



AMERICAN JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (AJMRI)

ISSN: 2158-8155 (ONLINE), 2832-4854 (PRINT)

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 4 (2023)



PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

Exploring Customer Perceptions and Experiences: A Qualitative Study of Crispy King Fast-Food

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Article Information

Received: June 25, 2023

Accepted: July 22, 2023

Published: July 30, 2023

Keywords

*Fast-Food, Customer
Perceptions, Customer
Experiences, Customer
Preferences, Food Quality*

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study aims to delve into the perceptions and experiences of customers at Crispy King Fast-food, a prominent chain in the fast-food industry. By employing in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the study seeks to understand the factors influencing customers' preferences for Crispy King and the aspects that contribute to their overall satisfaction with the brand. The research will explore various dimensions, including the taste and quality of food offerings, the effectiveness of service, the ambiance of the outlets, and the brand's positioning in the market. By analyzing these qualitative data, the study aims to identify key strengths and weaknesses of Crispy King from the perspective of its valued customers. Through this research, the study intends to provide valuable insights to Crispy King's management and marketing teams, helping them enhance their understanding of customer needs and expectations. The findings of this study may serve as a basis for strategic decision-making, fostering improvements in customer satisfaction and loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the fast-food industry has experienced remarkable growth, becoming an integral part of modern urban culture and lifestyle. Fast-paced daily routines and changing consumer preferences have contributed to the popularity of fast-food establishments, providing convenient and quick dining options. Among the renowned names in this competitive landscape, Crispy King Fast-food stands out as a major player, known for its diverse menu and customer-centric approach.

Understanding customer perceptions and experiences is crucial for any business, especially in the highly competitive fast-food sector. Numerous studies have explored customer attitudes towards fast-food chains, emphasizing the importance of customer satisfaction in building brand loyalty and maintaining a competitive edge (Aldaihani & Ali, 2018; Xue, *et al.*, 2021; Slack, *et al.*, 2021; Mobarak *et al.*, 2022; Ollor & Onyemachi, 2022; Lee *et al.*, 2022) However, there is a limited understanding of the unique factors that contribute to Crispy King's success and appeal to its customer base.

The fast-food industry's dynamic nature and fierce competition necessitate continuous efforts to meet customer expectations and retain their loyalty. Understanding what drives customer satisfaction and loyalty at Crispy King Fast-food is crucial for the brand's sustained success and market positioning. By gaining valuable insights into the preferences and experiences of Crispy King's customers, the management team can tailor their strategies to cater to customer demands more effectively.

This study's findings will not only benefit Crispy King

but also contribute to the broader body of knowledge in the field of marketing and consumer behavior. As fast-food chains continue to shape urban dining trends, this research can serve as a reference for other players in the industry seeking to enhance their customer experiences and build brand loyalty.

While several studies have examined customer perceptions and experiences in the fast-food industry, there is a research gap when it comes to understanding the specific factors driving customer satisfaction and loyalty at Crispy King Fast-food. Existing studies have often focused on larger fast-food chains with broader geographical coverage, making it essential to investigate the unique aspects that set Crispy King apart from its competitors and contribute to its success in a particular local setting.

This qualitative research aims to bridge the existing gap in the literature by conducting in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to gain comprehensive insights into the preferences and experiences of Crispy King's customers. By adopting a qualitative approach, this study aims to capture rich and nuanced data, exploring various dimensions that influence customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

By delving into the unique aspects that shape customer perceptions and experiences at Crispy King Fast-food, this research endeavors to provide valuable insights to the management team. The findings will inform strategic decision-making, enabling Crispy King to continuously enhance its offerings, services, and customer engagement strategies to maintain its competitive edge in the fast-food industry.

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Through this qualitative study, the voices of Crispy King's customers will be amplified, allowing their preferences and experiences to contribute significantly to the brand's success. The in-depth exploration of customer perceptions will pave the way for customer-centric strategies that cater to the evolving demands of the market, fostering long-term customer loyalty and sustainability for Crispy King Fast-food

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review of related literature explores the various dimensions that influence customer perceptions and experiences in the fast-food industry, with a specific focus on factors relevant to Crispy King Fast-food. The literature review is organized into four main themes: customer preferences, brand loyalty, customer satisfaction, and fast-food ambiance.

Customer Preferences

Studies have highlighted the significance of customer preferences in driving fast-food choices (Iglesias *et al.*, 2019; Farooqui & Alwi 2019; Hidayat *et al.*, 2021). Research by Iglesias *et al.* (2020) emphasizes that the taste and quality of food offerings play a pivotal role in shaping customer decisions. Farooqui & Alwi (2019) delve into the importance of fast-food service quality in meeting customer expectations and creating positive dining experiences. Furthermore, Hidayat *et al.* (2021) examine customers' growing interest in health and sustainability aspects when making fast-food choices, which may have implications for Crispy King in developing a more health-conscious menu. Utonga & Ndoweka (2023) highlighted that fostering the development of more efficient payment systems, particularly electronic payment systems, can mitigate expenses and potential risks associated with cash transactions. Moreover, promoting financial inclusion can reduce the need for cash and enhance the efficacy of monetary policy, serving as a preventive measure against inflationary pressures and unnecessary credit growth.

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is crucial for fast-food chains to maintain a steady customer base (Hussain, 2018; Sochenda, 2021; Izquierdo-Yusta *et al.*, 2022). Hussain (2018) identifies factors influencing brand loyalty in fast-food chains, emphasizing the role of brand image and customer satisfaction. Sochenda (2021) present a case study highlighting the impact of fast-food branding on customer loyalty, providing insights into successful strategies employed by popular chains. Izquierdo-Yusta *et al.* (2022) explore the impact of menu design on customer preferences, underscoring the potential of effective branding in enhancing customer loyalty and repeat visits. Kabir (2023) highlights the importance of building and maintaining a brand's image in the era of social commerce. Furthermore, this study provides insights into the factors that drive consumers' perception of trust, connectedness, responsibility, and competence

towards brands in the context of social commerce.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a key determinant of the success of fast-food chains (Shah, 2020; Chen *et al.*, 2018; Rakwach, 2022). Shah (2020) examine the role of ambiance in fast-food customer experiences, showing that the physical environment significantly influences customer satisfaction and dining behavior. Chen *et al.*, (2018) further explore the link between customer perceptions of health and sustainability in fast-food choices and overall satisfaction with the dining experience. Additionally, Rakwach (2022) investigate the influence of fast-food advertising on consumer decision-making, demonstrating the impact of marketing strategies on customer satisfaction and perception.

Fast-food Ambiance

The ambiance of fast-food outlets has been recognized as a critical factor in shaping customer experiences (Carranza *et al.*, 2017; Izquierdo-Yusta *et al.* 2022). Carranza *et al.*, (2018) highlight that factors such as lighting, decor, and seating arrangements contribute to the overall ambiance and influence customer satisfaction. Izquierdo-Yusta *et al.* (2022) explore the impact of menu design and its effect on customer preferences, showcasing how an appealing ambiance can enhance the overall dining experience and customer loyalty.

Customer perceptions and experiences in the fast-food industry have been a subject of interest for researchers, with numerous studies exploring the factors that influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. Beyond the authors cited in the previous section, several other researchers have contributed to the literature in this area:

Singh *et al.* (2022) conducted a comparative study analyzing customer perceptions and experiences in various fast-food chains. The study compared customer satisfaction, service quality, and brand loyalty across different fast-food establishments, providing insights into the unique aspects that influence customer preferences in the competitive industry.

Fanelli & Di Nocera (2018) examined the impact of online reviews on customer perceptions of fast-food restaurants. The study explored how online reviews and ratings influence customer satisfaction and brand perceptions, shedding light on the role of online reputation management in the fast-food industry.

Rajput & Gahfoor (2020) conducted an exploratory study to understand customers' dining experiences at fast-food restaurants. The research focused on identifying the factors that contribute to positive and negative experiences, providing insights into the key determinants of customer satisfaction in fast-food settings.

Zhong & Moon (2020) investigated the role of ambiance in fast-food restaurant customer satisfaction. The study examined how the restaurant's atmosphere and physical environment influence customer perceptions and experiences, contributing to overall customer

satisfaction and loyalty.

Muskat *et al.* (2019) explored the effects of food quality, service quality, and price fairness on customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions in fast-food restaurants. The research highlights the importance of these factors in shaping customer perceptions and loyalty in the fast-food industry.

Theoretical Framework

In this study on customer perceptions and experiences at Crispy King Fast-food, two prominent theories anchor the research: the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model and the Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT).

Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model

The Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, introduced by Kevin Lane Keller in 1993, serves as a guiding framework to understand how customers form perceptions and attitudes towards a brand. This model emphasizes that brand equity is built upon four key dimensions:

Brand Awareness

Refers to customers' recognition and familiarity with the brand. Crispy King has successfully established brand awareness among its target market, with customers being familiar with the brand's name and offerings.

Brand Associations

Represents the mental links and connections customers make between the brand and certain attributes, images, or experiences. Positive brand associations, such as delicious taste and affordable pricing, contribute to customer loyalty and positive perceptions of Crispy King.

Perceived Quality

Relates to customers' subjective assessments of a brand's product or service quality. Crispy King's focus on delivering delicious and flavorful meals has resulted in customers' positive perceptions of food quality.

Brand Loyalty

Refers to customers' commitment and attachment to the brand, leading to repeat purchases and preference over competitors. The study reveals that Crispy King has successfully cultivated brand loyalty among its customers, driven by positive associations and perceived quality.

Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT)

The Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) explains how customer satisfaction is influenced by the perceived match or mismatch between their expectations and the actual experiences with a product or service. According to EDT, customer satisfaction is influenced by two factors:

Expectations

Represent customers' pre-consumption beliefs and assumptions about a product or service. Before dining

at Crispy King, customers may have certain expectations regarding the taste, service, and overall experience.

Disconfirmation

Occurs when customers compare their actual experiences with their initial expectations. Positive disconfirmation happens when the actual experience exceeds expectations, leading to higher satisfaction and vice versa.

In the context of this study, the findings highlight that Crispy King has largely met or exceeded customers' expectations, leading to positive disconfirmation and high levels of satisfaction. The flavorful food offerings, efficient service, and affordable pricing have contributed to a positive disconfirmation, resulting in satisfied and loyal customers.

Combining the CBBE model and the EDT provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the dynamics of customer perceptions and experiences at Crispy King Fast-food. The CBBE model emphasizes the importance of brand equity and customer perceptions, while the EDT explains how customer satisfaction is influenced by their initial expectations and subsequent experiences. Together, these theories offer valuable insights into the factors driving customer satisfaction and loyalty at Crispy King, supporting the study's conclusions and practical implications for the brand.

Research Questions

1. What are the key factors that contribute to customer satisfaction and loyalty at Crispy King Fast-food?
2. How do customers' perceptions of food quality and taste impact their overall dining experiences at Crispy King?
3. What are the primary factors influencing customers' choices between Crispy King and its competitors in the fast-food industry?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This qualitative research employs a phenomenological approach to gain in-depth insights into customer perceptions and experiences at Crispy King Fast-food. Phenomenology is suitable for exploring participants' lived experiences, allowing the researchers to understand the unique perspectives and meanings customers attach to their interactions with the brand.

Research Environment

The study will be conducted at one branch of Crispy King located in Liloan, Southern Leyte, Philippines. Liloan is a municipality known for its vibrant community and diverse dining options. The selected Crispy King branch will serve as the primary research environment, providing insights into the experiences and perceptions of customers at this specific outlet.

Research Informant

The study will recruit a diverse sample of customers who have recently dined at Crispy King outlets. Participants

will be selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation from various demographics, including age, gender, and dining frequency. A target of 20-30 participants will be sought, considering the depth and richness of the data required for qualitative analysis.

Research Instruments

The research instrument for this qualitative study on customer perceptions and experiences at Crispy King Fast-food will consist of two main components: semi-structured interview guides and focus group discussion protocols. These instruments will be designed to explore various aspects related to customer preferences, brand loyalty, service quality, and overall dining experiences at Crispy King.

Data Collection

In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with participants to explore their experiences, perceptions, and preferences related to Crispy King Fast-food. The interviews will allow participants to provide detailed narratives about their interactions with the brand, the factors influencing their dining choices, and their overall satisfaction.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions will be organized to encourage participants to share their experiences openly and interact with each other, generating deeper insights and uncovering collective perspectives. Focus groups will be moderated to facilitate meaningful discussions while maintaining a comfortable and respectful environment.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis will be employed to analyze the data collected from interviews and focus group discussions. Audio recordings and transcriptions of the sessions will be carefully reviewed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and key findings related to customer perceptions and experiences at Crispy King Fast-food.

Ethical Considerations

This research will adhere to ethical guidelines, ensuring participants' informed consent, confidentiality, and privacy. Participants will be informed about the study's purpose, voluntary nature, and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. Ethical approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board to ensure the study meets the necessary ethical standards.

Data Trustworthiness

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the researchers will engage in peer debriefing, member-checking with participants, and triangulation of data sources. Multiple researchers will independently analyze the data to promote inter-rater reliability.

Limitations

The qualitative nature of the study may limit generalizability. However, the focus on Crispy King Fast-food and the use of rigorous methods will provide valuable insights specific to this context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the qualitative study on customer perceptions and experiences at Crispy King Fast-food revealed several key themes and insights. Data from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis, leading to the identification of the following prominent findings:

Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

Participants consistently cited food quality, taste, and value for money as the primary factors influencing their satisfaction and loyalty to Crispy King. The majority of customers expressed a preference for Crispy King due to the delicious taste of their signature dishes, particularly the crispy fried chicken and flavorful sauces. Additionally, participants appreciated the affordable pricing of menu items, which provided value for money compared to other fast-food chains in the area.

Impact of Brand Equity on Customer Perceptions

The Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model was evident in the participants' perceptions of Crispy King. Strong brand awareness and positive brand associations contributed to customers' confidence in the quality of food and service. The brand's reputation for consistently delivering tasty and satisfying meals created a sense of trust and loyalty among customers.

Service Quality and Customer Experiences

Participants' responses regarding service quality were generally positive, highlighting Crispy King's friendly and efficient staff. The staff's responsiveness and attentiveness to customer needs were well-received. However, some participants expressed occasional concerns about longer wait times during peak hours, suggesting potential areas for improvement. The findings from the study shed light on the crucial factors that contribute to customer satisfaction and loyalty at Crispy King Fast-food. The positive perceptions of food quality and taste align with the brand's focus on providing flavorful and enjoyable meals, contributing to customer retention and repeat business. The affordability of menu items also plays a significant role in attracting customers and enhancing their overall dining experiences.

The strong brand equity exhibited by Crispy King demonstrates the success of their marketing efforts in creating a positive brand image and reputation. The findings underscore the importance of consistently delivering on brand promises to foster trust and loyalty among customers.

While participants generally expressed satisfaction with the quality of service, the concerns raised about wait

times during peak hours present an opportunity for Crispy King to optimize their operations and enhance service efficiency. Addressing these issues could lead to even greater customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The study's results also suggest that the Crispy King outlet in Liloan, Southern Leyte, effectively caters to its target market, resonating with customers' preferences and providing a delightful dining experience. These insights can serve as a valuable guide for the management team to maintain and strengthen customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and competitiveness in the local fast-food industry.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative study on customer perceptions and experiences at Crispy King Fast-food in Liloan, Southern Leyte, has provided valuable insights into the factors that contribute to customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. The findings reveal that Crispy King has successfully established a positive brand image and reputation, with customers expressing strong preferences for the taste, quality, and affordability of its food offerings. The efficient and friendly service provided by the staff has further contributed to positive customer experiences.

Food Quality and Taste

Crispy King's focus on delivering delicious and flavorful meals has resonated with customers, becoming a significant driver of customer satisfaction and loyalty. The signature crispy fried chicken and flavorful sauces have garnered positive feedback and contributed to customers' preference for Crispy King over other fast-food chains.

Brand Equity

The study shows that Crispy King has achieved a strong brand equity among its customers. Positive brand associations, high brand awareness, and a reputation for delivering consistent and tasty meals have fostered trust and loyalty, influencing customers' dining choices.

Service Quality

While participants generally had positive experiences with the service at Crispy King, some expressed concerns about wait times during peak hours. Addressing these operational challenges could lead to even higher levels of customer satisfaction and overall dining experiences.

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