

# Triggers to Word of Mouth and Revisit Intention to Chinese Food Restaurant

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**Abstract-** *The purpose of this study is to probe the differences between the main triggers to revisit intention (RI) and word of mouth (WOM) intention of the Chinese Restaurants' consumers. The research method is quantitative; 525 consumers were surveyed in Tijuana. Ten indicators of the consumer behavioural intention were included to carried out multiple linear regressions. It was found that empathy, food taste and physical environment are related to both, but with different levels of importance and effect. Nevertheless, price ratio, and time to receive the food have a statistically relationship with RI and food aroma and time to receive the restaurant bill are significant just to the WOM.*

**Keywords-** *Consumer behavior; Revisit intention; Word of mouth; Triggers; Chinese restaurant.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) NAICS was developed under the auspices of Statistics Canada (2013)[21], the Office of Management and Budget of the United States (OMB) (1999) [16], and Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2013)[9] to allow for a high level of comparability in business statistics among the North American countries.

According to NAICS the food service and drinking places is defined as the subsector including establishments primarily engaged in preparing meals, snacks and beverages, to customer order, for immediate consumption on and off the premises. This subsector does not include food service activities that occur within establishments such as hotels, civic and social associations, amusement or recreation parks and theatres. However, leased food-service locations in facilities such as hotels, shopping malls, airports and department stores are included too. The industry groups within this subsector reflect the level and type of service provided (Statistic Canada, 2013 [21], U.S. Department of Commerce, 2016 [23] and INEGI, 2013[9]).

Within the range of restaurant options, there are those that are classified as Full Service Restaurants (FSR), these establishments primarily engaged in providing food services to customers who order and are served while seated and pay after eating and characterized by preparing food and beverages for immediate consumption (INEGI, 2013) [9], therefore, includes a full customer service: from their arrival until the moment of its departure.

According to the INEGI, there are 139 FSR specifically dedicated to the elaboration of Chinese food in Tijuana. 127 restaurants are micro enterprises, where 1 to 10

employees work and the remaining 12 are small companies, employing 11 to 50 workers, according to the stratification carried out by the Mexican Secretariat of Economy, (2009) [20].

In 2015, there was a problem with the Chinese community that operates these establishments, it was affirmed that in the kitchen of these restaurants, there was an improper handling of an input considered not for human consumption in Mexico, causing the closure of a lot of Chinese establishments in a short time of period. To compensate the damages, the Tourism and Convention Committee of Tijuana (COTUCO), The National Chamber of Restaurants and Seasoned Food Industry from Tijuana (CANIRAC) and the General Consul of the People's Republic of China in Tijuana, carried out trainings and certifications in the handling of food for consumption, in support of the community and for the strengthening of Chinese restaurants, its economy and to keep generating jobs in Tijuana (COTUCO, 2016) [3].

After this situation, it was essential to comprehend the triggers to rebuild customer loyalty and their behavioral intentions. Furthermore, it is necessary to identify and recommend practical clear indication due to the lack of budget associated to the micro and small enterprises. In this vein, Berezina, Cobanoglu, Miller and Kwanzaa (2012) [1] affirm that the triggers for the revisit and recommend intention are not the same. According to Namin, (2017) [14], the interaction among service, food, price and behavioral intentions like word for mouth (WOM) and revisit intention (RI) remains unanswered for customers who choose to go to a full service restaurant.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the revised literature, behavioral intentions are often interchangeably used by the term of loyalty. Both terms

loyalty and behavioral intention frequently include the elements of RI and WOM (Hutchinson, Lai & Wang, 2009 [8], Han, 2013 [5], and Tanford, & Jung, 2017 [22]. In the same sense, Hutchinson, Lai, & Wang, (2009) [8] and Menga & Hanb, (2018) [12] sustained that there is a direct relationship between satisfaction and the RI, as well as, on WOM.

Specifically analyzing the behavioral intention of restaurant consumers, Han, Back, & Barrett (2009) [7] and Namin (2017) [14] argue that behavioral intentions like the RI and WOM can be improved through customer satisfaction as an intermediary. Although dimensions used to estimate customer satisfaction in different studies are not identical, the satisfaction as a determinant factor of post purchase behavior is consistent in different researches (Yan, Wang, & Chau, 2015) [25].

According to Han, Back, & Barrett (2009) [7] and Han and Hyun (2017) [6], customer satisfaction is based on cognitive process determining commitment, and directly and indirectly engenders behavioral intentions. When consumers feel satisfied, it is increase their favorable intentions and their desire toward repurchasing and experiencing again. According to predictors of the RI, satisfaction with their overall experiences in a restaurant was identified to have a strong influence on intentions to revisit, when the customer is completely satisfied, they express strong intentions to repeatedly visit the restaurant (Han and Hyun, 2017) [6]. Hence, in order to generate these positive post-purchase intentions, practitioners should seek to improve patrons' overall satisfaction level by boosting diverse restaurant attributes.

Weiss, Feinstein, & Dalbor, (2008) [24] studied satisfaction of food quality, service quality, atmosphere, and novelty as predictors of the RI, they affirm that food quality and atmosphere were the only significant attributes influencing RI. Yan, Wang & Chau (2015) [25] used the following four dimension to analyze the RI: 1) Food quality: taste, variety, and appearance; 2) Service quality: employee appearance, employee attitude, 3) Atmosphere: cleanliness of the facilities; 4) price and value. They affirm that the four dimension have a positive effect on RI. Both studies did not included WOW as variable.

In the same way, Han and Hyun (2017) [6] affirmed that high quality of staff; physical environment and food are directly related to the customer satisfaction and to the RI to restaurants. In addition, quality of food includes: food taste, temperature, aroma or scent and presentation would be also essential for patron satisfaction and intention enhancement. Physical environment involves the cleanliness of the tables and restrooms, staff's quality includes: interpersonal skills and proficiency.

Regarding the trigger for WOM, Reza, Salimipour, Elyasi and Mohammadi (2017) [18] found that food quality, personal interaction quality, physical environment quality, and perceived value influence this variable. Similar conclusions were found by Muzamil, Qadeer, Makhija and Jahanzeb (2018) [13], whom studied the influence of

quality food, service, atmosphere and Price in the WOM pattern. They concluded that customers are influence to spread the word by the quality of the food and service. The most important being the food appearances and taste. These variables have a strong relationship with customer satisfaction and referrals. Regarding to the service quality, the most important are the service swiftness and empathy of the personnel.

In the literature review, it was found some research about behavioral intentions including WOM and intention to repurchase or revisit (Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012 [19], and Namin (2017) [14]. This type of research was carried out in Chinese restaurants, Ryu, Lee and Kim (2012) [19] using quality of physical environment, food and service. Their findings implied that food quality is the only predictor improving satisfaction and it is statistically related to behavioral intentions. Authors affirmed that customers in Chinese restaurants do not much perceive atmosphere and service as significant additional benefits considering the fact that many customers might be primarily driven to Chinese restaurants by food taste and low price instead of the physical environment and quality service. However, they do not explain if the quality of the food has an effect on the two indicators of consumer behavior (WOM or revisit intention) or if it is only on one of them.

For Namin (2017) [14] customer satisfaction has different indicators: service' reliability, food taste, price ratio, staff responsiveness, staff empathy, and expected time to receive the food and check. However, this study included both of the behavioral intention: revisit and WOM. The author concludes that in the case of fast food restaurants, not all the indicators of the customer satisfaction have a close interaction with revisiting and referral intention.

The reliability of the service, the staff responsiveness and empathy, as well as the time to receive the food and to pay have a direct and positive relation with customer satisfaction, nevertheless, this dimensions are not considered a direct significant influence for customers' behavioral intention (Hutchinson, Lai, and Wang, 2009 [8] and Namin (2017) [14], improving these factor significantly and positively impacts customer satisfaction, it would not directly encourage the customers to make the revisit for future purchases and WOM. Otherwise, food taste and price ratio has a direct relationship with the behavioral intentions. In particular, price to ratio, being one of the most important predictor to the repurchasing and revisiting intention (Namin, 2017) [14].

Namin (2017) [14] conclusion presents the same limitation of the one carried out on the Chinese restaurants, the author did not analyze which of the indicators were specifically related to the RI or to the WOM, and if all of them had an influence on both of the variables or whether some had a greater degree of influence for one than for the other. In other words, behavioral intention was treated as one dimension and it was assumed that all of the indicators that were statistically related to this dimension will be able to

trigger better service feedback, spread of positive word-of-mouth, and eventually the revisit intention

As mentioned above, there is a discrepancy between the factors that influence the RI and WOM, especially if the same factors influence both equally, there being an exceptional attention on the quality service variable, as a trigger for the behavioral intention after consuming in a full service restaurant

The indicators used in this study are those that appear consistently in restaurants' consumer behavior intentions models and were proved to have a statistically significant

Table 1 shows the indicators included in this research.

Table.1. Consumer Behavioral intention Indicators	
Indicators	Definition
Food taste	Costumers liking or disliking the food, the food being tasty or not
Food aroma	Costumers liking or disliking the scent or aroma of the food
Food presentation	Costumers liking or disliking the food appearance
Time to receive the food	Expected time to receive the food after the order
Time to receive the restaurant bill	Expected time to receive the restaurant bill after asking for it to the waiter
Price ratio	Price of an item relative to their overall perceived value of it
Responsiveness	The level of speed and accuracy of service provided, staff behavior in crowded times
Empathy	Employees paying attention to the costumer and understanding their needs by responding to complaints and creating a warm and friendly atmosphere for them
Reliability	Accomplishing the commitments and services promised to the customers with no mistake by the restaurant staff
Physical environment	cleanliness of the facilities

Source: Ryu, Lee and Kim, (2012), Yan, Wang & Chau (2015) Namin (2017), Han and Hyun (2017)

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Significance of the Study

The significance of this research lies in analyzing the relationship between a small number of attributes (ten) and their effect on the consumers' behavioral intension: RI and WOM to a restaurant. In addition, it is important to carry out this type of studies for micro and small companies with the purpose of offering them relevant information on the behavior of their clients, which will help them to make better decisions.

#### 3.2 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to find out the predictors for WOM and determinant factors for RI in Chinese Full Service Restaurants

#### 3.3 Method and Sample size

It was decided to use the quantitative method using the survey technique. To determine the sample size, a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of  $\pm 4\%$  were established, which allowed to define the sample in 525 individuals (Rea and Parker, 1991) [17]. The study took place in Tijuana, Mexico, a border city with California, USA. In order to evaluate their most recent experience random sampling was used to apply the face to face surveys.

With the purpose of design, the final version of the questionnaire used to gather the information required for the study, two pre-tests were carried out. Each pilot study was conducted in a sample of 30 respondents at the exit of Chinese restaurants.

relationship. However, these indicators were analyzed in two investigations to demonstrate effect in the WOM (Reza, Salimipour, Elyasi, & Mohammadi, 2017 [18], and Muzamil, Qadeer, Makhija, and Jahanzeb, 2018 [13]), and four to demonstrate the effect on RI (Weiss, Feinstein, & Dalbor, 2008 [24], Han, Back, & Barrett, 2009 [7], Han and Hyun, 2017 [6], Yan, Wang, & Chau, 2015 [25]). Only two studies analyzed these two variables within the dimension of the behavioral intention in the same structural model (Ryu, Lee & Kim, 2012 [19] and Namin, 2017 [14]).

A relevant fact worth mentioning is that during the pre-tests it was identified that most of the respondents showed a tendency to select the "neutral" response, which generated a bias in the information collected, so it was decided to eliminate it from the options. The exclusion of the neutral option does not necessarily change the proportion of responses that incline toward certain sides of a Likert response scale (positive or negative).

In order to reduce such bias and considering the statement by Dhar and Simonson (2003) [4], Lavrakas, (2008) [11], and Brown & Maydeu-Olivares (2011) [2], the forced choice format –without neutral option- increases the number of survey responses that are usable for analysis and encourage participants to provide an actual response. Additionally, it was considered that the interviewees were familiar with the subject to be evaluated, since the survey was applied to the exit of the restaurants. Based on the results of the previous tests, it was decided to modify the Likert scale from five to four points, eliminating the neutral value.

The questionnaire inquired the respondents to evaluate their dining experiences by using the four point Likert Scale. Ten items were assessed on 4-point scale ranging from 1=Not important, 2=Slightly Important, 3=Important, 4=Very Important. Also contains a section of variables to obtain the demographic profile of the respondents. Once gathered the information in the field, it was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Ver. 19.

### 3.4 Hypothesis

H01. There is a statistically significant relationship between RI and food taste, aroma and presentation, time to receive the food and bill, price ratio, responsiveness, empathy, reliability and physical environment.

H02. There is a statistically significant relationship between WOM and food taste, aroma and presentation, time to receive the food and bill, price ratio, responsiveness, empathy, reliability and physical environment.

H03. There are statistically significant differences between the main triggers to RI and to the WOM intention.

### 3.5 Measures

The reliability of the information was validated using the results obtained on the Cronbach's Alpha. Besides, for the

Table 2 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.706	12

Multiple regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between the attributes and return intention to Chinese restaurants. Table 3 shows the Anova results, the overall significance of the model (0.0000), the RI to

purpose of testing hypotheses H01, H02 and H03, multiple linear regression analysis was performed to evaluate the relationship between the ten attributes considered and the RI and the WOM

## 4. RESULTS

In order to test the reliability of the instrument Cronbach's Alpha analysis was performed. Table 2 shows the results of the analysis and it confirms that the instrument and items used were reliable with a coefficient alpha value of 0.706 above the generally accepted score of Nunnally (1978) of 0.7; this result validate the questionnaire reliability.

Table 3 Anova<sup>b</sup>

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	57.308	10	5.731	17.783	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	165.644	514	.322		
Total	222.952	524			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Responsiveness, Reliability, Food presentation, Food taste, Food Aroma, Empathy, Time to receive de restaurant bill, Physical environment, Price ratio, Time to receive the food.

b. Dependent Variable: Return Intention.

Taking into account the R<sup>2</sup> result (0.257) of table 4, it is affirmed that 25.7% of the RI is explained by the

Table 4 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.507 <sup>a</sup>	.257	.243	.568

a. Predictors: (Constant), Responsiveness, Reliability, Food presentation, Food taste, Food Aroma, Empathy, Time to receive de restaurant bill, Physical environment, Price ratio, Time to receive the food.

The Beta coefficients results of multiple linear regression, showed in table 5, indicate that six out of ten attributes have a statistical significant relation with RI. And the most important influencing the return intention to Chinese restaurants: first, empathy ( $\beta=-.209$ ) ( $p= 0.000$ ), followed by food taste ( $\beta=.190$ ) ( $p= 0.000$ ), responsiveness was ranked third ( $\beta=.131$ ) ( $p= 0.041$ ), physical environment (cleanliness of the facilities) is in fourth place ( $\beta=.112$ ) ( $p= 0.004$ ), price ratio is located in the fifth place ( $\beta=-.104$ ) ( $p= 0.007$ ), finally, time to receive the food ( $\beta=-.084$ ) ( $p= 0.033$ ) was hierarchically in sixth place.

Chinese restaurants has significant statistical relationship with Consumer behavioral intention indicators, because the significance is less than 0.05 ( $\pm 5\%$  error margin).

Consumer behavioral intention indicators used in this study.

Since the regression coefficients of price ratio and time to receive the food are negative, it was concluded that the existing relationship is inverse, so that the low prices and the swiftness to receive the food in the Chinese restaurants increase the RI.

On the other hand, the results obtained in the significance of each attribute in the regression (table 5), reliability (Sig.=.759), food presentation (Sig.=0.089) and aroma (Sig.=0.091), as well as the time to receive the restaurant bill (Sig. =0.709), have no significant statistical relationship with RI, because significances are greater than 0.05 ( $\pm 5\%$  error margin). For this reason, RI is not explained by these indicators.

Table 5 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.106	.353		.300	.765

Responsiveness	.183	.089	.131	2.050	.041
Reliability	.027	.086	.020	.307	.759
Food presentation	.103	.060	.073	1.703	.089
Food taste	.242	.057	.190	4.273	.000
Food Aroma	.091	.054	.069	1.692	.091
Empathy	.239	.047	.209	5.139	.000
Time to receive the restaurant bill	.018	.047	.015	.374	.709
Physical environment	.120	.042	.112	2.859	.004
Price ratio	-.217	.080	-.104	-2.702	.007
Time to receive the food	.116	.054	.084	2.137	.033

a. Dependent Variable: Return Intention.  
To measure the statistical relationship between the same ten attributes and the WOM for Chinese restaurants, a multiple linear regression was carried out. Table 6 shows the overall significance of the model (Sig.=0.000) in the

Anova results, the WOM for Chinese restaurants has significant statistical relationship with Consumer behavioral intention indicators, because the significance is less than 0.05 ( $\pm$  5% error margin).

Table 6 Anova

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	58.549	10	5.855	13.078	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	230.118	514	.448		
	Total	288.667	524			

Considering the R<sup>2</sup> result (0.203) of table 7 it is affirmed that 20.3% of the WOM intention is explained by the

Consumer behavioral intention indicators used in this study.

Table 7 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.450 <sup>a</sup>	.203	.187	.669

a. Predictors: (Constant), Responsiveness, Reliability, Food presentation, Food taste, Food Aroma, Empathy, Time to receive de restaurant bill, Physical environment, Price ratio, Time to receive the food

consumer intention to recommend Chinese restaurant are: first, empathy ( $\beta=.210$ ) ( $p= 0.000$ ), followed by food aroma ( $\beta=.152$ ) ( $p= 0.000$ ), food taste was ranked third ( $\beta=.151$ ) ( $p= 0.001$ ), time to receive the restaurant bill is in fourth place ( $\beta=.102$ ) ( $p= 0.012$ ) and physical environment is located in the fifth place ( $\beta=-.098$ ) ( $p= 0.017$ ).

The Beta coefficients results of multiple linear regression (table 8), show that five out of ten attributes have a positive significant statistical relation with WOM intention. The most important attributes influencing the

Table 8 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.055	.416		-.133	.894
	Responsiveness	.122	.105	.077	1.162	.246
	Reliability	.101	.102	.067	.994	.321
	Food presentation	-.103	.071	-.064	-1.442	.150
	Food taste	.217	.067	.150	3.247	.001
	Food Aroma	.227	.063	.152	3.573	.000
	Empathy	.275	.055	.210	5.007	.000
	Time to receive the restaurant bill	.140	.056	.102	2.514	.012
	Physical environment	.118	.049	.098	2.401	.017
	Price ratio	-.139	.095	-.058	-1.468	.143
	Time to receive the food	-.090	.064	-.058	-1.409	.159

a. Dependent Variable: WOM intention.  
Otherwise, the results obtained in the significance of each attribute in the regression (table 8), responsiveness (Sig.=.246), reliability (Sig.=.321), food presentation (Sig.=.150) and price ratio (Sig.=.143), as well as the time to receive the food (Sig.=.159), have no significant statistical relationship with WOM, because significances are greater than 0.05 ( $\pm$  5% error margin). For this reason, WOM is not explained by these indicators.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

With the results presented above, it was only found that 6 out of the ten attributes: 1) empathy, 2) food taste, 3) responsiveness, 4) physical environment, 5) price ratio, and 6) time to receive the food have a statistically significant relationship RI. Therefore, the hypothesis H1 was partially approved because six out of the ten attributes were related. These findings are in accordance with the results of Weiss, Feinstein, & Dalbor (2008)

[24], Yan, Wang & Chau (2015) [25], and Han & Hyun (2017) [6].

On the other hand, Hypothesis H2 was partially approved, because it was only validated in five out of ten of the consumer behavioral intention indicators. The factors statistically related to the WOM intention are: 1) empathy, 2) food aroma, 3) food taste, 4) time to receive the restaurant bill and the last one, 5) physical environment. These findings are in accordance with Reza, Salimpour, Elyasi and Mohammadi (2017)[18]. Furthermore, the results differ from Muzamil, Qadeer, Makhija and Jahanzeb (2018) [13], whom affirmed that customers are influenced to spread WOM just by food and service quality, concluding that atmosphere or physical environment were not important.

Finally, the hypothesis H3 was approved, because it was found significant differences between the main attributes to RI and to the WOM. The indicators that are related to both are: empathy, food taste and physical environment, but with different levels of importance and effect. Nevertheless, price ratio, and time to receive the food have a statistically relationship with RI and food aroma and time to receive the restaurant bill are significant just to the WOM.

It is necessary to clarify that there are coincidences and discrepancies between our findings and the results obtained by Ryu, Lee and Kim (2012) [19] in Chinese restaurants and Namin (2017)[14] in fast food restaurants, by agreeing that the factors of food taste and low prices are drivers to their consumer behavioral intentions: RI and WOM. But a relevant discrepancy is that they assume that these two factors affect both aspects in the same way, without specifying the intensity and level of importance for each one.

In this sense, by analyzing separately the relationship of the factors with the RI, it was found that in addition to food taste and low prices, four additional factors: empathy, responsiveness, time to receive the food and physical environment, were also triggers to increase the RI. While Namin (2017) [14] argues that the price ratio is the most important factor for driving the RI, in this research it was found that it ranks fifth after empathy, food taste, responsiveness and physical environment.

In the same sense, when comparing the results of the relationship between the ten factors with the WOM and the findings of Ryu, Lee & Kim (2012) [19] and Namin (2017) [14], it was found that the results of the three investigations in confirming that food taste is statistically related to it. Additionally, it was identified that the factors empathy, food aroma and taste, time to receive the restaurant bill and physical environment, are also drivers to positively boost the WOM. However, the main discrepancy lies in the fact that in this research, low prices factor does not affect the WOM intention, as they argue.

In summary, if Chinese food restaurants' entrepreneurs want to retain their customers and increase the RI, they should implement strategies that emphasize the empathy and responsiveness of the staff, the food taste, the

restaurant physical environment and the time to receive the food, without focusing too much on the price ratio factor. On the other hand, if what they want is to attract more clients as a result of the WOM, then they should elaborate a strategy that stands out empathy, food aroma and taste, time to receive the restaurant bill and physical environment.

The aim of this research was to probe that there are not the same triggers for the revisit and recommend intentions. In this sense, owners and managers of Chinese food restaurants should focus mainly on the ones that have an effect in both of them. They must provide training to strengthen the person-to-person contact, particularly in matters of customer service so that they can give a personalized attention and understand the needs of their client, resolving in a reliable and consistent way their doubts or complaints affording an accurate service, which will generate customer empathy and will (empathy and responsiveness).

They have to standardize the processes for preparing the dishes and buy quality inputs, in this way the food will have the same taste and aroma for the same consumers in different visits or new clients in their first visit, with the purpose of increasing the customer's perception of the product price value (food taste, aroma and price ratio).

It is essential that restaurant managers evaluate their system of commands, and training of the waiters for the filling of these, the command must be done in the right way, and this action can be decisive to avoid input and time losses in the restaurant. A badly filled command can cause the preparation of dishes that were not requested, inconvenience to customers when receiving a different dish or delay in the time to receive the food, (time to receive the food), which may be reflected in late delivery of the restaurant bill, due to the revision and adjustment on this.

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