

KFC Rage: Racial Tension Or Shoddy Customer Service?

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Some of us have an aversion to fast foods because they are high in additives, preservatives, salt and calories. One would never have imagined that employee rage would be another reason for avoiding these fast-food chains.

The KFC franchise must regret that its staff training is so ineffective, that the staff vented their frustrations by attacking one of their customers. The manager should have gauged people's feelings and realised that resentment was building up.

Having pre-paid for his food over the internet and then being forced to wait in a queue for about an hour, the customer who had been attacked, was told, as were the other patrons, that there was no more fried chicken.

The customer had demanded to see the manager to complain about the abysmal service. Most of us would have done the same. I would have demanded to see the manager after five minutes and not after one hour.

KFC prides itself on being a fast-food chain. If it wants to live up to the "fast-food" name, then it should provide the service or else give up its franchise.

In America, Ray Kroc of McDonald's had strict rules which franchises must obey. Customers having to wait for more than five minutes for their fast-food are not required to pay. Malaysian fast food chains would go bankrupt if this promise was enforced by the parent company.

When a customer wants to speak to the manager, why should the employee take umbrage?

The KFC attack was filmed and became a YouTube viral video.

A handful of KFC employees, who were seen trying to isolate the surly employee, should be commended. But where was their boss?

We are told that the manager had been spotted in the kitchen chatting away with other employees. Why did he not attend to the customer before the situation escalated?

The queue was not a short one (as seen from the video) so why did the manager not inform the customers earlier on, that there was no more chicken rather than waste their time? This is disrespectful to the customers.

The KFC store was not in a remote part of the country. Why did the manager not contact another outlet to replenish their stock? This was an emergency. Why not issue an I.O.U. to those customers who had pre-paid vouchers? This would have improved KFC's image, in the long run.

For as long as I can remember, Malaysians have been subjected to shoddy, incompetent customer service. It is very rare, that an establishment really offers true, commendable service; I would write about it, if I heard of it.

Unfortunately, most of us, when faced with a surly employee, a recalcitrant waiter or unhelpful civil servant, walk out and do nothing. In the case of government departments, we simply grin and bear it, because we have no choice.

We do have a choice. We can complain to the manager, on the spot, and follow this up with a letter to the

chairman and CEO of the company, or head of department, for the civil service.

But very few of us do that, preferring to lick our wounds and vowing to stay away from the establishment. That is why shoddy customer service continues; because we refuse to take a stand.

When a policeman tried to fine me for going over some non-existent white lines on the road in Ipoh, I wrote to the Chief of Police with a photo of the road (and the non-existent white lines) and the RM300 fine was overturned.

I will never know if the traffic police who tried to pull a fast one on me was disciplined, and I never received an apology. The word "sorry" does not exist in the vocabulary of those in authority in Malaysia.

Of course, the police are never wrong. The CPO blamed the Ipoh City Council for not painting the white lines and told me that if the white lines were there, I would "surely have been fined". The police are too proud to admit guilt and that they are in the wrong.

Readers have contacted me about shoddy customer service. I have written about MAS's incompetence and my reader has received a cash voucher. I have written about a surly bank employee and he was transferred to a rural branch.

A colleague related an incident when he posted a parcel of books by the Pos Laju service to England, but his securely wrapped and labeled parcel, was damaged and its contents lost during transit.

Pos Laju refused to compensate him, and refused to reimburse him for the postage, never mind the contents. What is the point of paying for insurance on Pos Laju if they will not honour their end of their agreement?

Returning to the KFC incident, the branch manager should be reprimanded for not taking charge of the situation and KFC has failed in its duty of responsible community service and duty of care.

It did not issue an immediate apology for the incident. Will it also publicly state that it will revise its training procedures and contingency plans? When will KFC realise the gravity of this situation?

Will KFC respond only when its sales plummet and customers patronise their rivals?

The irresponsible advertisement by KFC has created a backlash. Do not promote goods or services which you cannot provide.

A few people maintain this episode to be racially motivated. Then the statement of the policeman who attended to the victim is revealing. When the victim lodged a police report about the incident, a policeman reportedly told the victim not to approach any political party for assistance in the spirit of "1 Malaysia."

What the policeman has just done is to show his contempt for the "1Malaysia" catch-phrase.

He does not believe in "1Malaysia" any more than you or I. It also shows the thin veneer separating catch-phrases and reality.

If Prime minister Najib Abdul Razak continues to employ large numbers of one race in the civil service, he should be prepared for racial resentment.

Sadly, Najib's false promise of racial solidarity has been caught out by a chicken.

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