

Mediating Role of Service Quality between Sensory Marketing and Customer Loyalty in Restaurant Industry: A Case of Pakistan

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Abstract

Consumers are considered “King” who is served by businesses. To keep “King” happy and satisfied, businesses use different marketing strategies to position their products and services. For this sensory marketing has become a significant strategy for businesses specially hotels and restaurant industry. The purpose of this study is to see the impact of sensory marketing on customer loyalty through mediating role of service quality. For this a structured questionnaire was distributed among the customers of restaurant industry. Total 450 questionnaires were distributed and 362 were received in return. Partial least square method and path coefficients were used to test the relationship among the variables and significance was tested by applying bootstrapping. It was found that service quality partially mediates between sensory marketing and customer loyalty. Direct and indirect relations were calculated to find the significance and insignificance of relationships among variables.

Keywords: Sensory, Service quality, Customer loyalty, Path Coefficients, Bootstrapping.

Introduction

Customers are important for businesses in a competitive marketplace. Businesses can differentiate themselves by providing what customers need and demand. Successful businesses use customer satisfaction as key element to become prominent in competitive market (Beard, 2014). Marketing activities are being used by the businesses like hotels, restaurants, and departments through senses of the customer. In this era sensory marketing is not only being used in service industry but also in product industry too (Goldkuhl & Styven, 2007). The songs being played in, scent of bakery store, the design and color of some symbol, the sampling of any product and even by touching of any cloth can be a good

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example of sensory marketing. The services provided are intangible (not touchable), so the best way to market it is to provide some tangible environment of services like color, scents or music (McDougall & Snetsinger, 1990).

It can shape the climate keeping in mind the end goal to make the great position of the brand and item (Rushton & Carson, 1989). The entire facts raise a question that whether Sensory Marketing is the key to success in service industry. How will the process work to alter & influence the decision of the user? So the main target is to study that how sensory marketing effects consumer behavior. The atmosphere is an important element of characteristic of industries especially service industries like hotels and restaurants. The purpose of this study is to explore that how sensory marketing activities are applied by restaurant industry of Pakistan for creating customer loyalty with service quality as mediator.

Problem Statement

Restaurant industry has evolved from just a meal delivering facility to an enlarged mix of service related elements. These elements are stressed to fulfill the integral needs of its clients (Khan & Shaikh, 2011). The restaurants are developing industry in the Pakistan; from the aggregate job 1.31 percent is employed in it (Labor Force Survey 2010-11). In Pakistan, a family unit normal visit to restaurants and hotels is 1.14 percent from its aggregate food consumptions (Hussain & Routray, 2012). In Pakistan, service industry is presenting higher consumption and market share. The financial survey of Pakistan 2011-12 indicates urban populace of Pakistan is 67.55 million, demonstrating a huge business sector for the restaurants. The part in urban zones to be most effective is restaurants; comparative to rural areas due to the expenditure patterns of family units (Azim et al., 2014).

There is growing popularity of "Dining out". Regularly more than 11 million people dine out. Most restaurants and hotels in the past, served traditional foods. On the other hand, recently, fast foods and ethnic, including Chinese style and western-style fast food, have ended up mainstreams and an expanding number of fast food chains. They have been effectively settled in the major urban regions. The segment is commanded by various and moderate sized Family restaurants in which family restaurants are 62%, fast food restaurants are 15%, hotels are 6% and ethnics are 17%. Sensory marketing impacts brand building. Sensory marketing is a relatively new idea. There is a progressive change amid the last one and a half decade in the restaurant business of Pakistan and the advertisers are utilizing sensory marketing at a bigger scale (Hussain

&Routra, 2012). This study will help to find out how much restaurant industry is focusing its customers by different marketing strategies like sensory marketing, service quality and customer loyalty.

Research Gap

The present study is focused to address research gaps recognized in the literature on restaurants. First, while it is generally well-accepted that sensory marketing leads to service quality, only a handful studies have been attempted which empirically verify the sensory marketing-service quality link in restaurant context (Tesanovic et al., 2014). According to existing body of knowledge, no study has comprehensively investigated that relationship of sensory marketing with customer loyalty with mediation effect of service quality in the restaurant industry. Restaurant industry needs to focus on importance of this relationship as it can bring them customers for long term and can generate good amount of money in their business (Neema &Bapna, 2012). The sensory experience is mostly studied rather than relating it to other consumer behavior factors (Pentz& Gerber, 2013). There are very few studies who have quantified the concept of sensory marketing in restaurant industry (Pentz & Gerber, 2013; Neema & Bapna, 2012; Shapiro & Spence, 2002; Yilmaz &Aydeniz, 2012). Another gap in the literature is that the researchers are mostly focusing on one or two senses at a time rather than involving all the five senses in their research studies. This study has focused on all five senses to determine their impact on customer loyalty through service quality.

Significance of the Study

The challenge for the advertising executives now rests in drawing in new clients to their restaurants. Utilizing senses by the restaurants has a positive result to their business in different ways. In the restaurants, they for the most part utilize five-senses keeping in mind the end goal to give the best climate to their consumers. Moreover, the enthusiastic music could prompt a more hunger and high turnover rate. In this way, it is indispensable for the restaurants to deal with the sorts of music legitimately to the idea of its restaurant. Academicians know the importance of sensory marketing and service quality but industry needs awareness about importance of customer satisfaction through impact of sensory marketing and service quality. This study will also fill this gap. Incorporating mediating variable and making the sensory marketing-customer loyalty association more complex is likely to strengthen the theory of sensory marketing and provide an opportunity to determine why some restaurants perform better than others.

Literature Review

Sensory Marketing

“Marketing that engages the consumers’ senses and affects their perception, judgment and behavior” (Krishna, 2012). Sensory marketing is considered to be more effective than traditional marketing as customers are exposed to several kinds of advertisements and marketers are using different ways to grasp the attention (Krishna, 2012). Even though customers senses are very essential but marketers neglected their importance for a long span of time but now they are working on them as they are one of the basic reason of consumer behavior (Hulten et al., 2009).

According to Krishna, (2012) sensory marketing can be more useful in triggering the subconscious perceptions of consumers of intangible product idea (that is quality or product complexity) and understanding sensory triggers that implies on the concepts of senses and perception. Sensory marketing use in strategies is limited although a number of studies researched on senses but even then little research has been done in sensory marketing field (Suhonen & Tengvall, 2009).

The concepts and ideas are continuously tested and tried in the marketing field (Hulten, Broweus & Dijk, 2009). This has become the challenge for marketers as they have to understand the changing behaviors of the customers and find new ways to attract them towards the product and grasp their attention (Belch & Belch, 2012). More effective strategy is urgently required to overwhelm customers beyond features and benefits of products/ services. New ways to deal and study are being searched by researchers and scholars. For this reason, marketing scholars give importance to satisfactory experience beyond the functional values being offered by the product or service such as to create emotional and personal attachment with the brand which may create brand equity. This advancement prompts the presentation of the very idea of Sensory Marketing in current marketing literature. In human life five senses play key role. The different brands are increasing products, importance of applying senses of established brand has become more important. Potential and current customers are being attracted on the sensory bases by the brands now days. Sensory marketing depends on the thought that we are destined to shape, hold and return to memory when every one of the five senses is engaged. By going beyond the traditional marketing media of sight and sound, brands can set up a more durable and more enduring emotional association with consumers (Scentair, 2009).

Service Quality

“The subjective comparison that customers make between the quality of the service that they want to receive and what they actually get” (Gefan, 2002). Quality of product and service from 1980s gained its reputation as the basic issue. Various researchers have defined the concept of quality in services and products so it’s clear and well explained, hence many researchers tries to form the link between service and quality as according to them they have strong association (Otto & Ritchie, 1995). To satisfy the needs and wants of the customers essential parameters should be recognized and understood in the general field of marketing to study general marketing (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). Perception of feelings in comparison with the expectations of customers is defined as overall service quality. Thus, service quality not only comprises of performance rather it also contains the service process (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985, 1988). An intensive effort is made to evaluate the customer’s way of perceiving service quality in a variety of settings to make business successful as it is associated to the level of service provided and efforts made to make them satisfied. Service quality defined by Gronroos (1982) as “the outcome of an evaluation process where the consumer compares his expectations with the service he perceived he has received.” Concluding that expected service is compared with perceived service. The result of comparison of what customers have received from a particular service to what they have expected is service quality. From the company’s perspective the concept of service quality defined by Wyckoff (1984) is the level of excellence for fulfilling requirements of customers and controlling variability to achieve that excellence. The association between a particular employee and a customer define service quality in dealing (Sherden, 1988). Even though service quality is achieved by the customer-employee association, management should make sure that customer’s expectation meet in their experience. The characteristics of service quality defined by Lovelock (1991) includes performance is that what is given to customers, production process involve customers, quality check is only monitored during the delivery process, service cannot be checked like material stock, delivery should be in real time and maximum times distribution channels are not present or very few are there to distribute services.

Customer Loyalty

“The relationship a customer maintains with the seller after the first transaction” (Hallowell, 1996). In marketing theory, customer loyalty is considered to be the essential outcome when searching for alternatives (Reichheld & Scheffer, 2000). According to Dalton (2003) people are

honest to those whom they are loyal, to whom they ensure that they will come back and will realize and value their sympathy. Loyalty is derived from customers, if the expectations of customers are met by the service firm. Jones and Farquhar (2003) said that “customer retention takes place when the service organization has the capacity of creating the potential to attract the customer by delivering specific service provided by staff and management”. Retention and loyalty should be increased more efficiently in competitive environment. As per Lam et al. (2004), the key components of loyalty involve supportive actions and recommendations of service.

The importance of quality of service and consumer loyalty has been picked up a significant measure of consideration from both administrators and scholastic specialists inspired by clarifying key factors like informal supports, repurchase goals, mark loyalty, and gainfulness. One of the concentrations of the present review has been connected with client loyalty, which has been gotten consideration from scholastic researchers in the foodservice business. Loyalty has been characterized as a profoundly held duty to rebuy or re-patronize a favored item or administration reliably later on, in this manner bringing on redundant same-mark set buying, in spite of situational impact's and promoting endeavor's having the capacity to bring about exchanging conduct (Skogland&Siguaw, 2004). Client loyalty comprises of both an attitudinal responsibility to the relationship, for example, value lack of care, and other, more over loyalty conduct, for example, positive verbal exchange and rehash support (Oliver, 1999). Consumer loyalty is essential for loyalty, however is not adequate condition on which possess to naturally prompt to rehash buys or mark loyalty (Bloemer& Kasper, 1995). Client loyalty has been characterized as the sentiment connection to, or fondness for an organization's kin, items or services (Heskett& Sasser, 1995). These specialists underscored a refinement between totally fulfilled clients and fulfilled clients. The finding showed that completely fulfilled clients were altogether more inclined to repurchase organization's items than basically fulfilled clients.

Sensory Marketing and Customer Loyalty

Intangibility is considered to be the most essential character of service while considering the attributes of services (McDougall & Snetsinger, 1990). Because of the reason that a service cannot be evaluated by the customers before consumption, so customers are inclined to assess the service by looking to its tangible facts. Five senses play an essential part in tangibilisation of service (Goldkuhl & Styven, 2007).

Environments can be affected by the sensory stimuli, so enhance the shopper involvement and alter the buying behavior in ways beyond perception. To make customers loyal is the major problem due to increase in competition. Customers are interchanging brands because of numerous choices and becoming butterfly customers. Sensory marketing offer customers live experiences and discern new ambiances at the point of purchase thus helping to increase customer loyalty. There are more chances of customers to revisit the store if they like the atmosphere and feel good about it (Soars, 2009). According to Elder & Krishna (2010) emotions create a link with the customers. It is basically what they feel or think while seeing or hearing a brand name (Hawkins, Coney & Best, 2003). The company's image is fortified in the minds of the customers when they play with the sense of customers and enhances their recall power. Certainly, a pleasant store gives a good purchasing experience. H₁: There is positive relationship between sensory marketing and customer loyalty.

Mediating Role of Service Quality

Customer's perception of restaurant navy sway their grasp firmness for example they are additional attracted towards the lofty feature tune donor (Namkung & Jang, 2007). According on the way to Sulek with Hensley (2004) service, mood as well as value of a restaurant are the mainly basic workings heartwarming loyalty of customers. Characteristic of examination be able to weight eminence of restaurants (Johns & Pine, 2002) in addition to its ambiance comprising of interior design, sitting room arrangement, song afterward additional sensory skin tone (Ryu & Han, 2011).

According toward Ha and Jang (2010) food quality as well as service quality has diverse impacts arranged client satisfaction with restaurant's atmosphere. The firm creates the value even then it is expected that satisfaction do not have direct association with the loyalty rather scheming factor that results in retention of customers that in turn leads to loyalty. Firm's profits are more affected by the loss of customers than other factors. In marketing theory it is believed that customer is the boss so firm's need to attract the customers to gain competitive advantage (Berndt & Brink, 2004). Stages are identified by Dalton (2003) that are effective for loyalty in service organization. According to the author the first step is brand identification which impacts information of customers about brand, second step involves effective loyal customers that is having positive image of the brand by the loyal customers, the third and the last step involves the transformation of intentions to actions that is the actual purchase of the service.

H₂: Service Quality partially mediates the positive relationship between sensory marketing and customer satisfaction.

Theoretical Model

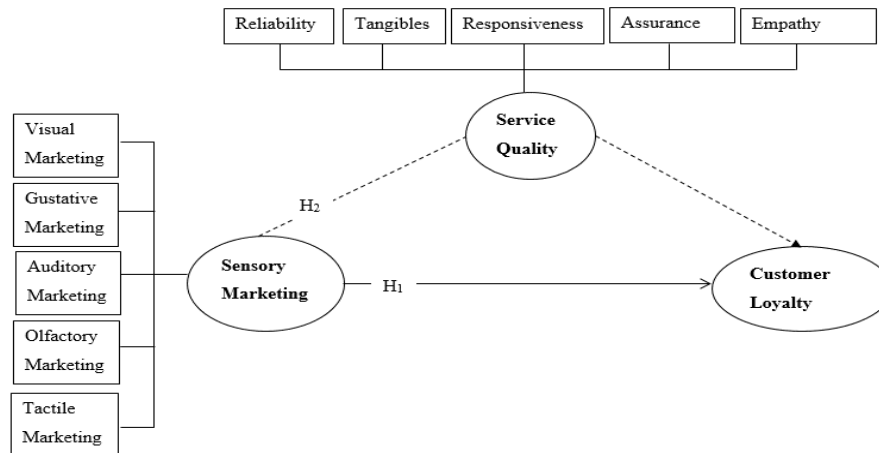


Figure 1: Service Quality as mediator between Sensory Marketing and customer loyalty

Methodology

To find out the role of mediation among sensory marketing and customer loyalty, a modified questionnaire was used to collect the data from these customers. These questionnaires were sent to them through emails and by post. The purpose of this study was communicated to them before getting their consent for filling these questionnaires. Consent of customers was taken after it and questionnaires were posted to them on their respective addresses. The data is collected directly from the customers and analyzed in accordance with their perspective.

The restaurants of major cities (Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi) were taken as population for the study. Fast food chains, hotels and roadside food stalls are excluded from this study. Total numbers of questionnaires were 450 and were equally divided among all major cities i.e. 75 questionnaires each. The target population for this study was customers earning Rs. 25,000 and above per month. The minimum age of the customer was 25 years and above. Customers were asked about their visits per month i.e. from once a month to above four times in a month. The sample is divided on the basis of income of customers. SmartPls 3.0 was used to analyze the data and mediation role of customer satisfaction.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Data analysis was performed in two steps by using partial least square method: measurement model was calculated to check the reliability and validity of the constructs and their dimensions; secondly structural model was tested to find out about the hypotheses stated. Significance of hypotheses was tested by using bootstrapping method. Descriptive statistics were calculated by using SPSS 21.

Demographics

The initial section of this study is based on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The respondents were requested to give the answers about their gender, age, education, monthly income, number of visits and marital status. The characteristic of the demographics are discussed to get a broader picture about the characteristics of respondents for this study. The table shows there were 201 male respondents and 161 female respondents which make 55.5% males and 44.5 % of females participants in the study. Thus the sample of the study is slightly biased towards the male respondents. The characteristic of the demographics are discussed to get a broader picture about the characteristics of respondents for this study. It also helps us to see details of each individual demographic and its frequency out of 100%. We can easily interpret the numbers and relate it with our hypotheses to find out the final outcome. A detail summary of all the demographics is combined in the table below:

Table 1: Respondents Demographics

Demographics	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	201	55.5
	Female	161	44.5
Age	25 years	30	16.3
	26-30 years	65	18
	31-35 years	54	14.9
	36-40 years	67	18.5
	41-50 years	56	15.5
	More than 50 years	61	16.9
Level of Education	High School	45	12.4
	Graduate	127	35.1
	Post Graduate	117	32.3
	Higher	73	20.2
Marital Status	Married	154	42.5
	Single	208	57.5
Income	25000	25	6.9

	26000-35000	75	20.7
	36000-45000	55	15.2
	46000-55000	61	16.9
	56000-65000	69	19.1
	Above 65000	77	21.3
Number of visits	Once in a month	85	23.5
	Twice a month	92	25.4
	Thrice a month	93	25.7
	Above four times	92	25.4

Measurement Model

Validity and reliability is important to calculate if we want to know the worth and implication of data collected from respondents. Convergent and discriminant validity are used to establish validity of the data. For the calculation of construct reliability, value of Cronbach alpha and composite reliability is used.

Composite reliability column is also important to consider because it is used to check the internal consistency of the instrument used. Its value should be greater than 0.7 to establish the reliability and internal consistency of a scale (Fornell & Larcker 1981). In our case composite reliability is also established as all values of all items of instruments are greater than 0.7. To establish *convergent validity* we use AVE or cross loadings. Convergent validity is established if the values of AVE are above 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). From this table we can clearly see that the values of AVE for all items are 0.5 or greater than 0.5. So for our instrument convergent validity is established. Researchers can use it with confidence and can rely on its responses and results.

Construct Reliability and Validity

Table 2: Construct reliability and validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	(AVE)
Assurance	0.940	0.952	0.769
Auditory Marketing	0.935	0.958	0.884
Customer Loyalty	0.836	0.901	0.752
Empathy	0.954	0.965	0.846
Gustative Marketing	0.869	0.920	0.793
Olfactory Marketing	0.950	0.964	0.870
Reliability	0.949	0.961	0.830
Responsiveness	0.882	0.927	0.809
Tactile Marketing	0.933	0.957	0.882
Tangibility	0.904	0.920	0.536
Visual Marketing	0.895	0.927	0.760

Discriminant validity shows that one construct differs from the other construct. There are two approaches to find out the discriminant validity. One is Fornell and Larcker (1981) that says that AVE should be greater than the variance between the construct and other constructs. We have performed this analysis in table 3.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity

	Assur	AM	CL	EMP	Gus_Mkt	Olf_Mkt	Reli	Resp	Tac_Mkt	Tang	Vis_Mkt
Assur	0.877										
AM	0.266	0.940									
CL	0.320	0.160	0.867								
EMP	0.361	0.207	0.262	0.920							
Gus_Mkt	0.432	0.461	0.266	0.354	0.891						
Olf_Mkt	0.279	0.335	0.108	0.271	0.491	0.933					
Reli	0.552	0.221	0.249	0.295	0.393	0.207	0.911				
Resp	0.575	0.222	0.298	0.347	0.404	0.250	0.524	0.899			
Tac_Mkt	0.290	0.277	0.195	0.199	0.488	0.275	0.288	0.299	0.939		
Tang	0.203	0.122	0.142	0.148	0.132	0.136	0.235	0.202	0.106	0.732	
Vis_Mkt	0.454	0.491	0.251	0.394	0.719	0.536	0.393	0.373	0.468	0.111	0.872

Structural Model Assessment

This model helps to find out the relationship between latent and observed variables and their constructs. It also helps to give the contribution of each dimension to the unobserved variable. It is used to find out the direct and indirect effect of variables on each other. We have calculated the R square, total effect, indirect effect and their significance by using path coefficients. R square for all the variables is given and we can see that all variables are contributing significantly towards customers' loyalty.

Table 4: Impact of dependent variables on dependent variable

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Assurance	0.691	0.690
Auditory Marketing	0.428	0.426
Empathy	0.373	0.372
Gustative Marketing	0.710	0.709
Olfactory Marketing	0.535	0.533
Reliability	0.614	0.613
Responsiveness	0.540	0.538
Tactile Marketing	0.401	0.399
Tangibility	0.216	0.214
Visual Marketing	0.775	0.774

Sensory Marketing and Customer Loyalty

The table below shows the significant t-value (>1.96) at $p \leq 0.05$. It means if researcher only study the impact of sensory marketing on customer loyalty, it is statistically significant and positive. The value of R-square is small that is 27.7% but still it is impacting customer loyalty. So

organizations have to consider sensory marketing to boost the customer loyalty.

Table 5: Direct relationship between sensory marketing and customer satisfaction

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Sensory Marketing -> Customer Loyalty	0.277	0.290	0.041	6.683	0.000

Mediation Analysis

From table 7, we can see that mediating effect is significant between sensory marketing and customer loyalty through service quality. It means sensory marketing effect service quality and service quality in turns effect customer loyalty. We can also see the impact through indirect effect which is also showing significant influence at p value 5%. T value is also higher than 1.96 which also shows that this mediation effect of service quality between sensory marketing and customer loyalty is significant.

Table 6: Total Effect

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Sensory Marketing -> Customer Loyalty	0.086	0.083	0.058	1.497	0.135
Sensory Marketing -> Service Quality	0.537	0.534	0.095	5.640	0.000
Service Quality -> Customer Loyalty	0.323	0.326	0.058	5.532	0.000

Table 7: Indirect Effect

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Sensory Marketing -> Customer Loyalty	0.173	0.176	0.050	3.483	0.001

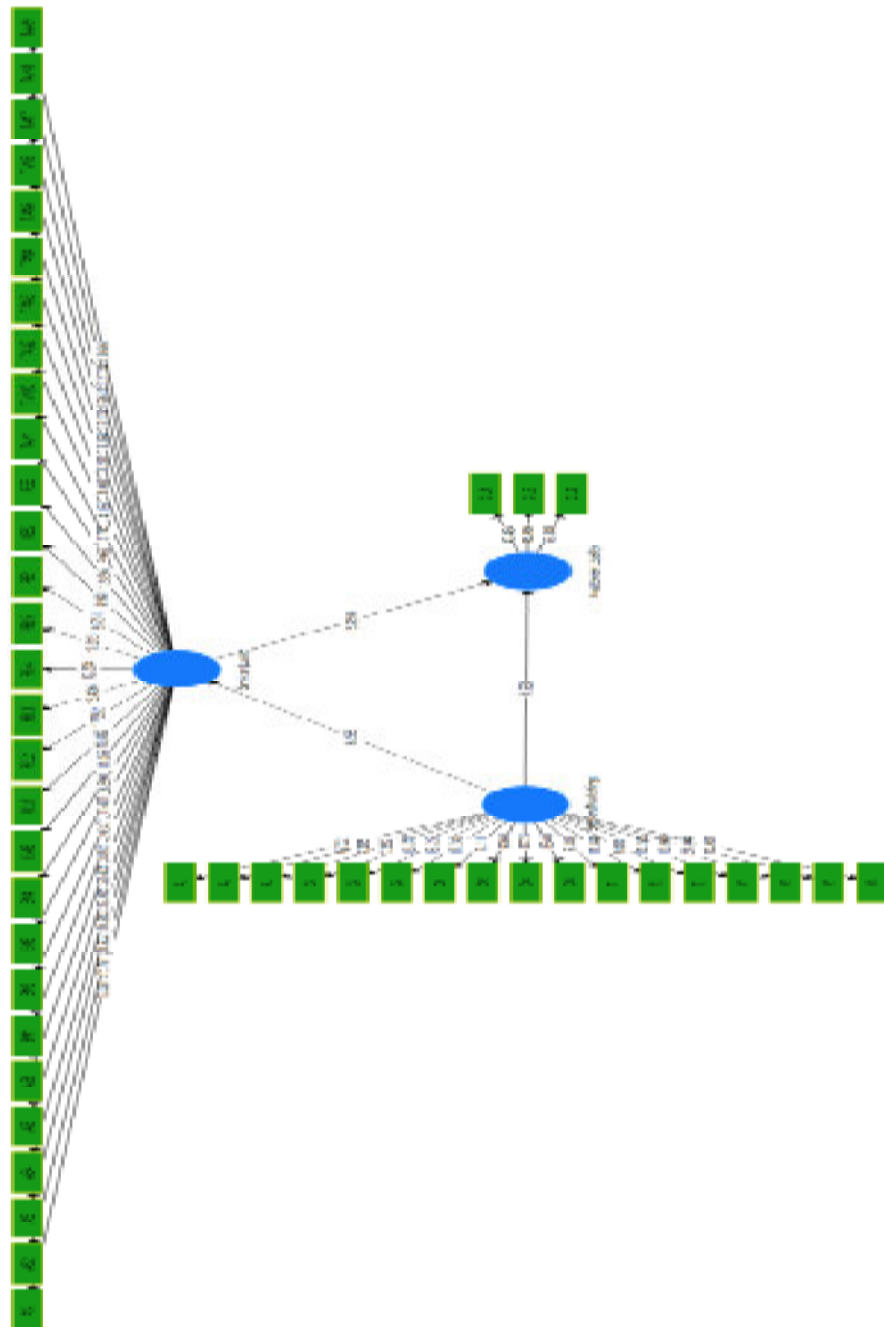


Figure 2: Service Quality mediates between Sensory Marketing and Customer loyalty

Summary of Hypotheses

No	Hypothesis	Result
1	There is positive relationship between Sensory marketing and customer loyalty.	Significant
2	Service quality partially mediates the positive relationship between sensory marketing and customer loyalty.	Significant

Conclusions

Customers are important stakeholders of the organization. It is duty of the business to fulfil their need in best possible way if they want to remain in limelight. Competitive marketplace demands that customers should be retained for longer run. For this customers should be satisfied with product and services provided by the organization. Different marketing strategies should be used side by side to get desired results in form of retaining customers for long run and profitability. These strategies are sensory marketing and service quality. Both should be considered to get customers' loyalty. Customer loyalty can be achieved by enhancing customer satisfaction. Service quality can play an important role in this regard. Service quality has positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction which leads to customer loyalty (Hafeez & Muhammad, 2012). Different marketing programs can be used to enhance the customer loyalty and to satisfy them by providing them quality and low cost products (Saeed et al., 2014). Restaurants environment is captivating and they leave better picture on the shoppers. It is important for you as a company to become renowned for customers. It can only be possible if your current customers are satisfied and they can turn into loyal customers. They will also spread positive word of mouth and this will generate future customers for you too.

Limitations and Future Research

Resources in form of time and data availability were limitations of this study. We could have get more accurate result if more data was gathered. This study can be extended to more cities and hotels for getting more responses for customer. This study can be prolonged to make city wise comparison in the future. More service industries can be targeted in future to see the relationship of these three variables.

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