

Customers' Intention to Visit Fast Food Restaurants in Malaysia: A Lesson Learned from Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

COVID-19 has flipped billions of people's lives upside down worldwide, and its consequences extend beyond physical health, affecting society and economics. The outbreak of this disease has severely affected the global and Malaysian economy. Among the economic sectors which are suffering loss, the service industry particularly, fast food restaurants, are hugely impacted. Before the outbreak of COVID-19, most consumers enjoyed going out and dine-in at a fast-food restaurant without feeling paranoid. The purpose of this study is to examine factors that influence consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, three independent variables were used: consumers' perceived risk, sales and promotion, and service quality. Online questionnaires were used as medium of data collection to customers of fast-food restaurants and after data screening, a total of 240 questionnaires were valid for further analysis. Data obtained was analyzed by using SPSS's latest version. The results of service quality (mean=3.76), sales promotion (mean=3.59) and perceived risk (mean=3.54) indicate a score leaning towards agreement level. Results showed that sales promotion (beta value: 0.256, sig-t: 0.000) is the most influential factor of consumers' intention to visit a fast-food restaurant and followed by the perceived risk and service quality. Additionally, findings obtained from this study found that perceived risk, sales promotion and service quality have a significant relationship with intention to visit fast food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic. It is expected that this study will help to assist the fast-food restaurant operators to focus on these three factors to take the necessary action to seek consumers' satisfaction and make them feel secure to dine in during this COVID-19 pandemic. **Keywords:** COVID-19 Pandemic, Consumers' Perceived Risk, Sales and Promotion, Service Quality, Intention to Visit Fast Food Restaurant

Introduction

Since its discovery in late 2019 in Wuhan, China, Coronavirus disease 19 (COVID-19) has engulfed the whole world (Lau et al., 2020). On February 3, 2020, the first Malaysian who tested positive for COVID-19 was announced; this individual had a history of going to a neighbouring nation for a business conference, which was also attended by a Chinese group

(Ahmad, 2020). This virus, which is characterized by its rapid pace of transmission from one person to another, has since reached an unmanageable rate of infection, with the number of cases rising every day. Former Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin has declared that the entire country will be on a movement control order starting from March 18th to 31st to deal with the rise in COVID-19 cases. He said that to enforce this prohibition, all places of worship and business premises must be closed except for supermarkets, public markets, grocery stores, and stores selling necessities. As a result, it has dramatically impacted Malaysia's economic sector. The food and beverage (F&B) industry, specifically the fast-food industry, is one of the industries that has been quite negatively impacted by this outbreak. Bernama (2020) reported that food and beverage businesses had suffered a 90% loss in revenue throughout the Malaysian Movement Control Order (MCO) period compared to the previous year.

After years passed and stay-at-home restrictions were lifted around the world, the government is finally allowing people to dine in restaurants strictly for people who have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (Durai, 2020). However, news reports and industry studies indicate that consumers have mixed feelings about simple things such as going out to eateries for a meal. According to Durai (2020), some people have developed a layer of caution in their approach to eating out. For example, they used to eat out every single weekday but now restrict themselves to dining out on weekends only. Despite all the safety measures that have been looked into, people are still careful about eating out. They have avoided eating out on several occasions because they are anxious about going out in public. According to recent studies, several favorable features of perceived risk and sales promotion significantly influenced consumers' intentions to eat at a fast-food restaurant during the COVID-19 pandemic (Keni & Wilson, 2021). However, the study was conducted in Jakarta. The findings from the other nation may not match those from the research. Therefore, it is undoubtedly essential to understand what are the influential factors that can influence consumers' intention to visit a restaurant in the fast-food sector, specifically in Malaysia.

Problem Statement

Nearly every industry worldwide has been adversely impacted by the present and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a significant influence on global economic sectors. According to Kee et al (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on many businesses across the globe. Businesses should develop new business techniques as the Covid-19 pandemic spreads worldwide, causing a socio-economic, cultural, and health crisis. As customers are one of the sources of revenue for the businesses, especially in fast-food restaurants, they have problems sustaining their business because the number of visitors had dropped significantly compared to that before the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, fast food restaurant operators need to think about influencing the customers to visit their restaurants. Kolmar (2021) reported that since the commencement of lockdown measures, foot traffic to fast food restaurants had dropped by 45 percent and 67 percent, respectively. Because fewer customers visit these fast-food outlets, even though many foodservice firms provide pick-up and take-out choices, the overall volume of orders has dropped.

On the other hand, Wei et al (2020) stated that encouraging consumer intentions to eat out during the reopening period will be a challenge. Because they were unsure of what to anticipate and how visiting a fast-food restaurant had altered in the era of COVID-19 pandemic, several customers appeared extremely uncomfortable or frightened. Hence, it is crucial to study the factors influencing consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants

during this pandemic. In addition, to the best of researchers' knowledge, there is no specific study examining the potential factors that influence consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia. Therefore, since the foodservice industry is in its recovery phase from the pandemic, it is essential to conduct this study to improve the foodservice sectors for overall economic growth. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the potential factors that influence consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the potential factors that influence consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic. The specific objectives are as follows: -

- 1) To identify possible factors that influence consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurant during COVID-19 pandemic
- 2) To determine the relationship between identified variables and consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurant during COVID-19 pandemic
- 3) To determine the most influential factors that influence consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurant during COVID-19 pandemic

Research Question

The specific research questions are as follows

What are the possible factors that influence consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic?

What is the relationship between identified variables and consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic?

What are the most influential factors that influence consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic?

Literature Review

Consumers' Perceived Risk

Risk perception is the process of evaluating potential threats to one's health or well-being (Adeola, 2007). Based on their anticipated risk that a particular activity may result in a bad consequence; people make instinctive judgments. As a result, persons who believed COVID-19 pandemic poses no risk could have negative attitudes about safety regulations, disapprove wearing masks, and advocate social gatherings (Ros, 2020), endangering both themselves and others. Because of its capacity to affect behaviour, this poor adaptation in risk perception can have an impact on other attitudes and practices that may be significant in the pandemic and aid in understanding people's actions. According to Manikandan (2020), consumers' perceived risk can be defined as a person's evaluation of all the dangers they might face while transacting with a company. Additionally, perceived risk can be described as a consumer's assessment of the bad experience of outcomes they expect while engaging in any purchase actions with a specific provider (Marafon et al., 2018; Bruwer et al., 2013). Hence, consumers' perceived risk in this study can be defined as their personal judgment and impression of the bad circumstances that may arise when they visit or buy a product from a store or company.

Sales Promotion

The American Marketing Association defined sales promotion as "those marketing activities other than personal selling, advertising, and publicity that stimulate consumer

purchases and dealer effectiveness." Its significance arises from its capacity to improve product recognition, product testing, as well as purchase size, and volume. Displays, exhibitions, and administrations are all examples of sales promotion. Rather than giving people reasons to buy, it gives them an incentive to buy. Price, monetary, and non-monetary sales promotions have varied effects on sales, profitability, and brand equity (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Price promotion demonstrates the benefit of a price reduction or increased product quantities. This is made available to a particular group of people for a limited time. This form of advertising has the potential to influence customers' purchasing decisions (Kotler, 2000) and sales for a limited time because sales promotions appeal to passers-by, disgruntled customers, and purchasers of competitor's items (Dawes, 2004). In addition, promotion may be described as any special offer made by a corporation to provide consumers with added value when purchasing a product or service from the firm (Chen et al., 2020). Moreover, sales promotion can be understood as a company's marketing strategy aimed at increasing the number of customers who come to its store and purchase products from the company, hence increasing the company's long-term revenue (Garretson et al., 1999). Thus, sales promotion in this study could be interpreted as a company's effort to keep current customers and draw in new potential ones by offering extra advantages associated with the customers' purchasing behaviour.

Service Quality

Service quality is described as a difference between customer needs and service effectiveness. Excellent service efficiency relates to customer happiness and consequently increases the efficiency of enterprises, particularly in the service sector. Recognizing service concerns and explaining service delivery and industry standards, as well as the level of service quality, could result in a positive customer service experience. In addition, the consistency of the service can be described by examining the differences between expected and perceived services. In today's competitive industry, offering high-quality service is critical to success, which leads to higher customer satisfaction. As a result, in the hospitality industry, customer evaluation of service quality is vital to the growth of the company (Chen & Tsai, 2008; Khan et al., 2016). However, in order to please their consumers and gain customer loyalty, hospitality establishments must give a competitive service (Chen et al., 2020). "Any intangible act or performance that one party delivers to another that does not result in the ownership of something," says Kotler (2001). Alternatively, service can be defined as an intangible provision a service provider makes to their service receiver in exchange for money in exchange for comfort and enjoyment. According to Gronroos (2000), service is typically a process involving a significant number of more/fewer intangible actions. However, it does not always occur physically or with a mutual impact between the consumer and service workers.

Therefore, service quality in this study could be interpreted as consumers' personal judgement and perception regarding all of the service quality that they received from the employees when they are visiting or buying a product from a store or company.

Intention to Visit

Consumers' intention to visit may be summed up as their drive and want to travel to a location, company, or organization in order to take in the surroundings and make a purchase there (Chen & Li, 2020; Marafon et al., 2018). Additionally, as it was derived from buy intention, intention to visit might be seen as customers' willingness to pay a charge to physically visit a site in order to satisfy their desire to acquire a good or service provided by

the firm (Wilson et al., 2019; Chakraborty, 2019). In this study, customers' desire to visit a store or restaurant on their own time and purchase a good or service provided by the business because they cannot acquire it elsewhere was characterized as having the intention to visit.

Effect of Consumers Perceived Risk on Intention to Visit

According to research done in the US equestrian tourism business, customers' intentions to travel and eventually return to the same area are lower when they think that doing so will waste their time which is time risks and harm their reputation in society which is psychological risks (Choo et al., 2016). If customers think that taking part in equestrian tourism would make them seem good in front of their society and that it won't be a waste of time, then they are more likely to travel and return to the same locations in the future. Furthermore, previous studies in the banking industry in Brazil found a negative and significant correlation between consumers' perceived risk and their intention to buy, indicating that as the likelihood of specific risks associated with consumers' actions toward a company increases, consumers' intention to use the company's goods and services declines (Marafon et al., 2018). In the foodservice industry, a study in Indonesia found that consumers' perceptions of risk significantly impacted their intention to visit a fast-food restaurant during the COVID-19 pandemic (Keni & Wilson, 2021). According to Keni and Wilson (2021), consumers believe that as long as they follow the safety standards, the risks associated with this pandemic are minimal, which increases their intention to visit their fast-food restaurants in the midst of the current scenario. Another study, on the other hand, discovered that the higher the amount of risk perceived by customers, the more significant the impact of the perceived importance of preventive measures on restaurant trust (Wei et al., 2021).

Based on these previous studies, the following hypothesis is proposed

H1: Consumers' Perceived Risk Has a Negative and Significant Effect on Consumers' Intention to Visit

The Effect of Sales Promotion on Intention to Visit

Previous research in the US dental industry revealed that implementing sales promotions (in the form of coupons) might have a significant effect on people's or consumers' intention to visit and re-visit the same business in the future when they want the same items or services (Garretson & Clow, 1999). Meanwhile, another study discovered that price promotions significantly impact customers' intentions to go and participate in a Chinese holiday (Chen & Li, 2020). In the food service sector, research in Egypt found that using sales promotions in fast food restaurants raises store traffic and customer frequency. Furthermore, Keni and Wilson (2021) discovered in their study that restaurant promotional techniques play a big part in inviting, attracting, and assuring that consumers will still be willing to visit and purchase food or beverages from the restaurant despite the circumstances.

Based on these previous studies, the following hypothesis is proposed

H2: Sales Promotion Has a Positive and Significant Effect on Consumers' Intention to Visit

The Effect of Service Quality on Intention to Visit

According to a US research, service quality has a considerable and direct influence on consumer satisfaction in the foodservice business sector (Namin, 2017). Namin (2017) also

found that better consumer loyalty and more instances of repurchasing would follow higher levels of customer pleasure. Al-Tit (2015) observed that the service quality aspects had an impact on customer satisfaction in addition to this. According to this study, service quality not only increases customer satisfaction but also encourages repeat business (Al-Tit, 2015). Alexandris et al (2006) mentioned that tourists' pleasure is a key factor in their decision to visit (or return to) a certain location.

Based on these previous studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Service Quality Has a Positive and Significant Effect on Consumers' Intention to Visit

Conceptual Framework

The study variables are indicated in the conceptual framework in Figure 1. The conceptual framework of possible factors that associated with customers' intention to visit fast food restaurants.

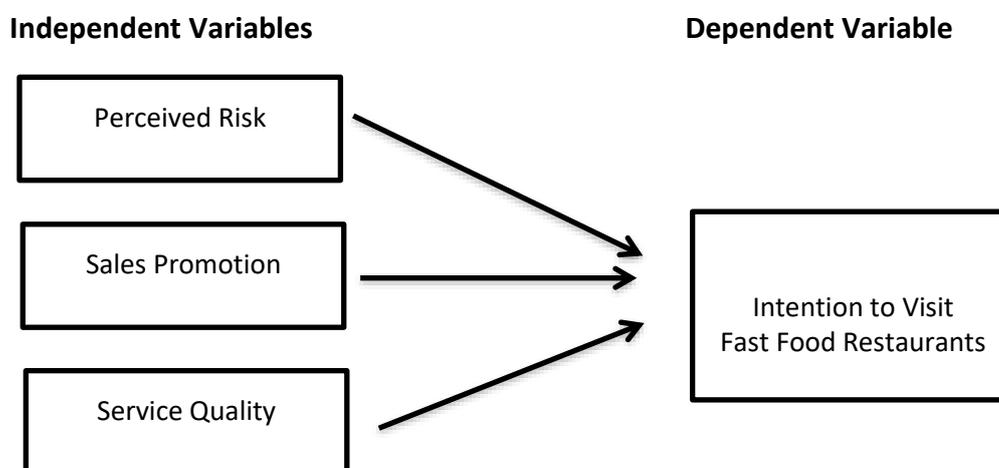


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

In this study, a quantitative methodology was used, and a convenience sampling design was used to gather the sample. Convenience sampling's main aim is to collect information from respondents who can easily be reached by researchers (Etikan, 2016). Additionally, quantitative research should choose a large and representative sample from the group of interest, evaluate the behavior and characteristics of that sample, and make an effort to increase generalizability (Noordin and Masrek, 2016). COVID-19 cases at the time had an impact on this study's data collection. During the data collection process which planned from January 2022 to March 2022, the COVID-19 cases were still high in Malaysia and many restaurants industry still cannot run their business as usual. The restaurateurs also need to follow strict standard operating procedure (SOP) set by the Malaysian government. Therefore, in order to expedite the process, data collection was done online using social media sites such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram. By adopting a snowball sampling technique, the researcher first distributed the survey link among her personal contacts before spreading it to more contacts. Respondents were given the Google form link through the online medium to access the questionnaire. Finally, the data collection was successfully done from end of February 2022 until end of March 2022. After data screening, a total of 240 questionnaires were valid for further analysis.

Questionnaire Design

In this study, the questionnaire developed consists of 3 sections and were written in English. The first section contains questions on the respondent's demographic. Demographic questions included gender, age, races, state, marital status, educational level, employment status, job sector, and income level group. The next section consists of a series of questions about the customers' intention to visit a fast-food restaurant by using five points Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. Lastly, fifteen questions on perceived risk, sales and promotion and service quality where there were five questions for each factor were included in the final section of the questionnaire. Similarly, respondents were given five points Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree. The time taken for answering the questionnaire was an average of 8 minutes to 10 minutes.

Results

Demographic Profiles

There were a total of 240 respondents participated in this study. The demographic analysis of respondents consists of gender, age, race, state, marital status, education level, employment status, job sector and income level group. Majority of respondents were female (76.3%) which was higher than male respondents (23.8%). Almost 82.5% of respondents were within the age between 20-29 years old followed by age range between 30-39 years old with 18 of respondents (7.5%), less than 20 years old with 17 respondents (7.1%) and last but not least, 2 respondents (0.8%) from the age range between 50 years old and above participated in this study.

Majority of respondents were Malay (93.3%), followed by Chinese (5.4%) and Indian (1.3%). For marital status, most of respondents (210 respondents) were single with 87.5%, followed by 30 (12.5%) of respondents were married. Majority of respondents were students (63.3%) and for educational level, many respondents had bachelor degree (65.8%). Last but not least, in term of income level, most of respondents came from no income category with 126 respondents (52.5%). Table 1 shows the profile of respondents in details.

Table 1

Demographic profile of the respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Gender	Female	183	76.2
	Male	57	23.8
Age	Below 20 years	17	7.1
	20-29 years	198	82.5
	30-39 years	18	7.5
	40-49 years	5	2.1
	50 years and above	2	0.8
Race	Malay	224	93.3
	Chinese	13	5.4
	Indian	3	1.3
Educational level	SPM	21	8.8
	Certificate	5	2.1
	Diploma	48	20
	Bachelor degree	158	65.8

	Master Degree	6	2.5
	Others	2	0.8
Marital status	Single	210	87.5
	Married	30	12.5
	Others	-	-
Employment status	Full-time	67	27.9
	Part-time	10	4.2
	Student	152	63.3
	Unemployed	8	3.3
	Retiree	1	0.4
	Contract worker	2	0.8
Job Sector	Government sector	28	11.7
	Private sector	48	20
	Self-employed	12	5
	Other (unemployed, retiree, student, housewife)	152	63.3
Income Level	No income	126	52.5
	B40(Less than RM2,500-RM4,849 monthly income)	76	31.7
	M40 (RM4,850-RM10,959 monthly income)	34	14.2
	T20(RM10,960-RM15,039 or more monthly income)	4	1.7

Note: N= 240

Identification of Possible Factors Influencing Consumers' Intention to Visit Fast-food Restaurant During COVID-19 Pandemic

Descriptive analysis has been performed in order to identify the possible factors influencing consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurant during COVID-19 pandemic. Table 2 presented the mean score and standard deviation for the dependent variable (intention to visit fast food restaurant) and independent variables (perceived risk, sales promotion and service quality). Result shows that service quality has the highest mean score with 3.76, followed by sales promotion with 3.59 and perceived risk with 3.54. The result also indicates that the mean of all identified variables was leaning towards agreement scale which is 4.00. Therefore, this implied that most customers agree that identified factors were the factors that influenced them to visit fast-food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for the variables

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
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Perceived Risk	240	3.54	.588
Sales and Promotion	240	3.59	.683
Service Quality	240	3.76	.554

Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Relationship Between Identified Variables and Consumers' Intention to Visit Fast-food Restaurant During COVID-19 Pandemic

Pearson correlation analysis was done to determine the relationship between identified variables and consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic. The result shows that the r value of perceived risk was -0.258 and sig-r value was 0.000. Thus, there was a negative and weak relationship between perceived risk and intention to visit fast food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic. Since sig-r value was < 0.01, there was a significant relationship between perceived risk and intention to visit fast food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic at 0.01 level of significance.

Meanwhile, the r value for sales promotion was 0.318 and sig-r value was 0.000. Thus, there was a weak and positive relationship between sales promotion and intention to visit fast food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic. Since sig-r value was < 0.01, there was a significant relationship between sales promotion and intention to visit fast food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic at 0.01 level of significance. Lastly, the result indicates that the r value of service quality was 0.218 and sig-r value was 0.001. Thus, there was a weak and positive relationship between service quality and intention to visit fast food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic. Since sig-r value was < 0.01, there was a significant relationship between service quality and intention to visit fast food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic at 0.01 level of significance. The details of result shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Correlation between Factors and Employees' Job Stress

Variable	Intent to visit Fast	Perceived Risk	Sales Promotion	Service Quality
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Food Rest.					
Intention to visit fast food restaurant	Pearson	1	-0.258**	0.318**	0.218**
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.001
	N	240	240	240	240
Perceived Risk	Pearson	-.258**	1	-0.071	-0.014
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.276	0.824
	N	240	240	240	240
Sales Promotion	Pearson	0.318**	-0.071	1	0.390**
	Correlation	Sig.			
	(2-tailed)	0.000	0.276		0.000
	N	240	240	240	240
Service Quality	Pearson	0.218**	-0.014	0.390**	1
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.824	0.000	
	N	240	240	240	240

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Identification of The Most Influential Factors That Influence Consumers' Intention to Visit Fast-food Restaurant During COVID-19 Pandemic

Furthermore, in order to predict factors associated with intention to visit and to determine the most influential factors that influence consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic, Multiple linear regression analysis was performed. Table 4 below shows the summary of regression done in this study. Referring to the analysed data, the R Square (R^2) was 0.168. The result shows that 16.8% of variance in intention to visit fast food restaurant was explained by the independent variables used in this study which were perceived risk, sales promotion and service quality. Since the value of R^2 is more than 0.7, this value is generally considered to have a strong relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables in this study.

Table 4

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.401 ^a	0.168	0.157	0.71898

a. Predictors: (Constant) perceived risk, sales promotion and service quality.

Table 5 shows that sales promotion has the highest beta value which was 0.256, followed by service quality (0.115) and perceived risk (-0.239). Meanwhile, the result indicates that perceived risk and sale promotion have the same significant value which was 0.000 and the significant value of service quality was 0.077. Hence, the most influential factors that influence consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants was sales promotion (beta value: 0.256, sig-t: 0.000 less than $\alpha=0.05$) followed by perceived risk and service quality.

Table 5
Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.682	0.454		5.909	0.000
Perceived Risk	-0.318	0.079	-0.239	-4.010	0.000
Sales Promotion	0.294	0.074	0.256	3.959	0.000
Service Quality	0.162	0.091	0.115	1.779	0.077

Dependent Variable: Intention to visit fast food restaurants

Hypotheses Testing Result

Furthermore, findings highlighted in Table 6 supported the findings of the hypothesis testing carried out in this study. Therefore, it may be said that this investigation supported hypotheses one and two. The first hypothesis states that consumers' perceptions of risk in Malaysia negatively and significantly influenced their intention to visit a fast-food restaurant. Given that the outcomes of this hypothesis was significant and have a significant value of 0.000 (less than 0.05), it can be said that this hypothesis was supported (H1 Supported). In addition, the second hypothesis proposes that in Malaysia, consumers' intention to visit a fast-food restaurant was positively and significantly impacted by sales promotion. It was possible to conclude that the outcome of this hypothesis was significant, with a significance value of 0.000 (less than 0.05), confirming that this hypothesis was supported (H2 Supported). However, the third hypothesis's outcome was insignificant because its significance level was 0.077 (more than 0.05). The third hypothesis that was consumers' intention to visit a fast-food restaurant in Malaysia was positively and significantly influenced by the quality of the service provided. Thus, the hypothesis was unsupported (H3 not supported).

Table 6
Summary of Hypotheses Testing Result

Hypotheses	Coefficient	Sig. value	Results	Conclusion
Consumers' Perceived Risk Has a Negative and Significant Effect on Consumers' Intention to Visit	-0.239	0.000	Significant	Hypothesis (H1) was supported
Sales Promotion Has a Positive and Significant Effect on Consumers' Intention to Visit	0.256	0.000	Significant	Hypothesis (H2) was supported
Service Quality Has a Positive and Significant Effect on Consumers' Intention to Visit	0.115	0.077	Not significant	Hypothesis (H3) was not supported

Discussion

A descriptive analysis was conducted in order to identify the possible factors that influence consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the result of the analysis, service quality has the highest mean score with 3.76, followed by sales promotion with 3.59 and perceived risk with 3.54. The results were leaning towards agreement scale. So, this indicates that most customers agreed that identified factors was the factor that influenced them to visit fast-food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic.

Results obtained from this study were able to answer research question one which indicated that perceived risk, sales promotion and service quality identified as factors influencing consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic. This can be explained as the majority of the customers will visit the restaurant according to how they perceive risk associated with COVID-19, promotions that have been offered by the restaurant and good service quality that they received from the restaurants. Past research in the Brazilian banking sector discovered a negative and significant relationship between consumers' perceived risk and their intention to purchase, indicating that as the likelihood of certain risks associated with consumers' actions toward a company increases, consumers' intention to visit or use the company's product and service decreases (Marafon et al., 2018). This is similar to the results obtained from this study where many respondents would decide against leaving their homes to visit a restaurant if they think the hazards posed by the current pandemic are significant. On the other hand, consumers would not have any troubles or worries about visiting the restaurant if they believe the chance that they would not be affected by the hazards of doing so is minimal and they would not be afraid of the risks linked with the present pandemic.

To answer research question two, Pearson correlation analysis has been carried out to determine the relationship between identified variables and consumers' intention to visit fast food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the result of analysis, the r value of perceived risk was -0.258 and sig- r value was 0.000. So, there was a negative and weak relationship between perceived risk and intention to visit fast food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic. Since sig- r value was < 0.01 , there was a significant relationship between perceived risk and intention to visit fast food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic at 0.01 level of significance.

Meanwhile, the r value for sales promotion was 0.318 and sig- r value was 0.000. Thus, there was a weak and positive relationship between sales promotion and intention to visit fast food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic. Since sig- r value was < 0.01 , there was a significant relationship between sales promotion and intention to visit fast food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic at 0.01 level of significance. Lastly, the result indicates that the r value of service quality was 0.218 and sig- r value is 0.001. Hence, there was a weak and positive relationship between service quality and intention to visit fast food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic. Since sig- r value was < 0.01 , there was a significant relationship between service quality and intention to visit fast food restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic at 0.01 level of significance. All findings obtained for research question two in this study were similar with previous studies (Keni & Wilson, 2021; Namin, 2017).

Lastly, Multiple linear regression had been performed in order to answer research question three. Based on the result of the analysis, sales promotion was the most influential factors that influence consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurant during COVID-19 pandemic. The result showed that 16.8% of variance in the consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants was explained by the independent variables used in this study which were perceived risk, sales promotion and service quality. The regression model also fits the data well since F value was 15.889 and sig- F is 0.000 which was less than 0.05.

Furthermore, the coefficient table indicated that sales promotion has the highest beta value which was 0.256, followed by service quality (0.115) and perceived risk (-0.239). Meanwhile, the result indicates that perceived risk and sales promotion have the same significant value which was 0.000 and the significant value of service quality was 0.077. Hence, the most influential factors that influence consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants was sales promotion (beta value: 0.256, sig- t : 0.000 less than $\alpha=0.05$) followed by perceived risk and service quality. Findings of this study were similar to the previous study which found that using sales promotions in fast food restaurants raises store traffic and customer frequency (Abdelhamied, 2013). Another study also found that price promotions significantly impact customers' intentions to go and participate in a Chinese holiday (Chen & Li, 2020). This indicates that promotional strategies such as coupons and vouchers play an important role in attracting customers to visit fast-food restaurants.

Lastly, after analyzing the hypothesis result, it can be said that the first and second hypotheses were supported. Result shows that consumers' perceived risk had a negative and significant impact on consumers' intention to visit. This result indicates the majority of respondents still believe that the risks linked with the COVID-19 pandemic are minimal and not particularly serious, which allows and persuades them to go to their preferred fast-food restaurant without having any worries. Furthermore, findings obtained from this study also showed that fast-food restaurant chains in Malaysia might successfully draw in more customers despite the crisis by using and implementing sales promotions. The majority of the customers will feel like it is such a waste to let go of the coupons or vouchers that have been given by the restaurant so they go visit the restaurant and use the promotion coupons to receive some additional benefits or values while making some purchasing transactions. However, the third hypothesis was unsupported where the result indicated that service quality had an insignificant impact on consumers' intention to visit. This finding parallel with the past study where Namin (2017) stated that service quality significantly and directly impacts consumer satisfaction. As it will increase customer satisfaction, it will also result in customers coming to visit the restaurant. The majority of the customers might think that

service quality is not as important as perceived risk and sales promotion to consider as factors that they look into when visiting the restaurants.

Conclusion

After conducting this research, a thorough understanding of the factors influencing consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic was identified. This study has achieved the purpose of examining the potential factors that influence consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the results obtained from this study, it can be concluded that most of customers agree that service quality was the factor that influenced them to visit fast-food restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As three factors have been identified in this study: perceived risk, sales promotion, and service quality. The result shows that sales promotion was the most influential factor that influenced consumers' intention to visit fast-food restaurants, followed by perceived risk and service quality. This can be concluded that promotional strategies that the fast-food restaurant manager or operator has employed play a significant role in inviting and ensuring that customers will still be interested in visiting the restaurants and buying the products regardless of the circumstance. Therefore, it is recommended for the restaurant manager or operator to focus on this aspect to draw more customers to their restaurants and to aid in maintaining their business stability.

Furthermore, based on the result generated from this research, it can be seen that perceived risk has a negative and significant relationship, while both sales promotion and service quality have weak and positive relationships towards intention to visit fast food restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic. Customers believe that the risks associated with this pandemic are low as long as they follow the standard operating procedures (SOP) as advised by the governments and the Ministry of Health. Therefore, it is increasing the consumers' intention to still visit their fast-food restaurants in the middle of the current crisis. Therefore, this study can act as a reference for the managers or restaurant operators to formulate effective strategies to influence customers to visit fast food restaurants. One of the strategies that can be implemented is restricting the number of customers inside the restaurant at one time. Therefore, this can lower the risk of people getting infected by this virus because the space is less crowded with people. In this way, customers will think that the strategy implemented is valuable and safe for them; hence, they will visit and buy food or beverages from fast food restaurants.

Limitations and Recommendations

The researchers are aware that this study has some limitations. Some limitations have been identified in completing this research. First, this study employed an online method due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings could be different if the researchers had the chance to interact with respondents face-to-face and meet them physically. Secondly, this study only focuses on the fast-food restaurant chain sector, thus there may be changes in how variables relate to one another in other types of restaurants such as fine-dining restaurant or high-end restaurants. Therefore, research on various restaurant types can be done in the future to broaden the applicability of the findings from this study. In order to expand the diversity and uniqueness of this issue, it is recommended that future research choose other variables or elements affecting consumers' intention to visit in the future. Last but not least, recommendations are needed for this research in order to improve the weaknesses that

occurred to ensure better research is developed in the future. Future researcher can employ a qualitative approach such as an interview to gather in-depth data and gain a better grasp of the consumers' perspectives.

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