

Research Article

A Literature Review: Unraveling the Dimensions of Food Quality and Its Influence on Consumer Satisfaction

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Abstract.

This research examines food quality dimensions and their impact on customer satisfaction, a topic often seen through a Western lens. By delving into menu variety, taste, presentation, temperature, and freshness, we provide a comprehensive review of food quality aspects. Notably, this study emphasizes on the Asian perspectives, by broadening the understanding beyond Western viewpoints. The methodology comprises a review of literature, spanning a range of scholarly articles and research journals, delving into the discourse of food quality and customer satisfaction. Our findings highlight the significance of diverse menus, sensory taste attributes, and aesthetic presentation in shaping consumer expectations. Furthermore, the importance of food temperature and freshness in determining satisfaction is emphasized. This research crucially blends varied cultural insights with universal food standards, promoting a nuanced approach in the global food industry to optimize customer contentment.

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1. Introduction

Food quality is an essential element within the food industry, playing a pivotal role in driving consumer satisfaction. As the industry rapidly evolves, consumer awareness grows, and competition escalates, the significance of food quality becomes even more pronounced. Over the years, the concept of 'food quality' has evolved from a simple notion anchored in taste to a more intricate composition encompassing various dimensions [1].

The shift in consumer demographics, driven by globalization and societal transformations, has further contributed to the nuanced understanding of food quality. Modern consumers are diverse, knowledgeable, and demanding, displaying an evolved awareness of their food choices [2]. They tend to favor establishments that provide high-quality food, leading to a subjective understanding of food quality [3]. Consequently,

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food businesses must continuously adapt and innovate their offerings to meet these ever-evolving expectations and preferences [4].

With the evolution of the industry, consumer awareness has also evolved remarkably. Today's consumers are more informed, health-conscious, and discerning in their choices. Simultaneously, globalization has diversified demographics, resulting in a wide range of palates that the food industry must cater to. This has rendered the concept of food quality even more nuanced and subjective [5]. It is no longer about delivering a one-size-fits-all solution but about appreciating diversity, understanding nuances, and tailoring offerings accordingly.

Food quality is undeniably subjective, varying from one consumer to another based on personal preferences, cultural backgrounds, and previous culinary experiences. Deciphering the dimensions of food quality is to understanding the tastes of a diverse global population. It is a complex endeavor but one that can be transformative for stakeholders in the food industry, offering them the insight needed to improve and innovate their offerings.

While there is a wealth of research on food quality, much of it has been centered on Western societies. This focus leaves a gap in our understanding, as it doesn't fully account for the diverse global population and their unique preferences [6]. This article makes strides in addressing this gap by incorporating studies from Asia as well. Including research from different cultural contexts like those found in studies by [7] from Vietnam or [8] and [9] from South Korea provides a more comprehensive perspective on food quality dimensions and their impact on consumer satisfaction. Incorporating these diverse viewpoints can lead to a richer understanding of how different dimensions of food quality interact to influence customer satisfaction globally. It underscores the need for further research that includes more varied cultural contexts to expand our knowledge beyond predominantly Western perspectives.

Moreover, there is a dearth of comprehensive studies that connect the theoretical understanding of food quality with practical implications for businesses in the industry. There is an evident need for research that not only elucidates what constitutes high-quality food from a consumer perspective but also provides actionable insights for businesses to enhance their offerings and improve customer satisfaction.

Given the multifaceted nature of food quality and its direct implications on consumer satisfaction, a thorough exploration of its various dimensions is of paramount

importance. This study aims to delve into the food quality dimensions and their implications on consumer satisfaction. It seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the various dimensions, including taste, freshness, presentation, service quality, and menu variety. By investigating these dimensions and their implications on consumer satisfaction, this journal seeks to contribute to both theoretical as well as practical knowledge in the food industry. The findings will offer valuable insights for businesses in understanding consumer expectations and tailoring their offerings to enhance customer satisfaction.

2. Material and Methods

To ensure the validity of the research, a systematic approach will be employed in obtaining and analyzing the journals. This process includes several steps designed to maximize reliability and minimize bias. The search for relevant literature will be conducted using multiple databases including PubMed, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. This broad approach ensures a comprehensive collection of data from diverse sources. This involve an examination of existing academic studies, theoretical concepts, industry reports, and case studies related to the topic of food quality and its influence on consumer satisfaction.

A strategic keyword search will be used to find relevant articles. Keywords such as “food quality,” “consumer satisfaction,” “dimensions of food quality,” “consumer perceptions of food quality” among others will be utilized to optimize results. To maintain focus on the most pertinent information, inclusion and exclusion criteria will be established before commencing the search. For instance, only peer-reviewed articles published might be included.

Each article found during the search process will undergo a rigorous quality assessment to ensure its relevance and reliability for this study’s purposes. Articles that are not peer-reviewed or do not provide significant insight into the topic at hand may not meet this study’s high standards for inclusion. Relevant data from each selected article will then be extracted carefully using a standardized extraction form to avoid errors and ensure consistency across all articles reviewed. Finally, all extracted data will then undergo synthesis where it is analyzed collectively rather than individually - enabling an understanding of broader trends across multiple studies.

This systematic methodology ensures that only high-quality journals are included in this review while also allowing for an unbiased analysis of their findings - enhancing both validity and reliability.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Dimensions of food quality

The impact that food quality holds on customer satisfaction has been extensively studied in the literature, with numerous studies highlighting the significance of food quality in influencing customer satisfaction levels. Research related to the role of food quality in predicting customer satisfaction in Vietnam [7]. The results indicated that food quality has positive and notable effects on customer satisfaction.

A research analysis for explored the factors influencing customer loyalty at fast-food restaurants [10]. The study highlighted that food quality is important in determining customer satisfaction. It also suggested a clear and positive influence linking food quality and customer satisfaction within restaurants.

Furthermore, the study compared customer reviews between local restaurants and chain restaurants by using a multilevel approach to examine data from Google reviews [11]. The study revealed that in the case of local restaurants, food quality holds a more significant impact in determining customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, in the case of chain restaurants, it is the service quality that has a more significant impact in determining customer satisfaction. This suggests that food quality holds a crucial role in defining customer satisfaction levels, particularly for local establishments.

The available literature strongly underscores food quality as a crucial determinant in shaping customer satisfaction within the food industry. Offering high-quality food not only satiates customers' immediate culinary desires but also weaves an enriching dining narrative that seeds their loyalty towards the establishment. Consequently, stakeholders in the food industry must prioritize food quality to augment customer satisfaction and secure enduring patronage. To enhance our understanding of this complex construct, this research seeks to venture further into the dimensions of food quality, exploring their nuanced influences on consumer satisfaction. These dimensions, which constitute the cornerstones of food quality, include:

TABLE 1: Literature Review.

No.	Dimensions	Reference
1.	Variety of Menu	[8,12–17]
2.	Taste	[9,18–22]
3.	Food Presentation	[23–29]
4.	Temperature	[6,30–33]
5.	Freshness	[34–37]

3.1.1. Variety of Menu

Offering a diverse range of menu options allows consumers to choose according to their preferences and dietary needs. It enhances the dining experience by providing more options and catering to different tastes. Multiple studies have focused on the link that menu variety has towards customer satisfaction, underscoring that it is crucial to provide diverse options to meet customer preferences and improve dining experiences [8,12].

The significance of variety of menu in a foodservice establishment's menu is well-documented. Menu variations in providing a variety of food choices is something that is important to pay attention to [15]. It gives consumers a broad array of choices, catering to diverse tastes and dietary preferences. Moreover, it reflects on the restaurant's capability to serve a variety of customers, implying culinary skills and expertise in preparing an assortment of dishes.

Variety is integral to food quality researchers outlined two crucial aspects of menu variety [8]:

Range: This covers the vastness of options, including different cuisines, dietary choices such as vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, etc., and types of dishes, such as appetizers, main courses, and desserts.

Balance: It refers to the spread of options across categories. A menu offering a multitude of steak types but no vegetarian options is less diverse than one that presents a balanced choice of meat-based, vegetarian, and vegan dishes.

There is a significant and positive relationship between menu diversity and customer satisfaction [12]. More menu variations have a positive effect on customer satisfaction [13]. The findings suggest that a wide range of menu options can boost customer satisfaction levels. There is an impact of menu variations on the characteristics of the dessert cafe environment [14]. Their study suggested that a variety of menu options shapes dining experiences and influences overall quality, brand image, and customer loyalty, implying that a diverse menu can lead to positive perceptions of an establishment and enhance customer loyalty.

The importance of menu variety in foodservice establishments and its positive impact on customer satisfaction is well-supported by both empirical studies and theoretical frameworks. Theories such as Variety-Seeking Theory and Assortment Theory provide a robust conceptual foundation that aligns with these empirical findings.

The Variety-Seeking Theory, as proposed by [38] posits that consumers have an inherent desire for novel experiences and hence seek variety. This theory directly

supports the menu variety dimension in food quality research [16,17]. It suggests that when restaurants offer a diverse range of menu options, they cater to this innate consumer desire for novelty and variation, enhancing their overall dining experience. In essence, by offering a broad assortment of dishes – from different cuisines to various dietary options – businesses can satisfy this need for diversity and potentially increase customer satisfaction.

By integrating these theories with empirical evidence from studies offering diverse menu options is not just beneficial but essential in shaping positive dining experiences, influencing perceptions about food quality, boosting customer loyalty, and ultimately increasing customer satisfaction.

The variety in menus is a crucial aspect of food quality as it directly influences customer satisfaction. Offering a broad range of menu options enables customers to select according to their dietary needs and preferences, thereby enhancing their overall dining experience. Therefore, businesses in the food industry should prioritize menu variety to cater to diverse customer preferences and increase customer satisfaction.

3.1.2. Taste

Taste plays a pivotal role in the perception and evaluation of food by consumers, thereby forming a significant dimension of food quality. It refers to the sensory perception of flavors in food, primarily experienced through the taste buds on the tongue, and is an integral part of the enjoyment and satisfaction derived from eating [18].

Sensory Evaluation Theory: This theory focuses on how individuals perceive and evaluate sensory attributes such as taste. It emphasizes the role of sensory experiences in shaping consumer preferences and satisfaction with food [39].

Expectation-Confirmation Theory: According to this theory, consumer satisfaction is influenced by the alignment between their expectations and actual experiences. If the taste matches or exceeds their expectations, it leads to higher levels of satisfaction [40].

Numerous studies confirm taste as a crucial factor influencing food choices and preferences. Consumers consider taste alongside other elements like health and nutrition when assessing food quality. As a hedonic characteristic of food, taste directly influences food choices and acceptance, serving as a sensory property that affects consumer satisfaction and the perceived quality of food [19,20].

Taste in the dining experience is something important [21]. They suggested that customers relate good taste with high food quality, resulting in elevated customer satisfaction. [9] delved into the connection between sensory qualities, including taste.

The research findings underscored the vital influence of sensory attributes, especially taste, on consumer acceptance and preference.

Similar results were echoed in [22] which identified taste as the main indicator that influences customer satisfaction in restaurant dining experiences. The customers' ratings on their dining experiences largely depended on the taste of the consumed food. Taste as a dimension of food quality, however, is multi-faceted. It encapsulates the food's flavor, aroma, texture, and temperature – all sensory aspects that together shape the overall perception of the food's taste. A well-prepared meal might meet freshness and healthiness expectations, yet if it falls short on taste, it might be perceived as lower quality.

The role of taste in shaping consumer satisfaction is not only empirically supported but also theoretically grounded. The Sensory Evaluation Theory and Expectation-Confirmation Theory provide robust frameworks that align with the empirical findings on the significance of taste as a critical dimension of food quality. Sensory Evaluation Theory by [39] focuses on how individuals perceive and evaluate sensory attributes such as taste. This theory directly underscores the importance of taste in food quality research. In other words, when restaurants deliver dishes that not only look good but also stimulate these sensory experiences positively, they can enhance consumers' overall dining experience and increase their satisfaction levels.

On the other hand, Expectation-Confirmation Theory by [40] provides a framework for understanding how consumer expectations about taste influence their satisfaction with food. According to this theory, if the actual taste of food matches or exceeds consumers' pre-consumption expectations, it results in confirmation leading to higher levels of customer satisfaction. Conversely, if there's a disconfirmation – where actual experience falls short of expectations – it could lead to dissatisfaction. By integrating these theories with empirical evidence, taste is not just an important but pivotal aspect influencing consumer perceptions about food quality and their overall dining experience. Thus businesses must prioritize delivering exceptional taste experiences aligned with customer expectations to enhance customer satisfaction.

Taste's role as a critical dimension of food quality directly impacts consumer satisfaction. As a sensory property, taste contributes to the hedonic eating experience and is tightly linked with food enjoyment and perception. Thus, businesses considering taste alongside other dimensions of food quality can better meet consumer expectations and enhance their offerings.

3.1.3. Food presentation

Food presentation, referring to the visual appeal of food including its arrangement, colors, garnishes, and overall aesthetic, forms a significant dimension of food quality [23]. The influence of visual appeal on positive expectation creation and the enhancement of the overall dining experience [24]. It is posited that the visual appearance of food can influence consumers' perception of food quality as it often signifies freshness, meticulousness, and overall care in food preparation.

The role of visual presentation of food in influencing customer perception and satisfaction is discussed in the study by [25]. They examined the impact of plate size on food consumption, noting that larger plates create an illusion of smaller portion sizes leading to increased consumption. This finding underscores that the visual presentation of food, including its arrangement and the plate's size, can alter customers' perception of portion sizes and impact their satisfaction.

Food presentation is an important dimension of food quality [26]. The visual attributes of food, like its color, arrangement, and garnishing, contribute significantly to the overall perception of quality and augment the dining experience. Consumers are often attracted to visually appealing dishes, suggesting that the presentation of food can impact their satisfaction and choice. [27] further emphasized the role of colors and patterns in food presentation, which can stimulate or suppress appetite, thereby affecting customer satisfaction.

The relevance of food presentation extends to the context of internet-based food delivery services. as well. In the time of COVID-19, researchers focused on consumer factors influencing their decisions to order food online, [28] highlighted that appealing food images and descriptions, key elements of visual presentation, positively influenced customer satisfaction and their intention to use the service.

The importance of food presentation as a critical dimension of food quality is well-supported by both empirical studies and theoretical perspectives. Theories such as Aesthetic Consumption Theory and the Halo Effect provide conceptual frameworks that align with these empirical findings. Aesthetic Consumption Theory by [41] posits that consumers derive pleasure from aesthetically pleasing products or experiences. According to [29], this theory directly supports the dimension of food presentation in food quality research. It suggests that when restaurants present their dishes in visually appealing ways – with thoughtful arrangement, vibrant colors, attractive garnishes – they can create positive emotions among consumers. These positive emotions can enhance customers' overall dining experience and increase their satisfaction levels.

By integrating these theories with empirical evidence, food presentation plays an essential role in shaping consumer perceptions about food quality and enhancing customer satisfaction levels. Thus businesses should prioritize exceptional aesthetic experiences alongside taste and menu variety to deliver superior dining experiences.

Food presentation stands as a crucial dimension of food quality, shaping consumer perception and satisfaction. The visual attributes of food can create positive expectations and enhance the dining experience, playing a significant role in consumer evaluations, preferences, and overall quality perception. Thus, businesses in the food industry should prioritize food presentation to align with consumer expectations and enhance customer satisfaction.

3.1.4. Temperature

Temperature, a critical factor determining food quality, impacts the sensory experience, safety, and preservation of food. In the sphere of food preservation, its role in food safety is crucial as maintaining proper temperature control is essential to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria and maintain food safety. Appropriate temperatures during food storage, transportation, and preparation minimize the risk of foodborne illnesses. By controlling temperature during processing, storage, and transportation, the shelf life of perishable foods is extended, and their quality maintained [31].

The sensory attributes of food such as taste, texture, and aroma are greatly influenced by temperature. For optimal flavor and texture, different foods are enjoyed at specific temperatures; for instance, certain beverages are more refreshing when served chilled, while some dishes are more enjoyable when served hot or warm. Temperature can affect food thresholds, thereby affecting acceptability and ease of swallowing [30]. They found that food at higher temperatures was more acceptable for swallowing compared to lower temperatures. Also, sensory receptors in the tongue respond to both taste and thermal stimuli, suggesting that the role of temperature in taste perception is essential. It also influences the overall sensory experience of food.

Temperature is a key element that contributes to customer satisfaction [6,32,33]. Serving food at the right temperature contributes to taste and satisfaction. When these temperature expectations are met, the perceived quality of the food increases.

The significance of temperature as a critical dimension of food quality is well-supported by both empirical studies and theoretical perspectives. The Warmth-Induced Interpersonal Warmth Effect provides a conceptual framework that aligns with these empirical findings. The Warmth-Induced Interpersonal Warmth Effect by [42] suggests

that physical warmth can influence social judgments and interpersonal relationships. In the context of food service, according to [43], this theory implies that serving warm or hot food can evoke positive emotions associated with interpersonal warmth. This emotional response could enhance customer satisfaction levels. It suggests that when restaurants serve their dishes at the appropriate temperatures – whether it's a piping hot bowl of soup or a perfectly chilled dessert – they can create positive emotional responses among consumers, which in turn enhances their overall dining experience.

Temperature plays an essential role in shaping consumer perceptions about food quality and enhancing customer satisfaction levels. Thus businesses should prioritize maintaining appropriate temperatures for different types of dishes to deliver superior dining experiences. Temperature as a dimension of food quality influences taste perception, food safety, and customer satisfaction directly. It underscores the importance of proper temperature control in providing a high-quality dining experience.

3.1.5. Freshness

Freshness, a crucial dimension of food quality, significantly impacts consumer satisfaction and the overall quality of food products. The role of freshness in preserving the natural flavors of food products is emphasized by [34]. The study notes that a prolonged period between harvest and consumption results in a reduction in the distinctive taste of fruits and vegetables, as well as unwanted off-flavors.

Freshness has a significant effect on consumer perceptions of food quality and contributes significantly to overall customer satisfaction [37]. Fresh ingredients are perceived to offer superior flavor and texture, leading to a more satisfying eating experience. [36] emphasized the role of freshness in the context of food presentation. Their study suggests fresh food eye-appeal is a significant indicator of freshness and significantly influences consumer satisfaction. Similarly, a study by [35] found that perceptions of freshness contribute significantly to overall customer satisfaction.

The role of freshness as a critical dimension of food quality is well-supported by both empirical studies and theoretical perspectives. Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory provide conceptual frameworks that align with these empirical findings. Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory by [44] on the other hand, provides a framework for understanding how consumer expectations about freshness influence their satisfaction with food. According to this theory, if the actual freshness level of food meets or exceeds consumers' pre-consumption expectations, it results in confirmation leading to higher

levels of customer satisfaction. Conversely, if there's a disconfirmation – where actual experience falls short of expectations – it could lead to dissatisfaction.

By integrating these theories with empirical evidence, freshness plays an essential role in shaping consumer perceptions about food quality and enhancing customer satisfaction levels. Thus businesses should prioritize maintaining high levels of freshness in their offerings to deliver superior dining experiences. Freshness directly influencing consumer satisfaction, flavor, and overall food product quality, is a critical dimension of food quality. To meet consumer expectations and maintain food safety and quality standards, maintaining the food freshness through proper handling, storage, and delivery is a must.

It's clear that food quality is not a monolithic construct. It encompasses multiple dimensions, including variety of the menu, taste, presentation, temperature, and freshness. Each dimension is essential and contributes distinctively to the overall perception of quality.

Despite the multidimensionality, taste appears to hold the paramount position among these dimensions. This suggests that even if other factors are up to the mark, a compromise on taste can lead to a significant dip in perceived food quality and contribute to significantly influencing customer satisfaction. Second, this finding highlights the importance of presentation in food quality. While it may not be as crucial as taste, an appealing presentation can enhance the overall dining experience and customer satisfaction. Third, the role of appropriate temperature and freshness in food quality can't be underestimated. Whether the food is meant to be served hot or cold, if it is not served at the correct temperature or isn't fresh, it can adversely affect the customer satisfaction. Fourth, a varied menu also plays a role in perceived food quality. Offering a diverse range of options can cater to a wider audience, ensuring that different preferences and dietary requirements are met, and contribute significantly to customer satisfaction.

4. Conclusion

Food quality shaped by several interlinked dimensions. The variety of menu options emerged as a significant factor, enhancing customer satisfaction by catering to diverse tastes and dietary preferences. Taste, being a sensory property, directly influenced food choices and acceptance, serving as a vital component of the overall dining experience and customer satisfaction. The presentation of food significantly affected consumer evaluations and preferences, with visually appealing food promoting a higher perception of quality and creating customer satisfaction. Temperature control's role was

prominent in maintaining food safety, improving taste perception, and directly affecting customer satisfaction. Lastly, freshness significantly impacted consumer satisfaction. This comprehensive understanding of food quality's key dimensions provides valuable insights for stakeholders in the food industry to enhance their offerings, meet consumer expectations, and improve overall customer satisfaction.

5. Limitations and Implications

The findings may not generalize across diverse cultural contexts. Different cultures may have varying views on what constitutes food quality, and certain dimensions may be more critical in some cultures than others. Future research could explore these dimensions across different countries or cultures.

Understanding the key dimensions of food quality – menu variety, taste, food presentation, temperature, and freshness – holds considerable implications both theoretical and practical. These findings highlight the complexity of food quality and suggest the need for a multi-dimensional approach in related studies. Existing theories on food quality could benefit from integrating these key dimensions – menu variety, taste, presentation, temperature, and freshness – in their conceptual frameworks. This would allow for a more holistic understanding and better predictability on consumer satisfaction as well as behaviors within the industry of food. For restaurant owners and chefs, recognizing these dimensions can guide menu development, food preparation, and presentation strategies. A diverse menu that caters to different tastes and dietary needs can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Paying attention to the taste and temperature of dishes served, and ensuring they are visually appealing, can heighten the dining experience and increase the perceived quality of the food. Furthermore, emphasizing the use of fresh ingredients can improve the overall quality of dishes, as freshness directly influences flavor and customer satisfaction.

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