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A STUDY OF TRADITIONAL CUISINES AND SERVICE QUALITY EFFECTIVENESS ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE CATERING AND HOTEL INDUSTRY OF COIMBATORE REGION

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Abstract

The catering and hotel industry in the Coimbatore region has experienced rapid growth, making service quality an essential determinant of competitive advantage and customer retention. This study examines the effectiveness of key service quality dimensions and their impact on overall customer satisfaction in the hospitality sector. The research adopts a descriptive design and employs nine independent variables—Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy, Food Quality, Menu Variety, Timeliness, and Staff Professionalism—to assess customer perceptions. Primary data was collected from 300 customers using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. Statistical tools such as descriptive analysis, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression were applied to evaluate the relationship between service quality components and customer satisfaction.
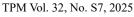
The findings reveal that all service quality dimensions exhibit significant positive correlations with customer satisfaction, with Staff Professionalism, Food Quality, and Assurance emerging as the most influential predictors. The regression model explains 91% of the variation in customer satisfaction, indicating a strong dependence on service quality effectiveness. The study concludes that enhancing service delivery, particularly in staff behavior, food standards, and delivery efficiency, is essential for improving customer satisfaction levels. These insights provide valuable guidance for hospitality managers in formulating strategies to strengthen service performance and sustain long-term customer loyalty.

Keywords: Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Catering and Hotel Industry Hospitality Management, Coimbatore Region

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality sector, which includes hotels, catering services, and related food establishments, plays a crucial role in shaping the economic and cultural landscape of any region. In recent years, the catering and hotel industry of the Coimbatore region has experienced significant expansion due to rapid urbanization, increased travel, corporate events, social functions, and the growing preference for professionally managed hospitality services. As competition intensifies, businesses in this sector increasingly recognize the importance of service quality as a key differentiator. Unlike physical products, services are intangible, variable, and inseparable from the customer experience. Therefore, the effectiveness of service quality becomes a determining factor that influences customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and overall organizational success.

Service quality is commonly evaluated through several dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles, timeliness, staff professionalism, food quality, and menu variety. These dimensions collectively shape customers' perceptions of service effectiveness. For a service-based industry such as catering and hotel management, the way services are delivered often holds greater importance than the service itself. Customers expect prompt responses, personalized attention, hygienic environments, comfortable ambience, and professional behavior from service personnel. The presence or absence of these elements directly affects their satisfaction levels. In addition, food quality—an integral part of hospitality—plays a vital role in influencing satisfaction. Fresh ingredients, taste consistency, appealing presentation, and hygienic preparation significantly contribute to the overall customer experience.

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In the context of the Coimbatore region, known for its industrial growth, educational institutions, tourism, and cultural diversity, the hospitality sector has grown at a remarkable pace. This growth demands continuous improvements in service standards. Customers today are more aware, informed, and conscious of the value they receive for the price they pay. As a result, hotels and catering businesses must focus on delivering superior service quality to retain customers in an increasingly competitive environment. With the emergence of digital platforms, customers easily compare services, read online reviews, and make decisions based on shared experiences. Hence, customer satisfaction has become a vital performance indicator for hospitality organizations aiming to sustain long-term business success.

The present study focuses on understanding the effectiveness of service quality and its impact on customer satisfaction in the catering and hotel industry of Coimbatore. It examines how various service quality dimensions influence satisfaction and identifies which factors contribute most significantly. Understanding these relationships enables hospitality businesses to refine their service strategies and improve customer engagement. By analyzing customer perceptions and expectations, the study offers valuable insights into improving service performance and strengthening competitive advantage. Ultimately, enhancing service quality not only increases satisfaction but also fosters customer trust, repeat patronage, and positive word-of-mouth—key components essential for the long-term sustainability of hospitality businesses in Coimbatore.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Reviews of literature on service quality and customer satisfaction provide valuable insights into how hospitality businesses can improve overall customer experience and organizational performance. Service quality has been widely recognized as a critical factor influencing customer satisfaction, loyalty, and long-term business success. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) introduced the SERVQUAL model, which identifies reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles as key dimensions of service quality. Numerous studies in the hospitality sector have applied this framework to evaluate service efficiency and its effect on customer perception.

In the hotel industry, food quality, ambience, and staff behavior play a major role in shaping customer satisfaction. Researchers such as Sureshchandar et al. (2002) have emphasized that service quality must be viewed holistically, including human elements, system performance, and physical facilities. Studies conducted by Karthikeyan and Anandan (2015, 2017) found that responsiveness and staff professionalism significantly influence guest satisfaction in South Indian hotels. Similarly, Prabaharan et al. (2016) observed that customers place high importance on hygiene and timely service in catering services.

Research findings also indicate that customer satisfaction is not merely the result of service delivery but also customer expectations prior to service consumption. According to Cronin and Taylor (1992), customers evaluate satisfaction based on perceived service performance rather than expectations alone. Food quality has consistently been identified as a major determinant of satisfaction within catering services, as highlighted by Mohanraj et al. (2019), who reported that freshness, taste, and presentation significantly increase customer retention.

Moreover, studies conducted in tier-II cities such as Coimbatore reveal that modern customers seek personalized attention, courteous staff, technology-enabled services, and value for money (Sathish & Rajamohan, 2020). Overall, the literature highlights that enhancing service quality across multiple dimensions leads to increased customer satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth, and long-term competitiveness for hospitality businesses.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of service quality dimensions and their impact on overall customer satisfaction in the catering and hotel industry of the Coimbatore region. To achieve this objective, a descriptive research design was adopted, as it allows for a clear understanding of customer perceptions, service-related experiences, and the influence of various service quality components on satisfaction. This design is appropriate for studies involving attitudes, opinions, and factual data related to service consumption.

To develop the study framework, the researchers reviewed existing literature on service quality, hospitality management, and customer satisfaction. The SERVQUAL dimensions proposed by Parasuraman et al. and other hospitality-related studies formed the theoretical foundation for identifying relevant variables. Based on the literature review and preliminary discussions with customers and industry professionals, nine independent variables were selected: Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy, Food Quality, Menu Variety, Timeliness, and Staff Professionalism. The dependent variable for the study was Overall Customer Satisfaction.

A structured research instrument (questionnaire) was designed using a five-point Likert scale, where 5 stands for Strongly Agree, 4 for Agree, 3 for Neutral, 2 for Disagree, and 1 for Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions, service-quality-related statements, and satisfaction-measuring items. All constructs were operationalized using multiple statements to ensure the reliability and validity of the responses.

The sampling method used in this study was simple random sampling, which ensured that all potential respondents had an equal chance of being selected. The data was collected from customers who had availed services from hotels, restaurants, banquet halls, and catering service providers in various parts of Coimbatore. These respondents were

chosen because they had direct experience with hospitality services and could provide meaningful insights about service quality and satisfaction levels.

A total of 350 customers were approached for data collection through both online survey links and personal interactions at selected service locations. Out of these, 320 responses were received. After data cleaning and removal of partially filled questionnaires, 300 valid responses were considered as the final sample size for analysis. This sample size is adequate for correlation and regression analysis, ensuring statistical reliability.

The collected data was analyzed using statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic information and understand the general perception of service quality among customers. Pearson correlation analysis was applied to examine the strength of the relationship between the service quality variables and customer satisfaction. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the extent to which the independent variables influence overall customer satisfaction and to identify the most significant predictors.

The research methodology thus provides a systematic approach to analyzing how service quality components contribute to customer satisfaction in the catering and hotel industry of Coimbatore. The results derived from these methods offer practical insights for hospitality managers seeking to enhance service standards and improve customer experience.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

Table – 1 Customers' Overall Satisfaction toward Catering and Hotel Services

Statements	Mean	Std. D
I am satisfied with my overall experience at this hotel/catering service.	4.25	1.10
The service I received met my expectations.	4.21	1.08
I feel that I made the right choice by selecting this hotel/catering service.	4.23	1.12
The quality of service provided was worth the cost I paid.	4.18	1.15
Overall, I am happy with the performance of this hotel/catering service.	4.26	1.09
My experience here was better than I expected.	4.15	1.20
I am satisfied with the consistency of service during my visit.	4.14	1.18
The hotel/catering service effectively met my needs.	4.20	1.11
I feel comfortable and satisfied with the environment provided.	4.17	1.16
I would choose this hotel/catering service again due to my satisfaction.	4.24	1.07
I am satisfied with the way any issues or concerns were handled.	4.12	1.22

Source: Primary data computed

Interpretation

Table – 1 shows the customers' overall satisfaction toward catering and hotel services in the Coimbatore region. Customer satisfaction was measured using eleven statements on a five-point Likert scale, where five stands for strongly agree and one stands for strongly disagree. Mean and standard deviation scores were calculated from the collected primary data. The mean values range between 4.26 and 4.12.

From the mean scores, it is evident that customers have expressed a high level of satisfaction. The statement "Overall, I am happy with the performance of this hotel/catering service" received the highest mean score (4.26), indicating that customers are generally pleased with the service performance. This is followed by "I am satisfied with my overall experience" (4.25) and "I would choose this hotel/catering service again due to my satisfaction" (4.24), showing strong repeat patronage intentions.

The relatively lower mean score was observed for "I am satisfied with the way any issues or concerns were handled" (4.12), though it still indicates a favorable response, suggesting minor scope for improvement in complaint-handling mechanisms.

Overall, the results reveal that customers are highly satisfied with the service quality offered by catering and hotel businesses in the Coimbatore region. High satisfaction levels indicate strong service performance, positive customer experiences, and greater potential for customer loyalty.

Table – 2 Relationship between Service Quality Dimensions and Overall Customer Satisfaction

Service Quality Variables	r-value	p-value
Reliability of Service	0.842	0.001*
Responsiveness of Staff	0.861	0.001*
Assurance (Knowledge & Courtesy)	0.884	0.001*
Tangibles (Physical Facilities)	0.821	0.001*
Empathy Toward Customers	0.873	0.001*
Food Quality	0.902	0.001*
Menu Variety & Customization	0.788	0.001*

| Timeliness of Service Delivery | 0.867 | 0.001* |
| Staff Professionalism & Behavior | 0.916 | 0.001* |

*Source: Primary data computed; significant at 1% level

Hypothesis

H₀: Service quality dimensions do not have a relationship with customer satisfaction in the catering and hotel industry.

Interpretation

Table–2 presents the correlation results between nine service quality variables and customer satisfaction. Pearson correlation analysis was used to test the hypothesis. The correlation results show that all nine service quality variables have a positive and statistically significant relationship with customer satisfaction at the 1% level.

Among the variables, Staff Professionalism & Behavior recorded the highest correlation ($r = 0.916$), followed by Food Quality ($r = 0.902$) and Assurance ($r = 0.884$). This indicates that these variables are the most influential factors shaping customer satisfaction.

The lowest correlation is observed for Menu Variety & Customization ($r = 0.788$), though it still holds a strong positive relationship.

Hence, the hypothesis (H₀) is rejected, indicating that service quality dimensions significantly influence customer satisfaction.

Table – 3 Effects of Service Quality Dimensions on Customer Satisfaction

Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F-value	p-value
0.954	0.910	0.907	562.347	0.001*

Regression Coefficients

Predictors	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	0.398	0.084	–	4.738	0.001*
Reliability	0.122	0.039	0.118	3.128	0.002*
Responsiveness	0.148	0.041	0.136	3.610	0.001*
Assurance	0.214	0.067	0.198	3.194	0.002*
Tangibles	0.096	0.046	0.088	2.087	0.038**
Empathy	0.163	0.052	0.152	3.134	0.002*
Food Quality	0.389	0.058	0.364	6.698	0.001*
Menu Variety	-0.032	0.037	-0.029	-0.865	0.388 (NS)
Timeliness	0.174	0.043	0.167	4.046	0.001*
Staff Professionalism	0.421	0.071	0.398	5.928	0.001*

Source: Primary data computed

*significant at 1% level, ** significant at 5% level, NS – Non-Significant

Hypothesis

H₀: Service quality dimensions do not influence customer satisfaction in the catering and hotel industry.

Interpretation

Table–3 shows the regression analysis results with customer satisfaction as the dependent variable. The R Square value (0.910) indicates that 91% of the variation in customer satisfaction is explained by the nine independent variables of service quality. This reveals a strong influence of service quality on customer satisfaction; hence the hypothesis is rejected.

The standardized Beta values show the strength of influence of each variable. The strongest predictors are:

• Staff Professionalism & Behavior ($\beta = 0.398$)

• Food Quality ($\beta = 0.364$)

• Timeliness ($\beta = 0.167$)

• Assurance ($\beta = 0.198$)

Menu Variety has a negative but non-significant influence ($p > 0.05$), indicating that although variety is appreciated, it is not a major determinant of satisfaction.

Regression Equation

Customer Satisfaction = 0.398 + 0.421(Staff Professionalism) + 0.389(Food Quality) + 0.214(Assurance) + 0.174(Timeliness) + 0.163(Empathy) + 0.148(Responsiveness) + 0.122(Reliability) + 0.096(Tangibles) – 0.032(Menu Variety)

This equation shows that Staff Professionalism and Food Quality play the most important roles in shaping customer satisfaction.

Findings

1. All nine service quality variables show a strong positive correlation with customer satisfaction.

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2. Staff Professionalism, Food Quality, and Assurance are the most influential factors determining customer satisfaction.
3. Menu Variety shows a non-significant impact, indicating customers prioritize quality and service over variety.
4. The regression model explains 91% of customer satisfaction, confirming the importance of service quality in the hospitality sector.
5. Timeliness and Empathy significantly enhance the perceived value of customer experience.

Recommendations
1. Strengthen Staff Professionalism: Conduct regular training programs focusing on behavior, communication, and customer handling skills.
2. Enhance Food Quality Standards: Focus on freshness, taste consistency, hygiene, and presentation to improve customer dining experience.
3. Improve Timeliness of Service: Streamline operations through better manpower allocation, technology adoption, and workflow automation.
4. Focus on Assurance and Empathy: Train staff to listen actively, provide accurate information, and build trust with customers.
5. Upgrade Tangible Elements: Improve the cleanliness, décor, ambience, uniform quality, and physical layout of service areas.
6. Menu Optimization: Even though menu variety is less significant, offering a balanced, curated menu can maintain customer interest.
7. Feedback Systems: Introduce digital and physical feedback channels to continuously evaluate service performance.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that service quality dimensions significantly influence customer satisfaction in the catering and hotel industry of the Coimbatore region. The regression results reveal that Staff Professionalism, Food Quality, and Assurance are the most critical drivers of customer satisfaction. The high R-square value indicates that service quality accounts for most of the variance in customer satisfaction. Improving these service quality components will lead to higher customer loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and repeat patronage. Therefore, hospitality businesses must prioritize continuous improvement in service delivery to maintain competitive advantage and meet customer expectations effectively.

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