

Customers' Service Quality Expectations From Quick Service Restaurants

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ABSTRACT

The significance of service quality has gained a huge amount of concern in the service industry. This study provides the results of research carried out to identify the expectations of customers with respect to quality of services delivered by quick service restaurants. Identifying the factors that influence the expectations of customer is of paramount importance to evolve service strategy which determines the future of this business. Investigation of the topic is done taking five components of service quality i.e. tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy which is carried out for evaluating the service quality offered by fast food chains to its customers. An exploratory study is carried out to comprehend the strategies adopted by different fast food brands to match the expectations of customers in Mysore city. Primary data were obtained by administering structured questionnaires on a cross-section of 300 Customers of quick service restaurants who patronized quick service restaurants. A multistage random sampling technique was employed to select five (5) quick service restaurants from the city namely McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza and Café Coffee Day (CCD). The data collected from customers are analyzed with the help of SPSS. The study reveals an empirical analysis, which showed that the most expected factor by customers is tangible elements in fast food restaurants like appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials. Tangible element alone represents the total sum of square of 3.23 in the study. The study therefore, concludes that apart from tangibility other two components namely Service Reliability (Accessibility, Continuity and Performance) and Empathy are the most expected service quality dimensions from quick service restaurants. The results of the research can be useful for fast food companies, as they should often change and upgrade their service quality accordingly to the expectations of customers by adopting suitable marketing techniques.

Keywords: service quality, fast food, customer's expectation

INTRODUCTION

To stand out in a crowded food industry, fast food chains are not only focusing on food and quick service quality, but on creating a whole quality experience seeing that the current phase is the 'Era of Quality'. According to Grzanic (2007), quality as a concept is a complex term, made up of several element and criteria. All quality elements are equally important in order to obtain one hundred per cent quality. It is therefore important to focus on components of service by delivering the service to the expectations of the customers as delivering quality service to customers is a

must for success and survival in today's competitive environment (Samli and Frohlich, 1992). Hence only those fast food companies that are capable to endure can provide better quality products and render service to the customer's expectations. The service quality of fast food chains is the understanding that the services offered by fast food restaurants have more quality attributes that are not there in a competitor's service and outstandingly differentiate their quality of service from other brands. Conversely, proper quality control ensures most effective utilisation of available resources and reduction in cost of production for fast food companies. For this reason, fast food companies are trying to focus on quality food products and services that fulfill the expectations of customers and measure them with up to the services offered by their competitors.

Objectives

1. To analyse service quality dimensions of fast food restaurants in Mysore city.
2. To examine the service quality expectations of customers in fast food outlets.
3. To examine the factors that influence customers' expectation and acceptance of quality.

Scope of the Study

Demographic variables such as age, gender, occupation, income and customer acquaintance variable like service quality are analyzed. The data for the study is collected from customers in fast food outlets. McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza and Café Coffee Day are the five companies considered for measuring the overall effectiveness of service quality expectations from consumers and to evaluate the vital essentials of service quality. The sample comprises of 300 fast food customer respondents where the study is done predominantly in Mysore city.

Research Methodology

An exploratory, analytical and descriptive study is carried out with a view to identify the service quality expectations of fast food customers in Mysore city. The research methodology for the study is summarized as follows:

Source of the Data

The proposed research involves both primary and secondary data.

- **Primary data:** Primary data on service quality expectations are collected through the structured questionnaire. The primary data is collected from customers.
- **Secondary data:** The secondary data is extracted from different published sources such as manuals and reports, magazines, voice and data magazine, research articles, books and selected websites.

Data Analysis Tools and Techniques

To analyse the data composed from customers and to verify the hypothesis, various statistical methods and tools have been used for the study. From the data analysis, various tables and charts are being obtained. Cross tabulation is extracted to understand the customer expectations on service quality dimensions in fast food outlets. Hypothesis is tested with the use of KMO and Bartlett's Test. The data collected from customers are analyzed with the help of SPSS.

STATEMENT OF INTENDED CONTRIBUTION

The proposed research paper is imperative as it attempts to understand the expectation of customers with respect to service quality that are offered by fast food restaurants in Mysore city. It focuses on investigating the influence of service quality dimensions on customers and hence the analysis and interpretation is done on components of service quality by using suitable statistical tools. The study is conducted only in Mysore city with a pre decided sample of

respondents. As a result, the analysis is done on the basis of information provided by the sample respondents which may not be entirely faultless and generalizations drawn on the basis of the study may not be extended to the whole population of fast food consumers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kotler (2002) state that the product quality is characteristic of a product or service that relies on its ability to satisfy customers' needs. According to Mowen and Minor (2002), the quality of the products or services is defined as a comprehensive evaluation of the goodness of the performance of goods or services. Kotler and Armstrong (2004) state that the product quality is the ability to demonstrate a product in its function, it includes the overall durability, reliability, accuracy, ease of operation and repair products are also other product attributes. In the words, quality is the totality of characteristics and features of service or product that carries its ability to satisfy stated needs of customers (Kotler, 2003). Similarly, Quality is known as multi-dimensional phenomenon so that reaching the quality of service without distinguishing the major aspects of quality is far from possibility. Quality of service includes three output dimensions: service performance quality, technical quality and organization's mental picture (Gronroos, 1996).

According to Gronroos (2007), service quality is an important outcome of comparison between customer expectations before and after their experience of the service. If customers view that their expectations for service performance conform their perceptions of the service, this situation may lead to induce the notion of service quality (Gronroos 2007, Kitapci, Akdogan & Dortyol 2014). A systematic investigation of successful service based organizations/companies discloses that the ability of service providers to appropriately implement tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy in executing daily job may have a significant impact on positive customer outcomes especially customer satisfaction (Azman et al. 2016, Hussain et al. 2015, Rao Kondasani, Panda 2015).

Besides, service quality is considered as adequate if expectations are met, but it is assumed to be unsatisfactory if it does not meet customer expectations (Ali, 2018). According to Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2012), there are five dimensions to measure service quality namely; (A) physical evidence (tangibles), that focuses on the elements that represent the physical services (B) Reliability that is the ability to provide services (C) Responsiveness is the willingness to help and provide fast service and appropriate to customers (D) Assurance, which is the ability to create trust and confidence for customer (E) Empathy that emphasizes on customer's treatment as an individual.

Similarly, a model which was developed in early 90's by Parasuraman et. al. (1991) is an operational instrument which is used to measure the service quality construct. It is a multi-item scale developed to assess customer perceptions of service quality in service and retail businesses. The scale decomposes the notion of service quality into five constructs as follows: Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. The limitation of this model has since being published with emphasis that the classical model of Parasuraman et. al (1985; 1988) should not be generalized in all service sectors (Vandamme and Leunis 1993; Bowers et. al. 1994).

RESEARCH GAP

The review of literature reveals that much of the research work were undertaken by earlier researchers focused on the overall process of service quality whereas, this paper specifically deals with the customer expectations on service quality dimensions of fast food restaurants in Mysore city. There is no extensive work done primarily on customers' service quality expectations from fast food restaurants, so the present study focuses mainly on the concept of quality of service expectations from customers in fast food outlets of Mysore city.

On the other hand due to quick changing food consumption patterns among the people in Mysore city, a little has been done in this regard and the research studies hold few crucial dues in the modern areas of services marketing of fast food. Hence, there is a need for further more careful investigation of customer expectations on service quality dimensions within the section of fast food restaurants.

HYPOTHESIS

H₀: There is no mutual influence of Service Quality Dimensions on customers.

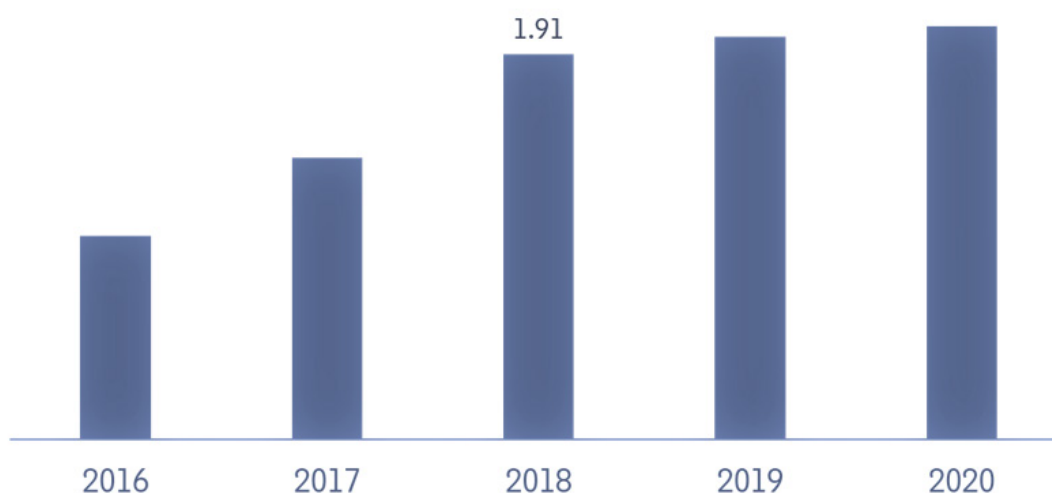
H₁: There is mutual influence of Service Quality Dimensions on customers. (Accepted as the Significance value is 0.00).

FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS

Fast food restaurants are the most in vogue classification of the fragment which is likewise called fast food joints. They vend processed foods at reasonable value which has an average menu which incorporates burgers, pizza, milkshakes, french fries, and so forth with negligible table help and give a takeaway as well as home.

India has observed a tremendous growth in Fast Food Restaurants (FFR) in the past 10-15 years. The concept of quick serving restaurants has been doing well in the nation because of shorter lead time and snappier food utilization choices for the purchasers. Fast food brands such as McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Domino's, KFC, Burger King and Subway are few famous quick service restaurants widely present in almost every city of the country. Therefore, fast food restaurants are contributing to the foodservice market in India significantly.

FIGURE 1
MARKET VALUE OF QUICK SERVICE RESTAURANTS (IN USD BILLION)
INDIA, 2016 - 2020



Source: Mordor Intelligence

Current Status

Fast food restaurants have remained a very important segment of the country's food market and have fully fledged over the years. Several fast food restaurants chains have congregated in the country over the past few years with particular food offering to the customers which is driving for the development of market. It is from metropolitans to cities, fast food brands are increasing into smaller cities with smaller configurations. The entire fast food market is approximately to be around 95,000 crore rupees.

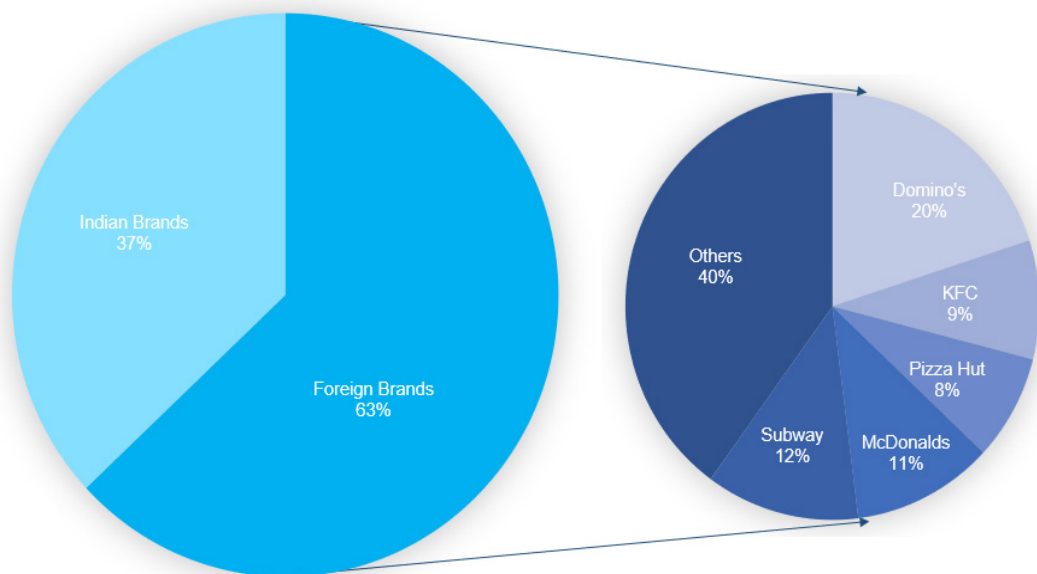
Key Players

The series space in the fast food restaurant segment has nearly 100 brands with around 3,000 outlets spread across various cities. Indian and international chains both have the allocation in this sector. While known Indian fast food restaurants like Bikanerwala, Haldiram's, etc. have a skew towards vegetarian food. Whereas the global players like KFC, McDonald's, Domino's Pizza, Pizza Hut, Subway etc. provide a combination of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian offerings.

Market Dominate by Internatinal Brands in India

In early 90's when Liberalization Privatization Globalization (LPG) was introduced in the Indian economy, that was the point in time when McDonald's entered Indian market and was followed by other worldwide brands such as Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut and Domino's Pizza. Most of the international brands function all the way through the franchise model, which helps these companies to expand quickly with minimum principal amount of investment. These international brands especially the ones which are selected for the study have established themselves vigorously with good reputation. These international brands at present lead the Indian fast food market with an aggregate share of 63 percent.

**FIGURE 2
BREAK-UP OF MARKET SHARE**



Source: CRISIL Research

The Five Servqual dimensions of Service Quality are as follows:

- **TANGIBLES** - Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.
- **RELIABILITY** - Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
- **RESPONSIVENESS** - Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.
- **ASSURANCE** - Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
- **EMPATHY** - Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers.

In general, quality is the characteristics of products or services that depend on its ability to demonstrate its function, among others, the overall durability, reliability, accuracy, ease of operation and repair product attributes are also other products to satisfy consumer needs and wants.

DEMOGRAPHY OF THE RESPONDENTS

For the purpose of collecting primary data for the study, a structured questionnaire was administered to 300 fast food customers. The following is the demographic profile of the respondents:

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHY OF RESPONDENTS

Particular	Sub-Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	182	60.7%
	Female	118	39.3%
	Total	300	100.0%
Age	10-18 Years	11	3.7%
	19-25 Years	63	21.0%
	26-35 Years	181	60.3%
	36-49 Years	37	12.3%
	50 & Above	8	2.7%
	Total	300	100.0%
Qualification	Schooling	13	4.3%
	UG	93	31.0%
	Postgraduate	134	44.7%
	Professional degree	60	20.0%
	Total	300	100.0%
Occupation	Housewife	15	5.0%
	Student	40	13.3%
	Govt. employee	31	10.3%
	Private employee	189	63.0%
	Businessman	25	8.3%
	Total	300	100.0%
Income	NIL	48	16.0%
	5,000 - 10,000	12	4.0%
	10,000 - 15,000	23	7.7%
	15,000 - 25,000	91	30.3%
	25,000 & Above	126	42.0%
	Total	300	100.0%

Source: Field survey

Table 1 illustrates that out of 300 customers who have responded to the questionnaire consists of 182 male and 118 female who belong to different age levels. Out of 300 respondents, 11 are between the age group of 10-18 years, 63 are between 19-25 years, the highest portion of respondents 181 are between 26-35 years, 37 between 36-49 years and finally 8 are 50 & above. In the survey, the respondents were of different levels of education that is 60 are professional degree holders, 134 postgraduates, 93 undergraduates and lastly 13 school level of education. Sorting the respondents based on their income there are 48 respondents that are still not earning, 12 respondents are in the income group of Rs.5,000 - Rs.10,000, 23 respondents in the range of Rs.10,000 - Rs.15,000, 91 respondents in the group Rs15,000-Rs.25,000 and the highest portion of the respondents that is 126 are in the income group of Rs. 25,000 and above per month. Further, based on the occupation, the respondents includes 245 working class people out of which 31 are government employees, 189 are private employees and 25 are Businessman/ Entrepreneur, 40 are still students and 15 are housewives. Thus respondents are made up of individuals from different income, education, gender and occupational background.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The study brings out the opinions of customers surveyed from different fast food restaurants located at Mysore and a framework of statistical analysis to examine the service quality expectations of customers in fast food outlets.

In Table 2 of 300 respondents, more than half of the respondents i.e., 186 respondents (62.0%) say that Tangible elements like appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials create the centre of attention and hence it is clear from the study that customer expectations are always high on tangible elements of service quality. 61 respondents (20.3%) anticipates the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately i.e., Reliability followed by Empathy (12.0%). At last it is Responsiveness and Assurance is what customers expect the least which shows that these two elements of service quality have less effect on customers. So it is found from the study that Tangible, Reliability and Empathy are the most expected service quality elements in fast food restaurants by customers.

The responses are found to be significantly associated which is supported by the significant contingency coefficient [CC = 0.327, P Value = 0.003]. Therefore the association among the responses towards the customer's expectations with respect to components of service quality is significantly associated.

TABLE 2
CUSTOMERS' EXPECTATION WITH RESPECT TO COMPONENTS OF SERVICE QUALITY

Particulars		CCD	P Hut	Domino's	KFC	McD	Total
Tangibles	F	14	24	38	52	58	186
	%	4.7%	8.0%	12.7%	17.3%	19.3%	62.0%
Reliability	F	7	21	8	19	6	61
	%	2.3%	7.0%	2.7%	6.3%	2.0%	20.3%
Empathy	F	1	7	13	11	4	36
	%	0.3%	2.3%	4.3%	3.7%	1.3%	12.0%
Responsiveness	F	0	3	5	4	2	14
	%	0.0%	1.0%	1.7%	1.3%	0.7%	4.7%
Assurance	F	0	1	0	1	1	3
	%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	1.0%
Total	F	22	56	64	87	71	300
	%	7.3%	18.7%	21.3%	29.0%	23.7%	100.0%
Chi Square	CC	0.327					
	P Value	0.003					

Source: Field survey

KAISER-MEYER-OLKIN AND BARTLETT'S TEST ON COMPONENTS OF SERVICE QUALITY

KMO is a numeral value which measures the sampling adequacy of the variables considered for the study. The value of coefficient of sampling adequacy must be between more than 0.5. The Sampling Adequacy value in the study is 0.839 and therefore it is accepted. This basically shows that the five elements of service quality taken for the study are adequate in interpreting fast food customer expectations and in understanding the customer orientation.

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity explicates about the null and alternative hypothesis. The null is basically where there will be no co-relation or relationship among the variables. In the above table, the probability significance value is less than 0.05 i.e., 0.000 which means that there is mutual influence of service quality dimensions on customers that enhances fast food restaurants' excellence in Mysore and thus, the Alternative Hypothesis is Accepted. Therefore the above test verifies the minimum standard for conducting factor analysis is being fulfilled.

TABLE 3
KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.839
	Approx. Chi-Square	750.263
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	10
	Sig.	0.000

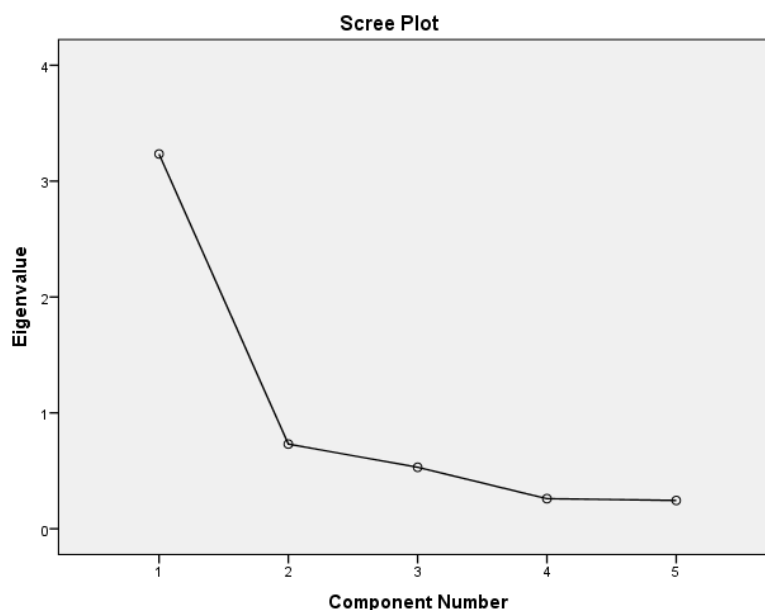
TABLE 4
TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED

Component	Initial Eigen Values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %
1	3.235	64.690	64.690	3.235	64.690	64.690
2	0.731	14.614	79.304			
3	0.531	10.612	89.916			
4	0.260	5.194	95.110			
5	0.244	4.890	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Based on the Eigen Values, the factors where the value is bigger than 1.0 is considered for the study and it is only one factor which is considered. The remaining Eigen values are below 1.0 i.e., 0.731, 0.531, 0.260 and 0.244 which is not considered for the study. Therefore the Extraction Sums of Square reveals the number of factors that have been pulled out are most efficient. Out of five factors that are taken for the study only the first factor i.e., Tangible element of service quality is summarized with the total sum of square of 3.235.

**FIGURE 4
SCREE PLOT**



A plot on x axis of the Scree Plot taken from factors 1 – 5 are plotted based on Eigen values. The above graph manifestly shows that the kink curve which is plotted between the first and second factor is considered as the cut-off value. Hence from the study it is found that the determining number of factor is just one i.e., Tangible of service quality. It clearly signifies that among five dimensions of service quality, it is 'visible' aspects of the service which is the most expected and influencing factor for customers.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is conducted only in Mysore city with pre-decided sample of 300 respondents. As a result, the analysis is done on the basis of information provided by the sample respondents may not be entirely faultless and generalizations drawn on the basis of the study may not be extended to the whole population of the diversified service quality of fast food chains.

FINDINGS

As services are intangible in nature, customers often rely on tangible cues to evaluate the service before its purchase. Even the present study reveals that tangibility is the most expected and influential element of service quality in fast food outlets. On the other hand, changing lifestyle and preferences along with busy schedule has made customers to expect a quick, accurate and timely service that should act upon its reliability in outlets. And finally to a small extent customer do expect service providers to understand their priorities (empathy) in fast food outlets.

Therefore, majority of the respondents view that the important element in determining the service quality in the context of fast food restaurants is servicescape. Exterior attributes such as good-looking design of the outlets, spacious parking facilities, identifiable signage around the building and hygienic surrounding environment and interior attributes such as modern designs, layout, air quality/temperature, attractive decor and most importantly the comfortable utensils with an eye-catching shape and design of edible products are the foremost expectations of fast food customers in Mysore city.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

There is a significant influence of service quality dimensions on fast food customers and the major expectations lies in tangibility, reliability and empathy followed by responsiveness and assurance. Tangible element of service quality is the most expected and influential factor among the customers in Mysore city. This clearly shows that customers do expect more of visible aspects of service and are more concerned about servicescape in fast food outlets.

Service quality expectations of customers have an influential outcome which may lead to the diversion of customer's mind that might affect their buying decisions. Hence, it is important to give extra attention to manage and provide good quality services that matches the expectations of the customers. Thus to match the service quality expectations of customers, fast food companies must focus on all dimensions of service quality, specially on tangible elements and provide services to the taste and preferences of customers in the outlets of Mysore city.

Scope for Future Research:

The present study primarily focuses on customer service quality expectations from fast food restaurants with respect to Mysore city only. Fast food restaurants in food and beverages sector are creating a competitive environment for future growth. This is absolutely going to attract more and new academic researchers in the upcoming years which provide a significant opportunity to understand and study the new service quality techniques and strategies that these fast food brands will possibly execute to manipulate the demand for their products and services in prospect.

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