



# Determinants of Customer Satisfaction in the Restaurant Industry: A Focused Study on Rajamahendravaram, East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh

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*Abstract:* This study explores customer satisfaction factors at eateries in Rajamahendravaram, East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh. Restaurant enterprises must comprehend the elements affecting customer satisfaction to be competitive in the rapidly expanding Indian food service sector, especially in smaller cities. A survey of 150 respondents identified six key elements: customer connection, support services, delivery procedure, service environment, enhanced services, and the core product. Data analysis, including exploratory factor analysis (EFA), highlights meal quality and service procedures as the most influential factors. Findings suggest that restaurants can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty by improving food quality, expediting service procedures, and creating a better overall dining experience. Restaurants need investments in tangible aspects, like food quality and sanitation, and intangible elements, like ambiance and customer service, which are essential for maintaining competitiveness. The study emphasizes the need for restaurants to adapt to evolving consumer preferences by prioritizing quality, variety, and convenience to meet the expectations of a diverse clientele.

Keywords – Restaurants, Customer Satisfaction, Determinants of Customer Satisfaction, Quality Food and Services.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The market for food services in India is dynamically evolving due to growing disposable incomes, shifting consumer habits, and technological advancements (Swiggy & Bain & Company, 2023). Customer satisfaction has become a critical success factor as the industry is expected to grow from its present value of ₹5.5 trillion to an estimated ₹9 trillion by 2030 (National Restaurant Association of India [NRAI], 2023). Increased wealth, urbanization, and the rising preference for convenience-driven dining options, such as quick-service restaurants and online food delivery, are key drivers of this robust growth (Frost & Sullivan, 2022).

The Indian restaurant sector is shaped by its diverse customer base, projected to grow significantly over the next decade. Swiggy and Bain & Company (2023) estimate that the addressable consumer base will increase from the current 320–340 million to approximately 430–450 million by 2030. This growth is particularly evident in tier-2 cities and beyond, where increasing disposable incomes and rapid urbanization are creating new market opportunities. Additionally, the frequency of eating out, which is currently five times per month on average, is expected to rise to seven or eight times per month, signaling a shift in dining habits from a luxury to a lifestyle choice (NRAI, 2023).

The demand for diverse culinary options and dining experiences is a key driver of customer satisfaction in India's restaurant industry. Indian consumers explore over three cuisines annually on average through online platforms, reflecting a growing preference for variety and convenience in food choices (Swiggy & Bain & Company, 2023). The rise of online food delivery services has also been noteworthy, with their contribution to the foodservice market growing from 8% in 2019 to 12% in 2023, and an anticipated annual growth rate of 18% through 2030. By then, online food delivery is expected to account for 20% of the total foodservice market (Frost & Sullivan, 2022).

Quick-service restaurants (QSRs) and cloud kitchens are further transforming satisfaction metrics, with these formats projected to expand 40% faster than the overall market by 2030 (Technopak Advisors, 2023). Technology is playing a pivotal role in enhancing customer experience through features such as app-based ordering, personalized recommendations, and seamless payment systems. These innovations mirror trends in developed nations like the US and China, where convenience-based dining and higher restaurant density significantly contribute to customer satisfaction (Euromonitor International, 2023).

India's restaurant density remains lower than countries like China, which boasts four times the number of restaurants per million people. This disparity highlights a substantial growth opportunity, particularly in emerging regions where

demand is poised to increase (NRAI, 2023). Presently, 70% of foodservice consumption occurs in India's top 50 cities, predominantly among upper-middle and high-income segments. While urban centers will continue to dominate, emerging regions are expected to play an increasingly critical role in market expansion.

Customer expectations have also evolved, with hygiene and safety becoming integral to the dining experience, a trend accelerated by the pandemic (Frost & Sullivan, 2022). The perception of dining out has shifted from an occasional indulgence to a regular habit driven by convenience, compelling restaurants to innovate continuously to retain customer loyalty. Factors such as timely delivery, consistent food quality, and excellent service are pivotal in fostering positive customer experiences.

In conclusion, India's restaurant industry is on the brink of significant transformation, fuelled by technological advancements, changing consumer preferences, and rapid market expansion. The addition of 110 million potential customers by 2030 presents a remarkable growth opportunity, with a focus on variety, convenience, and quality essential to meeting the demands of an increasingly diverse customer base (Swiggy & Bain & Company, 2023).

## 2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

The Indian hospitality sector is changing quickly as a result of urbanisation, rising disposable incomes, and shifting consumer tastes. Businesses must comprehend the factors that influence customer satisfaction as the market expands in order to stay competitive. Smaller cities have not received enough attention, even though urban centers are the subject of extensive research. Affordability, convenience, and high-quality service are the main socioeconomic elements that affect customer satisfaction in these areas. In order to help hotel companies improve service quality, client loyalty, and long-term profitability in emerging countries, this study attempts to uncover the major factors that influence consumer satisfaction.

## 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The importance of service quality, sustainability, and innovation in achieving customer satisfaction and loyalty is well-documented in research across the hospitality and foodservice sectors. Studies have consistently emphasized that maintaining high-quality services, ensuring safety, and demonstrating environmental consciousness significantly influence customer satisfaction and their likelihood of returning. Sustainable practices, such as maintaining food quality and environmental consciousness, not only enhance brand recognition but also provide a competitive edge in the market (Chaturvedi et al., 2024; Anand et al., 2018; Frost & Sullivan, 2022; National Restaurant Association of India, 2023). Factors such as affordability, cleanliness, safety, responsiveness, and reliability have been identified as crucial determinants of service quality and customer satisfaction. Tangibility, among these dimensions, often emerges as the most significant in meeting consumer expectations (Gupta, 2017; Eshetie et al., 2016; Das et al., 2017; Euromonitor International, 2023; Swiggy & Bain & Company, 2023).

Research has also highlighted the role of demographic characteristics in shaping perceptions of service quality. Variations in customer satisfaction across diverse demographic profiles indicate the need for tailored service delivery. For instance, structured investigations, such as those involving boutique hotels in Kolkata and hotels in Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, demonstrated that dimensions like affordability, meeting basic needs, and tangible offerings are central to enhancing satisfaction (Gupta, 2017; Das et al., 2017; DilPazir et al., 2015; Technopak Advisors, 2023; Batra, 2014). Studies from international contexts further support these findings, with evidence showing that specialized services and enhanced communication strategies lead to a significant competitive advantage for hospitality businesses (Tabaku & Cerri, 2016; Kalotra et al., 2016; Eshetie et al., 2016; Euromonitor International, 2023).

In addition to tangible services, intangible offerings, such as personalized services, ambiance, and trust-building mechanisms, significantly contribute to customer loyalty and retention. Researchers have noted that while tangible features set the initial perception of quality, intangible aspects such as staff behavior, promptness, and emotional engagement solidify long-term loyalty (Batra, 2014; DilPazir et al., 2015; Gupta, 2017; Das et al., 2017). Studies from Ethiopia and Albania corroborate these findings, showing positive correlations between service dimensions like confidence, reliability, and communication, and overall guest satisfaction (Eshetie et al., 2016; Tabaku & Cerri, 2016; Anand et al., 2018). Studies such as Frost & Sullivan (2022) and Technopak Advisors (2023) emphasize the evolving expectations of consumers and the role of adaptive service strategies.

The economic significance of the hospitality sector is equally noteworthy. Research highlights its role in employment generation, national income creation, and economic development. The sector's establishments, including hotels, restaurants, and cafés, contribute substantially to the gross domestic product while providing opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers (Kalotra et al., 2016; Tabaku & Cerri, 2016; Chaturvedi et al., 2024). Strategic investments in sustainable practices, staff training, and technology adoption have been identified as critical drivers for maintaining service quality and addressing operational challenges (Swiggy & Bain & Company, 2023; Euromonitor International, 2023; Anand et al., 2018).

Moreover, the growing role of consumer feedback in shaping service strategies cannot be overlooked. Studies show that leveraging customer insights to enhance key service attributes, such as cleanliness, safety, and convenience, fosters greater customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth (Anand et al., 2018; Batra, 2014; Das et al., 2017; Kalotra et al., 2016). The integration of advanced analytics and personalized customer experiences has been increasingly recommended to address the dynamic needs of diverse consumer groups (Frost & Sullivan, 2022; Technopak Advisors, 2023; National Restaurant Association of India, 2023). Innovative service solutions, including loyalty programs and special event

offerings, have also been shown to enhance retention and differentiate businesses in competitive markets (Chaturvedi et al., 2024; Euromonitor International, 2023).

#### 4. RESEARCH GAP

Limited research exists on the factors influencing customer satisfaction in smaller cities, as most studies in the hospitality sector have primarily focused on urban environments or global contexts. While general service quality factors such as food, cleanliness, and safety are frequently studied, there is insufficient understanding of how technological innovations, regional cultural preferences, and cost factors contribute to customer satisfaction. Furthermore, much of the existing research tends to examine these factors in isolation, rather than considering them in combination. This study aims to address these gaps by exploring the specific elements that influence consumer satisfaction in smaller cities.

#### 5. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the rapid growth and increasing competition in the hospitality industry, hotels in developing countries often struggle to meet the evolving demands of their customers. Specifically, there is limited understanding of how factors like food quality, hygiene, and service interact to drive satisfaction in these regions. Previous research on customer satisfaction in smaller cities has not thoroughly explored the relationship between these service quality components, which this study aims to address. The findings will help hotels better tailor their offerings to align with customer expectations, ultimately improving customer satisfaction and ensuring long-term business success.

#### 6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS

##### 6.1 Objectives of the study

The primary objective of this study is to explore the factors determining customer satisfaction in restaurants. By identifying and analyzing these factors, the research aims to provide actionable insights for restaurant management to enhance service quality and customer experience.

##### 6.2 Hypotheses

- **Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** Core product, facilitating services, delivery process, service environment, enhancing services, and customer interaction do not positively influence customer satisfaction in restaurants.
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** Core product, facilitating services, delivery process, service environment, enhancing services, and customer interaction positively influence customer satisfaction in restaurants.

#### 7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

##### 7.1 Sampling Design

The study was conducted in Rajamahendravaram, located in the East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh, India, chosen for its diverse customer base, offering valuable insights into the factors that influence customer satisfaction in local restaurants. A Simple Random Sampling technique was employed to ensure that every individual in the sampling frame had an equal chance of selection, thereby minimizing selection bias and ensuring a representative sample. The study focused on a sample size of 150 respondents, carefully selected to ensure sufficient representation of the population, thus yielding statistically reliable and meaningful results for analysis.

##### 7.2 Data Collection

Primary data was collected directly from respondents through a structured questionnaire consisting of 30 items. These items were designed based on the research objectives, covering key dimensions such as core product, facilitating services, delivery process, service environment, enhancing services, and customer interaction. The questionnaire was tailored to gather responses that align with the study's objectives and hypotheses, ensuring that firsthand information was obtained from individuals with direct experience of restaurant services in the study area. Secondary data was sourced from reputable references such as academic journals, books, and relevant literature, providing a theoretical foundation that supports the study and informs the development of the questionnaire.

##### 7.3 Statistical Tools

The data is analyzed using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). This statistical tool helps identify and group underlying factors influencing customer satisfaction, enabling a better understanding of relationships between observed variables and latent constructs. This structured methodology ensures a systematic approach to achieving the research objectives and testing the hypotheses, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry.

## 8. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The following are the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) results obtained from the data collected from 150 respondents.

### 8.1 Results & Discussion

**Table 1:** Case Processing Summary

Cases		N	%
	Valid		150
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	150	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Source: Primary Data

**Table 2:** Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.770	30

Source: Primary Data

The overall Cronbach's alpha value of **0.770** for the 30 items indicates acceptable reliability, confirming that the items used in the study are consistent in measuring customer satisfaction factors.

**Table 3:** KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.812
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1102.201
	df	153
	Sig.	.000

Source: Primary Data

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy of **0.812** is well above the threshold of 0.6, indicating that the sample size is adequate for conducting factor analysis.

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant at 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ), which suggests that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix, meaning that there are meaningful relationships among the variables.

**Table 4:** Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
CP1	1.000	.677
CP2	1.000	.708
CP3	1.000	.579
CP4	1.000	.633
CP5	1.000	.607
FS1	1.000	.518
FS2	1.000	.594
FS3	1.000	.602
FS4	1.000	.657
FS5	1.000	.639
DP1	1.000	.705
DP2	1.000	.633
DP3	1.000	.704
DP4	1.000	.690
SE1	1.000	.624
SE2	1.000	.736
SE3	1.000	.581
SE4	1.000	.722

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Primary Data

All variables show good commonalities (above 0.5), indicating that each item has a substantial portion of its variance explained by the underlying factors.

**Table 5: Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.058	22.544	22.544	4.058	22.544	22.544	3.174	17.635	17.635
2	3.805	21.136	43.680	3.805	21.136	43.680	3.091	17.171	34.806
3	2.062	11.454	55.134	2.062	11.454	55.134	2.682	14.902	49.708
4	1.686	9.366	64.501	1.686	9.366	64.501	2.663	14.793	64.501
5	.735	4.085	68.586						
6	.664	3.689	72.275						
7	.611	3.395	75.670						
8	.580	3.224	78.894						
9	.531	2.951	81.845						
10	.502	2.788	84.633						
11	.460	2.555	87.188						
12	.408	2.266	89.454						
13	.389	2.164	91.617						
14	.357	1.985	93.602						
15	.343	1.906	95.508						
16	.297	1.649	97.157						
17	.271	1.504	98.661						
18	.241	1.339	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Primary Data

Generally, a TVE of 60% or higher is considered good, and your value of 64.501% comfortably meets this threshold. Distribution of Variance: It is also important to look at how the variance is distributed across the factors. The first two components explain 43.68% of the variance (22.544% for Component 1 and 21.136% for Component 2). This indicates that the first two factors are dominant in explaining the variance in customer satisfaction, particularly the Core Product and Facilitating Services. The remaining components (3rd and 4th) explain 11.454% and 9.366% of the variance, respectively. These factors (related to the Delivery Process and Service Environment) still contribute meaningfully but to a lesser degree.

**Table 6: Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
CP2	.829			
CP1	.816			
CP4	.760			
CP3	.742			
CP5	.728			
FS4		.803		
FS5		.793		
FS3		.757		
FS2		.721		
FS1		.717		
DP4			.814	
DP1			.808	
DP3			.787	
DP2			.773	
SE2				.845
SE4				.843
SE1				.738
SE3				.727

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.  
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Source: Primary Data

**Table 7: Extracted Groups**

Extracted Groups	Group Name	Group Reliability
CP1,CP2,CP3,CP4,CP5	Core Product	0.850

FS1,FS2,FS3,FS4,FS5	Facilitating Service	0.830
DP1,DP2,DP3,DP4	Delivery Process	0.832
SE1,SE2,SE3,SE4	Service Environment	0.821

Source: Primary Data

## 8.2 Research Findings

Customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry is significantly influenced by the quality and variety of the food offered, aligning with the findings of Chaturvedi et al. (2024) and Anand et al. (2018). Crucial factors such as the taste, portion sizes, and freshness of ingredients directly affect the dining experience. These elements reflect the importance of tangibility in service quality, as highlighted by Gupta (2017) and Eshetie et al. (2016).

Efficient service procedures further enhance customer experiences by reducing friction in operations. Factors like parking availability, seating arrangements, and convenient payment options contribute to a seamless flow of service, in line with the role of convenience-driven dining trends discussed by Frost & Sullivan (2022). Meeting customer expectations for timely meal delivery and accommodating special requests are vital aspects that reinforce trust and reliability, corroborated by the studies of Das et al. (2017) and Tabaku et al. (2016). Order accuracy and attentive staff interactions are essential components, consistent with findings by DilPazir et al. (2015) that emphasize the importance of responsiveness in service quality.

The physical environment of a restaurant, encompassing cleanliness, comfort, and hygiene, has a profound impact on customer satisfaction. A well-maintained setting not only fosters a positive atmosphere but also builds customer confidence, as observed in studies by Eshetie et al. (2016) and Kalotra et al. (2016). Enhanced physical and emotional engagement strategies, such as warm greetings and knowledgeable staff, contribute significantly to customer loyalty, reinforcing Batra's (2014) insights on personalized service.

Beyond basic expectations, additional services such as loyalty programs, special events, or complimentary offerings can enhance the overall experience, as they create value and encourage repeat visits. The growing demand for diverse culinary options and variety in dining experiences, as highlighted by Swiggy & Bain & Company (2023), underscores the importance of these initiatives. Finally, effective complaint resolution and building rapport with customers through personalized interactions help establish long-term loyalty, aligning with the evolving trends identified by NRAI (2023).

## 9. SUGGESTIONS

To enhance customer satisfaction, restaurants should focus on improving the quality, portion sizes, and presentation of their food. Offering a diverse menu that caters to different tastes can also contribute to a more enjoyable dining experience. Streamlining operational processes such as payment, seating, and restaurant navigation can further enhance the overall experience. Clear signage and well-organized seating arrangements help create a welcoming atmosphere for guests. Ensuring prompt and accurate meal delivery while accommodating special dietary requests is essential. Staff training to efficiently handle customer needs will contribute to maintaining high service quality. Regular cleaning and attention to details like lighting, temperature, and furniture comfort will elevate the dining environment. Introducing loyalty programs, organizing special events, or offering freebies can also enhance the guest experience and encourage repeat visits. Finally, educating employees on effectively managing complaints, offering warm greetings, and making thoughtful menu recommendations can strengthen customer relations and promote loyalty.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

### 10.1 Conclusions

Restaurants are encouraged to give continuous enhancements to both the material and immaterial aspects of their service top priority. Restaurants can improve overall customer satisfaction by improving food quality, expediting service processes, maintaining a hygienic and welcoming environment, and making investments in employee training. Building enduring ties with customers can also be facilitated by encouraging customer interaction through loyalty programs and unique events. Long-term success in the fiercely competitive restaurant industry ultimately depends on implementing a holistic strategy for service quality that emphasizes both operational effectiveness and client interactions.

### 10.2 Implications

This study offers valuable insights for restaurant managers in smaller cities, highlighting the need to enhance core product offerings, optimize service processes, and create a comfortable, hygienic dining environment to increase customer satisfaction. Training staff to handle customer interactions efficiently, alongside implementing loyalty programs or hosting special events, can help build long-lasting customer relationships. Theoretically, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of customer satisfaction in under-explored, non-metropolitan areas, providing a foundation for targeted service improvements. Additionally, policymakers can use these findings to create initiatives that support small and medium-sized enterprises in the hospitality sector, thereby promoting regional economic development.

### 10.3 Limitations

Despite its valuable contributions, the study has some limitations. The narrow geographical scope, focusing solely on Rajamahendravaram, and the relatively small sample size of 150 respondents restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions or larger populations. Furthermore, the study concentrates exclusively on the restaurant sector, overlooking other hospitality segments, such as hotels or catering services, which may have different factors influencing

customer satisfaction. Additionally, the cross-sectional design of the research does not account for the evolving nature of consumer preferences or the impact of external factors, such as macroeconomic changes or technological advancements, over time.

#### 10.4 Scope for Future Research

Future research could broaden the scope of this study by incorporating diverse geographical regions and cultural contexts, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing customer satisfaction. Adopting longitudinal research designs would enable the tracking of shifts in consumer behavior and preferences over time. Investigating the influence of emerging technologies, such as AI-driven personalization, online reviews, and app-based ordering systems, could provide valuable insights into their effect on customer satisfaction. Furthermore, exploring satisfaction dynamics in other hospitality sub-sectors, like boutique hotels or cloud kitchens, would enhance the generalizability of the findings across the broader hospitality industry.

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