Selection criteria of customers of Chinese restaurants and their dining habits

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Abstract: The present study investigates the selection criteria used by restaurant customers in India while choosing Chinese restaurant for dining and also to understand their contemporary dining habits. Structured questionnaire was used to collect the data from the respondents. Respondents were selected using the convenience sampling approach. The study used descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis to interpret the data. The results of the study would assist the Chinese restaurant marketers to understand the important restaurant attributesfrom the customer's perspective. It would also help to formulate required marketing and operational strategies incorporating food quality, service quality, customer relationship practices and promotional offers, so that the restaurant can stay competitive in the market by better meeting the needs and expectations of the customers. This study was an attempt to examine the Chinese restaurant consumer behaviour in the Indian context, particularly from the Chennai City. The research also provided vital information and insights for the researchers, academicians and the practitioners in the restaurant industry.

Keywords: Chinese; restaurant selection; dining habits; Chinese restaurant; important attributes.

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1 Introduction

Restaurant customers in India like cuisine from different parts of the world. One such popular cuisine next to Indian cuisine is Chinese cuisine. The number of authentic Chinese restaurants is gradually growing up in the city and the customers are interested in trying various options available in the market. The attitudes of the Indian restaurant customers are also changing. Providing authentic cuisine alone is therefore not sufficient to attract and to retain the customers. Customers expect the restaurant to possess a greater eye for detail in understanding their needs and wants. They are no longer ready to face any lapse or unfulfilling dining experience. Due to the stiff competition in the market with other emerging cuisines, the Chinese restaurateurs are required to be vigilant in better understanding the restaurant selection process of the customers and their dining patterns. So the present study provides practical implications for the Chinese restaurant operators and the managers. The theoretical support for the present study is based on Rhee et al. (2016). Rhee et al. (2016) investigated travellers restaurant selection behaviour by examining various restaurants attributes. The study was conducted in four scenarios. The first scenario was an overall travellers group and the second scenario was from two different country-of-residence groups: foreign and domestic travellers. The findings of the first and second scenario reported that food, value, atmosphere, and service were considered very important criteria in selecting the restaurants. The third scenario explored different restaurant types (low-priced food stand, low-priced indoor, and high-priced indoor) and found that the food attribute was the most important factor across the restaurant types. The other restaurant attributes rankings were varied. The final scenario divided the studied sample by both traveller origin and restaurant type. Interestingly, the results indicated a complete difference in the importance ranking from all the attributes taken for the study. Hence, the present study on selection criteria of customers of Chinese restaurants and their Dining Habits is expected to bring significant research findings and thereby contributes to literature on restaurant selection behaviour of the customers.

1.1 Chinese restaurant

The history of Chinese cuisine can be traced back to 40,000 years ago (Wikipedia, 2009). Today, Chinese cuisine has steadily evolved and developed as major cuisine today. Capatti and Montanari (2003) have indicated that Chinese cuisine is ranked as one of the top three cuisines in the world. Currently in India, Chinese cuisine is most popular among the people next to Indian cuisine. Chinese cuisine in India is available in both organised and unorganised food outlets in the city. Organised outlets provide speciality Chinese

meal and they are either located in star hotels or in standalone areas. The unorganised food outlets are usually located in the street. The street food outlets offer Indo-Chinese food with more of Indian style by adding local flavours and ingredients to make the food suitable for Indian palate. In the case of the standalone and star hotel restaurant, it offers authentic Chinese food matching with the rich atmosphere which projects the Chinese culture. Efforts are being taken by the restaurateurs to get chefs from native china in order to ensure maximum authenticity of the food as possible. Usually Chinese restaurant operates for lunch and dinner. The number of Chinese restaurant in the Chennai City is growing rapidly. The restaurants can easily copy the products and services from the competitors in the market. Therefore, restaurants are finding it very difficult to survive in the market. This situation can be handled well when the restaurateurs possess the knowledge on the restaurant selection behaviour of the customer and their dining patterns. Mostly restaurateur takes random decision with regard to the design of the products and services. When there is a gap exists between the random decision and customer's selection preference of the restaurant, it might result in service lapse and the dissatisfaction of the customers.

2   Need for the study

Study conducted by Kim and Moon (2009) indicated that customer perception and expectation was different according to the restaurant types and dining experience. The selection criteria used by the customers while deciding which restaurant to dine out was varied according to restaurant type. It indicates that specific reason to select one type of restaurant would be different from another restaurant type. For instance, the customer who prefers to dine in the full service restaurant may place high importance towards restaurant ambience and service. In the case of fast food restaurant, customer might place higher importance towards speed and quality of food. Based on the evidence from (Rhee et al. (2016) and Kim and Moon (2009). It provides a clear indication that restaurant type and customer selection preference of the restaurant vary. This study is therefore an attempt to understand the restaurant selection criteria used by the customers for Chinese restaurant and their dining patterns.

2.1   Study objectives

The main objectives of the study are:

- to investigate the selection process used by Indian customers when choosing Chinese restaurant to dine

- to understand the contemporary dining habits of the customers.

3   Literature review

This section aims to review the significant literature available on restaurant selection behaviour and dining habits of the consumers from different types of restaurant and the attributes used in the study. The reviews are discussed below. Tikkanen (2007) indicated that the consumers had variety of needs and desires when deciding where to dine out and

what to eat. Lundberg (1994) highlighted that there were several reasons for people dine out. The reasons were to satisfy hunger, to fulfil the social needs and for the self-fulfilment needs. Based on the reason to dine out, the consumer decides to collect information about the available restaurants in the market. Due to the increased number of restaurant in the market, the consumers were flooded with choices and availability of the information about the same was unlimited. On the other side, it was very important for the restaurant operators to understand what service attributes created favourability to the customers in order to ensure customer satisfaction and foster repeat business (Dube et al., 1994).

3.1   Restaurant selection criteria

Criteria used for the selection of the restaurant are the vital attributes that customers use in selecting which restaurant to dine out. The customers may use different criteria while evaluating the restaurant based on the needs and wants of an individual or a group of people.

Otengei et al. (2017) identified that food quality assurance, food authenticity; personalised service and security assurance were used by ethnic restaurants to increase food tourist inflows. The study also found that knowledge absorption capacity helped ethnic restaurants to attract and retain food tourists. Namin (2017) found an evidence for customer satisfaction improvement through service quality, food quality, and price-value ratio. Kim et al. (2017) indicated that unfamiliar food names and ingredients significantly enhanced customers' perceptions of authenticity and induced positive emotions. In contrast, familiar food names and ingredients arouse negative valence emotions, such as boredom and calm. Filimonau and Krivcova (2017) mentioned that while restaurateurs acknowledged rising customer awareness about the changing food choice on personal health and the environment, but they were not confident about the use of menu design as a means to positively affect consumer choice. Kim et al. (2016) study revealed that the number of online reviews customers had a significant positive impact on restaurant performance. Customer overall rating, guest served per labour hour, and the food quality offered by the restaurant influence restaurant performance. The moderating effect of the restaurant excellence certificate between the number of reviews and restaurant performance were found to be significant. Basri et al. (2015) identified the relationship between attributes of WOM towards purchase decision in Malay upscale restaurants in Klang Valley. The results indicated that physical environment quality had impact on the word of mouth (WOM). Ehsan (2012) indicated that fast food customers considered price, variety of food, promotional deals and timely service as the important factors for the selection of fast food restaurants. The study also found different factors in different cities. The study highlighted that the customer choice and selection criteria of fast food restaurants varied among different cities in a country. Rahman (2012) identified that there was a strong relationship between consumer perceptions and behaviour in selecting a restaurant. Age, gender and income were found to play a mediating role. In addition it was also found that consumer's age had highest influence on their behaviour of choosing a restaurant. Jang and Namkung (2009) suggested three factors. i.e., service quality, product quality, and atmospherics as the main restaurant attributes affecting perceived quality of restaurant experiences. Barta (2008) studied preference of foreign tourist for eating out at ethnic restaurants in Bangkok. The study found that healthy foods, relaxation, experience, and ambiance were seen as important motivation factors. In

addition, western respondents were more influenced by the appearance of ethnic food and healthy alternatives than the eastern respondents. Myung et al. (2008) examined various attributes that contributed to consumer meal choice decisions within a prix fixe menu. Attributes were healthy food, nutritional characteristics, and freshness of food, food familiarity, variety seeking and value for price. The results of the study showed that the current trend toward consumer's interest in health issues suggested that restaurants needed to offer meal items linked to nutritional benefits to enhance consumer's menu item selection decisions for a fixed price. In addition, the older age group highly rated the healthy food attribute compared to the average respondents. Comparative study was conducted by Dutta et al. (2008) on restaurant consumers in the USA and India. They found that American consumers displayed a higher involvement in environmentally and socially responsible practices, while Indian consumers had a higher degree of involvement in health related responsible practices. Njite et al. (2008) found customer relations were the most important attribute in the fine-dining segment. The study indicated that price was the least important attribute. Goyal and Singh (2007) indicated that the young Indian consumers had passion for visiting fast food outlets for fun and change. However, home food was found to be their first choice. The respondents in their study mentioned that homemade food was better than food served at fast food outlets. They attached highest value for taste and quality (nutritional values) followed by ambience and hygiene. The study also identified from the respondents that the fast food outlets were to provide additional information on nutritional values and hygiene conditions inside the kitchen. Two studies were conducted by Knutson et al. (2006a, 2006b) in the first study; they concluded that friendliness, menu variety, location and overall price were the important factors for visiting the restaurants. In their study, nearly 50% of the respondents mentioned that they eat out in a restaurant at least once a week. In the second study, friendliness, menu variety, location, value, price, speed of service and convenience were the important factors for senior customers. In addition, they found that incentives valued by the senior's were early bird specials, coupons, discounts, senior menus and 'doggie bags'. Lockyer (2005) findings revealed that cleanliness, food taste, and service quality were the three most important issues. There were no significant differences found on age and income. The mean expectations were higher for women than for men. Cleanliness was found to be the most important restaurant attribute for the respondents.

Cullen (2004) identified factors influencing restaurant choices in Dublin. The factors were quality of food, type of food, location, cleanliness, and good reputation of the restaurant. The study also found that these factors differed by occasions. It was mainly due to the fact that, customers placed high importance to the attributes which fulfilled their basic dining motivation in the restaurant. For social occasion, quality of food was the most important factor, while for cooking substitution occasion; location of the restaurant was ranked first. The study established that cleanliness was rated as one of the important factors for both occasions. Erik and Nir (2004) stated that restaurant characteristics had strongly influenced tourists eating out at restaurants. Main characteristics were attractive décor and atmosphere, display of menus in the window, evidence of wide variety of the food on the menu and the restaurant looking busy. Results identified that many western tourists in Thailand ordered for pat Thai (Thai fried noodles) or khao pat (fried rice) in Thai restaurants due to the menu displayed in the window. Sulek and Hensley (2004) indentified that food quality, the restaurant atmosphere, including décor, noise level, and cleanliness impacted the dining experience. The authors

also tested the impact of restaurant attributes on customer satisfaction and repeat patronage in a full-service restaurant. The results indicated that only food quality and dining atmosphere had significant effects on satisfaction and repeat patronage.

Moschis et al. (2003) identified that the availability of special senior discounts was the most important reason for senior customers to frequent the same restaurant again for dining. Revisit intention was high in consumers in the age group of 55 and above then the other age groups. The younger group indicated that their most important reason for choosing a restaurant was the possibility for comfortable sociality and this factor influenced the patronage behaviour. Yamanaka et al. (2003) study revealed that older customers preferred restaurants that provided good quality food, cleanliness, and reasonable prices. Chen and Bowen (2001) found that good concept, consistency of food quality, standard food preparation and cooking processes, cost control, training programs, Western management and Eastern expertise, marketing, customer satisfaction, brand name awareness and location were the major factors that determined the success of chain of Chinese restaurants in the USA. Marta (2001) examined the customer's motivational factors as related to their external information search when choosing a restaurant. The results referred to two information sources provided by the restaurant: information source provided through advertising (such as ad placed in a magazine, internet, or the window of the restaurant) and information provided by the restaurant through its tangible elements (the decorations, sound, light, and the door menu). Both the information sources played a determining role in customer's selection of a restaurant. Susskind and Chan (2000) identified that good service and a pleasant setting was also the important attributes in a full-service restaurant. Kivela et al. (2000) findings identified a strong relationship between the consumer's selection of a restaurant, the quality standards and the value for money provided by the restaurant. The study also ranked the top five attributes: it is Comfortable feeling of eating in the restaurant, cleanliness, freshness of the food, staff appearance and room temperature. MacLaurin and MacLaurin (2000) looked at the consumers perceptions of two eastern-theme restaurants (Celebrities Asia and House of Mao) and two western-theme restaurants (Hard Rock Cafe and Planet Hollywood). Customers were asked to rank nine restaurant attributes including theme concept, service quality, food quality, menu, atmosphere, convenience, value, product merchandise and pricing among these four restaurants. Results indicated that Hard Rock Cafe received the best ratings on most of the attributes, except convenience and atmosphere. Results also indicated that those who visited theme restaurants were mainly teenagers or young adults, Chinese and those from lower income groups. Lahue (2000) pointed out that the mature patrons were not entirely depending on menu item choices when they had chosen a restaurant. They considered the physical aspects of the restaurant as a critical concern, such as location, noise level, safe and sufficient parking, and comfortable seating. The availability of discounts for senior-citizen, being a comfortable place to socialise, close travel distance, and peer recommendations were the most important considerations for consumers over 55 years patronising specific restaurants. Siguaw and Enz (1999) indicated that dietary characteristics were becoming progressively more important for restaurants because consumers were more worried about healthy food that was low in calories, fat, or carbohydrates, as well as vegetarian and vegan meals. Koo et al. (1999) established an evoked set of important attributes that restaurant diners used in deciding where to dine for a family meal, business entertainment or as a tourist in Hong Kong. Results indicated that taste of food was the main attribute of restaurant selection, followed by service, uniqueness, price, decoration, location, type of food, food variety

and car park. Clark and Wood's (1999) consumers own preferences and tastes were the main determinants of restaurant selection and choice. It was suggested that the quality and range of food were the key determinants of consumer loyalty. Elder et al. (1999) identified the preference for restaurant selection by parents with young children. Their results indicated that cleanliness was the most important factor, followed by taste of food, atmosphere, and quality of service, price, children's menu and menu variety. Their results suggested that factors influencing restaurant selection varied by types of restaurant. In fast-food restaurant, children's menu, price, taste, and quality of service were the main features for selection, In the case of the family style restaurant such as Mexican full service restaurants, nutritional values and healthfulness of food were the dominant factors that influenced restaurant choice. Johns and Howard (1998) examined the consumer expectations and performance perceptions of service attributes in two different pizza restaurants. The results indicated that the consumer's expectations and performance perceptions were based on an almost identical list of attributes – food, price and value. Their findings supported the notion that consumers had a mental 'checklist' of expectations against which they compared quality. Qu (1998) performed a study on the service quality and repurchase intention of customers of Chinese restaurants in the USA. This study found that four dimensions of the Chinese restaurant services significantly contributed to the likelihood of customer's return intention. The dimensions were identified as food and environment, service and courtesy, price and value, as well as advertisement and promotion. Clark and Wood (1998) evaluated ten characteristics customers used in the restaurant selection process. Of the ten, respondents identified five as the most important in restaurant selection: range of food, quality of food, price of food, atmosphere and speed of service. Kivela (1997) stated that food type and food quality were the most important variables for restaurant selection in Hong Kong.

In theme restaurants setting (Woods, 1994) claimed that the food, service and value of Ruby Tuesday were the important attributes that attracted businesses and competed against other theme restaurants. Shank and Nahhas (1994) found out that the elderly customers were more likely to consider friendly service and individualised attention than younger customers, whereas seniors were less likely to rate speed of service as an important factor in restaurant selection. Knutson and Patton (1993) indicated that most senior customers wanted to dine out in restaurants due to convenience and companionship and one of the most important factors driving the mature market to select a particular restaurant was food quality. They considered spending most of their time in the kitchen as non-economical, because their households usually consisted of one or two members. The majority of seniors 'did not feel like preparing food at home' and some of them felt that it was 'cheaper to eat out than buy groceries'.

Gordon (1992) found that menu variety, portion size, friendly people, quality of service, and value for money were the major factors that made Chinese restaurants popular in the USA. Waiting time was the most critical attribute in quick-service restaurants (Davies and Vollmann, 1990). Barrows et al. (1989) reported that reviews were the least influential determinant in the restaurant choice. The findings indicated that the rank order of the restaurant choice was friend's recommendation, restaurant's reputation, menu, price, specials and discounts, restaurant advertising, restaurant reviews. Knutson (1988) study indicated that the underlying factors that drive customer satisfaction in restaurants were employee greeting, restaurant atmosphere, speed of service, and convenience. Schroeder (1985) indentified the importance of the restaurant attributes as perceived by the restaurant critics. The rank order of the importance was

quality of food, quality of service, ambience, pricing, menu variety, sanitation, physical aspects of the establishment and nutrition and quantity of food. Lewis (1981) considered five factors as criteria for the selection of the restaurant and the factors were food quality, menu variety, price, atmosphere and convenience factors.

3.2   Dining habits

Koo et al. (1999) study indicated different meal purposes (i.e., family meal, business meal and tourist meal) and employee groups (i.e., service sector, engineers, doctors etc) as the reason for the customer to dine out in the restaurant. Jaksa (1997) investigated the reasons for the customers eating out in restaurants. The restaurant was considered as a place to meet someone, to satisfy the hunger, to have fun in the restaurant, to have a quick meal, to enjoy in dining, to celebrate social occasion, to dine with the business partners, for a family outing, a birthday or anniversary celebration, a new dining experience while dining in the restaurant. Kivela (1997) had identified nine occasions that prompted customers dining at American theme restaurants in Hong Kong. The occasions were place to meet someone, to fulfil the hungry, to have fun, for convenience, to have enjoyment, for a social occasion, for business necessity, family outing and for celebration. Goldman (1993) highlighted five basic reasons for dining out, namely, having a fun time, having a nice meal out, satisfying a craving, making sure that everyone has something to eat and doing the easy thing. Auty (1992) said that the reasons for the customers to dine out. Depending on the occasion, it is classified as celebration, social occasion, convenience/quick meal and business meal.

Based on the literature review, it is clear that restaurant selection criteria used by the customers differed according to the restaurant type, context and occasion. Even the dining pattern of the customer also found to be varied. Almost all the studies were found to be carried out in the foreign context and the study provided a direction that similar studies should be conducted in the Indian context. This attempt directs to fill up the gap in the literature and to provide practical implications for the restaurateurs.

4   Research methodology

4.1   Study population and sampling method

The population for the present study consists of customers who visited authentic Chinese restaurants in Chennai City, Southern India. To identify the respondents, convenience sampling approach was used for the survey.

4.2   Study measurement

The measurement for the study was developed based on the literature review and then in depth interview was conducted with Chinese restaurant customers, restaurant managers and the hospitality academicians to refine the questionnaire. The structured questionnaire comprised of two sections. The first section consists of questions relating to restaurant attributes. Seven point Likert scale is used to rate the attributes. The second section consists of questions relating to dining patterns of the customers.

4.3 Pilot test

Pilot test was conducted to check the validity of the questionnaire. Seventy respondents were approached for the pilot test. Cronbach's alpha value was calculated based on the data collection through pilot study and the value was 0.958. Suggestions by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) as the value is greater than 0.70 the instrument displayed high internal consistency.

4.4 Data collection

The data for the study were collected from the authentic Chinese restaurants located in different parts of the Chennai City. Location of restaurants helped to obtain heterogeneous sample from which generalisations to a broader population can be drawn. Questionnaire was distributed to the customers who agreed to participate in the survey. The survey was conducted both at the lunch and dinner periods on weekdays and weekends. The finished questionnaires were collected by the waitresses/Waiters of the restaurant. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed and 24 questionnaires were discarded due to the incompleteness of the data provided. One hundred and twenty six filled in questionnaire were used for data analysis.

4.5 Analysis

The study used descriptive statistics to analyse the gathered data with mean values, standard deviation, percentage analysis and the exploratory factor analysis.

5 Results

5.1 Importance of the attributes of Chinese restaurant

Customers were asked to rate the importance of the 40 attributes of Chinese restaurants on a seven point scale. In Table 1 the results of the study are reported. The attributes such as restaurant ranking in the city, restaurant reviews, celebrity/speciality chef and number of branches are scored below five. The remaining attributes have scored above five indicating the importance the customer considers while selecting the Chinese restaurant for dining. The top ten important attributes are overall hygiene and cleanliness of the restaurant, food quality, service quality, beverage quality, restaurant environment quality, religious food options, healthy options, quality certifications like ISO 22000 and best customer service, type of cuisine and live cooking in the restaurant. The rank score indicates the importance of the attributes. The ten least important attributes are availability of reservation facilities, food and beverage promotions like food festival, promotion offer availability, brand image of the restaurant, reputation of the restaurant, innovation and creative options, restaurant ranking in the city like trip advisor ranking, restaurant reviews, celebrity/speciality chefs and number of branches. When the attribute is least important it does not mean that customers do not expect or want the particular attribute in the restaurant. But it implies that those are all the least important when compared to other attributes of the restaurant.

Table 1 Importance of the attributes of Chinese restaurant

Rank	Chinese restaurant attributes	Mean	SD
1	Overall hygiene and cleanliness of the restaurant.	6.87	.32
2	Food quality	6.84	.41
3	Service quality	6.83	.21
4	Beverage quality	6.81	.76
5	Restaurant environment quality	6.79	.66
6	Religious food options	6.71	.74
7	Healthy options	6.70	.72
8	Quality certification like food safety ISO 22000, best customer service.	6.67	. 67
9	Type of cuisine	6.33	.91
10	Live cooking in the restaurant	6.31	.90
11	Entertainment facilities and options	6.27	.93
12	Food and Beverage customisation availability	6.21	1.02
13	Alcoholic beverage availability	6.20	.88
14	Non-alcoholic beverage availability	6.17	.91
15	Price range availability	6.15	.87
16	Authenticity of the dining experience	6.09	.92
17	Value for the money	6.08	.91
18	Environmentally friendly practices	6.06	.90
19	Location of the restaurant	6.05	.90
20	Accessibility to the restaurant	6.03	. 91
21	Parking facilities	5.93	.99
22	Comfortable seating arrangement	5.90	.91
23	Entertainment facilities and options	5.87	.84
24	Children play area	5.83	.83
25	Acceptance of the credit cards	5.81	.82
26	Operating hours of the restaurant	5.77	1.19
27	Dining privacy	5.75	1.03
28	Restaurant crowd and profile of the customers.	5.71	1.06
29	Compliant handling system.	5.51	1.20
30	Customer's delight practice.	5.69	1.27
31	Reservation facilities availability	5.67	1.30
32	Food and Beverage promotions Like food festival	5.42	1.18
33	Promotional offer availability	5.40	1.17
34	Brand image of the restaurant	5.39	1.15
35	Reputation of the restaurant	5.38	1.14
36	Innovative and creative options	5.27	1.41
37	Restaurant ranking in the city. Like trip advisor ranking	4.94	1.30
38	Restaurant reviews	4.83	1.12
39	Celebrity/speciality chef	4.71	1.21
40	Number of branches	3.87	1.48

Table 2 Results of the exploratory factor analysis for Chinese restaurant

Factors	Components	Factor loadings
Factors 1 Restaurant quality	Food quality	0.821
	Service quality	0.808
	Overall hygiene and cleanliness of the restaurant	0.805
	Restaurant environment quality	0.802
	Value for money	0.799
Factors 2 Dining comfort	Dining convenience	0.766
	Location of the restaurant	0.755
	Number of branches	0.751
	Operating hours of the restaurant	0.749
	Acceptance of credit card	0.741
	Religious food options	0.739
	Authenticity of the dining experience	0.734
Factors 3 Customer sensitivity	Customer delight practices	0.727
	Accessibility to the restaurant	0.712
	Complaint handling system	0.682
	Dining privacy	0.652
	Environmentally friendly practices	0.649
	Customer relationship practices	0.642
	Quality certification like food safety certification	0.635
	Type of cuisine	0.618
	Live cooking in the restaurant	0.608
	Price range of menu	0.572
	Comfortable seating arrangement	0.554
	Reservation facilities	0.548
Factors 4 Dining options	Healthy options	0.547
	Innovative and creative options	0.542
	Food and Beverage customisation availability	0.542
	Food and Beverage promotions like food festivals	0.506
	Availability of promotional offer	0.477
	Alcoholic beverage availability	0.469
	Entertainment facilities and options	0.469
	Non-alcoholic beverage availability	0.461
	Beverage quality	0.453
Factors 5 Restaurant image	Brand image of the restaurant	0.435
	Reputation of the restaurant	0.427
	Restaurant crowd and profile of the customers	0.423
	Restaurant ranking in the city like trip advisors ranking	0.423
	Parking facilities	0.422
	Celebrity/speciality chef	0.410
	Children play area	0.400

5.2   Chinese restaurant selection preference

This study identified 40 restaurant attributes which the customers consider as important at the time of selecting the Chinese restaurant for dining. In order to group the 40 restaurants attributes into latent dimensions. The study performed an exploratory factor analysis. Before running the factor analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) which is the measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of Sphericity were performed. The KMO test result was 0.973 and it is significant. The result of the Bartlett's test of Sphericity indicates significance ($p < .000$) rejecting the null hypothesis. This indicates that restaurant attributes are uncorrelated in the population. As the next step, these items were subjected to VARIMAX rotation and it helped to reduce the factor loadings which were moderate and improved those loadings which were already high. For this purpose, the study retained VARIMAX rotation in the final solution. A five factor solution which explains 85.62 percentage of variability was denoted by the Eigen values greater than 1 criterion and the screen plot. This is represented in Table 2. The first factor with five of the restaurant attributes food quality, service quality, overall hygiene and cleanliness of the restaurant, restaurant environment quality, value for money is identified as 'restaurant quality' dimension of the Chinese restaurant. The second factor is identified as 'dining comfort' due to the high coefficient loading in the second factor and the attributes are dining convenience, location of the restaurant, number of branches, operating hours of the restaurant, acceptance of credit card, religious food options, and authenticity of the dining experience. The third factor included restaurant attributes such as customer delight practices, accessibility to the restaurant, complaint handling system, dining privacy, environmentally friendly practices, customer relationship practices, quality certification like food safety certification, type of cuisine, live cooking in the restaurant, price range of menu, comfortable seating arrangement, reservation facilities due to their loadings in the third factor and is identified as 'customer sensitivity'. The fourth factor consists of attributes healthy options, innovative and creative options, food and beverage customisation availability, food and beverage promotions like food festivals, availability of promotional offer, alcoholic beverage availability, entertainment facilities and options, non-alcoholic beverage availability, beverage quality and is defined as 'dining options'. The remaining set of attributes which includes brand image of the restaurant, reputation of the restaurant, restaurant crowd and profile of the customers, restaurant ranking in the city like trip advisors ranking, parking facilities, celebrity/speciality chef, children play area is identified as 'restaurant image'. This study results are consistent with the findings of the previous studies conducted by Qu (1998).

5.3   Dining habits of customers of Chinese restaurant

Table 3 indicates that the customers dining frequency in the Chinese restaurant indicates that majority of the respondent's dine once to twice in month. The dining frequency of above two times and less than once in a month is significantly low.

Table 4 indicates that the main source of information to know about the Chinese restaurant is mainly from internet, newspaper advertisement, information provided by the colleagues and friends. This result can be justified by the raising usage of the internet by the people and increased information exchange occurs from the colleagues and friends.

Table 3 Restaurant customer dining frequency

First time visit	3%
Less than once in a month	5%
Once a month	25%
Two times in a month	45%
Three times in a month	10%
Fiur times in a month	7%
Five to six times in a month	3%
Seven to eight times in a month	2%

Table 4 Source of information

Family members	8%
Magazine advertisement	2%
Newspaper advertisement	18%
Internet	22%
Colleagues	17%
TV advertisement	2%
Friends	21%
Restaurant directory	10%

Table 5 Restaurant visit planning

On the spot	4%
A few hours in advance	25%
One to three days in advance	47%
Three to ten days in advance	17%
More than ten days in advance	7%

Table 6 Reservation preferences

Yes	75%
No	25%

Table 7 Source of recommendation to dine out in the Chinese restaurant

Friends recommendation	27%
Colleague recommendation	20%
Family recommendation	12%
Media advertising	8%
Restaurant reviews	7%
Restaurant staff	20%
Social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter)	6%

Table 5 indicates that to visit a Chinese restaurant, majority of the respondent's plans between few hours to three to ten days in advance. This indicates that planned decision making process occurs.

Table 6 indicates that 75% of the respondents make reservations while visiting the Chinese restaurant for meal.

Table 7 indicates that respondents are comfortable to dine in the Chinese restaurant while they receive the recommendation from a friend, colleague, restaurant staff and family. Interestingly, this study finds that restaurant review and the social networking sites are the least important source of information.

Table 8   Dining day preference

Week days	35%
Week ends	40%
Any day	15%
Public holidays	10%

Table 8 indicates that the preferred day to dine in the Chinese restaurant is mainly during the weekends and weekdays. This indicates the Chinese cuisine is considered as staple meal during weekday and as relaxation meal during the weekends.

Table 9 indicates that the spending patterns of the customers indicate significant variation between the lunch and dinner. This indicates that customer prefer lighter meal for the lunch then for the dinner.

Table 9   Lunch and dinner-spending patterns

Spending category	Lunch	Dinner
Food in Rs	1,000	2,500
Beverage in Rs	500	1,000

Table 10   Purpose of visiting restaurant

Special occasion celebration	26%
Family outing for a meal	13%
Friends get-together	18%
Intimate meal with closed one	13%
Colleague get together	10%
Achievement celebration	5%
Business meal	12%
Different dining experience	3%

Table 11   Dining group size

Just you	5%
Two person	25%
Three to four person	45%
Five person or above	25%

Table 12 Dining companion

Spouse	26%
Children	5%
Parents	21%
Colleagues	20
Friends	10%
Relatives	5%
Boss	10%
Alone	3%

Table 10 indicates that the main purpose of visiting the Chinese restaurant for meal is special occasion celebration, friend's get-together and family outing for a meal.

Table 11 indicates that the dining group size in the Chinese restaurant varies between two and five and above.

Table 12 indicates that the main dining companion for the respondents while dining at the Chinese restaurant is spouse, parent and colleague.

6 Conclusions

The present study investigates Indian customer's restaurant selection behaviour of Chinese restaurants and their dining patterns. Based on the results produced in the present study, it provides a comprehensive picture for Chinese restaurateurs in the Chennai City to improve on the important attributes the customers choose while planning to dine in Chinese restaurants. The finding of the study recommends the Chinese restaurant marketers and the restaurant managers to concentrate on overall hygiene and cleanliness of the restaurant food quality, service quality, beverage quality, restaurant environment quality, religious food options, healthy options, quality certifications like ISO 22000 and best customer service, type of cuisine and live cooking in the restaurant. These attributes are considered as extremely important by the Indian Chinese restaurant customers and it will have strong impact on the restaurant success in the market. Other attributes are also important for the restaurant customers. Reasonable resources should be allocated by the Chinese restaurateurs based on the importance level of the Chinese restaurant attributes found in the study. Also the study provides in-depth insights into the dining habits of the Indian restaurant customers. The output of the study greatly benefits the researchers who are interested in the Chinese restaurant market and for the Chinese restaurant managers to frame the improved products and services based on the need and expectation of the Indian restaurant customers. The study indicates that adaptation of the Chinese restaurants by the Indian customers can be positively improved by better understanding of the Indian customers. And also this study provides significant knowledge to fill in the gap in the literature pertaining to the importance of the Chinese restaurant attribute importance preferred by the customers in Indian context.

6.1   Suggestions to the restaurateur

The results indicate that five dimensions of restaurant selection criteria are used by the customers while deciding to dine in the Chinese restaurant. The dimensions are restaurant quality, dining comfort, customer sensitivity, dining options and restaurant image. This implies that customers consider multiple dimensions during the restaurant selection. The relative importance of restaurant dimension indicates that restaurant quality dimension has highest impact on restaurant selection and is followed by dining comfort, customer sensitivity, dining option and restaurant image. This result provides a crucial message to the restaurateur that concentrating on one dimension might not ensure effectiveness towards the customer attraction and retention. These efforts would enable the restaurant manager to stay competitive in the market and to attain the restaurant business objective. The restaurant managers can apply the study results from the dining patterns and the restaurant selection behaviour while designing the products and service or to enhance the existing operational practices in the restaurant. Mainly, the restaurateurs should pay attention on food quality, service quality, overall hygiene and cleanliness of the restaurant, restaurant environment quality, value for money. By concentrating on these attributes, the basic needs and wants of the guests can be fulfilled easily.

6.2   Future research directions

Future research should cover more geographical locations. The performance of the Chinese restaurants in the city can be measured by applying the scale developed by the study. This will help the operators to design the products and services strategies to stay competitive in the market by better meeting the needs and demands of the customers. The attributes used in the present study are generic in nature. For example, food quality. Under food quality there are quality indicators like presentation of the food, portion size of the food, temperature of the food, taste of the food, safety of the food, nutritional value of the food etc. So focus is required on a single attribute and the underlying quality indicators to understand the in-depth expectations of the customers.

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