FACTORS IMPACTING ON CUSTOMER PROMOTION ACCEPTANCE IN THE FAST FOOD INDUSTRY IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Fast food chains in Sri Lanka are a recently emerging industry which makes revolutionary transmutations within the frequent consumer patterns. The purpose of this research is to point out the factors which influence the consumers' acceptance of promotions made by fast food restaurants. A total of 384 questionnaires were conveniently distributed among teenagers, youngsters, professionals and middle-aged consumers in the Colombo suburb via online platforms and physical modes. Data analysis was done using SPSS Version 26. The relationship between variables and their impact were identified by correlation and regression respectively. According to frequency distribution analysis the consumers in the age group of 25 to 35 are mostly interested in accepting promotion messages through SMS and Facebook. Further, out of respective promotion categories buy one get one free is the most outstanding promotion type among consumers. The study observed price, income, attitude and promotional deals as the significant factors for the acceptance of promotion. Also results revealed that price, attitude and promotional deals had a highly positive correlation with promotion acceptance rather than income. Due to the time constraint and Covid-19 pandemic, respective respondents were selected only from the Colombo region. The paper provides useful information and new insights for potential marketers and academicians about the factors to be considered in customer promotion message acceptance in the fast food industry.

KEYWORDS: *Fast Food Industry, Promotion Acceptance, Income, Attitude, Price, Promotional Deals*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Fast food chains have become an incredible and revolutionary trend within the busy lifestyle of human beings and where fast food items are hassle free to prepare and consume. In addition, we can determine that fast food has taken a major space in the respective industry. However, the conception of the fast food industry has widely influenced to make changes in habits and culinary preferences of dual income earning families as they can pay more attention to their priorities. Further, the women workforce and the young generation are rapidly exposed to a variety of fast foods in fulfilling their basic and fundamental food needs.

In accordance with the 2019 Fast Food & Quick Service Restaurant Trends analysis report, the global size of the market for the fast food industry emerged by USD 257.19 billion. Over the years, it has kept growing with an annual growth rate of 5.1% from 2020 onwards, and in 2019, the size of the fast food industry was valued at over USD 500 billion. Fast food entities and quick service restaurants have emerged as a main provider of this mass production of food. Better taste, ease of purchasing and being economical in terms of both prices and time are some of the essential attributes for the boon of the marketplace for fast food and quick service restaurants.

In 2019 America, China and Italy have mainly grabbed a wide portion of shares in fast food and quick service restaurants all over the globe respectively. When it comes to the American cuisines the market is direct, and it accounted for more than 25% of shares of the world revenue in 2019. The context's category includes restaurants with a huge variety of food items. The scope of the American cuisine is enriched with major factors such as the process of the industry, hustling lifestyle, upcoming franchises and the production efficiency (Fig.1).

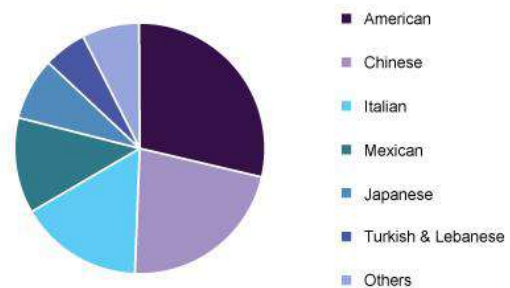During the past colonial era, Sri Lanka had an influence of the fast food industry where the name

Figure 1: Global fast food & quick service restaurant market share by cuisine, (2019).

Perera and Sons got established in 1902 with the commencement of their business life cycle as a fast food provider to Sri Lankans (Gunasekara, 2001).

With the elapsed time, the industry kept growing by gathering newcomers such as Royal Bakers and many others. Apart from that, as a result of globalization and proliferation of multinationals companies, fast food service sources, i.e. top rated companies such as McDonalds, Pizza Hut and KFC started fulfilling the needs for appeasement of hunger in an innovative way. When it comes to Sri Lankan culture, food and food preparation have played a vital role from earliest times as the country carries multicultural and multi religious people. As a result of that it drives the country to have such a diverse food variety in their diverse habits (Rasanthika & Gunawardana, 2013).

Promotion can be known as a general strategy used by the fast food service industry in order to enhance the sales and attract customers towards the organization. According to (Raed Momani & Sima Magatef, 2016) one of the crucial elements of promotional mix, sales promotions can be used to encourage competitive advantages. By stimulating the customer purchase decision, it increases the sales for marketers and this is a precious tool when it comes to marketing.

The industry usually obtains customer promotions to capture brand switchers, motivate price-sensitive customers, and encourage daily usage. Sometimes it is all about providing a value-added service for the customer. As stated by R. Sritharan, et al., 2015, sales promotion affects customers' purchasing decisions with exceptional preference to particular

products. Furthermore, various studies have mentioned different arguments pinpointing the relationship between promotional activities and brand loyalty. These sales promotions are used by restaurants in the fast food industry in a substantial manner with the intention of building a loyal customer population. Along with these past literature reviews we researchers can conclude that there is a remarkable relationship between promotional deals and customers in the fast food industry in the Sri Lankan context.

This research explores factors that influence customer promotion acceptance in the fast food industry within the Sri Lankan context. However, this study considers the four factors, i.e. price, income, attitude and types of the promotion. Along that the study merges the variable factors with the promotion acceptance in order to extract a relationship between these two aspects. Basically, there are both local and international fast food outlets currently performing within the country, adding value to the competitive advantage (Hirunika Nirmani, et al., 2017). In such a circumstance, fast food marketers are encountered with the challenge of identifying whether their customers respond to the promotions sent via different advertising platforms.

Prior to coming up with a new comprehension, we researchers directed a pilot survey separately for companies and the customers in order to make sure there was a mismatch between companies' perception towards the promotion acceptance by the customers and the customers' point of view towards the promotion sent from the companies. So, the endeavor of this research was to recognize the factors which drive the customer into the promotion acceptance once the promotion offer is received by their mobile devices. And by such an approach it is easy to figure out the effectiveness of a company's promotion on its sales as long as they send the promotion messages to the customer. That motivates the customers to taste the food based on the promotion offer.

2. METHODOLOGY

The quantitative approach was used to gather needful data in order to achieve the objectives of the study. To support the achievement of the objectives with the gathered data, three questionnaires were developed for the study, including a pilot survey to make sure that there was an unfilled gap to answer.

Research approach

The study stands on a deductive approach and it is developed on the theory-based hypothesis based on the data collection and analysis. Further a quantitative research approach was used in the study since the collected data fall under a numeric form in order to identify both independent and dependent variables. The illustrated map (Fig. 2) of the conceptualization framework narrates the path of the research and how it is based constantly on theoretical pillars by showing the relationship between independent and the dependent variable.
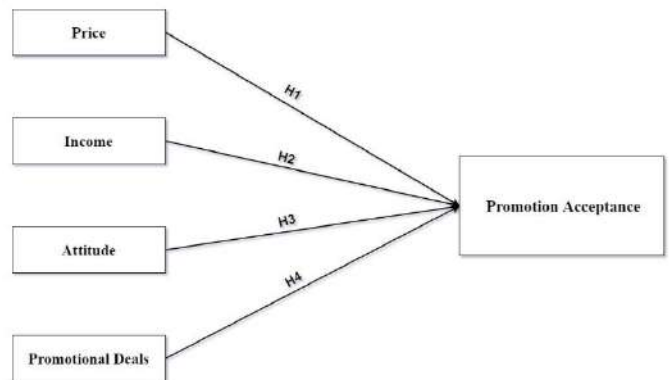

Figure 2: Conceptualization Framework

Research design

The way of answering the research questions and the overall plan of the research is well described under the research design. Based on the objectives of the study following has to be focused, namely; the sources of data collection, the data collection procedure, the way it is researched and addressing the ethical issues. The research design brings the view of

how the study was planned and scheduled and how it has to be carried out. Understanding of this research design is crucial when it comes to identify various tools and techniques which are to be used in the methodology.

Population and Sampling design

The population of the study consists of the people in the age group of 15 to 55 living around Colombo. Theoretically, according to Krejcie & Morgan, 1970, the sample size we chose which is 384 was the entire population for the particular study.

Method of data collection

Before implementing the main survey, a pilot study was conducted to identify the research problem of the study. Mainly the pilot survey was conducted in two ways where one targeted the general population and the other targeted restaurants in the industry. The main survey consisted of 32 questions including Likert scale and close ended questions. With the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, collecting data physically through the main questionnaire was limited. But the researchers were competent to collect a considerable amount of data physically with a pre-approval from a reputed government institution which convinced the researchers to approach the fast food consumers in order to enhance the category of employed population. The rest of the needful data was collected by sending the main questionnaire in a digital mode. In total, more than 200 questionnaire responses were collected though online google forms.

Data Analysis

Correlation coefficient

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Rank.

Value of r	Relationship
r = +1	Perfect positive correlation
+0.5 <= r < +1	High positive correlation
r = + 0.5	Moderate positive correlation
0 <= r < +0.5	Weak positive correlation
0 = r	No correlation
0< r <= -0.5	Weak negative correlation
r = -0.5	Moderate negative correlation

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Rank.

Value of r	Relationship
-.5 < r <= -1	High negative correlation
r = -1	Perfect negative correlation

As Schober, et al., (2018) stated, the correlation can be defined as a test measure which has been done to measure the strength of the association among two or more variables. This study was conducted through Pearson's correlation analysis which was used to measure the significance and the trend of the relationship between variables. Basically, the correlation coefficient value is denoted by "r" and it can be different in between the +1 to -1 in which it takes within both independent and dependent variables. The clear explanation of correlation used is emphasized in Table 01. Source - (Hauke & Kossowski, 2011)

Regression (multiple regression)

R square value is named as coefficient of determination and it illustrates the portion of the difference in the dependent variable which is described by the independent variable. The high rate of R square indicates how long the model fits suitably (R2 > 50%) and it can be changed from 0 to 1. However, it cannot predict that a good regression model has the highest r square value where it depends on the variable used, the units of the measurements, processing of the survey question and the existence. Consequently, a higher R square value always comes up with an issue with the regression model.

3. RESULTS

Reliability and the Validity

Reliability

Reliability refers to a proportion where the obtained scales are capable of reproducing the same results if it was applied into different sample groups at a various time. (Hair, et al., 2003) According to the research, on analyzing the factors which impact upon the promotion acceptance by the customer, a questionnaire was built and each factor consisted of a number of questions on it so as to make sure that the

developed questions are reliable enough to continue with the study to achieve the goals. Sekaran & Bougie (2006) stated that the alpha value which is above 0.8 is a good level of reliability.

Table 2:Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.943	24

Based on Cronbach's alpha, Table 02 shows the value of our study is 0.943 where the reliability can be taken as acceptable to carry on the study further.

Table 3: Reliability Statistics for individual variable

	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
Income	0.748
Attitude	0.835
Promotional Deals	0.867
Price	0.82
Promotion Acceptance	0.823

According to the SPSS results (Table 03*)* the alpha values are separately taken to the variables as 0.748 for income, 0.835 for attitude, 0.867 for promotional deals, 0.820 for price and 0.823 for promotion acceptance as the dependent variable. Eventually in this research a minimum 0.7 value of alpha is required and more than 0.7 is acceptable for the study.

Validity

Table 4: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.805
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	987.677
	df	276
	Sig.	0

Validity is measured based on KMO and Bartlett's test, and it is the adequacy of a sample in which if it is higher than 0.5, it tends that the sample is in a satisfactory level to conduct the analysis process (Quang Nguyen, et al., 2018). The Table 04 shows

the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of the current research and the result of the test is 0.805 where it can be considered acceptable KMO and the sample taken is adequate to go with further studies.

Frequency distribution analysis of background data

Table 5: Frequency distribution analysis of background data

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	210	54.7
Female	174	45.3
Age		
15 – 24	152	39.5
25 – 34	183	47.7
35 – 44	37	9.7
45 – 54	7	1.8
55 – 64	5	1.3
Status		
Employed	262	68.2
Unemployed	21	5.5
Studying (university or school)	101	26.3
Income Level		
Less than Rs.15000	6	1.6
Rs.15000 – Rs.30000	38	9.9
Rs. 30000 - Rs. 50000	104	27.1
Rs.50000 - Rs.100000	85	22.1
More than Rs.100000	31	8.1
Dependence	120	31.3
Amount allocation		
Less than Rs.1000	197	51.3
Rs.1000 to Rs. 2500	123	32
Rs. 2500 to Rs.5000	39	10.2
More than Rs.5000	25	6.5

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Frequency of buying fast food		
At least once a week	123	32
1–3 times per month	105	27.3
Once in every 2 months	94	24.5
Few times a year	62	16.1
Promotion message view platform		
SMS	202	52.6
Facebook	103	26.8
Instagram	51	13.3
Mobile apps	17	4.4
Websites	11	2.9
Promotion type		
Buy one get one free	176	45.8
Special day promotions	83	21.6
Family combo pack promotions	58	15.1
Credit card promotions	45	11.7
Dine in and take away promotions	22	5.7

According to Table 5, out of 384 respondents 210 were male and 174 were female, which is 54.7% and 45.3% of the total outcome respectively. It shows that the majority of the fast food consumers are male respondents and females too have the nearby taste according to the male. And the respective age respondents are categorized under 5 sectors between 15 to 64 in the survey. According to the distribution of age categories the highest percentage was carried by the age group 25 to 34, and the lowest percentage value was represented by 55 to 64 elders. There it shows a drastic value drop down in percentages from 35 years onwards. Among these respondents there are employees, unemployed and university and school students. the majority of respondents are employees and students, which is 262 and 101 respectively. The

rest of the results belong to the unemployed population which indicated a frequency value as 21 respondents. The researchers have classified the income into 6 areas including the option as dependence, by taking note of the unemployed and the studying population. The most contributed income range for the survey is from Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 50,000 and Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 100,000. On the other hand, the very lowest frequency with 6 respondents belongs to the lower income range where they earn less than Rs. 15,000 per month. According to the results, 197 respondents were highly passionate to allocate less than Rs.1000 on fast food. As the opposite result 6.5% which represented the lowest percentage value given for the amount allocation range of more than Rs.5000 from 25 respondents. When it comes to the frequency of buying fast food, it can be varied under 4 different frequencies, i.e. at least once a week, 1–3 times per month, once in every 2 months and a few times a year. The highest frequency of purchasing fast food was at least once a week. The least frequency of buying fast food is recorded as a few times a year where it was recorded only as 62 respondents. In addition to that SMS, Facebook, Instagram, mobile apps and websites are taken down as most viewed promotion offers in platforms. Short Message Service (SMS) and Facebook have the most frequent value with users 202 and 103 respectively. Furthermore, mobile apps and websites have gained the lowest rate of responses in the survey. Eventually, the most embraced types of promotion are buy one get one free, special day promotions, family combo pack promotions, credit card promotions and dine in and take away promotions. The fast food consumers pay more attention to buy one get one offer rather than other offerings. The least level of preference is towards the dine in and take away promotions among the society

Objective 1 - Pearson Correlation Coefficients between price and promotion acceptance

In general, positive correlation can be identified as a positive r value that increases the value of one variable influence to increase in the second variable value. In the *table 17* below, Pearson correlation of price and promotion acceptance is depicted as 0.650 (r= 0.650), and it can be apprehended that when the

price increases, it tends to increase promotion acceptance by 65%. Besides the results interpret that there is a highly positive correlation (correlation coefficient is 0.650 which is in $+0.5 <= r < +1$) between the two variables, which provides the values of r = 0.650, N = 384, which depicts the mean of price and promotion acceptance from a total count of respondent with price and promotion, p = 0.000.

Objective 2 - Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Income and Promotion Acceptance

As per the Pearson's correlation result below, it represents that the Pearson value as 0.566 (r=0.566) between income and the promotion acceptance. The researchers observe that when the income rises up, the promotion acceptance tends to increase by 0.566. Therefore, the outcomes reveal a positive value, but it is a moderate positive correlation (correlation coefficient is 0.566 which is in r = + 0.5 according to the Pearson Correlation Rank table) between the two variables.

Objective 3 - Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Attitude and Promotion Acceptance

The following *table 19* displays the correlation coefficient value between attitude and promotion acceptance as 0.607. Along with that, it can be defined as a high positive correlation where the attitude variable increases, parallelly the acceptance of promotion tends to increase by 0.607. However, it is accepted as a high positive correlation due to the correlation coefficient or r value is in $+0.5 <= r < +1$ according to the Pearson correlation rank table above.

Objective 4 - Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Promotional deals and Promotion acceptance

As depicted in *table 20,* a correlation coefficient of 0.669 (r=0.669) was evident between the two variables, namely promotional deals and acceptance of promotion. Therefore, the study recognized that increment of promotional deals by one unit would influence an increment in promotion acceptance by 0.669. The outcome results emphasize a high positive

correlation whose r value is between $+0.5 <= r < +1$ rank according to the Pearson correlation rank Table 06.

Table 6: Pearson Correlation Coefficients between variables

	IN	AT	PD	PR	PA
Income	1	.557**	.505**	.516**	.566**
Attitude	.557**	1	.677**	.700**	.607**
Promotional Deal	.505**	.677**	1	.712**	.669**
Price	.516**	.700**	.712**	1	.650**
Promotion Acceptance	.566**	.607**	.669**	.650**	1

Regression Equation

PA = 0.719 + 0.207 [Price]+ 0.224 [Income] + 0.090 [Attitude] + 0.307 [Promotional Deal] + ϵ

As per the above regression equation, the interpretations for regression model coefficients could be as given below. The Beta value of the price is 0.207 where it represents a positive relationship with the promotion acceptance by consumers. The significant level of price is 0.000 under the acceptable level of 0.5 speaks that and an increment of the price by 1 unit will result in 0.207 by increasing the promotion acceptance. When it comes to the attitude factor, the Beta value shows 0.090 where the significant value is greater than 0.5 significant level. So, the attitude can be taken as an insignificant factor which makes an impact on the promotion acceptance (Table 7).

Table 7: Coefficients value for regression model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.719	0.167		4.314	0
IN	0.224	0.042	0.229	5.384	0
AT	0.09	0.049	0.098	1.851	.065
PD	0.307	0.05	0.32	6.087	0
PR	0.207	0.048	0.234	4.319	0

Objective 5 - Regression between price, income, attitude, promotional deal and promotion acceptance

So, the identification of the relationship between the factors (price, attitudes, income level and the promotion type) and promotion acceptance by the customer as our final objective of the research was successfully accomplished. With the above generated results the independent variables, namely the factors income, promotional deals, price make an impact on the customer when he/she is on a purchasing decision. But, the individuals do not pay much attention on their attitudes while they are making purchasing decisions.

Hypothesis testing

This study consisted of 4 hypotheses for each independent variable. Below explain the results of hypothesis testing which support to evaluate the acceptance and rejection of hypotheses.

H1 – There is a significant relationship between Price and Promotional Acceptance
As the analysis conveys that there is a statistically significant relationship between price of the promotion and the customer promotion acceptance where the independent variables P value (P=0.000) is less than 0.05. Therefore, the researcher would be able to accept the hypothesis.
H2 – There is a significant relationship between Income and Promotional Acceptance

According to SPSS result, it conveys a significant value as (P=0.000) which is less than 0.05. Therefore, it is concluded that there is a statistically significant bond between customer's income and the consumer promotion acceptance, and the hypothesis can be accepted.

H3 – There is a significant relationship between Attitude and Promotional Acceptance

Since the study shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between customers' attitude

towards the promotion and the consumer promotion acceptance where the independent variables P value is not more than 0.05, which supports the acceptance of the hypothesis

H4 – There is a significant relationship between Promotional Deals and Promotional Acceptance.

Based on the result there is a statistically proved relationship between promotional deals and the consumer promotion acceptance where the P value is 0.000, and the value comes below 0.05, which means the hypothesis can be accepted.

4. DISCUSSION

According to the generated result from the analysis, the regression coefficient of price is shown as 0.573 with a 0.000 significant value. It means there is a significantly positive impact on price and the intention of promotional acceptance of customers in the Colombo suburb. Furthermore, the research accepts the hypothesis 01 (H1) "there is a significant relationship between price and promotional acceptance". Also, it results when changing the price from 1 unit the promotion acceptance change is 0.573 units. A research done by (Huang, et al., 2014), according to their result analysis they found that price promotion has a significant positive influence on the quality of the food and beverage. Also, the price promotion has shown a direct impact on the satisfaction of the customer, and at the same time this satisfaction showed a significant influence on purchase intentions. The price promotion too has shown a direct impact on repeat purchasing intentions. Moreover, their results confirm that price promotion motivates non-frequent customers to come again and frequent customers are more likely to keep purchasing regardless of this price promotion.

As per the generated results, the regression coefficient of consumers' income is valued as 0.554 with a 0.000 significant value, where it says that a significantly positive relationship can be seen in customers' income and their promotion acceptance decisions. Also, the study accepts the hypothesis 02 (H2) "there is a significant relationship between income and promotional acceptance", where it results

when the customer's income fluctuates from 1 unit, the promotion acceptance impacts from 0.554 units. According to Ifeanyichukwu & Nwaizugbo (2019), they have noted over two billion human beings in developing countries spend up to 70% of their income on food. A study done by Ozdemir & Ergin (2017) stated that there is a significantly highly positive relationship between income and the frequency of fast food consumption, where it concludes that the higher income earners visit fast food restaurants often and the income level of the fast food consumer is significantly correlated with frequent food consumption.

The study's regression coefficient of consumer attitude is 0.554, shown with a 0.000 significant value, where it can be concluded that a significantly positive relationship can be seen between the customer's attitude and his promotion acceptance intention.

Also, the thesis accepts the hypothesis 03 (H3) "there is a significant relationship between attitude and promotional acceptance", where it impacts when the customer's attitude differs from 1 unit the promotion acceptance differs with 0.554 units. Xue, et al. (2021) generated their research result and they observed a positive relationship between attitude and fast food purchase, where it significantly increased by household structures. Also Devendra & Kennedy (n.d.) has stated that according to their research attitudes of the consumers are making a significant impact on fast food consumption. Also, many other studies predict the theory that there is a positive effect on attitudes and fast food consumers' intentions (Ajzen, 2015)

The results of the study interpret the regression coefficient of promotional deals as 0.624 projected with a value of 0.000 significant, where it can be said that a significantly positive relationship can be observed in promotional deals and promotion acceptance decisions by the fast food consumer. Also, the study accepts the hypothesis 04 (H4) "there is a significant relationship between promotional deals and promotional acceptance", where it influences when the promotional deal changes by 1 unit, the promotion acceptance changes by 0.554

units. A research done by Ehsan (2012) considering 3 cities in Pakistan and considering the factors which are more influential in selecting fast food restaurants among Pakistanis. As per the result generated by the authors to measure the significance of these factors considered in 3 cities, people are always aware and interested about promotional deals. According to that opinion, it is important that the price, timely service and promotional deals are the main factors to be considered when it comes to selecting a restaurant in Pakistan.

5. CONCLUSION

As discussed in the section above, it can clearly be stated that the factors income, price, attitudes and promotional deals are positively related with promotion acceptance. The results generated in the previous sections show that there is a significant relationship among these factors, and moreover the created hypotheses are all accepted by proving more about the relationship of these factors with the dependent variable, which is promotion acceptance. All the objectives constructed by the researcher for the accomplishment at the end of this research were successfully achieved and the results generated are clearly defined as well. So, the current paper expands the empirical findings of the gathered data.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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