DETERMINING FOOD QUALITY AS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF CUSTOMERS' DINING EXPERIENCE

Aravind Kumar Rai, Manipal University Jaipur, Jaipur Rajasthan
Mukesh Shekhar, Manipal University Jaipur, Jaipur Rajasthan
Shweta Upamanyu, Manipal University Jaipur, Jaipur Rajasthan
Anmol Mehta, Manipal University Jaipur, Jaipur Rajasthan

ABSTRACT

The quality of food is a fundamental component to satisfy the dining experience in a restaurant. However, most of the literature found is either on service delivery or on customer experiences. Furthermore, there is a lack of quantitative studies to establish the important food quality parameters that are perceived by the customers of fine dining restaurant in India. This study adopted a mix-method approach. The Scopus data base was explored with the help of bibliometric analysis to identify the emerging area of research on food quality and factor analysis was applied to identify its dimensions. The result showed that there is a strong linkage between food quality and customers' dining experience and appearance, aroma & texture, service, and taste are the identified dimensions of food quality in fine dining restaurants. Hence, restaurant managers should pay more attention to the identified factors to enhance their business.

Key Words: Food Quality, Restaurant, Hospitality, Perception, Dining Experience.

INTRODUCTION

Dining out is more of an experience now a days. It is a token to spend time with family and friends; an opportunity to socialise in a relaxed setting while enjoying delicious cuisine. This means that customers expect delicious cuisine, pleasant ambiance, entertainment, and speedy service. Fine dining establishments or the restaurants of luxury hotels cater to these aspects by providing high-quality meals in a great ambience setting, thus creating a great dining experiences (Göçer et al., 2014).

Datta, (2020) mentioned that the increasing income and global exposure have increased the consciousness of the food lovers and they seek for new, exciting, and relevant culinary sensory experiences everywhere. Consumers cherish hedonic advantages of meals and look for features that engage all their senses and provide the most pleasurable experience. There are many factors that influence this food sensory like taste, these are collectively known as food quality (Teng & Chang, 2013). Although the food and service are the main components, the setting in which the meal is eaten is quite an important factor. It is well known that the ambiance of a restaurant may enhance the eating experience and influence customer satisfaction and subsequent behaviour. Thus, a multi-sensory setting or service is critical in providing remarkable dining experiences for customers.

Globalization of industries in India in recent times has generated income for the present employees to afford higher quality of living and a new lifestyle. This group is eager to try new culinary pleasures, which is making the restaurant dining more popular, and customers are accepting more theme diversities. The restaurants of luxury hotels are commonly termed as fine dining restaurant and cater to this sector. Food is an essential element to please the dining experience in a restaurant. However, most of the studies are

either on service delivery or on consumer experiences. In addition, maximum among them are conceptual based studies and research to measure food quality in a fine dining restaurant is still unventured. The primary purpose of this study is to explore the literature on food quality and then determine its dimension by analyzing customers' dining experience on it.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Abdelhamied (2011) Customer satisfaction was studied in connection to criteria such as service quality, meal quality, pricing, and the physical environment. This research included 191 questionnaires served on 220 walk-in customers at a fast-food restaurant. It was discovered that service quality, food quality, price and the physical surroundings all contribute to customer satisfaction with a fast-food restaurant's service. Customers' happiness at fast food restaurants is mostly influenced by the physical surroundings. People appreciate the physical environment if it is clean and well-lit. They also like the smell and the air quality. Environmental factors like music and design can influence customer satisfaction by building a positive image of the restaurant in customers' thoughts.

(Majid et al., 2018) In Terengganu, Malaysia, researchers studied the link between customer loyalty, service quality, meal quality, and image. A cross-sectional, quantitative strategy was adopted. The convenience sample was utilized to conduct service, meal, image, and customer loyalty metrics. 231 relevant data points were examined using multiple regressions. Food, service, and image affected customer loyalty. Customers are more loyal to restaurants that provide high-quality food and service as these create a positive image

Alonso et al., (2005) defined the aspects of "Dining experience" and their effect on customer perceived values. A combination of descriptive and quantitative research methods was employed, including a survey of fine dining restaurant guests. This research used a standardized questionnaire with preset close-ended options. The five-factor "Dining experience" structure revealed by exploratory factor analysis explained up to 58.35 percent of the variance. Aesthetic, ambient, and hygiene factors had statistically significant effect on customer perceived value. However external and tangibles factors did not. The study's results demonstrate the importance of "Dining experience" in creating and enhancing customer value.

(Mohaydin Ghulam et al., 2017)in Food safety impacts meal quality and customer satisfaction. Their research sampled 116 students utilizing easy sampling method. These students were from Lahore's University of Engineering and Technology. Food quality (FQ) is an independent variable whereas consumer attitude fulfilment (CAF) is a dependent variable. The FQ-customer perception relationship Food quality (FQ) is an independent variable whereas consumer attitude fulfilment (CAF) is a dependent variable.

To find out whether food service-brand equity affects customer perception of food value, food risk, and brand choice, one researcher Datta, (2021) looked into it. The study employed a convenience sample of 386 steakhouse patrons. The impacts of service-brand awareness and brand image on customer perceptions of food value and risk were studied using structural equation modelling. Brand awareness improves food value assessments but not perceived physical hazard. Contrarily, brand image had a negative influence on perceived physical risk and a positive impact on brand choice, "but not on perceived value". This is the first research work that tries to address the topics such as how service-brand equity influences food-risk and value assessments, as well as brand choice Tables 1-3.

Table 1 ARTICLES FROM SCOPUS DATABASE			
Author	**Paper Title**	**Key Words**	**Citation**
(Aaker et al.,	Canadian Organic Food Consumers'	food quality; health; market	41

2015)	Profile and Their Willingness to Pay Premium Prices	segmentation; organic food; psychographics; willingness to pay	
(Teng & Chang, 2013)	Mechanism of customer value in restaurant consumption: Employee hospitality and entertainment cues as boundary conditions	Employee hospitality; Entertainment cues; Food quality; Perceived value; Task performance	38
(Abdelhamied, 2011)	Customers' perceptions of floating restaurants in Egypt	Customer satisfaction; Food quality; Repeat patronage intention; Sailing Floating Restaurants (SFR); Service quality	23
(Göçer et al., 2014)	Food as people: Teenagers' perspectives on food personalities and implications for healthy eating	Branding; Food marketing; Food symbolism; Healthy eating; Youth	22
(Black et al., 2012)	Variety and quality of healthy foods differ according to neighbourhood deprivation	Food environment; Food quality; Food variety; Neighbourhood deprivation	18
(Alonso et al., 2005)	Testing a model of perceived food quality determinants	Image dimension; Perceived food quality; Regression analysis; Tangible dimension	15
(BELLIA Claudio et al., 2016)	Street food and food safety: A driver for tourism?	Food quality; Food safety; Steet food; Tourism	14
(Hussain et al., 2018)	How do foreigners perceive? Exploring foreign diners' satisfaction with service quality of Chinese restaurants	Asia Pacific; China; Chinese restaurants; customer satisfaction; dining experience; foreign travelers; language proficiency; regional differences; Service quality; tourism marketing	9
(Savelli et al., 2017)	Food habits and attitudes towards food quality among young students	Food behaviour; Food quality; Food services; University students; Young people	9
(Richardson et al., 2019)	Effect of dining experience on future intention in quick service restaurants	Ambiance; Convenience; Food quality; Overall satisfaction; Quick service restaurants; Service quality	8
(Dimitrovski, 2016)	Urban gastronomic festivals—Non-food related attributes and food quality in satisfaction construct: A pilot study	Behavioral intention; food quality; gastronomic tourism; non-food related attributes; pilot study; urban gastronomic event	8
(Bing Jia & Yongjian Yang, 2011)	The design of food quality supervision platform based on the Internet of Things	context modeling; food security; IOT; matching algorithm; ontology	7
(Ho et al., 2021)	Perceived food souvenir quality as a formative second-order construct: how do tourists evaluate the quality of food souvenirs?	food souvenir; formative measurement; perceived food quality; Perceived food souvenir quality; second-order construct	6
(Pérez-Ferrer et al., 2020)	Longitudinal changes in the retail food environment in Mexico and their association with diabetes	Built environment; Convenience foods; Food supply; Mexico; Supermarkets; Type 2 diabetes mellitus; Urban health	5
(Lari et al., 2020)	Prioritising theme park service quality in Islamic contexts: an analytic hierarchy process approach	Analytic hierarchy process (AHP); Islamic attributes; Service quality; Theme parks; United Arab Emirates (UAE)	5
(Pratt et al., 2017)	Food miles and food choices: the case of an upscale urban hotel in Hong Kong	emissions; Food miles; food production; Hong Kong; sustainable food; transportation	5
(Otsuki, 2014)	Social economy of quality food	Brazil; Food procurement; Governance; Inequality; Local capacity; Quality	5

(Walch et al., 2021)	The Nutrient Quality of Foods Provided to Clients at the Largest Food Pantry in Alaska	diet quality; food pantry; Food security; low income	2
(Liu et al., 2022)	Comparison of localized and foreign restaurant brands for consumer behavior prediction	Destination image; Destination trust; Environmental evaluation; Food quality; Recommendation; Willingness to pay more	1
(Lefrid, 2021)	Dining at gas stations: an analysis of nonconventional fast-food outlets from a consumer behavior perspective	Behavioral intention; Convenience; Customer satisfaction; Fast-food; Gas stations	1
(Kala & Barthwal, 2020)	Exploring tourist satisfaction on food and restaurant experience in mountainous religious destinations	Experience; Food; India; Mountainous destination; Religious destination; Restaurant; Tourist satisfaction	1
(Joung et al., 2015)	The Impact of Perceived Service and Food Quality on Behavioral Intentions in Continuing Care Retirement Communities: A Mediating Effect of Satisfaction	behavioral intention; continuing care retirement communities; food quality; satisfaction; service quality	1
(Evans et al., 2022)	The ontological politics of freshness: Qualities of food and sustainability governance	Actor-network theory; economy of qualities; market studies; plastic packaging; sustainable food	0
(Aktas-Polat & Polat, 2022)	Discovery of factors affecting tourists' fine dining experiences at five-star hotel restaurants in Istanbul	Customer delight; Fine dining experience; Latent Dirichlet allocation; Satisfaction; Topic modeling	0
(Zeballos et al., 2020)	Does how you pay influence the share of healthy items that you Buy? Assessing differences in nutritional quality of food purchases by payment type	FoodAPS; Guiding stars; Payment type	0
(Rodríguez López et al., 2019)	Dining experience in the restaurant: Theoretical and empirical delimitation for two types of establishments	Atmosphere; Casual restaurant; Dining experience; Fine restaurant; Food quality; Service quality	0
(van Boekel, 2017)	Food chain processes and food quality	Consumer; Food chain; Food chain actor; Food production; Food quality; Innovation; Quality analysis critical control points (QACCP); Sustainability	0
(Li, 2015)	Adaptability analysis of system for retail chain enterprise management	ERP; GSP; Information management system; Retail chain enterprises	0
(Wijaya S et al., 2016)	The underlying factors affecting consumers' behavioral intentions in foodservice business in Surabaya, Indonesia	Behavioral intentions; Food quality; Physical dining environment; Restaurants; Service quality	0

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Mix method approach was applied in this study. Initially the bibliometric analysis was applied to explore the Scopus data to identify the emerging area of research on food quality and dining experience. Then the survey instrument was used to measure food quality by adapting 10 items from the study. The 7 Point Likert scale was used to capture the responses. Convenience sampling method was applied to select the 25 fine dining restaurants of 14, 4-star and 5-star hotels of Jaipur for the data collection. The questionnaires were self-administered by the researcher and were collected from the guests visiting these restaurants.

Eliminating all the incomplete data, 436 data was loaded in SPSS for analysis. Profile of the 70% of the samples was male and 85% were Indians.

DATA ANALYSIS

Bibliometric Analysis

The VOSviewer software was utilized to examine the data. It is likely to acquire visual links using this application. Besides, it is simple to generate maps corresponding to citation analysis and co-citation analysis results. In addition, VOSviewer includes a strong graphical interface that permits designing maps that signifies each analysis unit's networks. The Scopus bibliographic data base was initially scanned with key words "food quality" or "quality of food". The source of data was limit to the subject areas: "business, management and accounting", "social Science", and "decision science". The search result established 65 data and then the sources related to the field of hospitality or food service business was shortlisted. The 29 filtered data was uploaded in VOSviewer software. Searching the co-occurrence of author's keywords yielded the network references of the variable food quality (Figure 1).
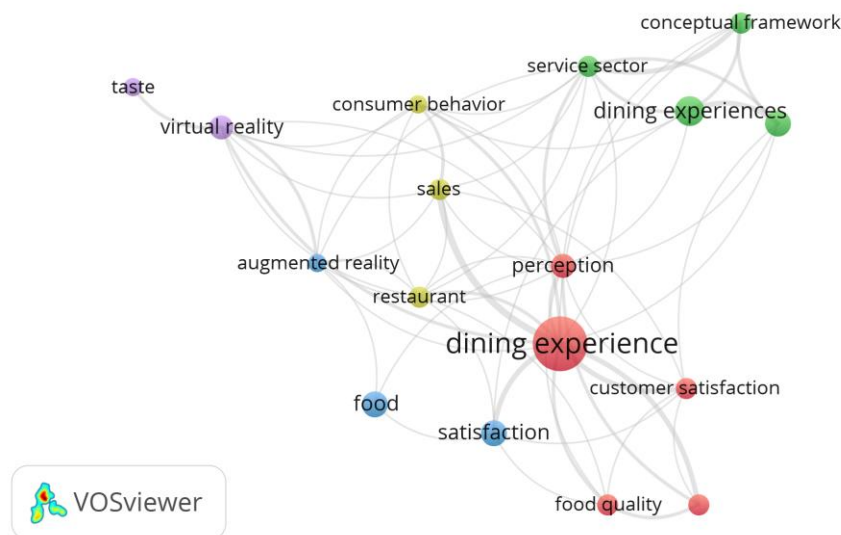

FIGURE 1
BIBLIOMETRIC NETWORK

The result established that the most cited author (Aaker et al., 2015) with 49 citations followed by (Teng & Chang, 2013) with 38 citations, (Abdelhamied, 2011):23 (Göçer et al., 2014): 22, (Black et al., 2012): 18, (Alonso et al., 2005): 15, and (BELLIA Claudio et al., 2016): 14, and the remaining all are below 1 citations. Very strong network of food quality and dining experience were established, with traces of occurrence with customer satisfaction, perception, restaurant, and food components (taste and reality was established). The analysis further suggested that most of the articles published in scopus in this field is conceptual in nature.

Explore the Factors of Food Quality in the Fine Dining Restaurants

Cronbach's Alpha was created to address the need for an objective method of assessing the internal consistency and dependability of a research instrument. The result

established the satisfied alpha value of the 10 items to be 0.72, which is greater than the threshold value of 0.7.

KMO determines the sample's adequacy. If the value of Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) is more than 0.5, the sampling is acceptable. According to (Field, 2000) the value of KMO is 0.772 and p= 0.00. According to (Field, 2000), a basic minimum of 0.5 is recommended and factor analysis may be conducted on this data set.

Factor rotation is a method of defining a limited set of factors that can best represent the whole connection between variables. This approach was used to create uncorrelated linear combinations of the observed data. The first component has the most variation. The subsequent components explain progressively less of the variation and are all uncorrelated with one another. The initial factor solution is obtained via principal components analysis (PCA) and varimax rotation.

The total variance extracted established 04 dimensions with eigenvalue greater than 1 and cumulative variance of 95.5%. The varimax factor loading further categorized the 04 factors with each having factorial loading value above 0.5.

Table 2
SUMMARY OF TOTAL VARIANCE EXTRACTED

Component	SS Loadings	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.4	30.9	30.9
2	2.82	25.6	56.5
3	2.39	21.7	78.2
4	1.9	17.3	95.5

Table 3
ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Freshness and quality of food served	0.724			
Nutrition value of the meal	0.623			
Presentation of the food	0.601			
Doneness of the food		0.799		
Aroma of your meal		0.717		
Temperature of served food			0.709	
Uses of appropriate crockery, cutlery, glassware			0.778	
Portion size of the meal			0.692	
Taste of the items				0.772
Quality of ingredients used in food preparations				0.671

Note. 'varimax' rotation was used

The first dimension with an eigenvalue: 3.4 and variance of 30.9% and has 3 factors. Item freshness and quality of food served has the maximum loading of 0.72, followed by nutrition value of the meal (0.623), and presentation of the food (0.601). Based on its loading and literature review this factor has been termed as "Appearance". The second dimension with an eigenvalue: 2.82 and variance of 25.6% is composed of two items. Doneness of the food has a factorial loading of 0.799, and aroma of your meal has 0.717. Based on its loading and literature review this factor has been termed "Aroma & Texture".

The third identified dimension with 03 items has an eigenvalue of 2.39 and variance of 21.7%. Temperature of served food (loading=0.709), uses of appropriate crockery, cutlery,

glassware (loading=0.778), and portion size of the meal (loading=0.692) composes this dimension. Grounded on literature review and factor loadings this dimension is termed as "Service". With a variance of 17.3% and eigenvalue of 1.9, the fourth dimension is framed with two items. Component taste of the items has a loading of 0.772 and quality of ingredients used in food preparations has 0.671 loading. This dimension is named as "Taste" based on the item loading and literature support.

DISCUSSION

In the study, food quality studies in the food service or restaurant business field are examined by means of bibliometric analysis. According to co-occurrence analysis results, it can be argued that food quality studies are principally focused on dining experience variables, as "dining experience" is found as the maximum recurrently used word in the abstracts. Furthermore, "customer satisfaction", "satisfaction", and "food" keywords are also commonly used. The variable is related to the "restaurant" and "service" sector, which is also evident through the mapping. The linkages also established that most of these articles are based on "conceptual framework" and hence there is a dearth in quantitative studies. The keyword "food" was found to have common occurrence linkage with "augmented reality", "virtual Reality", and "taste". Whereas the "sales" depends on the "perception" and on the "customer behaviour".

The PCA analysis identified a four-dimension food-quality model, namely: appearance, aroma & texture, service, and taste. Appearance: the size, shape, color, structure, transparency or turbidity, dullness or gloss, and degree of wholesomeness or damage are all factors in a food's look. The interactions between a substance or object and its environment as perceived by the human observer give rise to appearance, which comprises all observable attributes. In this analysis, this factor explained 30.9% of the total variance. This factor supports the Datta & Singh, (2018) food appearance factor that consists of the geometrical, the food's dimensions of size, shape and intrinsic characteristic variability in uniformity and mass, and the optical, surface gloss or dullness, the nature and degree of pigmentation, and the light-scattering power of the food's structure. Aroma and Texture of the Food: The second-factor aroma & texture have been shown to influence food choices, portion selection, and can promote a specific desire to consume certain foods (Savelli et al., 2017). This factor explained the 25.6% of the total variance that showed that food aromas had a positive influence on some emotions (pleasure, but not arousal), as well as customers' impressions of the general food quality and restaurant environment. Serving the Food: The most important things to remember about serving prepared foods. This is an important factor influencing decision-making is the service provided by the restaurant (Richardson et al., 2019). The third factor serving the food explained the 21.7% of the total variance. The transition from cooking to eating is not insignificant. Foodservice requires essential role divides, etiquette, and cultural traditions, especially with advanced production and preparation. This factor confirms the study of Dimitrovski, (2016) and Bing Jia & Yongjian Yang, (2011). Taste of Food: the fourth-factor taste of the food explained the 17.3% of the variance. Datta, (2020) explained that it is the most critical element and yet perspective in nature. The taste of the food depends on the palatability of the person and great difficult to maintain a uniform favorable appreciation.

Limitations of the Study

The research is limited to a city in India. As a result, the study's sample cannot be extrapolated to other cities in the country. It is suggested that the same structures be studied with a large sample size dispersed across the country. Other factors, such as temperature and

food presentation, should also be investigated as essential elements of food quality. Future study should take the aforementioned factors into account.

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