Journal of Research in Business, Economics and Management (JRBEM)
ISSN: 2395-2210

SCITECH
RESEARCH ORGANISATION

Volume 4, Issue 4
November 15, 2015

Journal of Research in Business, Economics and Management
www.scitecresearch.com

Customer Satisfaction in the Brazilian Fast Food Franchise Segment

Edgard Monforte Merlo[1], Helenita R. da Silva Tamashiro[2], Evandro Eduardo Seron Ruiz[3]

[1] Phd in Business FEA/USP, Professor at FEARP/USP – Business Department

[2] Phd in Business FEA/USP, Professor at Reges College – Business Department

[3] Phd in Electronic Engineering University of Kent at Canterbury - Professor at FFCLRP/USP – Computer Science and Mathematics Department

Abstract

In a market with great competition, store image associated with quality and brand become an important competitive tool, meanly when associated to perceived customer satisfaction. The main objective of this study was to analyze the influence of image, brand and quality on customer satisfaction in the Brazilian fast food segment. Data analysis was conducted through multivariate techniques to verify the significance of the relationship between variables analyzing two of the five biggest fast food chains in Brazil. The results showed that brand and quality were the most valued variables according to perceived customer satisfaction. In the model used, brand presented the greatest explanatory power. Based on the multiple coefficient of determination (adjusted R^2), quality, image and brand as a group explained about 62.7% (Franchise 1) and 61.3% (Franchise 2) of the search for satisfaction, being that only quality and brand were statistically significant.

Keywords: Image Store; Retail; Quality; Attributes; Consumer; Brand; Satisfaction; Fast Food.

1 Introduction

Kumar and Steenkamp (2008) described the shift that took place from the 19th century, when customers purchased nameless products of inconsistent quality offered by local factories, to brand products made by global manufacturers, such as Coke, Johnnie Walker, Johnson & Johnson, Kraft, Levi's, Procter & Gamble, Nestlé, Unilever and others. These authors also demonstrated that customers initially purchased brands endorsed by these manufacturers as symbols of quality, trustworthiness and affluence. After some time, these brands began to be consumed as symbols of aspirations, images and lifestyles. In this perspective, Swoboda *et al.* (2013) also indicated that the success of retailers depends on having strong and attractive retail brands, ease access to a store with an equally accessible and suitable location. The author also observes that a strong brand may receive the benefits from the company brand's image.

Within this emphasis, retailers must pay attention to their model of customer service, so that it does not become out of date. If this occurs customers may form a negative store image. For Burt and Carralero-Encinas (2000), the image of the retailer is the key factor contributing to a company's success. Thus, it is essential to understand the importance of such image to define the position of a company within its market.

Within the franchising context, just like in any other segment of the economy, quality plays an important role as a standard for expanding a business (Monroy and Alzola, 2005). Similarly, Khauaja and Mattar (2006) highlighted that in the current hypercompetitive business environment, the relevance of branding to a company's performance must be acknowledged, whether on a national or international level. According to these authors, the power of brand had a great capacity to positively influence buying behavior. This is due to the fact that products' functional attributes are usually not sufficient to set them apart from their competition. In the retail segment frequently occurs that technologies, designs, raw materials and functions are very similar, if not identical. In this case, brands play an important role to products and services offered. Based on this background, the following research question was created: **how do image, brand and quality influence customer satisfaction in the fast food segment?**

To answer this question, the main objective of this study was to analyze the influence of image, brand and quality on customer satisfaction in the Brazilian fast food segment. Considering that customers process information about attributes independently for different brands and that they purchase the values synthesized in all relevant attributes (Teng and Laroche, 2007), to measure the importance of service or product attributes is essential. According to this fact, Bussab and Samartini (2006) presents some reasons: 1) Assessing the importance of product/service attributes can be used to create an overall score; 2) Customer importance – or preference – is a relevant variable that marketing professionals must be aware of, as they are faced with the challenge of identifying aspects related to market segmentation. In this sense, Assael (1996) affirms that the basis for understanding customer beliefs with regards to a given product or service lies in conducting research and measure product attributes.

Thus, this text was structured as follows: in the introduction, we present the theoretical background, the research question and the study's main objectives. Next, we present a literature review illustrating the main concepts regarding the theme. Third, the study methodological procedures are explained, as well as the results of our research. The last section presents our final considerations, limitations and contributions of the study and suggestions for further research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Retail: Concept and Classification

The results of a study conducted in 2013 by Boucinhas & Campos consultancy showed that retail is the third largest sector in Brazil in terms of quantity of transactions and that it presented a 7.5% growth in 2012. Brazil is considered the largest customer market in Latin America. Market size, purchasing power of the Brazilian population, innovation and quality has made the country one very attractive option for retail chains from all over the world (Boucinhas, 2014).

According to Stern *et al.* (1996), a retailer is a businessperson who sells products and/or services to customers for their own personal use. Dunne and Lusch (1999), on the other hand, broadened the concept by stating that retail consists of the final activity as well as the necessary steps to place merchandise in customer hands or to provide the customer with a service. This idea that retailers may compose products and services in different ways also appears to Mc Goldrick (2002), retail companies can provide physical goods, services or a combination of goods and services. In this sense, each retailer tries to survive by satisfying a specific group of customer needs.

According to Parente (2009), retail companies can be classified in the following categories: a) Independent, consisting of a small, family-run single store; b) Chains, which operate more than one store under the same management; c) Franchises, systems in which small businesspersons can benefit from being part of large retail chain institutions; Departments within a larger retail store, operated and managed by a single company (jewelry, shoes, bakeries, floriculture); d) Vertical Marketing Systems, independent companies that carry out production, wholesale and retail activities as a group, in which each member of the channel tries to maximize their respective profits. They can be corporate, administrative and contractual. Regarding food store retail, Parente (2009) indicated that Brazilian companies have been following global trends, presenting a very wide range of store models and formats and meeting several different market characteristics and needs.

Among the different forms of retail property, there is the franchise system, which is when a franchisor, normally a manufacturer, wholesaler or service company, grants a license to a small company or individual (the franchisee) to conduct business using pre-determined procedures for a specific period (Morgenstein and Strongin, 1992). Next, we present and discuss the topic of franchise retailing.

2.2 Franchise Retailing in Brazil

Franchise system as one business format has been growing in emerging markets. In this system stores are operated based on the partnership between two independent companies that aim to make profits based on joint actions. On the one hand, the franchisor has invested in the franchisee's success, as they are entitled to a percentage of the franchisee's profit in return for the assistance provided. On the other hand, the franchisee has invested in the franchisor's success, as their success is mutually dependent. Some concepts of franchising are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – Definitions of Franchising	
Authors	**Definitions**
Hisrich and Peters (2004)	An agreement in which one manufacturer or distributor of a registered brand product or service concedes exclusive local distribution rights to independent retailers in exchange for royalties for brand use and for the franchisee's conformance to standardized operational procedures.
Associação Brasileira de Franchising (ABF, 2014)	A strategy directed at the distribution and sales of products and services, in which the franchisor company owns the brand and idealizes, formats and grants the license to run the business franchise. In turn, the franchisee can be a natural person or a legal entity that adheres to the franchise chain. Franchisees invest resources in their own business, which will be supervised by the franchisor and operate with the franchisor's brand, in accordance with pre-established standards. The essence of franchising lies in cooperative partnership. Thus, this system has reached great success rates in the most diverse fields of activity.
International Franchise Association (IFA, 2014).	An agreement that establishes a union between two legally independent parties: ● The franchisor, which concedes its brand and operating methods and has the obligation to provide rights and support to franchisees. ● The franchisee can be a person or group of people who pay royalties for the right to market the franchisor company's business system. The contract that establishes the union of the two parties is called a "franchise".

Based on this conceptual chart, it can be inferred that in essence, franchising is when a business concept is reapplied in several different locations or markets, normally governed by a contract of rights and obligations, signed by franchisor and franchisee. By using the franchise system, companies seek to combine the advantages of an owner-run business with the efficiency of centralized decision-making, characteristic of store chain operations: Franchisees are motivated to be successful in their own stores and profit, while franchisors are motivated to create new products and systems and promote the brand, as their gains are based on royalty fees, which are based on sales values (Levy and Weitz, 2000).

According to Olivo *et al.* (2008), the franchise sector in Brazil has grown in a higher rate than the GDP, proving to be more dynamic than the average Brazilian economy. According to the same authors, such growth is due to the following factors:

- The organic growth of traditional franchise chains, some of which have been operating in Brazil for more than 20 years.
- The creation of new franchise chains that have generated national capital in recent years;
- The implementation of international franchise chains that were absent from the Brazilian market and that began their operations in the country in recent years.

In 2012, the franchise sector presented revenue of R$103 billion, a 16.2% growth rate with regards to 2011. Furthermore, it generated over 103 thousand direct jobs, a growth rate of 12.3% when compared to the previous year. The Hotel and Tourism sector presented the greatest growth rate (21.9%), followed by Personal Accessories and Shoes (17.1%) (ABF, 2014). Table 2 summarizes the revenue by sector in 2012 and 2013.

Table 2 – Revenue by Franchise Sector 2013-2012 (Values in R$ Billions)			
Segment	**2012**	**2013**	**Variation**
Personal Accessories and Shoes	6.286	7.363	17.1%
Food	**20.576**	**23.998**	**16.6%**
Education and Training	6.509	7.592	16.6%
Fitness, Health, Beauty and Entertainment	17.866	22.137	23.9%
Hotels and Tourism	5.487	6.688	21.9%
Communication, Computers and Electronics	1.588	1.827	15.1%
Cleaning and Conservation	1.055	1.073	1.6%
House and Construction	5.523	6.264	13.4%
Businesses, Services and other Retailers	26.323	25.120	-4.6%
Vehicles	3.699	4.123	11.5%
Clothing	8.375	9.392	12.1%
Total	**103.291**	**115.582**	**11.9%**
Source: ABF (2014)			

Analyzing the main reasons for franchise success Shane and Spell (1998) listed a series of aspects: the successful experience of the parent company before deciding to work with franchising; the presence of an integrated management system that provides franchisees with autonomy; integrated marketing efforts directed at brand strengthening; continuous management adaptation to the growth of its franchise chain; and finally, a strict franchisee selection process in order to uphold quality standards. These authors analyzes only reasons for franchise success, on the other hand aspects related to product quality, image and customer satisfaction won't be discussed by the authors.

2.3 Customer Satisfaction and Perception of Quality

In the current competitive business world, companies recognize the need for establishing strategic policies directed to customers and different market segments. To compete, they must differentiate themselves in terms of service quality and customer satisfaction, as product or service satisfaction is directly influenced by how their attributes are perceived (Daunt and Harris, 2012; Parasuraman *et al*., 1991).

In fact, considering the retail growth and modernization, retailers must find the customer needs in such a way that they can obtain satisfaction from the store and have a positive store image from retailers. Therefore, longevity of customer relationship depends on companies being able to satisfy customers enough to earn their loyalty and win new customers (Jang *et al*., 2013). According to Baltas *et al*. (2010), the higher the satisfaction with a given store, the less customers search for new alternatives, a point that highlights the importance of studying customer satisfaction in retail.

We must notice that satisfaction has been recognized as an indicator of organizational performance (Anderson, 1998). In recent years, the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction has received an increasing academic attention (Sureshcandar *et al*., 2002). In this sense, Cronin *et al*. (2000) affirms that several studies on service quality, service value and issues related to satisfaction have dominated the literature on service.

Studies defined satisfaction as the way customers respond to a given service or product received. Thus, it is a judgment of a product or service attribute, or the product or services itself, and whether their consumption provided a certain level of pleasure (Oliver, 1997). Following the same reasoning, Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) defined satisfaction as a judgment made by customers in terms of whether or not a service or product met their needs and expectations. Within this context, Cronin and Taylor (1992) stated that service quality is a predecessor of customer satisfaction.

As reported by Cadotte *et al*. (1987) and Oliver (1994), satisfaction can be understood as an affective state experienced by customers, generated by an emotional response to the consumption experience of a product/service. Furthermore, Churchill and Suprenant (1982) showed that satisfaction is a post-purchase and post-consumption effect, arising from the comparison between the rewards and costs of a given purchase. Thus, companies are currently focusing on gaining customer loyalty and keeping a competitive edge by creating positive customer experiences (Klaus, 2013).

When analyzing the publications related to satisfactions Yi (1989) affirms that they can be divided in two basic categories: those studies that emphasize satisfaction as a process and those that treat it as a final product. Parker and Mathews (2001) corroborated this classification and stated that satisfaction as a process corresponds to the result of a judgment made by customers comparing what the product or service offered with their initial expectations. In turn, satisfaction as a final product is a cognitive state, defined by emotions and customer satiety.

Related to the studies of consumer's satisfaction appears the studies associated to quality and we highlighted the article of Zeithaml (1988) whose defined quality as a judgment made by customers regarding the overall excellence or superiority of a product or service. In this sense, retailers can provide a wide variety of services and must consider factors such as service quality, payment option convenience, credit availability, quick service and check-out line wait time, and opening hours. This must be considered jointly with other services such as return and exchange policies, available parking, and the presence of salespersons, among others (McGoldrick, 2002).

Finally, we must consider the customer expectations and their impact on perceived value, quality and satisfaction, according to Fornell *et al.*(1996). Moreover, according to Cronin *et al*. (2000), perceived quality directly impacts perceived value and satisfaction, while perceived value impacts satisfaction and future purchase intent. Therefore, retail customer satisfaction models must take into account perceived value, which encompasses aspects such as perceived image, brand and quality of the products and services offered by a company. The next section discusses the topic of image and brand.

2.4 Image and Brand

According to Grunert and Juhl (1995) it's important to understand the attributes most valued by customers in the buying process is important because they function as decision-making and justification criteria. Assessing customer perceived store image is essential to guarantee congruence between the image desired by the target market and the image projected by the store. According to Assael (1996), measuring attributes and conducting studies and research on the topic are the basis for understanding customer beliefs regarding specific products or brands.

Store image can be conceived as all of the associations made by customers based on their buying experiences at a given store (Kunnel and Barry, 1968). In turn, Bloemer and Schroder (2002) defined store image as the sum of all customer perceived store attributes. For the purposes of this study, the definition by Martineau (1958) was adopted, being that the store is defined in customer's minds, partly by functional qualities and partly by a set of psychological attributes. Martineau also stated that customer's purchasing power takes second place in store choice, in that it is primarily influenced by the global image held by customers, which must be acceptable and attractive to their lifestyle.

The importance of store image in retail was demonstrated by Schiffman and Kanuk (2000), who stated that stores have their own image, which influence the perceived quality of the products available at the store and that of the services provided, besides the customers' decisions on where to make their purchases. Emotional and rational aspects of image were observed by McGoldrick (2002), who defended that store image is formed selectively and consists of a combination of material, factual and emotional factors. Furthermore, the author stated that even tangible attributes such as price and location can be analyzed by customers subjectively, while intangible aspects like store atmosphere can be measured through tangible aspects, such as music, lighting, colors, etc. According to Woodruff and Gardial (1996) attributes are characteristics that are necessary to a product description.

In order to understand how customers perceive and evaluate their store, we must consider the weight of each attribute of store image. This procedure will help in the projection of a more adequate retail mix (Chang and Luan, 2010). Store image is formed by customer assessment and perception with respect to each separate feature (Cardozo, 1965; Chang and Luan, 2010).

Bloemer and Ryuter (1998) studied the relationship between image and satisfaction and demonstrated that among other things, satisfaction is a result of store image. In their research, Bloemer and Schroder (2002) concluded that customers who held favorable store perceptions were more likely to experience satisfaction than those who had an image that was less than favorable. Therefore, it is crucial for franchise chains to understand the importance of store image in their performance and provide customers with pleasant buying experiences.

In this context, brand image is an important source of company value. Brand image, according to Keller (1993), is formed by a group of perceptions about its brand, as reflected by associations normally kept in memory. The American Marketing Association (AMA, 2014) defines brand as a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies a seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers.

In order to create a positive image, Keller (1993) believed that such associations must be strong, favorable and unique. The strength of associations is a consequence of how the company marketing programs affect the experience of the customer with the brand. Customer experience with products happens when they interact with them, such as when they seek them out (Hoch, 2002). Customers also experience products and services when effectively consuming them (Brakus *et al*., 2009).Thus, brand strength depends on the type and amount of information on the brand to which customers are being exposed. Brand experience is related to, but is conceptually distinct from, other brand-related constructs. In particular, brand experience differs from assessment, affective and associative constructs, such as brand attitude, brand involvement, brand fixation, customer satisfaction and brand personality (Brakus *et al*., 2009).

Aaker (1998) mentioned that brand value is formed by a set of resources and deficiencies inherent to a registered brand and to a symbol that adds to (or subtracts from) product or service value, benefitting a product or its customers. The author also stated that the main resource categories are awareness of the registered brand, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand associations. Each of these elements creates value both for customers and for the company.

Regarding the issue of how customers assess brand value, Srivastava and Shocker (1991) highlighted that it can be understood as consisting of two main components: brand strength (positive customer associations) and brand performance (present and future profits accrued through perceived brand strength). Lassar *et al*. (1995) discussed how to measure brand value and proposed a model composed of the following dimensions: performance, social image, positive images and perceived brand value (brand utility as compared to costs).

3 Materials and Methods

This article analyzes the influence of store image, brand and quality on customer satisfaction considering two important chains in the Brazilian fast food segment. Some reasons can explain our decision to evaluate these two specific companies. Both of them have a great number of stores; they have more than a decade of operations; both have consolidated business formats and they have different nationalities, one of them begin in USA and the other was created in Brazil. The selected companies, here denominated 1 and 2, have been following the growth process of the national fast food market and their market positions show that the strategies adopted by both have led to good financial results and high growth. Thus, these companies present a well-defined product and service proposal, are well known by customers and operate in a segment in which marketing performance is essential to expand their business.

In light of the significance of image when analyzing the performance of marketing strategies, different authors have studied alternatives for measuring this concept. In this sense, the choice of image measuring techniques must minimize sources of research errors and distortions. In the present study, we presented customers with affirmations by which to judge the two investigated companies. The complexity of image measurement lies in the fact that the process of image perception can present high variations between people. Schiffman and Kanuk (2000) stated that different person can be subjected to the same apparent stimuli and conditions but recognize, select, organize and interpret differently, based on each person's needs, values, and expectations. In this sense, image has a great subjectivity but could be very interesting to evaluate great groups of consumers exposed to the same stimulus – in our study service quality and brand management strategies.

Due to the importance of service quality, several authors developed methods for measuring this concept. The most used method is the SERVQUAL, presented by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) in a study investigating concepts related to service quality. These authors defined the five main dimensions of services, namely, tangible (equipment and facilities), reliability (conformity of services provided and problem resolution), responsiveness (willingness to help customers), assurance (both the company and its employees must inspire trust) and empathy (individualized and caring attention).

Redirecting the discussion proposed by SERVQUAL, Johnson *et al.* (1995) set forth a broader assessment model by making use of systems theory to analyze product quality. These authors' approach divides services into three different dimensions: inputs (equipment, quality reputation, environment, among others), processes (quality of customer interaction, including courtesy, attention and responsiveness) and outputs (service results, such as intangible benefits related to customer perception).

According to Dunne and Lusch (1999), given the specificities of retail services, companies must consider corporate image in addition to service quality, as it plays an important role in reducing customer perceived risk. Therefore, although the model set forth by Johnson *et al.* (1995) used a systemic and comprehensive concept, it did not include aspects such as image and brand value assessment, which according to Dunne and Lusch (1999), should have been incorporated in the study. In this sense, these aspects must be included in one comprehensive study linking all these different (but connected) elements of market performance. Therefore, the present study made improvements in the model proposed by Johnson *et al.* (1995). Regarding the input dimension, we selected statements related to reputation and the state of equipment and physical facilities. In terms of process, aspects related to courteous and friendly service, service responsiveness and attention to needs were analyzed. Finally, considering the final product, we selected aspects related to fulfilled expectations, fulfilled needs, service reliability and service variability.

The questionnaire was structured in such a way that each participant assessed both of the franchises chosen in the study according to the same variables.

Before data collection, a pilot study (pre-test) was developed with approximately 30 interviews in order to assess question comprehensibility. It was only after the conclusion of this phase that a wider quantitative study was conducted with a greater number of interviewees. The sample was selected by convenience and consisted of 360 individuals in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. The state of São Paulo contributes with 33.1% (US$ 625 Bi, in 2010) of Brazil's GDP, has a HDI of 0.83 and life expectancy of 74.6 years. This state was chosen for this study due to the high competitiveness of the fast food segment, in that customers can choose from a great range of products/services offered by several companies. The survey questions are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 - Survey Questions

Concept	Question
Quality	The company has up-to-date equipment? The furniture is in accordance to the service provided? Physical facilities are visually attractive? Employees are friendly? Employees are helpful regarding my needs? Employees are attentive to my needs? The goals I had for the service were completely fulfilled? I received the service I was expecting? The service was done correctly the first time? The service product met my expectations? The service met all the needs I wanted? The company provides reliable service? Service performance is variable?
Image	Employees seem happy with the service? Employees are polite? The assortment of product options is very good? The store atmosphere is very good? The style of the store is very good? I consider this company to be very reliable? This company is very reliable in terms of customers' interests? They have very good deals? The store location is very good? Product prices are fair?
Brand	The company is known for its quality? This brand fits my personality? I have positive personal feelings regarding this brand?
Satisfaction	My overall satisfaction is (a score from 1 to 5).

Source: created by the authors

The data obtained in the field survey were analyzed using the software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

4 Results and Discussion

Multiple regressions were used for data analysis, which according to Hair *et al.* (2006) is a technique that analyzes the relationship between a dependent variable (satisfaction) and other independent variables. This technique was used in the present study to develop an equation to analyze existing associations between quality, image and brand and the satisfaction of food franchise customers.

A sample profile was established in order to conduct descriptive data analysis, followed by regression analysis. Regarding sample characteristics, of the 360 respondents, 45% were men and 55%, women. Furthermore, most were between the ages of 18 and 34 (approximately 90% of the sample).

Regression Analysis

Hair *et al.* (2005) defined multiple regression as a multivariate statistical technique used to analyze relationships of cause and effect between a single dependent variable (criterion or explained) and several independent variables (predictors or explanatory). Such association indicated to what degree the dependent variables explained customer satisfaction. Tables 4 and 5 demonstrate the causal model between satisfaction-related variables in the two studied franchises, given the quantification of the respective beta coefficients for each of the independent variables.

Table 4 - Summary of the Regression Analysis for Franchise 1

	Non-Standardized Coefficients		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
Model	B	Standard Error	β		
1(Constant)	-0.298	0.301		-0.990	0.324
Quality	0.374	0.114	0.227	3.280	0.001
Image	0.177	0.118	0.107	1.500	0.136
Brand	0.581	0.063	0.568	9.188	0.000
R^2: 0.634		Adjusted R^2: 0.627		Standard error: 0.59	
Satisfaction: -0.298 + 0.581 Brand + 0.374 Quality + 0.177 Image					

Source: created by the authors

Table 5 - Summary of the Regression Analysis for Franchise 2

Model	Non-Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	β	Standard Error	β		
1(Constant)	-0.289	0.136		-2.127	0.035
Quality	0.525	0.146	0.261	3.601	0.000
Image	0.259	0.140	0.137	1.855	0.065
Brand	0.466	0.060	0.498	7.731	0.000
R^2: 0.621		Adjusted R^2: 0.613		Standard Error: 0.22	
Satisfaction: -0.289 + 0.466 Brand + 0.525 Quality + 0.259 Image					

Source: created by the authors

Based on the coefficient of multiple determination (R^2), quality, image and brand as a group explained approximately 62.7% (Franchise 1) and 61.3% (Franchise 2) of search for satisfaction, being that only quality and brand were statistically significant.

The results of Student's t-test, illustrated in Tables 5 and 6, indicated that brand was the independent variable with the greatest explanatory power, as it presented the greatest *t* value both in Franchise 1 (9.188) and Franchise 2 (7.731).

Residual standard error indicated that observed values varied on average of 22.70% and 21.10% (Franchise 1 and 2, respectively) in terms of predicted values. Thus, the model fit the data and adequately explained the phenomenon of satisfaction with regards to quality, image and brand variables, in that R^2 was greater than 50% and residual standard error, less than 25%.

After each franchise analysis was submitted to the equations, a comparative analysis was conducted between resulting satisfaction models. We found that image, quality and brand were present in all the developed satisfaction models, findings that confirm the joint importance of the three aspects in customer satisfaction, as reported by Parasuraman *et al.* (1991), Daunt and Harris (2012). When customers are satisfied, it is believed that they will make fewer efforts searching for new alternatives (Baltas *et al.*, 2010).

In terms of image, the item "**This company is very reliable in terms of customers' interests"** was present in the satisfaction equations of both companies, although its value was insignificant. Image-related attributes corresponded to only 10.12% of the variables associated with satisfaction in Franchise 1 and 10.70% in Franchise 2. Companies must assess customer perception of store image not only to understand customer beliefs regarding a given product or brand (Assael, 1996), but primarily to guarantee congruence between the image desired by the target market and that projected by the store. According to Grunert and Juhl (1995), being aware of and understanding the attributes most valued by customers in their buying process is of great relevance, as such attributes are the criteria used for select future marketing actions for the company.

Considering that a company's image is formed by a group of perceptions about its brand, as reflected by associations normally kept in memory (Keller, 1993), the findings of the current research study indicate that the associations established by customers were a consequence of how the marketing programs of the studied companies affected customers' experience with the brand, as suggested by Keller (1993).

The functions of the studied franchises' brands represented the guarantee, characterization and hedonic factors (Kapferer, 2003), as the brands' relationship with customer personality and positive feelings was a fundamental aspect influencing satisfaction. Questions related to intangible brand attributes represented 74.28% and 69.18% of variables considered important to satisfaction in Franchises 1 and 2, respectively. These aspects show the importance of intangible factors to obtain higher levels of satisfaction.

Regarding quality (in both of the studied franchises) the attributes that most influenced satisfaction represented 15.60% and 20.11% in Franchises 1 and 2, respectively. These attributes were:"**The goals I had for the service were completely fulfilled** and **I received the service I was expecting",** showing that such perceived quality reflected in a positive customer judgment regarding the excellence of the product/service offered by both retailers (Zeithaml, 1988).

Our findings demonstrate that customer-generated expectations positively influence perceived quality and satisfaction, in accordance with Fornell *et al.* (1996) and Cronin *et al.* (2000). In this sense, the results of this study indicate that customer perception of quality was more closely related to intangible aspects, such as the perception that expectations were met, than to tangible aspects, such as products, facilities and received service. The following Table 6 illustrates the variables that most stood out in the regression equations.

Table 6 - Relevant Variables Identified in the Survey

Content Description	Related Conceptual Aspect
This brand fits my personality. I have positive personal feelings regarding this brand.	**Brand**
The goals I had for the service were completely fulfilled.	**Quality**
Employees are polite The assortment of product options is very good Product prices are fair. The style of the store is very good	**Image**

Source: created by the authors

By analyzing the most relevant elements to customer satisfaction in fast food chains, the importance of intangible aspects stand out. These aspects are represented by the feeling and perception that the company is reliable and able to meet customers' needs. In general, franchise 1 presented the following regression equation: **Satisfaction 1 =** $0.220 + 0.242x_1 + 0.264x1 + 0.112x_3 + 0.109x_4 + 0.125x_5 + 0.128x_6$. Where:

X_1 = brand fits personality;

X_2 = brand has positive associations;

X_3 = goals for the service were met;

X_4 = polite employees;

X_5 = product met expectations;

X_6 = reliable company.

In turn, the regression equation for franchise 2 was: **Satisfaction 2=** $0.174 + 0.214x_1 + 0.121x_2 + 0.172x_3 + 0.104x_4 + 0.085x_5 + 0.084x_6 + 0.107x_7 + 0.089x_{8.}$ Where:

X_1 =brand has positive associations;

X_2 = goals for the service were met;

X_3 = brand agrees with personality;

X_4 = varied assortment of products;

X_5 = good deals;

X_6 = good store atmosphere;

X_7 = product met expectations;

X_8 = reliable company.

Aspects related to image, quality and brand were present in both of the analyzed companies, thus confirming the joint importance of the three aspects in customer satisfaction, as reported by Parasuraman *et al.* (1991) and Daunt and Harris (2012). When customers are satisfied, they expend fewer efforts searching for new alternatives (Baltas *et al.*, 2010). In order to enhance analyzes of the influence of image, brand and quality on customer satisfaction in the fast food segment we collected a sample of microblogs posts, actually Twitter posts. Twitter microblogs are particularly attractive to researchers in many areas as it is a real-time social communication tool. Twitter posts, also known as "tweets", empowers researchers to collect succinct information. The Twitter is a service represented today by over 302M users, 77% outside the U.S., who posts 500M tweets every day. Beside these numbers, Twitter is also an research appealing tool due to its real time communication capability and its public broadcasting facility - Using microblog data collection to explore additional aspects of consumer's positive experience:

- **The Microblog Data Collection:** During the first days of June 2015, we collected 2,294 tweet posts, in portuguese language only, filtered by the following terms: "mcdonalds_br", "mcdonalds", "habibs", "habibis, "habib's", "habibsonline". It is worth mentioning that "mcdonalds_br" and "habibsonline" are the terms used as the official Twitter channels of the two largest fast food chains in Brazil. From the total number of tweets, approximately 27% (623 posts) of then referred to Hab and the remaining 73% (1671 posts) referred to Mc.
- **Analyzing Data:** Considering the 623 posts of the Franchise Hab, We collected 102 posts (16%) originated or mentioned the official user name. Most of these posts were just a mention of the customer current location, such as "I am at Hab in city X". Also, among the total there were 82 posts (13%) that mentioned some food or drink consumed or sold by the store. It is worth mentioning that 14 posts were concerned to a promotional ticket offer of a soccer game. The overall majority of the posts expressed a positive feeling about either the food or just the fact of being at one of the stores. Some of the posts were also about the practicality of having a trustful meal option in various occasions, nighttime, after work and others.

Concerning the 1,671 posts of Franchise Mc, 419 posts (25%) mentioned or was originated from the official user name. A large proportion of these posts (145 tweets) were concerned about promotional events or promotional offers. 44 of these posts referred to a particular table game offer associated with biscuits. Most of these posts were in fact "re-tweets" from the official user, forwarded messages. About 10% of the posts (169 tweets) had a direct mention to a food or drink commercialized by the store. As mentioned from the previous Franchise, the majority of the posts also expressed positive feelings just as for being part of the business, or even taking the store as a congregational space for friends and family. Next, we present our final considerations.

5 Final Considerations

The present study aimed to understand what attributes are related to image and brand management, as well as perceived quality aspects associated with customer satisfaction. Thus, it was observed that the model proposed through multiple regression proved to be adequate for understanding satisfaction in terms of brand, quality and image, although it was also incomplete, as it did not explain 37.3% and 38.7% (Franchise 1 and 2, respectively) of satisfaction variance.

Brand was the indicator with most influence on customer satisfaction, contrarily to image, which did not demonstrate any considerable impact on the dependent variable. The results of this study allowed us to weave some conclusions, among them, the importance of analyzing the joint influence of brand, image and quality on customer satisfaction in the food franchise segment.

Regarding brand, our findings demonstrated the importance of the positive reputation developed by both companies in the market, not only in the sense of attracting clients, but also guaranteeing they have pleasant buying experiences and, consequently, experience satisfaction with the company. Moreover, the way brands fit customers' personality can be considered a significant attribute influencing satisfaction.

Such capacity for a brand to adapt to customers' personalities is especially worthy of note. Companies must understand the values and attitudes of their customers so that their brand can capture such values and reflect them effectively to the market.

We highlight that customer perception of quality is primarily related to intangible attributes, such as service reliability and whether or not expectations are met. Emotions experienced by fast food franchise customers during their stay at the restaurant constitute a particularly important experience. Limitations of this study include the fact that the main sample consisted only of university students, not allowing for comparative analyses with other population segments. This limitation does not negate the importance of our findings.

6 References

[1] Aaker, DA (1998). *Marcas: gerenciando o valor da marca*. São Paulo: Negócio.

[2] American Marketing Association (2014). *Dictionary.* Accessed 21st September, available at: www.marketingpower.com/_layouts/Dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B.

[3] Anderson, EW (1998). Customer satisfaction and word of mouth. *Journal of Service Research*, *1*(1), 5-17.

[4] Assael, H (1996). *Customer behavior and marketing action.* Boston: PWS Kent.

[5] Associação Brasileira de Franchising (2014). *Evolução do setor 2003-2013*. Accessed 3th August, available at: www.portaldofranchising.com.br/numeros-do-franchising/evolucao-do-setor-de-franchising.

[6] Baltas, G, Argouslidis, PC, Skarmea, D (2010). The role of customer factors in multiple store patronage: a cost-benefit approach. *Journal of Retailing*, *86*(1), 37-50.

[7] Bloemer, J & Ruyter, K (1998). On the relationship between store image, store satisfaction and store loyalty. *European Journal of Marketing***,** *32*(5/6), 499-513.

[8] Bloemer, J & Schroder, G (2002). Store Satisfaction and store loyalty explained by customer and store related factors. *Journal of Customer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, *15*, 68-80.

[9] Boucinhas, F (2014). *Raio X do varejo brasileiro*. Accessed 21st September, available at: www.portalnovarejo.com.br/pdfs/PPT-Boucinhas-Consultoria.pdf. .

[10] Brakus, JJ, Schmitt, BH, Zarantonello, L (2009). Brand experience: what is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty? *Journal of Marketing*, *73*(3), 52–68.

[11] Burt, S & Carralero-Encinas, J (2000). The role of store image in retail internationalization. *International Marketing Review***,** *17*, 433-453.

[12] Bussab, WO, & Samartini, ALS (2006). Modelos com variáveis latentes aplicados à mensuração da importância de atributos. In *Anais do XXX Encontro da Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Administração.*

[13] Cadotte, ER, Woodruff, RB, Jenkins, RL (1987). Expectations and norms in models of customer satisfaction. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *24*, 305-314.

[14] Cardozo, RN (1965). An experimental study of customer effort, expectation and satisfaction. *Journal of Marketing Research***,** *2*(3), 244-249.

[15] Chang, E & Luan, B (2010). Chinese customers' perception of hypermarket store image. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics, 22*(4), 512-527.

[16] Churchill, GA & Suprenant, C (1982). An investigation into the determinants of customer satisfaction. *Journal of Marketing, 19*(4), 491-504.

[17] Cronin, JJ, Brady, MK, Hult, GTM (2000). Assessing the effects of quality, value, and customer satisfaction on customer behavior al intentions in service environments. *Journal of Retailling, 76*(2), 193-218.

[18] Cronin, JJ & Taylor, SA (1992). Measuring service quality: a reexamination and extension. *Journal of Marketing, 56*(3), 55-68.

[19] Daunt, KL & Harris, LC (2012). Exploring the forms of dysfunctional customer behaviour: A study of differences in services cape and customer disaffection with service. *Journal of Marketing Management, 28*(1/2), 129-153.

[20] Dunne, P & Lusch, RF (1999). *Retailing* (3rd ed.). Fort Worth: Dryden Press.

[21] Fornell, C, Johnson, MD, Anderson, EW, Cha, J, Bryant, BE (1996). The American customer satisfaction index: nature, purpose and findings. *Journal of Marketing, 60*(4), 7-18.

[22] Grunert, SC & Juhl, HJ (1995). Values, environmental attitudes, and buying of organic foods. *Journal of Economic Psychology***,** *16*(1), 39-62.

[23] Hair, JF, Anderson, RE, Tatham, RL, Black, WC (2006). *Análise multivariada de dados* (5. ed.). Porto Alegre: Bookman.

[24] Hisrich, RD & Peters, MP (2004). *Empreendedorismo (*5. ed.). Porto Alegre: Bookman.

[25] Hoch, SJ (2002). Product experience is seductive. *Journal of Customer Research***,** 29(3), 448–454.

[26] Instituto Brasileiro de Executivos de Varejo e Mercado de Consumo (2013). *Ranking: 120 maiores empresas do varejo brasileiro*. Accessed 21st September, available at: www.pwc.com.br/pt_BR/br/publicacoes/setores-atividade/assets/produtos-consumo-varejo/ranking-ibevar-2013.pdf.

[27] International Franchise Association (2014). *An introduction to franchising*. Accessed 21st September, available at: www.franchise.org/uploadedFiles/Franchise_Industry/Resources/Education_Foundation/introtofranchising_final.pdf.

[28] Jang, JH, Kim, SW, Lee, SY, Kim, JS (2013). The effects of relationship benefit on relationship quality and store loyalty from convergence environments — NPS analysis and moderating effects. *Electronic Commerce Research, 13*(3), 291-315.

[29] Johnson, RL, Tsiros, M, Lancioni, RA (1995). Measuring service quality: a systems approach. *Journal of Services Marketing, 9*(5), 6-19.

[30] Kapferer, JN (2003). *As marcas, capital da empresa: criar e desenvolver marcas fortes. Porto Alegre:* Bookman.

[31] Keller, KL (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing***,** *57*(1), 1-22.

[32] Khauaja, DMR, & Mattar, FN (2006).Fatores de marketing na construção de marcas sólidas: estudo exploratório com marcas brasileiras. *Revista de Gestão USP***,** *13*(4), 25-38.

[33] Klaus, P (2013). The case of Amazon.com: towards a conceptual framework of online customer service experience (OCSE) using the emerging consensus technique (ECT). *Journal of Services Marketing, 27*(6), 443-457.

[34] Kumar, N & Steenkamp, JBEM (2008). *Estratégia de marcas próprias: como enfrentar o desafio da marca de loja.* São Paulo: Makron Books.

[35] Kunkel, JH & Berry, LL (1968). A behavioral conception of retail image. *Journal of Marketing, 32*(4), 29-38.

[36] Lassar, W, Mittal, B, Sharma, A (1995). Measuring customer-based brand equity. *The Journal of Customer Marketing, 12*(4), 11-19.

[37] Levy, M & Weitz, BA (2000). *Administração de varejo* (3. ed.). São Paulo: Atlas.

[38] Martineau, P (1958). The personality of the retail store. *Harvard Business Review, 36*, 47-55.

[39] McGoldrick, PJ (2002). *Retail marketing.* London: McGraw-Hill.

[40] Monroy, M F & Alzola, LM (2005). An analysis of quality management in franchise systems. *European Journal of Marketing*, *39*(5/6), 585-605.

[41] Morgenstein, M & Strongin, H (1992). *Modern retailing: management principles and practices (*3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

[42] Oliver, RL (1994). Conceptual issues in the structural analysis of consumption emotion, satisfaction and quality: evidence in a service setting. *Advances in Customer Research, 21*, 16-22.

[43] Oliver, RL (1997). *Satisfaction: a behavioral perspective on the customer.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

[44] Olivo, RLF, Crivelaro, E, Gozzi, S, Cavalcanti, M (2008). Criação de valor das franquias empresariais no Brasil sob a perspectiva do franqueador. *Revista de Ciências Gerenciais*, *12*(14), 85-100.

[45] Parasuraman, A, Berry, LL, Zeithaml, VA (1991). Perceived service quality as a customer-based performance measure: an empirical examination of organization barriers using an extended service quality model. *Human Resource Management, 30*(3), 335-364.

[46] Parasuraman, A, Zeithaml, V, Berry, LL (1985). A conceptual model of service quality and its implication for future research. *Journal of Marketing, 49*(4), 41-50.

[47] Parente, J (2009). *Varejo no Brasil: gestão e estratégia.* São Paulo: Atlas.

[48] Parker, C & Mathews, BP (2001). Customer satisfaction: contrasting academic and customers' interpretations. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning, 19*(1), 38-44.

[49] Schiffman, L & Kanuk, L (2000). *Comportamento do consumidor.* Rio de Janeiro: LTD.

[50] Shane, S & Spell, C (1998). Factors for new franchise success. *Sloan Management Review*, *39*(3), 43-50.

[51] Srivastava, RK & Shocker, AD (1991). *Brand equity: a perspective on its meaning and measurement.* Working Paper. Cambridge: Marketing Science Institute.

[52] Stern, LW, El-Ansary, AI, Coughlan, AT (1996). *Marketing channels* (5th ed.). São Paulo: Prentice Hall.

[53] Sureshcandar, GS, Rajendran, C, Anantharaman, RN (2002). The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction – a factor specific approach. *Journal of Service Marketing, 16*(4), 363-379.

[54] Swoboda, B, Berg, B, Schramm-Klein, H, Foscht, T (2013). The importance of retail brand equity and store accessibility for store loyalty in local competition. *Journal of Retailing and Customer Services, 20*, 251–262.

[55] Teng, L & Laroche, M (2007). Building and testing models of customer purchase intention in competitive and multicultural environments. *Journal of Business Research, 60*, 260-268.

[56] Twitter homepage (2015). Accessed 9th November, available at: https://about.twitter.com/pt/company

[57] Woodruff, R & Gardial, S (1996). *Know your customer: new approaches to understanding customer value and satisfaction.* Cambridge: Blackwell.

[58] Yi, Y (1989). *A critical review of customer satisfaction*. Working Paper 604. An Arbor: University of Michigan.

[59] Zeithaml, VA (1988). Customer perceptions of price, quality, and value: a means-end model of synthesis of evidence. *Journal of Marketing*, *52*(3), 2-22.

[60] Zeithaml, VA & Bitner, MJ (2003). *Marketing de serviços: a empresa com foco no cliente.* Porto Alegre: Bookman.