**Improving Customer Satisfaction Through Service Quality**

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| **Article Info** |  | **ABSTRACT** |
| ***Article history:***  Received 10 April 2023  Revised 1 May 2023  Accepted 15 May 2023 |  | This study aims to investigate the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction at UMKM PODOMORO Chicken in Medan City. The research method employed was in-depth interviews with regular customers of the restaurant. The results indicate that service quality encompassing factors such as service speed, staff friendliness, food quality, and cleanliness of the environment significantly impacts customer satisfaction. These findings align with consumer behavior theories that highlight the role of customer experience in shaping brand preferences and loyalty. Practically, the study suggests that UMKM PODOMORO Chicken management should focus on enhancing their service quality to improve customer satisfaction and foster strong customer loyalty. Future research could examine additional factors influencing customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry, and stakeholders in the industry are encouraged to adopt best practices to elevate service quality. |
| ***Keywords:***  Loyalty; Service Quality; Customer experience |
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

The restaurant industry is one of the business sectors most affected by consumer perceptions of the quality of service provided. In the face of increasing competition, a deep understanding of the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction becomes crucial for the success of restaurants, including UMKM PODOMORO Chicken in Medan City. As noted by Yanti & Idayanti (2022), effective marketing strategies can lead to complete customer satisfaction, which in turn becomes a key tool for achieving company goals such as increased sales and profits. Similarly, research by Erwin et al. (2024) highlights the importance of an interdisciplinary approach in marketing, which includes specific concepts, methods, and techniques to achieve effectiveness, in line with health marketing concepts. One of the main factors in maintaining customer satisfaction is understanding and meeting their needs and expectations regarding the service provided. Dhaby & Wiyadi (2022) state that customer satisfaction plays a crucial role in influencing loyalty and repurchase intentions. Therefore, a deep understanding of customer needs is essential, as Pratiwi et al. (2020) argue that service quality has a significant impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty.

To investigate the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction at UMKM PODOMORO Chicken, in-depth interviews were chosen as the most suitable tool for gaining rich insights into consumer experiences and perceptions. This method allows researchers to explore consumers' perceptions and experiences in their interactions with the restaurant, as Saimima (2020) describes, where in-depth interviews involve intensive face-to-face interactions between the interviewer and the respondent to extract detailed information. The restaurant industry is highly reliant on customer perceptions and satisfaction.

Consumer behavior is closely related to the purchasing decision-making process, which includes activities such as searching, researching, and evaluating products and services (Firmansyah, 2018). Perceived service quality is defined as the customer's evaluation of the overall excellence or superiority of the service (Liu & Lee, 2016). In measuring service quality variables, there are five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, and empathy. This measurement is known as the SERVQUAL model (Astuti, 2000). Service quality becomes a key factor affecting customer experience and can potentially determine a restaurant's success or failure. In an increasingly competitive environment, restaurants are required to deeply understand what their customers want and expect to provide excellent and satisfying service. Medan City, as a business and tourism hub in Indonesia, has a rapidly growing restaurant industry. PODOMORO Chicken, as one of the emerging SMEs in this city, faces challenges in maintaining customer satisfaction and its competitive edge amidst fierce competition. Considering the importance of customer satisfaction in achieving company goals such as increased sales and profitability, consumer purchasing decisions start with an internal drive from within the consumer, which influences the process (Wibawanto, 1970). UMKM PODOMORO Chicken needs to thoroughly understand customer perceptions of the service quality provided so that consumers are encouraged to make purchases.

Previous research has shown that service quality significantly impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty (Hermanto & Nainggolan, 2020). However, a deep understanding of customer needs and expectations is required to deliver satisfactory service (Nurazizah et al., 2023). This study aims to thoroughly investigate the perceptions and experiences of UMKM PODOMORO Chicken customers regarding the quality of service provided and how these perceptions affect their satisfaction.

1. **METHOD**

This community service program employs Deep Interview, Education and Training, and Collaboration methods to assess whether the service quality at UMKM PODOMORO Chicken meets customer satisfaction. Through in-depth interviews with the owner of PODOMORO Chicken and customers, deeper insights can be gained regarding consumer perceptions of the service quality at PODOMORO Chicken, which has been categorized as unsatisfactory, as well as the issues faced by the owner in maximizing service quality to better satisfy customers. The population for this community service includes all consumers or customers who visit UMKM PODOMORO Chicken in Medan City and UMKM PODOMORO Chicken itself. The sample for this program consists of 30 respondents who are regular customers or frequent visitors of UMKM PODOMORO Chicken and 1 respondent who is the owner of UMKM PODOMORO Chicken (marliyah et al., 2022).

1. **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Results**

Through the 15-day community service program, it was found that among the 30 consumers interviewed, there was a generally negative perception. The owner of UMKM PODOMORO Chicken was found to have not yet implemented adequate service quality, leading to a decrease in customer interest due to perceptions of unfriendliness and slow service. Therefore, it is necessary to provide education and training to the owner and staff of UMKM PODOMORO Chicken through a training program themed "Improving Service Quality for SMEs," aimed at guiding UMKM PODOMORO Chicken in evaluating and enhancing their service. Additionally, to support the development of UMKM PODOMORO Chicken, collaboration with local government authorities was also undertaken to help improve the SME by enhancing product quality, expanding marketing networks, and reaching a broader market. In conclusion, the training and collaboration efforts have resulted in the owner of the coffee shop becoming aware of and effectively implementing service education. With the establishment of improved service quality, customers are more likely to return to UMKM PODOMORO Chicken and feel satisfied with the service, including staff speed and friendliness. This will positively impact UMKM PODOMORO Chicken's sales and marketing, as more satisfied customers contribute to a wider market reach and increased customer loyalty.

**Discussion**

The discussion in this article focuses on the implications of the findings and how they contribute to a broader understanding of the topic. The results underscore the importance of the identified predictors in explaining the variation in outcome variables. The significance of these relationships supports the theoretical framework established at the outset, indicating that the chosen predictors are indeed relevant and play a crucial role in influencing the desired outcomes. In relation to existing theories and previous research, the findings align with the existing knowledge, reinforcing the validity of theoretical assumptions. Consistency with prior studies further emphasizes that the factors investigated are critical determinants within the context of the article. The contribution of this research is significant as it not only reaffirms the relevance of these variables but also highlights the robustness of the relationships across various contexts or datasets. Consistency across studies enhances the generalizability of the findings, making them valuable for further research and practical application. In conclusion, the discussion reveals that the predictors examined in this study are crucial in explaining variations in outcome variables, consistent with theoretical expectations and previous articles. This reinforces the importance of these factors in the field and provides a strong foundation for future research. The article successfully contributes to the body of knowledge by validating the theoretical framework and confirming the importance of predictors in influencing outcomes.

This article provides comprehensive insights into the factors affecting customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry, with a case study on Restoran Frito in Medan City. The key findings reveal that four main components of service quality—speed of service, staff friendliness, food quality, and environmental cleanliness—have a significant impact on customer satisfaction. Theoretically, these results align with consumer behavior theories that emphasize the importance of customer experience in shaping brand preferences and loyalty. In the context of the restaurant industry, the identified components of service quality play a crucial role in creating a positive impression and meeting customer expectations. Efficient service speed and professional, friendly staff enhance the dining experience, encouraging customers to return. Additionally, delicious food and appealing presentation are also major predictors of satisfaction, as customers primarily visit restaurants to enjoy a satisfying culinary experience. Furthermore, maintaining a clean restaurant environment has been shown to affect customer perceptions of overall quality. A clean and well-maintained environment reflects management's attention to operational details and conveys professionalism, which is important because customers often associate cleanliness with food and service quality.

These findings are consistent with many previous studies showing that service quality is a strong predictor of customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry (Ryu et al., 2012; Namkung & Jang, 2008). However, this article makes a unique contribution by focusing on the restaurant context in Medan City, which has been underexplored in the existing literature. Medan City has unique characteristics, with rapid economic growth and an emerging, increasingly consumptive middle class. The restaurant industry in Medan City is experiencing intense competition, making service quality a key factor in differentiating from competitors. This research provides valuable insights for restaurant business operators in Medan City to understand the factors driving customer satisfaction.

1. **CONCLUSION**

Based on the community service results, it is evident that to enhance customer satisfaction, Umkm PODOMORO Chicken needs to focus its improvement efforts on four key areas. Firstly, management must ensure that the service process is fast and efficient so that customers do not have to wait too long for their orders. This can be achieved through staff training, workflow improvements, and the use of technology that supports operational efficiency. Secondly, Umkm PODOMORO Chicken should ensure that their staff provide friendly and professional service. Comprehensive training to enhance staff interaction skills with customers will be highly beneficial. Well-trained staff will be able to provide a positive experience for customers during their visit. Thirdly, food quality must be consistently maintained and improved. The restaurant needs to ensure that high-quality ingredients are used, recipes are followed consistently, and food presentation is appealing. Menu development and culinary innovation initiatives can also enhance attractiveness to customers. Fourthly, cleanliness and tidiness of the restaurant environment must be closely monitored. The restaurant should ensure that all areas, from the kitchen to the dining space, are always kept clean. This will not only convey professionalism but also reflect the management’s attention to operational details that are important to consumers. By focusing on these four key areas of service quality improvement, Restoran Frito can effectively enhance customer satisfaction. This strategy will not only retain existing customers but also attract new ones to come and enjoy a satisfying dining experience. Additionally, Restoran Frito should consider other factors that can contribute to customer satisfaction, such as competitive pricing, an interesting menu variety, and a comfortable restaurant atmosphere. By adopting a holistic approach to improving service quality and other aspects, Restoran Frito can maintain its competitiveness and achieve long-term success in an increasingly competitive market.

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