**FACTORS DETERMINING THE PERCEPTION OF PRODUCT QUALITY: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE RESTAURANT SECTOR IN COLOMBO CITY**

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# ABSTRACT

Consumers use different variables to determine the overall quality of a product. These qualities lies in the eyes of the consumers in question. What may be seemed to be of high quality to one consumer may be inferior to another. Even though many consumers uses price as an indicator of product quality (Kotler 2001), there are doubts in consumers mind whether there is a relationship between price, value and product quality and further price itself is a strong indicator of product quality in the absence of any information. The major objective of this research is to analyse the major factors affecting customer perception of overall product quality of restaurants. The population of this study is all registered Middle class restaurants (Casual Dining Restaurants in Sri Lanka). Among them Colombo restaurants were selected as the study sample of this research. . The respondents were selected through a purposive sampling method. Sample selected from the Middle class restaurants (Casual Dining Restaurants) and a minimum of 100 guest selected as the sample size of this study. Purposive sampling method was adopted as a sampling technique. In this study, researcher used judgement provided by the Middle class restaurant sector in Colombo to select the subject member for the survey. To analyse the data SPSS Version 23 were used and correlation and regression done for data analysis. The findings of the study revealed positive significant relationship between dependent and independent variables. Regression analysis revealed that there is significant impact of service quality on overall product quality, there is significant impact of atmospherics on overall product quality and there is significant impact of food quality on overall product quality. The study recommended that excellent customer service is a must for any restaurant and if restaurant fails to provide reliable customer service there might be a possibility that will lose out on valuable customers. Encourage and train them to think concerning customer care, which goes beyond basic service. There should be good communication between the service staff and kitchen staff which will ensure timely service, as soon as the food is prepared. If the jobs are divided among people, coordination gets easier. Managers need concerns when they are hiring new staff as well as training staff members, focus on the qualities such as**empathy, patience, clarity to respond promptly, when they are interacting with their customers.**

**Key words:** *overall* *product quality, atmospherics, service quality, food quality*