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ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

THE MODERATING EFFECT OF EWOM ON THE PERCEPTION OF SERVICE QUALITY AND REPURCHASE INTENSION RELATIONSHIP: THE CASE OF THE WEST BANK RESTAURANTS

MASTER'S THESIS

Hebah HANBALI

Department of Business

Business Administration Program

July, 2021

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(Y1812.130254)

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Thesis Advisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Cihan TINAZTEPE

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ONAY FORMU

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the research study "The moderating effect of eWOM on the perception of service quality and repurchase intension relationship: the case of the West Bank restaurants", which I presented as a Master thesis, was prepared without any aid in contravention of scientific ethics and traditions throughout the whole process from the stage of the project to the thesis' end, and the materials from which I benefitted are those listed in the Bibliography. (…/…/20…)

Hebah Hanbali

FOREWORD

With my respect and appreciation, I would like to express gratitude to Assist. Prof. Dr. Cihan TINAZTEPE, thesis adviser, for her expert advice, valuable suggestions, and support through my thesis preparation duration.

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July, 2021   Hebah Hanbali

THE MODERATING EFFECT OF EWOM ON THE PERCEPTION OF SERVICE QUALITY AND REPURCHASE INTENSION RELATIONSHIP: THE CASE OF THE WEST BANK RESTAURANTS

ABSTRACT

Repurchase intention, service quality and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) became important issues to understand and search in the last decades. In restaurants business, previous researchers found that service quality was a main reason for business success and the creation of repurchase intentions while repurchase intention was found to be able to predict real repurchase behaviors and retain customers. Scholars also found that there is a relationship between service quality and repurchase initiation.

The ability of word of mouth (WOM) and social eWOM to affect the relationships between different variables was found in previous studies where they can strengthen or weaken the different relationships. Thus, the purpose of this quantitative study is to find the effect of perception of service which is one of the two components of service quality and its dimensions on repurchase intention of restaurant customers in West Bank, and to examine the moderating effect of social eWOM on the relationship between the perception of service and repurchase intention, so that restaurants there can benefit from the study's results in favor of their business.

The study uses an adapted questionnaire containing scale items for measuring perception of service, social eWOM and repurchase intention. It was distributed online to restaurants' customers in West Bank. Perception of service was measured using SERVQUAL attributes. The key variables of the questionnaire; perception of service, social eWOM and repurchase intention, were identified through literature. The data collected from 197 distributed questionnaires, where the participants were composed of (25% male and 75% female). The questionnaire is composed of two sections, the first is the demographic information section, and the second includes the scale items of perception of service, social eWOM and repurchase intention.

The reliability of the scale parts was tested and resulted in good and excellent internal consistency values. The data was analyzed using SPSS 19.0. Factor analysis demonstrated that Assurance and Reliability are the dimensions of perception of service. Multiple regression was used to study the effect of perception of service and its dimensions on repurchase intention. Hierarchical regression was also used to test the moderating effect of social eWOM on the relationship between perception of service and repurchase intention. The findings showed that the perception of service has a positive effect on customer repurchase intention. In addition, the results partially confirmed that social eWOM moderates the relationship between the perception of service and repurchase intention. The small size of the sample is a major limitation of this study.

Keywords: Repurchase Intention, Service Quality, EWOM, Social Media, Facebook

YENIDEN SATIN ALMA NIYETI ILE HIZMET KALITESI İLIŞKISI ÜZERINDE ELEKTRONIK AĞIZDAN AĞZA PAZARLAMANIN MODERATÖR ETKISI: WEST BANK'TAKI RESTORANLAR ÖRNEĞI

ÖZET

Yeniden satın alma niyeti, hizmet kalitesi ve elektronik ağızdan ağza iletişim (eWOM), son yıllarda anlaşılması ve araştırılması gereken önemli konular haline geldi. Restorancılık sektöründe önceki araştırmacılar hizmet kalitesinin, iş başarısının temel nedeni olduğunu ve yeniden satın alımı tetiklediğini tespit etmiştir. Akademisyenler ayrıca hizmet kalitesi ile yeniden satın alma arasında bir ilişki olduğunu bulmuşlardır.

Ağızdan ağıza pazarlama yapabilmenin ve sosyal ağızdan ağıza iletişim yetisinin farklı değişkenler arasındaki ilişkilere, ilişkileri güçlendirici veya zayıflatıcı şekilde etki ettiği ortaya konulmuştur. Dolayısıyla bu nicel çalışmanın amacı, hizmet kalitesinin iki bileşeninden biri olan hizmet algısı ve boyutlarının Batı Şeria'daki restoran müşterilerinin yeniden satın alma niyeti üzerindeki etkisini bulmak ve sosyal ağızdan ağıza iletişimin bu ilişki üzerindeki düzenleyici etkisini incelemektir. Hizmet algısı ile yeniden satın alma niyeti arasında bir ilişki kurarak, oradaki restoranların çalışmanın sonuçlarından yararlanabilmeleri sağlanacaktır.

Çalışmada hizmet algısı, sosyal ağızdan ağıza iletişim ve tekrar satın alma niyetini ölçmek için uyarlanmış bir anket kullanılmıştır. Batı Şeria'daki restoran müşterilerine bu anket elektronik ortamda dağıtılmıştır. Hizmet algısı SERVQUAL öznitelikleri kullanılarak ölçülmüştür. Katılımcıların %25'i erkek ve %75'I kadınlardan oluşmaktadır. Toplamda 197 geri dönüş alınmıştır. Anket iki bölümden oluşmaktadır; başta demografik bilgiler ve anketin gerisinde hizmet algısı, sosyal ağızdan ağıza iletişim ve tekrar satın alma niyeti ölçek maddeleri yer almaktadır.

Ölçeğin bileşenlerinin güvenilirliği test edilmiş ve anketin iç tutarlılık değerlerinin iyi olduğu görülmüştür. Veriler SPSS 19.0 programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Faktör analizi sonucunda göre hizmet algısının boyutları "güvence" ve "güvenilirlik"

olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Hizmet algısı ve boyutlarının yeniden satın alma niyeti üzerindeki etkisini incelemek için çoklu regresyon kullanılmıştır. Hiyerarşik regresyon ile sosyal ağızdan ağıza iletişimin hizmet algısı ve tekrar satın alma niyeti arasındaki ilişki üzerindeki düzenleyici etkisi test edilmiştir. Bulgular, hizmet algısının müşterinin yeniden satın alma niyeti üzerinde olumlu bir etkisi olduğunu göstermiştir. Ek olarak, sonuçlar kısmen sosyal ağızdan ağıza iletişimin hizmet algısı ile tekrar satın alma niyeti arasındaki ilişkiyi yumuşattığını doğrulamıştır. Örneklemin küçük olması bu çalışmanın önemli bir kısıtlılığıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeniden Satın Alma Niyeti, Hizmet Kalitesi, Elektronik Ağızdan Ağıza Iletişim, Sosyal Medya, Facebook

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ASS   **:** Assurance

E.g.   **:** Example

E-commerce **:** Electronic Commerce

EWOM   **:** Electronic Word of Mouth

ILS   **:** Israeli Shekel

PCA   **:** Principal Component Analysis

PCBS   **:** Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

REL   **:** Reliability

SERVQUAL **:** Service Quality

SNSs   **:** Social Networking Sites

Social eWOM: Electronic Word of Mouth on Social Media

SPSS   **:** Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

TPB   **:** Theory of Planned Behavior

UGC   **:** User Generated Content

UK   **:** United Kingdome

USD   **:** United States Dollar

VIF   **:** Variance Inflation Factor

WOM   **:** Word of Mouth

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background to the Study

Technological revolution and digitalization have changed people's lives in the last decade. Technology has supported business tasks (Nikoloski, 2014). Better communication, productivity (Berman, 2012), information spread, and customers' engagement (Muchardie et al., 2016) were some of the outputs of using these technologies.

In the last 30 years, the creation of social media networks has begun (Ahmad, 2011). These networks were great methods for people to communicate around the world. Facebook, Linked In, Twitter, and Instagram are examples of these networks. Information sharing, marketing, "learning" (Gikas & Grant, 2013: 19), and friends making are some examples of usage of such networks.

After the creation of social media networks, businesses started to benefit from their different offered options. In addition to their benefits for business, people became able to collect data, recommendations, and knowledge about various goods and services around the world. Moreover, people could create their own content that is known as UGC or eWOM where they present their real opinions and experiences. Facebook was found in former studies to be the most used social network worldwide. Thus it started to be used by business owners to reach a large number of their targeted customers.

In the restaurants' industry, it was found that from every 10 new worldwide opened restaurants, 6 are failing. Moreover, in five years duration from the beginning of the life of any restaurant, about 8 of 10 are shutting (Bellini, 2016).

In West Bank and Gaza, it was found that the output of tourism foundations in 2014 totally was USD 603.2 million. The highest two factors in creating that number are restaurants which shaped 38% and accommodation by shaping 22% of the total (PCBS, 2016).

Since restaurants formed the highest percent, it is an important issue to support and give a big concern to restaurants to help them achieve success, support them to survive, overcome their problems and consequently give great results, outputs, and returns.

The literature proved that in restaurants' context, the service quality was considered as a strategy to create a competitive advantage (Jin et al., 2013). According to Danaher & Rust (1996), the larger number the business can keep of its current customers, the greater profits can be gained and this can be achieved by providing customers with high-quality services. In other words, service quality is an important issue that leads to the success (Markovic, et al., 2011) and returns of business (Cegliński, 2016).

Different industries confirmed that service quality is one of the most important factors that can lead to success and survival, thus it was the subject of different researches. However, the level of quality can be measured through different methods suggested by different scholars, one of them is by using two main components according to the SERVQUAL scale. These components are the customer's perceived and expected service. By finding the difference between the readings of these two components, the service quality will be evaluated. SERVQUAL is the most popular among the different scales suggested to measure service quality. Thus, its items will be adapted to create part of the questionnaire applied in this study. In this study, the perception of service effect will be studied from the perspective of its importance for customers. The degree of importance for a customer to receive services will be studied through a framework suggesting the effect of the importance of perception of service on repurchase intention, and the moderation effect of social eWOM on that relationship.

Repurchase intention which was found as a predictor for the real repurchasing behavior of customers, was the main subject of many previous pieces of research, and found to be affected by service quality.

Repurchase intention is important for business for many reasons, for instance, besides being a predictor for customer repurchase behaviors, the repurchase intents of customers should be focused on by the business in the efforts it does to market for the goods or services because retaining a customer needs fewer efforts than gaining another one (Knox and Walker, 2001). Moreover, having new customers takes a

longer duration and potential than maintaining the existed buyers (Chou & Hsu, 2016). In addition, business will save more money by concentrating on creating a customer's repetitive purchase intents than by spending money on marketing efforts (Rosenberg and Czepiel, 1984).

Furthermore, word of mouth, and electronic word of mouth effects and relationships, were studied before. For instance, it was found that Green WOM has a moderating effect on the relationship between electronic service quality and purchase intention. WOM was also found beneficial for business and marketing applications. Since this study is interested in clarifying the relationship between some of the variables that can lead to business's success and predict the customers' repurchases, it was important to understand the effect of the perception of service on the repurchase intention of customers, additionally to understand if eWOM can strengthen or weaken the relationship between them.

Therefore, in this study, service quality, repurchase intention, and eWOM variables will be defined. The literature regarding these variables will be reviewed, ending up with presenting the relationship between the three variables and the hypothesis of the study. The study will concentrate on finding the following:

- The effect of the perception of service dimensions on repurchase intention of restaurants customers in West Bank.

- The effect of social eWOM on the relationship between the perception of service and repurchase intention.

The aim of this study is to understand the effect of perceived service dimensions, which will reflect the importance level of the applied services in restaurants on the repurchase intentions of their customers. Restaurants can benefit from such data in improving services applied according to customer's selection of the important services to be applied. In addition, by finding the effect of the different dimensions of perception of service on the repurchase intention in this study, restaurants in West Bank can concentrate on improving services that affect the repurchase intents which are expected to lead to real future purchases. By understanding the effect of eWOM restaurants can get the advantage of different tools on social media.

1. The Contribution of the Study

Since different research work found that the service quality measurement is affected by the context it is measured in (Gayatri et al., 2011; Micuda & Cruceru, 2010), this research contribution will be widening knowledge and the results of the researches done on service quality and its effect on repurchase intention by adding the context of West Bank restaurants and concentrating on the component of perception of service and its dimensions' effects on repurchase intention there.

Also, the effect of electronic word of mouth on social media was studied in different researches, for example, the article done by Kudeshia & Kumar (2017) about social eWOM and some of its effects on purchase intention and brand attitude. The moderating effect of social eWOM will be studied in this research which will result in another contribution by adding new knowledge about social eWOM effect on the relationship between perception of service and repurchase intention in the context of restaurants in West Bank.

B. Statement of the Problem

The impact of perception of service on repurchase intention of restaurant customers in West Bank and the effect of eWOM on this relationship are not clear. Since restaurants in West Bank and Gaza shaped around 38% of the output of all tourism foundations there, it is an important issue to help restaurants understand some factors that can affect their business to help them survive and compete instead of failing and shutting down. These factors can relate to each other or affect each other, so it is important to study them well to benefit favorably from the outcomes of researches.

Service quality was found previously to be an important factor for business success and to be able to be utilized as a competitive advantage. According to Warraich and his colleagues (2013), the quality of service evaluation can have an impact on retaining customers. Moreover, through literature, it was found that service quality has five dimensions that vary in the strength of affecting the repurchase intention in different contexts. Service quality is measured by finding the gap between the expectation of the customer about service and the perception of that service. This research is interested in studying the effect of the different dimensions of perception of service which is one of the two components of service quality on the repurchase

intention of the customer. Since these dimensions contribute to creating the gap by which service quality is measured, and because service quality in many studies affected the repurchase intention of the customer, logically the dimensions of the perception of service quality are expected to affect the repurchase intention too.

It was found that building customer repurchase intention is a better way through which companies can have customers in the future by retaining the already existed ones instead of paying a large amount of money on gaining others through marketing efforts. This will save time, costs, and efforts and it is believed that the highest percentage of purchases in the future will be repeated purchases. Peyrot & Van Doren (1994) stated that repeated purchases account for the vast majority of customers' purchases. From that, the creation of intents to repeat purchases of customers is an important issue for restaurants.

WOM and eWOM and their effects on different aspects of the business were studied through literature, their mediating effects were studied widely in different researches, but researches about their moderating effect, especially the moderating effect of eWOM on the relationship between the perception of service and repurchase intention was very few. This research expects that in the context of West Bank restaurants, eWOM on social media will have a moderating effect on that relationship.

The results of the study will help the restaurants to start to take actions to make improvements that can support their success and survival through improving the performed service depending on the perception of service dimensions that can affect the repurchase intention and be aware of social electronic word of mouth effect on that relationship to be able to take advantage of it.

C. Research Objectives

1-To identify a suitable measurement scale for the variables of perception of service, social electronic word of mouth, and the repurchase intention.

2-To find the relationship between the perception of service and repurchase intention.

3-To find the effect of electronic word of mouth on social media on the relationship between perception of service and repurchase intention.

4-To draw conclusion from the relationships.

D. Research Questions

1. What is the effect of perception of service on customer repurchase intention?

2. What is the effect of electronic word of mouth on social media on the relationship between perception of service and customer repurchase intention?

E. Research Hypotheses

H1: Perception of service has a positive effect on repurchase intention

H1a: The dimension of tangibles has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

H1b: The dimension of reliability has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

H1c: The dimension of responsiveness has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

H1d: The dimension of assurance has a positive effect on repurchase intention

H1e: The dimension of empathy has a positive effect on the repurchase intention.

H2: Social eWOM has a positive effect on the relationship between perception of service and repurchase intention.

F. Significance of the Study

This study will help restaurants to understand the level of importance of service quality dimensions related to the customer's perception of the services and the effect of social electronic word of mouth on the relationship between perception of service and customer repurchase intention. They will be able to know and define the most important dimensions that affect the repurchase intention with respect to the perception of service. It is expected that restaurants after reading the results of this research will put new strategies to improve their service quality dimensions that are related to the perception of service and which can affect the repurchase intention in parallel with giving great concern to the social electronic word of mouth. Electronic word of mouth maybe not common for some owners of small cafes, old restaurants, or restaurants owners who are not interested in using internet communication, while many researchers found that electronic word of mouth can reach a wider group of

people through their electronic online existence where it can beat the traditional word of mouth. Different researchers found that a big number of the population around the world are using digital technologies and social media, so this study will be an example from the restaurants in West Bank context, which will help restaurant owners understand part of social eWOM effects on their business. It is expected that they will change their attitude, try to get more knowledge and learn about different uses of social media to benefit from them.

G.   Scope of the Study

This study will discuss the relationships between three variables, they are the perception of service, repurchase intention, and social eWOM. It aims to find the effect of perception of service and its dimensions on the repurchase intention of restaurants' customers in the West Bank. The data in the study was collected from 197 restaurant customers from different cities there. The study will also clarify the moderating effect of social eWOM on the relationship between perception of service and the repurchase intention. The five dimensions of service quality related only to perception of service will be used in this study.

The study will take 6 months duration after the acceptance of the proposal. The duration starts from the time of questionnaire development and administration till the end of the study. The whole study will take 2 durations, the first one will be done between October 2020 to January 2021, and the next six months from January 2021 to June 2021 will be the second duration.

H.   Chapter Layout

The first chapter introduces the main topic of the thesis. The second chapter contains background and details about service quality, electronic word of mouth and repurchase intention. Every variable was discussed clearly and its effects and relationships with other variables were clarified. The conceptual framework and hypotheses that guide the study are presented. In the third chapter, methods used and sample information for the study are clarified. The fourth chapter contains analysis data and the findings that resulted in this study. The fifth chapter contains the

discussion and conclusions the study lead the researcher to find. The last chapter demonstrates the limitations and recommendations of the study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the literature where the topics of repurchase intention, service quality, and social electronic word of mouth (eWOM) will be discussed. Articles, websites, and books were the main used sources in building the body of the literature review. The review of the literature is composed of definitions, effects, relationships, explanations, figures, and models.

A. Purchase and Repurchase Behaviors and Intentions

Purchase behavior, repurchase behavior, purchase intention, and repurchase intention are four topics that were widely discussed by different scholars in previous studies (Mittal & Kamakura, 2001; Sullivan et al., 2018; Yeh et al., 2021). To understand the relationship between the variables mentioned before, it was an important issue to discover the relationship between behaviors and intentions. One of the models that clarify the relationship between behaviors and intentions was the model of Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). TPB model was applied in different studies (Dewberry & Jackson, 2018; Verma & Chandra, 2018), where the individual's intent pointed to "the likelihood of taking action to perform a specific behavior" (Raygor, 2016: 9).

The TPB can be defined as a "model used to address individual motivational factors within unique contexts to explain the overall execution of a specific behavior" (Raygor, 2016: 10). Ajzen (1991) suggested the model of the TPB, in which the intention of the individual is a factor that centralizes the model. The theory assumes that the factors which could motivate individuals' behaviors are captured by intentions. Intentions indicate the level of individuals' readiness for trying and the level of efforts the individual might plan to do for the purpose of performing a behavior. Generally, the possibility of behavior to be performed can be increased by having stronger behavior engagement intents.

The following subsections of this part of the literature review will help understanding purchase and repurchase behaviors, purchase and repurchase intentions, and the factors that affect the repurchase intentions.

1. Purchase and Repurchase Behavior

Armstrong & Kotler (2017) stated that the buyer behavior of the consumer is defined as "The buying behavior of final consumers- individuals and households that buy goods and services for personal consumption" (p.158). The Purchase behavior points to "what the buyer buys, when, where, and how much" (p.159).Whereas Knox, & Walker (2001) stated that the repurchase behavior points to the degree to which consumers repurchase the same item after being experienced with it.

There are five main factors that affect consumer behavior; social, personal, psychological, and buyer factors. Mostly those factors cannot be controlled by a marketer, however, he should be aware of them.
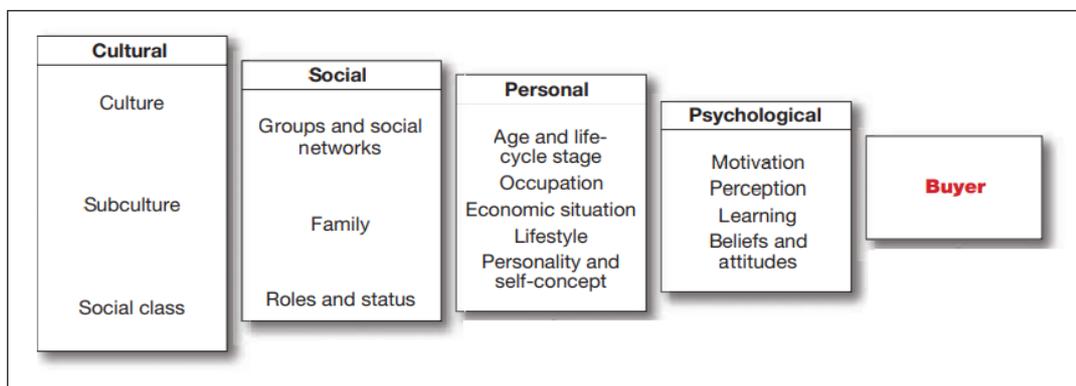
Figure 1 Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior

Source: (Armstrong & Kotler, 2017: 159)

Freud has suggested that the ways individuals behave are affected unconsciously by psychological forces (Armstrong & Kotler, 2017). One of these forces is the customer's perception which was defined as "The process by which people select, organize, and interpret information to form a meaningful picture of the world" (p.172). Thus, the actions of individuals are affected by their perception of different situations.

In this study, the perception of customers is one of the components that will be discussed clearly in the service quality part of the literature review, where the perception of the customers regarding the applied services are expected to have an effect on their repurchase intentions that consequently will be a predictor of the real behaviors according to the previously mentioned TPB.

Both purchase and repurchase behaviors are important factors for business. Xiao and

his colleagues (2018) stated that the success and profits of a business can be promoted by customers purchasing intents. Additionally, customers can be kept, and consequently, their lifetime values can be gained.

Chinomona & Maziriri (2017: 143) suggested that repurchase behavior's importance comes from the fact that "continuous repurchase behavior by consumers results in higher profit margins, competitive advantage, and faster business growth".

2. Purchase and Repurchase Intention

"Customer purchase intention refers to customers' intention to buy products or services through links in the community" (Prentice et al., 2019: 342). While repurchase intention refers to the decision of a customer about purchasing a specified service from its provider again, considering the present as well as possible future conditions (Hellier et al., 2003). In the digital environment, purchase intentions are defined as the "likelihood that a user makes a purchase from a website" (Poddar et al., 2008: 444). Whereas repurchase intention points to the person's possibility of choosing to buy from an electronic shop over and over in the long term (Chiu et al., 2009).

Intentions of customers predict their real behaviors (Montaño and Kasprzyk, 2015), consequently, higher purchase intentions of customers can lead to higher purchase behaviors. Moreover, the higher the repurchasing intentions of customers are, the higher possibility of occurrence of the actual repurchasing behaviors.

This study will focus on the variable of repurchase intentions of restaurant customers in West Bank.

a. Factors affecting repurchase intention

Previous studies presented many factors that can affect the repurchase intentions of customers. For instance, Saleem and his colleagues (2017) stated that trust and quality of service associate with repurchase intents. According to Curras-Perez and his colleagues (2017), having trust in internet sites predicts customers' intent to apply for next purchases, the reputation of the sites and the satisfaction of customers are the creators of that trust. Lin and Lekhawipat (2014) stated that satisfaction affects customer's intent to repurchase. Furthermore, Tong & Wong (2014) suggested that satisfied customers have greater repurchase intents. In addition, the link between the

satisfaction of customers with repurchase intents, can be affected by the degree to which the customers are loyal (Yi & La, 2004).

Moreover, brand preference has an impact on the intention to repurchase (Hellier et al., 2003). Mensah & Mensah (2018) suggested that service quality and satisfaction of customers together have an important impact on the next purchasing intentions they will have. Additionally, Ariffin and his colleagues (2016) mentioned that people's choice of selecting the same service supplier they want to repurchase from depends on the experience they had in the past.

From that, the repurchase intentions of restaurants' customers are expected to rely on different variables, one of them is the experience which customers had in the past in the restaurant. Thus, the repurchase intents of customers will rely on the service they actually received or in brief the perception of service.

B. Service Quality

Service quality is an important topic which was searched widely in different fields, where restaurants and the food industry can be some examples. Service quality was found to be an important factor for business success and revenue creation, thus different researchers tried to evaluate and find different variables affecting or affected by service quality. Since service has different attributes than goods, different definitions and models were suggested for the purpose of its measurement.

This part will make a better understanding of service quality variables by reviewing the literature regarding service quality definitions, measurement, dimensions, importance, effects, and factors affected by service quality.

1. Definitions of Service Quality

Scholars suggested different definitions for service quality. According to Levitt (1972), the quality of the service implies that the service's output is compliant with a stetted criteria. Another definition represented that it is the result of the variation between the customers' expected and perceived service (Oh, 1999). Moreover, it was presented as the extent to which the carried service is meeting the expectations a customer has (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

In the previously mentioned definitions, the perception of service is related to the

real performed services, while the expectations refer to the anticipations of the customers (Asubonteng et al., 1996).

2. Service Quality Measurement

Parasuraman and his colleagues (1985) stated that researchers have started to give more concern to the quality subject since 1980. Their concern was caused by the fact that the determination of quality for a good was easy, while for a service it was not. The attributes of service can be the main cause of the difficulty of the determination of the quality of service, for instance, it has an intangible nature. Moreover, depending on the service producers, every service is performed dissimilarly from the other. Furthermore, services can be consumed while the time through which they are being produced.

Different researchers in their works tried to suggest models that aim to assess the quality of service (Gronroos, 1984; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Parasuraman et al., 1988). Gronroos (1984) suggested in his model that customers make comparisons between the quality of the service they expected and received. The perceived service quality results from that comparison and is affected by the image of the firm. The technical quality dimension, as well as the functional quality, are used to specify the perceived service.

Another study about the same subject was done in the same decade by (Parasuraman et al., 1985) and it resulted in creating a model that clarifies five gaps that affect the service quality. Four of the gaps are between the perception that the executives have and the functions relating to services' delivery, marketing, and design. The fifth one is between perception and the expectation the customer has regarding the service as clarified in Figure 2. These gaps were found from gathering insights utilizing qualitative research in which interview questions were asked to executive personnel of four specified sectors and focus groups of customers as well.

CONSUMER

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┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
│ Word of Mouth│      │Personal Needs│      │Past Experience│
│Communications│      │              │      │              │
└──────┬───────┘      └──────┬───────┘      └──────┬───────┘
       │                     │                     │
       │              ┌──────▼───────┐             │
       └─────────────►│Expected Service│◄──────────┘
                      └──────────────┘
              GAP5        │  ▲
                      ┌───▼──┴──────┐
                      │Perceived Service│
                      └──────────────┘
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MARKETER

┌──────────────┐   GAP4   ┌──────────────┐
│Service Delivery│◄─────────────────►│   External   │
│(Including pre-│   │Communications│
│and Post-contacts)│   │ to Consumers │
└──────────────┘   └──────────────┘

GAP3

┌──────────────┐
│Translation of│
│Perception into│
│Service Quality│
│   Specs   │
└──────────────┘

GAP1   GAP2

┌──────────────┐
│ Management   │
│Perceptions of│
│Consumer Expectations│
└──────────────┘
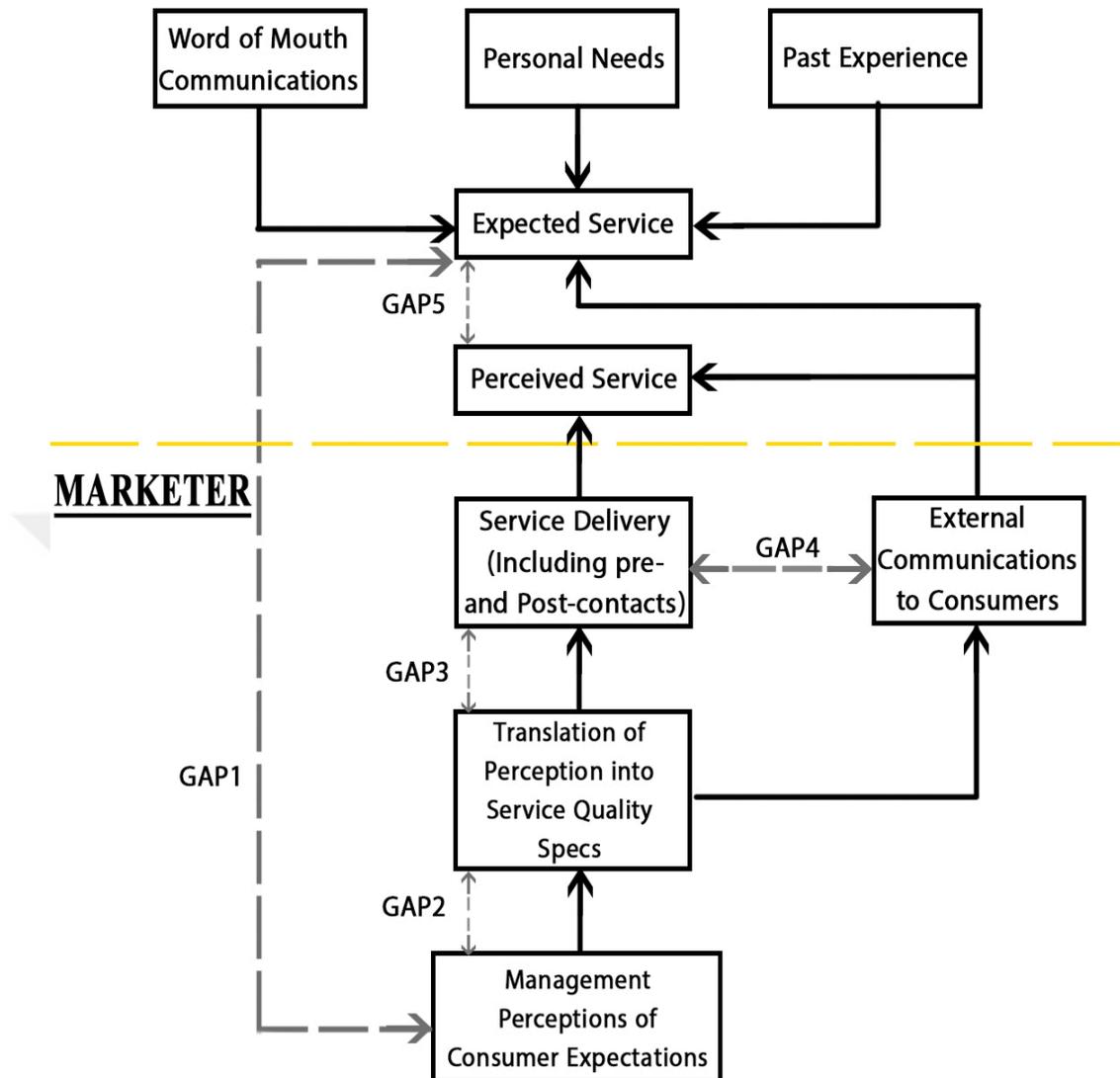
Figure 2 Service Quality Model

Source: (Parasuraman et al., 1985: 44)

In the model, the service quality perceived by customers is shown to be resulted from finding the difference between the dimensions of the expectation and perception of service.

The study ended up with the determination of 10 dimensions, which will be clarified in the following subsection under the title of the ten dimensions of the quality of service.

The customer utilizes the mentioned dimensions to create any expectation and perception regarding the service quality.

a. The ten dimensions of the quality of service

Referring to the study done by Parasuraman and his colleagues (1985), Figure 3 shows the dimensions and components of service quality. In this subsection, all the suggested 10 dimensions in the model will be clarified one by one.
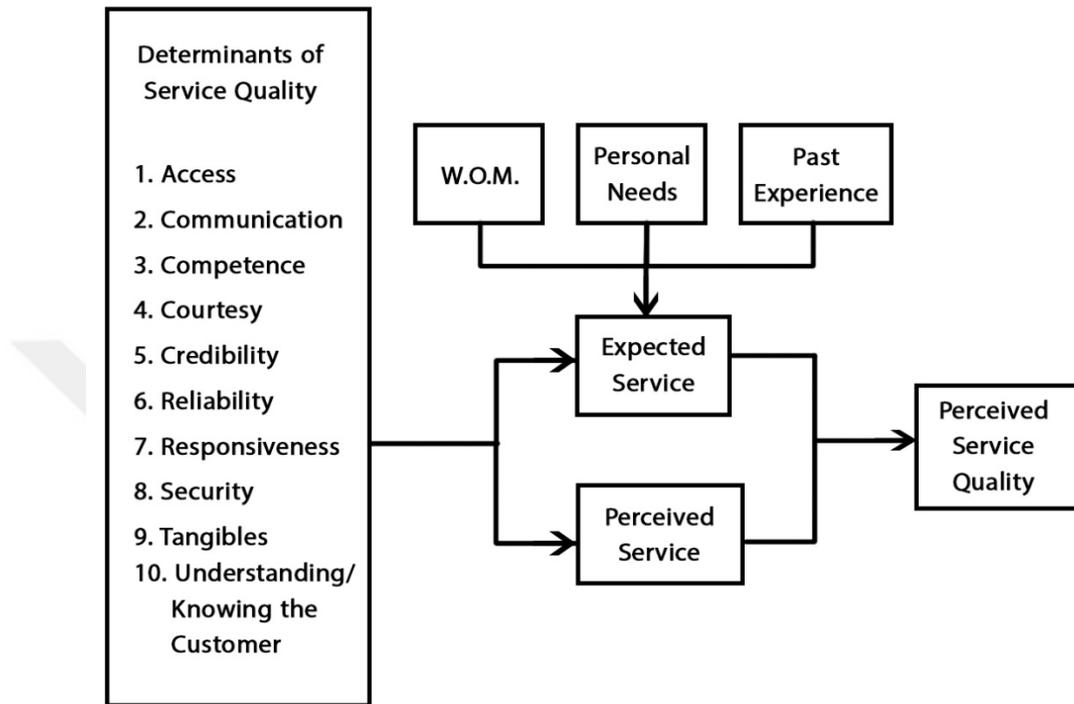
Figure 3 Determinants of Perceived Service Quality

Source: (Parasuraman et al., 1985: 48)

- Reliability

Reliability refers to the capability to perform the agreed services at a specified time and in an effective manner (e.g. every operation is done properly from the start and the accounting to be accurate).

- Responsiveness

Responsiveness points to the extent to which the staff is ready and willing to support customers by delivering the promised service at an accurate time (e.g. quick arrangement of an appointment).

- Competence

Competence is having the knowledge and talents that are needed to conduct services (e.g. the knowledge and skills of the staff and the analysis capability of the

company).

- Access

Access is the easiness of reach (e.g. the flexibility of working hours).

- Courtesy

Courtesy points to the attitudes of the staff members who are performing a service (e.g. being polite, kind, and courteous).

- Credibility

Credibility includes the worthiness of the service provider to be trusted and believed (e.g. trusting specific restaurants for their reputations).

- Communication

Communication means listening to customers and providing them with clear and understandable information (e.g. the staff of a restaurant are able to use different languages if customers do not understand the main one).

- Security

Security is causing no risks, and being free of dangers or doubts (e.g. the customer can be confident with that source of service).

- Understanding/ Knowing the customer

Understanding/ Knowing the customer includes efforts done for recognizing the particular needs of customers (e.g. to give customers the needed attention individually or to notice their arrival).

- Tangibles

Tangibles involve the real evidence of services (e.g. the look of devices, machinery, the place, and the staff) (Lee & Hing, 1995; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Zeithaml et al., 1990).

3. SERVQUAL

SERVQUAL is a measurement scale created by Parasuraman et al. (1988). It is one of the scales used to assess the quality of service by finding the difference between the expected and perceived service. The previously mentioned 10 dimensions which

were related to the service quality model (Parasuraman et al., 1985), and applied previously to measure service quality, were shrunk in this improved scale to include just five dimensions, they are: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy (Berry & Parasuraman, 2004; Saleh & Ryan, 1991; Zeithaml et al., 1990).

Even some different scales were suggested in the later studies for measuring service quality, SERVQUAL is one of the most popular and highly used scales among them.

According to Philip and Hazlett (1997), SERVQUAL is the vast and commonly used evaluating tool of the quality of service, because it is easy to be implemented. It can be generalized and it does not have complicated contents. It is believed that SERVQUAL is an integrated and widely utilized instrument for measuring the quality of service (Khatibi et al., 2002). Jain & Gupta (2004) stated that it is a powerful tool for diagnosing the areas of failing or deficiency of service quality for future adjustments and improvements that will be planned by management personnel. Parasuraman and his colleagues (1993) suggest that service quality is basically evaluated through the dimensions of SERVQUAL, while other special contextual dimensions can complement them when needed. The previously mentioned attributes caused the SERVQUAL scale to be chosen from all of the other scales for being applied in this study.

When using the SERVQUAL scale, the components of expectation and the perception of the service for which the quality is being measured, are evaluated using 22 scale items. The items of the scale are grouped under 5 dimensions and should be applied to each one of the previously mentioned components.

The following subsection titled the five dimensions of service quality according to SERVQUAL will help understanding clearly each one of the dimensions.

a. The five dimensions of service quality according to SERVQUAL

Berry & Parasuraman (2004) stated clarifications for the 5 dimensions of service quality as follows:

- Tangibles

Tangibles point to the looking of the physical facilities (e.g. the look of employees and equipment).

- Reliability

Reliability points to the regularity of execution, it means that things are being done correctly from the start. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the business seeks to provide the customer with the promised service (e.g. if a customer asks a restaurant's employee to prepare a specific meal, the employee will prepare the meal correctly without any mistake) (Saleh & Ryan, 1991).

- Responsiveness

Responsiveness indicates the intention and readiness of staff to supply the customer with the service quickly without any delay (e.g. if a customer asks an employee for a specific service, the employee will respond without any delay) (Saleh& Ryan, 1991).

- Assurance

Assurance points to the employed personnel's knowledge and courtesy, along with the certainty levels they can transmit (e.g the knowledge and behaviors of employees while responding to a restaurant's customer's question about the contents of a meal or a customer's complaint).

- Empathy

Empathy points to the intention of caring and giving special services to customers (e.g caring to serve alcohol-free food exactly as ordered by a customer).

4. The Importance and Effects of Service Quality

Carrick (2010) suggested that the quality of service can be used as a competitive advantage if an outstanding service was provided to the customer. In addition, the quality of service helps in retaining the available customers, attracting new ones via WOM, and hence helps in raising profits of the business (Danaher et al., 1996). Reichheld and Sasser (1990) stated that the quality of service can be a method used for customer retention. Moreover, raises in service quality associate with raises in investment returns and the shares of the business in the market (Anderson & Zeithaml, 1984; Zeithaml, 2000). Service quality decreases costs for manufacturers and causes business to be more productive (Garvin, 1983).

Scholars presented that service quality affects other variables. For instance, customer satisfaction and loyalty are some examples of the studied variables (Kheng et al.,

2010), where every dimension of the service quality differs in the strength of the effect it has on the affected variables. According to Heskett and his colleagues (1994), the quality of service influences the satisfaction of customers and their loyalty. Moreover, the purchase intents of customers are impacted by the quality of service (Alharthey, 2019).

Service quality is one of the important elements the customer needs to consider prior to selecting the supplier of service (Narayan and Jain, 2011). In addition, it was also found that service quality has an impact on the repurchasing intentions of customers. For instance, Satriandhini and his colleagues (2020) concluded that customers' willingness to repeat purchasing is positively influenced by the perception of quality of service.

5. The Quality of Service in Restaurants

Service quality is a significant issue for restaurants for different reasons. For instance, it is essential for raising sales (Qin & Prybutok, 2008), retaining and satisfying the customers (Al-Tit, 2015). In addition, service quality and customer satisfaction affect the repurchasing intentions of customers (Mensah & Mensah, 2018).

Moreover, scholars found that the dimensions of service quality differ in their relation with, and the strength of affecting different variables in different restaurant contexts. For instance, Omar and his colleagues (2016) suggested that service quality has a positive relationship with customers' satisfaction in Arabic restaurants in Malaysia. In addition, he reported in his study that the dimensions of empathy, tangibles, reliability, and responsiveness respectively follow the assurance dimension in their relationship strength with the satisfaction of customers.

Nguyen and his colleagues (2018) presented that dimensions of quality of service differ in their strength of impact on the satisfaction of the customers in quick-service restaurants in the UK. The tangibles dimension has the strongest effect, followed by assurance, responsiveness, reliability, and empathy respectively.

6. Factors Affecting Service Quality and its Assessment

As long as employees are satisfied, the level of service quality in the eye of customers increases, and a more effective organization can be achieved (Snipes et

al., 2005). Furthermore, the type of the service and the cultural context together were found to have the ability to affect the assessment of the quality of service according to previous researchers (Gayatri et al., 2011; Micuda & Cruceru, 2010). SERVQUAL scale in different studies was used to measure the service quality in different contexts like hotels (Akbaba, 2006; Debasish & Dey, 2015), travel agencies (Filiz, 2010, Johns et al., 2004; Lam & Zhang, 1999), libraries (Agustina et al., 2020; Asogwa et al., 2014; Kiran, 2010), airports (Heung et al., 2000; Pabedinskaitė & Akstinaitė, 2014), universities (Banahene et al., 2017), restaurants (Lee & Hing, 1995), etc.

Each dimension of service quality is expected to differ in its strength in predicting the quality of the service, and that strength can differ from one context to another. Yilmaz (2009) stated that for the assessment of service quality, in the context of hotels, the dimension of empathy was found to be the strongest predictor of perception of service, while the tangibles dimension was the weakest. However, Akbaba (2006) stated that the dimension of tangibles is the strongest factor in predicting the quality of service in the context of hotels.

According to Chin & Tsai (2013), the dimension that is superior for evaluating the quality of service is reliability. Next is the dimension of empathy, followed by innovation, tangibility, and assurance respectively. Vijayvargy (2014) stated that among four studied dimensions of service quality, the strongest predictor of quality of service for a restaurant chain starting in order is, empathy, convenience, and tangibles, while responsiveness is not as much important.

7. The Effect of Dimensions of Service Quality on Other Variables

Previous studies found different levels of effect of service quality's dimensions on the other variables in different contexts. For instance, all of the five dimensions of service quality have a positive impact on the equity of the brand, whilst the tangibles dimension had a stronger effect than the other dimensions (Esmaeilpour et al., 2016). Esmaeilpour & Hoseini (2017) suggested that all of the five dimensions have a positive impact on the identity of the brand, while the personality of the brand can just be affected by the reliability, tangibles, empathy, and assurance dimension. Kant and Jaiswal (2017) stated that the five dimensions plus the image are the measurement dimensions of service quality while responsiveness is discovered to be

the strongest dimension for predicting customer satisfaction.

Perez and his colleagues (2007) suggested that there is a positive association between the quality of service dimensions and the purchasing intents of customers.

C. Word of Mouth and Electronic Word of Mouth

Word of mouth (WOM) and its improved form named electronic word of mouth (eWOM) are subjects that were researched widely in business studies. Different definitions and measurement dimensions for both of them were suggested. In addition, their relationships with other variables were discussed by many scholars.

This part of the literature review will help understanding WOM, eWOM, and the logic under which the hypothesis of the expected effect of social eWOM on the relationship between service quality and repurchase intention was built for this research.

1. Word Of Mouth (WOM)

Scholars suggested different definitions for WOM, for instance, Huete-Alcocer (2017) suggested that WOM indicates the verbal conversation among different customers. Whereas Bao and Chang (2014) mentioned that it is interpersonal communication between the person who sends messages and who receives them. Whilst, Bone (1992: 579) stated that it is an interchange of commentary, beliefs, and opinions between people who are not representatives of business' marketing sources. In addition, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) presented that WOM is the activity of sharing data regarding a product or service between customers that can alter their points of view and attitudes. Furthermore, communications among customers regarding products, services, or companies they previously experienced without having an interest in causing a commercial impact is another definition (Litvin et al., 2008).

East and his colleagues (2008) suggested that WOM is an expression for advice without a formal nature, which can be exchanged amongst customers or end-users. While as stated by Ismagilova and his colleagues (2017: 7) it was the "Oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator, whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, product, service, or

organization".

The definitions mentioned above can be summarized to define WOM as verbal communication among people. It can include information regarding goods or services where the customers express their opinions without planning to result in a commercial impact. In addition, it can be considered a piece of advice and can affect the customers' attitudes as well as their opinions.

This part will review the literature regarding WOM by presenting sources, importance and effects, and factors that are affected by or affecting WOM.

a. Sources of WOM

Different sources were found to be able to produce the Word of mouth. For instance, friends, relatives, and acquaintances (Armstrong and Kotler, 2017). According to Ennew and his colleagues (2000), goods' suppliers, existing or prospected customers, and professionals are other sources for WOM.

b. Importance and effects of WOM

According to Muzamil and his colleagues (2018), services are not tangible in their nature, thus they can be assessed only after being experienced. Therefore, WOM which is composed of opinions of previous customers who had already experienced the service is an important factor on which new customers will depend to avoid risks (Jeong & Jang, 2011). In addition to reducing risks, the certainty of decisions can be a reason why the customers depend on the word of mouth (Murray, 1991). Consequently, WOM will strongly affect other factors in the hospitality sector (Zhang et al., 2014).

Word of mouth can be created by the customers who share their real opinions and true experiences regarding products or services with other personnel (Lerrthaitrakul & Panjakajornsak, 2014). According to Feick and Price (1987), word of mouth starts and spread by consumers who use the goods or services, telling the realistic experiences they had, therefore WOM is different from the contents created by companies' marketers. Furthermore, word of mouth is considered to be so accurate, since its provider generally has no relation with the company delivering the services and is not expected to benefit personally from recommending the services it offers (Silverman, 2011).

Moreover, data obtained from others can be more preferable for some people rather than theirs even if they were confident about that data they had (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004), therefore the data obtained from WOM can replace or affect the customer's former information. According to Huete-Alcocer (2017), recommendations from others might have an effect on the choices of customers, what they buy and what they consume. East and his colleagues (2008) stated that WOM most likely can affect the behaviors of customers and their selections.

Additionally, WOM is commercially unbiased and can spread rapidly as found with other researchers. For instance, Silverman (2011) presented that WOM communications are not biased and lack any expected personal stake. Li and his colleagues (2018) mentioned that word of mouth can spread more quickly than conventional advertisements and it is less expensive than them. Moreover, Williams & Buttle (2011) stated that the organization by getting advantage of WOM can become more effective.

c. Factors that are affected by WOM

Word of mouth was proved to affect other different variables through literature. According to Wangenheim & Bayón (2004), the effect of word of mouth on the loyalty of the customer has been widely documented. Additionally, it was regarded as a significant factor for influencing the customer's taken or switch choices.

WOM can moderate the relationships between different variables, for instance, Lin and Lu (2010) suggested that trust and intents to purchase relationship can be moderated by WOM's positive form. According to Saleem and his colleagues (2017), WOM moderates both the relationships of service quality and trust with the intent to purchase of the customer, which are mediated by the brand's image and the customer's satisfaction.

The word of mouth by being positive or negative can play a role in its effect. For instance, Moran and Muzellec (2017) explained that negative WOM can reduce the possibility of buying products while the positive form can increase the burying possibilities.

d. Measurement of WOM

Different researches in the past were done to understand WOM effects on or relationships with other variables. However, the method which was utilized to

measure WOM differed between one work and the other. Some researchers suggested evaluating dimensions for WOM. For instance, Bone (1992) and Mangold and his colleagues (1999) in their studies focused on the content of WOM. Khare and his colleagues (2011) concentrated on WOM volume. Lee & Koo (2012) studied the valence of a WOM conversation.

The Volume points to the amount of WOM communications (Godes & Mayzlin, 2009). The types of positive together with negative messaging are referred to as WOM valence. (Halstead, 2002). The message's content means the words, pictures or photos, signs, or audible information (Gheyle & Jacobs, 2017).

Other studies were interested in WOM effects without suggesting measurement dimensions. For instance, Kim and his colleagues (2001) studied WOM as one unit.

e. Factors affecting WOM

WOM was found to be affected by different factors in previous studies. For example, Muzamil and his colleagues (2018) stated that the quality of the offered foods and services had a significant influence on the generated WOM. Mensah & Mensah (2018) stated that satisfied customers are expected to intent to repeat their visits and to generate word of mouth.

According to Sundaram and his colleagues (1998), WOM motivations are strongly related to consuming experiences. The more experiences the customer passes through, the more likely opinions or recommendations will be shared. Thus, a larger number of people are able to be exposed to that data which can be preferable or not to the producer.

2. Electronic Word Of Mouth (EWOM)

New forms of WOM appeared with digitalization and web 2.0 inventions. One of them is eWOM (Alexandru, 2010; Yang, 2017). Later, with the creation of social media, another new improved form under the name of social eWOM took place (Hu et al., 2014). Thus, social eWOM is a form of eWOM that can be found on social media (Hu et al., 2014).

EWOM has different definitions suggested by previous scholars. For instance, it can be defined as data which can easily be reached online, regarding a product or a service, it is composed of words or points of view exchanges among different people.

That data can be positive or negative (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Wangenheim (2005) and Zeithaml and his colleagues (1996) reported that in the positive form of eWOM, customers recommend services they formerly experienced, while in the negative form they do not.

Bronner and de Hoog (2011) stated that eWOM points to posts shared on the internet and created by a consumer, they are composed of commentary regarding a good or service. According to Thorson and Rodgers (2006: 40), eWOM can be defined as "Positive or negative statements made about a product, company, or media personality that are made widely available via the Internet". Litvin and his colleagues (2008) defined eWOM as any informally applied interactions addressed to customers using technologies of the internet, around the attributes of a specific product, a service, or suppliers.

Ismagilova and his colleagues (2017) stated that eWOM is a persistent continuously changing process for data interchange done between the past, future, or current customers about the products, services, brands, or firms that are accessible using the internet for a large number of individuals as well as organizations.

This part will review the literature regarding eWOM's measurement, reasons why customers search for it, importance and effects, factors affected or affecting eWOM and social eWOM.

a. Measurement of eWOM

EWOM's prior researches used different methods in the aim of its measurement. Gopinath and his colleagues (2014) suggested that eWOM has the dimensions of valence and volume through which it can be assessed. According to Goyette and his colleagues (2010), eWOM assessing dimensions are the content, intensity, and valence that can be positive or negative, while (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017) studied the effect of eWOM as one unit.

b. Benefits for customers and business

Goldsmith and Horowitz (2006) examined motivators of the customer to seek digital views and discovered different motives such as reducing risks, doing the same thing that people who search digital views do, finding fewer prices, gaining information through utilizing easy methods and searching information before buying. In addition encouragement from traditional sources like television can be a motivator as well.

The customer can reach data regarding prices, products, services, or various providers that can lead to the better making of decisions (Varadarajan & Yadav, 2002).

The electronic form of WOM can be preferred to be used by some people rather than the traditional form of WOM for some reasons. For example, people share their opinions digitally and do not need to be present personally at a specific site (Al Halbusi & Tehseen, 2018). EWOM is easy to be reached (Huete-Alcocer, 2017), additionally it can be benefited from for a longer time as long as it stays available online (Al Halbusi & Tehseen, 2018). In WOM, the communications are done more privately than the electronic form which has higher visibility (King et al., 2014; Kozinets et al., 2010). Ismagilova and his colleagues (2017) stated that customers are able to search points of view regarding goods or experiences of services from personnel whom they do not know anonymously. EWOM can reach a larger number of respondents while being checked worldwide (Henni g-Thurau et al., 2003). Moreover, the messages when using eWOM can spread more quickly, whilst the place they are posted on can be the reason (Gupta and Harris, 2010).

c. Factors affecting eWOM

Different factors can affect eWOM. Ismagilova and his colleagues (2020) stated that customers' motives to deliver eWOM involve otherness, emotions expressing, social gains, rewards, and self-development. "Tie strength, trust, normative and informational influence" (Chu &Kim, 2011: 47) are other factors that have a positive connection with the eWOM behavior of the consumer. Doma and his colleagues (2015: 1) reported that some other factors that have a positive impact on eWOM on social networks are "social benefits extraversion and perceived usefulness". In addition, "Perceived eWOM Credibility and Customer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence appears to be significant factors impacting Ewom" (Akyüz, 2013: 159). Furthermore, Martínez and his colleagues (2020) stated that the extent to which the data is valuable and the Facebook is trusted, together with the desire for self-expressing, affect positively the eWOM intention.

d. Factors affected by eWOM

EWOM was widely studied in many previous pieces of research for seeking the effect it has on some aspects of the business. Hamdani and his colleagues (2018)

stated that eWOM positively affects the purchasing intents of customers. According to Tandon and his colleagues (2020), there is a positive effect of eWOM on the satisfaction and repurchase intents of customers. Torlak et. al. (2014) reported that eWOM positively impacts the image of the brand. For various industrial sectors' products, for example, books and cars, eWOM plays a role, it influences the behaviors of customers (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006; Fan et al. 2017). EWOM can affect sales (Babić Rosario et al., 2016), and the repurchase intents (Prasertith et al., 2015). Manap & Adzharudin (2013) reported that, social eWOM works like eWOM and WOM in its impact. From that social eWOM can affect other variables. It can also moderate the relationship between the perception of service and the repurchase intention of restaurant customers in West Bank.

D.   Social Media and Social Media Networks

Social media can be defined as a set of internet-dependent applications which are built according to the bases of web 2.0 techniques and principles, they enable the user generated content (UGC) to be produced and shared (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011).

Kudeshia & Kumar (2017) stated that social media can be classified into groups according to their aims. The first one is the social media networking group where people can communicate with each other, such as Facebook and Instagram. The rest of social media were grouped depending on collaboration, for instance, blogs where the interchange of impersonal data becomes easier or depending on entertainment, where it is mainly utilized by individuals for amusement and could include their communications as well.

The following subsection under the title of social media networks will help the readers to understand the reasons for choosing Facebook to be the social network where the effect of social eWOM will be studied.

1.   Social Media Networks

Social networking sites (SNSs) are platforms that rely on the web where any digital user can create a specified profile that can be seen publically or partially by other permitted users. The user can utilize SNSs to communicate with friends or other users of the same network through the shares on the platform like profile pictures, images, videos, status, messages, comments, posts, and other shares (Ellison et al.,

2014; Liu & Ying, 2010). Some of the examples of SNSs are Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Linked In, Snapchat (Phua et al., 2017).

In the last decades, these social networks started to add value to businesses especially in marketing applications. They became an effective tool through which marketers can reach their targeted groups (Thoumrungroje, 2014). These networks can be helpful for businesses by using the different features and services they offer. For instance, through Facebook, hotels, restaurants, companies, hospitals, and many other business fields can create their own pages where they can share data that can support their business like sharing offers and advertisements in different manners, for instance, video, posts..etc (Facebook for business, n.d.).

Furthermore, Mangold and Faulds (2009) stated that most likely, social networks are checked by customers in the aim of finding information and making decisions for purchases. In addition, it impacts their awareness, shapes their points of view besides their expectations. Moreover, it supports data exchanges and assesses customers' purchases and experiences.

According to Jones and his colleagues (2015), social networks might not be direct in their effect on the decisions of customers or their buying intents, whilst these networks could be utilized to create bonds with customers.

The networks which users prefer to use can differ from one context to another. However, in reference to previous studies, Facebook is the platform which is mostly used all around the world (Shiau et al., 2018). Facebook is an online tool that lets users interact more easily with their peers, families, and colleagues (About Facebook, n.d). According to Stutzman (2006), Facebook can be used for attaining different goals such as getting data about others, keeping social contact, staying updated, and passing the time. In addition, it can be used for creating UGC or in other words eWOM (Chu and Kim, 2011).

The feedback or the UGC arises when a purchaser shares his past experience digitally, thus other people get the chance to learn from that experience and the encouragement to share theirs as well (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). The engagement of customers can be presented as content shared on social platforms (Smith et al., 2012). UGC which is also called electronic word of mouth (eWOM) does the same job as WOM (Manap & Adzharudin, 2013). In other words, social eWOM is a UGC

that can be shared on social media. In addition, Facebook can effectively assess the conduct of eWOM (Chu and Kim, 2011).

From that, because of Facebook's mentioned assessing the ability of electronic word of mouth conduct and the majority of usage by different users around the world, it will be chosen to be applied in this study as an example of social networks where the effect of social electronic word of mouth on other variables and relationships is going to be studied.

E.   The Relationship among Marketing, WOM, and EWOM

According to Armstrong and Kotler (2017), marketing is defined as "the process of engaging customers and building profitable customer relationships by creating value for customers and capturing value in return" (p. 53). Marketing is important for creating strategic plans for the business. For example, its concept implies that strategies of companies must rely on generating value to the customers to develop a relationship with them, thus profits will be created in return. Additionally, it offers insights to the strategy planners who prepare strategies by identifying desirable new markets as well as analyzing the possibility that the firm will benefit from any opportunity. Moreover, in every business unit, the marketing strategies are created to reach the goals of the business by defining some tasks to market the different products and services and get the desired profits.

Word of mouth and its digital form is known as eWOM both are involved in marketing applications. Meiners and his colleagues (2010) suggested that marketing using word of mouth is considered one of the marketing types that particularly encourage personally applied communications which can be done in differentiated manners. According to Bone (1992: 579), WOM is "a marketing source". Naz (2014: 1) stated that "Word-of-Mouth is also a great aspect in marketing and more above all in e-Marketing". Silverman (2011) presented that WOM is one of the powerful marketing strategy tools that is focused on customers. It also saves costs, for instance, Sernovitz (2012) stated that sometimes more than one million can be spent for marketing on advertisements and their activities, but usually, the decisions of customers are made based on the trusted sources of WOM.

From that, both WOM and eWOM can be used as marketing strategies that help can

business to market for products and services and get value and profits from customers in return, thus it is important to study social eWOM where it can be benefited from in strengthening or weakening different relationships between variables while being used as a marketing tool.

F.   The Relationship between Perception of Service and Repurchase Intention

Previous studies proved that service quality affects customers' purchase and repurchase intentions. Prabowo and his colleagues (2019) stated that repurchase intents are behaviors of customers which favorably can be responding to the offered service and the intentions for revisiting or consuming again the company's goods. Prabowo and his colleagues (2019: 194) presented that "Service quality and brand image had positive and significant effect on repurchase intention". In addition, customers' choices of purchasing again from somewhere rely on their assessment of service quality (Li & Lai, 2021). From that, the repurchase intention is expected to be affected by the assessment of service quality.

As mentioned before in the service quality section of the literature review, the service quality can be measured by SERVQUAL (Lee & Hing, 1995), where each of the perception and expectation of service components is evaluated using the five dimensions of the scale and the items grouped under these dimensions. The difference between expected and perceived service evaluations creates a measurement of service quality. Since service quality is composed of both the expectation and perception of the service, then both of them will play a role in its effect on repurchase intention. According to Eldejany (2016), the repurchasing intents of customers are affected by their perceptions of service. As a result, the perception of service of West Bank restaurants is expected to affect the repurchase intention.

Moreover, every dimension of quality of service as concluded in previous studies is expected to have a distinct effect on the variables affected by it and consequently, every dimension of perception of service is expected to have a distinct effect on the repurchase intention.

G. The Relationship between Social EWOM, Perception of Service and Repurchase Intention

According to Ahmed & Zhang (2020), Green WOM has a significant positive effect on the relationship between electronic service quality and purchase intention. They suggested the moderating effect it has depending on the fact that service quality increases the reference groups who increase the WOM. Atmaja & Puspitawati (2019) stated that a reference group enhances the effect of the quality of e-commerce service on the intent of a person to make repetitive purchases. Consequently, service quality's relationship with repurchase intention can be affected by the moderating effect of word of mouth.

According to Gruen and his colleagues (2006), the impact of electronic word of mouth on customers is so close to the impact of word of mouth. Hennig-Thurau and his colleagues (2004) suggested that they work the same way. Therefore eWOM and social eWOM which is an improved version of eWOM are expected to have a moderating effect on the relationship between service quality and repurchase intention.

H. Conceptual Framework

This study is done to test the effect of the perception of service, which is a component of service quality, on the repurchase intention of restaurant customers in West Bank. The effect of each dimension of perception of service on repurchase intention in the study will be found. Furthermore, the moderating effect of social eWOM on the relationship between the perception of service and repurchase intention will be studied.

The literature presented the relationship between service quality and different other variables where repurchase intention in different contexts was one of them. It showed that there was a significant effect of service quality on repurchase intention. The service quality is composed of both of the components of expectation and perception of service where the quality of service evaluation is a result of the variation between them. Thus, both of the components play a role in the quality of service evaluation, and consequently, every one of the two components is expected to have a distinct role in affecting the variables which can be affected by service

quality.

Every dimension of each of the components of quality of service is expected to have a different strength of the effect it has on repurchase intentions, science in previous studies the distinct effects of these dimensions were found and studied on some variables like satisfaction of customers. Since the study is done in the restaurant context and in the West Bank, the dimensions that are expected to affect repurchase intentions may have a different arrangement in the strength of predicting the repurchase intention than in other studies.

The study tests the moderating effect suggested by Ahmed & Zhang (2020), but in this study, the effect will be studied on the relation between perception of service and repurchase intention, while the moderator will be the social eWOM.

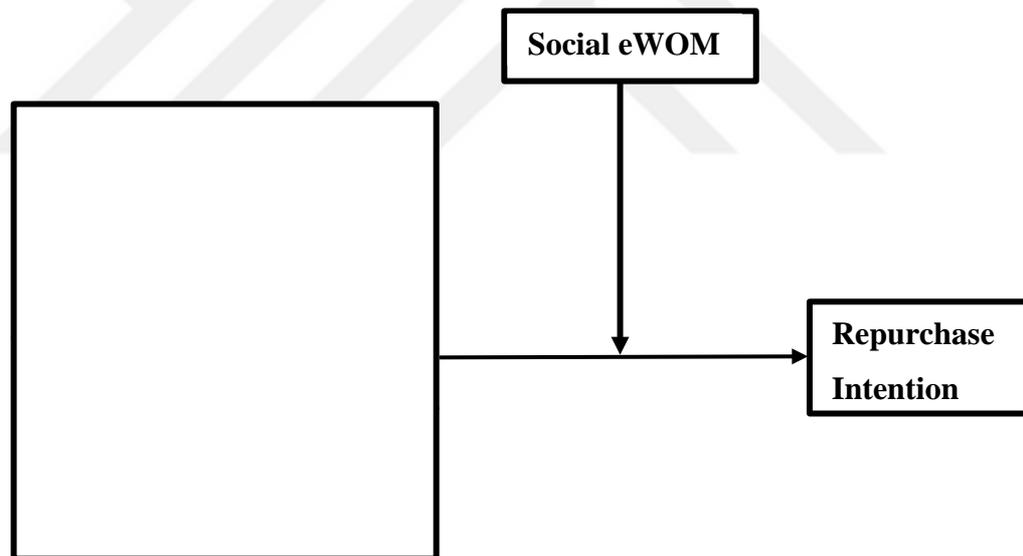The framework of the study to test the suggested hypothesis will be clarified in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Conceptual Framework`

1. Hypotheses

This study concentrates on the effect of perception of service on repurchase intention and the moderating effect of electronic word-of-mouth on social media on that relationship.

It suggested the following hypotheses regarding the perception of service and its

dimensions' effects on repurchase intention. It also suggests a hypothesis regarding the moderating effect of social eWOM on the relationship between perception of service and repurchase intention based on the reviewed literature, providing the study's scope and depth.

H1: Perception of service has a positive effect on repurchase intention

H1a: The dimension of tangibles has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

H1b: The dimension of reliability has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

H1c: The dimension of responsiveness has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

H1d: The dimension of assurance has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

H1e: The dimension of empathy has a positive effect on the repurchase intention.

H2: Social eWOM has a positive effect on the relationship between perception of service and repurchase intention.

III. METHOD

In this section, the sample of the study will be discussed and the demographic information will be presented. The instruments used to collect the data are explained next, containing the questionnaire sections and information regarding the measurement scales of the variables of perception of service, social eWOM and repurchase intention. After that the quality of the study using both the validity and reliability data is presented. Lastly the data analysis and the procedure applied in the study is clarified.

A. The Sample

The data were gathered conveniently from a total of 197 customers, who are mostly from Nablus. For the sampling technique, a convenience method is used, which constitutes non-random (non-probability) sampling (Sedgwick, 2013). Convenience sampling can be used by almost anyone and has been around for generations. One of the reasons that it is most often used is due to the numerous advantages it provides. This method is extremely speedy, easy, readily available, and cost-effective, causing it to be an attractive option to most researchers.

Thinking of approximately a total of 3.12 million in West Bank (PCBS, 2021), the number of the sample selected makes 6.9+/- margin of error at a 95% confidence level. Researchers normally work to a 95% level of certainty. This means that if the sample was selected 100 times, at least 95 of these samples would be certain to represent the characteristics of the population (Saunders et al., 2013).

The demographic information questions were placed in the first section of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1). The demographic characteristics consist of gender, age, monthly expenditure and frequency of visiting the restaurant/café and city. All the demographics were collected using a nominal scale. These variables were categorized in order to find significant results in difference tests. ¾ of the sample consists of female customers. The age groups were divided as 24%, under the age of

20; 68%, between the age of 20-35; 6%, between 36-50; 3%, between 51-65 and 0.5%, over the age of 66. Since the age groups were distributed to many small-sized groups, the age was regrouped in data and dived to half as over the age of 20 and below. The average monthly expenditure of these customers is around 1,000 ILS. These customers are mostly from Nablus (%63) and the second highest rate among cities belongs to Ramallah (%22). So the city variable was regrouped like age as Nablus, Ramallah, and other cities. Lastly, the frequency of visiting restaurant/café behavior was interrogated. Accordingly, these customers were found to visit restaurant/café three times a month in average. All the demographic information is clarified in Figure 5.

Gender

Age
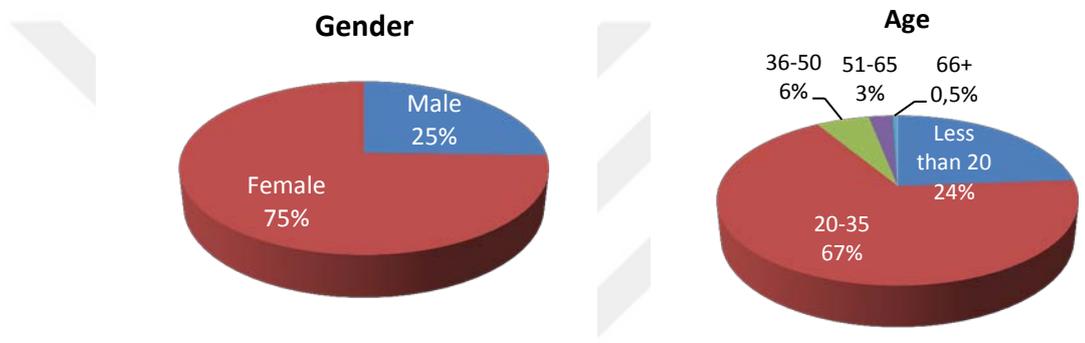
Figure 5 Demographic Information
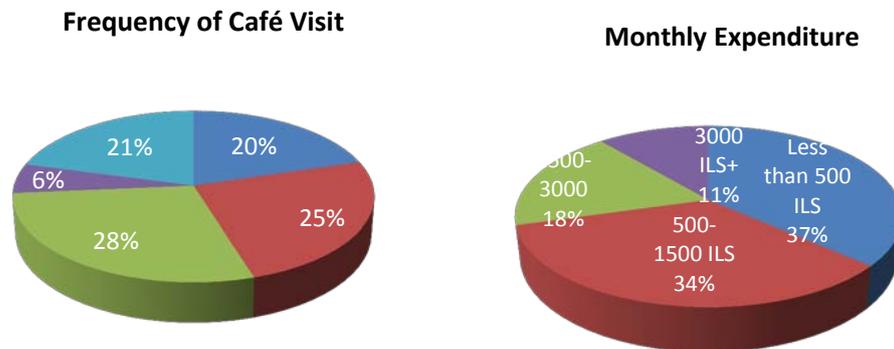
Frequency of Café Visit

- ■ Once a week
- ■ More than once a week
- ■ Once a month
- ■ Twicea month
- ■ Once in two months or more

Monthly Expenditure

City

Nablus	62.4
Ramallah/al-Bireh	21.8
Hebron	5.6
Tulkarm	4.1
Jenin	2.0
East Jerusalem	1.5
Bethlehem	1.0
Salfit	.5
Tubas	.5
Qalqilia	.5
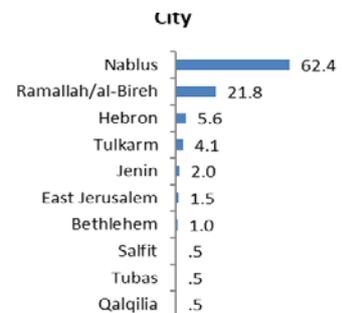
B. Data Collection Instruments

The choice of the data collection tools is influenced by the type of research approach used. Thus, the data collection tool has been selected was a questionnaire to suite collecting quantitative data.

Both primary and secondary data sources are used in order to gain information about the problem statement. The primary data will be collected using a quantitative data tool. While adequate secondary data was obtained from the published articles, books, and other sources, which can be found in the bibliography section.

In this study, the primary sources will be the collected data found by using a questionnaire for the quantitative part. The questionnaire is considered an important method of quantitative data collection used in research. It was mainly developed based on the research objectives and research questions. The final draft of the adapted questionnaire was given to the study sample in order to be distributed through the West Bank online. It took about five weeks for the instrument to be distributed, gathered and returned. The total number of the returned questionnaires was 197.

The distributed questionnaire was organized into two highly structured sections as follows:

Section 1 aims to collect information about the targeted respondents such as (gender, age, monthly expenditure, city, and Frequency of visiting a restaurant/café).

Section 2 asks for the determination of the moderating effect of eWOM on the perception of service and repurchase intension relationship using 30 items distributed among three domains of (Perception of service, Social eWOM, and Repurchase intention).

The first section includes five questions and the second is composed of questions divided according to the studied variables into 22 for the perception of service measurement, 4 for the evaluation of the social eWOM, and 4 for the repurchase intention assessment.

To evaluate the scores of responses, each item was calculated according to a Five-point Likert Scale (Likert, 1932), as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1 The Five Point Likert Scale Used for the Evaluation of the Questionnaire Domains

No.	Domain	Five-point Likert scale for the responses				
		1	2	3	4	5
	Perception of Service					
1.	Tangibles					
2.	Reliability	*Strongly*	*disagree*	*Undecided*	*Agree*	*Strongly*
3.	Responsiveness	*disagree*				*agree*
4.	Assurance					
5.	Empathy					
	Social EWOM	*Strongly*				
		disagree	*disagree*	*Undecided*	*Agree*	*Strongly*
						agree
	Repurchase intention	*Strongly*				
		disagree	*disagree*	*Undecided*	*Agree*	*Strongly*
						agree

Table 1 shows the Five-point Likert Scale applied in the study for the evaluation of the questionnaire domains.

The questionnaire was distributed in the Arabic language which is the mother language of the citizens of West Bank.

1. Perception of Service Measurement Scale

Perception of service is one of two components through which service quality is evaluated, where the expectation of service is the second component, and the difference between them creates the evaluation of service quality as mentioned in the previous literature review.

Service quality evaluation was done in previous studies using a scale named SERVQUAL which is composed of 22 questions asked for measuring expectations and 22 for perceptions' evaluation.

In this study, the perception of service will be measured by adapting items applied in SERVQUAL scale, to be suable for use for measuring the perception of service in restaurants.

For the 22 items scale, the respondent selects one of the choices as an answer for each item where the choices range from one to five. The choices numbers and their meanings are; 1= Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree.

2. Social EWOM Measurement Scale

As mentioned previously in the literature, social eWOM can be measured using different dimensions, however, in this study, it will be measured as one unit using four items adapted from a previous study done by Kudeshia & Kumar (2017). The four items will be evaluated using 5 Likert scale with the same choices' numbers in the same order applied in the perception of service measurement scale in this study.

3. Repurchase Intention Measurement Scale

Repurchase intention will be measured using 4 items that were mentioned in the study done by Tong & Wong (2014). The items were adapted to fit the restaurant/café context. In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to think of the latest café or restaurant where they have drunk or eaten at the time through which they were responding to the items of repurchase intention.

The 5 Likert scale was again utilized to find selected choices' evaluation level. The choices were ordered the same way utilized in the perception of service evaluation and eWOM parts.

C. Quality of the Research Design

Validity and reliability are presented as criteria for judging the quality of quantitative business research (Saunders et al., 2016). The following subsections will clarify the validity and reliability of the study.

1. Validity

Validity is the degree of accuracy of the method used for collecting data, or its ability for measuring what is meant to be measured (Saunders et al., 2016). The ethical committee has studied the questionnaire to ensure its validity. The purpose of the judgment was to determine whether the questions were comprehensible and can be interpreted by the study sample as they are intended measure.

The questionnaire is composed of scale items adapted from previous studies, where the items were prepared to measure the variables of perception of service, social eWOM, and repurchase intentions. These variables' validity were previously tested and proved inside the mentioned previous studies (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Lee & Hing, 1995; Maxham III, 2001; Tong & Wong, 2014).

2. Reliability Analysis

Reliability refers to the extent to which the data measurement instrument is resulting in consistent and stable findings (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), in other words, the same results can be achieved by using the same instruments more than once. The reliability of the questionnaire domains was calculated through Cronbach's Alpha Formula. The Cronbach's Alpha readings for the Assurance, Reliability, Social eWOM, and Repurchase intention were larger than 0.7. Thus, all the variables are reliable.

D. The Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19.0 for Windows was used to analyze the study's findings. A significance level of 0.05 was used in the statistical analysis. The main characteristics of the sample were presented using descriptive statistics. Reliability analysis was conducted on the scales to determine their internal consistency, and coefficient alphas were taken into account.

Non-parametric Bivariate Correlations were presented for descriptive purposes. Multiple Regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. Mann-Whitney rank sum test and Kruskal Wallis test were utilized for assessing the demographic differences of the variables. The demographic groups lacked the normality condition. Therefore, a non-parametric test was considered to be the most convenient for testing the demographic variables.

E. The Procedure

The questionnaire's items were electronically inserted using web pages and MS word. Next, it was sent to the sample of respondents where a link or a document was shared online especially through Facebook pages and messages. The questionnaire contained a brief letter to introduce the aim of the study and mention some important information that the respondent needs to know. For instance, the time the respondent will need to fill the questionnaire, security of the information, the thesis author's and university's name. It took around five weeks for 197 fully filled questionnaires to be gathered.

IV. FINDINGS

In this section, findings of the study are given under the titles of Factor Analyses and Internal Consistencies, Correlation Analysis, Regression Analysis, and Difference Tests. To describe the sample, the frequencies of demographics presented are taken. To test the hypotheses, a correlation analysis was firstly conducted. Then the analyses were followed by multiple regression analysis. Lastly, demographic comparisons between the variables were made by difference tests.

It should be noticed that before starting the analyses the data was checked if it was normally distributed or not. It is known that usually in social sciences, the data obtained yields values of skewness and kurtosis that clearly deviate from those of the normal distribution (Bauer and Sterba, 2011; Blanca et al., 2013; Lei and Lomax, 2005; Micceri, 1989). Accordingly, the data of this study is not normally distributed as it was expected. For testing the normality Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used. All the variables revealed p=0.000<0.05, which did not support H0 that was assuming a normal distribution of variables.

A. Factor Analyses and Internal Consistencies

To reduce the number of the variables, explanatory factor analysis was conducted with the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and varimax rotation on the factorial structure of the scales. The study's reliability analysis was then performed by measuring Cronbach's alpha and determining whether or not it was greater than 0.7, to check the internal consistency.

For the perception of service, factor analysis was conducted four times. In each iteration, either the factor loadings of some questions were very similar under different factors, or the questions were not significantly gathered. So some questions were eliminated from the scale. Finally, two main factors were acquired: Assurance and reliability which are presented below in Table 2. These factors included some items from other sub-factors of the scale. As a result of the elimination of the other

factors, the hypotheses H1a, H1c and H1e were rejected.

Table 2 Factorial Structure of Perception of Service

Factors	Items[1]	Factor loading	
		1	2
Assuarance	A3	,780	
	E1	,758	
	A4	,748	
	E2	,743	
	A2	,676	
	A1	,645	
	Res4	,553	
	Eigenvalue: 8,449; Variance explained: %29,884		
	Cronbach's alpha (α): 0,890		
Reliability	R5		,718
	E4		,704
	Res2		,701
	R2		,688
	R3		,683
	E5		,674
	E3		,642
	R4		,613
	R1		,560
	Eigenvalue: 1,107; Variance explained: %29,842		
	Cronbach's Alpha (α): 0,907		
Total variance explained: %59,726			
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy.			0,932
	Bartlett's Test	Approx. Chi-Square	1937,511
	of Sphericity	df	120
		Sig.	0,000

As a result only for the perception of service, the factor analysis conducted because the other two variables (Social EWOM and Repurchase intention) were consisting of fewer questions, which would not be enough to be divided into sub-factors.

By examining Cronbach's alpha values, the reliabilities of variables were tested. α estimates the proportion of variance that is systematic or consistent in a set of survey responses (Vaske et al., 2017). As it is seen in the table below, all the variables' internal consistencies were found high to be used in further analyses. It is known that the limit for an acceptable level of self-consistency is 0.70. Thusly the Cronbach's alpha values in this study range between 0.8-0.9. The Cronbach's alpha for

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[1] *Items are demsonstrated in Appendix.*

Assurance which has seven items is α=0.890; for Reliability with nine items, it is α=0.907; for Social EWOM (four items), α=0.767 and at last for Repurchase intention (four items), it is α=0.737.

Table 3 Reliability Statistics of Variables

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
Assurance	0.890	7
Reliability	0.907	9
Social EWOM	0.767	4
Repurchase Intention	0.734	4

B. Correlation Analysis

A bivariate correlation analysis has been done among the variables to see whether they are related or not. This analysis presents also the type and strength of the relationships among the variables. The correlation coefficient of Pearson is frequently used in this analysis. Barely the data of this study is not normally distributed. In some studies, Fowler (1987) found that Spearman's r was more powerful than Pearson's r across a range of non-normal bivariate distributions (Bishara and Hittner, 2012). So in this study, Spearman's coefficient was considered in correlation.

The means, standard deviations, and correlations related to all factors are presented in Table 4. All the correlations are significant at the 0.01 level and they imply moderate relationships, ranging from 0.347 to 0.92, and they are all in the anticipated direction.

Table 4 Correlations

	Mean	*SD*	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Assurance	3,86	0,77	1				
Reliability	3,91	0,77	0,703**	1			
EWOM	3,67	0,78	0,552**	0,558**	1		
Repurchase Int.	3,56	0,73	0,334**	0,315**	0,557**	1	
Service (Mean of 1 + 2)	3,88	0,72	0,92**	0,914**	0,598**	0,347**	1

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

As it is seen in the table, all the variables have a positive significant relationship

amongst each other. The strongest correlation is found between Perception of Service and Social EWOM (r=0.598, p <0.01), while the weakest is found between Assurance and Repurchase Intention (r=0.334, p < 0.01).

C. Regression Analysis

To see how more than one variable in the study explain their effects on the dependent variable, multiple regression analysis was conducted. It was important to be sure that there was not any multicollinearity among variables; otherwise, the data couldn't be suitable for conducting hierarchical regression analysis. To check this, all the tolerance scores for the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were examined. It was seen that the tolerance scores were not high and the VIF was smaller than three; which meant that any multicollinearity among variables was not in question. Thus data was suitable for conducting regression analysis. Besides, to avoid multicollinearity, centered scores were standardized by subtracting the means from the raw scores.

Table 5 Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Repurchase Intention			
Variables	**Beta**	**T**	**P**
Reliability (REL)	0,223	2,330	0,021
Assurance (ASS)	0,243	2,533	0,012
R= 0,461; R^2= 0,213; F= 26,214; p= 0,000			

When both of the Service's Perception sub-factors; Assurance and Reliability were included in multiple regression analysis, it is seen that they both have a positive significant effect on Repurchase Intention. This indicates that H1b and H1d are supported.   This regression model is meant to explain the dependent variable ($R2=0.213$, $p=0.000<0.05$). In this model, while Reliability explains almost 22% (βreliability =0.223) of repurchase intention's variance; Assurance explains similarly 24% (βassurance=0.243).

For the overall sample, it is seen that customers' repurchase intention can be statistically explained by their perception of assurance and reliability of the service. In Table 5 coefficient table, these two variables significantly ($p=0.000 < 0.05$) take place in regression equation. This approves the validity of the model. Accordingly, the equation of the model is:

$$\text{Repurchase intention} = 1.755 + (0.223 \times REL) + (0.243 \times ASS)$$

This regression equation means that a unit change in the reliability for a person makes a 0.22 unit change in his/her repurchase intention and in assurance, 0.24 unit changes. The model explains only 21% of the variation in repurchase intention.

To test the moderator effect of Social EWOM on the relationship between Perception of Service and Repurchase Intention, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. Accordingly, in three steps this analysis is implemented. In the first step only the independent variable; in the second step, independent variable, and moderator, and in the last step, independent variable, moderator and their interaction are included in the regression.

Table 6 Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Repurchase Intention			
Variables	**Beta**	**T**	**P**
Step 1			
Perception of Service	0,461	7,258	0,000
R= 0,461; R^2= 0,213; F= 52,863; p= 0,000			
Step 2			
Perception of Service	-0,011	-0,137	0,891
Social EWOM	0,667	8,724	0,000
R= 0,659; R^2= 0,435; F= 74,541; p= 0,000			
Step 3			
Perception of Service	0,247	1,635	0,104
Social EWOM	1,013	5,293	0,000
Interaction (Service*EWOM)	-0,569	-1,971	0,050
R= 0,668; R^2= 0,446; F= 51,728; p= 0,000			

The first model shows that Perception of Service could statistically explain the Repurchase Intention ($R2=0.213$, $p = 0.001 < 0.05$). So, this finding is important in the way of supporting the first hypothesis of the research.

In the second model when the Social EWOM was included in the model, the significance of the independent variable's explanation vanishes ($p = 0.891 > 0.05$). Besides it is seen that Social EWOM can significantly explain Repurchase Intention ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). As for the last model when the moderator (Social EWOM) interacts with the independent variable (Perception of Service), it is found that the interaction can almost statistically explain the dependent variable (Repurchase Intention), ($R2 = 0.446$, $p = 0.05 = 0.05$). This means that the moderator has almost

an effect on the relationship of Perception of Service and Repurchase Intention. So the moderator hypothesis can be said to be partially supported.

The partial effect of the moderator can be clearly seen on the interaction plot which is formed by Aiken & West (1991) and Dawson & Richter (2006) to display the interaction effects.
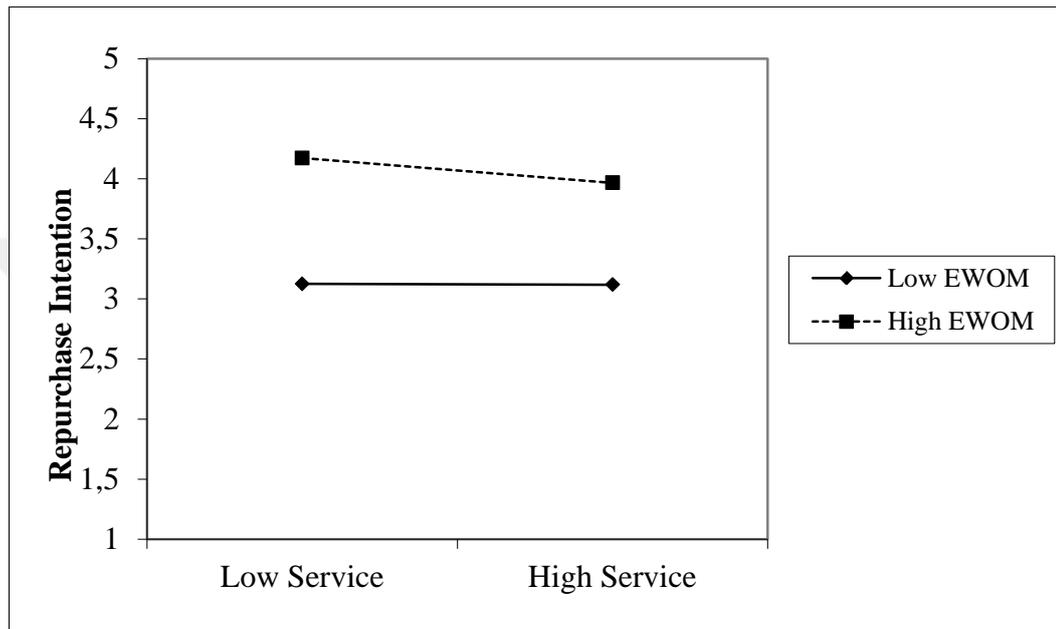

Figure 6 Interaction Plot for Repurchase Intention

According to Figure 6, it can be said that the repurchase intention of customers who involve lowly in Social EWOM does not reduce or increase even the perception of service keeps at a stable level. On the other hand, if customers involve in high Social EWOM, their repurchase intention slightly reduces as they perceive higher service. This shows that these two interactions between a quadratic main effect and a moderator will intersect as the sample size increases. This proves the possible proof of the moderation hypothesis. Accordingly, it can be said that it is partially supported.

D. Difference Tests

The difference test applied in the study using SPSS was done to see whether the variables of the study vary in terms of demographic variables. There are two types of difference tests; parametric and non-parametric tests. In this study, non-parametric

tests were used because the normality condition for the variables wasn't provided. Mann-Whitney rank sum is one of the two tests applied in this study as difference tests for non-parametric data. It was applied for two-grouped variables. Furthermore, in the case that the variable's groups are more than two, the other test called Kruskal Wallis was applied. In this section, only the valid results are represented. Accordingly, the only significant difference was found for Assurance in terms of frequency of visiting restaurant/café. The table demonstrates that there is a significant difference among frequencies of visiting restaurant/café in terms of customer's perception of service assurance. Excluding the group of "twice a month" because its base is low (n: 11), in general, apparently as the frequency gets higher the, perception of assurance increases.

Table 7 Difference Test for Assurance

	Frequency	N	Mean	Significance Level	Chi-square
Assurance	More than once a week	49	119.84	0.044	9.786
	Once a week	40	92.23		
	Once a month	56	90.51		
	Twice a month	11	108.50		
	Once in two months or more	41	89.96		

The following section discusses all of the conclusions derived from the findings of the study. Finally, the study presents its limitations and recommendations for future researchers.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study tests the effect of the perception of service on the repurchase intention of restaurant customers in West Bank. It also examines the moderating effect of social eWOM on the relationship between perceptions of service and repurchase intention. It seeks to satisfy the proposed objectives of the study, answering its questions and reaching the study's aims by applying an adapted questionnaire to test the sample chosen from the whole population of West Bank restaurants' customers and analyzing the returned data for getting the final results.

As a result of the factor analysis applied in this study, only two dimensions; Assurance and Reliability, were identified as dimensions of the perception of service in the context of West Bank restaurants. Thus, the number of dimensions of perception of service in this study differs from other studies which suggested more than two dimensions. For instance, the five dimensions; Empathy, Tangibles, Assurance, Reliability, and Responsiveness (Berry & Parasuraman, 2004), and the six dimensions found by Kant and Jaiswal (2017). This finding created the first contribution to the literature wherein in the context of West Bank restaurants, only two dimensions; assurance and reliability can determine the perception of service.

Tangibles' items were totally eliminated, the reason could be that people when caring about tangibles, care about the look of the employees and the facilities inside the restaurants, however, around 68% of restaurant customers were in the age between 20-35, and another 10% were composed of people over 35, and referring to PALESTINIAN CENTRAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS (2019), 47% of people over the age of 15 are employed, that means many people over the age of 20 are expected to be employees, so they only can visit restaurants for a limited time. Moreover, their need to have a good meal at a specific time with a limited budget can overwhelm the importance of the look of the employee or the equipment, since it is expected for a well-equipped restaurant to charge more for the services it offers; costume, machinery, tables that has a modern look ...etc., which can be difficult for people to cover. In 2017, the monthly expenditure of people in West Bank on food

was around 320 ILS (PCBS, 2018). Since "a mid-range international restaurant meal for 2 USD$38.29" (Xpatulator.com, n.d), which equals 125 ILS, that means, because of the limited budget, customers need to be very selective when choosing their meals' sources.

The elimination of other items from empathy and responsiveness dimensions can be explained by the limited time of the restaurant visit and the increase of the price with every extra service. For instance, calling a taxi for a customer is an extra service whereas public transportations are available in all of the cities. Moreover, the statements of some items in the questionnaire are so close in their meaning however they can differ in what they really measure and that needed the concentration of the respondents while answering different questions in the questionnaire.

In the study, two main and five derived hypotheses were suggested. For testing them, the relationship between the perception of service, repurchase intention, and social eWOM, was tested as a previous step for applying the multiple regression. The relationship which was studied by applying the correlation analysis, found that the perception of service is positively related to repurchase intention. Moreover, the three studied variables were found to have a positive relationship with each other.

In the next step where the multi regression analysis was applied, both of the dimensions of perception of service were found to have an effect on repurchase intention. The assurance dimension was found to have a stronger significant effect on repurchase intention and that result was expected since other studies showed that the dimensions of service quality differ in their strength of effect on other variables (Nguyen et al, 2018). That result means that customers are seeking the staff who are knowledgeable of their services for answering enquiries. Moreover, if a restaurant is interested in increasing repurchases, it should mainly concentrate on having a polite, kind staff. In addition, the staff's behavior should build customer confidence and the customers can feel safe while transacting with the restaurant staff members. The interest regarding assurance items can be explained by the fact that customers need to understand exactly the offered sorts to know if these sorts can fit their needs or not, and the limited time and money make it so important not to have an order that deviates from the need. The other factor was the reliability, which was found to follow assurance in the strength of the effect. It means that customers do care that the service is applied in a correct manner and at an exact time, and this can be explained

by the busy life of employed people which was discussed before since any mistake in the provided service, will consume more time to be fixed which the customer may not have. This can be the second contribution to the literature since it shows the exact order of the dimensions with respect to their strength in affecting the repurchase intention in the case of West Bank restaurant.

Following that, the applied hierarchical regression showed that the perception of service has a positive direct effect on the repurchase intention of customers and that result complies with the results of the study done by Eldejany (2016) and supports the hypothesis H1.

Hypothesis H2 that suggests the moderating effect of the social eWOM on the relationship between perceptions of service and repurchase intention was partially supported after applying the hierarchical regression analysis. Normally, when service quality or the perception of service is increased the repurchase intentions increase, however after adding the eWOM in the model to see its effect on that relationship, it was found that even if the perception of service is increased the repurchase intention is not getting higher. This can be explained by fact that eWOM can be either positive or negative and negative eWOM has a stronger effect than positive eWOM (Beneke et al., 2015).

This result will be another contribution to the literature since the study regarding the moderating effect of social eWOM on the relationship between perception of service and repurchase intention of restaurant customers in West Bank is done for the first time, moreover, this relationship was barely studied through previous studies.

In the regression, the significance value was exactly at the edge giving the reading of 0.05, however, the interaction plot showed that the possibility of moderation to occur by increasing the sample size. So it can be recommended for the next researches to apply the model to a larger size of respondents to confirm the moderation effect.

Restaurants in West Bank will be interested in the results of this study since by concentrating on the services that customers are interested in receiving, they can attain their success and competence, retain their customers, increase their sales and returns and save expenses and time as mentioned by previous literature (Cegliński, 2016; Jin et al., 2013; Danaher & Rust, 1996; Rosenberg & Czepiel, 1984). Moreover, since the study partially supports the moderating effect of social eWOM

on the relationship between perceptions of service and repurchase intention, and the plot showed that the relationship is decreasing because of that effect, consequently, restaurants need to be aware of social eWOM effects. They need to follow up on their customers' electronic word of mouth on social media for instance by checking their comments on social media pages especially specialized pages that are created for giving opinions and recommendations regarding restaurants and cafes so that they can support their business by satisfying customers, especially the ones who write the negative eWOM. Furthermore, they can offer a complaint box or email, so that by fixing the problems as fast as possible and satisfying unhappy customers they can reduce the possibility of occurrence of negative eWOM comments.

In addition, after applying the difference tests on the demographic data, perception of assurance was found to differ according to the frequency of visiting restaurant/café, thus, restaurants should convince customers to visit them over and over so their perceptions of assurance get higher and consequently more repurchase intentions can take place. This result also can be a contribution to the literature that in the context of West Bank Restaurant, the perception of assurance increases as the increase of the visiting frequency of restaurants or cafés.

VI.   LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Some limitations were faced while conducting this study. Firstly, the sample size was the main limitation, since the coronavirus pandemic which has changed the working hours of restaurants and political situations make it hard to reach restaurants' customers in person, thus, the questionnaire was sent to respondents online and consequently, the resulted number of responses was small. Secondly, most of the respondents were from Nablus and Ramallah while the participation of people from other cities was much less. Thirdly, some questions may be answered without a real concentration or without a well understanding.

Thus, referring to the limitations mentioned above, it is recommended for further researches to study a larger sample size to ensure generalization. In addition, it is recommended to concentrate on studying other cities in the West Bank, to get the point of views of restaurants' customers there. Moreover, face-to-face visits are recommended for future researches to help respondents enquire freely regarding different questions to provide them with clarification and to make sure that the questionnaire was answered correctly and carefully. Furthermore, for West Bank political situation and because of different barriers and checkpoints between cities there, it is recommended that researchers could make their researches on specific regions like one or 2 cities that are feasible, so with multiple integrated pieces of research applied to specific cities, the whole area will be studied correctly.

Other recommendations are:

- To apply the framework, however by studying the positive eWOM and negative eWOM moderating effect separately instead of the moderating effect of eWOM as one unit.

- To check the different communication tools that can appear in the future, which can also be common to different respondents, thus can make data collection much easier and done more quickly.

- The research conceptual framework can be applied in other contexts than West Bank so that it can help future researchers make comparisons. In addition, to help service providers and businessmen understand how the variables can differ in their effects from a context to another, thus they can target their customers in the right way.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Appendix 2: Ethical Committee Approval

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

THE MODERATING EFFECT OF EWOM ON THE PERCEPTION OF SERVICE QUALITY AND REPURCHASE INTENSION RELATIONSHIP: THE CASE OF THE WEST BANK RESTAURANTS

Dear Respondents:

I am a graduate student at Istanbul Aydin University. I am examining the moderating effect of eWOM on the perception of service quality and repurchase intension relationship: The case of the West Bank Restaurants in my master thesis.

The following questionnaire needs less than10 minutes to be filled. I would be grateful for your time and commitment in responding to it. This thesis study is for scholarly reasons and can only be used for scientific aims. Your responses will be kept exclusively secret.

Your kind reply will be an important contribution to science and will be highly respected.

Thank you very much in advance.

Section 1

Personal Information

1. Gender

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. Age

☐ <20

☐ 20-35

☐ 36-50

☐ 51-65   ☐

☐ >66

☐

3. Monthly expenditure

☐ <500 ILS

☐ 500-1500 ILS   ☐

☐ 1500-3000 ILS

☐ >3000 ILS   ☐

4. City

☐ Nablus

☐ Jenin

☐ Ramallah/al-Bireh

☐ Tulkarm

☐ Hebron

☐ Jericho

☐ Qalqilia

☐ Bethlehem

☐ East Jerusalem

☐ Tubas

☐ Salfit

5. Frequency of visiting a restaurant/café

☐ Once a week

☐ More than once a week

☐ Once a month

☐ Twice a month

☐ Once in two months or more

Section 2

To what extent do you agree with the following statements

Please answer on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1=Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly Agree

Perception of Service quality					
To which degree you agree that it is important for the restaurant/Cafe to have the attributes mentioned in the following group of statements related to the titles (Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy) in case you visit it					
Tangibles					
1-Having modern-looking equipment, eg: dining facility, bar facility, crockery, cutlery, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
2-Appealing of the physical facilities, eg: buildings, signs, dining room decor, lighting, carpet, etc, at the restaurant/Cafe	1	2	3	4	5
3-Looking of staff at the restaurant/Cafe eg: uniform, grooming, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
4-Visual appealing of Materials associated with the service, eg: pamphlets, statements, table line, serviettes and menu list in the restaurant/Cafe.	1	2	3	4	5
Reliability					
5-Doing the things it promised to do by a certain time, eg: when a client asks them to prepare a meal by a certain time. The restaurant/café will prepare it as it promised and by that time.	1	2	3	4	5
6- Showing a genuine interest in solving problems that the client might face eg: Mistakes in the bill.	1	2	3	4	5
7- Performing the service right the first time, eg: taking the right order and serving it right the first time.	1	2	3	4	5

8- Providing the service at the time it promises to do so, eg: the order is served at the promised time.	1	2	3	4	5
9- Insisting on error-free service, eg: no mistakes in the served order or bills.	1	2	3	4	5
Responsiveness					
10-Staff is telling the clients exactly when services will be performed, eg: when are the ordered items going to be ready.	1	2	3	4	5
11- Staff is giving prompt service, eg: serving the drinks in 10 minutes of ordering them.	1	2	3	4	5
12-Staff is always willing to help, eg: calling a taxi for a client.	1	2	3	4	5
13-Staff is never too busy to respond to requests, eg: requesting a glass of water or requesting a ketchup bottle.	1	2	3	4	5
Assurance					
14-The behavior of staff instills confidence, eg: if a client complains, the staff will deal with that complain in a skillful and professional manner.	1	2	3	4	5
15-Feeling safe in your transactions, eg: you can confide in the food/beverages suggested by the Staff.	1	2	3	4	5
16-Staff is consistently courteous, eg: staff are polite, kind, well behaved even if the clients where hard to be dealt with or hard to satisfy.	1	2	3	4	5
17- Staff is having the knowledge to answer the questions, eg: Staff has a good knowledge about the different kinds of offered food and beverages.	1	2	3	4	5
Empathy					
18-Giving individual attention, eg: Caring about the special needs of the customer like halal food, gluten free food.	1	2	3	4	5
19-The convenient operating hours of the restaurant/Café, eg: Working six days a week.	1	2	3	4	5
20- Staff which is giving its personal attention, eg: A short time after serving a meal, asking the customer if it was meal he received is good or not.	1	2	3	4	5
21-Having interests of clients at heart, eg: fair prices,	1	2	3	4	5

taking care of customer comfort.					
22- Staff is understanding the specific needs, eg: in some events or circumstances, the staff will try to provide a special service for the patrons, for example: Birthday cake or Baby seat.	1	2	3	4	5
Social eWOM / Electronic word of mouth on social media (what people say about the restaurant / Café in their posts, such as :their opinions or recommendations posted on social media)					
1-I often read other consumers/friends posts to make sure I buy the from the right restaurant/Café.	1	2	3	4	5
2-I often read other consumers/friends posts to know what in or about that restaurant/Cafe can make good Impression on others.	1	2	3	4	5
3-I often read other consumers/friends posts to gather information about the restaurant/Café.	1	2	3	4	5
4-I often read other consumers/friends posts to have confidence in my buying decision from that restaurant/Café.	1	2	3	4	5
Repurchase intention Think of the last restaurant/cafe where you have eaten/drunk while answering the following questions.					
1-I intend to eat/drink at this restaurant/Cafe next time.	1	2	3	4	5
2-I will continue eating/drinking at this restaurant/Café.	1	2	3	4	5
3-I will consider this restaurant/Cafe my first choice if I need to eat/drink.	1	2	3	4	5
4-I will eat/drink more at this restaurant/Cafe in the next few months.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 2: Ethical Committee Approval

T.C.
İSTANBUL AYDIN ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü

Sayı : E-88083623-020-9139
Konu : Etik Onayı Hk.

Sayın Hebah Maher Baker HANBALI

Tez çalışmanızda kullanmak üzere yapmayı talep ettiğiniz anketiniz İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Etik Komisyonu'nun 01.04.2021 tarihli ve 2021/04 sayılı kararıyla uygun bulunmuştur.
Bilgilerinize rica ederim.

Dr.Öğr.Üyesi Alper FİDAN
Müdür Yardımcısı

Dağıtım:
Sayın Dr.Öğr.Üyesi Alper FİDAN
Sayın Ecehan ŞİMŞEK
Sayın Merve AKBULUT
Sayın Gülfidan ERDOĞAN
Sayın Yeşim TİMİSİ
Sayın Buse DURAN
Sayın Feyza ÇAVUŞOĞLU
Sayın Tuğçe DÖNMEZER
Sayın Kadirye Defne DEMİRDÖVEN
Sayın Tuğba SOYSAL
Sayın Özge ALGÜL
Sayın Mayar RANNEH
Sayın Mehmet Ali BALTA
Sayın Ayşe KIZILKUŞ
Sayın Marıam CHAWK
Sayın Danıyal Humaıd Ur REHMAN
Sayın Amır T S AL IDRISI
Sayın Nazir Ahmed NOORI
Sayın Oluwadamilare Dare OSENİ
Sayın Sara Emad Eldin Ahmed Aly
Sayın Awaıs ALSHRAIEDEH
Sayın Hebah Maher Baker HANBALI
Sayın Dmytro BABUKHIN
Sayın RAED KAMHIA
Sayın ZINEB IDDOUTE
Sayın Ayşe Meriç YAZICI
Sayın Sümeyra TİRYAKİ

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

1/2

Sayın FAISAL SARWARIAAN
Sayın Nada OUSSIBLE
Sayın Malek ABOHOUSENE
Sayın Yumna ALMUSTAFA
Sayın Abdul Barı LATIFI
Sayın Esin ÇAVUŞ GENÇ
Sayın Çağla ÇAKIR
Sayın Neslihan SAYGILI
Sayın İsmail Okan DANSUK
Sayın Şevval UÇAR
Sayın Sevgi KORGAN
Sayın Bedriye KURNAZ KOŞKAN
Sayın Begüm KALENDER
Sayın Beste YUVAUÇ
Sayın Zeynep ÖZGÖRÜŞ
Sayın Ayşe Mine TUNCAY
Sayın Tuğçe AYBAK
Sayın Elif SOMUNCU
Sayın Ayşenur ÖZGÜL
Sayın Saniye UĞUR

80

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name Surname   **:** Hebah Hanbali

EDUCATION   **:**

☐   **Bachelor**   **:** 2010, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Engineering, Biomedical Engineering.

☐   **M.A**   **:** 2021, Istanbul Aydin University, Social Sciences Institute, Department of Business Administration.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AND AWARDS:

☐   March 2017-March 2018

Sales Support Executive, Techno-Line Medical and Lab equipment, Hizma, Palestine

☐   July 2015-Feb 2017

Biomedical Engineer, Bio-Hive Medical Technology, Ramallah, Palestine

☐   November 2013- June 2015

Manager, Maher Baker Hanbali Engineering Office, Nablus, Palestine

☐   June 2013 - October 2013

Biomedical Engineer, Arcomed Medical Supplies Co., Ramallah, Palestine

☐   Jan 2013 - June 2013

Biomedical Engineer, Jordan University Hospital, Amman, Jordan

☐   July 2011-Jan 2012

Biomedical Engineer, Augusta Victoria Hospital, Jerusalem, Palestine

LANGUAGES:

English: Very Good

Arabic: Mother Language

German: Intermediate