



**JOURNAL OF TOURISM,
HOSPITALITY AND
ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT
(JTHER)**
www.jthem.com



A STUDY OF FOOD AND SERVICE QUALITY INFLUENCING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN STUDENT CAFETERIA

Syuhirdy Mat Noor^{1*}, Nurul'Aishah Zakaria², Nurul Syafika Azri³, Amierul Hazry Ahmad Yusoff⁴

¹ Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara Cawangan Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

Email: syuhirdy094@uitm.edu.my

² Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara Cawangan Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

Email: nurul706@uitm.edu.my

³ Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara Cawangan Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

Email: 2020819282@uitm.edu.my

⁴ Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara Cawangan Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

Email: 2021868428@uitm.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 11.11.2024

Revised date: 18.11.2024

Accepted date: 11.05.2025

Published date: 01.06.2025

To cite this document:

Mat Noor, S., Zakaria, N. A., Azri, N. S., & Yusoff, A. H. A. (2025). A Study Of Food And Service Quality Influencing Customer Satisfaction In Student Cafeteria. *Journal of Tourism Hospitality and Environment Management*, 10 (40), 29-42.

DOI: 10.35631/JTHER.1040003.

This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)



Abstract:

Customer satisfaction in university cafeterias is significantly influenced by factors such as food quality, service efficiency, ambiance, and pricing. Enhancing these elements is vital for providing a positive dining experience that contributes to students' overall university experience. This study explores how service quality and food quality impact student satisfaction, driven by observed inconsistencies in service delivery among campus cafeteria operators that may hinder sustained satisfaction. Using purposive sampling, data were gathered from 400 UiTM students through questionnaires. Findings reveal that food quality scored higher in satisfaction than service quality. The study concludes with recommendations for improving cafeteria services and suggests potential directions for future research.

Keywords:

Food Quality, Service Quality, Cafeteria, Students, Customer Satisfaction

Introduction

The food service sector within the hospitality industry has experienced substantial growth, particularly in institutional food services, which cater to large groups in settings such as schools, hospitals, prisons, childcare centers, elder care facilities, and corporate environments. This sector plays a vital role in providing consistent, large-scale meal services where demand is continuous. Each year, the number of food service workers in these institutions increases to meet expanding needs. In universities, recognizing the growth of the college student market is essential for effective food service management. Research by Kim, Moreo, and Yeoh (2004) highlights that the rising enrollment in educational institutions is driving the demand for on-campus dining options.

Institutional food service is a crucial part of the industry, focused on meeting the dietary needs of large groups while complying with strict health, safety, and dietary guidelines. Studies underscore the significance of institutional food services in enhancing quality of life within these settings. For instance, Gregoire (2013) found that food service in healthcare institutions positively affects patient satisfaction and recovery. Additionally, Wansink and Hanks (2013) demonstrated that strategic menu design and meal presentation in institutional settings can effectively encourage healthier food choices.

Data from the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education reveals that in 2002, private institutions enrolled 197,736 students, while state universities had 937,213 students. This increase in enrollment prompted universities to expand their facilities, including building additional dining halls to accommodate the growing demand for on-campus housing. A report from Research and Markets indicates that Malaysia's food service industry experienced a 4.3% growth in sales, rising from MYR 1,769.0 million in 2006 to MYR 1,953.1 million in 2011. Furthermore, Marketing Charts reports that college students have an estimated spending power of \$90 billion. This growing purchasing power, coupled with the strong expansion of Malaysia's food service market, is expected to boost revenue in university food services. To meet the evolving needs and preferences of students, food service providers must stay responsive to these factors. Studies by Ng (2005), Oh (2000), and Yuksel & Yuksel (2002) emphasize the critical role of customer satisfaction in the food service industry, which is essential for retaining loyal customers and attracting new ones.

In student cafeterias, both service quality and product quality play a crucial role in determining customer satisfaction. Enhancing either of these factors can significantly improve students' overall experience, fostering greater satisfaction, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth. Therefore, cafeteria management should prioritize training staff to deliver excellent service while ensuring that the food offerings align with students' expectations and needs. This study underscores the importance of addressing both service and product quality to effectively boost customer satisfaction in a student cafeteria environment.

Literature Review

The relationship between service quality, food quality, and customer satisfaction in cafeterias has been a subject of considerable interest in hospitality and food service research. In the context of university cafeterias, where large numbers of students rely on daily meal services, understanding this relationship becomes critical to ensuring a positive dining experience. Service quality encompasses various factors such as staff behavior, responsiveness, and efficiency, while food quality involves aspects like taste, presentation, nutritional value, and

variety. Both elements are intertwined and collectively influence how customers perceive their overall experience.

Service Quality

Service quality has become a crucial factor for businesses seeking to maintain a competitive advantage and improve customer satisfaction. It is defined as the customer's overall perception of how effectively a service meets their needs and expectations. This perception often dictates customer satisfaction levels, loyalty, and the likelihood of repeat business. High service quality is typically associated with attributes such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, all of which are key to delivering positive customer experiences (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). Recently, the emphasis on service quality has grown, driven by heightened competition and evolving customer expectations. Service quality models like SERVQUAL remain widely utilized to assess service performance and identify gaps between customer expectations and their perceptions. Businesses are encouraged to adopt a customer-centric approach to enhance service processes and ensure consistent quality at every customer touchpoint.

For example, Choudhury and Harrigan (2019) noted in their study that service quality plays a significant role in customer satisfaction, particularly in the digital era, where businesses must adapt to changing customer demands across both online and offline platforms. Similarly, Dagger et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of responsiveness and personalized service in achieving customer satisfaction in the healthcare sector. More recently, Prentice and Loureiro (2021) highlighted the challenges businesses face in maintaining service quality in the post-pandemic era, noting shifts in customer behavior and expectations. Their study suggested that service providers need to prioritize hygiene, safety, and digital interactions to meet customer satisfaction in a rapidly changing market environment.

Reliability

Reliability, a core dimension of service quality, refers to a service provider's ability to consistently deliver the promised service accurately and dependably. It is a key factor in influencing customer satisfaction, as it ensures that customers' expectations are consistently met over time. In the food service industry, reliability is just as critical, as it reflects the ability to consistently provide accurate orders, timely service, and maintain food quality. Namkung and Jang (2008) studied the restaurant industry and found that reliability in both food quality and service consistency significantly impacts customer satisfaction. They highlighted that customers are more satisfied when restaurants reliably meet their expectations, such as delivering the correct order on time. Additionally, Ryu, Lee, and Kim (2012) explored customer satisfaction in quick-service restaurants and found that reliability, which includes delivering orders accurately and promptly, is a major factor in customer satisfaction. Customers highly value consistent and accurate service in quick-service environments.

In the broader hospitality industry, reliability encompasses consistent service delivery, such as on-time check-ins, accurate reservations, and dependable food and beverage services. Recent research underscores the importance of reliability in enhancing customer satisfaction and fostering loyalty. For example, Zhang et al. (2018) found that reliable hotel services play a significant role in guest satisfaction, particularly in luxury settings. Similarly, Mensah and Mensah (2018) identified reliability as a key determinant of customer satisfaction in hotels in Ghana. More recently, Demir et al. (2021) demonstrated that hotel guests place high

importance on reliable services, including prompt issue resolution and consistent service delivery.

Responsiveness

In a food court setting, Garg and Kumar (2017) highlight the significance of responsiveness, given the typically limited time customers have to dine. Delays in taking orders or providing accurate menu information can lead to frustration, prompting customers to seek other dining alternatives. Efficient communication among staff members can enhance responsiveness by minimizing delays and errors. Furthermore, having an effective system for addressing complaints and resolving issues quickly is crucial for maintaining customer satisfaction. As emphasized by Mensah and Mensah (2018), responsiveness is a key element of service quality in food courts, with a direct impact on overall customer experience and satisfaction.

Responsiveness is a critical service quality factor that greatly influences customer satisfaction. When staff members promptly and effectively address customer needs and requests, it creates a sense of being valued, resulting in a more positive experience and increased satisfaction with the food court. In contrast, slow or inadequate responses can lead to frustration and dissatisfaction. Therefore, responsiveness is essential for improving and sustaining customer satisfaction in food courts (Lei, 2013). When service meets or exceeds customer expectations, satisfaction with the dining experience is likely to increase (Canny, 2014).

Kwortnik and Thompson (2009) introduced the Service Experience Management (SEM) framework, which combines service marketing and operations to improve service quality and customer satisfaction. Their research underscores the importance of responsiveness in the service experience, arguing that managing and enhancing responsiveness, such as providing timely and accurate responses to customer needs, can significantly boost satisfaction and loyalty. Pérez and Rodríguez del Bosque (2015) studied the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction in the hotel and restaurant industries. They found that responsiveness is a key factor in achieving customer satisfaction, with prompt and effective responses to customer inquiries and complaints being essential for a positive experience. Similarly, Chechi and Valle (2019) explored how different dimensions of service quality, including responsiveness, influence customer satisfaction in hospitality. Their research showed that responsiveness—defined by timely and efficient service—is a major driver of satisfaction, highlighting the importance of training staff to be responsive and efficient in meeting and exceeding customer expectations.

H1: There is a relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.

Food Quality

Food quality is a vital component of the food service industry, playing a key role in influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty. The perception of food quality includes various factors, such as taste, presentation, and freshness, all of which contribute to the overall dining experience. In a highly competitive market with diverse customer preferences and high expectations, consistently delivering high-quality food can set a restaurant apart from its competitors and help build strong, positive relationships with customers.

Research has consistently shown that food quality is a critical determinant of customer satisfaction. For example, studies by Jin, Line, and Wang (2012) and Namkung and Jang (2007) emphasize the importance of food quality attributes in creating positive dining experiences. Their findings indicate that sensory factors, such as taste, appearance, and freshness, are essential to customer satisfaction and can greatly influence dining choices. Additionally, Kamal, Hussain, and Tariq (2016) have highlighted the interaction between food quality and other factors like pricing, suggesting that a combination of high-quality food and fair pricing can boost customer loyalty and repurchase intentions. This highlights the need for food service providers to maintain high food quality standards while also offering fair pricing strategies.

Shahzadi, Anwar, and Khan (2018) emphasize the importance of food quality alongside service quality and ambiance as key drivers of customer satisfaction and the intention to revisit full-service restaurants. Their research underscores that these elements together are crucial for enhancing the overall dining experience and encouraging repeat business. Similarly, Luo, Li, and Zhang (2019) found that food quality plays a significant role in shaping customer satisfaction, with key attributes such as taste, freshness, and price identified as important factors influencing customer perceptions and satisfaction.

Price

Research has consistently highlighted the critical role of price fairness in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty within the hospitality industry. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) developed a scale to measure consumer-perceived value, identifying pricing fairness as a key determinant of overall satisfaction. Their study demonstrated that perceived value, including fair pricing, has a significant influence on customer satisfaction. Building on this concept, Kwornik and Thompson (2009) examined how effective service experience management, including fair pricing, integrates with service marketing and operations to enhance customer satisfaction. Their research emphasized that managing service experiences, which involves fair pricing, is vital for achieving high levels of customer satisfaction.

Further exploration of this topic was conducted by Hsu and Huang (2016), who found that perceived price fairness has a substantial impact on both customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hotel industry. Their study showed that guests who view hotel pricing as fair are more likely to report higher satisfaction and demonstrate greater loyalty. Supporting these findings, Kim and Lee (2013) highlighted the importance of fair pricing in improving customer satisfaction and fostering loyalty in the hotel sector. Their research underscores the significant role of pricing strategies in shaping positive customer experiences and encouraging repeat business. Together, these studies illustrate that fair pricing is a fundamental factor in enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty, emphasizing the need for hospitality providers to implement pricing strategies that align with customer expectations.

Cleanliness

Cleanliness is a crucial factor that significantly impacts customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Baker and Crompton (2000) examined the relationship between quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, emphasizing that cleanliness is an essential element of service quality that affects both customer satisfaction and future behavioral intentions. Expanding on this, Choi and Chu (2001) identified cleanliness as a key determinant of hotel guest satisfaction and repeat patronage in their study of the Hong Kong hotel industry. Their research revealed

that cleanliness, alongside other factors, plays an important role in shaping overall guest satisfaction and the likelihood of return visits.

H2: There is a relationship between food quality and customer satisfaction.

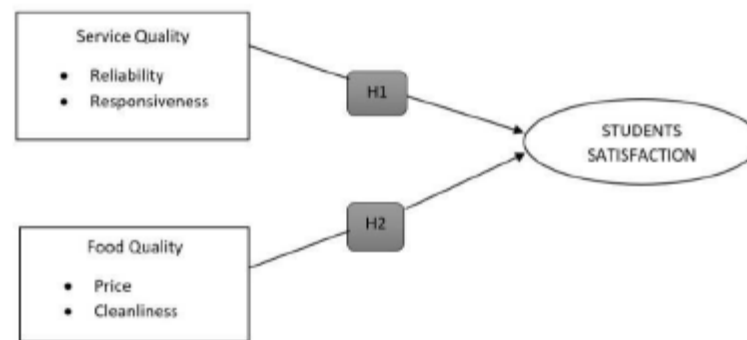


Figure 1: Research Framework

Problem Statement

The quality of both service and food plays a crucial role in ensuring student satisfaction at university cafeterias. However, recent observations indicate that many students experience inconsistencies in these areas, leading to dissatisfaction and a reduction in repeat visits. Key aspects of service quality, such as staff responsiveness, friendliness, and reliability, are frequently cited as essential components in shaping customer satisfaction within cafeteria settings. Similarly, food quality elements, including pricing, cleanliness, and nutritional value, are vital factors that influence the overall dining experience. When either service or food quality falls short, students' expectations are not met, which negatively affects their overall campus experience. Consequently, addressing deficiencies in both service and food quality is imperative to improving student satisfaction and ensuring that the cafeteria remains a preferred dining option. This study aims to examine the relationship between service quality, food quality, and customer satisfaction within the university cafeteria environment.

Methodology

The methodology of this study utilized a quantitative research design to examine customer satisfaction in relation to service and food quality at a university cafeteria. A survey approach was adopted to collect numerical data from participants, allowing for a systematic evaluation of the factors influencing satisfaction. By employing this method, the study aimed to gather measurable insights on how different aspects of service quality and food quality contribute to students' overall dining experiences. The use of a structured questionnaire ensured consistency in data collection, providing a reliable foundation for analyzing the relationship between these variables and student satisfaction.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study focused on students at UiTM Penang, who served as the target population. The study aimed to explore the factors of service quality and food quality that influence customer satisfaction at the university cafeteria. To gather data from this specific group, a convenience sampling method was employed, allowing for the selection of

participants who were readily available and willing to participate in the survey. This approach ensured the efficient collection of data from a representative sample of students, providing valuable insights into their dining experiences at the cafeteria.

Research Design

The research design for this study adopts a quantitative approach to assess student satisfaction at UiTM Penang's cafeteria. Data will be collected through a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms on social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, and Facebook. The survey will focus on key aspects of service quality, such as reliability and responsiveness, as well as elements of food quality, including price and cleanliness. A convenience sampling method will be utilized to select participants based on accessibility, ensuring an efficient data collection process. The study follows a descriptive and hypothesis-testing approach, enabling the researcher to gather detailed information and test the relationships between service quality, food quality, and customer satisfaction. This design allows for a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing student satisfaction in the cafeteria setting, contributing to the overall understanding of the issue.

Sampling and Population

The sampling method for this study is designed to target the population of individuals who visit the cafeterias at UiTM Permatang Pauh, with a specific focus on students who regularly dine at these cafeterias. A purposive sampling technique will be employed to select respondents who meet the criteria of frequent cafeteria visitors. The study will be conducted across the university's three cafeterias, which have been chosen as the locations for data collection. A sample size of 400 participants has been determined to be suitable for this study, allowing for a robust analysis of student satisfaction with the cafeteria's service and food quality. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection tool, a pilot test will be conducted. According to Diener et al. (2009), a pilot test typically involves a sample of 10-30 participants to assess the consistency and clarity of the questionnaire. For this study, a pilot test was carried out with 30 students from UiTM Penang. The pilot phase will allow for the evaluation of the survey's effectiveness, as well as the procedures for data entry and processing before the full-scale survey is distributed.

Research Instrument.

The research instrument for this study is an online survey questionnaire developed using Google Forms, with bilingual questions in both English and Malay to ensure accessibility and comprehension for a wider range of respondents. By offering the questionnaire in two languages, participants are able to respond in their preferred language, promoting more accurate and effective answers. The questionnaire is divided into four sections: Section A gathers demographic information, such as age, gender, and frequency of cafeteria visits; Section B includes eight questions assessing service quality, which is the independent variable of the study; Section C features seven questions focusing on food quality, another independent variable; and Section D contains four questions measuring customer satisfaction, the dependent variable. To evaluate respondents' opinions, a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), is employed. This scale provides a clear and consistent method for gauging responses, enabling the researcher to analyze the relationship between service quality, food quality, and customer satisfaction.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this research will primarily focus on descriptive statistics to evaluate customer satisfaction at the university cafeteria, particularly in relation to service quality and food quality. Descriptive analyses will be conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics, where mean values, frequencies, and standard deviations will be calculated to summarize the data. Graphical representations, including bar charts and statistical summaries, will also be created to visually present the findings. Additionally, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient will be used to examine the relationships between the variables in more depth, providing insights into the strength and direction of the associations between service quality, food quality, and customer satisfaction. This combination of descriptive and correlation analyses will help in understanding the key factors that influence student satisfaction at the cafeteria.

Findings

Reliability Test

Reliability testing is an essential statistical approach used to evaluate the consistency and stability of a measurement tool or its subscales. This process assesses how reliably the instrument, or its items measure the same construct across multiple administrations. Cronbach's Alpha is among the most frequently used reliability indicators, assessing the internal consistency of a set of items or a scale. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the instrument, helping to determine whether the test items are correlated and reflect the same underlying construct. According to Sekaran (2003), a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.6 is generally considered acceptable. It is also important to note that the number of items on a scale can impact Cronbach's Alpha, as shorter scales often yield lower values. Here, the reliability analysis produced Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each variable, all of which were above 0.6, suggesting a satisfactory level of reliability for the instrument.

Table 1: Reliability Statistic

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Service Quality	.955	8
Food Quality	.988	7
Customer Satisfaction	.962	4

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis is a fundamental statistical method used to summarize and interpret data in a way that reveals patterns, trends, and essential characteristics. It involves organizing and analyzing data to provide insights into a dataset's central tendencies, variations, and distributions, typically using metrics like mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and range. Descriptive analysis serves as a crucial first step in research because it allows researchers to understand the basic features of the data without making predictions or inferences. In research, descriptive statistics are often presented through tables, graphs, and charts, making complex data easier to interpret and communicate. By summarizing large amounts of data into digestible forms, descriptive analysis supports researchers in identifying potential areas for further investigation and in setting a foundation for more complex statistical analyses.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

This section presents the demographic profile of the respondents, including information on their gender, age, level of study, and frequency of customer satisfaction with the UiTM Penang cafeteria.

Table 2: Respondents Profile

	n.	%
Respondent	400	
Gender		
Male	162	40.5%
Female	238	59.5%
Age		
18-20 years old	82	20.5%
21-24 years old	283	70.8%
25-27 years old	34	8.5%
28 year above	1	.3%
Educational Level		
Pra-Diploma	4	1%
Diploma	136	34%
Bachelor Degree	259	64.8%
Master	1	.3%

Among the 400 respondents, 238 (59.5%) were female, and 162 (40.5%) were male. The largest age group was 21-24 years, with 283 respondents (70.8%), followed by the 18-20 age group, which included 82 respondents (20.5%). A smaller proportion, 34 respondents (8.5%), were in the 25-27 age range, while only one respondent (0.3%) was aged 28 or older. Regarding educational level, most respondents, 259 individuals (64.8%), were bachelor's degree students. Those pursuing a diploma made up 136 respondents (34%), and pre-diploma and master's level students were represented by 4 (1%) and 1 (0.3%) respondent, respectively.

*Descriptive Statistic For Each Variable***Table 3: Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Price**

	N	Minimu m	Maximu m	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Statisti c	Statistic	Statistic	Statisti c	Statistic
Service Quality	400	6	20	14.3	1.465
Food Quality	400	3	15	12.17	1.189
Customer Satisfaction	400	3	15	12.10	1.140
Valid N(listwise)	400				

The service quality data reveals a minimum score of 6 and a maximum score of 20, with a resulting range of 14. The mean score of 14.3 suggests that observations are generally centered around this value. A low standard deviation of 1.465 indicates that data points are closely grouped near the mean, reflecting a high level of consistency. For product quality, scores range from 3 to 15, yielding a range of 12. The mean of 12.17 suggests that, on average, observations center around this point. The standard deviation of 1.189 shows low variability, with data points clustered near the mean, indicating strong consistency. Customer satisfaction scores range from 3 to 15, with an average score of 12.10 and a low standard deviation of 1.140. These figures reflect a narrow range, with scores tightly clustered around the mean, suggesting limited variability and a consistent distribution.

*Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis***Table 4: Pearson Correlation Matrix between Variables**

		Service Quality	Product Quality	Customer Satisfaction
Service Quality (IV)	Pearson Correlation	1	.768**	.293**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	400	400	400
Product Quality (IV)	Pearson Correlation	.768**	1	.429**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	400	400	400
Customer Satisfaction (DV)	Pearson Correlation	.293**	.429**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	400	400	400

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

Table 4 shows a moderate positive correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction ($r = .293$), indicating a significant positive relationship and supporting the hypothesis that service quality is significantly associated with customer satisfaction. This finding aligns with Rauch, Collins, Nale, and Barr (2015), who also reported a moderate positive link between service quality and customer satisfaction, reinforcing the results of this study. However, Liat, Mansori, and Huei (2014) suggested a stronger relationship, positing that

higher perceived service quality leads to notably greater customer satisfaction in the hotel industry.

The analysis also revealed a moderate positive correlation between food quality and customer satisfaction ($r = .429$), suggesting that higher food quality is associated with greater customer satisfaction, thus supporting the hypothesis that food quality has a significant positive influence on customer satisfaction. This result is consistent with studies by Ryu, Lee, and Kim (2012), Heung and Gu (2012), and Cottam and Goodwin (2020), which similarly found a moderate positive relationship between food quality and customer satisfaction. In contrast, research by Baker and Andrews (2019) and Kang and Lee (2021) reported a stronger positive relationship, indicating a more substantial impact of food quality on customer satisfaction in their study contexts.

Discussion.

This study explores the impact of service quality and food quality on customer satisfaction within the UiTM Penang cafeteria. The primary aim was to examine the relationships between these factors and assess how each contributes to overall customer satisfaction. To guide the analysis, two alternative hypotheses were proposed for each variable. The results demonstrate that both service quality and food quality have significant positive effects on customer satisfaction, underscoring their roles in encouraging repeat visits and sustained patronage of the cafeteria.

The findings for Hypothesis 1, which explores the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, reveal a positive impact on UiTM Penang students. This variable highlights the importance of the reliability and responsiveness of cafeteria staff. When the cafeteria consistently provides accurate orders, upholds food quality, and fulfills service commitments, students are more likely to return and develop loyalty toward the establishment. This loyalty reduces customer churn and encourages repeat visits, contributing to stable revenue. Additionally, prompt service, effective issue resolution, and attentive responses to inquiries significantly enhance customer satisfaction. To strengthen this aspect, cafeteria management should prioritize staff training focused on responsiveness and customer care. Strategic initiatives could include reducing wait times, addressing inquiries attentively, and proactively resolving issues to ensure a positive dining experience.

Regarding Hypothesis 2, the analysis shows a moderate positive relationship between food quality and customer satisfaction. This highlights the significance of both pricing and cleanliness in the cafeteria experience. When customers perceive prices as fair and the food cleanliness is maintained at a high standard, they feel they are receiving good value for their money. As a result, customers are more likely to be satisfied with their meals, and this satisfaction increases the perceived value of their dining experience. Such positive perceptions not only encourage repeat visits but also foster greater customer loyalty. For the cafeteria, it is crucial to maintain cleanliness and offer competitive pricing to stay ahead in a market with diverse dining options. Management should focus on ensuring rigorous hygiene practices in food handling, storage, and preparation, as lapses in cleanliness can lead to foodborne illnesses and damage the reputation of the business. Additionally, any price adjustments should be carefully considered and accompanied by clear improvements in food quality, portion sizes, or other service enhancements to maintain customer satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into customer satisfaction in university cafeterias, focusing on key factors like service quality and food quality. The findings emphasize that students prioritize affordable prices, food cleanliness, and safe consumption. Ensuring reasonable pricing, maintaining high standards of food hygiene, and providing consistent and timely service are essential strategies for enhancing student satisfaction. These recommendations offer practical guidance for cafeteria owners to improve their services and increase customer loyalty.

However, the study's limitation lies in its focus on the opinions of students from UiTM Penang, which may not fully capture the perspectives of other customer groups such as university staff or external visitors. The reliance on self-reported data is another limitation, as it may not always reflect actual experiences. Future research could benefit from including a more diverse sample from various universities and customer demographics. Additionally, using observational methods or analyzing sales data could provide more objective insights into service quality. Exploring pricing strategies and marketing efforts could also deepen our understanding of factors that contribute to cafeteria success.

In conclusion, university cafeterias play a vital role in meeting the food-related needs and expectations of their customers. Supporting these establishments is crucial for ensuring their continued success in delivering comfort and satisfaction to both students and university staff.

Acknowledgement

This research would not have been possible without the assistance of several individuals and organizations. We are particularly grateful to the students of UiTM Penang for their participation and valuable input. We also wish to thank the cafeteria staff and management for their cooperation and for providing access to essential data. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Universiti Teknologi Mara Pulau Pinang for their invaluable support and resources that made this research possible. Lastly, we would like to express our gratitude to our families for their unwavering patience and support throughout this journey.

References

- Baker, D. A., & Crompton, J. L. (2000). Quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(3), 785-804.
- Baker, M., & Andrews, L. (2019). Food quality and its impact on customer satisfaction: A review of literature and implications for future research. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 43(2), 230-252.
- Canny, I. U. (2014). Measuring the mediating role of dining experience attributes on customer satisfaction and its impact on behavioral intentions of casual dining restaurants in Jakarta. *International Journal of Innovation, Management and Technology*, 5(1), 25-29.
- Chechi, G., & Valle, J. (2019). Service quality dimensions and their impact on customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Insights*, 2(4), 312-326.
- Choi, T. Y., & Chu, R. (2001). Determinants of hotel guests' satisfaction and repeat patronage in the Hong Kong hotel industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 20(3), 277-297.

- Choudhury, M. M., & Harrigan, P. (2019). The impact of digital service quality on customer satisfaction in online and offline settings. *Journal of Service Marketing*, 33(5), 472-484.
- Cottam, S., & Goodwin, R. (2020). Food quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty: An empirical study in the restaurant sector. *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, 23(3), 238-252.
- Demir, M., Nyadzayo, M. W., & Casidy, R. (2021). Service quality in luxury hotels: A framework and research agenda. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 60, 102465.
- Diener, E., Inglehart, R., & Tay, L. (2009). Theory and validity of life satisfaction scales. *Social Indicators Research*, 112(3), 497-527.
- Dagger, T. S., Danaher, P. J., & Gibbs, B. J. (2020). How service responsiveness and personalization drive satisfaction in healthcare settings. *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, 25(3), 155-163.
- Garg, A., & Kumar, J. (2017). Impact of responsiveness on customer satisfaction in food courts: A study of service quality in Indian food courts. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 37, 1-12.
- Gregoire, M. B. (2013). *Foodservice organizations: A managerial and systems approach* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Heung, V. C. S., & Gu, W. (2012). The impact of food quality on customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31(1), 157-166.
- Hsu, C. H., & Huang, S. S. (2016). The influence of perceived price fairness on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hotel industry. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 25(4), 426-450.
- Jin, N. P., Line, N. D., & Wang, Y. (2012). An empirical investigation of the relationship between restaurant employees' customer orientation, organizational culture, and customer satisfaction. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31(4), 1276-1282.
- Kamal, S., Hussain, D., & Tariq, M. (2016). The impact of food quality, price fairness, and customer satisfaction on customer loyalty in the foodservice industry. *Journal of Service Research*, 9(2), 72-87.
- Kang, J., & Lee, H. (2021). Examining the relationship between food quality, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in the dining industry. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 45(1), 25-45.
- Kim, H., & Kim, W. G. (2016). The impact of cleanliness and service quality on customer satisfaction in the hotel industry. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 29, 40-50.
- Kim, W. G., & Lee, Y. K. (2013). Pricing strategies and their effects on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hotel sector. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 34, 49-58.
- Kim, W. G., Moreo, P., & Yeoh, J. P. S. (2004). Customers' satisfaction and buying intention in college and university foodservice programs. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 28(1), 35-53.
- Kwortnik, R. J., & Thompson, G. M. (2009). Unifying service marketing and service operations with the Service Experience Management (SEM) framework. *Journal of Service Research*, 11(4), 389-406.

- Liat, C. B., Mansori, S., & Huei, C. C. (2014). The effect of perceived service quality on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hotel industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 36, 261-270.
- Luo, X., Li, H., & Zhang, J. (2019). Examining the relationship between food quality, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in restaurants. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Management*, 38, 63-70.
- Mensah, I., & Mensah, R. D. (2018). Service quality and customer satisfaction in Ghanaian hotels: The mediating role of brand reputation. *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 6(2), 81-92.
- Namkung, Y., & Jang, S. (2007). Does food quality really matter in restaurants? Its impact on customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 31(3), 387-409.
- Namkung, Y., & Jang, S. (2008). Are highly satisfied restaurant customers really different? A quality perception perspective. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 20(2), 142-155.
- Oh, H. (2000). Diner's perceptions of quality, value, and satisfaction. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 41(3), 58-66.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12-40.
- Pérez, R. C., & Rodríguez del Bosque, I. (2015). The impact of service quality and customer satisfaction in hotel and restaurant industries: A comparative analysis. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 24(3), 239-267.
- Prentice, C., & Loureiro, S. M. C. (2021). Service quality in the post-pandemic era: Adapting to new customer expectations. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 94, 102811.
- Rauch, M., Collins, R., Nale, J., & Barr, R. (2015). Service quality and customer satisfaction in the service industry. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 29(4), 308-319.
- Ryu, K., Lee, H. R., & Kim, W. G. (2012). The influence of the quality of physical environment, food, and service on restaurant image, customer perceived value, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 24(2), 200-223.
- Sekaran, U. (2003). *Research methods for business: A skill-building approach* (4th ed.). Wiley.
- Shahzadi, G., Anwar, A., & Khan, S. (2018). The impact of food quality, service quality, and atmosphere on customer satisfaction in full-service restaurants. *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, 21(5), 476-489.
- Sweeney, J. C., & Soutar, G. N. (2001). Consumer perceived value: The development of a multiple item scale. *Journal of Retailing*, 77(2), 203-220.
- Wansink, B., & Hanks, A. S. (2013). Slim by design: Serving healthy foods first in buffet lines improves overall meal selection. *PloS ONE*, 8(10), e77055.
- Zhang, Z., Ye, Y., Law, R., & Li, Y. (2018). The impact of service quality on guest satisfaction in luxury hotels in China. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 27(2), 176-195.