



## **Factors Affecting Customers Purchase Decision in Fast Food Restaurants: The Mediating Role of Dissatisfaction and Negative Word of Mouth**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to investigate fast food restaurants' present market position in Egypt and examine their current sales decline. The primary goals are to give a complete research analysis of customer negative perception elements as well as to demonstrate a relationship between dropping sales variables and a general shift in customer purchase decisions. For that purpose, an online survey was conducted, and 400 questionnaires were delivered via linked-in and a monkey survey, with 354 responses. Hayes SPSS Process Macro was conducted to assess hypothesis relationships. According to the findings of this study, customer dissatisfaction and word of mouth mediate the association between customer negative perception and purchase decision. Based on the study findings, restaurant owners and managers should consider how an outstanding experience, reasonable pricing, product quality, and the value obtained may increase customer satisfaction and word of mouth, which usually leads to customer purchase decisions.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Recently, fast food restaurants have been suffering because of the recent significant decrease in food sales (Abdelgawwad, 2019, Reportlinker, 2018). The most likely cause of such a poor performance in the fast-food industry is the negative experience perceived by the customers of fast-food restaurants. People's primary factors when purchasing fast food are value obtained, consumer health preferences, and product quality (Seyfang, 2006; Murphy, 2011). Quality is a nebulous concept that can be felt before and after purchasing (Grunert, 2010). Consumers' views of quality are influenced by their perceptions of expected product performance and services (Boulding et al., 1993). The fast-food industry is widespread and growing in popularity around the globe. Consumers form opinions about fast food restaurants based on word-of-mouth, marketing by the restaurants, personal experience, ratings on social media, reviews, etc. Perceptions differ between cultures and countries (Tinoco and Ribeiro, 2008).

Price is considered as an important component that can contribute to customer satisfaction, since buyers frequently evaluate the quality of service or items based on their cost (Al-Msallam, 2015). The price of products and services has a significant

impact on their performance. As a result, price gap may result in negative perceptions such as brand switching (Campbell, 1999). It has also demonstrated that clients' social expectations about inappropriate costs may result in frustration, decreased repurchases, negative word of mouth, and individuals complaining (Rothenberger, 2015). As a result, it may create a negative perception of the business. Many different pricing approaches may be employed to increase income while also feeling price fairness. Pricing methods are difficult to choose since they have a direct impact on sales, profitability, and satisfaction. (Konuk, 2018).

The most crucial element related to the loss of income and sales is that customer behavior is shifting toward fast food. According to Bernhardt et al. (2012), the average UK individual is now four times more attentive to what they consume in terms of health. This demonstrates that people are increasingly looking for healthy meal choices, which directly influences fast food sales and income. As a result, consumer perception plays a critical role in fast food's present market position. Another critical factor associated with a lack of sales is the firm's inability to innovate and diversify. McDonald's' menu in the United Kingdom has been the same for the past 50 years, which has a direct influence on purchasers' decisions of a company's innovation and progress. While McDonald's' method is effective over time, it is reaching its limits, as seen by a sharp fall in total business revenue.

Customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is derived from a service interaction and comparing that interaction to a specified quality. Diaz and Ruiz (2002, p. 118) describe consumer satisfaction as "an immediate reaction to an occurrence during the supply of a service." Customers may perceive a relatively similar service experience from different perspectives, affecting the level of pleasure. According to retail customer dissatisfaction research conducted by the Retailing Initiative at Wharton and the Verde Group of Toronto, 31% of customers who had a terrible experience contacted friends, family, and coworkers. While dissatisfied consumers may not go out of their way to express their displeasure with the shop, they tell others about their poor service experience. According to the dissatisfaction survey, if 100 consumers have a negative experience, a shop loses between 32 and 36 existing or future customers.

The link between fast food satisfaction or dissatisfaction and positive or negative word of mouth must be emphasized. If their meal matches their promises, customers will be satisfied and will share great word-of-mouth recommendations, and vice versa, if it doesn't meet their expectations (Chang et al., 2014). Furthermore, if food items match or exceed expectations of quality, value, and all expected benefits, Customers are more likely to recommend them to others (Lam et al., 2016). Lai (2020) investigated the effect of satisfaction on word-of-mouth on Portuguese meals in Macau and discovered that satisfaction did influence word-of-mouth. Customer satisfaction influences word-of-mouth intent positively (Konuk, 2019). According to Kim et al. (2009), improving client satisfaction leads in increased word-of-mouth recommendation, enhancing customer loyalty, strengthening the dining facility's reputation, and generating more profit.

Customers, on the other hand, frequently base their decision to purchase or repurchase a product or service on past interactions with it (Ali et al., 2016; Jeon & Hyun, 2013; Prebensen et al., 2014). According to Han and Hyun, the dining experience at luxury hotel restaurants boosted customer satisfaction (2017). Furthermore, study analysis revealed that customer satisfaction with a restaurant's food quality is a substantial predictor of customer desire to return (Oh, 2000; Pettijohn et al., 1997; Qu, 1997). Diner satisfaction, according to Kim et al., has a substantial positive link with revisit intentions (2013).

This study contributes to the understanding of the areas mentioned. First, the study aims to develop a model by investigating crucial customer purchase decision features in the fast-food industry. Second, exploring the relationship between negative perceptions that affect customer purchasing decisions through an indirect link between customer dissatisfaction and negative word-of-mouth. The study would contribute to a better understanding of Egypt's fast foodservice industry.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Factors of customer negative perceptions**

The price is the amount of money that buyers pay for a product or service. In general, price is the value that purchasers give up in return for the advantages of using a product or service (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Therefore, price is an essential component in determining customer satisfaction since customers always consider the value of a service based on its price (Al-Msallam, 2015). According to Campbell (1999), a high price has a substantial impact on sales and profit; as a result, perceived price unfairness may result in undesirable responses such as negative word of mouth and shifting firms.

According to Rothenberger (2015), customers' negative perceptions of high costs can lead to dissatisfaction, decreased rebuying tendency, poor word of mouth, and complaints. The quality of food has a considerable influence on consumer satisfaction and retention. In general, meal quality is related to many aspects such as food presentation, taste, menu items, healthfulness, and quality (Hanaysha, 2018). A high level of food quality is a crucial marketing strategy that may satisfy and retain customers while also offering a satisfactory experience. Consumer satisfaction is significantly influenced by food quality (Gagic et al., 2013).

Customers' purchase decisions and tendencies are strongly linked to their assessment integrity of the entire experience of a service or product (Oliver, 1980). Customer satisfaction and loyalty, both of which are crucial to a performance of the company, may be strongly influenced by service quality. Increased customer satisfaction may result from high levels of service quality (Zhao et al., 2012). However, if the service performance is lower of the consumers' demands, disappointment will result (Brunner et al., 2008).

Customers' purchase decisions are inextricably linked to their whole experience with a service or product (Oliver, 1980). Service quality may substantially impact customer perception, which is critical to fast food store growth. Excellent perceived perception of service quality may result in high levels of customer satisfaction (Zhao

et al., 2012). However, dissatisfaction may occur if service performance falls short of consumers' expectations (Brunner et al., 2008). Positive perceptions of a restaurant may promote a company's brand image, change negative client perceptions, and have an immediate influence on customer satisfaction (Booms & Bitner, 1982).

Negative or positive, Customers' perceptions of price, quality, and service are intimately connected to their purchase decision and level of satisfaction based on their previous experience (Altamore et al., 2018).

Lim (2010) also stated that a restaurant's ability to innovate and diversify, its outstanding service and food quality, as well as consumer health preferences, are highly significant predictors of perception since they may lead to a higher degree of satisfaction and even influence customers' future purchase decisions in the food service business.

Service quality and product quality are critical in determining client happiness (Dandotiya et al., 2020). Customers' purchase decisions are directly tied to their general perception of a service or product (Oliver, 1980). The quality of products and services may have a considerable impact on customer satisfaction, which is critical to an organization's success (Zhong & Moon, 2020). Customer happiness may be increased by providing high-quality products and services (Zhao & Huddleston, 2012). According to Sharkey et al. (2007), service quality refers to a client's evaluation of service and is recognised as a predictor of total customer satisfaction. Service quality may also be described as a company's ability to meet or exceed its customers' expectations (Barber & Scarcelli, 2010). It shows the gap between consumers' expectations of the service being provided and their perception of the service. Customers' perspectives on service quality are developed by comparing their perceptions with their impressions of the services provided by fast-food stores. When expectations exceed performance, consumer perception is often less than desirable, resulting in consumer dissatisfaction (Sharkey et al., 2007).

The gap between the services that are expected by the customers and the perceived services, in some cases, might not be equal, thus leaving a gap. Customers always tend to compare the service they are "experiencing" with the service that they "expect". When the experience does not match the expectation, there is always a gap. (Shanka, 2012). Customer satisfaction in the restaurant sector is affected by the quality of products and services. This results in increased revenues for the firms. It is also interesting to note that the percentage of rivalry among businesses in the restaurant industry will rise, so for a specific restaurant to stand out, they must ensure that the quality of service they provide to their clientele is increased (Ryu & Han, 2010). Consumers are satisfied or dissatisfied with their purchasing selections and the decision-making process in terms of product availability, pre-purchase knowledge, and product variety (Chauke & Duh, 2019).

### **The power of word of mouth**

According to Vallejo et al. (2013), word of mouth is a standard mode of communication between individuals about the quality of a product or service. It is one of the most important forms of information obtained via interactions with friends and

family. It is a strong tool that gives the customer an indirect encounter with the product or service through friends and family; it is aimed at people who share common interests and is not limited by cost or other constraints such as social, time, familial, or physical factors.

The most decisive word of mouth in the fast-food industry comes from exceptional service quality and a positive customer perception; this will cause the consumer to speak positively about the fast-food services. According to Litrin (2006), negative word of mouth may have a significant impact on fast food's reputation since dissatisfied guests' express negative ideas about their experience. Natuhwera (2011) observed that in a service context such as the fast-food industry sector, urgent steps are required to satisfy unsatisfied consumers; otherwise, the customers will leave or relate the bad word of mouth (WOM) to the service provider's obstacle, and this will affect the sales and income.

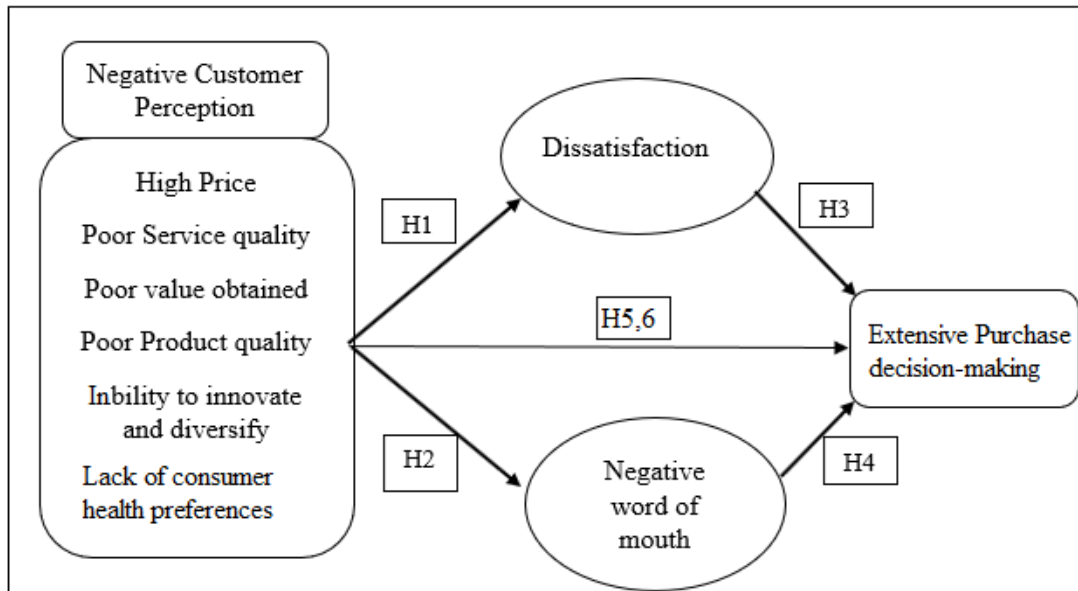
According to Little (2015), failing to build unique word of mouth is more costly, and consumers who encounter poor treatment or poor food quality not only quit using your services but can also dissuade up to 50 people in your network, resulting in a significant drop in restaurant performance and growth. According to Abdullah et al. (2018), pleased clients may result in positive word of mouth, which is the best marketing money can buy. People used to check other people's ratings of particular industries on social media networks to get the requisite level of confidence (Gómez-Suárez et al., 2017).

### **Purchase Decision**

Customers usually determine whether or not to buy or rebuy a product or service based on whether or not their past interactions with it were acceptable or joyful (Ali et al., 2016; Prebensen et al., 2014). Han et al. (2019) established and validated the relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intent. Variables associated with food consumption. Customers often decide whether or not to buy or repurchase a product/service based on whether or not they perceive it to be satisfying or pleasurable (Jeon & Hyun, 2013).

Han et al. (2019) established and validated the relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase desire. In the foodservice sector, variables associated with fast food satisfaction or quality influence customer purchase decisions (Ryu et al., 2012). Han and Hyun (2017) observed that consumer happiness in restaurants had a beneficial influence on customer experience. Furthermore, in several studies, customer satisfaction with a customer's perception of food quality is a powerful indicator of purchase decision (Oh, 2000; Qu, 2000). According to Kim et al. (2013), customer satisfaction has a considerable positive link with purchase decisions.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between negative customer Perception, dissatisfaction, negative word of mouth, and purchase decision.



**Fig.1.** The relationships between Negative Customer Perception, Dissatisfaction, Negative word of mouth, and Extensive Purchase decision-making.

### Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, the following study hypotheses are proposed:

- H1:** There is a statistically significant relationship between negative customer perception factors and customer dissatisfaction.
- H2:** There is a statistically significant relationship between negative customer perception factors and negative word of mouth.
- H3:** The association between negative customer perception and Extensive decision-making is positively mediated by customer dissatisfaction.
- H4:** The association between negative customer perception and Extensive decision-making is negatively mediated by negative word of mouth.
- H5:** Extensive purchase decision-making influenced by negative customer perception
- H6:** The association between negative customer perception and Extensive purchase decision-making is mediated by both customer dissatisfaction and negative word of mouth.

### METHODOLOGY

According to the reviewed literature, the study's primary goal is to build a conceptual framework about the impact of negative consumer perceptions drawn from the participants' experiences in the fast-food sector. Thus, according to this study, six characteristics of negative customer perceptions are significant explanations for the significant decrease in fast food consumption in Egypt. These negative perceptions affect customer purchasing decisions through an indirect link between customer dissatisfaction and negative word of mouth.

Therefore, the primary goal of this study was to determine the variables most often associated with negative customer perception and the influence of "the mediators," customer dissatisfaction and negative word of mouth, on customer purchase decisions in fast food restaurants.

The study's independent variables are negative perception factors (high price, poor service quality, poor value obtained, poor product quality, inability to innovate and diversify, and lack of consumer health preferences) influencing customer dissatisfaction and negative word of mouth. In contrast, the dependent variable is Extensive purchase decision-making. As a result, the research framework was construed as shown in figure (1) to explore the potential negative customer perceptions behind the declining fast-food restaurant sales in Egypt. Six hypotheses were proposed based on this framework in this study.

### **Sampling and data collection**

A structured questionnaire was distributed in Egyptian fast food outlets to investigate the negative customer perceptions and the components contributing to decreased customer demand for fast food restaurants. Furthermore, the effects of customer dissatisfaction and negative words on purchase decisions were investigated. Data was collected using a random sampling technique in 2021.

The questionnaires were distributed to prospective participants via Linked-in and a monkey survey website owned by Google, to provide social opportunities for online surveys. In the sample population, there were 120 fast-food restaurants. Ninety-five percent of them agreed to participate in the study because it would support them. Four hundred fast food customers were surveyed during the field study.

The questionnaire consists of four sections. Each section assesses one market factor in the fast-food industry: negative customer perceptions (NCP), dissatisfaction (DIS), negative word of mouth (NWOM), and Extensive purchase decision-making (EPD). The previous four factors were measured using a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Questions were adapted from previous studies by Ha and Jang (2013); Lovelock et al., 2012; Popovic et al., 2019; De Villiers et al., 2018).

Twenty pre-test questionnaires were conducted to assess the validity of this study. The experts in hospitality were consulted to clarify the meaning of the questions. Therefore, this research provided considerable content validity. Finally, 400 questionnaires were collected. There are 354 usable samples after removing invalid questionnaires (with incomplete answers) (the valid questionnaire return rate is 88.5 percent).

### **Data Analysis**

Hayes SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) Process Macro (Hayes 2013) was used to analyze the data collected. This study used descriptive statistics analysis, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. This study attempted to explain the impact of customer perception, customer dissatisfaction, and negative word of mouth on Extensive purchase decision-making.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Reliability

Internal consistency was checked on the collected data through Cronbach's Alpha. Table 1 shows that the total Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole questionnaire was 0.85. The measured values for negative customer perception were 0.83, customer dissatisfaction 0.86, word of mouth 0.85, and purchase decision 0.86, respectively

**Table 1**  
Variables Reliabilities

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>		
<b>N of Items</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>
Negative customer perception	0.83	0.75
Dissatisfaction	0.86	0.73
Negative word of mouth	0.85	0.71
Extensive Purchase decision-making	0.86	0.76
Total	0.85	0.72

The Cronbach alpha test results are all greater than 0.8, indicating high levels of internal consistency. This demonstrates that the conceptual construct has a high level of reliability and internal consistency. In addition, the validity of the developed scale was first evaluated using exploratory factor analysis. The KMO and Bartlett's Test were (.714,  $p = .001$ ), indicating adequate sampling. Each component of the negative customer perception was subjected to factor analysis, followed by dissatisfaction, customer word of mouth, and purchase decision as a whole. Any item with loading of less than 0.50 on any latent variable was removed. As shown in table 2, the outcomes of confirmatory factor analysis revealed that most of the main dimensions have factor loadings greater than 0.7. The confirmatory factor results revealed that four dimensions: negative customer perception, dissatisfaction, negative word of mouth, and Extensive purchase decision-making are satisfactory within the conceptual framework of the study.

**Table 2**  
Mean and Loading Factor

<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Loading</b>
<b>1- Negative customer perception</b>	<b>3.63</b>	<b>0.73</b>
• High price	3.81	0.78
• Poor Service quality	3.49	0.75
• Poor value obtained	3.71	0.78
• Poor Product quality	3.59	0.76
• Inability to innovate and diversify	3.61	0.65
• Lack of consumer health preferences	3.56	0.78
<b>2- Dissatisfaction</b>	<b>3.75</b>	<b>0.75</b>
<b>3- Negative word of mouth</b>	<b>3.70</b>	<b>0.95</b>
<b>4- Extensive purchase decision-making</b>	<b>3.96</b>	<b>0.76</b>

Table 2 demonstrated that the mean scores for all negative customer perception dimension variables ranged from 3.81 for the high price to 3.49 for poor service



quality. Therefore, all customers were moderately dissatisfied with their previous experience and all variables of customer perception. It also found that the highest negative perception among customers was for high prices, the poor value obtained, the inability to innovate and diversify, poor product quality, and lack of consumer health preferences, respectively, but the lowest negative perception was for poor service quality.

Furthermore, the results showed that the dimension of Extensive purchase decision-making had the highest mean (3.96), which reflects the consumer's behavior toward fast food restaurants when his perception doesn't meet his expectations. This was followed by dissatisfaction mean scores (3.75), and negative word of mouth had the lowest mean (3.96), as shown in Table 2. In order to determine the relationship between Extensive purchase decision-making and negative customer perceptions, dissatisfaction, and negative word of mouth dimensions among fast-food restaurants in Egypt, descriptive statistics, including Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis, were used with a 95.0 percent confidence level (P 0.05).

### Correlation analysis

A Pearson correlation analysis was computed among the four dimensions' scales on data for 354 participants were collected to determine the relationship between customer purchase decisions, customers' perceptions, dissatisfaction, and negative word of mouth dimensions in fast-food restaurants, as shown in the table 3

**Table 3**

Correlation Analysis

		NCP	DIS	NWOM	NPD
NCP	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
DIC	Pearson Correlation	.523**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
NWOM	Pearson Correlation	.228**	.175**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001		
EPD	Pearson Correlation	.438**	.591**	.003	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.951	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 3, the relationship between customer negative customers' perception and dissatisfaction was discovered to be moderate, positive, and significant ( $R=0.523^{**}$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). Also, there was a moderately significant positive relationship between negative customer perception, negative word of mouth, and Extensive purchase decision-making of fast food consumption structure ( $R=0.228^{**}$ ,  $0.438^{**}$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ), respectively. This implies that an increase in customer negative perception would lead to a significant increase in customer dissatisfaction, negative word of mouth, and the impact of customer purchase decision consumption structure among fast-food restaurants.

In addition, the results from the table indicated that the most substantial relationship found was between customer dissatisfaction and customer Extensive purchase

decision-making ( $R=0.591^{**}$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). This indicates that the growth in customer dissatisfaction would lead to a significant increase in the Extensive purchase decision-making. The relationship between negative word-of-mouth structure and Extensive purchase decision-making, on the other hand, was weak and insignificant ( $R = 0.003$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ). This indicates that the growth in word of mouth would have an insignificant increase in the purchase decision consumption pattern of fast-food restaurants.

According to the findings, customer dissatisfaction and Extensive purchase decision-making have a more significant relationship with negative customer perceptions among fast-food restaurants in Egypt than other factors used in this study. However, an increase in negative word of mouth would result in an insignificant increase in Extensive purchase decision-making, suggesting that word of mouth does not impact customer purchase decisions among fast-food restaurants.

### Regression analysis

A linear regression model was conducted to indicate the impact of each variable of negative customers' perception as independent variables on customer dissatisfaction as a dependent variable, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

Relationship between negative perception and dissatisfaction

	$\beta$	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.326	7.543	.000		
High price	.352	9.872	.000	.665	1.503
Poor Service quality	.184	4.716	.000	.687	1.455
Poor value obtained	.243	5.233	.000	.431	2.321
Poor Product quality	.205	4.687	.000	.688	1.454
inability to innovate and diversify	-.181	-3.504	.001	.543	1.841
Lack of consumer health preferences	-.153	-3.917	.000	.519	1.926
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig	
0.713	0.508	0.500	59.772	0.001	

Table 4 shows the results of regressing the six variables of negative customers' perceptions on customer dissatisfaction. The result demonstrates that R (0.713), which is the correlation of the negative customers' perception variables with customer dissatisfaction in fast food restaurants, Fast food restaurant dissatisfaction was explained by six variables, which accounted for 50.8 percent of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.508$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The F-test statistic was 59.772 with a p-value of 0.0001 and a tolerance more significant than 0.1 (or  $VIF < 10$ ) for all variables, indicating that the model is statistically significant.

High price, poor service quality, the poor value obtained, and poor product quality was significant positive predictors ( $p < 0.05$ ), with a t-test statistic of 9.872, 4.716, 5.233, and 4.687 respectively. Thus, the model predicts that for every one-point increase in High price, poor service quality, poor value obtained, and poor product

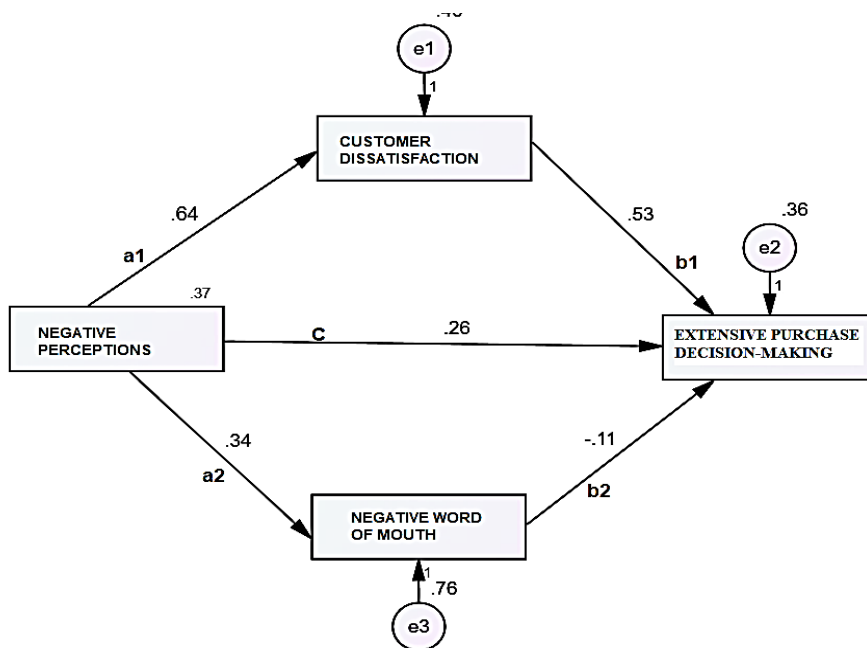
quality, customer dissatisfaction will increase by 0.352, 0.184, 0.243, and 0.205 respectively.

On the other hand, lack of consumer health preferences and the inability to innovate and diversify Impacts were also significant predictors ( $p < 0.05$ ) associated with negative signs and t-test statistics of -3.504 and -3.917. Thus, H1 was confirmed. That "There is a statistically significant relationship between negative customer perception factors and customer dissatisfaction."

**Regression**

**Direct Effect**

A bootstrapping method was performed using SPSS Process Macro to examine if dissatisfaction and customer word of mouth mediated the relationship between customer negative perception and Extensive purchase decision-making.



**Fig.2.** Regression Weights

**Table 5**

Direct Effect Path Analysis

	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	constant	β	S.E	t	P
NCP --->DIS	.5232	.2737	132.6531	1.4248	.642	.056	11.534	***
NCP --->WOM	.2282	.0521	19.3386	2.4741	.337	.077	4.404	***
WOM---> EPD					-.113	.037	-3.080	***
DIS ---> EPD	.6231	.3882	74.0389	1.4711	.525	.051	10.365	***
NCP ---> EPD					.258	.063	4.101	***

First, the results in Table 5 show that the direct effect of the relationship between the independent variable "negative perception" and the dependent variable " Extensive purchase decision-making " without meditators is statistically positive and significant. This result explains that the direct effect was ( $\beta = 0.258, t = 4.101, p < .05$ ), which

supports H5 that " Extensive purchase decision-making influenced by negative customer perception". Furthermore, the regression analysis results show that negative perception (independent variable) is a significant positive predictor of both customer dissatisfaction ( $= 0.64$ ,  $t = 11.534$ ,  $p.001$ ) and negative word of mouth ( $= 0.33$ ,  $t = 4.404$ ,  $p.001$ ). in addition, the result of table 5 revealed that customer word of mouth influenced by negative customer perception ( $= 0.337$ ,  $t = 4.404$ ,  $p.001$ ) which conform H2 "There is a statistically significant relationship between negative customer perception factors and negative word of mouth."

Second, after controlling for customer dissatisfaction and negative word of mouth (mediators), the second regression analysis revealed that customer dissatisfaction was a significant positive predictor of Extensive purchase decision-making (dependent variable)  $= .52$ ,  $t = 10.365$ ,  $p >.05$ ). In contrast, negative word of mouth was a significant negative predictor of Extensive purchase decision-making (dependent variable)  $= -.113$ ,  $t = -3.080$ ,  $p >.05$ ). Results supported both H3 and H4.

### Indirect Effect

Table 6 explains Based on 5000 bootstrap samples. The indirect effect results show a significant indirect positive relationship between negative perception and purchase decision mediated by customer dissatisfaction and negative word of mouth ( $a1*b2$ ) + ( $a2*b2$ )  $= (0.298$ ,  $p.05$ ).

**Table 6**

Indirect Effect Path Analysis and total effect

Effects	$\beta$	S.E	t	P	95% Confidence Interval	
Direct	0.2577	.0631	4.0837	.0001	.1336	0.3819
Dissatisfaction	0.3370	.0521		.0000	.2383	0.4430
Negative word of mouth	-0.0382	.0182		.0000	-.0790	-0.0081
Total Mediators	0.2988	.0514		.0000	.1997	0.4002
TOTAL	0.5565	.0608	9.1513	.0000	.4369	0.6761

The results of the bootstrap confidence interval showed that CI95 was 0.1997 (lower limit) to 0.4002 (upper limit). We can conclude that, since "zero" does not fall within the 95% confidence interval, customer dissatisfaction and customer word of mouth mediate the relationship between negative perception and purchase decision. Furthermore, an investigation conducted to examine the indirect relationship between the independent negative perception (X) and the dependent Extensive purchase decision-making (Y) variables revealed that they are equal to zero. The results of the table show that the indirect effect of customer dissatisfaction is equal to "0.3370" with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval of 0.238 (lower limit) to 0.4430 (upper limit). On the other hand, customer word of mouth is equal to "-.0382" with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval of -.0790 (lower limit) to -.0081 (upper limit). Since "zero" does not fall within the 95% confidence interval, we conclude that customer dissatisfaction and customer word of mouth are statistically significant at alpha.05 (p.05). These results conformed to H6. The mediator, customer dissatisfaction, accounted for

approximately 60.5% of the total effect on the purchase decision [ $PM = (.3370) / (.5565)$ ]. Word of mouth accounted for approximately 7% of the total effect on purchasing decisions [ $PM = (-.0382)/(.5565)$ ].

Table 6 illustrates the total effect produced by the entire model, including indirect and direct effects. It is the sum of indirect effects  $(a1*b1) + (a2*b2)$  and direct (c) effects. Table 6 shows that the total effect was 0.5565 with a "t" value of 9.1513 and a p-value of ".00", indicating a statistically significant effect (p .05).

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the current state of the fast-food sector in Egypt and analyze its current sales decline. The primary purpose is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the fast-food industry and its position in the Egyptian market, as well as to draw a link between declining sales as a result of negative customer perceptions, customer dissatisfaction, negative word of mouth, and general changes in customer buying decisions.

According to the findings, six factors, namely (high price, poor service quality, poor value obtained, poor product quality, inability to innovate and diversify, and lack of consumer health preferences) have a substantial impact on customer dissatisfaction and negative customer word of mouth, which eventually results in positive or negative customer buying decisions. Furthermore, the highest negative perception among customers was for high prices, the poor value obtained, inability to innovate and diversify, poor product quality, and lack of consumer health preferences, respectively, but the lowest negative perception was for poor service quality. This finding is consistent with (Ma et al., 2014; Zhong & Moon, 2020), who found that the key factors that influence satisfaction are service quality, pricing strategy, and inability to innovate and diversify. Restaurants may boost customer satisfaction and loyalty by providing high-quality services at reasonable costs with high quality of service and products.

The impacts of the determinants of negative customer perception, customer dissatisfaction, and negative word of mouth on customer purchase decisions of Egyptian fast food enterprises were investigated. Furthermore, the results indicated that the most important predictor of the customer's negative perception was the high price, which may have a negative and immediate influence on consumers' perceptions of the quality of a restaurant. The findings are somewhat consistent with Ryu and Han's (2010) study. They claim that perceived price mediate customer satisfaction and quality features (food, service, and physical environment quality).

On the other hand, lack of consumer health preferences and inability to innovate and diversify impacts were also significant predictors associated with negative customer perception. Therefore, taking these two variables into account will help to reduce customer dissatisfaction. Neglecting these variables increases customer satisfaction and, therefore, directly affects the purchase decision.

According to Bernhardt et al. (2012), the average UK citizen is now four times more health-conscious about what they consume. This shows that individuals are increasingly seeking healthier lunch options, which has a direct impact on

McDonald's sales and profitability. As a result, consumer behavior is crucial to McDonald's current market position. In addition, there is a consumer shift away from unhealthy fast-food restaurants. According to Bloomberg (2015), four out of every ten customers who reject McDonald's purchase a Subway sandwich as a healthier alternative to McDonald's.

Another surprising finding from this study is that dissatisfaction, rather than negative word of mouth, is the strongest predictor of negative customer perception, followed by the negative word of as a consequence, managers should raise that by taking into consideration high prices as well as other dimensions of negative customer perception in order to improve profitability in the fast-food business. Improvements in positive customer perception lead to increased customer satisfaction while neglecting customer perceptions increases dissatisfaction, impacting customer purchase decisions, resulting in a more sales decline in the fast-food industry.

Customer dissatisfaction in a fast-food restaurant, according to the findings, strongly and positively mediates the relationship between negative customer perception and Extensive purchase decision-making. This result suggests that dissatisfaction/satisfaction have a direct and significant positive effect on purchase decisions. So, if the client agrees to purchase the food from fast-food restaurants, the consumer will likely be satisfied with the food that has been purchased. This conclusion is congruent with Chauke and Duh's (2019) findings, which revealed that customer dissatisfaction/satisfaction had strong relationship with customer purchase decisions.

On the contrary, negative word of mouth negatively mediates the relationship between negative customer perception and Extensive purchase decision-making. However, it has a weak effect on the link between negative customer perception and customer purchase decision. This finding implies that negative/positive word of mouth has a direct and consequential influence on customer perception. Furthermore, this implies that if a client has a positive perception of the meal, he or she will spread the word about the restaurant. On the contrary, if a client has a negative perception of the meal, he or she will spread the negative word about the restaurant. These findings were similar to those published by Ningsih et al. (2021), and Tandon et al. (2020), who investigated the relationships between perception and word of mouth. Their findings proved the existence of a strong relationship between perception and word of mouth.

### **MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The empirical findings show that the negative customer perception attributes "high price, poor service quality, the poor value obtained, poor product quality, ability to innovate and diversify, and consumer health preferences" all have a significant impact on customer dissatisfaction, the spread of negative word of mouth, and purchase decisions.

Second, the study found that the link between negative customer perception and customer dissatisfaction regarding fast food restaurants was particularly strong. This implies that in fast food restaurants, customer perception strongly influences the level

of satisfaction. The consequence for fast food restaurant managers or company owners is that they should place considerable emphasis on customer experiences, such as price and quality, as this appears to affect customer decisions. As a result, fast food restaurants may still engage clients by working on their complaints and following up with dissatisfied customers in their establishments. Another implication of this concern is that companies should generally spend the majority, if not all, of their attention on the negative word of mouth. Policymakers might offer assistance to fast food restaurants to provide the most outstanding experience possible. For example, mastery shoppers can be used to evaluate services from time to time, and offer rewards to workers who can solve customer problems or even transfer the problem to management.

Another management consequence is to improve service quality and food quality consistency in raising customer satisfaction by empowering restaurant managers to provide real compensation to angry customers, transforming them into satisfied and motivated customers. This will contribute to customer loyalty and the improvement of customer purchase decisions. Fast-food restaurant enterprises must produce new or seasonal products frequently to keep their customers engaged. Customers are likely to be disappointed if they are always presented with the same old menus that never offer anything new. As a result, fast-food establishments may lose customers. However, the new menu item should be economically priced, engaging, and appealing to the general public.

Another essential element contributing to income and sales losses is a shift in customer behavior toward fast food. According to Bernhardt et al. (2012), the average UK citizen is now four times more health-conscious about what they consume. This obviously shows that individuals are increasingly opting for healthier food options, which has a direct impact on fast food restaurants' resultant sales and profitability.

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## العوامل المؤثرة في قرار الشراء في مطاعم الوجبات السريعة: الدور الوسيط لعدم الرضا والتواصل الشفوي السلبي

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معلومات المقالة	المخلص
<p><b>الكلمات المفتاحية</b> المدرک؛ التواصل الشفوي؛ قرار الشراء؛ عدم الرضا؛ السعر.</p>	<p>الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو التحقق من الوضع الحالي لمطاعم الوجبات السريعة في السوق المصري واسباب انخفاض مبيعاتها الحالي. تتمثل الأهداف الرئيسية للدراسة في تحليل عناصر الإدراك السلبي للعميل بالإضافة إلى إظهار العلاقة بين انخفاض متغيرات المبيعات والتحول العام في قرارات شراء العميل. ولتحقيق هذا الغرض، تم إجراء مسح عن طريق مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي، وتم ارسال 400 استبانة كان العائد منها والصالح للتحليل 354 استبانة. تم استخدام Hayes SPSS Process Macro لاختبار الفرضيات. وفقاً لنتائج هذه الدراسة، فإن عدم الرضا والتواصل الشفوي السلبي للعملاء هي متغيرات تتوسط الارتباط بين الإدراك السلبي للعميل وقرار الشراء. وتوصلت نتائج الدراسة، الى ضرورة التفكير في وضع استراتيجيات ملائمة لتكون تجربة العملاء مميزة، وان يكون التسعير معقول، ورفع جودة المنتج والقيمة التي يتم الحصول عليها. مما يعزز من رضا العملاء والتواصل الشفوي، اتخاذ قرارات الشراء الايجابية لدى العملاء.</p>

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