

# Service Quality of McDonald's

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## Abstract

The services are the economic activities characterized by intangibility, heterogeneity and difficult to evaluate. But these features have not acted as a barrier in enlarging the scope of services which is very wide and profound especially in emerging economies like India. Services have become an essential part of our lives especially the services offered by fast food industry. The growth of fast food industry in India has been manifold. With the ease in doing business and the life of young professionals running like a bullet train the demand of chain of fast food restaurants has been on a higher side. The quality of the services provided to the customers thus becomes a matter of study. The level of services offered by these chains of restaurants should be exorbitant, enabling the customers to feel delighted. Thus, this paper studies the service quality of the famous fast food chain of restaurants - McDonald's. In this study, Servqual instrument has been used to identify the gaps between the customers' expectations and perceptions regarding McDonald's.

*"Always render more and better service than is expected of you, no matter what your task may be."*

- OgMandino

**Keywords:** Brand Apparel, Fast Food Chain, Food Industry, McDonald, Restaurants

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Fast Food Restaurant Industry

The restaurants and fast food industry is on a high as Indians continue to have a feast. Fuelled by what can be termed as a perfect ingredient for any industry - large disposable incomes - the food sector is seeing a tremendous change in consumption patterns, especially in terms of food. The rising number of international fast food chains charging to India is because they all are prodigious potential in this type of business. The large upwardly mobile population in the urban areas tend to eat out more often or business or for leisure.

The major players operating in India are the well established and highly renowned Indian chains like Nirula's, Haldiram's and multinational companies like McDonalds, Pizza hut, Domino's pizza, KFC, etc.

In extension to these, evidently some of the best known international food chains are looking at India. Among them are The Burger King, Great American Disaster, Mexican food chain Tacogrill, etc. are few of them.

They see an enormous potential in this business but at present they are fighting for their shares as the habit of fast food is not very prominent in India.

These players are fighting for the price, positioning, and products and they are trying to make their loyal customer base. They are trying to provide the product of quality and standardized on taste.

India among top 10 markets for weekly fast food consumption, an online survey has found. Most of the countries are from the Asia-pacific region, with the US being the exemption.

According to an A C Neilson study of 28 markets across the US, Europe and the Asia-Pacific, carried out through the internet in interviews with more than 14000 consumers, Asians are the world's greatest fast food fans.

### 1.2 McDonald's

McDonald's, the world's largest chain for hamburger fast food restaurants. McDonald serves near about 68 million happy customers daily in 119 countries over 35,000 outlets. The initial restaurant with arches opened in Phoenix on March 1953. The

primary mascot of McDonald's was a man with a chef's hat on top of a hamburger shaped head whose name was "Speedee". In 1967 Speedee was being replaced by Ronald McDonald when company primarily files a U.S. trademark on a clown-shaped man having puffed-out costume legs. McDonald's first filed for a U.S. Trademark on the name "McDonald's" with the description "Drive-In Restaurant Services". The company filed a logo trademark on an overlapping, double-arched "M" symbol. The present version as a letter "M" did not appear until 1968 when the company applied for U.S. Trademark.

McDonald's predominantly sells hamburgers, chicken sandwiches, chicken, French Fries, Soft drinks, breakfast items and Desserts. It also offers salads, vegetarian items, and wraps. It offers McRib on a seasonal basis. McDonald focuses more over its strategy of local responsiveness. It offers soups in Asia, McRice in Indonesia, Ebi (Prawn) Burger in Singapore, In Germany and western European countries it sells beer. McDonald's restaurants are found in 118 countries and territories around the world and it serves near about 68 million customers each day.

On 1 March 2015, Steve Easterbrook became CEO in succession of Don Thompson after being the Chief Brand Officer and McDonald's former head in Northern Europe and UK.

Most of the McDonald's restaurants offer both drive through service and counter service, with indoor and occasionally outdoor seating.

- In 1948, the business of "Speedee Service System" is being reorganized as a hamburger stand using production line principles
- Auto Mac or Pay and Drive concept or "McDrive" is known in various countries. In today's trending time for high quality coffee and the increasing popularity of coffee shops McDonald's introduced McCafe, a café style like Starbucks offers to its customers.
- "McDonaldization" of the society can be said due to the increasing and emblematic performance of globalized McDonald.
- Few of the McDonald's in suburban areas and certain cities are having large outdoor and indoor playgrounds.
- In 2006, McDonald's brought in its "Forever Young" brand by redesigning all of its restaurants, a first major change since 1970's.

McDonald's Corporation earns its revenue being an investor in properties, a franchiser of restaurants, and a restaurant operator. Approximately 15% of McDonald's restaurants are owned and operated by McDonald's Corporation directly. The remaining of the total is operated by others through a variety of franchise agreements and joint ventures. As a condition of many

franchise agreements, which vary by contract, age, country, and location, the Corporation may own or lease the properties on which McDonald's franchises are located. As a matter of policy, McDonald's does not make direct sales of food or materials to its franchisees, instead of that it organizes the supply of food and materials to restaurants through approved third party logistics operators.

McDonald's has maintained a huge advertising campaign from decades. In addition to the common media (television, radio, and newspaper), the company significantly used billboards and signage, sponsors sporting events.

### 1.3 Servqual

Earlier Servqual is known as RATER, a quality management framework. Servqual was discovered by Valarie Zeithaml, A. Parasuraman & Leonard Berry in mid-1980s, to measure quality in the service sector. The Servqual originally consist ten elements of service quality, but later, these were collapsed into five factors - Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness (RATER).

- Reliability: the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
- Assurance: the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
- Tangibles: the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.
- Empathy: the provision of caring, individualized attention to customers.
- Responsiveness: the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service.

Different service sectors using Servqual to measure and manage service quality by analyzing questionnaire that measures both the customer expectations regarding service quality in terms of five dimensions (RATER), and their perceptions about service they receive. When customer's expectations are more than their perceptions them service quality is deemed to be low.

The Servqual identified four Gaps that may cause customers to experience poor service quality.

#### 1.3.1 Gap 1: Listening Gap (Consumer Expectation and Management Perception)

Here management does not know what the customer actually wants. Factors leading to this gap can be:

- Poorly interpreted information about the customer's expectations
- Inadequate market research
- Research not focused on demand quality

### 1.3.2 Gap 2: The Service Design & Standard Gap

This gap may occur when Management know what their customers actually want but not able to set an appropriate performance standard for their employees. This Gap can be occurring because of following reasons:

- Cryptic service design
- Deficient planning procedures
- Chaotic new service development process

### 1.3.3 Gap 3: Service Performance Gap (Service Quality Specification and Service Delivery)

This gap may occur because service personnel being poorly trained, de-motivated, incapable or unwilling to meet the standard set for the service. The major reasons behind this gap can be:

- Lack of proper customer education and training
- unable to match demand and supply
- Improper internal marketing

### 1.3.4 Gap 4: Communication Gap (Service Delivery and External Communication)

This gap occur when Consumer expectations goes high from the influencing statements made by company representatives and advertisements etc. but are not fulfilled at the time of delivery of the service. These discrepancies may occur due to the following reasons:

- Over-promises in advertisement and other communication campaign
- Failure to perform accordingly
- Failure to manage customer expectations

## 2. Literature Review

Expectations have been viewed as benchmarks consumers use to determine satisfaction<sup>1,2</sup> or appraise performance of products and services<sup>2,3,4,5</sup>. Consumer expectations may be multi-level benchmarks used for evaluation or appraisal<sup>3,6,7,8</sup>. Within the process, antecedents have a direct effect on the formation of expectations<sup>3,8,9,10</sup>. The final part of the process is the formation of consumer intentions to repurchase a product or service (based on comparisons of service performance to expectations)<sup>11,12</sup>.

Xue et al.<sup>13</sup> have mentioned that customer satisfaction (CS) has becomes one of the cores of modern service competition. They have also mentioned that there are some major aspects, such as infrastructure and the appearance of physical facilities; dependability and accuracy; betimes character of service; the reliability of the trusted staffs; customer care; price diversity; and

food quality etc. are have significant influence on customer satisfaction in fast food industry.

Research has shown that service quality is an essential strategy for winning and retaining customers<sup>14,15,16</sup>. Indeed, the quality of service is more important than price in differentiating a service firm from its competitors and in fostering customer loyalty<sup>17,18</sup>.

Measuring service quality is a challenging task because the concept of service quality is inherently intangible in nature and difficult to define<sup>19</sup>. Measuring improvements in service quality is even more challenging<sup>20</sup>. Commonly used techniques for measuring service quality include customer service audits<sup>21</sup>, gap analysis<sup>22</sup>, SERVQUAL<sup>5</sup>, SERVPERF<sup>23</sup>, critical incident technique<sup>24</sup>, and sequential incident technique<sup>25</sup>.

Parasuraman et al.<sup>20</sup> suggested adapting the SERVQUAL instrument to measure service quality in relation to competition. SERVQUAL is a well-established “gap-assessment” methodology that can be used to develop service-improvement initiatives by examining the “gap” between expectations and perceptions. The adapted SERVQUAL instrument<sup>7</sup> uses a non-comparative evaluation model – that is, customers of firm A are asked to state their perception or their expectation of firm A’s services and another group of customers are asked to state their perception or their expectation of firm B’s services. After obtaining the perceptions and expectations, the SERVQUAL scores are calculated and gaps between the two firms are assessed.

### 2.1 Customer Satisfaction at McDonald’s

The company has been following innovations and using different technologies for the purpose providing quality products and services to the customers (Astute Solutions, 2012). McDonald’s is the largest fast food chains in the world. The company has been performing different activities to satisfy its customers. However, in accordance with data collected by the American Consumer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) reveals that McDonald’s ranks in last place in customer satisfaction, despite being the top fast food company in terms of revenue (The HuffingtonPost.Com, Inc., 2012). The data from ACSI shows that the company was highest in customer satisfaction in 1995. The restaurant, which serves tens of millions of customers a day, had a rating of only 59 back on 2000. Based on the survey carried by ACSI (2012), it is clear that McDonald’s has the lowest score in customer satisfaction compare to other fast-food industry around the USA and other international countries.

Dhaval (2012) has stated that McDonald’s thinks according to the customers’ tastes, value systems, lifestyles, language and perception that reflect the commitment of the business to increase and improve customer satisfaction.

Fitzgerald and Moon (1996) have mentioned that the employees of the McDonald’s have been focusing on the particular demands and expectations of the customers to increase

their level of satisfaction on the products and services at the business. They have also mentioned that most of the employees at McDonald's are talking constantly with the customers to get their feedback and suggestions and thus develop business policy to reduce customers' complaints in relation to increase customer satisfaction at the business compare to other competitors in the fast-food industry.

Based on the information obtained from City and Guilds (2012), McDonald's has been providing training to staff while seeing immediate improvements in customer satisfaction. It is all about the effective day-to-day running of each restaurant and how every apprentice can contribute to improve and increase customer satisfaction (City and Guilds, 2012).

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Objectives

- To find the gaps between perceptions and expectations of customers regarding McDonalds.
- To analyze the service quality of McDonalds.

#### 3.2 Methodology

- Initially, the research was started with a comprehensive study of McDonalds.
- Studied various research papers on the service quality of McDonalds.
- The next step involved a short survey to know the expectations and perceptions of customers.
- Then, the gaps between expectations and perceptions of customers are identified.
- The results were ascertained with the help of t-test.

#### 3.3 Methods of Collecting Data

##### 3.3.1 Primary Data

Primary data is that data which is collected by the researcher for the first time through the way of observation, experimentation, questionnaire, interview etc.

##### 3.3.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data is that data which is already collected by the researcher and is available in books, magazines, reports, articles, publications of central, state and local government.

In this research, we have used the primary data as well as the secondary data as a method of data collection. In secondary data, we have examined company website, other websites, articles, case studies, etc. And in primary data, data is collected through Servqual questionnaire.

## 4. Hypothesis

### 4.1 Original Hypothesis (H1)

In original hypothesis, there exist a relationship between dependent and independent variable. Here, there exist the gap between customer expectations and perceptions regarding the service quality of McDonalds at 95% level of confidence.

### 4.2 Null Hypothesis (H0)

According to null hypothesis, there is no relationship between dependent and independent variable. Here, there doesn't exist any gap between customer expectations and perceptions concerning the service quality of McDonalds.

The Table 2 shows the average of gaps between customer expectations and perceptions on various dimensions.

The above graphical representation depicts the average of gaps (Figure 1).

Table 3 gives the average of expectations and perceptions across the five dimensions.

**Table 1.** Mc Donald Specification

Name of the organization	McDonald's
Industry	Restaurant
Founders	McDonald's - Richard and Maurice McDonald McDonald's Corporation- Ray Kroc
Headquarters	Oak Brook, Illinois, U.S.
Number of locations	36,000+ worldwide
President and CEO	Steve Easterbrook
Slogan	I'm Lovin' It

**Table 2.** Data analysis and interpretation

Dimensions	Average of Gap
Tangibles	-0.497524752
Reliability	-0.401980198
Responsiveness	-0.571782178
Assurance	-0.517326733
Empathy	-0.512871287

**Table 3.**

Dimensions	E*	P*
Tangible	20.08911	18.09901
Reliability	24.9802	22.9703
Assurance	21	18.93069
Responsiveness	20.67327	18.38614
Empathy	24.83168	22.26733

Where, E\* = Expectation and P\* = Perception

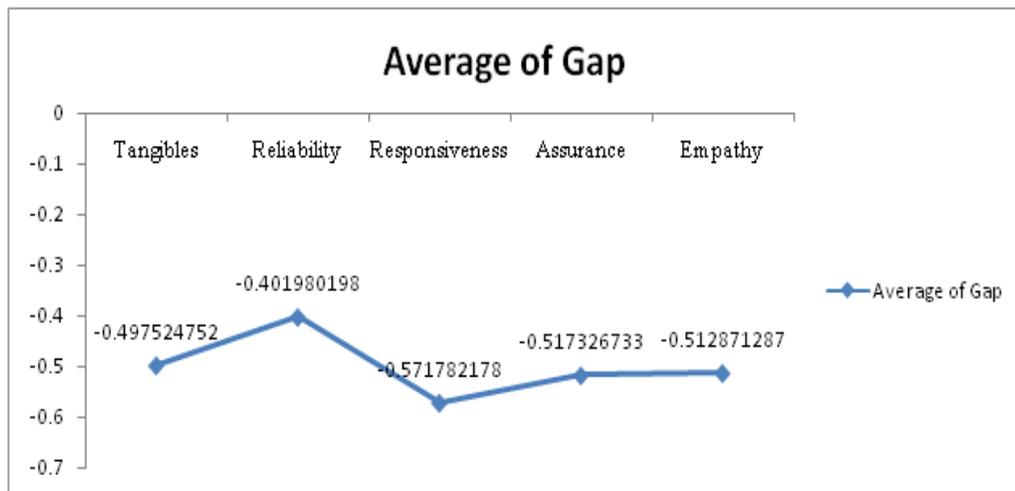


Figure 1. Average Gap.

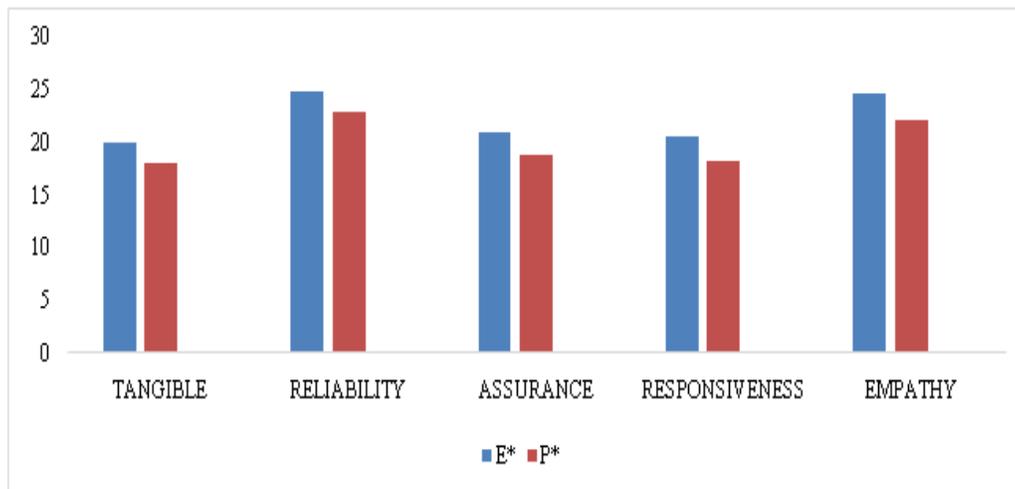


Figure 2. Graphical presentation is the representation of the average of perceptions and expectation.

The graphical presentation is the representation of the average of perceptions and expectations across the five dimensions (Figure 2).

The respondents have ranked Tangibility (-0.4775), Reliability (-0.384), Responsiveness (-0.555), Assurance (-0.51) and Empathy (-0.470707071). The negative average shows that the customers' expectations with McDonalds' is on a higher side whereas the fast food franchisee is not able to satisfy them as the perceptions with each of the dimension is low.

The standard deviation is a statistical measure that points out the degree of homogeneity or uniformity within the data as a low standard deviation means the data is having uniformity. The standard deviation of the dimension Empathy (0.984646145) is lowest among the five dimensions which means there is high degree of homogeneity in the customers' expectations and perceptions leading to fewer gaps between the same.

The five dimensions are ranged in the following sequence Tangibility (7.75), Reliability (5.2), Responsiveness (9.25), Assurance (9.5) and Empathy (9.6). The t-test with 95% level of significance results in rejecting the null hypothesis and indicates that there exist gaps between the customer's expectations and perceptions in all the five dimensions of the Servqual. The 5% shows that there is non-existence of relationship between the customer's expectations and perceptions with McDonalds. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and original hypothesis is accepted (Table 4).

## 5. Recommendations

From the study conducted, we recommend that McDonald Corporation should focus on some important aspects in order to be competitive in the market and at the same time fulfill the

**Table 4.** Five dimensions of high degree of homogeneity in the customers' expectations

Factor	Tangibility	Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy
t Stat	4.330	3.748	4.736	3.990	3.960
P value*	0.00001769	0.0001487	0.000003591	0.00006299	0.00007019

\*As p value is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is accepted with 95% level of confidence.

expectations of the customers' such as: offering cost effective healthy meal, implementing child proof play areas, cleanliness, and Wi-Fi technology.

- The company needs to make play land child proof. There have been many incidents reported where the child may get hurt or injured due to no railings or carpet in the play area. With that said, the company has been sued several times due to negligence of no child security. The physical set up of each restaurant should have aesthetic look and at the same time conducive to the needs of their small age group customers.
- The cleanliness at McDonalds is a major problem; the management must make sure that the entire site is clean and hygienic including the bathrooms and play areas.
- The company needs to install Wi-Fi in all McDonald Corporations in order to compete with its competitors.
- It should also make its employees more customers friendly. Their uniforms should be made much more attractive.
- The physical equipments used in every McDonald restaurant should be modern looking. There must be more and better use of communication materials that are able to create an excitement within the customers whenever they enter any store of McDonald.
- The company should also provide prompt services as well as fulfill what it promises to its customers on time.
- With the onset of Burger King, Dunkin Donuts, Subway and many other fast food restaurants, the McDonalds' needs to train and encourage its employees to be at their toes when it comes to serving their customers. They are the ones who can make their customers (with age no bar) unique and special by showing their care and concern towards them.

McDonalds need to carry out marketing research on regular basis for the purpose of exploring and analyzing the changes in customer demands and expectations into the fast-food industry. Based on the data and information, the organizations need to develop business strategies, such as marketing and operations strategy in relation to increase level of satisfaction about products and services by their customers.

## 6. Limitations

Due to shortage of time:

- Limited number of sample size has been reached, i.e., only 101 responses throughout the survey.
- The responses have been collected from Delhi and NCR region.

The instrument used in this paper "Servqual" has been criticized by various researchers and on a number of grounds. It has been found that there exist better and more superior instruments than Servqual. Servqual's efficacy has also been questioned and criticized by various research authors. Some authors have raised concerns over the conceptualization and operationalization of the instrument as well.

## 7. Conclusion

In the end we would like to conclude that there exists the gap between the customers' expectations and perceptions when it comes to the analysis of service quality of McDonalds'. But these gaps can be overcome by the organization. According to the overall discussions and statements of issues and concerns involved in the study of customer expectations and perceptions at McDonald's, we would like to opine that McDonalds need to focus on the quality, finer customer services and cleanliness in order to increase the customer satisfaction and to reach at the customers' expectations. The Company focuses on delivering simple and delightful restaurant experiences for customers and generates superior value for its shareholders.

*"Your customer doesn't care how much you know until they know how much you care."*

- Damon Richards

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### Conflict of Interest:

Author of a paper had no conflict neither financially nor academically.

# ANNEXURE-QUESTIONNAIRE

## THE SERVQUAL INSTRUMENT

EXPECTATIONS							PERCEPTIONS								
<p>This survey deals with your opinions of fast food restaurants. Please show the extent to which you think fast food restaurants should possess the following features. What we are interested in here is a number that best shows your expectations about fast food restaurants offering services.</p>							<p>The following statements relate to your feelings about the particular McDonalds you chose. Please show the extent to which you believe McDonalds has the feature described in the statement. Here, we are interested in a number that shows your perceptions about McDonalds.</p>								
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
<b>Tangibles</b>							(E)	<b>Tangibles</b>							(P)
E1. Excellent fast food restaurants will have modern looking equipment.								P1. McDonalds has modern looking equipment.							
E2. The physical facilities at excellent fast food restaurants will be visually appealing.								P2. McDonalds's physical facilities are visually appealing.							
E3. Employees at excellent fast food restaurants will be neat appearing.								P3. McDonalds's reception desk employees are neat appearing.							
E4. Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) will be visually appealing at an excellent fast food restaurants.								P4. Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) are visually appealing at McDonalds.							
<b>Reliability</b>							(E)	<b>Reliability</b>							(P) P - E
E5. When excellent fast food restaurants promise to do something by a certain time, they do.								P5. When McDonalds promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.							
E6. When a customer has a problem, excellent fast food restaurants will show a sincere interest in solving it.								P6. When you have a problem, McDonalds shows a sincere interest in solving it.							
E7. Excellent fast food restaurants will perform the service right the first time.								P7. McDonalds performs the service right the first time.							
E8. Excellent fast food restaurants will provide the service at the time they promise to do so.								P8. McDonalds provides its service at the time it promises to do so.							
E9. Excellent fast food restaurants will insist on error free records.								P9. McDonalds insists on error free records							
<b>Responsiveness</b>							(E)	<b>Responsiveness</b>							(P)
E10. Employees of excellent fast food restaurants will tell customers exactly when services will be performed.								P10. Employees in McDonalds tell you exactly when services will be performed.							
E11. Employees of excellent fast food restaurants will give prompt service to customers.								P11. Employees in McDonalds give you prompt service.							
E12. Employees of excellent fast food restaurants will always be willing to help customers.								P12. Employees in McDonalds are always willing to help you.							
E13. Employees of excellent fast food restaurants will never be too busy to respond to customers' requests.								P13. Employees in McDonalds are never too busy to respond to your request.							
<b>Assurance</b>							(E)	<b>Assurance</b>							(P) P - E
E14. The behavior of employees in excellent fast food restaurants will instill confidence in customers.								P14. The behavior of employees in McDonalds instills confidence in you.							
E15. Customers of excellent fast food restaurants will feel safe in transactions.								P15. You feel safe in your transactions with McDonalds.							

E16. Employees of excellent fast food restaurants will be consistently courteous with customers.

E17. Employees of excellent fast food restaurants will have the knowledge to answer customers' questions.

**Empathy**

E18. Excellent fast food restaurants will give customers individual attention.

E19. Excellent fast food restaurants will have operating hours convenient to all their customers.

E20. Excellent fast food restaurants will have employees who give customers personal attention.

E21. Excellent fast food restaurants will have their customer's best interests at heart.

E22. The employees of excellent fast food restaurants will understand the specific needs of their customers.

(E)

P16. Employees in McDonald's area consistently courteous with you.

P17. Employees in McDonalds have the knowledge to answer your questions.

**Empathy**

P18. McDonalds gives you individual attention.

P19. McDonalds has operating hours convenient to all its customers.

P20. McDonalds has employees who give you personal attention.

P21. McDonalds has your best interest at heart.

P22. The employees of McDonalds understand your specific needs.

(P)