THE EFFECT OF BRAND EQUITY ON CUSTOMER REVISIT INTENTION TO FAST-FOOD RESTAURANT IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract*: The study examined the effect of brand equity on customer revisits intention toward fast-food restaurants in Malaysia. Further, the study explored the relationship between brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty on customer revisit intention using the theory of reasoned action (TRA). A survey was conducted using online questionnaires involving 388 respondents who consumed fast-food in Malaysia. Using SPSS, descriptive and correlation analyses were used to analyse the data of this study. Findings revealed that three variables positively correlate with customer revisit intention. Brand loyalty shows the strongest impact that led customer to revisit to the fast-food restaurant. The results are aligned with previous research that stated brand loyalty is the most critical determinant affecting customers' revisit intention to the restaurants. Moreover, this research contributed to the existing body of knowledge in the field of brand management. Finally, the findings of this study can be used by restaurateurs as a reference for focusing on and managing their brand equity. In line with the study, future researchers were given implications and recommendations.*

Keywords*: Theory of reasoned action, brand equity, customer revisit intention, fast-food restaurant*

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Introduction

The most important restaurant assets in the hospitality and tourism industry are the brand name and what that brand presented (Aaker et al., 1991), (Yoo et al., 2001). Most customers can easily recognise the brand identifiers of many famous restaurant chains worldwide, for example, McDonald's golden arches (Kotler et al., 2006). Therefore, restaurants can increase corporate profitability by taking advantage of a brand's influence, distinguishing them from other similar brands (Aaker et al., 1991). According to (Berry et al., 2000), the brand "plays a special role in service companies because strong brands increase customers' trust of the invisible purchase". In a highly competitive market, restaurants face stiff competition, and it is crucial to persuade or influence customers to revisit the organisation (Win et al., 2016). The secret of success for any organisation is through strong attributes to the brand (Song et al., 2019).

The first gap concerns the underlying mechanism of the importance of brand equity to the fast-food restaurant. Recently researchers started to acknowledge the role of brand equity as one of the vital determinants for customers' revisit intention e.g., (Pham et al., 2016). This suggests that strengthening brand equity will motivate customers to revisit the organisation (Wijaksono et al., 2019). Thus, brand equity can create a competitive advantage for the restaurant as it creates an emotional connection with the customers (Rodríguez-López et al., 2020), (Aaker et al., 2009). The second gap concerns the limited research on how brand equity affects revisit intention using the theory of reasoned action (TRA), especially in the hospitality industry in Malaysia. Numerous researchers have produced a large number of studies on brand equity. For example, much of the focus from the previous studies on brand equity research has been on the issues with regards to customer perception by online experience (Kurniawan et al., 2019), social media marketing, theme restaurant (Nawawi et al., 2018), and tourist loyalty (Chen et al., 2020). However, there is little empirical research describing the relationship between brand equity and customer revisit intention (Mokhtar et al., 2018) especially in the context of a fast-food restaurant in Malaysia. In light of these details, this research has taken some measures to fill this gap by examining how the dimensions of brand equity influenced customers' behaviour to revisit the restaurant.

The study draws from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), focusing on perceived service quality, food quality, and price perception to predict behavioural intention. The concepts of behaviour intention were developed to be repeated purchase intention in the service industry, such as restaurant revisit intention (Lamai et al., 2020). According to the satisfied customer, the restaurateur meets the customer's needs and expectations for the product or service and earns customers' trust (Lamai et al., 2020), (Cakici et al., 2019). This study aimed to examine the effect of brand equity on customer revisit intention to the fast-food restaurant in Malaysia. To investigate this effect, we examined the relationship between the dimensions of brand equity and revisit intention. Therefore, building on somewhat limited research conducted to date on brand equity and revisit intention to the fast-food restaurant in Malaysia. This study investigates the overarching research question: "Does brand equity positively affect customers' revisit intention to the fast-food restaurant?".

Literature review

Theory of Reasoned Action

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) was used in this study to explore how brand equity influences customers to revisit intention towards the fast-food restaurant. Earlier studies use this theory to predict behavioural intention to assist the customer in making the decision

(Fishbein et al., 1975), (Hagger et al., 2019). TRA has been widely used to explain customers' behavioural intention, such as in a large restaurant, tourism industry (Kusumawati et al., 2021), social media (Schivinski et al., 2021), and hotel industry (Sukhu et al., 2019). Analysing customer behavioural intention will reveal some elements which determine individuals' behaviour. Fishbein and Ajzen (Fishbein et al., 1975) developed the idea "theory of reasoned action," showing the potential to predict interest and customer behaviour. Predictions of customer behaviour are critical to consider while determining customer preferences.

The concepts of behaviour intention were developed to be repeated purchase intention in the service industry, such as restaurant revisit intention (Lamai et al., 2020). For example, the studies have been mentioned that customer satisfaction is a key to revisiting intention since it is based on an individual's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product and service by the restaurant. According to the TRA in this study, customers will be interested in returning and visiting the restaurant if they believe the brand quality is consistently high or even improving (Lamai et al., 2020), (Cakici et al., 2019). In addition, the dimensions of brand equity will use this theory to influence the customer to revisit..

Brand Equity

Brand equity defines as a collection of brand assets and liabilities associated with brand names and symbols, which can be added or subtracted from a product or service (Aaker et al., 1996). Brand equity plays a significant role in the restaurant industry as it helps to differentiate itself from rivals. A brand involves both the tangible and intangible characteristics that define an industry's goods, as well as all identifying markings that differentiate one brand from another (Rambocas et al., 2018). According to (Aaker et al., 1992) and (Pham et al., 2016), brand equity established five dimensions: brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and other proprietary brand assets. (Yoo et al., 2001) mentioned that other proprietary assets comprise trademarks, patents, and distribution channel relationships irrelevant to customer perception. Nevertheless, only four dimensions have been considered a core dimension of brand equity (Yoo et al., 2001), (Pham et al., 2016). Adapting the study by Pham, et al. (Pham et al., 2016), this study used four dimensions of brand equity in measuring customers, including brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty.

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is defined as the customer's ability to recall and recognise a valued brand to which customers are familiar with and knowledgeable about a particular brand (Vasudevan et al., 2019). Brand awareness significantly impacts customers' purchase decisions by emphasising product quality and attributes and reducing perceived risks (Ledikwe et al., 2020). Further, it allows customers to be more familiar with a brand and to be able to recall it immediately when making a purchase decision (Mackay et al., 2013). Thus, brand awareness indicates the association of a specific brand in memory, whether positive or negative customer impacts. This is observed in many brands, especially in the fast-food restaurant industry. A previous study mentioned that brand awareness assists customers in making purchasing decisions when it is difficult to differentiate between similar services or products quality (Nurhayati et al., 2019). This suggests that customers can decide to revisit or repurchase based on their knowledge and experience of the product.

Brand Association

According to (Phong et al., 2020), the brand association is linked to information in the customer's mind about the brand and associated with the brain memory network (Emari et al.,

2012). However, a customer must be aware of the brand to build a set of associations (Jayswal et al., 2019). (Phong et al., 2020) claimed that brand association works as an information collecting tool to execute brand differentiation and extension. Almost everything associated with a brand is referred to as brand association, which is seen to be a part of brand equity (Aaker et al., 1991), (Pham et al., 2016). Any information intentionally associated with a brand is highly related to the brand name and reflects the brand's image (Pham et al., 2016). For example, the stronger brand associations in the product, the more the customer will remember it and be loyal to a particular brand (Phong et al., 2020). Therefore, brand associations are crucial in distinguishing one organisation from others and creating good opinions toward organisational products, which is extremely valuable.

Perceived quality

Perceived quality can be defined as a customer's perception of a brand's advantages, excellence, credibility, and differences compared to other brands (Pham et al., 2016). Perceived quality has become one of the critical elements in the early stage of brand building in fast-food brands (Mokhtar et al., 2018) and a common factor in decision-making for product selection from a choice of brands (Le-Hoang et al., 2020). The significant effect of perceived quality on a brand has been discussed in various industries (Mokhtar et al., 2018). In the food and beverage industry, perceived quality significantly affects the customer's repurchase intention (Vazifehdoost et al., 2018). For example, a restaurant with high-quality service offers competitive advantage (Le-Hoang et al., 2020) that will motivate customers to choose a particular brand over the competitors (Le-Hoang et al., 2020). As a result, it is assumed in this study that perceived quality is one of the significant factors of brand equity in Malaysian fast-food restaurants and that it might have a considerable impact on customer revisit intention.

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty defines as a strong desire to repurchase preferred products or services in the future (Ibrahim et al., 2021). In their study, Walter, et al. (Walter et al., 2013) mentioned two different measure concepts: behavioural and attitudinal. Behavioural loyalty is a repurchase process that attracts and creates customer retention to a specific service provider. In comparison, attitudinal loyalty is characterised by the customer's psychological and emotional state (Ibrahim et al., 2021). This suggests that brand loyalty is evident in customers' strong commitment to revisit a particular brand. Brand loyalty can lead to a strong positive association between customer loyalty and fast-food restaurant revisit intention (Espinosa et al., 2018). Further, it also has a direct positive impact on a brand's equity, profitability, revenue, market share, and long-term sustainability of a brand (Espinosa et al., 2018). When loyal customers spend more, they are ready to pay higher prices and willing to revisit the restaurant. This provides a positive indication that loyal customers can build emotional relationships with the brand, transforming them into advocates for the restaurant (Rafiq et al., 2020).

Customer revisit intention

Customer revisit intention is defined as the willingness of customers to revisit the place because of a satisfactory experience (Rajput et al., 2020). Customers are willing to spread positive word of mouth, revisit, be loyal, and spend more than expected (Mokhtar et al., 2018) due to their positive experiences. This suggested their satisfactory purchase intention and repeated visitation to the fast-food restaurant. From that, customers should be a business's top priority, and the restaurateur must understand customer behaviour. Furthermore, revisit intention is one of the main aspects that contribute to a company's revenues and can be caused by various situations (Mokhtar et al., 2018), (Majid et al., 2016). Therefore, restaurateurs must achieve a

competitive advantage through existing customers and take practical actions to encourage their repurchase behaviours while attracting new customers.
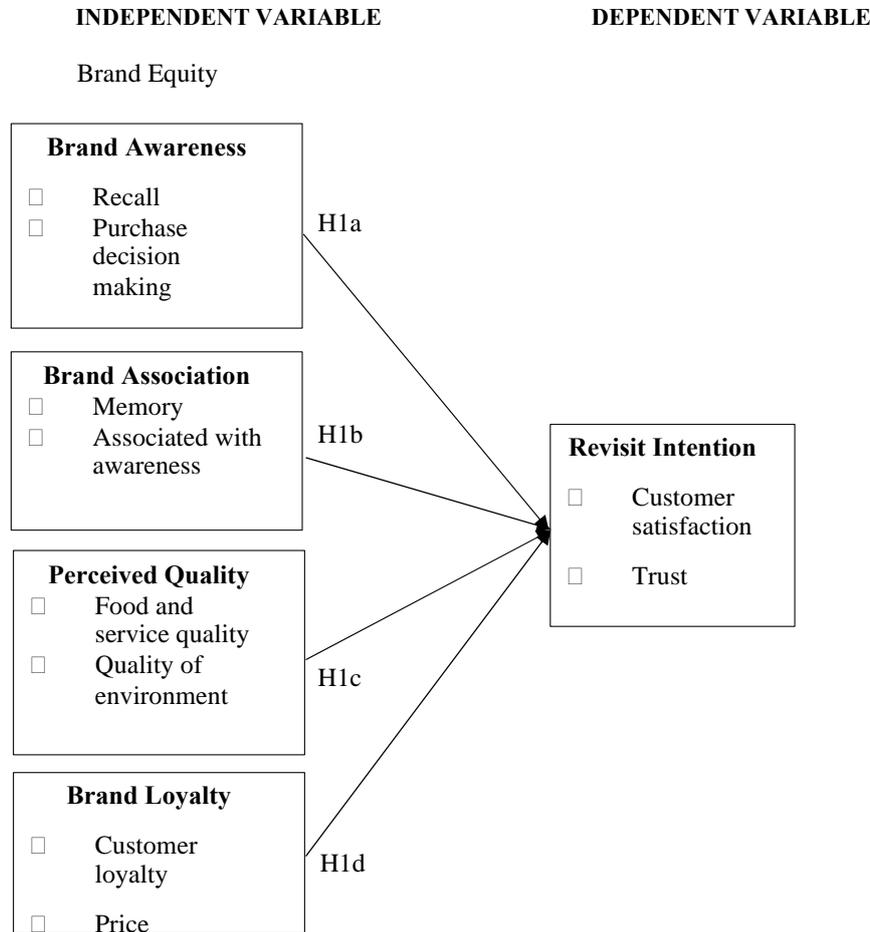

Figure 1: Adapted from Aaker (Aaker et al., 1996) and (Pham et al., 2016)

Hypothesis Development

According to (Aaker et al., 1992), brand awareness consists of two sub-dimensions: brand recall and brand recognition (Bilgin et al., 2018). (Khurram et al., 2018) mentioned that brand recall reflects customers' ability to generate the brand unexpectedly from memories to choose the brand. For instance, recalling a brand, memory elements are essential because they can assist the customer in revisiting the particular brand restaurant (Khurram et al., 2018). (Bilgin et al., 2018) also stated that brand awareness reduces the time and risk customers will spend searching for the product they buy. Therefore, this study hypothesises that;

H1 (a): Brand awareness will positively affect customer revisit intention.

Brand association is referred to anything linked in a customer's memory to the particular brand (Bilgin et al., 2018). (Pham et al., 2016) mentioned that customers aware and associated with the logo and recognised brand identities would make quick purchasing decisions and lead them to come back. Furthermore, creating positive brand associations in customers' minds will encourage their willingness to return (Pham et al., 2016). Thus, it is hypothesised that:

H1 (b): Brand association will positively affect customer revisit intention.

(Majid et al., 2016) and (Mokhtar et al., 2018) stated that perceived quality positively affects brand equity. The previous study found that perceived quality has a significant relationship with customer revisit intention (Mokhtar et al., 2018). (T -L et al., 2017) reported that customer satisfaction is determined by perceived quality due to the customer's experience. Based on past experiences, customers develop trust and communication that causes a reduction of uncertainty and potential risk (Tzavlopoulos et al., 2019). When the restaurateur can reach customer satisfaction, it will lead the customer to revisit in the future. Thus, it is hypothesised that:

H1 (c): Perceived quality will positively affect customer revisit intention.

Brand loyalty can lead the customers to revisit and the customers' willingness to recommend to the other potential customers (Bilgin et al., 2018). (Choi et al., 2020) have mentioned that customers may have a strong emotional connection and sense of loyalty toward a specific brand; they will express their willingness to revisit. For instance, people usually create passionate relationships with other people or brands, ranging from pleasant attachment to compulsive obsessions. Furthermore, brand loyalty will benefit the restaurant industry (Salehzadeh et al., 2016). Thus, it is hypothesised that:

H1 (d): Brand loyalty will positively affect customer revisit intention.

Methodology
The research approach was quantitative approach that focused on statistical analysis and numerical data collected through an online survey. An online questionnaire is designed by adapting and adopting the items to suit the research setting. The respondent were customers who have experienced dining at the fast-food restaurants in Malaysia. The sample size was determined by (Krejcie et al., 1970) which was 384 respondents, and this study used a simple random sampling method. A structured questionnaire has been used using a five-point Likert Scale was used for every variable except Demography, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The instrument for this study was adapted from the works of several authors for the variables of Demography, Brand Awareness (Pham et al., 2016), (Sean et al., 2011), Brand Association (Pham et al., 2016), (Washburn et al., 2002), (Farrokhi et al., 2020), Perceived Quality (Pham et al., 2016), Brand Loyalty (Pham et al., 2016), Revisit intention (Pham et al., 2016), (Rambocas et al., 2018). The data analysis was based on 388 valid questionnaire responses were collected through online Google Forms, and data were analysed using SPSS. This questionnaire was distributed through social media such Facebook, especially in fast-food pages and Travel groups, Twitter, and Instagram. Descriptive analysis was employed to identify and examine brand equity on customer revisit intention to fast-food restaurants, and multiple linear regression was used to determine the impact of the independent variable (brand equity) on the dependent variable (customer revisit intention) to the fast-food restaurants.

Findings and Discussion

Subject Demography
The respondents who contributed to the survey were female and male, representing 72.9 percent and 27.1 percent. Based on age, the highest number of respondents based on age is 25-34 years old, representing 45.1 percent, with a total of 175 respondents.

Brand Preference

The number of respondents who participated in this survey was 283 females, and 105 respondents were male. Based on the result, the majority chosen by respondents are Mc Donald's and KFC with (42.0%, 20.6%).

Reliability

A reliability test was conducted, and the result reported that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were all greater than 0.7, indicating that the internal reliability of each first-level indicator of the questionnaire was high (Brand awareness=0.892, Brand association=0.910, Perceived quality=0.944, Brand loyalty=0.926, Revisit intention=0.930)

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Based on table 1, shows that the R square is 0.750. It means that there is a 75% variance of the dependent variable (revisit intention) that is explained by the independent variables (brand equity), which is statistically significant as p-value <0.05.

Table 1: Model summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
					Change Statistics				
1	.866[a]	.750	.748	1.37981	.750	287.804	4	383	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand_Loyalty, Brand_Awareness, Perceived_Quality, Brand_Association

Table 2 shows the ANOVA test. This is to determine the regression model that has been tested is significant towards the research. Based on the table, we can see that the p-value < 0.05. This means that the null hypothesis has been rejected. This shows that this regression model is significant to the research study.

Table 2: Anova Model

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2191.774	4	547.943	287.804	.000[b]
	Residual	729.185	383	1.904		
	Total	2920.959	387			

a. Dependent Variable: Revisit_Intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand_Loyalty, Brand_Awareness, Perceived_Quality, Brand_Association

Figure 2 above the coefficients result which is the standardized coefficient for brand awareness is 0.029, brand association is 0.201, perceived quality 0.174 and brand loyalty 0.549. Then, the significance of brand awareness is 0.449 meanwhile brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty is 0.000. The p-value of brand awareness is p-value > 0.05, which means that there is no significant impact on the customer revisit intention. The brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty p-value < 0.05, which means that there is a significant impact on the customer revisit intention. From the table, we can conclude that brand loyalty gives a bigger

impact on the customer intention to revisit the fast-food restaurants due to the standardized coefficient of workload is bigger than others.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.473	.715		.662	.508	-.932	1.879
	Brand_Awareness	.031	.040	.029	.758	.449	-.049	.110
	Brand_Association	.201	.048	.201	4.213	.000	.107	.295
	Perceived_Quality	.089	.023	.174	3.894	.000	.044	.133
	Brand_Loyalty	.462	.034	.549	13.796	.000	.397	.528

a. Dependent Variable: Revisit_Intention

Figure 2: Coefficient Result

The first objective is to examine the effect of brand awareness on customer revisits intention to the fast-food restaurant. Based on the findings, there is no significant impact between brand awareness on the customer revisit intention and it can conclude that brand awareness do not give an impact on the revisit intention to the fast-food restaurants rejecting H1a. In line with previous study, brand awareness has a negative coefficient and does not affect the intention to revisit (Wijaksono et al., 2019). They further explained that the differences in the relationship between brand awareness and revisit intention could be due to variations or diversity of the area of research under study. It might be one of the possibilities if the item understudy has a weak relationship with brand awareness (Wijaksono et al., 2019). Specifically in Malaysia, this suggests that customers are already aware of the famous brand, as referring to Statista 2020 most customers in Malaysia preferred KFC and McDonald's compared to other fast-food restaurant. This indicate that brand awareness is not an important element as the customer are aware of the brand.

The second objective of this study is to examine the effect of brand association on customer revisit intention to the fast-food restaurant. The result shows a positive relationship between brand association and customer revisit intention (H1b). The result is similar to a study by (Pham et al., 2016), (Wijaksono et al., 2019) mentioned that the higher the brand association, the higher the possibility of the customer to revisit. This finding is in line with other research evidence that claims that brand association allows customers to differentiate their interests which the brand satisfies them, distinguishes the brand from competitors, and influences customers to revisit intention (Thu et al., 2019).

Based on the third objective, this study examines the effect of perceived quality on customer revisits intention to the fast-food restaurant. End of this study, the result shows a strong positive relationship between perceived quality and customer revisit intention (H1c). The correlation between both items is 0.748. This result was supported by (Lamai et al., 2020) who stated that perceived quality positively affects customer revisit. A current study believes that in branding, perceived quality should refer to both a customer's perception of overall performance and an intangible related to the brand (Thu et al., 2019). That will be the basic principle for gaining and improving customer intention to succeed in the restaurant by offering perceived service quality successfully (Lamai et al., 2020).

Last but not least, the objective is to examine the effect of brand loyalty on customer revisit intention to the fast-food restaurant. The result between brand loyalty and customer revisit intention is the highest correlation with 0.831. (Pham et al., 2016), (Wijaksono et al., 2019) also found that perceived quality directly impacts customers' revisit. Based on (Aaker et al., 1992), customer satisfaction measures brand loyalty that looks at customers and their willingness to remain with a brand. In line with (Wijaksono et al., 2019) mentioned that brand loyalty is a position in which a customer can switch to another brand, significantly when the brand's pricing and product attribute changes. For example, customers who have high brand loyalty will repeatedly purchase it and stay with the brand; they can be linked to the brand's loyal customer (Aaker et al., 1996), which usually is a sign of a strong brand (Espinosa et al., 2018).

Conclusions and Future research

Three hypotheses in this study are supported. It is wise to say that now, to improve the brand equity, a restaurateur needs to be concerned about the underlying mechanism of the importance of brand equity to a fast-food restaurant to require them to revisit. As a result, the more customers experience a particular brand, the more advantages the brand will get, and the more satisfaction service provided will get full attention from customers to revisit. Furthermore, this study's findings conclude that brand equity can create a competitive advantage for the restaurant by creating an emotional connection with the customers. Through this study, the strength of brand equity will motivate customers to revisit the restaurant, especially in Malaysia.

Several challenges faced in the study are to be highlighted for future research purposes. Nevertheless, this study also has limitation. The findings of this study were mainly from the central regions in Malaysia because of the limitations of time. Future research should gather information more evenly to all the regions to test the results again. Besides that, future research is also encouraged to investigate from the qualitative perspective by collecting data through in-depth interview for improvement and getting detailed data. It will provide deeper understanding of how brand affect their decision to revisit the fast-food restaurants.

Acknowledgment

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