

Factors Affecting Choice of Chinese Restaurants in Bandung: Important of Ambiance

Ratri Wulandari¹, Resi Anggraini Tandri², Apriliando Aditya Putra³

¹Department of Interior Design, Telkom University, Bandung, Indonesia

²Department of Interior Design, Telkom University, Bandung, Indonesia

³Department of Interior Design, Telkom University, Bandung, Indonesia

wulandari@telkomuniversity.ac.id (Ratri Wulandari),

Abstract

Chinese restaurants in Bandung existed since the colonial era. Customer satisfaction in a restaurant is influenced by factors including ambiance. This paper studied the important of ambiance in visitors' choice to a Chinese restaurant using 3 study cases. The method used were field observation, visual documentation, and questionnaire. Research finding was that ambiance was placed the third factor out four with level of importance at 58.8%, less significant than food (80.4%). However, when visitors were asked their visual preference and ideas on how a Chinese restaurant should be, they prefer a thematic restaurant with traditional ambiance.

Keywords restaurant, ethnic restaurant, ambiance, customers' choice

1. Introduction

Chinese restaurant in Bandung exist since the colonial era by the presence of Chinese ethnics to the city. Not only regarding the taste of Chinese food that must be considered in an ethnic Chinese restaurant, but also how the restaurant can give a special and authentic impression. An impression dominated by the ethnic's history and cultural heritage send to visitors which greatly influences customer satisfaction. Based on the background, issue raised on factors influencing choice and image of ethnic Chinese restaurants in Bandung. The paper is structured into introduction, methods, result and discussion, conclusion.

2. Methods

Research carried out through field observation in 3 Chinese restaurants in Bandung and questionnaires distribution. The three restaurants are Golden Chopstick, Po Ka Tiam, and Hong Sin Restaurant.

The field observation documented physical condition of each of 3 restaurants being studied. The documentation took materials on interior elements from seating arrangement to decorations used.

The questionnaires were distributed randomly in the restaurants through online questionnaire tools. Therefore, only those feeling convenience enough were taking the

survey. In addition, the questionnaire was also distributed through social media, using Line application, so that the data obtained not only from visitors in the ethnic restaurants but also Bandung residents' in general.

The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part was assessment of importance of factors related to selection of certain ethnic Chinese restaurants. The assessment was done using numeric scale from 1 to 5 with 1 is not important and 5 is very important. Factors being asked were service, food, price, and interior. The second part was question concerning their idea of how a Chinese restaurant in Bandung is desired. The last part is respondents' personal information consists of gender, age, occupation, and frequency of restaurant visit.

The data was analysed using modest quantitative analysis and descriptive qualitative analysis. The qualitative analysis were done by reading correlation between elements studied and questionnaires' responses. Instruments used in this research photographic documentation and questionnaire responses.

3. Result and Discussion

This part is presenting description of three restaurants studied on the first part, comparison of their visual and atmospheric condition on the second part, and analysis of questionnaires results.

3.1. Golden Chopstick

Located at Jl. Sultan Agung no.32, Trunojoyo, Bandung. Chinese Royal concepts was used through application of bright colours, the use of colour that characterizes Chinese ethnic is very striking through the application of green, gold, and red colour. Furniture and ceilings in this restaurant characterizes houses in China. Elements used to create China house atmosphere are lampions, Chinese geometric form, form of traditional house from columns to roof, statues as ornaments, furniture with traditional Chinese aesthetics through form and composition appear.

Materials also play part in creating traditional Chinese house atmosphere. Materials used are dominated by wood and bamboo. These materials were treated in such way to provide natural look

Seating areas were divided in three grand design which were round seating, long table for large group, and small table for small group. No individual seating for 2 people were available. The least was for 4 people which means that visitors coming are in group.



Figure 1. Collage of Golden Chopstick interior showing strong theme of a traditional Chinese house

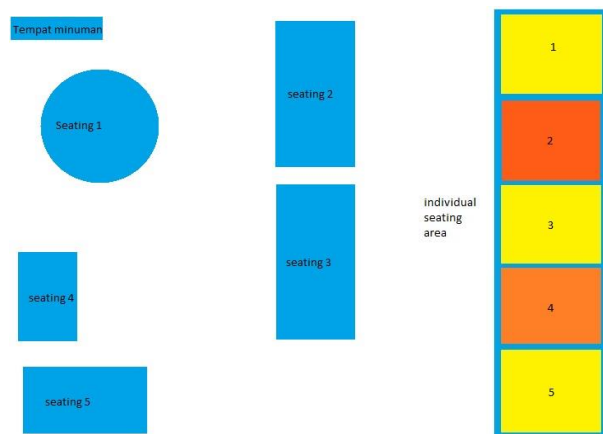


Figure 2. Illustration of layout in seating areas

3.2. Po Ka tiam

Located at Jl. Pasir Kaliki, Kebon kawung, Bandung, this restaurant is an ethnic restaurant with old Chinese shop

concept in the interior. The atmosphere given is an ancient Chinese tavern.

Dark brown and cream are dominating colours in the eating area. The wall is decorated with vintage pictures, as well as the table. The dining tables are arranged neatly without any other furniture that fills the space.

The arrangement of the dining tables differs from Golden Chopstick where Po Ka Tiam provides only small group seating of 4 people. Individual seating for two people are also available at this restaurant. The individual seating is positioned by the column.

The design didn't reflect any traditionalist image of China rather a more modest and modern design. However, the decoration on the wall are presenting vintage images with Chinese theme from people, myth characters, and writings.



Figure 3. Collage of Po Ka Tiam interior showing modesty in the design

3.3. Hong Sin

Located at Jl. Banceuy 110, Braga, Bandung. This restaurant used an elegant modern minimalist concept. The only design element showing Chinese character is the ornament on main entrance. Other decoration giving sense of Chinese atmosphere are china flower vas, red flower, and some geometric composition.

Seating arrangements were in group with one long sofa divided to fit several groups and group of 4 in the centre of the room, no individual seating in this restaurant. This indicate that the restaurant are targeted to groups or most visitors come in groups.

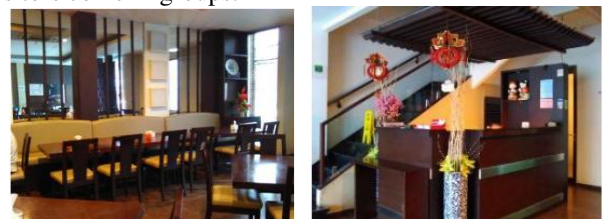


Figure 4. Collage of Hong Sin interior showing modern design

3.4. Discussion

A total of 52 responses were collected for analysis. Questionnaires consisted of three themes concerning demography, assessment on restaurants, the last question

was an open question to collect visitors idea on how a Chinese restaurant is expected in Bandung.

From 52 respondents, 82,7% were young adults in age range 19 to 23 years old. The rest were mix of age 15 to over 40. By occupation, 60,4% respondents were university students. School students were 1,9% and the rest were professionals.

The second part aimed to determine what factors were important in an ethnic Chinese restaurant. Respondents were asked to assess four factors considered important in a Chinese restaurants. The four factors were food, service, price, and interior atmosphere. These four factors were chosen in accordance to [1] [2] [3] that customers' dining-out experience is complex. Customers' dining experience includes the quality of food and drinks provided, the interior and the atmosphere of the restaurant, the service of the restaurants', and customers' companion during the experience. The result is as follow.



Figure 5. Chart of Responses

Food factor was considered important by 80,4% respondents. Service factor was considered important by 72% respondents. Price factor was considered important by 49% respondents. Ambience was considered important by 58,8% respondents.

Responses of questionnaires showed that food is a dominant factor for customer in choosing a restaurant. This means that satisfaction over food plays important role to a restaurant. It proved [4] [5] about relation of food quality and customer preference. They concluded that along with consistency of food quality, there is a tendency that customers favoured the dining experience at franchise restaurants, if the food quality is similar, over the experience in independent restaurants. Through this research [4] [5] highlight the importance of food quality

over ambience. Therefore, it can be understand well why ambience wasn't considered highly important in the questionnaire. Ambience only placed on the third place by respondents.

The questionnaire result also proved [6] that three elements of food quality, service reliability and environmental cleanliness are three pivotal attributes to create satisfied customers. The three elements also provide customers' positive post dining behavioural intentions. Respondents replied that food and service are two important factors in choosing a restaurant. Meanwhile, environmental cleanliness does not correlated directly to ambience or interior quality.

From theory [7] concluded a study that to attract more customers, ethnic theme restaurants should improve their service, settings, and food. Those improvements are to provide customers with a more authentic dining experience. Authenticity is related to interior ambience where in the questionnaire, it was considered the third out of four most important factor in choosing a restaurant. This statement support the following question in the questionnaire, which of the three restaurants has the most appealing image.

Afterward, pictures of the three chosen Chinese restaurants were presented to respondents to see which were the most appealing to respondents. The result is 50% of the responses chose Golden Chopstick to be most appealing Chinese restaurants, while Po Ka Tiam got 23,1% responses and Hong Sin got 26,9%.

As seen at 3.1, Golden Chopstick restaurant is the most thematic of three restaurant had been studied. The Golden Chopstick carried traditional Chinese house as main concept and theme of their interior. Even though ambience was rated low as important factor in choosing a restaurant, respondents chose the most thematic as the most appealing and as the most to be chosen. It goes with [8] [9] statement that in terms of the ambience, where the dining experience occurs, literature has documented that customers dining in ethnic restaurants are those who look for a genuinely ethnic ambience. Satisfaction generated for this type of customers is highly driven by authenticity. According to [8] [9] restaurant authenticity plays an important role in generating satisfaction for customers who look for a genuine ethnic ambience. In this case, thematic ambience is considered authentic in accordance to visitors or viewers knowledge and experience.

Price factor was not considered an important factor in choosing a restaurant. It can be said that price is not a pivotal element to a restaurant assessment as long as food and service are met.

The last question was an open question where respondents were asked to give opinion and idea of their expectation in a Chinese restaurant, particularly in Bandung. From 52 responses, similar responses were grouped as follows:

1. Chinese interior of the past with a good taste and adjusting prices.
2. In terms of the achievement of the atmosphere, make it in such a way to represent Chinese so that visitors

have not only a taste of Chinese cuisine but also experiencing space.

3. Minimalist concept of modern Chinese style, standard prices, and good service.
4. Friendly and satisfying service.

From the open question, three of four dominant statements talked about interior ambience. Food, service, and price are not as highly dominant compared to assessment from the previous section. This result shows that visitors do concern about the interior condition and ambience in a restaurant.

Since questionnaire questions stopped at the open question, reason behind this finding cannot be determined. Hypothesis for this dual opinion could relate to visitors current digital culture where restaurant or any eating place should be “instagramable” for their personal online promotion. It is proven by their answer in choosing Golden Chopstick as the most appealing Chinese restaurant.

4. Conclusion

A restaurant holds two dominant factors considered important by visitors or customers. The two most important factors are food quality and service. Meanwhile, consideration on interior ambience goes on the third position as important factor in a restaurant. This conclusion goes along with previous studies done [6][7]

However, through an open question, it was found that visitors consider that interior ambience is important, more than food and service, because it gives a spatial experience related to an ethnic or a sense of the past.

This dual opinion needs to be studied further since this study stopped at an open question requesting respondents' opinions and idea of how a Chinese restaurant is expected. It might be correlated to fact that visitors, especially young adults, have strong digital culture where a place should be “instagramable” to be appealing. Term “instagramable” could be translated as thematic in a spatial sense to experience. It is an interesting subject to be studied in further research.

REFERENCES

- [1] Pettersson, A., & Fjellström, C. (2007). Restaurants as friends of family: functions visited in everyday life. *Journal of Foodservice*, 18 (6), 207–217. doi: 10.1111 / j.1745-4506.2007.00067.x
- [2] Andersson, T. D. and Mossberg, L. (2004), The dining experience: do restaurants satisfy customer needs?. *Food Service Technology*, 4: 171-177. doi:10.1111/j.1471-5740.2004.00105.x
- [3] Kai Victor Hansen, Øystein Jensen & Inga- Britt Gustafsson (2005). The Meal Experiences of á la Carte Restaurant Customers, *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 5:2, 135-151, DOI: 10.1080/15022250510014417
- [4] Agarwal, R., & Dahm, MJ (2015). Success Factors in Independent Ethnic Restaurants. *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, 18 (1), 20–33. doi: 10.1080 / 15378020.2015.995749
- [5] Namkung, Y. & Jang, S. C. (2007). Does food quality really matter in restaurants? Its impact on customer satisfaction and behavioral intention. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 387-410.
- [6] Liu, Y., & Jang, S. (Shawn). (2009). Perceptions of Chinese restaurants in the US: what affects customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions? *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28 (3), 338–348. doi: 10.1016 / j.ijhm.2008.10.008
- [7] Simon, Tsai, C.-T., & Lu, P.-H. (2012). Authentic dining experiences in ethnic theme restaurants. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31(1), 304–306. doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2011.04.010
- [8] R. Bell, H.L. Meiselman, B.J. Pierson, W.G. Reeve. Effects of adding an Italian theme to a restaurant on the perceived ethnicity, acceptability, and selection of foods appetite, 22 (1) (1994), pp. 11-24
- [9] M.S. Gaytán. From sombreros to sincronizadas: authenticity, ethnicity, and the Mexican restaurant industry. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 37(3) (2008), pp. 314-341
- [10] Jing Wang, Yue Huili, Mark Goh. (2017). Empirical study of sustainable food supply chain management practices in China. *British Food Journal*, <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-09-2017-0525>
- [11] Liu, C., Cai, X., & Zhu, H. (2015). Eating Out Ethically: An Analysis of the Influence of Ethical Food Consumption in a Vegetarian Restaurant in Guangzhou, China. *Geographical Review*, 105 (4), 551– 565. doi: 10.1111 / j.1931-0846.2015.12092.x
- [12] Marinkovic, V., Senic, V., & Mimovic, P. (2015). Factors of choice and image of ethnic restaurants in Serbia. *British Food Journal*, 117 (7), 1903–1920. doi: 10.1108 / bfj-09-2014-0313