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THE ANTECEDENTS OF COGNITIVE–AFFECTIVE–CONATIVE MODEL OF RESTAURANT IMAGE**YU-LING SU****LECTURER, DEPARTMENT OF FOOD & BEVERAGE MANAGEMENT****TAIWAN HOSPITALITY & TOURISM COLLEGE; &****DOCTORAL STUDENT, DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION****NATIONAL DONG HWA UNIVERSITY****TAIWAN****ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to develop a conceptual framework which explores the relationship between the antecedents and the formation of restaurant image. Based on a literature review, the factors influence the formation of restaurant image include restaurant controllable service marketing mix factors, uncontrollable word of mouth and publicity, and customer's personal experience. To clarify the formation of restaurant image, this study attempts to incorporate the "image formation process" proposed by Gartner (1993) into the framework of restaurant image. Restaurant image is formed by cognitive, affective, and conative elements which are three separate hierarchical variables. The proposed framework provides a conceptual model to understand how restaurant image can be created and managed.

KEYWORDS

Restaurant Image, Service Marketing Mix, Cognitive–Affective–Conative Model.

1. INTRODUCTION

Restaurant image is the sum of emotional perceptions, ideas, or symbolic attitudes when customers associate to a restaurant (Ryu et al., 2012), and therefore restaurant image is an important factor that influences customer attitude, restaurant and product quality inferences, and customer intentions on a restaurant (Ryu et al., 2008; Chen & Tsai, 2007). A restaurant manager explores and creates a unique restaurant image that can help communicate the major advantages of the restaurant and position it in the target market. In this regard, restaurant image building is worth investigating for academics and practitioners.

Studies on restaurant image are few, and researchers apply the customer's perceptions of a store's image to evaluate restaurant image (Prendergast & Man, 2002; Ryu et al., 2008). Store image is "the way in which the store is defined in the shopper's mind, partly by its functional qualities and partly by an aura of psychological attributes" (Martineau, 1958:47). Therefore, store image comprises functional and psychological attributes (Martineau, 1958; Lindquist, 1974; Berman & Evans, 1995; Prendergast & Man, 2002; Ting & Chen, 2002), the customers use and organize these two attributes to form the store image; most studies evaluate store image either through the combination of these two attributes (Prendergast & Man, 2002; Ryu et al., 2012) or through functional attributes alone (Ryu et al., 2008; Theodoridis & Chatzipanagiotou, 2009). The functional attributes refer to the tangible features that can be assessed by the customers, such as physical environment and product of the store; the psychological attributes are related to the intangible and emotional dimensions that are revealed by feelings and attitudes towards the store (Zhang & Mao, 2012). Some authors consider factors such as product quality, store environment, and employee service and other factors as the components of store image functional attributes (Martineau, 1958; Lindquist, 1974; Berman & Evans, 1995; Prendergast & Man, 2002; Ting & Chen, 2002; Theodoridis & Chatzipanagiotou, 2009), but Baker et al. (1994) and Ryu et al. (2012) propose that these components are the antecedents of store/restaurant image. Because of the complex nature of the image, we find that there are different ways of exploring the antecedents and essence of store image. Despite store image is important for a restaurant, there has been little research focusing on the antecedents and essence of restaurant image. We therefore seek to fill this gap in this study. We extend and introduce the concept of brand image into the image drivers of a restaurant, because studies related to the antecedents and consequences of store or restaurant image are few (Ryu et al., 2012). Besides, we explore the essence or formation of restaurant image according to the concept of image formation proposed by Gartner (1993), cognitive, affective, and conative elements are the three separate hierarchical factors that form an image. Finally, we develop a conceptual framework to help manager understand how restaurant image can be created and managed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW**2.1 FROM THE IMAGE CONCEPT TO THE RESTAURANT IMAGE**

Image is customer's thoughts, feelings and past experiences with a service organization stored in customer's memory. The concept of image has been used in studies focusing on diverse service situations, such as retailing store (Thang & Tan, 2003), tourism destination (Agapito et al., 2013; Martin & Bosque, 2008), and restaurant (Prendergast & Man, 2002; Ryu et al., 2008).

In store image studies, Martineau (1958) firstly applies the image concept to research on store image and then defines store image as customers' evaluation of the integrative efforts of a retailer in terms of the retailer's integrated attributes, such as the physical environment of the store, the various processes that customers need to follow (waiting, paying, or carting), contact with employees, core efforts of the retailer (variety and quality of products), and pricing policy to determine customers' satisfaction with the store. Moreover, the following researchers claim that a customer-perceived store image should include both functional and psychological attributes (Martineau, 1958; Lindquist, 1974; Berman & Evans, 1995; Prendergast & Man, 2002; Ting & Chen, 2002). Functional attributes pertain to the product assortment, product quality of a store, the waiting time of customers to complete a purchase, store location, price, general service, and the services that employees offer. Psychological attributes encompass the feelings of warmth, friendliness, excitement, or interest created by a store (Prendergast & Man, 2002).

Related studies show that customers' perceptions of the functional attributes of store image are related to marketing mix or activities. For example, Beristain and Zorrilla (2011) view customers' evaluation of store attributes as the store image, and they consider store attributes to include intangible services and tangible dimensions, such as product quality and variety, price, and the physical facilities of the store. Jinfeng and Zhilong (2009) convince that store image is customers' perceived amalgam of different store attributes and that customers have different images for every retail store they encounter. Therefore, the dimensions of store image pertain to different store attributes, and store image is customers' perceptions of the major marketing mix or activities of the store such as perceived price, convenience, institutional factors, physical facilities, and employee services as the individual dimensions of store image. Although evaluating store image should include functional and psychological attributes, most researchers only use customer evaluation or perceptions of functional attributes as the store image dimensions, and customers' perceptions of the functional attributes of a store are associated with the perceptions of store marketing mix or activities.

To further research restaurant image, Prendergast and Man (2002) present 11 functional attributes in the fast food industry: food assortment, food taste, food price, store location, advertisements and sales promotions, employee service, store environment, waiting time to be seated, waiting time for food to be served, friends' recommendations, and store reputation. The authors also present eight psychological attributes of fast food restaurant image: happy, satisfied, pleased, hopeful, free, excited, rare, and un-crowded. However, researchers usually focus more on the functional attributes of restaurant image, such as Ryu et al. (2008) who have evaluated quick-casual restaurant image only according to customers' perceptions of the functional attributes of the restaurant, which are the

restaurant location, waiting time for food to be served, decoration and interior design, food quality, menu variety, and restaurant cleanliness. In conclusion, restaurant image includes both functional and psychological attributes, and perceptions of functional attributes are related to customers' evaluation of the marketing mix or activities in the restaurant service industry.

Image concept is also applied in studies on tourism destination; destination image is the sum of people's beliefs, ideas, and impressions about a place or tourism destination (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997). Gartner (1993) proposes the concept of image formation in his study, where he argues that tourism destination image is formed by cognitive, affective, and conative elements, which are separate hierarchical variables. Cognitive evaluation pertains to an individual's knowledge and beliefs toward the features of an object, affective appraisals refer to an individual's feelings about an object, and cognitive image is the antecedent of affective image (Beerli & Martin, 2004a, 2004b; Martin & Bosque, 2008). As the outcome variable of image, the conative element represents the actions and behavior (e.g., loyalty) of an individual with the use of information from the cognitive and affective evaluation stages (Gartner, 1993). An object could be a tourism destination, a product, a brand, or a store/restaurant. Comparing the functional attributes of store image with cognitive image and psychological attributes of store image with affective image, because functional attributes pertain to the tangible features of the store that can be evaluated by the customers; the psychological attributes refer to the intangible and emotional dimensions that are revealed by feelings and attitudes towards the store (Zhang & Mao, 2012). Therefore, this study concludes that the perceptions of the functional attributes of store/restaurant image are equal to the cognitive image in Gartner's image formation process, whereas the perceptions of psychological attributes refer to the affective image. Finally, conative variables, such as loyalty, result from the image formation process.

To clarify the complexity of image, researchers claim that image dimensions can be studied separately (Kim & Yoon, 2003; Agapito et al., 2013). Scholars claim that three dimensions help form an integrative image that is viewed to be superior to the sum of the parts of an image and that customers employ a three dimensional image to simplify decision making (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004a, 2004b; Agapito et al., 2013). Therefore, this study proposes the restaurant image model formed by three distinct and hierarchically interrelated dimensions. For cognitive image, we find in previous studies on store or restaurant image that customers consider the functional attributes or features of a store or a restaurant as their perceptions of the marketing mix or activities of the store or restaurant. Jinfeng and Zhilong (2009) also regard that the store image dimensions of different store attributes or characteristics are customers' perceptions of the marketing activities of the store. Basing on the aforementioned discussion, we propose that the cognitive image of a restaurant is an individual's beliefs and knowledge of restaurant attributes as customers' perceptions of the marketing mix of the restaurant. Furthermore, we propose that affective image is an individual's feelings about a restaurant and that the conative dimension is an individual's actual actions or intentions to patronize and recommend a restaurant or communicate a positive WOM about the restaurant to others.

2.2 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE FORMATION OF RESTAURANT IMAGE

What are the influential factors of restaurant image? Because few studies are relevant to the antecedents and consequences of store or restaurant image (Ryu et al., 2012), this study extends and introduces the concept of brand image into restaurant image to determine the factors that drive restaurant image formation. Brand image is "a set of brand association that are anything linked in memory to a brand, usually in some meaningful way" (Aaker, 1991:109) and can be defined as a set of beliefs held related to a particular brand (Kotler & Armstrong, 1996). In the service context, the company name is considered the brand name (Berry, 2000), such as Hilton and TGI Friday's; therefore, the restaurant image is the restaurant brand image. Some previous studies explored the factors that influence brand image. Keller (1993) has proposed that the marketing activities of a company can influence brand image. Al-Dmour et al. (2013) have explored the relationship of service marketing mix elements and customer-based brand equity, and they examined how the service marketing mix can influence brand image. Berry (2000) addresses a service-branding model in which the controllable and uncontrollable communication factors of a company, along with customer experience, can affect customers' service brand awareness and brand meaning (i.e., brand image). Among the three antecedents of brand awareness and brand image, experience with the service provider is the primary influential factor for customers. Controllable communication factors include advertising, service facilities, and appearance of service providers which refer to service marketing mix, whereas uncontrollable communication factors include WOM and publicity (Berry, 2000). In the framework of spectator-based brand equity proposed by Ross (2006), the author uses Berry's (2000) service-branding model and goes one step further to present the controllable communication factors directly managed by an organization. These controlled variables are the service marketing mix (7Ps), which contributes to customer brand association (i.e., brand image). The uncontrollable factors that are not offered by an organization itself include customers' WOM and media publicity, which could develop brand image; customer experience can influence the brand image held by customers (Ross, 2006). However, customers who have experiences in a store or restaurant may form perceptions about it that may differ from the perceptions of customers who are exposed to store information through friends and relatives or to the promotional activities of the store, such as advertisements, publicity, and TV programs. Berry (2000) and Beerli and Martin (2004b) state that image formation becomes more realistic, complex, and different after individuals actually visit the place than if the image is formed through other people or a place promotion mix which serve as informational sources.

Basing on these previous studies, we conclude that service marketing mix, WOM and publicity, and actual customer experience are the influential factors of brand image. Therefore, this study proposes that the controllable factors (service marketing mix), uncontrollable factors (WOM and publicity), and personal factors (actual customer experience) of a restaurant are all essential in forming a restaurant image.

3. PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 shows the proposed conceptual framework for restaurant image in this study. This framework presents the controllable service marketing mix of a restaurant, uncontrollable WOM and publicity, and personal experience as the factors that contribute to the creation of a restaurant image. The restaurant image here comprises the hierarchical cognitive-affective-conative model.

3.1 ANTECEDENTS OF RESTAURANT IMAGE

Store image refers to customers evaluate the offer of a retailer in their minds (Martineau, 1958; Theodoridis & Chatzipanagiotou, 2009). An organization directly offers and produces service marketing mix, so these elements are controllable through the management and can directly influence customers (Ross, 2006). In the service context, marketing mix is defined as "the controllable variables that an organization can coordinate to satisfy its target market" (Bitner, 1990). The service marketing mix differs from the traditional tangible goods marketing mix, which includes the service participants, the physical environment, and the service process in the traditional marketing mix elements of product, price, place and promotion. The marketing activities of a company can influence brand image (Keller, 1993; Berry, 2000; Al-Dmour et al., 2013), and the service provider or the service company is considered the major brand; therefore, the company image is referred to as the brand image of the company. Moreover, according to the perspective involving brand identity and brand image (Qu et al., 2011), the sender (i.e., company marketer) creates brand identity through all the features and activities that distinguish the store from other competitors, whereas the store image is formed and stored in the mind of the receiver (i.e., a customer). Specifically, store image is created in the minds of customers on the basis of the brand identity established by the marketers of the store. Therefore, a restaurant objectively implements service marketing activities to create a brand identity that contributes to the restaurant image evaluated by customers, that is, customers develop images about a restaurant from the service marketing mix offered by the restaurant. More service marketing activities implemented by the restaurant would drive customers to develop stronger restaurant image.

Uncontrollable factor is the source that offers the customers information about a brand or a store, and the factor is not controlled and paid for by the company. Uncontrollable factor is similar to Berry's (2000) external brand communication, which includes WOM communication and publicity (Berry, 2000; Ross, 2006). These two communication tools are related to both positive and negative perceptions and information, so they are a double-edged sword. Favorable and unfavorable WOM and publicity both influence brand evaluation and purchase probability. WOM communication and publicity belong to referral marketing and convey information about a brand or a store. WOM communication and publicity are not perceived as marketing activities of a company, so these two are considered reliable. WOM most often comes from the close relatives or friends of the receivers of information. Publicity is the presentation of a report or article through television programs, magazines, or newspapers, which can persuade the receivers of the information. We believe that WOM communication and publicity influence customers in developing a brand image (Berry, 2000; Ross, 2006; So & King, 2010) or restaurant image, that is, the restaurant with high level of WOM communication and publicity would facilitate customers to evaluate the restaurant image.

Previous experience is “the actual service experience encountered by the customer” (Ross, 2006); customer experience results from customers’ interaction with the product, physical evidence of the retailer’s store, the service provider and so on. In restaurant setting, customers interact with the marketing efforts of a restaurant to form a consumption experience. Balaji (2011) states that “brand image formation is a subjective learning process and is the result of past total experience.” And some authors discuss the relationship between customer experience and image, such as Cobb–Walgren et al. (1995) who suggest that customer perceptions of a brand result from various information sources, including objective and subjective sources. Objective sources include consumer reports, which are a form of publicity, whereas subjective sources are based on advertising or personal experiences. Romaniuk and Sharp (2003) also state that consumer experience is one of the ways through which brand image is produced. However, an image formed through customer experiences may differ from that formed through WOM, publicity, and advertisement because the former forms a primary image, whereas the latter forms a secondary image (Beerli & Martin, 2004b). In the tourism destination context, customer experience is related to the familiarity acquired from the number of visits to a place or the extent of customer contacts with a place. A tourist who is less familiar with a destination perceives images that are associated with attributes, functional, and common features, whereas someone who is much familiar with the destination perceives images that are holistic, psychological, and unique (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Beerli & Martin, 2004b). Therefore, the concept of familiarity can be introduced to store/restaurant image. In this study, customer experience is the degree of familiarity and the number of patronages of a customer or the extent of customer contact with a restaurant during the consumption process. Customers’ cumulative consumption experiences are likely to influence their own perceptions of the restaurant image (Ryu et al., 2012), including cognitive and affective images. Repeated exposure to a restaurant will raise consumption experiences with the restaurant and therefore increase the ability of the customer to develop the cognitive or affective image toward the restaurant.

3.2 THE COGNITIVE–AFFECTIVE–CONATIVE MODEL OF RESTAURANT IMAGE

Customers reasonably and emotionally interpret an object to form a store image; the outcomes are two components, the cognitive image of the functional perception or cognitive evaluation of the object and the affective image of the affective appraisal of the object (Gartner, 1993; Beerli & Martin, 2004a).

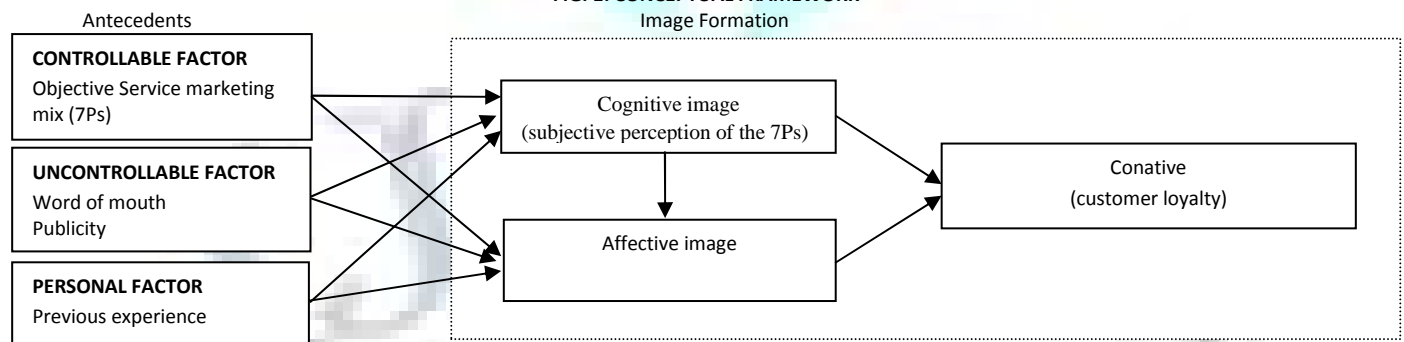
The cognitive image is customers’ personal knowledge and beliefs toward an object (Beerli & Martin, 2004a), which could be a company, brand, or product. Based on the cognitive perspective, the store image is the evaluation of customers of a set of attributes of store resources or attractions. In a restaurant setting, these attractions include the food, the physical environment, the service employees, and the memorable experiences that correspond to the service marketing mix elements. The customer cognitive image thus results from the evaluative response of individuals to the service marketing mix elements of restaurant objective implementation. These attributes or service marketing mix elements are subjectively organized, perceived, and evaluated by customers. Besides, WOM, publicity, and customer experience are the information resources that comprise customers’ subjective knowledge of a restaurant. Controllable marketing mix, uncontrollable WOM and publicity, and personal experience with a restaurant therefore influence customers’ subjective cognitive image. The cognitive image refers to individuals’ beliefs and knowledge about the attributes of a restaurant, and these functional attributes are the 7Ps.

The affective image is customers’ feelings toward an object, these feelings result from their interaction with the business, brand, or product, as well as from their information processing of the attribute indicators of image formation (Zhang & Mao, 2012). The marketing activities of restaurant implementation which customers receive are related to these customers’ contact with the business. Therefore, we consider that the 7Ps influence the affective image. In addition, the customer information processing of the functional indicators of an image influences the feelings of customers toward the company. We propose that the cognitive image influences the affective image because the literatures also present cognitive components as antecedents of affective components (Baloglu, 1999; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004, 2004b; Zhang & Mao, 2012; Agapito et al., 2013), that is, affective evaluation is a function of the cognitive evaluation of objects. Moreover, people’s interpretation of information can generate an emotional situation and not the information itself (Kim & Richardson, 2003). Information sources include the consumption experience, WOM communication as well as publicity. Zhang and Mao (2012) claim that customers’ feelings toward a business result from many experiences. Grace and O’Cass (2004) have also found that consumption experience significantly impacts the aroused feelings. In the study of Chew and Jahari (2014) on destination image, the authors present that previous travel experience, length of stay, and amount of information are the factors that influence both cognitive and affective images. Therefore, we propose that consumption experience, WOM as well as publicity influence the affective image. The affective image is the feelings that individuals associate with the restaurant.

Conative is the last image formation process and it is viewed as loyalty (Cai et al., 2004; Agapito et al., 2013). Because store image influences customers’ store preference and patronage times (Thang & Tan, 2003) and it is related to store loyalty and customers’ patronage behavior (Lessif, 1973; Jinfenf & Zhilong, 2009). Conative is an action stage that pertains to individuals’ practical conduct or intention to re-patronize, as well as their willingness to recommend or spread positive WOM to others about the restaurant. According to the cognitive–affective–conative conceptualization of image formation proposed by Gartner (1993), as well as the effect of cognitive and affective images on the conative construct, as examined by Agapito et al. (2013), we infer that the cognitive and the affective image of restaurant influence the conative construct and conative is customer loyalty.

This study separately investigates the three hierarchical constructs of restaurant image to help academics and practitioners understand well the complicated process of image formation, which is considered more significant than the integration of a part of an image (Agapito et al., 2013). In addition, customers simplify their decision making through these three hierarchical elements (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). The conceptual framework of restaurant image formation is presented in Figure 1:

FIG. 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
Image Formation



4. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study contributes to the future research by linking the three hierarchical models of image formation and the antecedents of image to customers’ decision making. The proposed framework provides a conceptual model to understand how restaurant image can be created and managed. This framework departs from traditional store image conceptualizations and claims that the development process of restaurant image separately includes cognitive and affective images. This process differs from evaluating restaurant image on the basis of cognitive images alone or the combination of both cognitive and affective images. The hierarchical process of image formation is an important and actual experience process for customers who evaluate restaurant image. Moreover, the framework proposes that restaurant controllable marketing mix factors (7Ps), uncontrollable WOM and publicity, and personal experience are the antecedents of restaurant image. These influential factors, cognitive and affective images all are vital in the formation of restaurant image and customer loyalty. The framework helps in understanding how managers can best manipulate marketing mix elements to create a restaurant image and influence customer loyalty. Although restaurants cannot absolutely manipulate WOM and publicity, as well as the extent of customer experience when customers visit a restaurant, these factors that influence restaurant image cannot be disregarded by managers.

The proposed restaurant image model can be used as a framework for structural models in examining the causal relationships among the constructs. By examining the relationships through structural models, restaurant managers can understand the direct and indirect effects of the service marketing mix, WOM and publicity, and personal experience on restaurant image. In addition, future research can explore restaurant cognitive or affective images in terms of which influence restaurant image formation and customer loyalty more.

Future research can also identify various levels of importance among service marketing mix elements, WOM and publicity, and personal experience that influence the development of restaurant image. This information can serve as a powerful decision-making tool for restaurant managers. For example, if a restaurant identifies the service marketing mix as the key factor that influence restaurant image, then restaurant resources can be focused on improving the service marketing mix. Similarly, if WOM and publicity are found to influence restaurant image considerably, then restaurants can cultivate loyal customers to deliver positive, relevant messages about the company. Restaurants can also provide electronic platforms (virtual communities or chat rooms) for customers to exchange experiences and restaurant perceptions, as well as maintain positive relationships with the media (TV shows, newspapers, or magazines) to communicate favorable comments. Examining the extent to which the proposed antecedents influence restaurant image can help managers effectively allocate company resources to these antecedents.

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