

**ORIGINAL RESEARCH**

# ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE SERVICE ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND WOM INTENTION AT CASUAL DINING RESTAURANTS IN JAKARTA

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**Abstract**

The increase in restaurant numbers every year has affected the intensity of competition in the restaurant industry. To be stand out among competitors, the right perceived image of the restaurant is needed and could be maintained by positive word-of-mouth spread in the community. The present study examines if employee behavior comprising of personal and functional service aspects in casual dining restaurant has an impact on customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth intention at casual dining restaurants. Using a survey approach, the questionnaire was distributed to 198 respondents age 17 years and above, which have already been to one of the particular casual dining restaurants in Jakarta. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling. Based on the study results, both personal and functional aspects can significantly predict customer satisfaction, although the functional aspects have contributed more considerably than the individual aspects. Besides, the result revealed that customer satisfaction would eventually affect word-of-mouth positively. Limitations and future research directions are also discussed.

**KEYWORDS:**

Casual Dining Restaurant, Customer Satisfaction, Employee Behavior, Restaurant Industry, Word-of-Mouth Intention

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

According to Maslow's theory of needs<sup>[1]</sup>, food is basic human needs. Therefore, fulfilling the needs of food is a must for the sake of the sustainability of humans. But as time goes by, the needs of food has shifted into a new lifestyle in our community. The change in lifestyle which becomes more modern has affected the lifestyle that becomes more practical, and increasing consumptive behavior in shopping, as well as the high desire to achieve a social status which eventually makes business opportunities such as restaurants, cafes, fitness centers, shopping centers, including salons and spas to health place are getting bigger.

Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), from 2008 to 2011, popular restaurants have always increased every year. Starting with a total of 2,235 businesses in 2008, large-scale restaurants have grown into 2,977 businesses. Central Statistics Agency (BPS) captured that from 2007-2011, DKI Jakarta is one of the provinces in Indonesia with the highest potential in improving restaurants with a percentage increase of 89.02%. With the emergence of many new restaurants, this also has an impact on the rise in a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), Indonesia alone for the food and beverage sector reached 6.2 percent in 2016 from the total national GDP. In addition, the food and beverage sector always grows above national GDP growth. From the available data, in the third quarter of 2017, the food and beverage sub-sector grew by 9.46 percent when the total national GDP growth only increased by 5.06 percent.

According to the Minister of Tourism Regulation and the Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia (2014), the classification of restaurants is divided into four based on stars. The higher the stars a restaurant gets, the more the menus and facilities offered to consumers. The restaurants can be classified into several types and concepts: fast-food restaurants, fast-casual dining, casual dining styles, fine dining, food trucks, and pop up restaurants.

Schiffman and Kanuk<sup>[2]</sup> stated that to get consumers' hearts, producers have to learn about consumer behavior. Not only in the food and beverage industry but also all service sector companies. One characteristic of companies engaged in the service sector is that there is a close relationship between the company and consumers. Thus, Barry (2000) stated that each service company is required to provide the best service to its potential customers and create its competitive advantage as a differentiator so that the company can meet its customers' expectations that eventually lead to customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction in the food service can be evaluated through several factors, including product quality, cleanliness, product quality, and different atmospheres<sup>[3]</sup>. Therefore, customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction, which was the result of the interaction process between employees and consumers, was influenced by the behavior of employees<sup>[4]</sup>. In addition, Medeiros and Salay<sup>[5]</sup> added that employees' attitudes and friendliness are strictly related to customer satisfaction in foodservice. Therefore, based on previous research, the quality of service in the restaurant industry can determine customer satisfaction.

This study aims to determine the effect of customer satisfaction on the intention to do word-of-mouth. According to Hawkins, Best, and Coney<sup>[6]</sup>, word-of-mouth is communication between someone who has consumed goods or services and has evaluated based on what they feel with someone who has an interest in trying those goods or services. WOM refers to sharing opinions from one consumer to another, and the stages of convincing someone to use the goods or service.

Despite the data that has been shown the increase in this type of restaurant, full-service aspects are also the factors that have to be fulfilled in this research. This study focuses on casual dining restaurants offering a variety of menu at moderate prices, having a variety of themes, and providing full service with reusable food equipment. The restaurants are located in Jakarta, Indonesia, and also based on Zomato, one of the food reviewer sites. These restaurants include Sushi Tei, Union, Sushi Hiro, Social House, Seribu Rasa, Toodz House, Seirock-Ya, Penang Bistro, Kila Kila by Akasya, and Holycow. Therefore, based on the phenomenon described above, this study examines the impact of a restaurant's services on customer satisfaction in restaurants. In addition, this study reviews the impact of customer satisfaction on WOM intention in the restaurant industry.

## 2 | MATERIAL AND METHOD

### 2.1 | Personal and Functional Service Aspects of Employee

The service quality of the foodservice industry is the focus of many studies. The quality of food, behavior, and friendliness of the employees, service quality, atmosphere, and environment influences consumer judgment on their dining experience<sup>[5, 7]</sup>. Considering the need for an approach for explaining overall customer experience with restaurant services, Five Aspects Meal Model (FAMM) was developed by Gustafsson<sup>[8]</sup> and Gustafsson et al.<sup>[9]</sup> It includes the aspects of space, products, management systems, atmosphere, and meetings as the main elements of customer experience in restaurants. The meeting referred to the process of interaction between guests and servants.

The behavior of employees links the company and its customers, and it also represents the values and service orientation adopted by the company<sup>[10]</sup>. In this context, employee behavior is an essential factor in explaining the customer's perception of overall quality and satisfaction<sup>[11]</sup>. The focus here is on employee skills, especially those related to successful communication and

satisfying customer needs. Therefore, soft skills are needed in this case. According to Weber et al.<sup>[12]</sup>, soft skills refer to employees' ability to communicate and understand others in interpersonal and emotional stages. Besides, restaurant employees and customers' social relations depend heavily on the soft skills possessed by employees.

Tsaur and Lin<sup>[13]</sup> distinguished service behavior through the role shown by employees during the service (formal role) and personal behavior while serving customers. Previous research identified aspects related to employees as dimensions of employee quality assessment, such as responsiveness, belief, and empathy as three of the five main dimensions that concern SERVQUAL<sup>[14]</sup>. Therefore, it is the dining experience perceived by customers in restaurants that creates customer satisfaction and the desire to repurchase.

The influence of aspects can be distinguished into two, i.e. the influence of individual aspects (personal characteristics of employees) and situational aspects (roles and attitudes of employees while serving). In a broader view, Wall and Berry<sup>[15]</sup> say the characteristics of service behavior are divided by considering functional and personal characteristics. Functional characteristics are related to the technical quality of services, especially those related to whether the service is carried out competently. The focus is on the quality of food and the efficiency of the service. Personal nature considers employees' behavior and characteristics in serving, which includes body language, smile, greetings, and hospitality to visitors. Employees' functional and personal nature is believed to be the thing that determines service quality and satisfaction. In addition, personal characteristics are also believed to be things that moderate the influence on mechanical things.

## 2.2 | Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is one of the most important things related to management, customer expectation, and service quality. This is also the main goal of every company. Customers are the main key in the success of running a business, and satisfied customers are the key for the business to keep growing and gain profit from the competitive market. From many definitions, Kotler and Keller<sup>[16]</sup> define customer satisfaction as a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment that resulted from comparing the actual perceived performance of the product or service to their expectations.

Previous researches reveal that many defining factors have essential roles in customer satisfaction. Some of these defining factors are food quality, service quality, cleanliness, restaurant atmosphere, convenient location, speed in service, and reasonable prices that make customers intend to come back. The customers in the modern era like today are smarter and have high expectations of the products or services presented to them. So they want high-quality products and services to ensure satisfaction.

Nicolini and Salini<sup>[17]</sup> say that consumer valuation of services is strongly influenced by interactions between customers and employees and technical characteristics in providing these services. Then Baker, Murrmann, and Green<sup>[18]</sup> added that employees' serving behavior is a significant factor in influencing customer judgment on services, as well as satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Therefore, the behavior characteristics of employees who offer comfort and attention to customers are highly emphasized as part of service quality<sup>[14]</sup>. Therefore, the following hypotheses proposed are:

**H1** Personal service aspects of restaurant employees can significantly predict customer satisfaction.

**H2** Functional service aspects of restaurant employees can significantly predict customer satisfaction.

## 2.3 | Word-of-Mouth Intention

Silverman<sup>[19]</sup> says that WOM is a communication about products and services between people considered independent by the products and services companies, in media that are considered self-employed by the company. Communication can be either a two-way conversation or a one-way testimonial.

Jalilvand and Samiei<sup>[20]</sup> say that WOM is an effective way to disseminate opinions because this is usually done face-to-face in conversations between people who are already familiar with each other and share the belief in an object as relatives and friends. Body language and voice intonation can also strengthen the message. Silverman<sup>[19]</sup> argues that people will naturally and consistently talk about products and services as part of the conversation material. Research shows that 15 percent of daily conversations conducted are related to products or services<sup>[20]</sup>.

WOM is a mechanism of delivering a perceived experience that eventually will trigger behavior. But in fact, the lack of positive experience with a product is usually the main factor that keeps people from liking the product. Previous research also revealed that WOM was the result of the customer's emotional response to their consumption experience<sup>[21]</sup>. WOM can determine the speed at which service is adopted so that honesty when doing WOM will add an element of credibility to the information provider<sup>[19]</sup>

WOM in the service industry has an important role and has been known as something influential, given its formlessness and higher risk associations<sup>[22, 23]</sup>. The findings of a study conducted by Fakharyan et al.<sup>[24]</sup> shows that the influence of service quality on WOM communication seems to depend on the industry itself. In the restaurant industry, the intention to eat in a particular place will increase if there are positive recommendations, thus affecting beliefs. This belief seems to have an essential role in the decision-making process. Referring to Keller (2007), who said that it appears that recommendations on the food category and dining experience are among the most sought-after and given recommendations.

This study analyzes the intention to do word-of-mouth after getting satisfaction in service. According to Jalilvand and Samiei<sup>[20]</sup>, WOM has several characteristics, i.e. talking about positive things to others, recommending products or services, and encouraging other people to try these products or services. Therefore, this study also test the following hypothesis:

**H3** Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on word-of-mouth intention.

## 2.4 | Restaurant Classification

According to the Dictionary of Hotels, Tourism, and Catering Restaurant, management is defined as a place where someone can buy and eat food. A restaurant is referred to as a commercial place of business where the scope of its activities provides food and beverages sold to the public and is located in its area of business. A restaurant is a profit-generating service activity where the main base sold is selling food and drinks to individuals or guests in small groups.

The restaurant industry consists of many units divided into restaurants that provide full service to fast service. This industry has many companies that are owned and operated independently, which are the main things in this industry. The full-service restaurant industry consists of companies that provide food services for customers who order and are served when customers sit (for example, there are waiters), and customers will pay after meals. According to An<sup>[25]</sup>, the company is providing this type of service to customers with a combination of sales of alcoholic beverages, carry out service and entertainment. While the fast-food restaurant industry consists of companies that provide food services, where customers usually order and choose food and payments made before meals. Food and drinks can be consumed on-site, taken home, or delivered to the customer's location. But according to Ryu, Han, and Kim<sup>[26]</sup>, several companies provide a combination of selling alcoholic beverages.

According to Dixon, Miscuraca, and Koutroumanis<sup>[27]</sup>, there are currently several kinds of trends or trends adopted by the restaurant industry, namely diversity, comfort, health and nutrition, and environmental sustainability. The restaurant industry can be divided into five categories ("North American Industry Classification System," 2017; "Restaurant Industry Outlook Brightens," 2010), namely quick-service restaurants (fast food), fast-casual restaurants, dining family restaurants, casual dining restaurants, and fine dining restaurant.

## 2.5 | The Framework

This study examined how service aspects, including personal and functional, of the employees, affect customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth intention. In the previous research, resulted that service aspects of employees are significantly predicted customer satisfaction, which then customer satisfaction significantly influences word-of-mouth intention. The research model consists of the hypotheses that show the relationship between each variable: personal service aspect, functional service aspect, customer satisfaction, and word-of-mouth intention, as illustrated in Figure 1 .



**FIGURE 1** The research's equation model.

## 2.6 | Sampling

Targeted respondents for this research are someone who had a meal experience in a particular examined restaurant in Jakarta. The sampling technique that is used for this research was non-probability sampling, which is convenience sampling. It was challenging to find a sample using probable sampling techniques. Inclusion criteria were: Any customer who had ever been to one of particular examined casual dining restaurants within six months and willingness to participate voluntarily in this research. Exclusion criteria include Any customer who had meal experience in a restaurant not included in the examined restaurant and more than six months. The data was gathered from a total of 324 respondents using offline, and an online questionnaire, with 198 data were passed the screening question and eligible to be processed.

## 2.7 | Survey Instrument and Measurement

This study uses a survey instrument that included measurement scale items that were used from a previous study. There are 14 measurement items of personal service aspects, 12 measurement items of functional service aspects, and five measurement items of customer satisfaction. All the measurements were adapted from Alhelalat, Habiballah, and Twaissi<sup>[28]</sup>. The other variable is the word-of-mouth intention using three measurement items adapted from Jalilvand et al.<sup>[22]</sup> The variable items were measured using 6 points Likert scale, ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" to "6 = strongly agree".

## 2.8 | Data Analysis

After collecting data, they were inputted into Statistic Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The output of this software is the sample profile and loading factor in determining which indicator of questions are valid. Then, the data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) with AMOS version 22, which included a test of the overall model fit and the correlation between the variables examined. These tests will indicate the relationship between service aspects of the restaurant employee, including personal service aspects and functional service aspects, customer satisfaction, and word-of-mouth intention. Five fit indices including Normed Fit Index (NFI), Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) or Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)<sup>[29]</sup>.

# 3 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## 3.1 | Respondents Profile

From a total of 324 respondents who participated, 198 respondents declared valid and can be processed further. The result consists of 56.54% of females and 43.54% of males, with the most respondents aged between 25 and 35. For the source of WOM, about 53% of respondents have known the examined restaurants from friends, siblings, or colleagues. Table 1 showed the demographic of the respondents.

**TABLE 1** Demographics of respondents.

Items	Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage	Items	Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender	Wanita	110	55.56%	Domicile	Jakarta Pusat	20	10.10%	
	Pria	88	44.44%		Jakarta Barat	15	7.58%	
Age	<17 Tahun	2	1.04%		Jakarta Selatan	40	20.20%	
	18 - 24 Tahun	88	45.60%		Jakarta Timur	16	8.08%	
	25 - 35 Tahun	93	48.19%		Jakarta Utara	10	5.05%	
	>35 tahun	10	5.18%		Bogor	8	4.04%	
	Pelajar/Mahasiswa	63	31.82%		Depok	16	8.08%	
Occupation	Pegawai Negeri Sipil	9	4.55%		Tangerang	28	14.14%	
	Pegawai Swasta	94	47.47%		Source of WOM	Bekasi	14	7.07%
	Pengusaha	10	5.05%			Others	31	15.66%
	Pedagang	2	1.01%	Teman/saudara/kerabat		106	53.54%	
	Others	20	10.10%	Aplikasi		35	17.68%	
	Monthly Expenses	<Rp 1.000.000	13	6.57%		Internet	13	6.57%
		Rp 1.000.000 -	57	28.79%		Media social	34	17.17%
Rp 3.000.000				Brosur				
Rp 3.000.001 -		57	28.79%				2	1.01%
Rp 5.000.000								
	>Rp 5.000.000	71	35.86%	Iklan		2	1.01%	
				Others	6	3.03%		

### 3.2 | Hypotheses Testing

The research investigated the relationship among variables: personal service aspects and functional service aspects of the restaurant's employee as independent variables, customer satisfaction, and word-of-mouth intention as a dependent variable. The result of three hypotheses was built to examine the predictability of casual dining respondents' perception toward customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth intention and tested using structural equation modeling (SEM). Findings are presented in table 2 and Table 3 .

From the analyzed data that was presented in Table 3 can be seen that all the hypotheses were supported. That means the study's model significantly predicts respondents' satisfaction by both personal and functional service aspects. This finding is aligned with the previous study by Jain and Gupta<sup>[30]</sup>, in restaurants, service quality directly influences customer satisfaction. Another past research confirmed that there is a very large dependence between service quality and customer satisfaction. An increase in one aspect would positively affect another one, and this has been proven to be true<sup>[31]</sup>. Besides, among the two variables, the result shows that functional service aspects contribute bigger than personal service aspects ( $\beta = 0.625$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ ).

Furthermore, in terms of word-of-mouth intention, the presented table reveals that customer satisfaction will affect positively toward the word-of-mouth intention ( $p \leq 0.001$ ). These results are confirmed with a previous study conducted by Jalilvand et al.<sup>[32]</sup>, that customer satisfaction has a positive influence on the intention to do WOM. Customer satisfaction, including how they feel the quality of food, whether the food is tasty, and the attractiveness of the foods.

## 4 | CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to determine what factors can affect customer satisfaction and intention to do word-of-mouth. Based on the research and analysis that has been done, showing that personal service aspects and functional service aspects of the restaurant's employees significantly and positively affect customer satisfaction. However, functional contributes to a greater role in influencing customer satisfaction. So it can be concluded that customers will be more satisfied when they were served well and competently by the staff. After customer satisfaction has been fulfilled, it will positively influence their intention to do word-of-mouth, including recommending the restaurant to friends, relatives, or colleagues who ask for advice.

Based on the research analysis, the current study brought to light the role of two master groups of aspects, which are personal and functional aspects of restaurant employees. These aspects could be the stepping stone of any service quality improvement. This study proposes three managerial implications as suggestions to service companies, especially those engaged in the restaurant industry.

**TABLE 2** The measurement model.

#	Item	SFL	CR	AVE
Personal Service Aspects				
1	The waiter/waitress' nails are clean and neat	0.543	0.934	0.544
2	The waiter/waitress's clothes appear clean and tidy.	0.659		
3	The waiter/waitress' shows always comforting facial. expressions such as smiling	0.747		
4	The waiter/waitress' behavior is entertaining.	0.79		
5	The waiter/waitress' hair looks clean and neat.	0.696		
6	The waiter/waitress' responsive eye contact with customers is appreciated.	0.613		
7	The waiter/waitress' reacts empathically to the customer's mood.	0.62		
8	The waiter/waitress' behavior is casual and moderate.	0.771		
9	The waiter/waitress's attitude, in general, is cordial and hospitable.	0.723		
10	The waiter/waitress' personal manners create a comfortable atmosphere.	0.75		
11	The waiter/waitress' speaks friendly and warmly.	0.839		
12	The waiter/waitress' speaks politely and respectfully to the customer.	0.841		
13	The waiter/waitress' makes sure any special requests are well accommodated.	0.801		
14	The waiter/waitress' respects customers' privacy.	0.752		
Functional Service Aspects				
1	The service speed was at a satisfactory level.	0.676	0.94	0.532
2	The waiter/waitress can explain how menu items are prepared.	0.715		
3	The waiter/waitress follows good hygiene practices while serving food.	0.74		
4	The waiter/waitress is ready to clarify any ambiguity in menu items.	0.772		
5	The waiter/waitress can handle the customer's particular needs effectively.	0.8		
6	The waiter/waitress is attentive to customer needs.	0.767		
7	The waiter/waitress doesn't disturb personal conversations among customers.	0.69		
8	The waiter/waitress respects customer's time-space during meal experience without bothering	0.636		
10	The waiter/waitress knows well the ingredients of the menu items.	0.695		
11	The waiter/waitress can assist the customer in choosing what to order.	0.751		
12	The waiter/waitress can accommodate customer complaints professionally.	0.744		
13	The waiter/waitress has practical communication skills.	0.838		
Customer Satisfaction				
1	There is a good variety of menu items which are prepared very well.	0.807	0.857	0.548
2	The location is excellent and accessible.	0.645		
3	I'm satisfied with the level of services offered.	0.853		
4	The atmosphere is nice & consistent with the restaurant's theme.	0.752		
5	The prices are reasonable & there is a good value for money.	0.617		
Word of Mouth Intention				
1	I say positive things about the restaurant to other people	0.92	0.946	0.855
2	I recommend the restaurant to someone who seeks your advice.	0.95		
3	I encourage friends and relatives to refer to the restaurant.	0.903		

**TABLE 3** The test result of structural model.

Hypothesis	Path	p-value	$\beta$
H1	Personal service aspects of restaurant employees can significantly predict customer satisfaction.	0.017	0.318
H2	Functional service aspects from restaurant staff can significantly predict customer satisfaction.	0	0.625
H3	Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on word of mouth intention.	0	0.770

First, the functional service aspects contribute a more significant impact than personal service aspects toward customer satisfaction. This indicates that the communication skills possessed by the waiter are essential and eventually lead to customers satisfied. The effectiveness of serving is also one of the main factors in creating customer satisfaction when visiting a restaurant. Therefore, managers are recommended to provide training for restaurant staff to improve their communication skills. To foster these skills, a continuous reinforcement program must be adopted.

Second, the way staff speaks, and politeness in serving is one of the factors that will be a consideration for customers, especially in casual dining restaurants where these types of restaurants are usually classified into the upper-middle class. Based on these indications, the waiter's attitude in the service encounter has to be considered by management. Conducting training to maintain quality and set clear service standards and procedures when serving consumers is one of the recommendations that should be done by management.

Third, the increase of restaurants in Jakarta every year forces them to have different strengths and set it as a competitive advantage. In accordance with the current study's findings, things that can differentiate one restaurant from another are having a variety of menu choices or having a unique restaurant theme. Furthermore, the increasingly massive social media user would be an

advantage for the company. This will affect the tendency of someone to recommend the restaurant and share it on social media if it has something to offer (such as a unique theme or fancy atmosphere). These factors should be taken into consideration as marketing activities in a way that enhances the rate of customer visits.

Despite the usefulness of its findings, this study has been limited by several factors. This study was focused on casual dining restaurants with ten particular restaurants were chosen for further examination. The uneven distribution of respondents from each restaurant is one of the limitations faced for this research. Out of 10 restaurants, most of the respondents chose Sushi Tei as their recently visit restaurant, which assessed the respondents had been referred only to certain restaurants. Hence to overcome this limitation, the suggestion for future research is to set a quota for each restaurant.

Another difficulty confronted in the present research was the development of the research model. The additional examined variable selected was the only word-of-mouth intention when, in fact, more variables could be used as the antecedents of customer satisfaction. As customer loyalty and customer patronage play a vital role as a descendant of customer satisfaction, this can be considered as a future focus of researchers.

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