et al., 2018), in their research, noted that Generation Y pays more attention to the price and food quality before purchasing the food, which reveals that the younger generation is concerned about the price. This finding indicates that the better the customer's price perception, the higher the customer satisfaction.

This study aims to analyse the effect of a) brand identity and b) price on younger customers' satisfaction with food trucks in Terengganu. The result of this study is expected to provide information and add knowledge to both academicians and practitioners in the decision-making process to improve customer satisfaction through brand image and price.

Literature Review

Food Truck Phenomenon in Malaysia

Food trucks are a new concept gaining popularity among Malaysian entrepreneurs and customers, but their numbers remain low compared to other countries. Reference (Mokhtar et al., 2018) agreed that the food truck industry in Malaysia has grown in popularity. Despite their positive development, food truck owners in Malaysia continue to face legal issues with the authorities, who have yet to provide credible licensing solutions. According to (Wahab et al., 2017), food trucks in Malaysia have the potential to expand if the government continues to focus on and promote this industry globally. Although many countries are ahead of Malaysia in this sector, this should not impede Malaysia's food truck industry's global success.

Furthermore, as (Mokhtar et al., 2017) reported, food trucks have emerged as a new sensation in the Malaysia's food and beverages industry, especially in Klang Valley. The success of food trucks is based not just on their versatility but also on their innovative branding. Running a legal food truck company, on the other hand, is more complex than it appears. Additionally, as stated by (Wahab et al., 2017), the government continues to promote the food truck industry across the country by assisting traders with capital funding and providing special places to conduct business under the 1 Malaysia Mobile Hawkers (1MMH).

According to (Ghazali et al., 2016) food trucks have become a new food and beverage trend in Malaysia. Flaming Wheels, the first and most popular food truck in Malaysia, was founded on 17th October 2013 to design a kitchen on wheels that sold freshly cooked food around Klang Valley. Dina Blazevic, the food truck's owner, started the business after seeing the idea on television and predicting the future trend of food service in Malaysia. Nonetheless, the food truck industry faced numerous challenges, the most significant of which was convincing Malaysian customers to accept this novel concept. Because of the growing middle-class population and changes in customer tastes, preferences, and lifestyles, this concept is still not widely known in Malaysia, particularly in rural areas.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the degree to which a consumption experience makes a person feels positive. According to (Prayag et al., 2017)), customer satisfaction is described as "a comparison of a consumer's perception of product or service performance, efficiency, or other outcomes with an evaluative norm". Customer satisfaction leads to increased repeat buying activity with recommendation intention (Prayag et al., 2017).

Customer satisfaction is understood to be the difference between customers' expectations before consumption and realization after consumption of a product or service. It leads to customer loyalty, which is essential for any business's success. Furthermore, customer satisfaction is the cornerstone of customer retention. The importance of customer satisfaction cannot be overstated because satisfied customers bring in new customers by spreading positive word of mouth about the company's goods and services [9].

According to (Raji et al., 2016), customer satisfaction will determine repeat sales, positive word of mouth, and customer loyalty. However, the goods and their characteristics, functions, reliability, sales activity, and customer support are crucial to ensure the customer meets or exceeds the satisfaction. Satisfied customers usually repurchase and buy more. Moreover, when the customers purchase more, they tend to share their experiences with their family and friends (Nielsen et al., 2016).

Customers will repeat the purchase if they are delighted with the product (Wantara et al., 2019). Reference (Zhong et al., 2020) stated that customers become loyal when they are satisfied with their dining experience. When customers' overall experience with the food establishment is satisfying, they feel that they have made a wise decision to visit this food establishment. When they feel satisfied, they believe that the food establishment has met most of their expectations. Happiness extends beyond the definition of happiness and is an essential factor in improving consumers' quality of life. When customers are satisfied, they will grow loyal to the service industries (Nikou et al., 2016). According to (Surip et al., 2017), customer satisfaction has a limited influence on price. Lowering the price would increase consumer loyalty. Customer

satisfaction can be measured when the customers think they have made the right decision to purchase food from the food truck and have enjoyed it (Suhud et al., 2016).

The Impact of Brand Identity on Customer Satisfaction

A brand is defined as a name, term, sign, symbol, or design that combine to identify the food truck's identity, including the foods and services to differentiate them from other competitors. According to (Hanaysha et al., 2016). organizations with a good name or brand identity for their products or services will benefit because they are easier to recall, more widely accepted, and have higher quality and reliability. A solid brand adds value to a company's products, allowing it to build long-term strengths and competencies. Customer-based brand equity encourages a deep understanding of their customers, and they will strive to find the best way to fulfil their needs (Majid et al., 2016).

Reference (Alkhalwaldeh et al., 2016) stated that when a food truck has a solid brand name, and customers are satisfied with their foods and services, it can lead to customer loyalty. When the customers hear about this brand, they will trust the products and services, thus willing to pay more than they would for other brands' products.

Customers choose a particular food establishment business because of its brand name. They are also attracted to a food truck business because of the logo (Arinda et al., 2018). The food truck brand has a reputation for quality, fashionable and trendy image, and unique features such as themes and design for a food truck (Hanaysha et al., 2016).

However, some consumers claim that loyalty to a particular establishment is based on the brand. Often, they are attracted to the brand due a strong sense of nostalgia. In various situations, a brand is considered important in gaining consumer loyalty and repurchase intention (Mokhtar et al., 2017) Since the food truck is a type of street food, brand identity can help with food truck brand and consumer behaviour, particularly when it comes to revisiting (Mokhtar et al., 2018).

Therefore, a brand identity can affect customer satisfaction. Brand identity such as price, quality, design, and symbol effectively present the strength of the brand. The strength of the brand can positively impact the brand experience like sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual that has a positive influence on improving customer satisfaction (Sammour et al., 2017). The study by (Dash et al., 2021) uncovered that customer satisfaction among generation Z or Millennials is also influenced by brand identity. According to (Zoyia et al., 2016), to attract customers and build customer satisfaction, the companies need to focus on developing a solid brand identity for their products. In this case, when customers can identify a brand with which they are satisfied, it can impact customer satisfaction (Kataria et al., 2019). Based on the results of previous studies, the researchers formulated the first hypothesis (H1) as follows:

H1: Brand Identity has a positive impact on Customer Satisfaction

The Impact of Price on Customer Satisfaction

According to (Ibrahim et al., 2018), customers consider price in a purchasing decision. Furthermore, in the food service industry, a fair price combined with a high level of food quality will lead to customer satisfaction. Price can be divided into three categories: good value for money, portion size, fair price, and overall dining value (Garg et al., 2017). Customers prefer more reasonable prices when purchasing food, particularly students and young workers who

earn average salaries. One of the reasons they prefer to buy food at food trucks is that food trucks can offer them good food and services at affordable prices (Ahmad et al., 2018).

Compared to other service measurements, the meal price (value) and service are equally essential (Garg et al., 2017). Reference (Zardi et al., 2018) reported that customer satisfaction would improve if food establishments could provide more competitive prices so all consumers could appreciate them. For instance, the price charged aligns with the quality of the product served. Prices are measured honestly and will satisfy customers based on the benefits obtained. Customers have expressed satisfaction with fair and reasonable pricing, prices that are competitive with other restaurants, and prices charged according to the quality of the goods received. The perception of prices is crucial in determining customer loyalty in establishments.

According to (Jawabreh et al., 2018), consumers liked to make price comparisons between one food establishment to another when they read the menu. The establishment offers the best possible price plan that meets customers' needs, and the food price charged by the food establishments is reasonable (Karki et al., 2018). The price of the food establishment is affordable and based on the food, and the price at food establishments is fair (Zhong et al., 2020).

Reference (Hanaysha et al., 2016) stated that fairness in pricing has a significant positive impact on consumer loyalty. In the food industry, perceived price fairness is one of the most important criteria for determining customer satisfaction. Consumers also compare different brands before or after buying to make informed decisions about the perceived value and determine their level of satisfaction. There is a need to develop superior pricing strategies and efficient pricing mechanisms to improve customer loyalty. Since pricing problems and price fluctuations can directly impact consumer expectations, they should be given special attention. Such activities are more likely to help a restaurant remain competitive and increase its long-term results.

When the price is affordable and reasonable, it positively and significantly impacts customer value, which affects customer satisfaction (Razak et al., 2016). According to (Jawabreh et al., 2018), the customers will be satisfied if they know the price in the menu in advance. Furthermore, (Subaebasni et al., 2019) stated that although the customers do not always remember the product's actual price, they can remember the price meaningful to them. Thus, the establishment's owner needs to put the right price on the product to satisfy customers. Therefore, based on the previous results, the researchers formulated the second hypothesis (H2), and the model is shown in Figure 1.

H2: Price has a positive impact on Customer Satisfaction

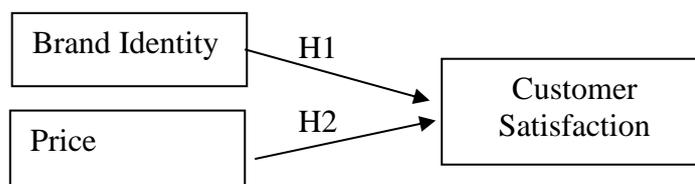


Figure 1: Hypothesized model

Methodology

Research Design

This is a causal study where a causation between the cause and effect of a situation is created (Zikmund et al., 2012). This study investigates the effect of brand identity and price on younger customers' satisfaction with food truck establishments in Terengganu. A cross-sectional study was employed by conducting quantitative research focusing on a statistical analysis of numerical data collected.

Sampling and Measurements

According to (Department et al., 2020), the local and domestic tourist arrival populations in Terengganu are 653,900 residents and 92,768 visitors. As a result, the total population is 746,668 people. This study focuses solely on customers, whether they are local or domestic tourists, as long as they are of the younger generation and have visited and purchased products from Terengganu's food trucks. In the context of this study, the younger customer generation defined as a generation were born from 1984 to 2010 which are known as Gen Y and Gen Z. According to (Tahir et al., 2020) younger generation was born from 1995 to 2010, from age 16 to 26. Generation Y, known as Millennials, were born between 1984 to 1996, while generation Z was born after 1997 (Bresman et al., 2017). Due to the ease of access issue for receiving information from the targeted respondents, the convenience sampling method is used to distribute the questionnaire. The primary benefit of this method is the speed with which data is collected (Mooi et al., 2018) and (Kotler et al., 2016). Other than that, participants always choose convenience sampling because they are frequently and conveniently available. Furthermore, the targeted respondents for convenience sampling are included for the study to satisfy functional requirements like simple accessibility, availability at a given time, geographical, or readiness to engage (Etikan et al., 2016).

The data for this study were collected through online distribution, namely WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, Facebook, and Twitter. All respondents to this survey must provide consent for their participation before receiving the Google Form questionnaire. One hundred and twenty-four (124) respondents completed the questionnaires, and valuable responses were used for data analysis.

The survey included four parts 1) respondents' demographic information, 2) food truck brand identity, 3) the food price at the food truck, 4) customer satisfaction on food truck business.

The brand identity of food trucks was measured with five questions adapted from the scale developed by (Arinda et al., 2018) and (Hanaysha et al., 2016). The food price at the food truck was measured with five questions (Jawabreh et al., 2018); (Karki et al., 2018) and (Hanaysha et al., 2016). Meanwhile, customer satisfaction has five questions based on customers' experience purchasing food from a food truck (Surip et al., 2017) and (Suhud et al., 2016). Except for demographic questions, all questions are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree).

Characteristics of Respondents

As illustrated in Table 1, the respondents of this study comprised 36.3% male and 63.7% female younger customers of food trucks. About 31.5% of the respondents were between the ages of 35 to 37 years old, followed by 23-25 (28.2%) and 20-22 (24.2%). The rest were from 26- 34 (14.5%) and 11-19 years old (1.6%). Most of the respondents were private employed (42.7%),

followed by students (39.5%). The other respondents were self-employed, government-employed and unemployed (17.7%). 36.3% of respondents answered they did not have any income, mainly students and the unemployed.

Table 1: Respondent Characteristics (n=124)

Category		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	45	36.3
	Female	79	63.7
Age	11-13	1	0.8
	14-16	0	0.0
	17-19	1	0.8
	20-22	30	24.2
	23-25	35	28.2
	26-28	3	2.4
	29-31	4	3.2
	32-34	11	8.9
	35-37	39	31.5
Occupational	Student	49	39.5
	Self-employed	12	9.7
	Government employed	5	4.0
	Private employed	53	42.7
	Unemployed	5	4.0
Income	No income	45	36.3
	Below RM1000	10	8.1
	RM1001 – RM2000	23	18.5
	RM2001 – RM3000	17	13.7
	RM3001 – RM4000	12	9.7
	RM4001 – RM5000	9	7.3
	Above RM5001	8	6.5

Reliability of the instruments

Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the reliability of measurement scales. According to (Guilford et al., 1965), the higher the Cronbach coefficient, the more reliable is the data. Reference (Hinton et al., 2004) suggested excellent reliability (0.90 and above), high reliability (0.70-0.90), moderate reliability (0.50-0.70), and low reliability (0.50 and below). However, (Said, 2018) stated that a Cronbach Alpha value between 0.6 and 0.8 is acceptable. The reliability coefficient for the scales (i.e., brand identity, price, and customer satisfaction) were 0.778, 0.854 and 0.932, respectively. These values suggested that the scales could be considered reliable and used for further analysis, considering the minimally acceptable level of alpha coefficient (i.e., 0.6).

Table 2: Summary of Cronbach's Alpha of the measurements

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	No. Of Questions
Brand Identity	0.778	5
Price	0.854	5
Customer satisfaction	0.932	5

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to identify younger customers' demographic information. The multiple regression was used with $p < .05$ as the criterion for statistical significance to explore the impact of brand identity and price toward younger customer satisfaction at a food truck.

Result

Effect of brand identity and price on younger customers' satisfaction

Multiple regression analysis was used to explore the impact of brand identity and price on younger customers' satisfaction with food trucks. The result indicated that 56% of the variance in customer satisfaction toward food trucks was explained by the model (adjusted $R^2 = .564$). While the p-value for brand identity and price is 0.000. Table 3 indicates that brand identity and price positively impacted younger customers' satisfaction with food trucks. The result showed that brand identity had the most substantial impact on younger customers' satisfaction ($\beta = .385$) as compared to price ($\beta = .318$). Thus, brand identity and price were positively associated with the younger customers' satisfaction with food trucks, supporting H1 and H2.

Table 3: Regression analysis for brand identity and price affecting consumer satisfaction

Variable	B	SE B	β
(Constant)	-.022	.329	
Brand Identity	.397	.077	.385
Price	.297	.062	.318

Note: Adjusted $R^2 = .564$, * $p < .001$

Discussion

This study explores the impact of brand identity and price on younger customers' satisfaction with food trucks in Terengganu. The results revealed that brand identity and price significantly impacted the younger customers' satisfaction with food trucks.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that younger customers are concerned about brand identity because they are attracted to visit or purchase food at food trucks that hold a strong brand identity. This study supported the previous research conducted by (Arinda et al., 2018) that customers are attracted to a food truck business because of the logo that exhibits the food truck's brand. The food truck brand has a reputation for quality, fashionable and trendy image, and unique features such as themes and design for food trucks (Hanaysha et al., 2016).

According to (Eliel et al., 2019), the brand identity of a food truck has an essential part that will attract customers. The customers will come to the food truck when the food truck has a strong brand identity. Moreover, the researchers believed that the younger generation would generally purchase food from food trucks based on the design and theme, such as hipster food trucks, modern food trucks, and others. Furthermore, the findings from this study discovered that the younger generation seeks the brand identity of food trucks first before looking at other factors such as the variety of menu and price. The researchers believe that the customers would be more satisfied if the brand identity of the food truck had a good reputation such as quality, trendy images, and unique features that suit the younger generation's lifestyle. This finding is in line with the study by (Kataria et al., 2019) that stated that when customers can identify a strong brand that they feel satisfied with, it can affect customer satisfaction. Therefore, it is time

for the food truck owners to expose their brand identity by promoting their food truck through social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and others. This initiative might pique the younger generation's interest in visiting and purchasing food from the food truck.

Another factor influencing customer satisfaction with food trucks is price. This study revealed that food price is crucial in attracting customers to purchase from the food truck. Reference (Ahmad et al., 2018) agreed that most customers prefer reasonable prices when purchasing at the food trucks, particularly the younger generations, such as students who have no or low income. This finding supports a previous study by (Razak et al., 2016) suggesting that affordable and reasonable prices positively influence and increase customer satisfaction. Moreover, this study found that the younger generation prefers to compare menus before deciding to purchase at the food truck because they are more satisfied when the food price is worth the ingredients and portion of meals. When several food trucks sell the same meals at different prices, most customers will choose the cheapest food, provided they are of the same quality, quantity, and taste. Thus, the meals' reasonable and affordable price is crucial in fulfilling customer satisfaction, especially the younger customers.

Conclusion And Recommendation

In conclusion, this study's finding is consistent with the previous related studies' results focusing on brand and price factors that influence customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the study stresses that food truck operators and marketers can attract younger customers from various demographics by increasing the perceived price value of products sold at the food truck through marketing strategy. In addition, the food truck owners need to be up to date with current trends so that the featured brand aligns with the products and constantly meet customers' needs. This strategy will indirectly satisfy customers and increase their desire to revisit the food truck. Thus, food truck operators and marketers must thoroughly understand their food truck's brand identity elements and price range that may affect the customers' satisfaction.

This study will help food truck owners to improve their brand identity and pricing strategies to increase customer satisfaction, promote existing customers' revisit intention, and attract potential customers. However, further exploration on customer revisits intention to food trucks as a factor influencing customer satisfaction is recommended. In addition, a comparison study based on different genders, generation Y and Z, is also suggested to determine the factors influencing generation Y and Z when purchasing food from food trucks.

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