



Managing Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction on Food Service Establishments in Cyberjaya, Selangor

Suresh Nagalingam¹, and Benjamin Chan Yin Fah*¹

¹ Tun Razak Graduate School, Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (UNIRAZAK), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the factors influencing customer satisfaction among food service establishments in Cyberjaya, Selangor, focusing on price, atmosphere, service quality, and product quality. A quantitative, descriptive research design was adopted, and data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via convenience sampling. A total of 155 valid responses were obtained, exceeding the minimum required sample of 68 determined using the Raosoft calculator for a population of 144,000 at a 90% confidence level and 10% margin of error. Reliability analysis confirmed strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.830 to 0.922 across all constructs. Pearson correlation analysis revealed that all four independent variables were significantly and positively associated with customer satisfaction, with product quality showing the strongest relationship ($r = 0.537$), followed by atmosphere ($r = 0.527$), service quality ($r = 0.517$), and price ($r = 0.377$), all significant at $p < 0.01$. Multiple linear regression showed the model was significant ($F = 18.546$, $p < 0.000$) and explained 31% of the variance in customer satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.331$). However, only product quality emerged as a statistically significant individual predictor ($\beta = 0.264$, $p = 0.040$), while price, atmosphere, and service quality did not reach significance in the regression model. All four hypotheses were supported at the correlation level. These findings suggest that food service operators in Cyberjaya should prioritize consistent product quality, while continuing to attend to pricing, ambience, and service standards as complementary drivers of customer satisfaction.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The food service industry is one of the largest and fastest-growing sectors contributing to global economic development (Abuthahir & Krishnapillai, 2018). Food service establishments provide food and beverages away from home for immediate consumption, and range in concept from full-service restaurants and casual dining outlets to quick service restaurants (QSR) and cafés. Eating out has evolved from an occasional luxury into a routine part of daily life, intensifying competition among operators to meet increasingly diverse customer expectations. Customer satisfaction is widely regarded as the primary driver of success for food service establishments and a prerequisite for developing customer loyalty.

Malaysia's multi-ethnic population has produced a rich and varied food culture, and national statistics show that average household spending on eating out rose from RM430 per month in 2016 to RM508 in 2019, with households in the

Klang Valley spending as much as RM700 per month (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019). Cyberjaya, located in the district of Sepang, Selangor, is a rapidly developing township with a population of approximately 144,000 people from diverse national, ethnic, and occupational backgrounds, making it a relevant setting to examine the determinants of customer satisfaction in food service establishments.

One of the most powerful tools for a successful business is customer satisfaction (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017), and it is well established that satisfaction underpins customer loyalty and repeat patronage (Cheng et al., 2018). Yet the industry is significantly affected by customers' constantly shifting preferences, which forces food service operators to develop strategic plans to remain competitive. Price is one of the most important considerations in customers' decisions to purchase food and beverages, and when the value delivered and the price paid fall out of alignment, dissatisfaction results (Che Ishak et al., 2021). The venue's atmosphere also affects long-

*Corresponding author.

E-mail address: Benjamin Chan Yin Fah <benjamin_chan@unirazak.edu.my>
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term profitability, as a visually appealing and well-maintained physical environment reinforces customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry (Cristo et al., 2017). Menu offerings and food quality remain central to the dining experience, with customers increasingly favoring bold flavors, healthy options, and visually appealing presentation (Che Ishak et al., 2021; Tahir et al., 2016). Because customer preferences continue to evolve, operators must stay attuned to these shifting demands in order to sustain loyalty and profitability.

Despite the size and importance of the industry, there remain limited published studies specifically examining customer satisfaction determinants among food service establishments in Cyberjaya. Price, atmosphere, service quality, and product quality have each been identified in prior research as influential factors, yet their combined and relative influence on satisfaction has not been established for this population. This study therefore aims to analyze the influence of price, atmosphere, service quality, and product quality on customer satisfaction in food service establishments in Cyberjaya, and to identify which of these factors contributes most significantly to customer satisfaction. The specific objectives are to identify the influence of (1) price, (2) atmosphere, (3) service quality, and (4) product quality on customer satisfaction. Correspondingly, four hypotheses were developed: price fairness (H1), atmosphere (H2), service quality (H3), and product quality (H4) each have a significant influence on customer satisfaction at food service establishments in Cyberjaya. The findings are intended to fill the gap in the literature specific to Cyberjaya and to help present and future food service operators incorporate customer-driven insights into their operational and marketing strategies to sustain business continuity and competitive advantage.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is underpinned by Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT), which explains post-purchase satisfaction through the interplay of expectations, perceived performance, and belief disconfirmation (Lee & Kim, 2020). Under ECT, pre-purchase expectations form the baseline against which actual performance is evaluated; when perceived performance meets or exceeds expectations, positive disconfirmation occurs and satisfaction results. The Kano model (Park et al., 2021) complements this perspective by classifying product and service attributes into basic (must-be), performance (one-dimensional), and attractive (delighter) categories, recognizing that not all attributes contribute equally or linearly to satisfaction. Together, these theories provide the conceptual foundation for examining how price, atmosphere, service quality, and product quality shape customer satisfaction in food service settings.

Customer satisfaction has been described as the psychological end-state resulting from a comparison between expected and perceived performance, and is considered a critical strategic issue because satisfied customers directly influence business profitability and competitive advantage (Hanaysha, 2016; Mohd Shariff et al., 2016). Prior studies consistently link satisfaction to loyalty, repurchase intention, and positive word-of-mouth (Wahab et al., 2018; Tahir et al., 2016), underscoring its centrality to sustained business performance in the food service sector.

Price fairness reflects customers' judgment of whether the price charged is reasonable relative to the value and quality received (Mohd Shariff et al., 2016). Fluctuating input costs often force operators to raise menu prices, and when such increases are not matched by perceptible improvements in food quality, customer dissatisfaction and reduced patronage can result (Che Ishak et al., 2021). Several studies report a significant positive relationship between price fairness and customer satisfaction (Cha & Seo, 2019b; Garg & Kumar, 2017).

Atmosphere encompasses the tangible and intangible elements of the physical environment, including interior design, cleanliness, lighting, spatial layout, and background music, all of which shape customers' emotional responses and revisit intentions (Cristo et al., 2017; Abuthahir & Krishnapillai, 2018). A well-designed, visually appealing, and hygienic environment has been found to reinforce customer satisfaction and encourage longer dwell time and repeat visits (Garg & Kumar, 2017; Hanaysha, 2016).

Service quality refers to the gap between customers' expectations of service and their actual experience, and is regarded as one of the most powerful sources of competitive advantage in the food service industry because services are inherently intangible and dependent on staff performance (Liu et al., 2016; Saad et al., 2020). Employee friendliness, responsiveness, and professionalism have repeatedly been shown to positively influence customer satisfaction (Cristo et al., 2017).

Product quality, largely synonymous with food quality, includes taste, freshness, presentation, aroma, and menu variety, and is often considered the most fundamental determinant of dining satisfaction (Garg & Kumar, 2017; Md Saleh et al., 2021; Tahir et al., 2016). Because perceptions of food quality are inherently subjective, consistency in preparation and presentation is critical for sustaining customer satisfaction over time.

Building on the DINESERV framework, which emphasizes price, interior environment, service quality, and food quality as joint determinants of restaurant satisfaction (Kim & Choi, 2019), this study proposes a conceptual framework in which price, atmosphere, service quality, and product quality serve as independent variables influencing the dependent variable, customer satisfaction, among food service establishments in Cyberjaya.

Taken together, the reviewed literature converges on the view that satisfaction in food service settings is multidimensional: it is shaped simultaneously by rational value judgments about price, sensory and emotional responses to the physical environment, interpersonal encounters with service staff, and direct product experience through taste and presentation. While each dimension has independently been shown to influence satisfaction across a range of restaurant and cafeteria contexts internationally and within Malaysia, relatively few studies have tested all four dimensions together within a single regression model for a specific Malaysian township population, which is the gap this study addresses for Cyberjaya.

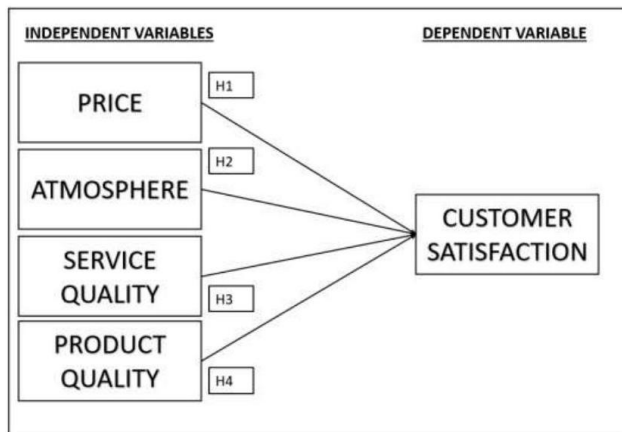


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework of the study

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive research design to test the hypothesized relationships between the four independent variables (price, atmosphere, service quality, and product quality) and the dependent variable (customer satisfaction). Data were collected using a structured, closed-ended online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms and shared via social messaging platforms including Telegram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Facebook Messenger, and Instagram. The questionnaire comprised two sections: Section A captured seven demographic items (age, gender, race, education, income, dining-out frequency, and type of food establishment visited), while Section B measured the study constructs using a five-point Likert scale.

The target population consisted of residents of Cyberjaya, Sepang, estimated at 144,000 people. Convenience sampling, a non-probability technique, was used due to its speed and cost-effectiveness. Using the Raosoft sample size calculator at a 90% confidence level and 10% margin of error, the minimum required sample size was determined to be 68. A total of 155 valid responses were collected, exceeding this requirement.

Part B of the questionnaire operationalized each construct with multiple items rated on the five-point scale: customer satisfaction (5 items), price (5 items), atmosphere (6 items), service quality (6 items), and product quality (6 items). Item wording was self-developed and adapted from prior validated instruments used in comparable food service satisfaction studies.

Data were analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics summarized demographic characteristics and variable distributions. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency reliability of each construct, with a threshold of 0.7 considered acceptable (Olaniyi, 2019a). Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was used to assess the strength and direction of relationships between each independent variable and customer satisfaction, on a scale ranging from -1 (perfect negative relationship) to +1 (perfect positive relationship), while multiple linear regression was used to determine the combined and individual predictive contribution of the four independent variables toward customer satisfaction.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of the 155 respondents, 46.5% were aged between 31 and 40 years, 27.1% between 20 and 30 years, 17.4% between 41 and 50 years, 6.5% above 51 years, and 2.6% below 20 years. Female respondents comprised 54.2% of the sample and males 45.8%. By ethnicity, 46.5% were Malay, 34.2% Indian, 8.4% Chinese, and 11.0% of other ethnicities. In terms of education, 39.0% held a bachelor's degree, 21.9% a master's or PhD, 16.8% an STPM/Diploma, and 12.3% SPM or below. Household income was fairly evenly distributed: 24.5% earned above RM8,000, 23.9% earned RM2,001–RM4,000, 21.9% earned RM6,001–RM8,000, 16.1% earned RM4,001–RM6,000, and 12.5% earned below RM2,000. Regarding dining frequency, 38.1% dined out more than three times a week, 29.7% twice a week, 18.1% once a week, and 14.2% once a month. Restaurants were the most frequently patronized establishment type (70.3%), followed by cafés (18.1%) and quick service restaurants (11.6%).

Table 1. Correlation and Regression Results (Determinants of Customer Satisfaction)

Predictor	r	β	t	p	Reg. Result
Price	.377**	-.002	-0.018	.985	n.s.
Atmosphere	.527**	.218	1.905	.069	n.s.
Service Quality	.517**	.146	1.250	.213	n.s.
Product Quality	.537**	.264	2.076	.040	Significant

Note. ** $p < .01$ (correlation, all supported). Regression model: $R = .575$, $R^2 = .331$, Adjusted $R^2 = .313$, $F(4, 150) = 18.546$, $p < .000$; only product quality was a significant individual predictor.

Reliability analysis showed that all constructs exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.7 (Olaniyi, 2019b), confirming strong internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha values were 0.872 for customer satisfaction (5 items), 0.830 for price (5 items), 0.894 for atmosphere (6 items), 0.903 for service quality (6 items), and 0.922 for product quality (6 items).

Descriptive analysis indicated generally favorable perceptions across all constructs. For customer satisfaction, the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all five statements, with the mean composite score at 20.43 (median = 20.00, skewness = -0.948, kurtosis = 2.156). For price, most respondents agreed that portioning was reasonable (51.6%) and that ingredients justified the price (43.2%), though a substantial share were neutral on whether the price reflected overall value for money (39.4%) or the service given (40.0%); the mean score was 18.03 (median = 18.00). For atmosphere, respondents most strongly agreed that the ambience was bright and peaceful (49.7%) and that the dining area was clean with a pleasant smell (44.5%); the mean score was 22.50 (median = 23.00). For service quality, respondents agreed most strongly that employees were patient when taking orders (50.3%) and that bills were settled quickly and accurately (46.5%); the mean score was 22.58 (median = 23.00). For product quality, respondents agreed most that food presentation was visually attractive (49.0%) and that the menu offered variety (49.0%); the mean score was 22.48 (median = 23.00).

Pearson correlation analysis showed that all four independent variables were significantly and positively correlated with customer satisfaction at the 0.01 level. Product quality had the strongest relationship with customer satisfaction ($r = 0.537$), followed by atmosphere ($r = 0.527$), service quality ($r = 0.517$), and price ($r = 0.377$). Independent variables were also strongly interrelated, with atmosphere and service quality correlating at 0.773, and product quality correlating with atmosphere (0.748) and service quality (0.759), suggesting some overlap among the constructs.

Hypothesis testing based on these correlations supported all four hypotheses: H1 (price; $r = 0.337$, $p < 0.01$), H2 (atmosphere; $r = 0.527$, $p < 0.01$), H3 (service quality; $r = 0.517$, $p < 0.01$), and H4 (product quality; $r = 0.537$, $p < 0.01$) were all accepted, confirming that each factor has a significant positive influence on customer satisfaction.

Multiple linear regression was conducted to assess the combined predictive power of the four independent variables. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(4, 150) = 18.546$, $p < 0.000$, with $R = 0.575$, $R^2 = 0.331$, and adjusted $R^2 = 0.313$, indicating that the four predictors jointly explained approximately 31% of the variance in customer satisfaction. However, at the level of individual coefficients, only product quality emerged as a statistically significant predictor ($B = 0.202$, $\beta = 0.264$, $t = 2.076$, $p = 0.040$). Atmosphere approached but did not reach significance ($\beta = 0.218$, $t = 1.905$, $p = 0.069$), service quality was non-significant ($\beta = 0.146$, $t = 1.250$, $p = 0.213$), and price showed a negligible, non-significant negative coefficient ($\beta = -0.002$, $t = -0.018$, $p = 0.985$). The resulting regression equation, after accounting for the dominant predictor, was: Customer Satisfaction = $9.667 + 0.202$ (Product Quality).

These results indicate that while all four factors are meaningfully correlated with customer satisfaction individually, product quality is the dominant driver when the variables are considered jointly, consistent with findings that food quality is the most vital determinant of satisfaction in food service settings (Karki & Panthi, 2018; Arlanda & Suroso, 2018). The significant bivariate relationship for price (Cha & Seo, 2019b; Bernarto et al., 2022) and its non-significant, near-zero regression coefficient suggest that price fairness operates largely through its association with other quality dimensions rather than as an independent driver once product quality, atmosphere, and service quality are accounted for. Similarly, atmosphere and service quality, despite significant correlations consistent with prior findings (Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020; Soebandhi et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019; Albari & Kartikasari, 2019), did not retain independent explanatory power in the regression model, likely due to the high intercorrelation among the three quality-related constructs ($r = 0.748$ – 0.773), which points to shared underlying variance rather than a lack of importance.

Mapping these findings onto the four research objectives, the first objective concerning price was supported: the reliable price scale ($\alpha = 0.830$) correlated significantly with customer satisfaction ($r = 0.337$, $p < 0.01$), consistent with Cha and Seo (2019b), who similarly found price to significantly influence customer satisfaction, and with Bernarto et al. (2022), who reported that price fairness positively affects satisfaction. The second objective concerning atmosphere was likewise supported ($\alpha = 0.894$; $r = 0.527$, $p < 0.01$), aligning with Rajput and Gahfoor (2020), who found that an interesting and

comfortable physical environment influences customer satisfaction, and Soebandhi et al. (2020), who reported that store atmosphere has a strong effect on satisfaction. The third objective concerning service quality was supported ($\alpha = 0.903$; $r = 0.517$, $p < 0.01$), consistent with Zhang et al. (2019) and Albari and Kartikasari (2019), both of whom found a positive relationship between service excellence and customer satisfaction. The fourth objective concerning product quality was strongly supported both at the correlational level ($\alpha = 0.922$; $r = 0.537$, $p < 0.01$) and as the sole significant predictor in the regression model, corroborating Karki and Panthi (2018) and Arlanda and Suroso (2018), who similarly identified food and product quality as a leading determinant of satisfaction in restaurant settings.

At the item level, respondents' agreement that food presentation was visually attractive and that the menu offered variety (both 49.0% agreement) aligns with the emphasis in the literature on visual appeal and menu breadth as drivers of perceived product quality (Garg & Kumar, 2017). For service quality, high agreement on staff patience (50.3%) and billing accuracy (46.5%) reflects the interpersonal and transactional dimensions of service encounters that shape overall satisfaction (Liu et al., 2016). For atmosphere, strong agreement that the ambience was bright and peaceful (49.7%) supports prior evidence that sensory and emotional cues in the physical environment meaningfully shape the dining experience (Cristo et al., 2017). By contrast, the comparatively higher proportion of neutral responses on price-related items, particularly whether the price paid reflected overall value for money (39.4% neutral) and whether it was worth the service given (40.0% neutral), helps explain why price, despite a significant bivariate correlation, did not emerge as an independent predictor once the stronger quality-related constructs were included in the regression model.

5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the factors influencing customer satisfaction among food service establishments in Cyberjaya, Selangor, focusing on price, atmosphere, service quality, and product quality. Based on responses from 155 participants, all four hypotheses were supported at the correlational level, confirming that price, atmosphere, service quality, and product quality each have a significant positive relationship with customer satisfaction. However, the multiple regression analysis revealed that product quality is the only factor that contributes significantly and independently to customer satisfaction when all predictors are considered together, explaining the largest share of the model's 31% explained variance.

These findings carry practical implications for food service operators in Cyberjaya. Consistency in food quality, encompassing taste, freshness, presentation, and menu variety, should be treated as the foremost operational priority, as inconsistency directly undermines customer satisfaction and repeat patronage. At the same time, price fairness, atmosphere, and service quality remain relevant complementary factors that shape the overall dining experience and should not be neglected, even though their standalone statistical contribution was outweighed by product quality in the regression model. Attending to ambience, staff service standards, and value-for-

money pricing can support and reinforce the positive effects of strong product quality on customer satisfaction.

This study is limited by its use of convenience sampling within a single township, which constrains the generalizability of findings beyond Cyberjaya, and by its reliance on only four predictor variables, which together explained less than a third of the variance in satisfaction, indicating that other unmeasured factors are also at play. The demographic profile of respondents, skewed toward the 31-40 age group and degree-level education, may also limit how well the findings generalize to other age and education segments within the same population. Future research should consider probability sampling methods to strengthen representativeness, examine specific demographic segments or establishment types (such as QSR outlets or cafés specifically) in greater depth, and incorporate additional variables such as personal recognition, digital ordering convenience, or brand image to build a more comprehensive model of customer satisfaction in the food service industry. Longitudinal designs that track satisfaction over time, or that compare Cyberjaya with other rapidly urbanizing townships in the Klang Valley, would also help clarify whether the dominance of product quality observed here is a stable pattern or specific to this population and period.

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