CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Cooper & Schindler (2003) “The research design is the blue print for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data” [300]. The research activity on a time based plan is the essence of research design. The research design helps the researcher in assigning the resources by posing crucial choices in methodology. The descriptive research is a kind of research suitable for formalized studies which are structured with stated hypothesis. This study uses descriptive research as the domain and has enough literatures to formulate the hypotheses. The study is cross sectional. Over 400 journals articles in the domain are reviewed, to identity the possible research gap. The following journal titles are used during the review process such as Cornell hospitality management, International journal of hospitality management, Service industries journal, Journal of Services Research, Journal of Business and industrial marketing, Journal of Marketing Research and Industrial Marketing Management.

The review process identified two different models on serving the customers. The first model gave the proven model of the behavior attributes of the customer towards a service sector affecting the relationship quality, which is the customer satisfaction and trust. This behavior aspect and the relationship quality variables affect the customer loyalty towards a service industry as per Sangyup Sean Hyun (2010). Jean Harrison Walker, 2001, have developed a model and tested for the word of mouth affecting the customer loyalty with reference to the service industry.
Since both the study has already tested their model empirically, both the models are taken into consideration, and the study has developed a conceptual model. The model used in this study has also tried to measure the attributes leading towards the customer loyalty. The customer behavioral attributes namely food quality, service quality, price, location and environment are considered to be exogenous variables and the relational quality variables namely, and customer satisfaction and trust are considered to be endogenous variables. The variable word of mouth is also considered as an antecedent to the endogenous variables customer loyalty. It is also conceptualized that the word of mouth may be mediating between the relationship variable and customer loyalty. The entire model is theorized with customer loyalty as outcome variable, which is important for business.

4.2 SAMPLING METHOD

Sampling method employed in this study is multistage sampling. There are two stages of sampling in this study. The first stage is to select from the chains of restaurant using simple random sampling and second stage is to choose the respondents using judgment sampling.

4.2.1 Selecting Chains of Restaurant

As discussed the chains of restaurants samples are selected using simple random sampling without replacement. The following steps were adopted in selecting Chains of Restaurant.

Step 1: The list of hotels is obtained from the associations and sampling frame was made with reference to restaurants in Tamil Nadu State.

Step 2: From the sampling frame, the four chains of restaurants are selected.

1. Hotel Saravana Bhavan
2. Hotel Vasanth Bhavan
3. Sangeetha Vegetarian Restaurant
4. Hotel Hot Chips

Step 3: Using judgment sampling to select the respondents. The prerequisite for the
participants is that they would use the hotel service more than once.

4.2.2 Sample Characteristics

The participants are customers of chains of restaurants selected for this study. The respondents were administered the questionnaire using paper and pencil method after the services. The respondents were asked to report on food quality, service quality, price, location, environment, trust, satisfaction, word of mouth and customer loyalty.

4.3 CONSTRUCTS/CONCEPTS DEFINITION

A total of nine constructs have been included in this study as adopted from the literature. The behavioral aspects are measured with five constructs which are the antecedents namely, food quality, service quality, price, location, and environment. The relationship facets are measured using two variables namely, customer satisfaction and trust. The model has a mediating variable called word of mouth. The outcome variable is customer loyalty.

4.3.1 Behavioral Aspect

The behavioral aspect consists of five constructs. They are Food Quality, Service Quality, Price, Location, and Environment. As per the relationship quality model proved by Sangyup Sean Hyun, the constructs are measured. The inputs from other researchers who have proved their model are also taken into consideration for assessing the constructs of the study. Food quality is measured by items such as the facets like taste of the food, presentation of the food, temperature of the food, freshness of the food, health benefit of the food, overall quality of the food. Service Quality is measured by items such as Willingness of servers to serve, Knowledge of the servers with regard to the service provide, perception of the brand, timing taken to serve the food, service quality among all the branches of the chains of restaurant and overall impact of service quality of the chains of restaurant.

Environment is measured by items such as Neatness and Cleanliness of the restaurants, Comfortless of the dining hall, Interiors of the restaurants and attractiveness of the dining area. Price is measured by items such as Reasonable pricing of the food items, Value
of the food, Satisfaction with the right pricing and Overall happiness with regard to the pricing strategy. Location is measured by items such as Convenience of the location of the restaurant, Impact of crowd in the restaurant, Convenience of working hours, Overall happiness of the location of the restaurant.

All 24 items were presented as statements on the questionnaire and they were measured using 5 point Likert scales anchored by “Strongly Disagree” (1) and “Strongly Agree” (5).

4.3.2 Relationship Quality Variables

There are two relationship quality variables as per the study conducted by Hyun (2010) and they are customer satisfaction and trust [5]. Customer Satisfaction is measured by items such as Happiness towards the performance of the restaurant, Feeling of contendedness with the restaurant performance, Delight feeling towards the restaurant when hearing the name of the restaurant and Overall satisfaction towards the restaurant. Trust is measured by items such as Sincerity of servers of the restaurant, Honesty of the servers, Reliability of the servers and Attitude of servers in treating the customers.

The two constructs are measured using eight items using 5 point Likert scale with 1=“Strongly disagree” and 5= “Strongly agree”.

4.3.3 Mediating Variable

Walker (2001) has proved the outcome variable loyalty with the mediation effect of the construct word of mouth. Hence, the model is tested for the Indian scenario with the model adopted by the researcher [256].

Word of Mouth is measured by items such as Frequency of mentioning the restaurant name to others, Opportunity to tell others about the restaurant, Number of instances mentioning the name of the particular restaurant in comparison with the other competitors in the
market. It is measured using 4 items with 5 point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.

4.3.4 Outcome Variable

As per the models proven by various researchers like Hyun (2010) and Walker (2001), the outcome variable customer loyalty is considered for this study. It is being tested in the Indian scenario. The outcome variable of customer loyalty are Sharing positive thoughts about the restaurant to others, recommending the particular restaurant to others, Attitude of customers in recommending for the particular restaurant every time they ask for and Choice of the particular restaurant when opting to eat out.

This construct is measured using 4 items with 5 point scaling in the questionnaire.

4.4 MEASURES

Reflective measurement models are used in this study. Nine constructs were operationalized in order to test the proposed research model. This is made of Behavioral constructs, Relationship quality constructs, and the customer loyalty, which is an outcome variable. Behavioral aspects is measured using five constructs namely food quality, service quality, price, location and environment. Relationship Quality is made up of two constructs namely: Customer Satisfaction, Trust. The word of mouth is the mediation variable. The outcome variable is the customer loyalty. The response format is a 5 point Likert Scale. The anchor points of the questions used in the study vary from “Strongly Disagree” = 1 to “Strongly Agree” = 5. Inputs from Hyun (2010); Walker (2001) were considered while designing the model for the study.

4.5 QUESTIONNAIRE

The descriptive research design is used in this study on chains of restaurants and the study pertaining to this is cross sectional, which is just one time data collection. The data
The questionnaire was administered to 50 samples selected for the study in the form of pilot study and the selected samples were requested to give their opinion about the questionnaire detailing, like if there are any ambiguity in understanding the questions from the questionnaire, if there are any omissions made or any further errors that could be noticed by the samples on the questionnaire. To select the samples judgement sampling method is adopted wherein the researcher will be able to select the samples based on a criteria prefixed as to who had availed services from that particular chains of restaurant atleast once before the current visit in that particular month. The data was collected from four different chains of restaurants Hotel Saravana Bhavan, Hotel Vasantha Bhavan, Hotel Hot Chips, Sangeetha Vegetarian Restaurant within Tamil Nadu. The sample size was 593. Questionnaire is made up of nine theoretical constructs with 40 measures/items. Since the data is multi variate non-normal in nature. Interdependent multi variate techniques were applied to analyze the study by using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM).

The items of all the constructs have been adopted from the literature and modified to suit the Indian culture. The questions are modified in such way that the core meaning has not
changed.

The content validity is assessed by sending questionnaires to the four domain experts to discover any ambiguous items in the questionnaire. The constructs used in this study are reflective and thus follow classical test theory. According to classical test theory, reliability and validity are important pillars of research.

The study does not possess any formative construct/Index and thus the study treat classical test theory as a basis. The software used for analysis of data was SPSS 21 and SmartPLS 3.0.