The Impact of Meal Duration to Spending in a Fast-Casual Dining Restaurant

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Abstract:
This study examined the impact on spending associated with meal duration. The Onion restaurant, a fast-casual dining restaurant located in Perry Barr, Birmingham, this operation will be used as a case study. This restaurant currently enjoys reviews for their fast food and takes away services (as shown from the restaurant website). Currently, the regular restaurant customers are students from a University. Additionally, there is a diverse cross-cultural mix in the local demographic. This situation impacts the type of customer as this may influence service planning. Value focused fast casual operations are dependent on delivering quality products and sales volume. In looking at volume, the researcher wanted to explore the correlation between meal duration and spending derived from the customer party mixes. The research findings identify that there is a pattern that the more number of party, the longer meal duration and shows the trend that spending increase as the number of party mixes increase. The research findings also identify that there is a correlation between meal duration and spending, the longer meal duration, the more spending achieved. This finding will be use as direction for restaurants manager to decide service planning appropriate for restaurant operation, especially the decision whether the restaurant need to reduce meal duration so that the table turn over time can be maximizing and more revenue can be achieved or the restaurant allows the customer stay longer and spend more based on the correlation between mean meal duration and average customer spending.

Rationale: Fast casual independent small medium enterprise restaurant operations represent an overlooked subsector of the hospitality industry. Survival in a value conscious arena, facing cost constant is challenging. Optimising capacity from retail space and balancing meal duration with spending to achieve volumes necessary are factors which may determine the restaurant with a future. This research explores the assumption that operations not accurately managing capacity, meal duration and spending are matters of substance.

Method: This research consists of secondary and primary research. The secondary research was conducted using journals and books diverse relevant data was collected and analysed. Primary research was observed through observations and interview. Observational data was collected having examined Kimes (2004) method to obtain accurate data on meal duration and customer’s spending in the fast-casual dining restaurant. Interviews to learn of the restaurant manager’s views on service planning. 46 journals and three books were used to test the theories relevant to this study. 231 different party groups from 503 customers were observed to obtain data on average meal duration and spending of different groups. Also, an unstructured interview with the restaurant manager obtained information on the restaurant’s service planning. All the information from the secondary and primary research was analysed, interpreted, and presented in detail to explain the impact of the average meal duration to spending of customers in a fast-casual dining restaurant.

Findings and conclusion. The findings and conclusion, as well as the recommendations of this study address fast casual dining restaurant managers or those in a similar restaurant setting. Information on the average meal duration and spending of different group in a fast-casual dining restaurant setting has been provided by the results of both secondary and primary research. Recommendations have also been provided to help restaurant managers managing capacity by providing the information on how long customer’s meal duration and how much their spending derived from party mixes. As this study only focuses on a fast-casual dining restaurant, and the data was obtained from one restaurant, the research findings and conclusion can be applied in other similar restaurants settings, but not all restaurant settings in general.

Keywords: Meal duration, spending, party mixes, capacity efficiency, capacity management, restaurant theme, restaurant manager, restaurant concept, fast casual dining restaurant, primary research, secondary research,

1. Introduction

1.1. Terms of Reference
In restaurant operations, the manager commonly deals with balancing a hospitable service with commercial goals such as managing seat occupancy with earnings. Thompson (2010) finds that strategies in restaurant operations have two aspects. One is demand management, which related to pricing strategies and the other one is duration management, which
is related to meal duration and table management. Meal duration is an important factor considered by restaurant managers when making service planning to reach the revenue expected, it is something that can be controlled by the restaurant manager. Calculating meal duration can be used as strategy to identify seat occupancy concerning of tables, whereas calculating customer’s spending can be used to measure revenue. The correlation between meal duration and spending can be used to identify service planning such as the decision whether the restaurant need to maximize table turn over time so the more customer can be served and more revenue can be achieved or the restaurant can allow customer to stay longer and spend more. The figure 1below illustrates the hierarchy of meal duration, adapted from Thompson (2010).

![Figure 1: Hierarchy of Meal Duration](image)

Previous research identifies the importance of managing meal duration. Guerriero et al. (2014) highlight that the restaurant manager commonly has to make a decision to provide service efficiency. The decision mainly concerns how to manage seat occupancy so that there is service efficiency. Operations must be strategic and deliver services as needed by customers and it is necessary to know how long customers are going to stay in the restaurant, how much their spending and what type of party they are with, in order to ensure that there is efficient capacity. This involves calculating table turnover times, customer spending and the correlation between meal duration and spending. This research was conducted to provide information on the average meal duration and spending of different parties in a fast-casual dining restaurant setting.

Although meal duration is an important factor in providing capacity efficiency, research on this area is limited, especially after 2011. This study has been conducted to provide information on meal duration through an analysis of theories on meal duration and direct observation to obtain information on meal duration related to customer's spending as well as through an unstructured interview. For the research concerning meal duration, the restaurant studied should be busy and fast (Thompson, 2010). The Red Onion, a fast-casual dining restaurant in Perry Barr, Birmingham therefore compliant aim Thompson observation. Considered this research address a fast casual dining restaurant setting.

1.2. Setting the Scene

In restaurant operations, restaurant managers must be able to make resource decisions (short term and long-term decisions). Long-term decision is for example how large the dining room and kitchen should be or how many physical resources, such as tables and cutlery, should be provided. Short term decisions include how many employees should be working in the dining area and kitchen and what the optimal staffing level should be at busy times. By considering such resources, approaches to service planning can be developed (Hwang and Lambert, 2009).

Kimes (2008) finds that to improve on profits, restaurant managers need to pay attention to meal duration. It can be controlled by knowing customer arrival times, the length of time a table will be occupied and the availability of the table for the next party. For the purpose of calculating meal duration, some strategies, concerning refining the definition of duration, reducing uncertainty over arrival, reducing uncertainty over duration, and reducing the time between meals are needed (Kimes 2004 – cited in Thompson, 2010). Adapted from Kimes (2008) research finding, meal duration can be measure by considering the uncertainty matter.

Regarding the meal duration associated with customer’s spending, Pliner et al. (2006) finds that meal duration lengthens as the number of dinners increases and that this extra time spent eating increases the amount being eaten as well as the money being spent. If the meal duration and spending can be calculated and predicted, the restaurant manager can identify the table turn over time and make the decision whether the restaurant need to maximize table turn over time so the more customer can be served and more revenue can be achieved or the restaurant can allow customer to stay longer and spend more. Adapted from capacity theory of Hwang and Lambert (2009) and revenue theory of Kimes (2004), in restaurant operations, managers must have service planning based on both measurement, which was capacity and revenue. This research purpose was to provide information of meal duration related to customer spending so that can help restaurant’s manager to manage capacity to achieve revenue.
The research begins with a discussion of a theoretical framework related to meal duration and spending and its correlation with different party in fast casual dining restaurant alone, but its findings, conclusion and recommendations are applicable to similar restaurant settings. The study uses secondary research on meal duration and spending as well as the primary research on restaurant operations. The secondary research was conducted before the primary research. This was because the researcher needed to gather sufficient information on meal duration theory and spending as well as other theories related to party mixes and dining stages before conducting the primary research. The primary research, both the observation and the interview were conducted during the restaurant’s opening hours during 22 October 2016 until 5 November 2016 in order to identify meal duration and spending during hour by hour on different days of restaurant operations. This aim to obtain a variety of data on meal duration and spending so that it more reliable.

1.3. Aim and Objectives
The aim of this research is to examine the impact on spending associated with meal duration in relations to different customer groups in fast casual dining restaurants.

Objectives:
- To discuss the concepts of ‘meal duration’ and ‘spending’.
- To establish through observation of mean meal duration and average spending in a case study restaurant with varied party groups.
- To explore the correlation between spending and meal duration using a case operation.
- To evaluate the extent to which the findings have potential value in similar restaurant settings.

Based on the rationale and objectives mentioned above, there are three hypotheses has been formulated to identify the average meal duration and spending in fast casual dining restaurants and the correlation between meal duration and spending derived from different party group in a fast-casual dining restaurant. The first hypothesis is that customer’s meal duration increases when the number of party increase. The second hypothesis is that customer’s spending increase when the number of party increase. The third hypothesis is that there is a correlation between customer’s meal duration and spending. As this study addresses a fast-casual dining restaurant, these hypotheses can be tested on other restaurants operation with the same or similar settings.

1.4. Theoretical Framework
A theoretical framework consists of a visualization concerning how the researcher designs the research in the beginning, through to the whole research process, based on the research aim and objectives. Firstly, the researcher used established theories on meal duration and spending from previous research to gather the information of it in restaurants operation. The researcher then analysed the correlation between meal duration and spending of different customer groups in the restaurants and the possible benefit of this. For the purpose of providing an in-depth discussion of meal duration and spending of different groups, the researcher explored factors influencing meal duration and strategies in restaurant operations, based on it. Finally, there was a case study on the subject.

This research is justified as it fills the knowledge on meal duration. There is little research and materials after 2011. Thompson (2010) identifies the importance of calculating meal duration to device strategies in providing service efficiency and achieving revenue expected. This research can give direction to restaurant managers to device strategies based on meal duration. Identifying meal duration can help provide a suitable service planning to achieve revenue. This research concerns these findings.

Qualitative methods were used in this study to provide and present data from both secondary and primary research. Secondary research was conducted through analysing sources relevant to the main discussion. 46 journals and three books were used to test the theories relevant to this study including customer’s meal duration and spending and its correlation. Factors influencing meal duration such as dining stages and restaurant themes also have been discussed.

For the purpose of extending secondary data, the primary research focused on two methods of gathering data on the Red Onion restaurant operation, observation and interview. A direct observation was carried out to collect data on the average meal duration and spending of different parties to manage service planning. An unstructured interview was piloted to gain information on the restaurant manager’s perspectives. The findings and conclusion, as well as the recommendations of this research from both secondary and primary research, interpret, explain and examine the meal duration and spending of customer groups in a fast, casual, dining restaurant setting. The research findings and conclusions also possibly addressed to other restaurant with the same or similar settings.

2. Literature Review
This chapter initiates the discussion of concepts linked to the topic using literature from journals and books. In this case, the author will discuss the perspectives of meal duration and spending. The author will then move on to a more specific discussion of how the correlation of meal duration and spending affect service planning. The discussion will go through further factors influencing meal duration and strategies based on meal duration. Finally, there will be a critical analysis of the profits and challenges of providing service efficiency.

2.1. Meal Duration
The focus of the subsection examined past authors work to investigate past research related to the concept of meal duration in restaurants. The literature reveals limited research in this area Kimes, a major scholar in this area found that to improve profit margin restaurant managers needs to pay attention to meal duration by controlling it and have a knowledge of customer arrival times, the length of time a table is occupied and the availability of the table for the next
party (Kimes, 2008). Meal duration is an important aspect for management forecast expected revenue. The restaurant manager needs to create strategies based on meal duration such as prediction of table turn over time. By maximizing table turn over time, more customer can be served and more profit can be achieved. From this perspective meal duration refers to the process that can be used as a medium that can be controlled or reduced to gain profitability.

Although meal duration can be controlled so that more customers can be served and profits can be improved, a restaurant manager needs to carefully consider their approach to the customer, as it will impact on customer satisfaction (Kimes, 2008). Restaurant managers need to consider customer satisfaction in controlling meal duration, without rushing customers. Normally, the fast service provided can be noticed by the customer so that the customer feels uncomfortable and might decide not to return.

There are several strategies linked to meal duration that need to be considered by the restaurant manager. They potentially limit the capacity of restaurants, including the back of the house (kitchen), waiters, number, size, and position of tables (Thompson and Kwortnik, 2008). Restaurant managers need to make decisions concerning the number of staff needed, the size and position of tables. If restaurant managers can calculate the mean meal duration, a restaurant manager can manage restaurant production and service well. It will impact the effectiveness of the restaurant service as a whole. If the mean meal duration can be calculated, a restaurant can predict the table turn over time based on revenue expected.

From another perspective, Thompson and Kwortnik (2008) study reveals that meal duration is related to capacity management. The study result indicates that meal duration is an important factor in providing service efficiency. Restaurant revenue can be achieved if restaurant capacity can be managed effectively. It is necessary for a restaurant manager to pay attention on meal duration as it impacts on strategies to create service efficiency to improve revenue. From this perspective, meal duration refers to the process that can be used as a parameter to manage restaurant capacity for the purpose of service efficiency to achieve profitability.

Adapted from the studies above, meal duration is an important factor in the restaurant operation. Meal duration can be used as a media and parameter to achieve profitability. In this study, the researcher will focus on meal duration that used as a parameter in managing service planning. The purpose of this study focusses on meal duration related with customer’s spending to provide service planning of the benefit of it is more widely applicable achieve revenue in the restaurant operation. Meal duration as a medium refers to reducing meal duration, whereas meal duration as a parameter refers to providing service efficiency. Research conducted by Thompson (2010) discusses the strategy of duration management. Research results indicate that reducing meal duration only contributes one-quarter of a whole profitability achieved in the restaurant operation. The major contributor is from capacity management based on meal duration. In this study, the theory of meal duration as a parameter applied to the research is based on identifying meal duration of customer for the purpose of providing service efficiency.

2.2. Spending
Customer spending is an important factor in businesses. Predicting aggregate customer spending is very important to marketing planning (Fornell et al., 2010). An estimate of customer spending needed at competing firms. For the purpose of obtaining profit, the data on competitive spending is needed (Jang et al., 2016). Spending, in general, has significant informative potential as it transfers an expression of people’s preferences to purchase and differing in sort, such as frequency, and variability (Otto et al., 2009). In the hospitality industry, customer spending behaviour is an important variable (should moderate the quality performance to overall satisfaction) and growth of revenue can be reached by increasing the customer base or the average amount of customers’ spending (Matzler et al., 2007). Based on the research discussing the concept of customers’ spending above, customer spending can be describing as an expression of customer preferences to purchase and it is an important factor in businesses, including the hospitality industry, as it can be used as an information tool in achieving revenue.

2.3. Correlation between Meal Duration and Customer Spending
Meal duration is influenced by customer characteristics, such as party mixes as well as by restaurant concept and nature of the service (Thompson, 2010). A restaurant manager needs to know how long the meal duration will be when customers eat alone or with co-eaters. This will impact on the strategies based on meal duration, such as providing service efficiency. The restaurant manager also needs to be aware of the concept and nature of service as it impacts on meal duration. For example, in the fast food restaurant setting, where the concept and nature of the service are quick services, customers tend to have their food quickly, so that the length of meal duration tends to be short.

Regarding the social facilitation effect, meal duration has been shown to be related to the number of customers present. Pliner et al. (2006) finds that meal duration lengthens as the number of dinners increases and that this extra time spent eating increases the amount being eaten as well as the money being spent. In a similar research topic, Brindal et al. (2011) study shows the correlation between eating behaviour and meal duration. Their conclusion is that there is a tendency for meal duration to increase when customers are eating together. Another conclusion is that the meal duration of lone diners increases if they are reading (Brindal et al., 2006). In contrast, Kimes (2008) finds that reducing meal duration increases the need for table turnover and the more customers that are served, which results in increased restaurant revenue.

Previous research on meal duration from (Thompson, 2010), Pliner et al. (2006) and Brindal et al. (2011), shows a pattern of meal duration by party sizes can be established. One pattern is that the bigger the size of the group, the longer the duration of the meal and the more spending. Additionally, research from Kimes and Robson (2004) describe the correlation between meal duration and spending. The researchers state that high average checks or customer spending
with long meal duration is acceptable but may not represent the maximum revenue. The ideal correlation is high customer spending with short meal duration.

This study purpose to test the correlation of meal duration and spending associated with party mixes. Regarding the definition of party mixes, most of the studies discuss party mixes by referring to the number of customers present. The varied party including Single male customer, single female customer, two customers same gender, two customers mix gender, three customers same gender, three customers mix gender, four and above customers same gender, four and above customers mix gender. This variety of party is used for the purpose of providing variety to the data that represent party mixes in a fast-casual dining restaurant. The justification of the party mixes used in this study is adapted from Pliner et al. (2006) who study meal duration derived from different party (in the number and gender).

In this study, the theory of social facilitation adapted from Pliner et al (2006) used to test the correlation between customer's meal duration and spending. The theory state that meal duration lengthens as the number of dinners increases and that this extra time spent eating increases the amount being eaten as well as the money being spent. The theory of Kimes and Robson (2004) also used to explore the combination of correlation between meal duration and spending. The data of mean meal duration and average spending of customers by the different formation of party mixes addresses a parameter to provide capacity efficiency. By understanding meal duration and spending by party mix, it allows a restaurant manager make decision whether the restaurant need to maximize table turn over time so the more customer can be served and more revenue can be achieved or the restaurant can allow customer to stay longer and spend more. The visualization of the correlation between meal duration and spending in this figure 3 below:

![Figure 3: Correlation between Meal Duration and Spending](image)

The gearbox metaphor shows that modest efforts to appropriate service planning has a progressive benefit in greater earnings. The model of correlation between meal duration and party mix above is adopted from Thompson (2010) whose study correlates meal duration with capacity management in the restaurant operation. Meal duration can be used as a parameter to create capacity efficiency, influenced by party mixes to provide capacity efficiency, especially in predicting table turn over time.

The identification of meal duration associated with customer's spending of different party mixes address provision to service planning, including restaurant manager's decision whether the restaurant need to reducing meal duration so that the table turn over time can be maximizing and more revenue can be achieved or the restaurant allows the customer stay longer and spend more.

2.4. External Factors Influencing Meal Duration

To provide a detailed discussion of external factors influencing meal duration, in a separate sub heading below, the author will analyse literature from the previous research on external factors influencing meal duration, including restaurant concept and restaurant theme. Factors which might have an impact on meal duration in terms of social facilitation effect is restaurant setting (Pliner et al., 2006). Instead of the number of customer present (party mix) as an internal factor influencing meal duration, which means that this factor should be considered from the customer's perspectives, there are external factors influencing meal duration which are based on the restaurant's atmosphere, including restaurant concept and restaurant setting. The restaurant's concept and theme can influence a customer's decision making concerning whether they will stay for a longer or shorter time in the restaurant. In this study, restaurant
managers need to identify the meal duration and spending in order to fit with restaurant's concept and theme. For the purpose of gathering in-depth information of external factors influencing meal duration, the discussion is as follows:

2.4.1. Restaurant Concept

One external factor influencing meal duration is the restaurant concept. To examine the relationship between meal duration and restaurant concept, an observational study of customers in three different types of lunch setting (worksite cafeteria, a fast-food restaurant, and a moderately priced restaurant) was conducted by Bella and Pliner (2003). The research result indicates that meal duration in the moderately priced restaurant was the longest and that the shortest was in the fast-food restaurant. Regarding the correlation between group size and setting, the size of the group had an effect on meal duration in the different settings. The observation of group mixes related to meal duration found that it was shortest smallest in the fast-food restaurant rather than the worksite cafeteria or moderately priced restaurant. Shioda (2003) – cited in Guirero et al. (2014) highlight that in managing meal duration, the benefit of calculating meal duration can be applied in a restaurant that does not accept reservations as restaurant managers can predict when the next table turn over without data from reservations.

From the studies above, it can be said that the length of meal duration is influenced by restaurant concept. A fast food restaurant has the shortest whereas a moderately priced restaurant has the longest meal duration. Regarding the difference of meal duration based on a restaurant concept, restaurant managers need to adjust the strategy of capacity efficiency to fit with the restaurant concept. The purpose of this study is to test the theory of meal duration as influenced by party mixes. The identification of meal duration associated with customer's spending address provision to service planning, whether the restaurant need to reducing meal duration so that the table turn over time can be maximizing and more revenue can be achieved or the restaurant allows the customer stay longer and spend more. Also, regarding restaurant concept influencing meal duration, in this case study, as the restaurant is categorised as a fast-casual dining restaurant, the assumption is that the meal duration should be short.

2.4.2. Restaurant Theme

Another external factor influencing meal duration is restaurant theme. This is a specific characteristic of the restaurant related to the characteristic of customers as well as their behaviour, and it can affect meal duration. Several studies will be discussed below, exploring views on how the different concept of a restaurant applies strategies related to time. Stroebel and Castro's (2006) study explored the correlation between meal duration and restaurant theme. Their study results provide evidence that customers tend to stay longer and consume more food when music is played in a restaurant.

The literature above gives a view of the length of meal duration in different restaurant settings. Concerning how a restaurant theme influences customer behaviour, a study by Wood and Munoz (2007) found that ethnic-themed restaurants are commonly known as foreign culture socialising agents. Although the media interprets them in a stereotypical manner, in the service area, there is an opportunity to provide a specific service.

Themed restaurants are sometimes referred to as entertainment where tools and equipment are used to give meaningful and entertaining dining and a chance for the customer to connect to a cultural heritage. Customer tend to stay longer to enjoy the food as well as the atmosphere. Similarly, Jang et al. (2011) highlights the impact of the atmosphere of an ethnic theme, how it instils influence of positive emotions and behaviour intention offering a specific service to customers. In this case, the restaurant is a medium of cultural connection and social communication. Moreover, the restaurant setting will encourage customers to enjoy a longer dining experience as they will enjoy the company.

To illustrate how a restaurant theme can influence customers to connect with their community and increase meal duration, Munoz and Wood (2009) find that, for many customers, ethnic-themed restaurants may provide food and beverage service that create a bond with a foreign culture. Usually, the owner of ethnic-themed restaurant is from the country in question so that they can create an authentic atmosphere. In this case, the dining experience is used as a medium of cultural connection and social communication so that can increase meal duration. However, research conducted by Seeman et al., (2005) has found that restaurant managers and owners tend to pay attention to revenue, but less attention to service quality. Poor quality of service leads to an inauthentic ethnic culture presented in the menu and the restaurant's atmosphere. Problems which might occur in this situation include a rushed service which will affect customer satisfaction and reduce customer willingness to enjoy the meal over a long time.

According to the literature above, there are two different research findings. One highlight that ethnic-themed restaurants provide a restaurant use atmosphere as a marketing strategy to help customers enjoy the food as well as a theme so that customer might stay longer (long meal duration). The second findings state that some ethnic-themed restaurant managers and owner in the UK use a strategy that only focuses on low pricing and advertising but less attention is paid to the quality of food and the service. This situation will influence customer satisfaction and reduce the length of their dining experience. In this study, the theme of the restaurant will be considered as a factor that can influence meal duration. When restaurant managers make the decision on how they are going to present their restaurant theme, they need to consider the purpose of meal duration to improve revenue, whether as a media (reducing dining duration) or as a parameter (capacity efficiency) The fast, casual dining restaurant theme leads to a fast meal duration as well.

2.4.3. Dining Stages

This study focuses on identifying mean meal duration. In calculating mean meal duration, it is useful to understand the step by step stages that customers usually go through when they go to a restaurant. This will give an
illustration of what the series of activities that can help restaurant managers to decide which dining stage can be calculated as a meal duration. Previous studies discussion below will give an outline of the dining experience stages.

For the purpose of measuring the meal duration in a restaurant, an understanding of the stages of the dining experience is needed. It will provide a direction for restaurant managers on which stages of dining experience can be calculated. Previous studies discussed below will give an outline of dining experience stages. Kimes (2008) categorises the stages as pre-arrival, pre-process, post-arrival, in-process, post-process and turn over. The pre-arrival stage or the pre-ordering of food is the time when a customer decides to go to a restaurant until the customer arrives. The post-arrival stage is the time from arrival until the customer is seated. The pre-processing stage is the time from being seated until the customer receives his/her food. The in-process stage is the time from receipt of the food until the customer requests the bill. The post-process stage is the time from requesting the bill until the customer leaves the restaurant. The turn over stage is the time from leaving the restaurant until the table is ready for the next customer.

Similar research was conducted by Thompson and Kwortnik (2008). They find that measuring time is important in a restaurant service. Measuring time can be seen as two stages: the time the customer is seated until the time he/she is finished and the time from when the customer is finished until when the table is ready for the next customer (Thompson and Kwortnik, 2008). Additionally, Dubé-Rioux et al’s (1989) study on dining experience stages and divide them into three. The first is the pre-processing stage, which is the time from when the customer arrives at the restaurant until the customer orders the meal. The second is the in-process stage, which is the time from when a customer orders the food until he/she finishes it. The third is the post-process stage, which is the time from payment until when the customer leaves the restaurant.

Based on the discussion of dining stages from the previous studies above, dining experience refers to stages that have been detailed the customer activity engage in when dining. However, some stages may be unpredictable and difficult to measure, especially in the pre-arrival stage, the time from when the customer decides to go to the restaurant until arrival at the restaurant. It is difficult to identify when the stage begins because it depends on the customer's willingness to share as this might happen outside the restaurant. In a restaurant operation, meal duration is influenced by dining stages. In a fast casual dining restaurant setting, dining experience stages are simpler, shorter and do not include the post-arrival stage, as customer usually directly order food and pay for it after arrival, without waiting for server assistant to come to a table assisting their menu order. The figure 4 below represent the dining stages in fast casual dining restaurant

![Figure 4: The Dining Stages in Fast Casual Dining Restaurant](source)

Dining stages researched on by Kimes (2008), Thompson and Kwortnik (2008) and Dubé-Rioux et al. (1989), indicate dining stages that are used to calculate meal duration in this study are similar to dining stages adapted from those previous researches. It contains eight dining stages and can be categorised as simple dining stages, as they are influenced by nature of the restaurant concept, which is fast casual dining restaurant.

In this study, the dining stages adapted from Kimes (2008), Thompson and Kwortnik (2008) and Dubé-Rioux et al. (1989), include arrival to order, order to paying the bill, paying the bill to seat, seat to order arrive, order arrival to eating time, eating time to customer leaving, customer leaving to table clearance, table clearance to the next re-seat. Therefore, the time from when the customer requests the bill for payment until leaving the restaurant is not relevant in fast food restaurant, as the customer usually orders and pays at the same time.

3. Methodology

Research methodology mirrors the shared beliefs within a community of researchers. It illustrates how research participants are sampled, research questions are asked and approached to generate perceptions (Kuhn, 1970 – cited in Murshed and Zhang, 2016). In research methodology, researchers’ personal characteristics such as thinking orientation influences the decision on what type of methodology will be used (Murshed and Zhang, 2016). In this study, the thinking orientation of the researcher on how to present the research leads to the decision on which methodology will be used.
As research methodology consists of the theory on how the research should be undertaken, in this part, information on approaches and methods that are used in this study alongside with designing constructing and undertaking both secondary and primary researched study will continue the case study. To provide direction on how the detailed study will proceed, the information has been arranged under these subheadings below:

3.1. Research Approach

In this research, a qualitative method was used. The purpose of it is because qualitative research allows researchers to find in-depth contextual information about a case study alongside the day by day interaction with respondents (Robert, 2014). It sits well with the purpose of this study which was based on the observation of mean meal duration by party mixes on a daily basis in restaurant operations. The qualitative method was also chosen as the data analysis approach and the result was presented in an explanation format, using more words than numbers.

Specifically, the interpretive approach of the qualitative method was chosen to present data because it provides an in-depth explanation of the processes. To support this opinion, the study from Caru et al. (2014) highlight that the interpretive approach in the qualitative method prompts the development of consumption experiences in a study (Moisander and Valtonen, 2012 – cited in Caru et al., 2014). It sits well with this case study that focuses on capacity efficiency that was measured through customer spending and meal duration (as part of consumption experience) of different party groups as an experienced process in restaurant operations. Using the interpretive approach, the author explained the detailed information from secondary data had been collected. The researcher then brought the data from secondary research and tested it against the real data in primary research.

Data were collected using both secondary and primary approaches. The secondary data were collected by shifting information within the discipline using existing theory in meal duration, customer spending and the application of that theory in restaurant businesses, especially in fast casual dining restaurants(secondary). This information was organised through clear subheadings, all the explanation of factors influencing meal duration and strategies managing meal duration in restaurant operations. The purpose of collecting data from the secondary research was to find the foundation of theories used in this study that were gathered from establishing the theories related with the discussion in this study such as meal duration, spending and party mixes.

The secondary data collected covered research questions exploring objectives of this research. This was used to gain more real information on the impact of meal duration to spending in the fast-casual dining restaurant operations for the purpose of finding the correlation between meal duration and spending of customers. The author then continued the process of collecting data while conducting the primary research, which was through direct observation and unstructured interview. A non-participant type of observation was conducted to gain the information on mean meal duration by party mixes, distribution party mixes per hours, average spending per party, mean meal duration by average spending per party, and estimated gross profit by Revenue per available seat hour (RevPASH) per party in a Red Onion restaurant (primary).

Primary data were also collected through an unstructured interview with the restaurant manager. The purpose was to gain more information on the restaurant manager’s perspective to service planning and the restaurant’s manager willingness to accept the study results.

3.2. Secondary Research

The secondary research was conducted to gather information of the main discussion of this study and the information related to it. The purpose was to have foundation information of the theoretical framework of the concept discussed in this study. The details of choice of research, construction of the design, sample procedure and data analysis process of secondary research are provided in the sub heading below:

3.2.1. Choice of Research Design

Research design provides the direction of how the research has been conducted. Choice of research design is influenced by the type of thinking orientation of the researcher especially on how the researcher thinks the study should be presented. A study from Murshed and Zhang (2016) highlight that this research tend to use analytic thinking using a quantitative methodology, whereas the researchers who tend to use holistic thinking, will prefer to use qualitative methodology. It demonstrates that thinking orientation impacts are researchers choice of approach.

The purpose of choosing secondary research was to provide holistic information tested by comparing, analysing and evaluating secondary data. Several previous studies discuss the similar topic from journals and books used to gain wider information and critical analysis from previous researchers, centred on a discussion of the main themes of this study. The selected journals and books were also used to support the discussion related to this study. The purpose was to give a directional plot to the research so that the research is reliable. As the main focus of the study was the application of yield management in restaurant services, some theories from previous researchers were adopted, including meal duration, spending and party mixes. For the purpose of testing the correlation between meal duration and party mixes, the social facilitation theory adapted from Pliner et al. (2006) has been used. In this study, the theory of social facilitation state that meal duration lengthens as the number of dinners increases and that this extra time spent eating increases the amount being eaten as well as the money being spent will be tested to explore the correlation between meal duration and spending of customers. The identification of meal duration associated with customer's spending of different party mixes address provision to service planning, whether the restaurant need to reducing meal duration so that the table turn over time can be maximizing and more revenue can be achieved or the restaurant allows the customer stay longer and spend more.
The purpose of using secondary research was to provide information from the existing theory to answer questions from the research objectives. Secondary research was used as the popular approach in social sciences study such as sociology. It fits with the research focus of this study which focuses on identification of customer meal duration by party mixes in the restaurant businesses and it is categorised as sociology research. To support this argument, the previous research study from Kean et al. (2015) state that secondary research is commonly used to answer complex questions of human behaviour in social sciences. The data are usually from other researchers or organisations, suitable for other study research with a similar topic and the users are usually not part of the design of the study (Kean et al., 2014). In this case study, secondary data collected address for justification so that the research has theoretical foundation and possibly can be considered to contribute to another study in the future. 46 journals and three books used to support the discussion of meal duration, spending and the correlation between meal duration and spending so that the discussion in the secondary research is reliable.

3.2.2 Construction of the Design

The purpose of constructing a research design is to provide a clear explanation of how the secondary research has been carried out. In this study, the secondary research was conducted to answer questions from the research objectives. The author started with bracketing parameter of secondary research needed based on the research objectives. The next step was refining keywords before conducting secondary research. The author then began to collect the literature, analysing and storing it into a word 2016 software computer programme. This process was repeated several times as it was the key point of conducting the secondary research.

In evaluating the secondary research, the author was comparing previous studies from different authors and sometimes combining them to gain reliable information. Additionally, the researcher was carefully considering when evaluating the secondary data as it can potentially lead to misunderstanding or misconception. A study from Saunders and Bezzima (2015) states that a misconception often appears because the wrong opinion has been interpreted by other researchers. Misconceptions are however equally considered as deviations from widely accepted norms.

For example, the process of refining keywords of the impact of meal duration associated with party mixes in fast casual dining restaurant businesses, the author searched the keywords on 'meal duration' and then came across the study from Chan and Chan (2008). The author then found another study from the keywords of 'restaurant capacity' and discovered the study from Nguyen and Wright (2015). The author then evaluated and linked the study of meal duration from Chan and Chan (2008) with the study of the capacity of Nguyen and Wright (2015). The purpose was to get a wider perspective of the application of meal duration associated with spending for the purpose of capacity efficiency in restaurant businesses.

3.2.3 Sample

The process of sampling the secondary research was conducted to find relevant sources for this study. Presenting sampling decisions is important regarding determining the quality of the research (Suri, 2011). After analysing several theories that fit with the discussion, in this case study, the author then selected 44 journals that were published between 2000-2016 and two journals used was published before 2000. The purpose of this was to provide an update of a theoretical background that is relevant to the current issues that have been discussed in this case study. Another purpose of selecting secondary resources was to find wider perspectives from previous researchers about the main discussion in this topic such as meal duration, spending and party mixes, whether they have a similar or even contradictory opinion in discussing the same topic. 46 journals and three books were explored to support the discussion of the main theme and subtopics of this study.

In the process of gathering, selecting and sampling secondary data, there was a missing dimension on meal duration beyond 2011. There was also a problem in finding the journal that specifically discuss the impact of meal duration associated with spending of customer of different party mixes in restaurant businesses. Some researchers study meal duration related with party sizes, but few of them research meal duration linked to party mixes (mix the number and the gender). Secondary research was conducted covering all the main discussion areas of this study reliable.

3.2.4 Procedure

The process of gathering secondary data (figure 1 below) began early with the process of searching journals related to the topic of this case study. For the online journals, most of them were from publishers such as Emerald Database, Cornell University Quarterly, Sage, Elsevier and Science direct. General keywords have been used to search the information such as meal duration, spending, party mixes, dining stages, restaurant concept and restaurant theme. Secondary data from journals are mostly from the published journal areas from International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, Journal Appetite, Journal of Management Decision, International Journal of Hospitality Management, Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, European Journal of Operational Research and Journal of Cornell University Quarterly, whereas secondary data from books was undertaken within the University College Birmingham library. The author then clustered journals and books into a subheading for each discussion topic and recorded the literature matrix which is provided in the appendices. The purpose was to make the process of evaluating secondary research easier and effective as well as make the storyline of how the secondary research was organised. Next, the author then used information from the literature matrix to provide discussions of main focus of the study including meal duration, spending and party mixes.
3.2.5. Data Analysis

In the data analysing process, the interpretive approach was used to analyse the data. The author used several stages such as clustering and categorizing data, examining concepts and themes, defining the relationship between concepts. Clustering and classifying data were used to gather information into a safe way and make the data analysis process easier and faster. In this study, the researcher analysed journals and books that relate to the main discussion of this study, including meal duration, spending and party mixes. Examining concepts and ideas were used to gather the data on meal duration and link it with the party mixes. Defining the relationship between concepts was done by comparing data discussion on the same topic, whether they have the same or different opinions on the topic. The author then made a conclusion of the discussion based on the previous researchers’ opinions as well as the author’s perspective.

3.3. Primary Research

After completing secondary research of this study, the primary research was conducted to find the real data to support the discussion from the secondary data. The details of choice of research, construction of the design, sample procedure and data analysis process of primary research are provided in the sub heading below:

3.3.1. Choice of Research Design

Primary research was undertaken to gain the real information of this case study. The research design for the primary data was conducted by observation and interview in the Red Onion restaurant, a fast-casual dining restaurant located in Perry Barr, Birmingham, UK. The method of observation used was a direct, non-participant observation on the customer (focused data of mean meal duration by party mixes) and unstructured interview with restaurant management (focused on restaurant manager’s perspective of this study).

The purpose of the use of a direct, non-participant observation is to collect data that answers the objectives of this case study research which was to find the mean of meal duration and spending with the various party groups. The observation was chosen as the data collection approach as it is the ideal approach to collect data for research that looks at the behavioural aspect rather than the perception of the individual (Kumar, 2014). In this case, the customers were not informed that they were being observed. The purpose was to make the data that were collected more genuine as the customers did not realise that they were being observed. Field notes were used to record data from the situation of the restaurant during lunch and dinner as well as the data collected from the interaction with the restaurant manager from the unstructured interview. The purpose of the use of non-participant observation and field notes was because these methods are easy to account for and save time. It also made the information more genuine.

In this study, the reliability and validity of the tools used were to test that the research was reliable and valid. The tools used underscores the credibility of the respondents, which help with the transferability to other contexts or settings (external). To support the opinion, research from Trochim and Donnelly (2007) uses this criterion for judging research, which are Credibility (internal) and transferability (external) validity tools (Trochim and Donnelly, 2007 – cited in Kumar, 2014).

The credibility of restaurant manager as a respondent (gathered from an unstructured interview with the restaurant manager) was used as an internal validity in this research. During the interview, the restaurant manager had questions about the willingness of restaurant managers to accept the research findings, conclusion and recommendations. After the findings had been provided, the restaurant management accepted the conclusion and recommendations and was willing to make some changes in restaurant operation to improve the revenue collected based on the research findings. An external reliability tool was also used by providing the possibility of this research being adopted in other similar study scenarios. The researcher was designing the research so that the result findings could be used and be beneficial for another study, organisation, company or other restaurant businesses with the same or similar setting. Although the data of meal duration and spending was collected from the fast-food restaurant setting, the application of these research findings is applicable, other restaurants with the same or similar settings.

Additionally, instead of both internal and external reliability and validity tools above, another reliability and validity tool has been used which is the respondents’ willingness to accept this study results, adapted from Trochim and Donnelly (2007). In this study, respondent of the study is a restaurant manager. Another study from Cho and Trend (2006) highlight that in qualitative research, the validity refers to the knowledge corresponded to the fact and divide the validity approach into transactional and transformational validity. Both approaches are acceptable to encounter the needs of the research. In this research, the manager willingness to accept this research result (gathered from the unstructured interview) categorised as a transformational validity as it transfers the research result into restaurant operation.

The use of a researchers’ personality was addressed as it was a good way to direct the study as the researcher was the person who has the most knowledge of the case as well as the person who conducted the study. The researcher kept the context open to maintain the validity of the data. The researcher also used all responses to stay focused on the topic and minimize data failures.

3.3.2. Construction of the Design

Regarding the approach to collect the data, previous study from Kumar (2014) highlights that observation is the ideal approach to collect data for research that looks at the behavioural aspect rather than the perception of the individual. It sits well with the purpose of this observational study that was more interested in the behaviour of customers, especially regarding their behaviour on how long their meal duration and how much their spending was associated with party mixes.
Two approaches were designed to collect primary data, which were direct, a non-participant observation and unstructured interview. The direct, non-participant observation was chosen to gather detailed data on mean meal duration by party mixes. The observation was conducted during restaurant opening hours which were 11am-10pm, from 22 October 2016 until 5 November 2016. The observation was conducted to collect data which one of them is mean meal duration by party mixes. The meal duration as main variable has been observed adapted from Kimes (2008), Thompson and Kwornik (2008) and Dubé-Rioux et al. (1989) contains the stages of activities of customer during their dining, including eight stages which were: the time from arrival to order, order to paying the bill, paying the bill to seat, seat to order arrive, order arrive to eating time, eating time to customer leave, customer leave to table clearance, table clearance to re-seated. The purpose of the use the dining stages above to calculate meal duration was because the dining stages fit with the dining stages used in the restaurant as a place of study. The pretest observation form was used to identify the stages of the dining process in the restaurant. The party mixes formation divided into eight parties, containing the variety of customers categorised as: single male party, single female party, 2 party same gender, 2 party different gender, 3 party same gender, 3 party different gender, 4 party same gender, 4 party different gender, 5 and above party same gender, 5 and above party different gender. The purpose of using the party mixes type shown above is because of the type match with the most types of party in restaurants. The type of party mixes formation used in this study is adapted from Pliner et al. (2006) who study the meal duration directed from different in number and gender. The use of party mixes formation above was also considered presentable to find the data of mean meal duration with varied party groups.

The observation was conducted from 22 October 2016 until 5 November 2016. This length of the time was calculated as the most efficient, as it covered all the data needed. The observation was completed when there were no more different data that could be collected. In the process of editing data, some data were deleted as there was a potential bias of the data, such as data that had the same time, same spending and the same party mixes. It made the data collection result more reliable. The observation purpose was to find the data of mean meal duration by party mixes, distribution party mixes per hours, average spending per party, mean meal duration by average spending per party and estimated gross profit by RevPASH per party. The RevPASH calculation adapted from Kimes and Robson (2004) used to measure profit. Those data used for guidance in service planning including to predict when the table turn over time, to predict how much the customer spending, to find the correlation between meal duration and spending for the purpose service planning especially the decision whether the restaurant need to maximize table turn over time so the more customer can be served and more revenue can be achieved or the restaurant can allow customer to stay longer and spend more.

The second approach for gaining primary data used was interview. An unstructured interview was conducted to gather information about the restaurant manager’s perspective to service planning and willingness to accept this study results. Kumar (2014) states that the strength value of an unstructured interview is providing a freestyle to its structure, content, question wording and order. Moreover, unstructured interviews are suitable for the purpose of exploring intensively and extensively, as well as digging deeper into a situation or phenomena (Kumar, 2014). In this study, the aim of using an interview was because it could provide real, on time information as it came from the main and first sources who interacted with the situation. The interview was also provided live from the interviewees gathered at the same time when the question from the interviewer was presented. To support this argument, research from Dowling et al. (2016) states that the interview persists as a dominant means of understanding, especially in a social study, as it captures social life in response to theoretical developments. During the interview process, the data of the restaurant manager’s perspective to accept this study result has been collected. The data from the unstructured interview was addressed to gather the information on the restaurant manager is willingness to accept this study result and the recommendations.

3.3.3. Sample

Selection of a sample in a qualitative study is influenced by factors such as ease of access to the potential respondent, researcher judgement of the respondent (Kumar, 2014). In choosing the sample in this qualitative method of research, the decision was made with the consideration of the personal knowledge of the researcher to the study which involved how many meal durations will be observed, which restaurant staff can be interviewed when the observation should be finished.

This case study was about collecting primary data using a direct, non-participant observation of meal duration and spending by party mixes of the customer at Red Onion restaurant located in Perry Barr, Birmingham, in the UK over the two weeks, from 22 October 2016 until 5 November 2016. The restaurant was systematically pre-selected by the author, and the issues were discussed with the research supervisor. It should be noted that the observation was conducted during a change of customers characteristics, in the observation by the researcher as previous regular customers, students from a University in the area moved their university campus into the city center area. This situation leads to the discussion that the restaurant needs to identify its current customers, including their meal duration and spending. It made the researcher decide to select Red onion as a case study. In total, the researcher observed 231 party mix, 503 customers from 22 October 2016 until 5 November 2016. The researcher decided this number was appropriate as there was no more variety of data from the observation beyond those observations.

The unstructured interview was also conducted to gather information on the perspective of restaurant manager to service planning regarding capacity efficiency and the restaurant manager’s willingness to accept this study result and recommendation. One person who was the restaurant manager was chosen as an interviewee based on the researcher judgement that a restaurant manager is a preferable person that has the most knowledge about restaurant operation. The interview was conducted before the observation.
3.3.4. Procedure

The author selected the Onion Restaurant located in Perry Barr, Birmingham, UK as a representative sample in this case study. The procedures of observations were beginning at an early stage of this research study. The follow is the step by step procedure:

- The observational study was applying the ethical clearance to the University College Birmingham.
- The author then discussed with the research supervisor how the observation and interview would be conducted.
- Once confirmation of ethical clearance was received from the University College Birmingham, the researcher then started collecting primary data.
- The next step was informing the restaurant manager that the observation will be conducted as discussed. At the beginning of writing this dissertation, the author was visiting the restaurant and explained briefly about this research and discuss the possibility of the author doing an observation as well as obtaining permission from the restaurant manager.

The observation was recorded using the approved and pre-tested observation form, which contained 231 potential data input of different party groups from 503 customers and provided the opportunity to analyse data using the qualitative method. Data were collected from the observation presented in two different formats. First, the observation of meal duration and spending by party mixes was presented in number format but analysed using interpretive explanation. Secondly, the observation of restaurant concept and theme was presented in a word format. Both of these were recorded on the approved and pre-test observation form.

The author also conducted the unstructured interview with the restaurant manager. The restaurant manager was questioned about the problems faced by restaurants regarding capacity efficiency and the restaurant manager's willingness to accept the result and recommendation of this study. The interview was conducted as a simple conversation, without formal text or audio record provided. The reason was to make the atmosphere of the interview not too formal so that the restaurant manager would supply the information needed.

During the interview, the conversation between the researcher and the interviewee went fluently. Informal atmosphere was addressed during the interview process. The purpose was to gain a wider perspective of information from the interviewee and to create an interesting interview atmosphere so that the interviewee did not feel bored or intimidated. Regarding the use of an open question in an interview, Vinten (1995) states that open questions refer to free answer, free response and free write up. These questions allow respondents to simply establish the topic and leave the respondent to answer the question as is seen fit with the nature of interview which was an unstructured interview that allows respondents to have an unformal atmosphere during the interview process. The interview was held on the first October 2016, before the observations.

3.3.5. Data Analysis

Primary research was analysed using the qualitative method and interpretive approach. The purpose was to provide an in-depth explanation of the information needed. Research from Caru et al. (2014) underline that the interpretive approach in qualitative method prompted the development of customer experiences (Moisander and Valtonen, 2012 – cited in Caru et al., 2014). It fits well with this study which was focusing on the customer experience on their meal duration.

In this study, the Strauss grounded theory used to analyse data collected to create strategies in service planning using the data of meal duration and spending. The purpose is to provide information of the impact of meal duration to spending from the case study. A research study by Bakir and Bakir (2006) using Strauss’s grounded theory, they found that in making strategies in public sector leisure business, restaurant managers engage in purposeful, complex processes. The strategies influencing by organisation resources, environment and manager's character. In this study, manager strategies related to capacity efficiency that influenced by organisation resources such as customer’s meal duration and spending, as well as environments such as restaurant concept and theme. Regarding the use of grounded theory method in qualitative theory building approach, Brinder and Edward (2010) highlight that the application of grounded theory in management operation are still not very widespread. However, it fits well with the observational study in industrial phenomena for the purpose of helping managers deal with their problems. In this case, restaurant manager strategies in restaurant operation can be analyse using grounded theory method as the strategy based on the current data of the observational study.

For the purpose of achieving revenue, some strategies, such as refining the definition of duration, reducing the uncertainty of arrival, reducing the uncertainty of duration, and reducing the time between meals are needed (Kimes 2004 – cited in Thompson, 2010). In achieving revenue, the restaurant manager needs to have data of mean meal duration and spending so that they can predict the table turn over time and provide service planning regarding managing capacity based on the data. This decision will make the process of serving food in the restaurant more effective and efficient.

As the method used was a qualitative method, the output of data provided were mostly explanations. The data analysis process intended to answer hypothesis which was contained in the three assumptions. The first hypothesis is that customer’s meal duration increases when the number of party increase. The second hypothesis is that customer’s spending increase when the number of party increase. The third hypothesis is that there is a correlation between customer’s meal duration and spending.
Instead of the information that has been collected in a word format which was obtained through the interview and the observation of restaurant setting and theme, there were data collected and presented in a number format as well. These data were from the observation which consisted of the data from customers’ mean meal duration by party mixes. Although the data collected were in a number format, the data analysis process and presentation of research findings presented an interpreted explanation format.

For the purpose of the research findings being more readable and understandable, the research findings were also presented in chart. The data of estimated gross profit by RevPASH per party also obtained from the observation. Using the same raw data of customer spending and meal duration of different party groups, the data shows the estimation of gross profit achieved by restaurant. The data presented in table and chart.

Excel 2016 computer programme was used as a tool in analysing the primary data which was in number format and presented research findings. All the data were analysed using Excel 2016. The system then provided information of all data in a numbers version, as well as in a table and chart. It made the data analysis easier and safe at the time. As the output of Excel 2016 programme was in a chart format, it made the display of the research results easier to understand and read.

3.4. Summary of Methodology

In general, the methodology of this research which used the qualitative method and interpretive approach. This involved both secondary and primary research. The secondary research covered all the main discussion on the impact of meal duration by party mixes, for appropriate service planning. It provides wider information from the previous studies on how the impact of meal duration to spending by party mixes and the correlation between meal duration and spending. Primary research involved providing actual and real time information on mean meal duration by party mixes, average spending per party mixes and the correlation between meal duration and spending in a fast-casual dining restaurant. Additionally, the possibility of research findings can be applied in other restaurant businesses with the same or similar settings as well. The research result was also addressed for academics to work on the similar study topic.

4. Analysis and Findings

As this study was conducted in two approaches of research which were secondary and primary research, the analysis and findings of this study were presented in separate subheadings of the main discussion, presenting research findings from both secondary and primary research. The purpose of presenting research findings is to communicate information that has been collected in the research beyond academia to the wider public (LaFreniere et al., 2013 – cited in Bartlett, 2015). In this study, the research analysis and findings addressed communicating information gathered in both secondary and primary research to another party such as researcher work in the similar topic with this study, as well as restaurant managers who work in the same or similar restaurant settings to this study. The direction of this research was narrowed to answer questions of research objectivity. In this section, findings and analysis were also directed to provide information and discussion based on research objectives.

4.1. Secondary Research Analysis

In this section, the analysis of main concepts in this research which was meal duration and spending are provided. The purpose of this part was to complete the first research objectives, which was to discuss concepts of meal duration and spending. Three previous pieces of research from four researchers were gathered to find the information of meal duration, which was (Kimes, 2008), (Thompson and Kworthnik, 2008) and Thompson (2010). Adapted from the previous researchers above, the concept of meal duration can be described as an important factor in the restaurant operation. It can be used as a media to reduce dining duration for the purpose of improving revenue. The research results indicate however that meal duration as a media contributes one-quarter of total restaurant revenue (Kimes, 2008). Additionally, research results indicate meal duration as a parameter in managing capacity for the purpose of capacity efficiency, contributes significantly of the whole restaurant revenue (Thompson and Kworthnik, 2008). Adapted from the previous research above, meal duration as media refers to tools that can be used to reduce the service duration, with the aim of revenue, whereas meal duration as a parameter was used to manage restaurant capacity for the purpose of capacity efficiency.

The second secondary data collected to complete the first research objective which was providing the information of concept ‘spending’ was gathered from the previous researchers who were (Fornell et al., 2010), (Jang et al., 2016), (Otto et al., 2009), and (Matzler et al., 2007) discussing the concept of customers’ spending from the different back ground of businesses. Fornell et al., (2010) identify customer spending as an important factor in businesses and underline the importance of predicting aggregate customer spending to marketing planning, whereas Jang et al., (2016) state that estimation of customer spending needed at competing firms, so that in obtaining profit, the data on competitive spending is needed. Otto et al., (2009) find that spending in general, and especially shopping, has significant informative potential as it transfers an expression of people’s preferences to purchase and differing in sorts, frequency, and variability. Matzler et al., (2007) discuss customer spending in the hospitality industry and the research result highlights that customer spending behaviour is an important variable as the growth of revenue can be reached by increasing the average amount of customers’ spending. Based on the research discussing customers’ spending above, customer spending can be described as an expression of customer preferences to purchase, and it is an important factor in businesses, including the hospitality industry, as it can be used as an information tool in achieving revenue.

For the purpose of continuing discussion based on the second research objectives which were discussing concepts of meal duration and spending by party mixes, the researcher collected the resources discussing meal duration and spending by party mixes. Four studies from nine different authors wereanalysed to find the information about the concept of party mixes related with meal duration and spending, which was (Thompson, 2010), Pliner et al. (2006), Brindal et al.
(2011) and Kimes and Robson (2004). All the previous studies of the above study about party mix related to meal duration and spending. Party mixes are one factor that influences meal duration, instead of restaurant concept and nature of the service (Thompson, 2010). Regarding the influence of party mix to the length of meal duration, a study conducted by Pliner et al. (2006) find that meal duration lengthens as the number of dinners increases. For the purpose of finding in-depth information of the correlation between party mix eating behaviour and meal duration, Brindal et al. (2011) have conducted research and their conclusion is that there is a tendency for meal duration to increase when the customers are eating together. Based on the previous study above, regarding the definition of party mixes, most of the studies identify party mixes as some customers present that influence meal duration.

The social facilitation theory adapted from Pliner et al. (2006) used to test the correlation between meal duration and spending of customers. Additionally, research from Kimes and Robson (2004) describe the correlation between meal duration and spending. The researchers state that high average checks or customer spending with long meal duration is suitable for the restaurant that established through observation of meal duration times and spending by party mixes.

For the purpose of providing information about the correlation between meal duration and spending by party mixes, as mentioned in the third research objective, adapted from studies above, an outline of meal duration by party mixes can be designed. One is that the bigger the size of the group, the longer the duration of the meal. Although all previous researchers above discussing party mix related to meal duration, most of them identify party mixes as the number of customer present, but none of them identifies party mixes that include mix number and gender of customers present.

4.2. Primary Research Analysis

Continuing to analyse and evaluate findings of the primary research, this part contains the evaluation of findings from direct, non-participant observation and unstructured interview. The purpose was to support the analysis of secondary research with the aim of establishing through observation of meal duration times and spending by party mixes in a fast-casual dining restaurant. Data analysed in the primary research including data of mean meal duration by party mixes, average spending per party mixes, mean meal duration by average spending per party and estimated gross profit by RevPASH per party.

The analysis and evaluation of primary research process starts with the evaluation of findings from the unstructured interview that contains general information about restaurants manager perspective of service planning regarding capacity efficiency. The researcher then continued process of analysing and evaluating data from the observation which was data of mean meal duration by party mixes, average spending per party, mean meal duration by average spending per party and estimated gross profit by RevPASH per party. All the process of analysing and evaluating primary research is provided in the subheading as follows:

4.2.1. Unstructured Interview

The data gathered from the interview were data of restaurant manager perspective of service planning regarding capacity efficiency and the perspectives of restaurant managers to accept the study results and recommendation. Restaurant manager of Red Onion restaurant, a fast-casual dining restaurant located in Perry Barr, the UK which was chosen as an interviewee as he is the person in charge that has the most knowledge about the service planning in restaurant operation. The findings from the interview are provided below:

The restaurant manager indicates that the regular customers who are students from the university in that area moved to their campus to the city center area. This situation has had an impact on the change of restaurant party mixes and their meal duration as well as customer spending. After the previous regular customers who were students from a university in that area moved, the new regular customers, were the workers and officers in that area. The restaurant manager needs to identify the customer’s meal duration and spending to be able to make decision whether the restaurant need to reducing meal duration so that the table turn over time can be maximizing or the restaurant allows the customer stay longer and spend more.

The interview was then continued with the conversation concerning the capacity problem. The restaurant manager mentioned that as the restaurant does not accept booking reservations and uses dedicated tables. Previous researchers Thompson and Sohn (2009) study that the dedicated table management is suitable for the restaurant that accepts the walk in customer and has a limited dining area. This study match with the finding in the interview process that the restaurant uses the dedicated table management which the restaurant reconfigures the table based on the customer party mixes when customers are arriving. Sometimes, especially during the busy time, the restaurant manager struggled in predicting when the customers will finish their meal so that restaurant can change the configuration of the tables suitable for the next party mixes.

The interview ended with a conversation on the willingness of the restaurant manager to accept the result and recommendation of this study. The previous study from Trochim and Donnely (2007) cited in Kumar (2014) uses the respondent willingness to accept the study results as an internal validity tool. The tools used underlines the credibility of the restaurant manager as a respondent, which contribute the transferability of the research result to the restaurant as a case study. The credibility of restaurant manager as a respondent (gathered from an unstructured interview with the restaurant manager) was used as an internal validity in this research. Another study from Cho and Trend (2006) note that in qualitative research, the validity refers to the knowledge corresponded to the fact or correspondent’s construction of reality and divide the validity approach into transactional and transformational validity. Both approaches are adequate to encounter the needs of the research. In this research, the manager willingness to accept this research result categorised as a transformational validity as it transfers the research result in to restaurant operation. The purpose of the conversation...
in the unstructured interview addresses the reliability and validity of this research. As the restaurant manager is willing to accept the recommendation of this study, it shown that this research is reliable.

4.2.2. Observation

Direct, non-participant observation was conducted to continue and complete the information from the secondary research, with the aim of providing information of meal duration and spending associated with party mixes as mentioned in the research objectives. The observation conducted during the restaurant operation hours, during 22 October 2016 until 5 November 2016. In the beginning of observation, the researcher observes the restaurant capacity and restaurant concept. The restaurant categorized as a small fast casual dining restaurant. There are 9 tables and 36 seats, all in 4 tops format in the dining area. The menu and theme presented are combinations between Asian and western. There is one big screen of television in the corner of dining room, small hand wash area, and waiting area for take away service without seat. Data collected in the observation includes data of mean meal duration by party mixes, average spending per party, mean meal duration by average spending per party and estimated gross profit by RevPASH per party. Details of data collected as follows:

4.2.2.1. Mean Meal Duration by Party Mixes

The first details of data from the observation provided in the table 1 below is the data of mean meal duration by party mixes. The table 1 format was designed by the researcher for the purpose of finding the mean meal duration during opening hours in fast casual dining restaurants. The data of mean meal duration by party mixes addressed to identify how long the approximately customer’s meal duration with different party mixes. By identifying the data of mean meal duration by party mixes, restaurant manager can predict the next table turn over time so that the table configuration can be prepared for the next party. The simple table format contains rows and columns presenting data of mean meal duration. The rows of the table represented the opening hours in the place of study which was Red Onion restaurant, a fast-casual dining restaurant, whereas the column of the table represented the party mixes.

| Time       | party1 | party2 | party3 | party4 | party5 | party6 | party7 | party8 |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 11-12am    | 18,33  | 23,66  | 30,50  | 28,33  | 30,00  | 31,00  | 32,50  | 34,00  |
| 12am-1pm   | 17,25  | 24,50  | 30,00  | 27,00  | 31,00  | 32,00  | 33,00  | 35,00  |
| 1-2pm      | 18,11  | 24,20  | 30,50  | 29,20  | 32,00  | 30,00  | 36,00  | 37,00  |
| 2-3pm      | 18,13  | 23,00  | 28,66  | 29,00  | 31,33  | 31,50  | 33,00  | 35,00  |
| 3-4pm      | 18,00  | 24,00  | 30,33  | 27,33  | 30,50  | 31,00  | 32,50  | 33,00  |
| 4-5pm      | 17,75  | 23,66  | 29,00  | 27,00  | 30,50  | 30,00  | 34,50  | 35,00  |
| 5-6pm      | 18,50  | 24,00  | 29,33  | 29,50  | 30,66  | 32,00  | 35,00  | 33,50  |
| 6-7pm      | 17,57  | 25,30  | 30,33  | 29,50  | 31,00  | 31,00  | 34,50  | 34,50  |
| 7-8pm      | 18,80  | 24,50  | 29,00  | 28,50  | 30,33  | 31,50  | 35,50  | 35,00  |
| 8-9pm      | 18,00  | 24,00  | 30,66  | 28,00  | 31,50  | 31,00  | 33,50  | 37,00  |
| 9-10pm     | 18,25  | 23,00  | 31,00  | 29,50  | 32,50  | 30,00  | 35,00  | 36,00  |
| Mean       | 18,06  | 23,98  | 30    | 29,04  | 31,03  | 33,7  | 35,01  | 36,47  |

Table 1: Mean Meal Duration by Party Mixes
Abbreviations: Party1 = 1 Male, Party2 = 1 Female, Party3 = 2 Same Gender,
Party4 = 2 Mix Gender, Party5 = 3 Same Gender, Party6 = 3 Mix Gender,
Party7 ≥ 4 Same Gender, Party8 ≥ 4 Different Gender

The table 1 was designed by the researcher for the purpose of finding the mean meal duration during opening hours in fast casual dining restaurants. The simple table format contains rows and columns presenting data of mean meal duration. The rows of the table represented the opening hours in the place of study which was Red Onion restaurant a fast-casual dining restaurant which was 11am until 10pm, whereas the column of the table represented the party mixes. The party mixes divided into 8 categories, include: party1 = 1 male, party2 = 1 female, party3 = 2 same gender, party4 = 2 mix gender, party5 = 3 same gender, party6 = 3 mix gender, party7 ≥ 4 same gender, party8 ≥ 4 different gender. The purpose of classifying the party mixes shown in the table 1 above is because the range of party mixes above fits with the range of the most party mixes in the restaurant and represent the variety of party mixes formation. The mean meal duration of party one (one male) at lunch time (11-12pm) is 18.33 minutes, while party 3 (2 customers same gender) need 30 minutes. During dinner times, the time needed for both parties are increased. The party one (one male) mean meal duration during dinner time (6-7pm) is 18.50 minutes and 29.33 minutes for party 3 (2 customers same gender). Based on the table 1 mean meal duration by party mixes above, the increase of mean meal duration during dinner time comparing with lunch time is that because customers tend to order bigger menu for their dinners.

The data presented the mean meal duration by party mixes above, provides the information of mean meal duration by party mixes at fast casual dining restaurant during the restaurant opening hours. The chart shows that the first hypothesis is that customer's meal duration increases when the number of party increase is correct. The chart shows, the longest meal duration shown by party8 (≥ 4 same gender) with the length of mean meal duration 36.47 minutes, while the shortest meal duration shown by party1 (1 male) with the length of mean meal duration 18.06 minutes and the moderate meal duration achieved by party 4 (2 same gender) with the length of mean meal duration 29.4 minutes. The shortest meal duration shown by party 1 (1 male) supported by previous research conducted by Park and Shin (2015).
The research result shows that in terms of chewing performance, male have greater bite size and chewing power as well as shorter meal duration than female.

The findings based on the data of mean meal duration by party mixes, also identify that there is a pattern that the more number of party, the longer meal duration. Although the pattern is not perfectly constantly increasing, but it can be summed up that the findings of mean meal duration by party mixes match with the previous research from Pliner et al. (2006) reveals that the meal duration lengthens as the number of dinners increases. Another study which was Brindal et al. (2011) highlight the correlation between eating behaviour and meal duration. Their conclusion is that there is a tendency for meal duration to increase when customers are eating together. This research and previous research findings are similar. In the observation, the length of meal duration increases when the number of parties increase as well because when the number is increasing, all process of dining stages is increasing as well as the member of a party represented as an individual customer. In this case, every member of party mix ordering their food and paying the bill separately and enjoy the food at the same table.

For the purpose of exploring the correlation between meal duration and party mixes, based on the chart 1 showing mean meal duration by party mixes above, the author evaluated the mean meal duration and party mixes in a fast-casual dining restaurant. Although the chart does not show a perfect constant flow, it can be concluded that there is a correlation between meal duration and party mixes in a fast-casual dining restaurant. The number and mixed gender of party mixes, the more the length of meal duration. It also answers the question in hypothesis 1 (meal duration increases when the number of party increase) is correct.

Using the data of mean meal duration by party mixes, the restaurant manager can have predicted how long customers will stay in a restaurant based on party mixes. As the restaurant does not accept the table reservations as a booking system and uses dedicated table approach to manage table, the restaurant manager needs to predict table turn over time, when the table will be ready to be reconfigured, especially during busy times. Previous study which was (Kimes, 2008) reveals the important of predicting table turn overtime, so that more customer can be served and more profit can be achieved. In this perspective meal duration refers to reducing meal duration to gain more profitability. On the other hands, study conducted by Thompson (2010) discusses the strategy of duration management. Research results indicate that reducing meal duration contributes one-quarter of restaurant revenue. The major contributor is from capacity management based on meal duration. Based on this research findings of mean meal duration by party mixes uses to predicting table turn over time, so that the dedicated table configuration time can be predicted and more revenue can be achieved. The purpose of predicting how long customer’s meal duration was to identify the approximate time when restaurant management can change the configuration of the table based on the next party mixes.

### 4.2.2.2. Average Spending Per Party Mixes

The second data collected was average spending by party mixes per opening hours. This data contains the information of how much spending per party mixes during restaurant opening hours. The data presented in table format contains the rows and cells. The row represents the amount of spending per hour of restaurant opening hours. The amount of spending presented in poundsterling and penny with the dot symbol to separate poundsterling and penny. The data below consists the average spending per party mixes presented below:

|       | Party1 | Party2 | Party3 | Party4 | Party5 | Party6 | Party7 | Party8 |
|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 11-12am | 3.09   | 3.19   | 4.99   | 4.76   | 7.99   | 6.69   | 8.97   | 13.37  |
| 12am-1pm | 3.57   | 2.89   | 7.1    | 6      | 6.43   | 8.2    | 10.4   | 15.97  |
| 1-2pm   | 1.7    | 1.46   | 3.99   | 5.74   | 5.49   | 5.2    | 9.98   | 8.98   |
| 2-3pm   | 2.7    | 2.92   | 4.86   | 4.79   | 7.59   | 9.46   | 6.14   | 9.79   |
| 3-4pm   | 1.99   | 2.96   | 3.76   | 3.86   | 4.99   | 7.29   | 7.74   | 11.48  |
| 4-5pm   | 2.57   | 3      | 5.87   | 4.7    | 5.58   | 7.69   | 8.5    | 10.94  |
| 5-6pm   | 2.45   | 3.12   | 3.43   | 6.3    | 7.19   | 9.94   | 11.39  | 11.23  |
| 6-7pm   | 2      | 3.19   | 5.36   | 5.94   | 10.85  | 8.06   | 8.99   | 8.98   |
| 7-8pm   | 2.87   | 2.85   | 3.2    | 4.84   | 6.54   | 7.19   | 6.42   | 10.23  |
| 8-9pm   | 3.35   | 3.44   | 4.69   | 7.69   | 7.71   | 6.74   | 7.9    | 7.69   |
| 9-10pm  | 2.97   | 2.99   | 4.22   | 5.78   | 5.18   | 9.2    | 12.49  | 5.99   |
| Average | 2.66   | 3.18   | 4.77   | 6.01   | 6.44   | 8.65   | 9.79   | 11.51  |

|       | Party1 | Party2 | Party3 | Party4 | Party5 | Party6 | Party7 | Party8 |
|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 11-12am | 3.09   | 3.19   | 4.99   | 4.76   | 7.99   | 6.69   | 8.97   | 13.37  |
| 12am-1pm | 3.57   | 2.89   | 7.1    | 6      | 6.43   | 8.2    | 10.4   | 15.97  |
| 1-2pm   | 1.7    | 1.46   | 3.99   | 5.74   | 5.49   | 5.2    | 9.98   | 8.98   |
| 2-3pm   | 2.7    | 2.92   | 4.86   | 4.79   | 7.59   | 9.46   | 6.14   | 9.79   |
| 3-4pm   | 1.99   | 2.96   | 3.76   | 3.86   | 4.99   | 7.29   | 7.74   | 11.48  |
| 4-5pm   | 2.57   | 3      | 5.87   | 4.7    | 5.58   | 7.69   | 8.5    | 10.94  |
| 5-6pm   | 2.45   | 3.12   | 3.43   | 6.3    | 7.19   | 9.94   | 11.39  | 11.23  |
| 6-7pm   | 2      | 3.19   | 5.36   | 5.94   | 10.85  | 8.06   | 8.99   | 8.98   |
| 7-8pm   | 2.87   | 2.85   | 3.2    | 4.84   | 6.54   | 7.19   | 6.42   | 10.23  |
| 8-9pm   | 3.35   | 3.44   | 4.69   | 7.69   | 7.71   | 6.74   | 7.9    | 7.69   |
| 9-10pm  | 2.97   | 2.99   | 4.22   | 5.78   | 5.18   | 9.2    | 12.49  | 5.99   |
| Average | 2.66   | 3.18   | 4.77   | 6.01   | 6.44   | 8.65   | 9.79   | 11.51  |

Table 2: Average Spending Per Party Mixes

Abbreviations: Party1 = 1 Male, Party 2 = 1 Female, Party3 = 2 Same Gender, Party4 = 2 Mix Gender, Party5 = 3 Same Gender, Party6 = 3 Mix Gender, Party7 = ≥ 4 Same Gender, Party8 = ≥ 4 Different Gender

Based on the data of average spending per party mixes, the less spending present by party 1 at 1-2pm with the amount of £1.70, while the most spending shows by party 7 at 9-10pm with the amount of £12.49. In this research, the data of average spending per party mixes address to find the approximate amount being spent by customer per party. Predicting aggregate customer spending is very significant to business planning (Fornell et al., 2010). For the purpose of gaining profit, the data on competitive spending is needed (Jang et al., 2016). Spending has significant informative potential as it transfers an expression of people’s preferences to purchase (Otto et al., 2009).
From the data of average spending per party mixes in the fast-casual dining restaurant above, the curve shows the trend that spending increase as the number of party mixes increase. It also answers the question in hypothesis 2 (spending increase when the number of party increase) is correct. The data of customer spending per party mixes influenced by the individuality of customers. Based on the observation, even the party mixes formation represents the different in number and gender, but the spending decision based on individuality of customer and it impacts to the amount of spending presenting individual spending. Few customers identified as one-party mix represent one spending decision as they might present as a family or couple.

4.2.2.3. Mean Meal Duration by Average Spending Per Party Mixes

The third data collected was data of average spending per mean meal duration. Its combinations between the previous data of mean meal duration by party mixes and the data of average spending per party mixes. The purpose of collecting this data is to explore the correlation between meal duration and spending. By knowing the correlation between those data, it can explain how the volume and the flow of the service so that the profitable combination between meal duration and spending which was the short meal duration with the high spending of party mixes can be identified. The data can provide information whether the restaurant need to reducing meal duration so that the table turn over time can be maximizing and more revenue can be achieved or the restaurant allows the customer stay longer and spend more. Previous researchers study the correlation between meal duration and spending. Pliner et al. (2006) find that meal duration grows as the number of dinners rises and that this extra time spent eating increases the amount being eaten as well as the money being spent. In a similar research topic, Brindal et al. (2011) study shows the correlation between eating behaviour and meal duration. The result is that there is a tendency for meal duration to growth when customers are eating together. It also shows that there is a rhyme patron increasing the amount of spending when the meal duration is increasing as well. The longer meal duration, the more amount of spending. This data shows that in fast casual dining restaurant, the theory of social facilitation adapted from Pliner et al. (2006) that meal duration lengthens as the number of dinners increases and that this extra time spent eating increases the amount being eaten as well as the money being spent is correct. In this case, customer's meal duration influenced by customers spending, as the longer meal duration, the more money spent. This data was also provided with the correlation between meal duration and spending of the customer as mentioned in the third research objectives. From this correlation the shortest meal duration with the highest spending of party mixes shown by party8 = ≥ 4 different gender with the amount of spending £11.51 for the length of 36.47 minutes. This finding influenced by factors such as social facilitation effect. There is an increase amount of consumption and spending when eating together. This finding fits with the Brindal et al. (2011) study that shows the correlation between eating behaviour and meal duration. Their conclusion is that there is a tendency for meal duration to increase when customers are eating together.

4.2.2.4. Estimated Gross Profit by Revpash per Party

From the data of mean meal duration and average spending, the calculation of revenue achieved can be calculated. The measurement of revenue adapted from Kimes and Robson (2004) which the measurement of revenue equal to total revenue divided by service cycle time (table reset time minus table committed time). Restaurant managements can calculate their revenue using RevPASH (Thompson and Sohn, 2009). By calculating revenue, restaurant managers can predict when is the higher RevPASH so that they can make strategy by reducing meal duration as well as the lower RevPASH when the restaurant managers need attracting more customers (Kimes, 1999 cited in Thompson and Sohn, 2009). In this case, the data of service cycle time obtained by the data of meal duration, the data of total revenue obtained using the data of customer spending, whereas the data of total revenue obtained by total of spending. The data of RevPASH can be provided below:

| Party1 | Party2 | Party3 | Party4 | Party5 | party6 | Party7 | Party8 |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 20.48  | 24.55  | 36.30  | 46.35  | 49.61  | 66.66  | 75.40  | 88.63  |
| 18.06  | 23.98  | 29.04  | 30     | 31.03  | 33.7   | 35.01  | 36.47  |
| RevPASH | 1.13   | 1.25   | 1.55   | 1.6    | 1.98   | 2.15   | 2.43   |

Table 3: Estimated Gross Profit by Revpash per Party

Abbreviations: Party1 = 1 Male, Party 2 = 1 Female, Party3 = 2 Same Gender, Party4 = 2 Mix Gender, Party5 = 3 Same Gender, Party6 = 3 Mix Gender, Party7 = ≥ 4 Same Gender, Party8 = ≥ 4 Different Gender

Based on the table 3 shown the estimated gross profit by Rev PASH per party, the data of RevPASH gained by calculating total average spending divided by total mean meal duration derived from party mixes. The lowest RevPASH shown by party 2 (one female) with the amount of £1, while the highest reached by party 8 (≥ 4 different gender) with the amount of £2.43. The lowest RevPASH shown by party 2 (one female), which means that one female customer spends the lower money and consume more time of meal duration. The biggest amount of profit achieved by party 8 (four and up mix gender) with the amount of £3,472, while the least amount shows by party 2 (1 female) with the amount of £1.461. The flow of line in the chart shows the increasing amount of profit of party 1 until party8 but not constant. Based on the data of the chart showing the estimated gross profit above, restaurant manager can predict the revenue achieved. However, in this study, the predicted revenue may not represent the total revenue as the restaurant also provide the take away service that did not included or calculated.
5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

This research has focused on examining the impact on spending associated with meal duration in relation to different customer groups in fast casual dining restaurants. The research was conducted in both secondary (through discussion of established literatures) and primary research (through interview and observation). The secondary and primary research have identified some findings that can be concluded and recommended based on the research aim and objectives. The details, discussions and summary of the conclusions and recommendations are as follows:

5.1.1. Meal Duration and Spending Are an Important Factor as It Can Be Used as a Media and Parameter in Achieving Revenue.

Through the discussion of concepts of meal duration and spending based on the finding of secondary research, previous pieces of research have discussed the concept of meal duration, (Kimes, 2008), (Thompson and Kwortnik, 2008) and Thompson (2010). Concluded from the previous researchers above, the concept of meal duration can be defined as an important factor in the restaurant operation. Meal duration can be used as a media in reducing dining duration for the purpose of improving revenue, however meal duration as a media contributes one-quarter of total restaurant revenue (Kimes, 2008). On the other hand, research results indicates meal duration as a parameter in managing capacity for the purpose of capacity efficiency, which contributes significantly of the whole restaurant revenue (Thompson and Kwortnik, 2008). Concluded from the previous research above, meal duration as media refers to tools that can be used to reduce the service duration, with the aim of improving revenue, whereas meal duration as a parameter was used to manage restaurant capacity for the purpose of capacity efficiency to improve revenue.

The information from the concept of spending were gathered from four previous researchers which were (Fornell et al., 2010), (Jang et al., 2016), (Otto et al., 2009), and (Matzler et al., 2007) discussing concept of customers’ spending from the different perspectives of businesses. Fornell et al., (2010) describe customer spending as a crucial factor and it is important to predict the amount of customer spending to marketing planning, whereas Jang et al., 2016 state the estimation of customer spending needed to obtain profit. Otto et al., (2009) find that spending in general, has significant informative potential as it transfers an expression of people’s preferences to purchase, while Matzler et al., (2007) discussing customer spending in the hospitality industry and the research result highlights that customer spending behaviour is an important variable as growth of revenue can be reached by increasing the average amount of customers’ spending. Based on the research discussing customers’ spending above, customer spending can be describing as an expression of customer preferences to purchase and it is an important factor in businesses, including the hospitality industry, as it can be used as an information tool in achieving revenue and both meal duration and spending can be used as media to reduce meal duration and as parameter to manage capacity efficiency with the aim of achieving revenue. This conclusion meets the first point of the research objectives which is providing discussions on the concept of meal duration and spending.

5.1.2. Meal Duration and Spending Influenced by Party Mixes

Based on the research finding in the observation for the purpose of establishing through observation of mean meal duration and average spending in a case study restaurant with varied party groups, the first point found in the observation of mean meal duration by party mixes which was the meal duration increases when the party sizes are bigger. Although the graphic in the chart 1 does not show a perfect constant flow, it can be concluded that there is a correlation between meal duration and party mixes in a fast-casual dining restaurant. The greater the number and mixed gender of party mixes, the more the length of meal duration. It answers the question in hypothesis 1 that customer’s meal duration increases when the number of party increase is correct. This finding is also supported by previous research from Pliner et al. (2006) who state that meal duration lengths as the number of parties increases. The conclusion can be summed up that the longer meal duration, the more spending.

The second point of observation found that spending is increase with bigger party sizes. From chart 2 of average spending per party mixes in the fast-casual dining restaurant above, the curve displays the tendency of spending to increase as the number of party mixes increases. The data of customer spending per party mixes is influenced by individuality of the customers. Based on the data of observation, even the party mixes formation represents the difference in numbers and gender, but the spending decision is influenced by individuality of the customer and it effect the length of ordering food and paying bill process as every member of party orders and pays individually. Few customers recognized as one party mix represent one spending decision as they might present as a family or couple.

5.1.3. There Is a Correlation between Meal Duration and Spending (The Longer the Meal Duration, the More Spending)

This research finding presented the correlation between meal duration and spending. Chart 3 shows there is a rhyme pattern growing the amount of spending when the meal duration is increasing as well. This finding can be summarised as the longer the meal duration, the more amount of spending. This data shows that theory of social facilitation adapted from Pliner et al. (2006) show that meal duration lengthens as the number of diners increases and that this extra time spent eating increases the amount being eaten as well as the money being spent which matches with the finding in this case study. In this case, customer’s meal duration is influenced by customers spending, as the longer the meal duration, the more money spent. This finding is also provided the correlation between meal duration and spending of customer as mentioned in the third research objectives. Kimes and Robson (2004) study the correlation between meal duration and spending and state that high average checks or customer spending with long meal duration is acceptable but...
may not represent the maximum revenue. As this case study only focuses on exploring the correlation between meal duration and spending, the maximum revenue might need to be observed in the future study.

5.1.4. The Findings of This Research Can Be Applied in Other Similar Restaurant Settings

This research was conducted in a fast-casual dining restaurant. The research findings addressed to manage seat occupancy and table combination problems so that there is service efficiency. Although the research data were gathered from fast casual dining restaurant, the research findings can be applied in other similar restaurant settings. Guerriero et al. (2014) highlight that the restaurant manager commonly has to make a decision to provide service efficiency. Restaurant managers should have strategy to deliver services as needed by customers and where necessary to know how long customers are going to stay in the restaurant and what type of party they are with, in order to ensure that there is efficient capacity.

As this research addressed the findings of the correlation between meal duration and spending, the data and research findings can be used by restaurant manager in other similar restaurant settings as direction to manage service planning, especially in making decision whether the restaurant need to maximize table turn over time so the more customer can be served and more revenue can be achieved or the restaurant can allow customer to stay longer and spend more. The research findings possibly applied in the same or similar restaurant settings.

5.2. Recommendation

This research provides recommendations based on the research findings. Several recommendations include the restaurant operations strategy that can be used in fast casual dining restaurants and other similar restaurant settings. The recommendation focuses on managing capacity efficiency using the data of average meal duration and spending by party mixes. The details of recommendations are as follows:

5.2.1. Restaurant Manager Can Use the Data of Meal Duration and Spending as Media and Parameter in Managing Capacity Efficiency

Based on the research findings, the data of meal duration and spending can be used as an information tool in achieving revenue. Both meal duration and spending can be used as media to reduce meal duration and as parameter to manage capacity efficiency with the aim of achieving revenue. Restaurant managers can create strategies based on meal duration such as prediction of table turn round time.

This recommendation is supported by previous researcher, Kimes (2008) who studies the importance of meal duration as media to improve revenue and highlight that restaurant managers need to pay attention to meal duration by controlling it and have a knowledge of customer arrival times, the length of time a table is occupied and the availability of the table for the next party.

The purpose is that more customers can be served and more profit can be achieved. From this perspective meal duration and spending refers to the process that can be used as a medium that can be controlled or reduced to gain more profitability.

From the concept of meal duration and spending as a parameter to manage capacity efficiency, the data of meal duration and spending can be used by restaurant managers to find appropriate service planning. This recommendation is supported by previous research conducted by Thompson (2010) that studies the strategy of duration management. Research results show the major contributor is from capacity management based on meal duration. In this study, the theory of meal duration and spending as a parameter applied to the research is based on identifying meal duration and spending of customer for the purpose of providing service efficiency.

In fast casual dining restaurants, restaurant managers should pay attention to the party mixes (difference in numbers and gender) as it influences the length of meal duration and the amount of spending. Restaurant managers need to pay attention to the party mixes. Based on the data of observation there are different data party mixes during restaurant opening hours. The longest meal duration shown by party 8 (≥ 4 same gender) with the length of mean meal duration 36.47 minutes, while the shortest meal duration shown by party 1 (1 male) with the length of mean meal duration 18.06 minutes and the moderate meal duration achieved by party 4 (2 same gender) with the length of mean meal duration 29.4 minutes and shows that the first hypothesis is that customer's meal duration increase when the number of party increase is correct. Using the data of mean meal duration by party mixes, the restaurant manager can forecast how long customers will stay in a restaurant based on party mixes. As the restaurant does not admit table reservations as a booking system and uses a dedicated table approach to manage table, the restaurant manager can predict when the table will be ready to be reconfigured, especially during busy times.

Based on the findings of the average spending per party mixes, restaurant managers can predict restaurant profitability. This recommendation is supported by Fornell et al., (2010) who state that predicting aggregate customer spending is very important to marketing planning and Jang et al. (2016) find that estimates of customer spending are needed to gain competitive revenue. In these research findings, the less spending existing by party 1 (1 male) at 1-2pm with the amount of £1.70, while the most spending is shown by party 7 at 9-10pm with a cost of £12.49. The recommendation based on the data above is that the restaurant manager should make strategy based on the data, such as giving reducing the table format in single top as there is less revenue presented by party 1 (1 male) during the period 1-2pm. Another strategy can be made by the restaurant manager to increase revenue during the period of 9-10pm by providing more table configuration in 4 tops as the most party present in that period is party 7 (≥ 4 same gender) during the period 9-10pm.
Restaurant manager can consider during busy time the table turn over time can be maximizing, while in the low season, restaurant manager can allow customer to stay longer and spend more.

Based on the research findings about the correlation between the data of meal duration and spending that there is a rhyme pattern growing the amount of spending when the meal duration is increasing (the longer meal duration, the more amount of spending). From the data of mean meal duration by average spending, it can explain the volume and the flow of the service so that revenue can be achieved. The data can provide information whether the restaurant needs to reduce meal duration so that the table turn over time can be maximized and more revenue can be achieved or the restaurant can allow customers stay longer and spend more. In this case, restaurant managers can consider during busy time the table turn over time can be maximized, while in the low seasons, restaurant manager can allow customer to stay longer and spend more.

This recommendation matches with the theory of social facilitation adapted from Pliner et al. (2006) that meal duration lengthens as the number of diners increases and that this extra time spent eating increases the amount being eaten as well as the money being spent. Additionally, research from Kimes and Robson (2004) describe the correlation between meal duration and spending. The researchers state that high average checks or customer spending with long meal duration is acceptable but may not represent the maximum revenue. The ideal correlation is high customer spending with short meal duration. This indicate the area of research in future study can be narrowed to improving revenue using the possible correlation between meal duration and spending that the more profitable correlation is when the more spending and short duration needs to be form.

5.2.2. The Consideration of Suitable and Profitable Table Combination Can Be Applied in another Similar Restaurant Setting

As this research is based on one restaurant operation in a fast-casual dining restaurant setting, the recommendation of this research addresses to the restaurant as a case study. There is however a possibility that the recommendation of this study can possibly be applied in other restaurant settings as well. From the recommendation that restaurant managers can consider in managing capacity based which the restaurant can consider to maximize the table turn over time during busy times or allowing customer to stay longer and spend more during low seasons. This recommendation can possibly to be applied in other similar setting as it is commonly used in managing capacity in restaurant operation. Previous research supports this recommendation which was Thompson’s (2011) study on service during busy times which highlights that service pace is influenced by factors such as customers’ willingness to wait for tables, the duration of peak seasons and table sizes. Obviously, during busy times, when demand is high during lunch and dinner, restaurant managers are very concerned about the efficiency and effectiveness of service operators in the kitchen and dining areas (Abdullah et al., 2009). From the discussion above, the recommendation can possibly to be applied in other restaurant settings.

Another recommendation that can be applied in another restaurant settings which was table combination which was in single tops formation suitable for the case study which was a fast- casual dining restaurant. This recommendation can be applied to other similar restaurant settings with the assumption that type of customer is similar as well. This recommendation is supported by previous research about possible table combinations where Kimes and Thompson (2004 – cited in Kimes and Thompson, 2005) previously tried to test all possible table combinations. The study results highlight that an optimal capacity allowed the restaurant to serve 35% more customers without increasing waiting times. The discussion of recommendations above, indicates that the consideration of possible and profitable table combinations can be applied in other similar restaurant settings as well. The discussion also indicates that for future study, the area that needs to be explored more is the improving revenue based on capacity efficiency.

| Author           | Year | Title                                                                 | Source                                                                 | Discussion                                                                 | Earning & Spending | Meal Duration | Factors Influence Meal Duration |
|------------------|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Abdullah, F., Arthur, A., Welsh, R. | 2009 | Managers’ perceptions of tacit knowledge in Edinburgh’s Indian restaurants | International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management | Research about the duration management and underline the importance of service pace in both dining area and kitchen | X                  |               |                                 |
| Akan, M., Ata, B., Dana, Jr. J. | 2015 | Revenue management by sequential screening | Journal of Economic Theory | Yield earnings practices influenced by pricing product management. | x                  |               |                                 |
| Bella, R. and Pliner, P. | 2003 | Time to eat: the relationship between the number of people eating and meal duration in three lunch settings | Journal of Appetite | Examine the correlation of meal duration with restaurant concept in three different restaurants setting, worksite cafeteria, fast-food restaurant and moderate price restaurant. | X                  | X             |                                 |

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| Author                        | Year | Title                                                                 | Source                                                                 | Discussion                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Earning & Spending | Meal Duration | Factors Influence Meal Duration |
|------------------------------|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| Brindal, E., Wilson, C., Mohr, P., Wittert, G. | 2011 | Does meal duration predict amount consumed in lone diners? An evaluation of the time-extension hypothesis | Journal of Appetite                                                                 | Research about correlation meal duration associates with eating behaviour. The study result indicates there is a tendency of increasing meal duration when the customer is eating together.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                    |               | X                             |
| Hummel, E. and Murphy, K.    | 2011 | Using Service Blueprinting to Analyse Restaurant Service Efficiency    | Journal of Cornell Hospitality Quarterly                              | Research about strategies and challenges reducing meal duration related to customer behaviour                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                    | X             |                               |
| Kimes, S. and Singh, S.      | 2009 | Spa Revenue Management                                                | Journal of Cornell University Quarterly                               | Yield earnings practice in spa businesses influenced by time and price strategies and commonly using RevPath as a parameter                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                    |               | x                             |
| Kimes, S.                   | 2008 | The Role of Technology in Restaurant Revenue Management               | Journal of Cornell Hospitality Quarterly                               | The effectiveness of meal duration to increase restaurant revenue. Restaurant manager needs to measure the dining stage of customer to improve revenue                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                    |               | x                             |
| Kimes, S.                   | 2004 | Restaurant revenue management: Implementation at Chevys Arrowhead      | Journal of Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly       | Study about strategies to reduce meal duration with the main aim to increase restaurant revenue                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                    |               | X                             |
| Kimes, S. and McGuire, K.    | 2001 | Function-space Revenue Management a Case Study from Singapore          | Journal of Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly       | Research in capacity management and strategies based on management staff.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                    |               | X                             |
| Kimes, S. and Robson, S.     | 2004 | The impact of restaurant table characteristics on meal duration and spending | Journal of Cornell University                                         | Study about capacity management associated with top table mixes, meal duration and spending.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                    |               | X                             |
| Maier, T.                   | 2012 | International hotel revenue management Web-performance effectiveness modelling research comparative | Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology                           | Yield earnings practice in hotel management has been used in marketing strategy and commonly measured by RevPAR or RevPar index                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                    |               |                               |
| Mitra, S.                   | 2007 | Revenue management for remanufactured products                        | Journal of Omega,                                                      | The application of yield earnings for remanufactured products influenced by government rules and technology.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                    |               |                               |
| Author                | Year | Title                                                                 | Source                                              | Discussion                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Earning & Spending | Meal Duration | Factors Influence Meal Duration |
|-----------------------|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Momtaz, N., Alizadeh, S., Vaghefi, M. | 2013 | A new model for assessment fast food customer behaviour case study: An Iranian fast-food restaurant | British Food Journal                                 | Study the importance of duration management to identify the busy time in restaurant                                                                                                                        |                   |               | X                                |
| Noone, B., Kimes, S., Matilla, A., Wirtz, J. | 2007 | The Effect of Meal Pace on Customer Satisfaction                      | Journal of Cornell University                      | Study about the importance of customer satisfaction in designing strategies to reduce meal duration.                                                                                                       |                   |               | X                                |
| Pliner, P., Bell, R., Hirsch, E., Kinchla, M. | 2006 | Meal duration mediates the effect of ‘social facilitation’ on eating in humans | Journal of Appetite                                 | Study about meal duration associated with party sizes. The research result indicates that meal duration increases as the number of the co-eater increase as well.                                         |                   |               | X                                |
| Sharma, S.            | 2012 | Applying innovative food cost management practices in inflationary times Indian budget restaurant segment experiences | Journal of Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes | Discuss the importance of technology in restaurant industry to make a speedy service                                                                                                                       |                   |               | X                                |
| Stroebele, N. and Castro, J. | 2006 | Listening to music while eating is related to increases in people’s food intake and meal duration | Journal of Appetite                                 | Study about the correlation between meal duration and restaurant is setting. The result indicates the fast food restaurant has the shorter dining duration, while fine dining restaurant has the longest duration. |                   |               | X                                |
| Thompson, G.          | 2010 | Restaurant Profitability Management the Evolution of Restaurant Revenue Management | Journal of Cornell University Quarterly             | The application of yield earnings in restaurant businesses influenced by factors based on pricing strategy and time-related strategy,                                                                       |                   |               | x                                |
| Thompson, G.          | 2011 | Cherry-Picking Customers by Party Size in Restaurants                 | Journal of Service Research                         | Study about strategies to encounter the busy time caused by increasing the number of party size.                                                                                                          |                   |               | x                                |
| Thompson, G.          | 2015 | An Evaluation of Rules for Assigning Tables to Walk-in Parties in Restaurants | Journal of Cornell Hospitality Quarterly            | Study about table turnover management and table assignment policy                                                                                                                                       |                   |               | x                                |
| Thompson, G. and Kwortnik, R. | 2008 | Pooling Restaurant Reservations to Increase Service Efficiency       | Journal of Service Research                         | Study about capacity management associated with restaurant table mixes and party sizes.                                                                                                                  |                   |               | x                                |
| Author          | Year | Title                                                                 | Source                                      | Discussion                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Earning & Spending | Meal Duration | Factors Influence Meal Duration |
|-----------------|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Withiam, G.     | 2010 | Revenue management: Familiarity breeds contentment                   | Journal article of Cornell Insight           | Yield earnings in hotel operation influenced by pricing strategies, for example, the fairness and unfairness of hotel rooms rice for guest.                                                                   |                   |               | x                               |
| Wood, N. and Munoz | 2007 | No rules, just right 'or is it? The role of themed restaurants as cultural ambassadors | Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research | Study result indicates customers tends to stay longer to enjoy the atmosphere in ethnic-themed restaurant                                                                                               |                   |               | x                               |
| Jang, S., Liu, Y. and Namkung, Y. | 2011 | Effects of authentic atmospherics in ethnic restaurants: investigating Chinese restaurants | International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management | Study result indicates customers tends to stay longer to enjoy the atmosphere in ethnic-themed restaurant                                                                                             |                   |               | x                               |
| Munoz, C. and Wood, N. | 2009 | A recipe for success: understanding regional perceptions of authenticity in themed restaurants | International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research | Study result indicates customers tends to stay longer to enjoy the atmosphere in ethnic-themed restaurant                                                                                             |                   |               | x                               |
| Seaman, C., Bent, R., Ingram, A., Welsh, R. and Mederos, A. | 2005 | Fissures in the marketing strategies of South Asian restaurants in Edinburgh | International Journal of Consumer Studies | Study the drawback of reducing meal duration when customer satisfaction is avoided                                                                                                                       |                   |               | x                               |
| Kimes, S.       | 2004 | Restaurant Revenue Management                                         | Centre for hospitality research publication, Cornell University New York | Study result strategies in managing dining duration to increase revenue                                                                                                                                 |                   |               | x                               |
| Piercy, N. and Ellinger, A. | 2015 | Demand- and supply-side cross-functional relationships: an application of disconfirmation theory | Journal of Strategic Marketing                | Research about supply and demand in businesses associated with yield earnings                                                                                                                          |                   |               | x                               |
| Treville, S., Saphiro, R., Hameri, A. | 2004 | From supply chain to demand chain: the role of lead time reduction in improving demand chain performance | Journal of Operations Management              | Research about supply and demand in businesses associated with yield earnings                                                                                                                          |                   |               | x                               |
| Thompson, G and Sohn, H. | 2009 | Time- and Capacity Based Measurement of Restaurant Revenue             | Journal of Cornell University                | Study about capacity management in restaurant businesses for the purpose of maximizing table mix management                                                                                        |                   |               | x                               |
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