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RESTAURANT SERVICE QUALITY: The Impact of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction in Restaurant Service

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Abstract

In recent years, large international fast food chains have been expanding their presence in the Mongolian market. Previous research in the field of hospitality services in Mongolia, especially food production establishments, has mostly focused on consumer satisfaction with the hygiene, taste, and service quality of the food. However, there is a lack of employee-oriented research on human resources, such as employee work conditions, workload, team atmosphere, incentives, and achievement. Therefore, the purpose of the research work is to reveal the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction. A quantitative method was used to analyze this study. A random sampling method is used to distribute and gather data. 380 participants were involved in this study. This research was conducted to determine the assessment of employees' job satisfaction, whether the perceived performance of service quality differs from their expectations, and to detect the interaction between variables such as service quality and customer satisfaction. As a result of the research, the level of service quality is average (3.63), and the indicators of service quality that need to be improved are prompt service (-0.89), sincere attention to customer requests (-1.39), problem solving (-1.05), always being ready to help customers (-0.91), and friendly and polite communication (-1.30). The findings indicated, as a whole, that the customers' perceptions of service quality provided by the fast food industry were lower than their expectations, and the gap between customers' expectations and perceptions (-0.67) was significant. Results show that service quality has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.

Keywords: *Fast food service, employee satisfaction, service quality*

1. Introduction

Mongolia's National Vision 2050 emphasizes "national values," or ethnic pride, as a top priority for nationalgoals. Tourism offers the people an opportunity to reaffirm their pride, and foreign tourists will reevaluateMongolia's appeal by coming into contact with the magnificent nature and nomadic culture of Mongolia.With a population of only 3.4 million between the great powers of Russia and China, Mongolia can expand itsborders worldwide by opening windows to the world in the form of tourism, which is also significant inachieving what Vision 2050 aims to achieve. Mongolia's economy has an economic structure in which the majority of its exports are based on mining resources. The mining resources will endover time. However, However, if appropriately conserved and protected, tourism resources can remain sustainable. Mongolia aims tobecome a leading tourism destination, setting an ambitious tourism vision for 2030: attracting two million visitors - a threefold increase from 650,000 in 2023. This growth is expected to drive $3-4 billion in destination spending, a sixfold surge from $550 million in 2023. Tourism GPT contribution is set to rise to 10% (up from just 2% in 2023), while sector employment is expected to double from 83,000 to 160,000 jobs. Additionally, Mongolia seeks to improve its global standing, targeting 65th place in the World Economic Forum (WEF) Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI), a 20-position jump from its current rank (85th place) (Boston Consulting Group, 2025).The hospitality and tourism industry in Mongolia holds significant importance. According to Mongolia's National Statistics Office, as of 2024, approximately 8,500 business entities are operating within the country's food production and service sector. Of these, rural areas account for 47%, while the capital city hosts 53%. This sector includes 1,570 restaurants, 400 cafés, 1,331 bars, 85 fast-food services, 544 healthcare cafeterias, 1,600 school canteens, 283 dormitory kitchens, and 2,369 tea houses, totaling 8,467 food-service establishments(Mongolia N. s., 2024). A strong relationship

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between service quality and customer satisfaction is deemed essential for a managerial strategy that emphasizes a comprehensive approach to managing service quality. Customer satisfaction refers to the extent to which a product or service meets or surpasses customer expectations. Generally, customer satisfaction is linked to two main aspects: the customer's evaluation of product or service quality and their perception of the interaction experience with the brand's service provider(Dapkevičius, 2009). The rapidly changing competitive market environment in the hospitality industry has compelled restaurant managers to seek effective strategies for enhancing customer satisfaction to sustain their businesses and remain competitive. Prioritizing customer satisfaction has become essential for achieving brand success and improving performance. Namkung identified food quality as a crucial factor influencing customers' overall evaluations of a restaurant and their intention to repurchase(Namkung, 2007). Service workers who interact directly with customers are not only the face of the organization but also play a crucial role in influencing customer satisfaction. Employees in the hospitality industry are 3.5 times more likely to experience stress compared to those in other industries (Amarjargal Sukhragchaa, 2021).Various workplace factors can contribute to decreased satisfaction, lower work efficiency, and diminished productivity, which in turn affects the quality of service that employees deliver to customers (Liljander & Strandvik, 1997). The current literature on service quality demonstrates a correlation between customer satisfaction (Benjamin Schneider, 1993), (Michael D. Hartline, 2000), and(Otabor Joseph Osahon, 2016), (Loveman, 1998).This study aims to examine the levels of service quality and customer satisfaction in the fast food sector and to explore the relationships between these variables.

2. Literature Review

Fast food service

Chain restaurants define fast food asprepared, served, and sold quickly. The fast-food industry in Mongolia is highly competitive, with many players vying for consumer attention and loyalty. In this environment, businesses must deliver exceptional service quality to stand out and attract and retain customers. The SERVQUAL dimensions of service quality offer a framework for assessing and improving the service quality of fast-food establishments(Kristiawan Y. H., 2021); (Kanyan & Voon, 2016). Employee training and development is a vital strategy for enhancing service quality. Well-trained, knowledgeable staff with strong interpersonal skills can deliver efficient and personalized service, leading to higher customer satisfaction. Training programs should focus on critical areas such as product knowledge, communication skills, conflict resolution, customer-centricity, leadership potential, and the impact of emotional labor on employee engagement and satisfaction. Businesses compete for customer loyalty through various means, including product, price, and brand differentiation. Consumer perceptions of a restaurant's brand, particularly in the fast-food sector, can significantly influence its competitive position. The way consumers perceive quality is a key determinant of their product choices. Fast food restaurants aim to create a distinctive dining experience by integrating both tangible and intangible elements. In this industry, it is essential for businesses to maximize customer satisfaction through outstanding customer service (Kanyan, 2016); (Kumolu-Johnson, 2024).

Service quality

Service quality refers to the level of quality during a service process that is deemed acceptable by consumers. When customer service meets expectations, it is considered satisfactory. Conversely, consumers regard the service quality as poor if the received services fail to meet their expectations. In simpler terms, when service quality is achieved, the service is deemed satisfactory. Service quality is a topic that generates interest and debate in research literature due to its complexity and the lack of a universally accepted definition and measurement. There are various definitions of service quality. One definition suggests that service quality is the ability to meet the needs or expectations of the customer (Barbara R. Lewis, 1990). Another perspective defines service quality as the gap between customer expectations and the service as perceived or received by the customer (Eugene W. Anderson, 1997). Researchers have identified different dimensions of service quality. In their early studies, (A. Parasuraman, 1985) outlined ten dimensions: credibility, security, competence, courtesy, communication, understanding/knowing customers, access, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibility. They later narrowed these down to five important areas: empathy, assurance, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibility.

Service quality is particularly important across various service industries for both managers and academic researchers. Due to the intangible nature of services, consumers often find it more challenging to assess service quality compared to product quality.

Customer satisfaction

Customers who are dissatisfied with a product or service may opt to switch to another company or disseminate negative feedback through word-of-mouth. Besides customer dissatisfaction, competitors might attract customers who are only marginally satisfied or indifferent. Customer satisfaction plays a crucial role in highly competitive markets, where there is a significant difference between merely satisfied customers and those who are completely satisfied (Wirtz, 2006). To assess customer satisfaction levels, companies must determine how satisfied or dissatisfied their current customers are. This can be achieved by asking customers which factors they deem most important for their satisfaction and subsequently evaluating the performance of the service offered in relation to those factors. With this information, businesses can find areas where quality is lacking and come up with plans to make customers happier.

Service quality is often defined as the discrepancy between a customer's expectations (E) and perceptions (P) of the service experience (A.Parasuraman, 1987). According to Villanueva (2023) service quality is a crucial component of fast-food restaurants, requiring continuous measurement and

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improvement(Villanueva, 2023). Customers are the best judges of service quality, and SERVQUAL is a tool for measuring it. They determine the perceived value of service based on their overall experience with the service delivered, which restaurant practitioners should keep in mind.

Customer satisfaction and loyalty are vital for a company's success, and service quality can significantly impact both. For customer-focused businesses, customer satisfaction is among the key elements of success. Typically, marketers aim to provide value and pursue customer satisfaction, with service quality being an essential component of that satisfaction. High levels of service quality may lead to high customer satisfaction (Kristiawan, 2021); (Febryanto, 2018)Conversely, if service performance does not meet consumer expectations, it can result in customer discontent (Brunner, 2008). This discontent toward a fast-food restaurant's service may lead to negative consequences, such as loss of business to competitors, reduced revenue, and potential liquidation.

Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) noted that managing service quality involves addressing the gaps between expectations and perceptions from the perspectives of management, employees, and customers. The most critical gap (Gap 5) is between customers' expectations of service and their perceptions of the service actually delivered. Thus, according to the gap model, service marketers must close the customer gap (Gap 5). To achieve this, service providers must also close the four other gaps (Gaps 1, 2, 3, and 4) within the organization that hinder the delivery of quality service. Urgent action is necessary because the way customers, particularly hotel customers, perceive service performance compared to their expectations will reflect the quality of service provided by the organization(Lkhamtseden Badarch, 2025).

3. Research Methodology

Statement of the problem

Every day, customers encounter service quality issues with nearly every service they purchase. We can continue identifying dissatisfaction at many service-oriented organizations. Unfortunately, the quality of service offered cannot always meet the needs, requirements, and expectations of the consumer. The primary reason for selecting this topic is the issue of inadequate service quality, as highlighted by feedback from various customers in fast food establishments and specifically in restaurants.

The purpose of the study

Customer satisfaction is a key objective in the fast food restaurant industry, as previously mentioned. Restaurant services and those in the hospitality industry must focus on their consumers to survive, particularly by meeting their needs, requirements, and expectations. This focus can enhance the company's image. This research aims to identify the essential characteristics of customer satisfaction and the factors of service quality that contribute to it.

First, the quality of service in Mongolian fast food restaurants will be assessed through customer satisfaction, and the research hypotheses are as follows.

H1.*There is a significant difference between customer expectations and perceptions of evaluations of service quality in fast food restaurants.*

H2: *There is a positive correlation between tangible and customer satisfaction.*

H3*: There is a positive correlation between responsiveness and customer satisfaction.*

H4*: There is a positive correlation between reliability and customer satisfaction.*

H5*: There is a positive correlation between assurance and customer satisfaction.*

H6*: There is a positive correlation between empathy and customer satisfaction.*

Samples and Procedures

Survey questionnaires were collected from customers at four branches of a fast food chain located in a district of Ulaanbaatar. A survey was conducted among employees using a random sampling method from March 10 to May 20, 2025, resulting in a total of 380 completed questionnaires from customers. The research employed the SERVQUAL scale to evaluate the gap between a) customer perceptions and b) customer expectations regarding the quality of service provided. This scale consists of 17 statements categorized into five dimensions: tangibility (4 statements), reliability (3 statements), responsiveness (3 statements), assurance (3 statements), and empathy (4 statements). The survey comprises three sections, totaling 42 questions. The first part has 4 questions about customer demographics, the second part has 34 questions about service quality (A Parasuraman, 1988), and the third part has 4 questions about overall customer satisfaction. Service quality variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The study's results were analyzed using IBM SPSS 27 software, which facilitated frequency analysis, descriptive analysis, factor analysis, reliability analysis, GAP analysis, regression analysis, and correlation analysis.

4. Results

4.1.Profile of respondents

In the research, female customers represent 58%, while male customers account for 42%. More than 50% of the customers are students, with 42% employed full-time, 5% working part-time, and 1% unemployed. Students consume more fast food than other demographics. Most customers, 95%, are 35 years old or younger. Within this group, 63% are ages 20–25, and 32% are between 26 and 35 years old. Only 3% of customers fall within the age range of 36 to 45, and 2% are older than 45. Additionally, 42% of the total customers visit 2–3 times a week.

4.2. Reliability Analysis

The factor loading of the variables was set to be greater than 0.6 (Fornell, 1981), (Nunnally, 1994), (Saleh F, 1992). Results showed that all the values were above 0.70. The Cronbach alpha coefficient, which is very close to 1 or greater than 0.7 (0.703-0.842), is used to evaluate the reliability of the

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questions. The following 34 questionnaires were found to have good reliability and validity.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test Result

Variable	**Expected** Cronbach's Alpha	**Perceived** Cronbach's Alpha
Tangibles	α=0.709	α=0.816
Reliability	α=0.826	α=0.842
Responsiveness	α=0.812	α=0.824
Assurance	α=0.703	α=0.818
Empathy	α=0.826	α=0.837

Source: Author's calculations

1.2. Gap analyses

A total of 380 customers were surveyed, and service quality was measured as the gap (GAP) between customer expectations (E) and perceptions (P) of the service experience, calculated as Q = P - E. Paired t-tests were conducted for each of the service quality dimensions to determine whether there is a significant difference (0.05 or greater) between the means of the two sets of scores. The research findings reveal a negative disparity (-0.67) between customer expectations and perceptions of service quality, indicating that the fast food restaurant's service quality is inadequate. Additionally, Table 2 shows that the difference between expectations and perceptions is statistically significant (sig. ant (si. 0.000) for each dimension). The study results reveal that empathy (-1.02) and responsiveness (-1.05) have higher negative variances, indicating greater dissatisfaction. The service quality indicators that require immediate improvement are providing service quickly and promptly (-1.05), ensuring employees always have time to answer clients' questions (-1.39), handling complaints and problems graciously (-1.05), always being willing to help clients (-0.91), and demonstrating friendly behavior (-1.30). In summary, customers assessed that these indicators do not meet the expected service quality of an international fast food chain. Consequently, the results support the first hypothesis.

Table 2.*Descriptive Statistics Customer Expectations and Perceptions (n=380)*

Service Quality Dimensions	**E Mean**	**P Mean**	**GAP (P-E)**	***t- test significance***
Tangibles	**4.10**	**3.73**	**-0.37**	*
Attractiveness of the restaurant's decoration and design.	4.20	3.73	-0.47	*
Neat and professional appearance of staff	4.10	3.72	-0.38	*
Modern-looking and well-maintained restaurant equipment.	4.00	3.78	-0.22	*
Food and beverage selection varies.	4.10	3.70	-0.40	**
Reliability	**4.32**	**3.66**	**-0.66**	*
Handled complaints and problems graciously.	4.32	3.27	-1.05	*
Provides services as promised.	4.18	3.86	-0.32	**
The employees do not make mistakes when providing the service.	4.46	3.85	-0.61	*
Responsiveness	**4.18**	**3.29**	**-0.89**	*
The employees provide the service quickly and promptly.	4.20	3.15	-1.05	*
The employees are always willing to help the clients.	4.14	3.23	-0.91	*
The quality of the food is delicious.	4.20	3.50	-0.70	*
Assurance	**4.09**	**3.66**	**-0.43**	*
Well-trained and knowledgeable staff.	4.03	3.83	-0.20	*
Convenience of service availability.	4.04	3.77	-0.27	*
Provides a safe and secure place for guests.	4.22	3.38	-0.84	*
Empathy	**4.32**	**3.30**	**-1.02**	*
The employees show a special interest in taking care of the clients.	4.21	3.54	-0.67	*
The employees always have time to answer the questions.	4.24	2.85	-1.39	*
The employees offer the clients personalized.	4.23	3.51	-0.72	*
The employees demonstrate friendly behavior.	4.60	3.30	-1.30	*

* p<0.1** p<0.05*** p<0.01

Source: Author's calculations

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Table 3.GAP analysis

№	Service Quality Dimensions	E	P	GAP Q=P-E
1	Tangibles	4.10	3.73	-0.37
2	Reliability	4.32	3.66	-0.66
3	Responsiveness	4.18	3.29	-0.89
4	Assurance	4.09	3.66	-0.43
5	Empathy	4.32	3.30	-1.02
				-0.67

Source: Author's calculations

The results shown in Tables 4 and 5 show that the overall level of service quality (3.63) and the overall level of customer satisfaction (3.80) were closest to the answer of "moderate", which is average.

Table 4. Overall Service Quality

Service Quality Dimensions	Mean	Std. Deviation
Service Quality	**3.63**	.896
Tangibles	3.74	1.231
Reliability	3.23	1.189
Responsiveness	3.83	1.250
Assurance	3.65	1.227
Empathy	3.70	1.110

Source: Author's calculations

Table 5. Overall customer satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction Dimensions (n=380)	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
Customer satisfaction	**3.80**	1.22
I am pleased that I have visited this fast food restaurant.	3.87	0.97
I really enjoyed myself at this fast food restaurant.	3.60	1.00
Considering all my experiences with this restaurant, my decision to visit it was a wise one.	3.80	0.86
The food quality and services of this restaurant fulfill my	3.90	1.24

Source: Author's calculations

1.2. *CorrelationAnalysis*

According to the correlation test, as shown in Table 6, there is a correlation between service quality as an independent factor and customer satisfaction as a dependent factor. The findings indicate that responsiveness, assurance, reliability and empathy have significant positive effects on customer satisfaction [r = .921, p < 0.00],[[r = .844, p < 0.00],[r = .523, p < 0.00], [r = .731, p < 0.00]. According to the correlation test, the researcher found that all customer satisfaction factors have a significant negative correlation with tangible.

Table6.*CorrelationAnalysis:* Exploring Relationships between Variables

		1	2	3	4	5	6
Tangibles (1)	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
Responsiveness (2)	Pearson Correlation	.936**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000					
Assurance (3)	Pearson Correlation	.761**	.801**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000				
Reliability (4)	Pearson Correlation	.571**	.443*	.428**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.010	.000			
Empathy (5)	Pearson Correlation	.382	.498	.671	.476	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		
Customer Satisfaction (6)	Pearson Correlation	-241**	.921**	854**	523**	731**	1

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	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Author's calculations

1.2. Regression Analysis

Table 8 explains the results of the research hypothesis. The first hypothesis, tangibles, has significantly predicted customer satisfaction (beta is weighted 0.208, p<.001); this result indicates that tangibles have a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Therefore, based on this result, the second hypothesis was supported. The third hypothesis, responsiveness has significantly predicted customer satisfaction (beta is weighted 0.853, p<.001); this result indicates that responsiveness has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Therefore, based on this result the third hypothesis was supported. The fourth hypothesis, reliability has significantly predicted customer satisfaction (beta is weighted 0.576, p<.001); this result, indicates that reliability have a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Therefore, based on these results, the fourth hypothesis was supported. The fifth hypothesis, assurance has significantly predicted customer satisfaction (beta is weighted 0.432, p<.001); this result, indicates that assurance has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Therefore, based on results the fifth hypothesis was supported. Finally, empathy has significantly predicted customer satisfaction (beta is weighted 0.316, p<.001); this conclusion indicates that empathy have a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Therefore, based on this result the last hypothesis was supported.

Table 7. Model summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R-Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.801[a]	.699	.806	.560

Predictors: (Constant), Tangible, Responsiveness, Empathy, Assurance, Reliability

Dependent Variable: CS

The table 7 above represents the R-value as 0.801, which is the Pearson correlation between predicted and observed values of customer satisfaction. R-squared can be explained by independent variables such as tangible, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, reliability. This is the collective measure of the strong association of independent variables but not specific to any independent variable. The model summary shows the R-squared (coefficient of determination) value = 0.699, which indicates that the model is having a medium effect on dependent variables. The R- square value of the above table indicates that 69% is the collective measure of strong association of the independent variables, but not specifically to any independent variable. Hence, the model is fit. The above table indicates the adjusted R- square as 0.806.

Table 8. Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.185	.538		7.467	.000
Tangibles	1.310	.247	.208	6.614	.000
Responsiveness	.307	.132	.853	2.654	.002
Reliability	.624	.196	.576	3.121	.000
Assurance	.472	.097	.432	2.686	.003
Empathy	.528	.082	.316	3.287	.000
Dependent Variable:Customer Satisfaction					

Source: Author's calculations

5. Conclusion

The results demonstrated that service quality significantly enhances customer happiness. The disparity between client expectations and perceptions was assessed as negative (-0.67), the service quality level was deemed average (3.63), and the overall customer satisfaction rating was recorded at (3.80). The service quality indicators requiring immediate enhancement are promptness in service delivery (-1.05), employees' availability to address client inquiries (-1.39), gracious handling of complaints and issues (-1.05),

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willingness to assist clients (-0.91), and demonstration of friendly behavior by employees (-1.30). demonstrates the necessity of enhancing service quality by the establishment of service standards. This research primarily examines the correlation between characteristics of service quality and customer pleasure. Customers of fast food services expressed more satisfaction with service quality, with the exception of the reliability dimension. This research's descriptive analysis indicates that current customers attribute specific significance to fast food service quality, which is associated with the SERVQUAL dimensions. This validates the service quality theory (SERVQUAL) formulated by Parasuraman et al. (1988), which emphasized evaluation based on perceptions of assurance, reliability, empathy, tangibility, and responsiveness. This study found that empathy, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and tangibility were all strongly linked to customer satisfaction. The responsiveness element has shown a substantial correlation with customer satisfaction (r=.921**, p<0.01). The assurance factor had a substantial correlation with customer satisfaction (r = .854**, p < 0.01). The empathy factor showed a substantial correlation with customer satisfaction (r=.731**, p<0.01). The reliability factor had a substantial correlation (r=.523**, p<0.01) with customer satisfaction. A substantial correlation was identified between the tangible element and customer happiness (r = -0.241**, p < 0.01). This study's findings indicate that SERVQUAL is an effective tool for assessing service quality in fast food restaurants; thus, restaurant managers could utilize this instrument for evaluation, and it may also be applicable in other sectors of the hospitality industry. Service quality focuses on enhancing and sustaining visitor and customer satisfaction. This study's findings indicate that the SERVQUAL aspects of reliability, empathy, assurance, tangibility, and responsiveness are strong determinants of customer satisfaction. This indicates that these five dimensions are the most significant to clients of fast food establishments. The correlation between SERVQUAL and customer satisfaction was examined by regression analysis. The results of the multiple regression analysis indicate that five SERVQUAL characteristics were substantially correlated with customer satisfaction at a p-value of less than 0.01. The research findings indicate that overall customer satisfaction in fast food restaurants is entirely contingent upon the aspects of service quality: empathy, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibles. The research purpose is to examine the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction within the fast food service sector. The findings of our investigation indicate that the research objectives were met and the hypotheses were validated. This study contributed to both the academic field and the corporate sector. The researcher intends to examine the theoretical underpinnings of customer satisfaction and the dimensions of service quality, namely SERVQUAL, to investigate the influence of these dimensions on customer satisfaction to achieve the research objective. This study examined the influence of service quality characteristics on customer satisfaction and determined that five dimensions exerted a favorable effect. A fast food restaurant manager can analyze the causes of negative issues resulting in customer dissatisfaction and enhance service to fulfill customer requirements and expectations.

The management must continually modify these aspects to deliver optimal value to clients and identify critical dimensions to emphasize in order to improve service quality, hence elevating customer satisfaction levels.

Limitations and future research

While the findings of the present study exhibit less concern for common method variance, other issues may constrain the significance of the research. This study aims to investigate the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction within the fast food service sector, with findings that may be relevant to this environment. Additional research in other sectors of chain restaurant services becomes essential to generalize the findings of this study. A further potential issue with the current study is the relative simplicity of the comprehensive model evaluated. To enhance our comprehension of the correlation between service quality and client happiness, other factors must be incorporated into the model by gathering new data from restaurant services and patrons.

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