

# The influences of restaurant service quality and ambience towards customer satisfaction

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**Abstract:** *The aims of this paper is to measure the relationship between service quality and ambience in restaurants towards customer satisfaction. Food business have been growing rapidly recently. More and more new restaurants with various cousins and attractions in order to capture the customer to dine in. The increase number of tourist domestic and internationally make prosper the industry competition. Data were collected using questionnaire distributed among the restaurant visitors. 270 questionnaires distributed but only 212 returns completely. The results indicate that both service quality and ambience is equally important in restaurant industry towards customer satisfaction. Service provider must learn the current market trends and preferences as there is a change in customer behaviour lead to purchase intentions. Customer is getting sophisticated and the competition create advantage to the customer in selecting the service provider that can meet their needs and wants.*

**Keywords:** *Jakarta, Service quality, Ambience, Customer satisfaction*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The numbers of new restaurant enter to the market is continuously increased from 2017 to 2019. Business owner is looking forward to own a restaurants based on the large market in food especially in all major cities in Indonesia. The number of international tourists increase consistently from 2016 to 2019 lead to a huge market for the food industry. The change in pattern and trends of local people especially among the young adults increased the market demand for restaurant. There are many reasons why people would like to dine in restaurant and one of the reason is because they want to enjoy the food style. Young people is looking forward for healthy food and concerns about nutritional. Certain restaurants are good in the areas and they might be able to cater such market. It also noticeable that people go to restaurant because of value for money. Small family especially would rather spend money for dine in rather than cook themselves as it could be more expensive. Tourist at the same time are also fond of trying new cuisine and enjoy local food. Past research indicates that there are a group of tourists that visit selected destination because of the food experiences. Indonesia is one of the destinations that promised to provide various food experiences with more than 5000 traditional menus from 300 ethnics.

It is very important for service provider to know that based on research, customer come to restaurant partly because of opinions and suggestion from previous customer. It means that servicing current customer is important for a future benefit. Satisfied customer tends to come back for repurchase. At the same time satisfied customer will also communicate to others to share their positive experiences to others. Indirectly it helps to attract customer to the restaurants.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

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## 2.1 Customer satisfaction

Competition in service industry is getting tough especially in the era of modern marketing where customer is getting more knowledge and ability to make choice due to high competition in the market. Customer today have more bargaining power as they can make selection on which services or products that they really want as compared to actual consumer market in the last 2 decades. Customer satisfaction according (M.F. Shamsudin, Razak, & Salem, 2018) is the important strategic factors that service provider need to focused in order to sustain in the business. Competition in the 21<sup>st</sup> century among the market players have forced that each service providers to become market driven (Famiyeh, Asante-Darko, & Kwarteng, 2018; Forsythe, 2016; Yilmaz, Ari, & Gürbüüz, 2018). Service providers compete among themselves to provide the best and unique services that may attract and keep the customer. According to (Ahmed, Tarique, & Arif, 2017; Eberle, Milan, & Dorion, 2016; Khamis & AbRashid, 2018) customer is the source of income. Business exist because of the customers and service providers have not many choices in getting their attention except to provide the best services that may get them satisfied. (Moghavvemi, Lee, & Lee, 2018) stated that businesses depend on customer to survive in the industry.

Past studies in customer satisfaction (M. F. M. F. Shamsudin, Esa, & Ali, 2019) revealed that service provider may stand a chance to keep the customer and lead them towards loyal once the customer is satisfied with the services offered. Service provider who keeps to give best services that satisfied customer can have the benefits of customer retention (S. Hassan, Shamsudin, & Mustapha, 2019). Based on that (Janahi & Al Mubarak, 2017; Lau, Cheung, Pires, & Chan, 2019; Nguyen, Nisar, Knox, & Prabhakar, 2018) suggested that service providers to continuously improved service quality in order to gain the benefits out of the customer satisfaction. Overall, according to (Kotler, 1994), customer satisfaction is the sum of customer experienced over the subscriptions, purchased or consumptions that meet the customer expectations. (Grönroos, 2011) stated that past research indicates that service quality and customer satisfaction is becoming a common point of achieving the benefits from the customer retention.

Past research with regards to restaurants (Amin & Isa, 2008; Chen & Hu, 2010; Samen, Akroush, & Abu-Lail, 2013) indicates that customer satisfaction is important to the business survival. Service industry such as restaurants need regular customer in order to sustain (Mohd Farid Shamsudin, Ali, Wahid, & Nadzri, 2019). At the same time, restaurants or similar service industry need to continuous get new customer in order to enjoyed the business growth (Z. Zhang, Zhang, & Law, 2013). (Muhammad, Farid Shamsudin, & Hadi, 2016) stated that customer satisfaction may lead to a repeat purchase. A customer who satisfied with the service of a restaurant may have high tendency to come back for repeat purchase (M. F. Shamsudin, Nurana, Aesya, & Nabi, 2018). (M. F. M. F. Shamsudin, Ishak, et al., 2019) claimed that repeat purchased will lead to increase of sales revenue and business growth. The challenges of business today are to captured the attention of customer for being loyal to them (Aydemir & Sahin, 2019; Lau et al., 2019; Z. Zhang et al., 2013). High competition leads to heavy competition in terms of promotions and advertisements (Nguyen et al., 2018; Rejikumar, Raja Sreedharan, & Saha, 2019; Xu & Selover, 2019). The generation of current customer was said by (Ramanathan, Di, & Ramanathan, 2016; Turan Katircioglu, Mehtap-Smadi, Kiliç, & Ünlücan, 2012) to be a generation that tends to explore and compare of all the services available in order to get the best benefits out of it. (Islam, Ahmed, Ali, & Ahmer, 2019; Jayasanka & Wickramasuriya, 2019; Ryu, Han, & Jang, 2010) stated that customer can compare the best services among all the market players and get the feedback information from the previous customer from social media (Shamim & Mohsin Butt, 2013). Customer today according to (M. F. Shamsudin, Razak, & Salem, 2018) is rich of information's. They can have the feel and looks of the service providers even before they subscribe or become the customer (Gregory, 2019; Lau et al., 2019; Z. Zhang et al., 2013).

(Aydemir & Sahin, 2019) recommended that service providers to improves service quality as it may add more values and improves customer loyalty. Loyal customer brings positive impacts to service providers especially restaurant as they

may not think of switching or change their preferences as there are a lot of competitors in the market (Razak & Shamsudin, 2019). Past research (Hamzah, Lee, & Moghavvemi, 2017) indicates customer satisfaction may help service provider to sustain in business during the crisis period. Customer satisfaction can be a good platform for service industry to gain support during the economy crisis or recession (Yu & Yuan, 2019). During recession, customer will normally reduce their expenditure and saving more (M. F. Shamsudin, Razak, et al., 2018). Having food outside in favourite restaurants could be the least options should the customer is not at the satisfied level (Amin & Isa, 2008).

According to (Buttle, 1996), customer satisfaction may also increase the brand popularity of the service provider. (M. F. M. F. Shamsudin, Ali, Wahid, & Saidun, 2019) claimed that the current generation today used social media to promote their preferred service providers on frequent basis to inform their closed community circle or public about their choice of service providers (M. Shamsudin et al., 2015). The popularity of social media by the current customers now is another challenges of service provider at 21<sup>st</sup> century. Customer promote both good and bad experiences. Last two decades, service providers faced the term of word of mouth by the customer. The word of mouth is spread among them verbally to express their feelings towards their experiences (Mohd Farid Shamsudin & Razali, 2015). Research (Barabino, Deiana, & Tilocca, 2012; Shafiq, Mostafiz, & Taniguchi, 2019) claimed that happy customer will tell 10 of their friends and family about their experiences. The messages than conveyed by the family and friends to networking circles. Today, the used of social media is unlimited coverages. Customer may post their opinion and the comments can reach the entire of friend s or followers list without boundary (El-Bassiouni, Madi, Zoubeidi, & Hassan, 2012). The used of E-WOM using social media is crucial as both the benefits and disadvantages may affect the good brand within seconds.

Customer satisfaction at the restaurant services may help the service provider to keep the service provider from the competition. Satisfied customer may not have interested to explore or attracted to the new services offered by the competitors. Such situation, according to (Ahn & Back, 2018; Bapat, 2020; Girish & Lee, 2019) may help the service provider to keep and maintains their market share at stipulate time. Past research (Sallaudin Hassan & Shamsudin, 2019), also indicates that customer satisfaction contribute to the service provider growth by providing feedback and comments of their services. The feedback can be used by the service provider to improve their services from time to time. (Legendre, Cartier, & Warnick, 2019) claims that not many customer is willing to give feedback as they rather complaint or share their moments with their close friends. Satisfied customer however is willing to support the service providers by giving their opinion and at the same time support the advertising. Customer satisfaction helps service provider in a way of word of mouth and also extending the coverage of advertising media through the current social media platforms or any electronic and internet platforms (Santos Corrada, Flecha, & Lopez, 2020). (Razak & Shamsudin, 2019) also highlighted that customer satisfaction is willing to give evaluation of the current services provided by the service provider especially restaurants (M. F. M. F. Shamsudin, Ishak, et al., 2019). Service quality in restaurants must be improve continuously parallel with the needs of current customers. Customer is getting complicated as they want more and more updated services from the features, ambience, taste and customer services. Those things may add more value to customer and helps the customer to retain longer in the lifecycle (Gerdt, Wagner, & Schewe, 2019; Liu et al., 2019; J. Zhang, Zhang, & Zhang, 2019).

Customer satisfaction lead to a free review or share of information in a current social media trends (Ahmed et al., 2017; Famiyeh et al., 2018; Khamis & AbRashid, 2018). Customer will help service provider to give feedback whether live in Facebook or Instagram so that their followers can follow and feel the situation in the restaurants. The review will give all the information such as the visual of the menu, prices and the taste of the dishes. Those actions bring benefits to the service providers. It is also highlighted by (M. F. Shamsudin, Razak, et al., 2018) that good service by employee may contribute to the customer satisfaction. Customer will combine all their experiences with the service providers and

the result will be based on their expectations. Customer satisfaction derived from the overall delivery of the service providers (Eberle et al., 2016; Moghavvemi et al., 2018). High expectations but low service quality or delivery may lead to unhappy customers. Customer satisfaction is achieved when the service delivery is meeting or above the customer expectations (M. F. Shamsudin, Nurana, et al., 2018).

## **2.2 Service Quality**

Service quality in restaurants is very important especially when there is too many choices that customer have in terms of selecting the type of restaurants or the menu that they offered (Teeters & Boatman, 1995). Customer have too many experiences in subscribing to the services and therefore the level of quality must be at something that can be measurable by both parties. Service quality according to (Berry, 2009) is the comparison between the customer expectation against the customer perception. It is more less similar to how customer satisfaction was measured. Service at the same time defined by (Kotler, 1992, 1994) as “A benefits that one party can offer to another which is essentially intangible and does not result in ownership of anything” .

Therefore, service quality is the overall customer feeling and experiences that the customer went through during purchasing or subscribing the services. Quality itself is defined by (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1993) as “the features and characteristics of a product or a service that bear on its ability to satisfy needs”. There are five important dimensions in the service quality especially related to restaurant services. The five dimensions were based on the SERVQUAL and DINESERVE introduced by (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1994) and (Terho, Eggert, Haas, & Ulaga, 2015) are reliability, assurance, responsiveness, tangibles and empathy. Each of the dimensions play an important role as a measurement tool towards evaluating the customer satisfaction over the service rendered to customer.

One of the important elements in service quality is the role of reliability which can be evaluate through the ability of the restaurant employee to service the customer as per their promised and accurately (Peng & Chen, 2015). The waiting time is within the reasonable time and the delivery is according to the item ordered. It is also important that the service provider emphasis on the assurance as it may represent the level of knowledge of employee of the products and services offered by the restaurant (Wu, 2017) . Assurance reflects the courtesy of employee and ability to convey and instil trust and confident to customers.

Restaurant may also need to look at the tangibles matters in service quality related to physical factors such as parking areas, cleaning services, decorations and those related to the facilities that can provides convenient to customer (El-Bassiouni et al., 2012). Reliability at the same time is more related to the accuracy and service delivery time while responsiveness is measuring the speed and quality and the ability of the staff to meet the demand or special needs of customer (Turan Katircioglu et al., 2012). Assurance is related to how the service fulfil the needs and wants of customer in terms of servicing, delivery, and information given to customer. Empathy is related to how the staff being more concerns about customer at service. Staff should try to understand the customer situation and provides the services with a positive feeling that may lead to customer satisfaction.

It was also highlighted that restaurants' employee must serve customer based on individualized attention. It means the employee may not assume that all customer is the same. Each customer may have a different preferences and purchase behaviour (Buttle, 1996). Beside that it is also recommended that restaurant to ensure all employee are being responsiveness. Responsiveness refers to the speed of delivery especially during peak hours. Customer may have no complaint during off peak but the critical reliable services is really needed during the peak hours. Peak hours are when customer is rushing to the restaurant perhaps because of the limited time. During peak hours, number of customer will be increase while restaurant need to serve all accordingly within a reasonable time (Uddin, 2019). Customer will also measure the responsiveness based on the prompt service. How the restaurant acknowledges the attendance of customer and the time take to be served. Beside that customer could also measure the responsiveness of a restaurant based on their

extra effort in doing something extra based on ala carte order (Barabino et al., 2012). Any special request whether it is related to the menu, dishes or other requirements could lead to customer observation and evaluation for the service delivery.

### 2.3 Ambience

Past research highlighted that ambience or atmosphere of the restaurant is important to induce overall positive customer experiences. Ambience can be a useful tools or platform to add more value to customer to the restaurant (Clemes, Mohi, Li, & Hu, 2018). Many past research focused on service quality but recent study claimed that ambience can helps the restaurant to add more positive experiences to customer (Jun, Kang, & Hyun, 2017). Among the important things that service provider can take into considerations is by providing a good lighting in the restaurant. The lighting should be match with the concept, theme of the restaurants. It should be adjustable to balance with the natural light. Good lighting will make customer feel; comfortable and happy (Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012). Service provider can also add to the customer experiences the elements of music so that it can blend together with the restaurant decorations, lighting and music. The music however must be make sure suitable to the moods during that situation. It should be flexible enough to match with external environments too. The music itself must be at the acceptable volume. High volume either from the music or any electronic devises will make customer feel annoyed (Nguyen et al., 2018). The same goes to the interaction among staff that sometimes they may raise their voice or talk loudly.

One more thing that is important for restaurant according to (Peng & Chen, 2015) is the space for customers. The restaurant should provide a reasonable space for customer to be comfort. It should not be to tight that will make movement getting difficult (Shahzadi, Malik, Ahmad, & Shabbir, 2018). The space is also required as customer need at least some level of privacy to discuss and had conversation. Ample space will make customer feel comfortable and ease. It was also highlighted that service provider need to focused on a good smell of the restaurants. The design of the restaurants should be good by separating the kitchen and dining hall. The separation is to avoid the smell from spoil the customer moods. The restaurant should also have a good ventilation system so that the air circulation is clean and odourless (Peng & Chen, 2015). On top of that, service provider should also provide additional smell that is suitable for apatite and situation in the restaurant. A good smell either from natural products or not could provide a good customer experiences to the customer.

## III. METHODOLOGY

This research used survey method to measure the hypothesis of the relationship between service quality and ambience towards customer satisfaction. This research aims to measure the direct relationship between two constructs using quantitative method. Questionnaire were used to collect data. Each questionnaire consists of relevant questions that was adopted from past researches. Some wording and sentences change based on recommendation from the subject matter expert. Pilot test conducted prior the full data collection to test the validity of the questions. 270 respondents participated ion the data collection. Respondent were chosen based on selected restaurants in Jakarta. Overall the data collection took 7 days to be completed. Out of 270 questionnaires distributed only 212 are usable. The balance of 58 are either rejected due to missing data. The data compiled were tested using AMOS and SEM for the hypothesis measurements.

## IV. FINDINGS

Table 1 is the summary of the respondents' profile that took participation in the data collection. There are 51.88% male and 48.11% female. The numbers can be considered as balance with a variance between less than 5%. The balance numbers of male and female can reduce the bias based on gender. 18.87% were first time to the restaurant while half of the respondent at least come to the restaurant between 2 – 5 times a year. Two important reasons for coming to restaurant according to the feedback is because of the food and service. It is also interesting to know that there is various reason

that lead to customer decision making in term of choice of restaurant. Responses gathered that 22.17% choose location as criteria followed by ambience. Value for money and service come next after ambience. Such results would be good to be consider for service provider for their marketing strategy.

Table 1: Summary respondents' profile

Descriptions	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	110	51.88%
Female	102	48.11%
	212	100.00%
Frequency visit to the restaurant		
first time	40	18.87%
2 -5 times a year	112	52.83%
6 - 10 a year	48	22.64%
11 - 15 a year	11	5.19%
more than 16 times a year	1	0.47%
	212	100.00%
Reason to choose the restaurants		
The food	91	42.92%
The service	90	42.45%
The design	14	6.60%
X factor	17	8.02%
	212	100.00%
Top criteria in selecting restaurants		
Location	47	22.17%
Ambience	41	19.34%
Value for money	35	16.51%
Service	35	16.51%
Hygiene	14	6.60%
Cuisine	24	11.32%
Chef	16	7.55%
	212	100.00%
Age		
<20 years	3	1.42%
20 - 29 years	16	7.55%
30 - 39 years	87	41.04%
40 - 49 years	61	28.77%
50 and above	45	21.23%
	212	100.00%

Table 2: Summary of statistics of the questionnaire survey

Constructs	No. of items	Mean	SD	$\alpha$
Service quality	11	3.136	1.038	0.893
Ambience	6	3.368	1.039	0.864
Customer satisfaction	5	3.034	1.378	0.876

Notes: SD, standard deviation;  $\alpha$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ; overall  $\alpha = 0.881$

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values of the six constructs. Table 3 indicates the rotated factor loadings and their corresponding eigenvalues. The rule of thumb for Cronbach's  $\alpha$  is 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). In this study, the  $\alpha$  values of each item are higher than the broadly diagnosed rule of thumb, thereby indicating a good internal consistency

PCA intends to explain the maximum amount of variance with the fewest number of primary components. The PCA was conducted to apprehend the fundamental association of factors data decline and to escape multi-collinearity. In the PCA, cut-off point was 0.50 (absolute value less than 0.50 should be quashed), which ensures the questionnaire reliability. As suggested, through the findings of PCA, three item of "Service quality" (SQ 3, SQ 8 & SQ 9) and one item of "Ambience" (Amb 4) were eliminated due to the value less than 0.50.

Table 3: Result of principal component analysis

No	Service quality	Ambience	Customer satisfaction
SQ 1	0.854		
SQ 2	0.752		
SQ 4	0.822		
SQ 5	0.893		
SQ 6	0.754		
SQ 7	0.878		
SQ 10	0.865		
SQ 11	0.877		
SQ 12	0.787		
SQ 13	0.788		
SQ 14	0.814		
Amb 1		0.862	
Amb 2		0.811	
Amb 3		0.695	
Amb 5		0.810	
Amb 6		0.789	
Amb 7		0.791	
Csat 1			0.823
Csat 2			0.812
Csat 3			0.755
Csat 4			0.872
Csat 5			0.860

Eigenvalue	8.578	4.169	2.799
Variance explained (%)	34.521	18.135	12.531

Table 4 presents the values of AVE for constructs ranged from 0.89 to 0.93, which surpassed the threshold value 0.50, thus ensuring the convergent validity. To assess convergent validity, t-statistics related to factor loadings are also taken under consideration (Rao and Troshani, 2007). Table 4 shows the t-statistics values of all items that are significant at the 0.01 level and established the convergent validity of the constructs. To test discriminant validity, AVE is also used (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The rule of thumb is that AVE values should be higher than corresponding squared inter-construct correlation estimates (SIC) in the model (Churchill, 1979).

Table 4: Measurement model results

Constructs variables	Standardized loadings	t-statistics	CR	AVE
SQ 1	0.874	15.163**	0.90	0.89
SQ 2	0.762	16.321**		
SQ 4	0.832	12.527**		
SQ 5	0.813	11.632**		
SQ 6	0.794	11.797**		
SQ 7	0.808	15.963**		
SQ 10	0.815	16.721**		
SQ 11	0.827	12.927**		
SQ 12	0.797	11.532**		
SQ 13	0.798	11.397**		
SQ 14	0.834	11.877**	0.91	0.90
Amb 1	0.872	12.978**		
Amb 2	0.893	13.774**		
Amb 3	0.903	14.754**		
Amb 5	0.843	13.845**		
Amb 6	0.811	13.123**		
Amb 7	0.798	14.764**		
Csat 1	0.913	18.395**	0.88	0.93
Csat 2	0.964	11.668**		
Csat 3	0.731	19.764**		
Csat 4	0.812	10.887**		
Csat 5	0.834	11.747**		
Eigenvalue	8.538	4.169	2.799	
Variance explained (%)	34.921	18.135	12.531	



Table 5: Path analysis of structural model

Casual path	Path coefficient	t-statistics	Results
Service quality → Customer satisfaction	0.355*	2.332	Supported
Ambience → Customer satisfaction	0.364*	2.638	Supported
Note: *,**Significant at $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$ levels, respectively			

Table 5 is the result of path analysis of structural model where it shows that both service quality and ambience influenced the customer satisfaction.

## V. DISCUSSIONS

The results of this research claimed that both service quality and ambience is equally important towards customer satisfaction. One of the possible reason that can support the findings is because of the nature of customer satisfaction, Customer satisfaction by nature can only be achieved once the overall customer experiences is more than expectations. It means than customer satisfaction can be achieved if the total customer experiences more than what the customer expect. The combination of service quality and ambience can be considered as double happiness to the customer should it match the customer expectations. Ambience is the overall atmosphere that add to customer experiences. Whereas service quality is among the additional valued that is expected by customer. Many past study focused only on service quality. Results from past studies revealed that service quality influenced customer satisfaction (Bujisic, Hutchinson, & Parsa, 2014; Cheng, Chang, Tsai, Chen, & Tseng, 2019; Jun et al., 2017; Ryu et al., 2012).

Recent studies normally focusing on ambience alone. Ambience studied in various scope of research such as theme park, SPA, and hotel. Combining the ambience create another results that can be applied to other restaurants especially in providing additional customer experiences other than the service quality or food quality. Ambience can be used as an element to enhance the happiness of customer and lead to satisfaction.

It is recommended that service provider especially restaurant business owner to start focusing on ambience as it can provide additional benefits to attract more customer and repeat purchase. Ambience can be seen as additional cost to customer and subject to the suitable places and space. Service provider may look at every possibility to insert any of the elements of ambience based on their current setting depends on the possibility. Overall, the findings are very important to service provider to provide another insight of elements that contribute to customer satisfaction.

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