Factors Affecting Customer Satisfaction in Restaurant Services: A Study on Rangpur Region, Bangladesh

Shain Hasnat Riva [1]

[1] Department of Marketing, Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur, Bangladesh.
Email: shainhasnatr@gmail.com

Abstract

With an emphasis on the SERVQUAL dimensions (tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy), this study attempts to investigate the variables affecting customer satisfaction in the restaurant business. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through surveys from 200 clients of various restaurants. The results reveal that empathy has the most significant impact on customer satisfaction, followed by tangibility, while assurance was found to have a minimal effect. These results suggest that restaurants should prioritize empathetic service to enhance customer experiences. However, the findings' generalizability is constrained by the study's sample size and focus. The research highlights the importance of improving service quality through customer-centered strategies and provides actionable insights for restaurant managers. The originality of this study lies in its focus on the SERVQUAL dimensions in the context of the restaurant industry, an area that has received limited attention in recent research.

Keywords: Customer Satisfaction, SERVQUAL Dimensions, Restaurant Industry, Empathy, Service Quality.

1. Introduction

The service quality of restaurants has long been standard as a key determinant of customer satisfaction. In today's increasingly competitive market, restaurant managers must fully understand the factors that influence customer perceptions and experiences. The SERVQUAL approach, which specifies five essential dimensions—tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, reliability, and empathy—is frequently used to assess the quality of services. With each component having a unique impact on client satisfaction, these dimensions offer a framework for evaluating the total service experience. Although the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction has been the subject of several studies in a variety of businesses, the restaurant industry offers specific potential and challenges, especially in light of the global COVID-19 pandemic. A wealth of research has examined the role of service quality in customer satisfaction across different sectors. For instance, Nguyen et al. (2018) studied the SERVQUAL dimensions in the UK's fast-food industry and found that tangibles, responsiveness, and assurance were the

most influential factors driving satisfaction. In the banking sector, Pakurár et al. (2019) identified that responsiveness and empathy were crucial in enhancing customer satisfaction in Jordanian banks. These studies underscore that customer satisfaction is heavily influenced by the perceived quality of service, which can vary depending on the specific industry. In the case of restaurants, customers expect not only quality food but also efficient, friendly, and reliable service, all of which contribute significantly to their overall satisfaction. The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically altered customer expectations and behaviors across various sectors, including hospitality. Safety measures such as social distancing, mask mandates, and enhanced sanitation protocols became essential elements of service delivery. Research by Zibarzani et al. (2022) revealed that customer satisfaction with restaurant service quality during the pandemic was heavily influenced by the perception of safety measures and service delivery. Customers began to prioritize hygiene and safety alongside traditional service quality factors, making it essential for restaurants to adapt their service offerings to meet these new expectations.

In addition to the traditional dimensions of service quality, innovative delivery methods—such as robot-served restaurants—have emerged as a response to pandemic-related challenges. El-Said and Al Hajri (2022) examined customer satisfaction with robot service in restaurants and found that perceived usefulness, service speed, and novelty were critical factors contributing to satisfaction during the pandemic. This shift in service delivery underscores the growing importance of technology and innovation in shaping customer experiences. Many restaurants have embraced automation and contactless service to mitigate the risk of infection, providing customers with a safer dining experience. Despite numerous studies on the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction, there remains a gap in research specifically focused on the restaurant industry during and after the pandemic. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring how service quality dimensions, particularly empathy and assurance, impact customer satisfaction in the post-pandemic restaurant sector. By building on the SERVQUAL model, the research will examine how these dimensions contribute to customer satisfaction in a rapidly changing environment. Additionally, the study will investigate the moderating effects of COVID-19 safety measures on the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial for restaurant managers looking to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty in an evolving market. By addressing this gap in the existing literature, this study will offer valuable insights into the key drivers of customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. Moreover, the findings will provide practical recommendations for improving service quality and developing strategies to retain customers in a post-pandemic landscape. In today's highly competitive global markets, businesses must prioritize attracting and retaining customers. Modern consumers have become more discerning, raising their expectations for both products and services. To meet these heightened expectations, companies must deliver high-quality products and services (Cook, 2011). A customer-centric approach is vital for success in any industry (Kotler, 1973). In the restaurant business, service quality has become an essential component of customer satisfaction. Service quality not only plays a significant role in ensuring customer satisfaction but also directly impacts a restaurant's ability to retain customers (Nalini & Samuel, 2011).

In 1988, Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry created the SERVQUAL model, which is a strong instrument for pinpointing problems with service quality. The theory behind it is that when comparing their expectations with their actual experiences, customers are able to gauge the quality of a service. The SERVQUAL methodology enables customers and restaurant owners to evaluate service quality and customer satisfaction by examining five dimensions: tangibility,

reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Waitiki, 2014). Many restaurateurs devote considerable time and effort to finding the ideal marketing strategy to maintain their competitive edge in a challenging market. Customer satisfaction, as a key factor, plays an essential role in driving repeat business (Tam, 2000). The elements influencing satisfaction include the variety and quality of food, atmosphere, hygiene, service speed, pricing, and location. These factors collectively shape customers' repurchase intentions, which are influenced by a restaurant's ability to meet their expectations (Hellier et al., 2003). The primary objective of this study is to identify the factors that influence customer satisfaction in restaurant services, with a focus on the Rangpur region. Specific objectives include: (a) to determine the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in restaurants and (b) to propose strategies for restaurant owners to enhance customer satisfaction.

2. Literature Review
The understanding of customer satisfaction in service industries, particularly in restaurants, banking, courier services, and sports fitness centers, has been explored extensively in recent research. With the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, several studies have highlighted the shifting dynamics in customer expectations, service delivery, and satisfaction levels. The impact of COVID-19 on customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry has been a focal point of recent research. Zibarzani et al. (2022) investigated customer satisfaction in the restaurant sector during the COVID-19 outbreak, employing a hybrid methodology combining clustering, supervised learning, and text mining techniques to analyze customer reviews. Their study revealed that safety precautions during the pandemic significantly influenced customer satisfaction, alongside the traditional restaurant quality dimensions, such as food quality, service responsiveness, and ambiance. The study highlighted the need for businesses to adapt to changing customer needs during the pandemic, incorporating safety measures and improving digital services as critical to maintaining customer satisfaction. Similarly, Nguyen et al. (2018) examined the role of tangible attributes of service quality in the UK quick-service restaurant industry. They found that tangibles, responsiveness, and assurance were key drivers of customer satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of physical service attributes like restaurant cleanliness and the behavior of employees. The study underscored the significance of managing physical attributes in enhancing customer experiences in fast-food settings, which has implications for both pre- and post-pandemic service models. El-Said and Al Hajri (2022) focused on the emerging trend of robot service restaurants during the pandemic. Their study found that perceived usefulness, speed of service, and novelty were significant drivers of satisfaction, while perceived enjoyment and novelty seeking influenced customers' extended experiences with robot service. This research underscores the increasing role of technology in reshaping customer experiences, particularly in response to health-related concerns during the COVID-19 crisis.

In the restaurant and banking industries, researchers have looked at the correlation between high-quality food and service and repeat business. Al-Tit (2015) investigated the impact of limited-service restaurants in Jordan on customer satisfaction and retention rates through the quality of food and service. According to the research, client happiness, which in turn affects customer retention, is positively affected by high-quality service and cuisine. Slack et al. (2021) found that customers' perceptions of value, happiness, and behavioural intentions are impacted by the combined effects of food quality, physical environment quality, and personnel service quality. The necessity of consistently providing high-quality food to encourage customer loyalty was highlighted in their study on fast-food restaurants, which indicated that the physical atmosphere and food quality were the most important factors in determining consumer happiness. Specifically, Pakurár et al. (2019) looked at the banking industry in Jordan and how

different aspects of service quality affected customers' happiness. According to their research, factors including personnel competence, reliability, and assurance all played a role in determining customer happiness. Muala (2016) also looked at the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty at Islamic banks in Jordan and found that tangibility, dependability, and empathy were the most important service quality factors. Customers' expectations have changed drastically in the courier service business, particularly in light of the COVID-19 epidemic. Tang et al. (2022) looked examined the relationship between customer satisfaction with courier services and service quality factors such tangibility, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. They discovered that the most important criteria were responsiveness, dependability, and empathy, with empathy being the most powerful driver of customer happiness. During the pandemic, there was a noticeable increase in the need for dependable and customised services, particularly in the realms of logistics and delivery. When it comes to sports fitness centres, client happiness and loyalty are greatly influenced by the quality of service. When investigating the link between service quality and customer loyalty, Huang and Kim (2023) looked at how participation in sports could moderate the effect. They found that tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy all positively affected customer satisfaction, which in turn enhanced loyalty. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that customers' involvement in sports moderates the effects of these service quality dimensions on their satisfaction, highlighting the need for tailored service experiences based on customer engagement levels in fitness settings. The literature reveals that across various sectors, including restaurants, banking, courier services, and sports fitness centers, service quality dimensions such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy significantly influence customer satisfaction. The impact of COVID-19 has accentuated the need for safety precautions and technological innovation in customer service delivery. The role of physical attributes, such as food quality and restaurant environment, remains crucial in fast-food and restaurant settings, while in tech-driven industries, like robot service restaurants and courier services, perceived usefulness and empathy have gained prominence. The findings across these studies underline the importance of understanding the evolving service quality expectations and adapting to new consumer needs, particularly in the post-pandemic era. Future research could focus on the long-term impacts of these changes and how businesses can sustain customer satisfaction and loyalty in a rapidly changing environment.

2.1 Customer Satisfaction and Service Quality

Businesses in many different industries rely on happy customers to be in business. This is especially true in the service industries, where industries like banking, sports fitness centers, and courier services thrive. There is a lot of research that shows how important it is to provide high-quality service if you want your customers to have good experiences and remain loyal over the long run. Dimensions like as tangibility, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and reliability represent the customer's opinion of service excellence and are typically used to evaluate service quality. A large body of research supports the idea that high-quality service directly affects customer happiness, and that companies who reliably deliver outstanding service develop stronger, more loyal ties with their clientele. Nguyen et al. (2018) and Al-Tit (2015) found that service quality significantly affects customer satisfaction in the restaurant business. The significance of elements including cleanliness, atmosphere, and staff conduct was highlighted by Nguyen et al. (2018), who discovered that in the UK quick-service restaurant industry, tangibility, responsiveness, and assurance were the main determinants of consumer satisfaction. Similarly, Al-Tit (2015) explored the relationship between service and food quality in Jordanian restaurants, confirming that both service and food quality are essential elements of customer satisfaction. These findings emphasize that service quality dimensions—particularly tangibility—play a critical role in shaping customers' perceptions, especially in settings where

the physical environment has a significant impact on the overall experience. Over time, researchers have taken a more nuanced approach to understanding and measuring satisfaction and service quality. While factors such as product quality and price influence customer satisfaction, perceived service quality is a fundamental component of this satisfaction (Zeithaml et al., 2006). Service quality is generally defined as a focused evaluation, considering the customer's perception of aspects like tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. In contrast, customer satisfaction is a broader concept, influenced not only by perceived service quality but also by factors like price, product quality, situational variables, and individual customer preferences (Wilson, 2008). This distinction highlights the complexity of customer satisfaction, demonstrating that it is shaped by a range of factors, with service quality being a key determinant in driving positive customer outcomes.

2.2 Tangibility

Tangibility in the context of restaurant service quality refers to the physical aspects of the restaurant, including the cleanliness of the environment, the appearance of the building, the condition of equipment, and the visible elements that customers interact with during their visit. This includes the atmosphere of the restaurant, the appearance and attire of the servers, as well as the modernity of the furniture, cutlery, and overall physical setup. According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), tangibility is critical in providing a clear visibility of resources and services to customers. A well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing restaurant with visible signs of cleanliness and modern equipment can significantly impact customer satisfaction, as customers tend to associate physical appearances with service quality and reliability (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014). This dimension plays a crucial role in setting the first impression for customers, as an appealing environment fosters comfort, trust, and confidence. Therefore, a restaurant's tangibility has been shown to correlate with positive customer experiences and is an essential factor in overall customer satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2018). In the research by Zibarzani et al. (2022), the cleanliness and physical quality of restaurant environments were highlighted as key factors that could either enhance or detract from customer satisfaction, especially in light of the health-conscious attitudes heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, it is posited that the tangibility of a restaurant, encompassing its cleanliness, equipment, and ambiance, plays a significant role in shaping customers' satisfaction levels and their perceptions of the overall dining experience.

H1: Tangibility of the restaurant significantly affects customer satisfaction.

2.3 Reliability

Reliability refers to a restaurant's ability to consistently deliver accurate, dependable, and high-quality service to customers. This includes fulfilling promises made to customers, handling complaints effectively, and maintaining consistency in service delivery across different visits (Minh et al., 2017). Reliability is often seen as a fundamental aspect of service quality, as customers expect the same level of service during every visit. As Parasuraman et al. (1988) suggest, a reliable service provider is one that can consistently meet customer expectations without fail. The dimension of reliability encompasses factors such as the ability of staff to meet customer expectations regarding the timeliness and quality of service, proper pricing strategies, and the effective handling of any issues or complaints that arise. Reliability is crucial in establishing trust between the restaurant and its customers, as it assures them that their needs will be met on every visit. For example, customers expect their orders to be delivered accurately, within the promised time, and at the right temperature. A restaurant that consistently meets these expectations is perceived as reliable and is more likely to generate repeat customers and positive word-of-mouth (Zibarzani et al., 2022). As noted by El-Said & Al Hajri (2022), customers

are more likely to feel satisfied and loyal when they know that the service will be delivered with precision and dependability. Hence, reliability is one of the critical dimensions that drive customer satisfaction and long-term loyalty in the restaurant industry.

H2: Reliability of the restaurant significantly affects customer satisfaction.

2.4 Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to a restaurant's ability to provide prompt service, meet customers' needs quickly, and address any requests or concerns in a timely and efficient manner. This dimension emphasizes the willingness and flexibility of restaurant staff to assist customers whenever needed, ensuring a seamless dining experience (Rauch et al., 2015). Responsiveness also includes the warmth and friendliness of the staff, as well as their ability to be attentive without being intrusive. For instance, when customers have special requests or complaints, their concerns should be addressed quickly and professionally, contributing to a positive experience. According to Qin et al. (2009), the level of individual attention and care given to customers during their visit can significantly enhance their satisfaction. Research by Nguyen et al. (2018) has shown that customers value responsiveness because it directly influences how well their dining experience meets their expectations. A responsive restaurant will ensure that its staff is not only available but actively engaged in providing a high level of service, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction. In the post-COVID era, responsiveness also entails being adaptable to new dining needs, such as providing contactless services or adjusting seating arrangements for social distancing. Therefore, the responsiveness of a restaurant is a key driver of customer satisfaction, with its impact being felt across various dimensions of the dining experience, from initial contact to the resolution of any issues.

H3: Responsiveness of the restaurant significantly affects customer satisfaction.

2.5 Assurance

The competency, friendliness, and expertise of the restaurant's staff, as well as their capacity to garner patrons' trust and confidence, are the focal points of the assurance service quality dimension. This dimension highlights the importance of well-trained, professional staff who can provide knowledgeable recommendations, demonstrate expertise in menu items, and offer a sense of security to customers. Assurance can be measured through the manner in which employees communicate with customers, their ability to handle complex or sensitive situations, and their efforts to build trust with diners (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014). As Parasuraman et al. (1988) point out, the confidence and trust that employees inspire directly contribute to customer satisfaction, particularly in situations where customers are uncertain or hesitant about what to expect from the dining experience. Restaurants that provide knowledgeable and approachable staff create an environment where customers feel comfortable and valued. This aspect of service quality has a direct impact on customer satisfaction, as customers are more likely to return to a restaurant where they feel assured of a high-quality, consistent service. In studies like those by Al-Tit (2015) and El-Said & Al Hajri (2022), it was shown that assurance is an essential driver in ensuring customer trust and satisfaction. Therefore, the assurance dimension of service quality plays a vital role in fostering customer confidence and satisfaction in a restaurant setting. Based on the above discussion, researcher reached the following hypothesis:

H4: Assurance of the restaurant significantly affects customer satisfaction.

2.6 Empathy

Empathy in the restaurant service context refers to the degree to which employees show care, concern, and personalized attention to customers. It involves understanding and addressing the individual needs of each customer, going beyond the standard service protocols to make

customers feel valued and understood. Empathy is characterized by a staff's ability to recognize customer emotions, offer personalized recommendations, and provide a level of care that makes diners feel like they are receiving special attention (Rauch et al., 2015). As highlighted by Bernardo et al. (2013) and Lee et al. (2011), empathetic behavior from restaurant staff plays a critical role in ensuring a positive customer experience. Customers who feel that their individual needs are acknowledged are more likely to experience higher satisfaction and are more inclined to return to the restaurant. This dimension also involves creating an atmosphere where customers feel welcome, understood, and respected. For example, staff who take the time to engage with customers, offer help in a warm and friendly manner, and anticipate customer needs demonstrate empathy. This level of attentiveness makes a significant difference in customer satisfaction, as it addresses emotional and relational needs that go beyond just food quality or service efficiency. Studies by Muala (2016) and Pakurár et al. (2019) have shown that empathy can lead to stronger customer loyalty, as it strengthens the emotional connection between the restaurant and its customers. Therefore, empathy is a crucial factor in driving customer satisfaction, as it creates an atmosphere of trust and personal connection. Based on the above discussion researcher proposed the following hypothesis:

H5: Empathy of the restaurant significantly affects customer satisfaction.

2.7 Framework of the Present Research

Prior studies have found a number of elements that influence the level of pleasure felt by diners at various types of restaurants. Numerous studies in various nations have built on this idea, with various foci including service quality, product flavour, customer loyalty, sales promotions, the likelihood of a customer returning, the restaurant's physical layout and design, its location, and the prices of its food. Included in the literature review and the figure below are all variables that determine customer satisfaction; based on these variables, research hypotheses were developed. Based on the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), the suggested framework (Figure 1) shows how several aspects of service quality relate to customer satisfaction in the restaurant business. Tangibility, dependability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy are the five pillars upon which this paradigm rests on describing service excellence. It is believed that each of these factors has a substantial impact on diners' happiness at restaurants. The cleanliness, quality of the equipment, and general atmosphere of the restaurant are examples of tangible qualities. This aspect is vital since it establishes the mood for the diners' first impressions and the quality of their meal. Customers are more likely to be satisfied when they feel safe and trusted in an attractive, well-kept space. Since a pleasant and well-kept eating space improves the experience for everyone, it follows that tangibility plays a big role in customer satisfaction (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014; Zibarzani et al., 2022). Customers are more likely to have a favourable impression of and be satisfied with a restaurant that has contemporary furnishings, clean, and well-maintained equipment (Nguyen et al., 2018). In contrast, reliability refers to how consistent and dependable the restaurant's services are. Every time a customer visits, they anticipate receiving service that is precise, prompt, and of high quality. Reliability in service is key to building confidence and encouraging customers to return to a restaurant. Because consistent service builds a solid foundation of client loyalty, dependability is hypothesised to greatly contribute to consumer happiness (Zibarzani et al., 2022). According to El-Said and Al Hajri (2022), one of the main factors that contribute to customer satisfaction is the capacity to precisely satisfy their expectations. How fast the restaurant can respond to client requests and problems is a key component of responsiveness. Timely and effective handling of requests and achieving client expectations are the focus of this component. Having a restaurant that is quick to respond shows that they care about their customers, which makes for a better eating experience overall. Customers are more likely to be satisfied with a business that responds

quickly and effectively to their needs (Qin et al., 2009; Rauch et al., 2015). In the post-COVID age, responsiveness has grown to encompass contactless services and the capacity to adjust to client worries about safety. Rest assured, the restaurant staff is highly competent, knowledgeable, and well dressed. client trust and security are enhanced when staff members are competent and self-assured in meeting client requests. This is especially crucial in the restaurant industry, where patrons want guarantees about the dishes they order, the friendliness of the staff, and the whole experience. Customers are more likely to be satisfied and confident when they work with qualified people (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014; Al-Tit, 2015), which is why assurance is seen to have a substantial impact on customer satisfaction. El-Said and Al Hajri (2022) found that when customers are guaranteed competent service, they are more inclined to return to a restaurant. Finally, there's empathy, which shows how well the restaurant knows its clients and can cater to their specific requirements. Creating an emotional connection with a consumer is a key component of empathy, which entails giving them individualised attention and demonstrating care and concern for their well-being. Diners are more likely to enjoy their meals and come back for more when they feel heard and understood. Bernardo et al. (2013) and Muala (2016) postulate that empathy is a key factor in customer satisfaction since it cultivates strong ties with customers and encourages their loyalty. Customers are more likely to be satisfied and come back to a firm that caters to their unique preferences (Pakurár et al., 2019) when they receive individualised service. According to the suggested model, customer happiness is affected by the interplay of the five aspects of service quality. A more satisfying experience for the consumer is the result of improvements in any one of these areas. Diners will be more satisfied, loyal, and likely to suggest the restaurant to others if the establishment prioritises these aspects of service (Minh et al., 2017). Therefore, according to the suggested model, these aspects of service quality are crucial in determining whether or not customers are satisfied with their eating experience.
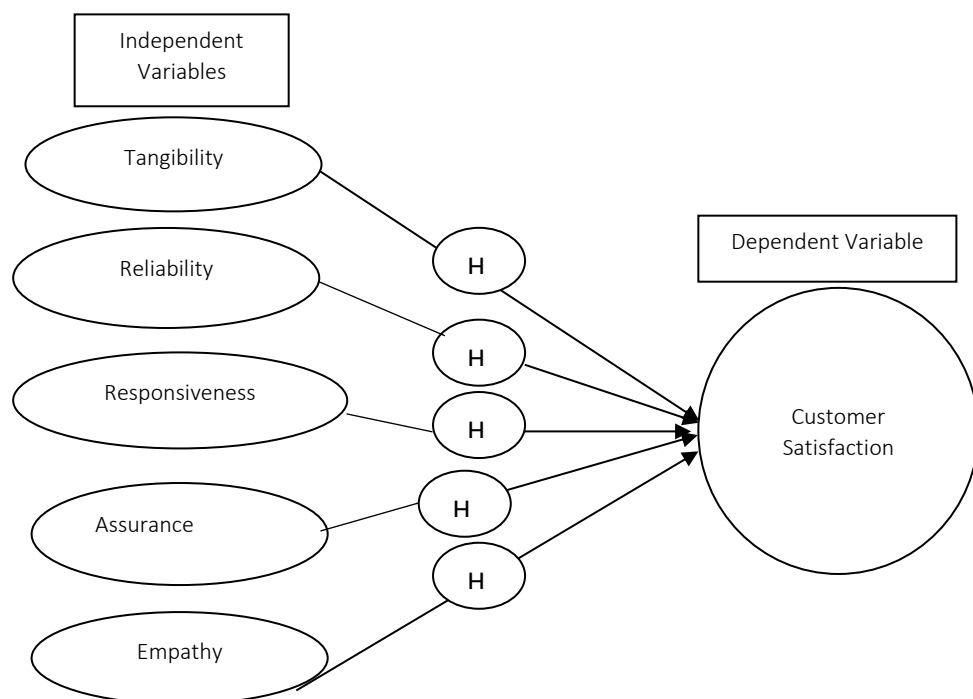
Figure 1: Framework of the present Research (Source: Developed for the research)

3. Methodology

In order to delve into the details of a specific occurrence, this study uses a descriptive research approach (Sekaran, 2013). In the restaurant business, knowing how service quality affects client pleasure is the main objective of this design. The SERVQUAL Model served as the basis for the structured questionnaire that was utilized to gather primary data. Specific information about the elements of service quality and customer satisfaction was intended to be gathered by means of the questionnaire. Questionnaires sent out to people in the Rangpur area served as the main data source for this investigation. The research's emphasis on the restaurant business in this specific location led to the participants' selection since they were relevant to the topic. To ensure that the data acquired were relevant to the study's aims, the research design carefully targeted consumers who had experienced the services of the restaurant. This study employed a sample size of 200 respondents, which is consistent with prior research and provides enough data for analysis. As an example, the sample size of this study was 200 people, which is comparable to previous research by Kundi and Qureshi (2014) and Chow Keng Yong and Wong Yin Kuan (2013).

The study employed a non-comparative scaling technique, specifically using a Likert scale to measure participants' responses. The Likert scale used in this study consists of five points ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale was chosen for its ability to capture the intensity of respondents' attitudes toward various service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. Non-probability sampling was used in this study, with convenience sampling as the chosen method. This technique involves selecting respondents who are easily accessible and willing to participate, as defined by Zikmund (2003). Convenience sampling was employed in this study to ensure that the data collection process was both efficient and practical, focusing on individuals who were readily available in the Rangpur region. A structured questionnaire was created for the study, containing three sections. The first section collected background information about the participants, while the second section gathered data on service quality dimensions and their impact on customer satisfaction. The third section focused on measuring the overall level of customer satisfaction. The questionnaire used closed-ended questions to simplify the process for respondents and ensure the data were easily quantifiable. After the data were collected, they were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical analysis was applied to summarize the data and identify trends or patterns in customer perceptions of service quality and satisfaction. Regression analysis was also conducted to explore the relationships between different service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction, testing the hypotheses proposed in the study.

4. Data Analysis and Findings
4.1 Background Information
4.1.1 Gender

Table 1 presents the gender distribution of the respondents in the study, revealing that 97 (48.5%) were male and 103 (51.5%) were female. This indicates a fairly balanced representation of both genders, with a slight majority of female respondents. The sample size for this study was 200, which is large enough to ensure a diverse representation, making it appropriate for examining customer satisfaction across different demographic groups. The near-equal distribution of male and female respondents suggests that gender may not be a significant bias in the study, allowing for a fair assessment of the effects of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction. The slight higher percentage of female respondents may reflect the general dining behavior in the region or may be due to the specific sampling method used in the study, but the difference is relatively minimal, and this small variation does not significantly impact the validity of the results. By having a close to equal number of male and female participants, the study

ensures that gender-based differences in service quality expectations and customer satisfaction can be explored, if necessary. However, the data shows no overwhelming dominance of one gender over the other, suggesting that both male and female customers have been adequately represented, and any potential variations in satisfaction can be analyzed across genders.

Table 1: Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	97	48.5	48.5	48.5
	Female	103	51.5	51.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field data

4.1.2 Age

Table 2 shows that most respondents (87%) are between the ages of 19-30, with a smaller portion in the 31-45 age range (11%) and only 2% below 18. This indicates that young adults are the primary demographic for dining out in the region. The low number of younger respondents may reflect age restrictions, while the 31-45 age group's smaller presence could suggest they dine out less frequently. Overall, the sample predominantly represents the preferences and satisfaction levels of younger adults, with some insights into the behavior of older customers.

Table 2: Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 18	4	2.0	2.0	2.0
	19-30	174	87.0	87.0	89.0
	31-45	22	11.0	11.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source data: Field data

4.1.3 Occupation

Table 3 highlights that the majority of respondents (81.5%) are students, followed by individuals working in service jobs (14.5%). A small portion of the sample consists of business owners (1%) and others (3%). This distribution suggests that students are the dominant group in the study's sample, likely reflecting a higher frequency of dining out or ordering food compared to other occupation groups. The small number of business people and those in other occupations indicates that the dining habits of professionals or business owners may differ, with less representation in this sample.

Table 3: Occupation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Student	163	81.5	81.5	81.5
	Service	29	14.5	14.5	96.0
	Business	2	1.0	1.0	97.0
	Others	6	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field data

4.1.4 Educational Background

Table 4 shows that the majority of respondents (61.5%) have completed their undergraduate studies, followed by those with postgraduate education or higher (29.5%). A smaller proportion (9%) has only completed Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC). This distribution suggests that the

respondents have a relatively high level of education, with a significant portion possessing a university degree or higher. This may reflect a more educated customer base that could have specific preferences and expectations regarding restaurant services, influencing their dining experiences and satisfaction levels.

Table 4: Educational Background

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	HSC	18	9.0	9.0	9.0
	Graduation	123	61.5	61.5	70.5
	Post Graduation and Above	59	29.5	29.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field data

4.1.5 Frequency of Eating Out at Restaurant

Table 5 illustrates the frequency with which respondents dine out. The largest group of respondents (36.5%) reported eating at a restaurant occasionally, followed by those who dine out once a week (28%) and those who do so monthly (24.5%). A small percentage (10.5%) dine out every day, while only one respondent (0.5%) indicated they never eat out. This distribution suggests that most respondents dine out occasionally, and the data indicates a reasonable level of engagement with restaurant services. Understanding this frequency can help restaurant owners and managers tailor their offerings and marketing strategies to better serve customers with varying dining habits.

Table 5. Frequency of eating out at Restaurant

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Everyday	21	10.5	10.5	10.5
	Once in a week	56	28.0	28.0	38.5
	Monthly	49	24.5	24.5	63.0
	Occasionally	73	36.5	36.5	99.5
	Never	1	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field data

4.2 Regression Analysis

The variables that impact restaurant patrons' happiness may be better understood with the use of the regression analysis's findings. With an R-value of 0.732, the model summary (Table 6) shows that the predictors—Empathy, Responsiveness, Tangibility, Reliability, and Assurance—strongly correlate with customer satisfaction. With a R Squared value of 0.535, it appears that the model explains a considerable amount of the variation in customer satisfaction. With a standard error of the estimate of 0.33953 and an adjusted R Squared value of 0.523, the model is found to have a decent match when taking the sample size into account. With an F-value of 44.685 and a p-value of 0.000, the ANOVA findings (Table 7) provide further evidence that the model is significant. This emphasises the significance of these aspects in restaurant service and implies that customer happiness is strongly explained by the five dimensions of service excellence when taken together. Efforts to enhance these aspects may result in greater customer satisfaction, according to the statistically significant regression model.

Looking at the coefficients (Table 8), Empathy emerges as the most influential factor, with a standardized beta value of 0.347 and a p-value of 0.000, suggesting a strong positive impact on customer satisfaction. Tangibility follows closely with a beta value of 0.245, also significantly

contributing to customer satisfaction, as indicated by its p-value of 0.000. Reliability also plays an important role, with a beta of 0.147 and a p-value of 0.021, further reinforcing its importance in shaping customer experiences. Responsiveness is another significant predictor, with a beta of 0.129 and a p-value of 0.027, though its impact is slightly smaller compared to Tangibility and Empathy. Assurance, however, does not appear to have a significant impact on customer satisfaction, as its p-value of 0.114 exceeds the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05. These findings suggest that while all five dimensions are important to some degree, Empathy, Tangibility, and Reliability have the most substantial influence on customer satisfaction in the restaurant context.

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.732a	.535	.523	.33953

a. Predictors: (Constant), Empathy, Responsiveness, Tangibility, Reliability, Assurance (Source: Field data)

Table 7: ANOVAa

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	25.757	5	5.151	44.685	.000b
	Residual	22.365	194	.115		
	Total	48.122	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction
b. Predictors: (Constant), Empathy, Responsiveness, Tangibility, Reliability, Assurance (Source: Field data)

Table 8: Coefficientsa

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.419	.228		1.836	.068	-.031	.870
	Tangibility	.215	.051	.245	4.180	.000	.114	.317
	Reliability	.148	.063	.147	2.336	.021	.023	.273
	Responsiveness	.103	.046	.129	2.230	.027	.012	.193
	Assurance	.098	.062	.101	1.589	.114	-.024	.220
	Empathy	.333	.058	.347	5.741	.000	.219	.448

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction (Source: Field data)

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Table 9: Hypothesis Testing presents the results of testing the impact of various service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry. The findings reveal that tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy all significantly affect customer satisfaction. Specifically, the hypothesis that the tangibility of the restaurant significantly influences customer satisfaction was accepted, with a p-value of 0.000, well below the 0.05 threshold. Similarly, the hypotheses regarding reliability (p = 0.021) and responsiveness (p = 0.027) were also accepted, indicating these factors have a significant impact on customer satisfaction. Additionally, the hypothesis concerning empathy (p = 0.000) was accepted, confirming that empathetic service plays a critical role in enhancing customer satisfaction. However, the hypothesis that assurance significantly affects customer satisfaction was rejected, as the p-value of 0.114 exceeded the 0.05 significance level. The lack of significance for assurance can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, assurance in a restaurant context often refers to the confidence instilled in customers through competent staff behavior, such as the ability to resolve issues and provide clear information. However, many customers may prioritize more tangible or immediate service aspects, like the physical environment (tangibility), the reliability of service (e.g., timely delivery

of food), or responsiveness to needs, over the feeling of reassurance. Additionally, the relatively lower emphasis on assurance in restaurant services, where the customer experience is more centered on interaction and immediate satisfaction, might explain why this dimension did not emerge as a significant predictor of overall satisfaction. Therefore, while assurance is important, it may not have as direct or strong an influence on customer satisfaction in the context of this study compared to the other SERVQUAL dimensions.

Table 9: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Results	Achieved
H1: Tangibility of the restaurant significantly affects customer satisfaction.	(p < 0.05) Here, p = .000	Yes, It is accepted.
H2: Reliability of the restaurant significantly affects customer satisfaction.	(p < 0.05) Here, p = .021	Yes, It is accepted.
H3: Responsiveness of the restaurant significantly affects customer satisfaction.	(p < 0.05) Here, p = .027	Yes, It is accepted.
H4: Assurance of the restaurant significantly affects customer satisfaction.	(p > 0.05) Here, p = .114	No, It is rejected.
H5: Empathy of the restaurant significantly affects customer satisfaction.	(p < 0.05) Here, p = .000	Yes, It is accepted.

(Source: Field data)

5. Applications

The findings of this study offer several practical applications for the restaurant industry, particularly in enhancing service quality and improving customer satisfaction. First and foremost, the study highlights the importance of empathy in customer interactions. Given that empathy emerged as the most significant factor influencing customer satisfaction, restaurants should prioritize training their staff in empathetic communication. This involves addressing customer needs with attentiveness, understanding, and care, ensuring a more personalized and positive experience that fosters customer loyalty. Another key takeaway is the significant role of tangibility—the physical environment of a restaurant. The study suggests that restaurants should invest in maintaining a clean, aesthetically pleasing, and well-designed environment. This includes attention to details such as décor, seating comfort, lighting, and the overall cleanliness of the restaurant. A well-maintained environment can greatly enhance the overall dining experience and contribute to repeat business. Reliability also emerged as a critical factor, indicating that customers expect consistent and dependable service. Ensuring that orders are fulfilled accurately and promptly, along with delivering a consistently high-quality experience, should be a key operational focus for restaurant management. Standardizing processes, training staff to follow procedures, and reducing service delays will be essential in meeting these expectations. Furthermore, responsiveness to customer requests and needs is vital. The study emphasizes the importance of promptly addressing customer concerns, whether it's taking orders quickly or resolving issues effectively. A responsive staff can significantly improve customer satisfaction by making diners feel valued and attended to throughout their visit. The study also revealed that assurance—or the feeling of confidence in service—is less influential in the restaurant context compared to other factors. While assurance remains important, it may not require as much focus as empathy, tangibility, and reliability. Instead, restaurants should ensure they provide an environment where customers can trust that their immediate needs are met

promptly and with professionalism. Additionally, the research provides valuable insights into customer demographics, particularly the predominance of young adults and students as the main customer base. This demographic information allows restaurants to tailor their marketing and promotional efforts. Offering student discounts or events catered to younger audiences could increase engagement and attract more customers. Finally, the study suggests that restaurants focus on customer retention by continuously improving the service quality dimensions that matter most to diners. Regular feedback through surveys or comment cards can provide valuable insights into areas of improvement, helping restaurants adapt and refine their services to meet changing customer expectations. Additionally, the study offers a useful benchmark for other research, providing a framework for examining service quality in other regions or contexts, and could inform industry-wide policies to raise service standards across the sector. Overall, the study's findings underscore the importance of empathy, reliability, tangibility, and responsiveness in shaping customer satisfaction, offering restaurants actionable insights to improve their service offerings and ensure long-term success.

Conclusion

In the restaurant industry, this study delves deep into the relationship between service quality and client happiness, with a focus on the Rangpur region. Using the SERVQUAL paradigm, this study analyses the impact of five service quality aspects on customer satisfaction: empathy, tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance. Assuring customers is less important than empathy, tangibility, reliability, and responsiveness, according to the research. This shows that consumers put a premium on being responsive to their demands, receiving consistent service, having a clean and well-maintained environment, and receiving personalised attention. The results also show that young adults, especially students, make up the bulk of the clientele, which throws a wrench into how restaurants can target this age group with their menus and advertising. Improved customer pleasure, customer loyalty, and long-term success in a competitive market can be achieved by restaurants by focussing on four important service quality characteristics. Investment in personnel training, upholding high service standards, and concentrating on physical environment improvements are also highlighted as important in the report. There are other aspects of service quality that have a greater impact on the customer experience than assurance, which is why restaurants should focus on those instead. Moreover, this study contributes valuable insights into the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry. The findings provide actionable recommendations for restaurant owners and managers to refine their service strategies and enhance the overall dining experience. Future research could expand on these results by exploring the impact of other variables, such as pricing, location, and menu variety, on customer satisfaction, further contributing to the development of effective service quality models.

Limitations Scope for the Further Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry, it has several limitations. Firstly, the research was conducted within the Rangpur region, which may not fully reflect the diverse preferences and behaviors of customers in other regions or countries. Therefore, the findings may not be entirely generalizable to other geographical areas. Secondly, the sample predominantly consisted of young adults and students, making up the majority of the respondents, which may introduce a bias. The representation of other age groups, such as older adults or professionals, was limited, and thus the results may not adequately reflect the satisfaction levels of a broader customer base. Moreover, since the study employed a cross-sectional design, it only captured a snapshot of customer satisfaction at a specific point in time. This design does not account for the possibility

of fluctuations in customer satisfaction based on changing factors over a longer period, such as seasonal variations or shifts in consumer preferences. Additionally, the study focused primarily on the SERVQUAL dimensions—empathy, responsiveness, tangibility, reliability, and assurance—but did not incorporate other potentially influential factors like food quality, pricing, or the influence of online reviews and digital platforms, which are increasingly relevant in the restaurant industry. Future research could address these limitations by expanding the geographical scope and ensuring a more diverse sample that includes various demographic groups. A longitudinal study design would be beneficial to examine how customer satisfaction evolves over time, allowing for deeper insights into service quality's long-term impact. Furthermore, including additional factors such as food quality, pricing strategies, and the role of digital services would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing customer satisfaction in the restaurant sector, contributing to more effective management practices and improved service quality.

References:
Al-Tit, A. A. (2015). The effect of service and food quality on customer satisfaction and hence customer retention. *Asian Social Science*, *11*(23), 129–139. https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n23p129
Awara, N. F., & Anyadighibe, J. A. (2014). The Relationship Between Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty: a Study of Selected Eateries in Calabar, Cross River State. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, *5*(9), 110–125.
Chow, I. H.-s., Lau, V. P., Lo, T. W.-c., Sha, Z., & Yun, H. (2007). Service quality in restaurant operations in China: Decision- and experiential oriented perspectives. *Hospitality Management,* 26, 689-710.
El-Said, O., & Al Hajri, S. (2022). Are customers happy with robot service? Investigating satisfaction with robot service restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Heliyon*, *8*(3). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e08986
Gupta, A. (2017). Customer satisfaction in relation to service quality. *A conceptual study on Indian hotels*, *3*(1), 302–305.
Hellier, P. K., Geursen G. M., Carr R. A., and Rickard, J. A. (2003). Customer repurchase intention general structural equation model. *European Journal of Marketing, 37*(11), 1762-1800. Hema Nalini, M., & Samuel, S. (2011). Importance-Performance Analysis to determine Service Quality of a Restaurant Service–An Empirical Study. *Advances In Management.*
Huang, Y., & Kim, D. (2023). How Does Service Quality Improve Consumer Loyalty in Sports Fitness Centers? The Moderating Role of Sport Involvement. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, *15*(17). https://doi.org/10.3390/su151712840
Karim, R. A. (2020). Influence of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty in the Private Banking Sector of Bangladesh: A PLS Approach. *Journal of Marketing and Information Systems*, *1*(3), 8–17. https://doi.org/10.31580/jmis.v1i3.1049
Khan, A. G., Lima, R. P., & Mahmud, M. S. (2021). Understanding the Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction of Mobile Banking in Bangladesh: Using a Structural Equation Model. *Global Business Review*, *22*(1), 85–100. https://doi.org/10.1177/0972150918795551\
Kinyingi Mueni (2008). Factors influencing customer satisfaction in hotel industry.United states International University-Africa, 22-50.
Ko, K. H. (2008). Service dimensions of service quality impacting customer satisfaction of fine dining restaurants in Singapore. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Nevada Las Vegas.
Kotler, P. (1973). Atmospherics as a marketing tool. *Journal of retailing, 49*(4), 48-64.
Kundi M.G. and Qureshi A.Q. (2014). Impact of service quality on customer satisfaction. *Industrial engineering letters,* 4, 1-6.
Lian, J. W. (2021). Determinants and consequences of service experience toward small retailer platform business model: Stimulus–organism–response perspective. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *62*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102631
Melia Yeni (2016). The impact of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction. *Journal of economics,* 3, 69-79.

Minh, N. H., Ha, N. T., Anh, P. C., & Matsui, Y. (2017). Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction : A Case Study of Hotel Industry in Vietnam, *11*(10), 73–85.

Muala, A. A. (2016). The Effect of Service Quality Dimensions on Customers' Loyalty through Customer Satisfaction in Jordanian Islamic Bank. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, *8*(6), 141. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijms.v8n6p141

Nguyen, Q., Nisar, T. M., Knox, D., & Prabhakar, G. P. (2018). Understanding customer satisfaction in the UK quick service restaurant industry: The influence of the tangible attributes of perceived service quality. *British Food Journal*, *120*(6), 1207–1222. https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-08-2017-0449

Pakurár, M., Haddad, H., Nagy, J., Popp, J., & Oláh, J. (2019). The service quality dimensions that affect customer satisfaction in the Jordanian banking sector. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, *11*(4). https://doi.org/10.3390/su11041113

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V., & Berry, L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing, 64*(5), 21-40.

Qin, H., & Prybutok, V. R. (2009). Service quality, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in fast-food restaurants. *International Journal of Quality and Service Science, 1*(1), 78-95.

Rahman, F.A., Jamil, M.F.C., & Iranmanesh, M. (2014). Measuring the quality of ecotourism services. SAGE Open, *4*(2), 1-14.

Ramseook Prabha (2012). Perceived service quality in restaurant services. *Journal of Management and Marketing Research,* 5, 1-7

Rauch, D. A., Collins, M. D., Nale, R. D., & Barr, P. B. (2015). Measuring service quality in mid-scale hotels. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *27*(1), 87–106.

Sekaran, U. (2013). *Research methods for business*. NY: Hermitage Publishing Services.

Slack, N. J., Singh, G., Ali, J., Lata, R., Mudaliar, K., & Swamy, Y. (2021). Influence of fast-food restaurant service quality and its dimensions on customer perceived value, satisfaction and behavioural intentions. *British Food Journal*, *123*(4), 1324–1344. https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-09-2020-0771

Tam, J. L. M. (2000). The effects of service quality perceived value and customer satisfaction on behavioral intentions. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, *6*(4), 31-43.

Tang, R. Q., Tan, Y. J., Tan, Z. X., Tan, Y. T., Almawad, G., & Alosaimi, A. (2022). A Study of Courier Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction. *International Journal of Applied Business and International Management*, *7*(1). https://doi.org/10.32535/ijabim.v7i1.1447

Watiki, C. (2014). Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Hotels in Nairobi, Kenya, 1–55.

Wilson A., Zeithaml V.A., Bitner M.J., Gremler D.D. (2008) Services Marketing, McGraw-Hill Education.

Yong Keng and Kuan Yin. (2013). Factors influencing dining experience on customer satisfaction. A Research Project, 43-135.

Zeithaml, V. A., & Bitner, M. J. (2000). *Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm*, McGraw-Hill NY.

Zibarzani, M., Abumalloh, R. A., Nilashi, M., Samad, S., Alghamdi, O. A., Nayer, F. K., … Mohammed Akib, N. A. (2022). Customer satisfaction with Restaurants Service Quality during COVID-19 outbreak: A two-stage methodology. *Technology in Society*, *70*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2022.101977

Zikmund, W. G. (2003). *Business research method* (7th ed.). Ohio: Thomson South-Western.

Published by