

## **Making informed decisions to improve restaurant image using a hybrid MADM approach: A case of fast-food restaurants in an island of East Malaysia**

### **ABSTRACT**

Restaurant image refers to an immediate perception that pops up in a customer's mind when the name of a restaurant is mentioned. Therefore, it is crucial for restaurants, including fast-food restaurants (FFRs), to evaluate and sustain a positive restaurant image. However, evaluating and improving a restaurant's image is challenging, since it counts in multiple service attributes associated with various degrees of unknown priority. Even so, the existing literature is yet to outspread the usage of an appropriate multi-attribute decision-making (MADM)-based approach to specifically evaluate the image of FFRs. Therefore, this research aimed at employing such an approach to evaluate the image of four FFRs on an island in East Malaysia, using various people, processes, and physical evidence attributes. Firstly, an initial list of FFR image attributes was elicited from the available literature. This initial list was then further validated through a two-round Delphi survey involving a panel of ten experts. A questionnaire was then designed based on the finalized attributes, and data collected from a sample of 251 respondents were analyzed using the compromised-analytical hierarchy process (C-AHP) method. The C-AHP results suggest that the strategies to improve an FFR's image should primarily incorporate the following six attributes: hospitality, employees' problem-solving skills, employees' knowledge, food taste, physical cleanliness, and service response time. The FFR at the top of the ranking has the highest performance scores over these same six attributes. Surprisingly, employees' appearance and restaurant exterior were reported as the two least important image attributes. This research is the first to demonstrate the application of a hybrid MADM-based approach to uncover the weights of FFR image attributes and rank those FFRs by computing their aggregated image scores.