



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT AND MANAGEMENT

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AN INVESTIGATION ON HIGHER LEARNING STUDENTS SATISFACTION ON FOOD SERVICES AT UNIVERSITY CAFETERIA

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ABSTRACT

Food service becomes one of the service that need to be considered in order to satisfy students. The primary purpose of this paper is to investigate University student satisfaction with the universities' food service in which they study and to establish the benefits of that satisfaction to the institution especially the willingness and likelihood of recommending the institution to prospective students.. 200 questionnaires were distributed and only 83 students returned the questionnaires to the researcher. All proposed independent variables are significant and positively correlated to dependent variable. The significant factor that has the highest impact on a students' satisfaction on cafeteria service is food quality. Student's genders do not significantly differently on their satisfaction. However, there are significant different for hosteller and non hosteller students on ambiance of the cafeteria when determining their satisfaction on cafeteria service. The result of this study could help university cafeteria to improve their services.

KEYWORDS

Customer satisfaction, customer service, food services, quality and university cafeteria.

INTRODUCTION

Satisfaction means the wilful accomplishment which results in one's contentment, Rad & Yarmohammadian (2006). According to Zeithaml (1988) satisfaction mean the resultant outcome of an institution's administrative as well as educational system's coherent performance. The competitive in the higher education sector is increasing; the university student satisfaction is an important component in attracting and retaining high achievers who in turn increase the reputation and standing of the university, Wikiversity. According to Elliott & Shin (2002) "focusing on student satisfaction not only enables universities to re-engineer their organizations to adapt to student needs, but also allows them to develop a system for continuous monitoring of how effectively they meet or exceed student needs". They also argue that satisfaction is a worthy outcome variable to study because it has a number of student and course related benefits including increases in motivation, lower attrition rates and a greater number of referrals. There are many factor will affect the student satisfaction, according to Mai (2005), studied on the student satisfaction in higher education and its influential factors and it's was found that the overall impression of the school, overall impression of the quality of the education, teachers expertise and their interest in their subject, the quality and accessibility of IT facilities and the prospects of the degree furthering students careers were the most influential predictors of the students satisfaction. Another research which used a satisfaction model and Herzberg's two factor theory to examine the determinants of student satisfaction with education, it's found that faculty performance and classes were the key factors which determined the quality of college experience of students which in turn led to satisfaction [Deshields et al. (2005)].

Palacio et al (2002) conducted a study on Spanish university students; the results revealed that university image influenced the student satisfaction with the university. According to Aldemir & Gulcan (2004), some Turkish university students, the quality of instructors, education, textbooks and being female and informed before attending university considered to important factors of satisfaction. According to Navarro et al (2005) key elements to achieving Spanish student satisfaction and their subsequent loyalty are the teaching staff, teaching methods and course administration. Besides that, cafeteria also one of the factors will affect students' satisfaction. Satisfaction of school meals varies depending on the quality of meals, diversity of food, food hygiene and environment (Kim et al., 2003). According to Lee (2005), even if there is a cafeteria in a school, the space is small; waiting time for meals is prolonged making students unsatisfied. As a conclusion, the student satisfaction is important in the high competitive environment. According to Helgesen & Nettet (2007) student satisfaction has been related to recruitment and retention and academic success, which make university administrators pay high attention to the factors and help the university to attract more students effectively.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

In the higher education milieu, foodservice became an essential component affecting the quality of campus life and providing strategic and competitive advantages (Gramling et al., 2005; Horwitz, 2005; June, 2006). Captive environment, repetitive consumption of limited and monotonous menu items, mediocre execution of food and service, and facility in general (Gramling et al., 2005; Klassen et al., 2005), distinguish campus foodservice from other commercial restaurants.

Customers in college foodservice operations want maximum choice with wide variety, flexibility and customization, and fresh-prepared food (Buzalka, 2003; Law, 2004). The food serve by the cafeteria must be fulfilling the students' demand just able to increase their satisfaction level. According to McDougall & Levesque, 2000, satisfaction is the customer's overall judgment of the service provider. They prefer more tasty and trendy food, so they eat a lot of fast food and instant snacks, which is affected by food commercials and convenience (The Food and Drug Association, 2007).

In University, the students are divided into two major groups which are hosteller and non hosteller. Hosteller will spend more time in cafeteria if compare to the non hosteller this is because they are staying in the hostels. All the hostellers are providing three meals daily at the cafeteria of University. In year 2011, there is 1701 students stay in the hostel. Among 1701 students, 1136 students are female student and 565 male students. There is more than 3500 students study in AIMST University but just about 50% of them stay in hostel, this amount can show that most of the students not prefer stay in the hostel. One of the reasons

that make students do not want to stay in hostel is because of the cafeteria. So in order to increase the amount of hosteller, cafeteria should play an important role they should provide healthy and nutrient meal, reasonable price, and also should improve their service quality.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

According to Ashok Malhotra (2006), university's cafeteria designed for use by staff, students and visitors is generally the most visited component of a university. It is also a place where students and faculty can take their visitors for a brief coffee break or a lunch hour visit. A study from Kathryn K in 2010 found that students spend approximately 5 hours a week in university's cafeteria. Apparently, most of the students whether they are seniors or juniors are not are not fully satisfied with the existing cafeteria setup. It is important to analyze the impact of university's cafeteria features to ensure that students receive the greatest benefits from the cafeteria as part they spending on learning environments. Hence, it is important to analyze students are the main customers for universities as major players in the education industry. Students' satisfaction becomes the priority for universities in which the cafeteria provided for the students.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to investigate the students satisfaction on university cafeteria services overall. The objective of this study is to evaluate the followings;

- To examine the relationship between Food Quality, Food Variety, Ambiance, Cafeteria Staff, Price Fairness and Customer Satisfaction
- To investigate the differences in satisfaction levels with gender on University cafeteria food service.
- To investigate the differences in satisfaction levels between hosteller and non hosteller

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The study of student's satisfaction in university's cafeteria it can be a guideline for the university and to improve their quality. Cafeteria is a very important place for students, it can be one of the factor to consider when they choose their prefer university. This study designed is to help higher educational institution to understand the student's satisfaction in university's cafeteria and improve the quality of cafeteria, such as food price, food quality, staff, food variety and ambience in cafeteria. Besides that, in this study will test which is the most important factor to influence student's satisfaction in university cafeteria. The output of this study will be helpful for higher educational institution. It also can fulfill what students needs and wants, and to provide the best quality and services to the students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

STUDENTS' SATISFACTION ON UNIVERSITY'S CAFETERIA

The university cafeteria was scrutinized specifically for its impact on student retention and success. These include food service usage, relationships to other university services, and a review of pertinent studies for the impact of the cafeteria on retention. (Dr. Kevin Trutna, 2010)

Cafeterias and food service programs are noted in several academic studies as one of the strongest retention strategies for students at community universities. A college cafeteria is one important criterion that is identified and studied in student satisfaction and retention strategies. (Noel-Levitz, 2010)

The cafeteria and food services play a vital role in determining students' satisfaction and retention of students. It does not exist solely to feed employees or students; rather it is an integral part of a retention strategy for community university students. (Jerry Pattengale, 2009)

Variety, diversity and "comfort" in cafeteria food options at an university give students a sense of "home" while on campus and is important in determine students' satisfaction toward university's cafeteria. (Cohen, 2009)

CAFETERIA

A well-designed Central cafeteria, housed perhaps in the student center adds to functional efficiency of the university. For here, the lunch hour can be combined with a visit to the bank, post office and the book store along with a friendly exchange of words with colleagues, fellow students, visitors, staff and faculty who may be visiting the same building at the same time. Universities where such centers are not common would do well to plan for it on their campuses. (Keith Curry Lance, 2001)

The university cafeteria needs to be spacious not just because of the large number of its visitors but also because spacing between tables should ideally be much more than the spacing between tables in an ordinary restaurant. Students often use these tables to read or complete an assignment along with a snack, lunch or dinner. Music may never be permitted inside a university cafeteria for the same reason. Other sound proof sections of the student center can be designed to permit music. (Fe Angela Verzosa, 2008)

QUALITY OF FOOD

Food choices have grown so important to today's college student that some surveys are showing it among the top factors, not far behind academic programs and location, influencing where students decide to enroll (Lum 2005). According to Analdaleeb and Caskey (2007) while administrators realize that offering quality education is the paramount purpose of colleges, more administrators are beginning to recognize that students are seeking a total 'college experience' in which food service can play a vital role. Colleges have been seeking the opinions of their students regarding food services and whether such services meet students' needs.

College students live unique lifestyles. According to Andaleeb and Caskey (2007) one study indicates that college students typically eat their evening meals between 8 p.m. and 2 a.m. Another study indicates that many students, given their lifestyles, are on the lookout for dependable on-the-go food that offers value and satisfaction, such as for branded food services (Andaleeb and Caskey 2007). This study suggests that students are looking for speed, convenience, and a variety of food choices. Therefore where, what, and when they eat drives the satisfaction of college students and food administrators should pay close attention to these areas. The different lifestyles, needs, and cultures of college students in America indicate that the food service provided should reflect their needs.

Many other university food services are also trying to renovate or upgrade their dining facilities by following the students' expectations and demands. Because college students are part of the trend among many American adults to "dine out," George Mason turned to a brand-name, full-service restaurant to keep the dining dollars on campus rather than in the surrounding restaurants. Similarly, Notre Dame prefers to provide their own traditional food service and catering service for the most on-campus functions with a high quality of food and different menu options (Buzalka 2002). Purdue has a strategic plan to spend eighteen million dollars on a new dining court (Lee 2005). According to Johnson (2003) they are "stepping up to meet the students' demands." Johnson (2003) also stated that students want a less cafeteria-like atmosphere and desire a chef exhibition-style in front of the customers/students.

Satisfaction of school meals varies depending on the quality of meals, diversity of food, food hygiene and environment (Kim et al., 2003), but the eating place of school meals is different from cafeterias to classrooms and gender of meal eater is different. Service is the most important factor to improve the satisfaction on school meals. We need to examine the satisfaction on school meals by eating place and gender to improve the satisfaction of school meal. However, there was little research done on the comparison of satisfaction between eating places (cafeterias and classrooms) and gender (boy and girl) in school meals. We surveyed the satisfaction on school meals among middle school students in different eating places and gender; therefore, this study can provide basic data to improve the quality of school food service.

STAFF

The form of interaction that takes place in a university cafeteria is student seller interaction. The way the seller or the cafeteria staff interacts to students are very important as students are very sensitive in such matters. Service is the most important factor to improve the satisfaction on school meals (Jisook Jung, 2009).

Student satisfaction with regards to staff cafeteria in Malaysia has gone virtually untouched. This research attempts to clarify the attributes of quality staff cafeteria in influencing student satisfaction by explicitly examining how quality factors, including responsiveness of staff, food quality and restaurant ambience affect student satisfaction. Staff cafeteria where the preference of factors related to student satisfaction may be different. (Bartlett and Han, 2007)

Such dissatisfaction has been identified through opinion surveys conducted in organizations. These dissatisfactions are based on the facilities provided by the organization for the employees, such as the staff cafeteria. Further on, I will adopt their perspective and largely neglect alternative goals. Those persons would not be worse off, the contractor would have extra funds to do the work legacy staff is hard to motivate for, and the university would be better off via improved student performance because of better food. (Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006)

PRICE OF FOOD

The quality-price ratio that maximizes the benefit of all students or the average student might not prove trivial as my definition of quality contains many dimensions. Therefore, some students might prefer a low price level while others want large diversity of food or extended opening hours or free refills of their plates. The best way to achieve this seems to have a supervisory board of the nonprofits' cafeteria comprising various students, which would make the cafeteria a consumer-dominated nonprofits'. (Prufer, J, 2000)

Supply of food and drinks of decent quality in decent quantity for affordable price has a direct effect on the wellbeing of the cafeteria's student. Mostly the students of the organisation. Assume that cafeterias produce a certain quality level and ask for a certain price level of their output. Quality-price ratio that maximises the benefit of all students – or the average student - might not prove trivial as my definition of quality contains many dimensions. Therefore, some students might prefer a low price level while others want large diversity of food or extended opening hours or free refills of their plates. (Herbst, P. and J. Prüfer, 2007)

Meal plans are included in the rent for all residents, no exceptions. Individual meals are available to non-residents for \$7.50. A meal plan for the academic year is also available to non-residents for a semester rate. Students are permitted to eat at the cafeteria during the semester that the meal plan is purchased for. Intercession and summer are available at additional cost. (Adam Kuban, 2008)

VARIETY OF FOOD

Variety, diversity, and "comfort" in cafeteria food options at a university give students a sense of "home" while on campus. Variety and choice has been a concern for decades. Variety of food and beverages to cater to the many different needs of our customers, and we always serve it up with politeness and a smile. Student can enjoy our wide variety of food selections that are prepared fresh daily by our skilled cooks. Local area vendors provide our food fresh and new items are added to the menu monthly. (Cohen, 2009).

Variety of serving stations in the Café including soups of the day, a 36 item salad bar, hot entrees, a "made to order" deli and wrap station, appetizers, "hot-off-the-grill" sandwiches, beverages, frozen yogurt, and more than a dozen desserts. In cafeteria also have an extensive breakfast menu including a self-service hot food line, hot and cold cereal, assorted fruits and a wide variety of bagels and breads. (Cameron Ainsworth-Vincze, 2006). Daily, students can find seasonal fresh fruit, yogurt and a cereal bar. House made soups and fresh salads which change daily and compliment our great salad bar. Special monotony breakers include holiday favourites such as prime rib and turkey dinners and made to order specialty pastas. (Killian, K. S. 2009)

ENVIRONMENT

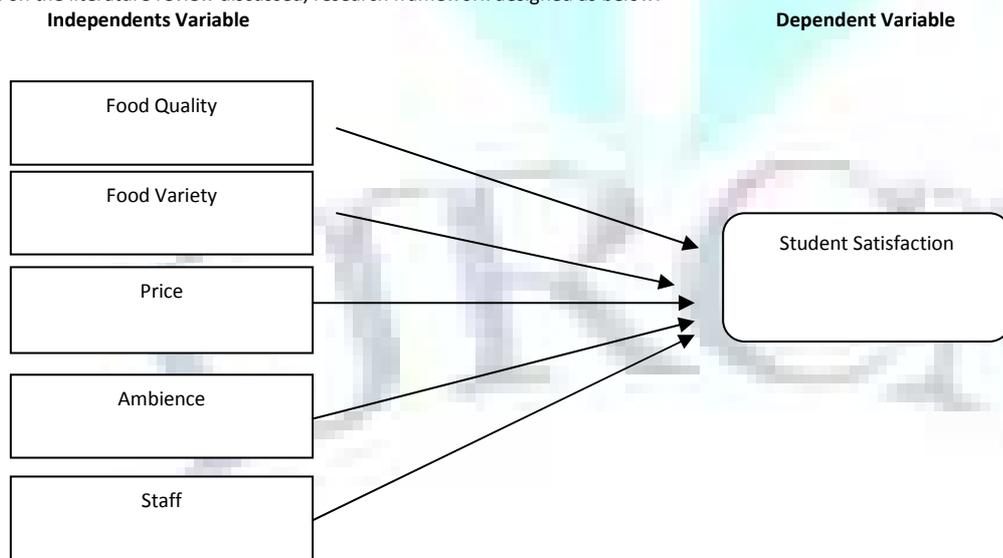
An ecological approach emphasizes the connections between student and environment. It also recognizes that behaviour and environment not only influence each other, but that they do so at multiple levels of interaction ranging from cafeteria. Cafeteria environmental factors refer to the upstream influences that impact behaviour on a food quality, and variety of food. Cafeteria environmental factors refer to influences within the individual's immediate settings, such as package, plate shape, lighting, and dining companions (Swinburn et al., 1999; Story et al., 2008).

An ecological approach to combating obesity and promoting wellness requires the design of cafeteria environments that support healthy food choices and eating behaviours. By learning how student make food decisions, how aware they are of environmental influences on those decisions, and how resulting behaviours affect health, interaction designers can reshape these environments to support, rather than sabotage, people's efforts to live healthfully within the larger ecosystem of food environments. (Wansink, 2006).

The influence food choice and eating behaviour are calling the *personal food environments* to promote wellness and complement interventions at higher levels. Throughout the process, student use an ecological approach to investigate the relationships between food information, food quality, eating behaviors, eating environments, and food distribution environments. (Flegal et al, 2010)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the literature review discussed, research framework designed as below:



RESEARCH DESIGN

SCOPE OF STUDY

The scope of study is limited to University students who currently studying as a targeted sample. The targeted sample is defined as such due to this group of people having the highest possibility of using the university cafeteria and food service and could provide a good feedback for the research.

POPULATION

In this study, the research was conducted in University. The population comprised of 2000 students who are studying at university.

SAMPLING

In this study, 200 questionnaires were distributed to Biotechnology and Engineering students who attending Introduction to Entrepreneurship course but only 83 respondents returned their questionnaires to the researcher.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Section A contained 9 questions which addressed the respondents' demographic information. These questions identified the respondents' gender, course, ethnicity, year of study, living arrangement, how often do they use cafeteria services, what is the main reason you frequently eat at the cafeteria, what is the main reason you not frequently eat the cafeteria and have you ever made a complaint.

RESULT ANALYSIS**DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS**

Referring to the table above, there are 83 of total respondents for this study. There are 68 (81.90%) students from biotechnology and 15 (18.10%) students from engineering. For the year of study, 55 (66.30%) of them are from year one and 28 (33.70%) of the students are from year three. For gender, there are 37 (44.60%) of male and 46 (55.40%) female completed this survey. For ethnicity, there are 42 (50.6%) Indians, 28 (33.70%) Chinese, 11 (13.30%) Malays, and 2 (2.40%) other races participated in this survey. There are 60 (72.30%) hostellers and 23 (27.70%) non hostellers for this research.

Among the total of 83 students, 63 (75.90%) students use cafeteria services daily, 11 (13.30%) of them use few times a month, 4 (4.80%) of them uses 3-4 times, 3 (3.60%) of them uses few times per semester, 2 (2.40%) of them uses only once or few times ever. There are 60 (72.30%) students goes to cafeteria with other reasons, 11 (13.30%) of them goes to cafeteria to socialize or meet friends, 8 (9.6%) students goes to cafeteria because the location is convenient, 3 (3.6%) of them are because of economical, and only 1 (1.2%) student is because of the food is good.

On the other hand, the main reason (55.40%) for students not frequently eat at cafeteria is the food is bad. 21 (25.30%) of them is because of others reason, expensive (8.40%) is the next reason that cause the student not to eat at cafeteria. 5 (6.0%) students feels that the cafeteria environment is bad. 2 (2.40%) students feels that the cafeteria location is not convenient and 2 (2.40%) students feels that the cafeteria are not friendly. 32 (38.60%) of the students have made a complained 51 (61.40%) of them have never made a complained.

VARIABLE ANALYSIS

The summary for the 26 items to each variable is shows have a means score of above 2.00, 3 items variables have a means score of above 3.00, 2 items variables have a means score of above 1.00. Thus, the findings indicate that the majority of the respondents disagree with the statement of items for each variable and dissatisfied with the cafeteria food, and consider those items important influencing their satisfaction on cafeteria food.

CORRELATION ANALYSIS

In this section, Pearson's correlation is used to explore the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Correlation coefficients are able to provide a numerical summary of the direction and the strength of the linear relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. The findings of correlations between the independent variables and dependent variable are summarized below:

FOOD QUALITY

There is a significant, weak positive correlation between food quality and student satisfaction on cafeteria service ($r = 0.554$, $p < 0.01$). The correlations indicate that the food quality, well cooked, taste, fresh food and consistent quality are important to determine their satisfaction on food.

FOOD VARIETY

There is a significant, weak and positive correlation between food variety and the student satisfaction on cafeteria service ($r = 0.507$, $p < 0.01$). Students satisfaction affected by the choices of food, whether the choices meet their special dietary, meet their cultural and ethnic preferences, and whether special meals and promotion offered frequently.

AMBIANCE

Similar to the food quality and food variety, there is a significant, weak and positive correlation between ambience and the student satisfaction on cafeteria service ($r = 0.552$, $p < 0.01$). This correlation show that, the available of the places to sit, opening hours, decoration of the cafeteria, comfortable seats, and cleanliness can determines the student satisfaction on cafeteria service.

CAFETERIA STAFF

The correlation between cafeteria staff and the student satisfaction on cafeteria service significant weak and positive correlation ($r = 0.483$, $p < 0.01$). Clean and neat of the staffs, friendliness, easy to talk with, smile of the staffs and faster serving line affects the students satisfaction on cafeteria service.

PRICE FAIRNESS

There is a significant, weak and positive correlation between price fairness and the student satisfaction on cafeteria service ($r = 0.320$, $p < 0.01$). This correlation show that, the acceptable prices, portion served, and acceptable price changes can determine the student satisfaction on cafeteria service.

In conclusion, the results revealed that all independent variables are positively correlated with the dependent variable at the high significant level $p < 0.01$, r appears to be a weak (< 0.5) relationship between each independent variables and the dependent variables except food quality, food variety and ambience.

MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS DIFFER IN SATISFACTION ON CAFETERIA SERVICE.

An independent sample t-test was carried out to identify the differences between respondents' gender in their satisfaction on food service. The results of the independent sample t-test are shown in table 4.5. If the Levene's Test is significant (the value under "Sig." is less than 0.05), the two variances are significantly different. If it is not significant (Sig. is greater than 0.05), the two variances are not significantly different; that is, the two variances are approximately equal. According to table 4.5, all the variables significant approximately equal because the Sig. is greater than 0.05. This indicates that male and female respondents have the same satisfaction level on cafeteria service. **So, the research fails to reject null hypothesis.** Furthermore, the results reveal similar outcomes to the five variables: food quality, food variety, ambience, cafeteria staff, and price fairness. Males and females did not differ significantly in their satisfaction on cafeteria service.

HOSTELLER AND NON HOSTELLER DIFFER IN SATISFACTION ON CAFETERIA SERVICE.

According to table 4.6, all the variables significant approximately equal because the Sig. is greater than 0.05 except ambience. This indicates that hostellers are more dissatisfied compare to non hostellers on the ambience of the cafeteria. The results reveal similar outcomes for four variables: food quality, food variety, cafeteria staff, and price fairness. Both of the hosteller and non hosteller students tend to have the same satisfaction on these factors.

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

From the research, multiple regressions were used to examine the effect of two or more independent variables on a single dependent variable (student satisfaction on cafeteria service). R-Square, also known as the Coefficient of determination is a commonly used statistic to evaluate model fit. R is the multiple correlations between independent variable and dependent variable. Constant refers to the intercept, while the row containing the name of independent variable (a) refers to the slope.

TABLE 4.5.1 REGRESSION BETWEEN FIVE INDEPENDENTS VARIABLES ON A DEPENDENT VARIABLE

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	-0.14	0.32		-0.44	0.66
Food_Quality	0.27	0.13	0.26	2.08	0.04
Food_Variety	0.13	0.11	0.14	1.13	0.26
Ambiance	0.30	0.11	0.29	2.76	0.01
Cafeteria_Staff	0.06	0.11	0.06	0.57	0.57
Price_Fairness	0.15	0.08	0.17	1.91	0.06
Dependent Variable: Student_Satisfaction					

$R^2 = 0.458$

F= 13.007

Based on the table, the ambiance is the strongest independent variable correlations to dependent variable (student satisfaction on university cafeteria), which are having 0.232 compare to others independent variables such as food quality, 0.17 or food variety, 0.14. Base of the result, the ambiance will influence the student satisfaction on university cafeteria, however the cafeteria staff are the lower influencing the student satisfaction on university cafeteria. This are also same with the slope, the cafeteria staff are the lower, with is 0.063 and the ambiance having the higher slope (0.29). Therefore, ambiance consider as the most important factor influence student satisfaction on university cafeteria.

CONCLUSION

The findings from the analyses shows most of the students are dissatisfied on the cafeteria service. Besides, all proposed independent variables are significant and positively correlated to dependent variable. The significant factor that has the highest impact on a students' satisfaction on cafeteria service is food quality. Student's genders do not significantly differently on their satisfaction. However, there are significant different for hosteller and non hosteller students on ambiance of the cafeteria when determining their satisfaction on cafeteria service.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The size of the sample is small. Only 83 respondents were responded in this research. The research would have been more reliable if a greater size of sample will be used. The researcher also believed other factors also might influence student's satisfaction on university cafeteria services. The result shows, only 5 factors tested which was selected from previous studies.

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