

Analysis of Service Quality of Roadside Dhaba of Haryana

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How to cite this article: Parmesh Dutt, Rakesh Ahlawat, Saras Verma, Virendra Kumar Arya, Srishti Dutta, Sanjay Jamwal (2024) Analysis of Service Quality of Roadside Dhaba of Haryana. *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 18929-18939.

ABSTRACT

The food market has been growing steadily in India and the rise to the infrastructure development especially the road network development has given rise to road travel in India. Along the highways the roadside restaurants, popularly known as Dhaba have come up. This study intended to study the service quality of dhaba. A questionnaire based on SERVQUAL model with an added dimension of food quality was prepared and used for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two sections divided to collect demographic information of the respondents in first section and second section collected information about the perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS AMOS 23. The results were presented in the form of tables and figures. Evaluation of perceived service quality reflected that the dhabas are performing well. The impact of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction was also studied and reflected that assurance and empathy are significant dimensions of service quality for customer satisfaction.

Keywords: service quality, SERVQUAL, customer satisfaction, dhaba, food quality

Introduction

The food market has seen an upsurge in the recent times. People have started eating out more often now than earlier (1). At the same time, Indian state of Haryana has seen rise in the investments in the national highways across the state (2). Several important national highways like NH-9, NH-44 and expressways like NH-152 D pass through Haryana. Apart from these many other highways are also proposed connecting northern part of the country to the coast of Mumbai and the national capital to the Union territory of Jammu Kashmir (3,4). Haryana shares its boundaries with Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, hence, it is considered as gateway to the north India. Travelers on the journey to the Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, and also of Punjab have to pass thorough highways in Haryana. There is a steady increase in the family travels in India (5). It is not only the family travels but also the road trips are on rise (6). This has given rise to a number of "Dhabas". Dhaba is a roadside eatery serving local cuisine (7). The *Dhaba's* have long existed in the Indian Sub Continent (8) and now the concept has expanded to the other parts of the world as well the migration of Indian population, like in USA (9). The concept of Dhaba came into existence to serve the meals to the truckers on the road but with the improvement in travel modes and increased tourism travel, the dhaba are the important food junctions located in the outer of the town along the highway (10). The dhabas' are important food service outlets during travel on the road hence it is important to study the performance of the service quality of the dhaba. The service quality and customer satisfaction has been highly sought after topic for the marketing researchers (11). This paper analyses the service quality of dhabas' along the national highways in India and also studies the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction of these dhaba.

Service quality may be defined as the variation between the expected services and delivered/perceived services. To study the service quality, Parasraman, Zeithaml and Berry put forth the SERVQUAL model based on five dimensions (12). These dimensions were based on the customer's perception. The dimensions are: tangibility, empathy, assurance, reliability and responsiveness. The service quality contributes to the overall trust of the customers in an organization (13) and help service organizations to retain the existing customers and also to attract the new customers (14). The same holds for the restaurants as well (15). Earlier the service quality was considered to be a competitive advantage for service organizations but now a days it is the minimum requirement to gain market acceptance (16). Hence it becomes important to analyze the service quality and its influence on customer satisfaction.

Slack, Singh, Ali, Lata, Mudaliar and Swamy (17) while studying the service quality of fast food restaurants found that food quality, physical environment and employees service quality to be the influential dimensions and food quality to be the most influential among these. Responsiveness and empathy are found to be critical factors while analyzing the service quality of the restraints in Tlaxcala (18). They also put forth that service quality has positive influence on customer satisfaction. On the contrary to (18) as per the study conducted by Appiah, tangibility has the most significant impact on the perceived service quality of the customers followed by responsiveness and assurance (19). Kukanja, Planinc and Jakulin also in their study found assurance, empathy and tangibles to be the most important attributes of service quality (20). Pratama and Dellyana argued that assurance, cleanliness, employees service quality and consistency were the most first priority factors for the customers in the restaurants in Kedai Bang Ben (21). They also found that service quality directly impacts the customer satisfaction. The same sentiment was reiterated by the study conducted by Ilmi, Darma and Wijayanti (22) on J. Co Donuts and Coffee a franchisee based company. They also presented that service quality has direct influence on customer satisfaction. The study by Uslu also discusses that the service quality dimensions have effect on customer satisfaction in restaurants (23). In other study by Razak et al., it was argued that assurance, empathy, price and reliability are important actors whereas responsiveness and tangibility were not found to be significant (24).

Methodology

The SERVQUAL model is the basis for other models developed to measure the service quality (25) such as DINESERV (26), DINESCAPE (27), QUICKSERV (16), GR SERV (28) and DinEX (29) of measuring service quality of restaurants. The previous studies have argued that SERVQUAL is the most important model to study the service quality (30,31). Hence, to collect the data for the study a questionnaire, based on five dimensions of SERVQUAL model and an additional dimension of food quality, was prepared. The questionnaire had two sections where section-1 collected the demographic information from the respondents whereas section-2 collected information about perceived service quality based on 25 questions. Convenience sampling technique was used to collect the data. Convenience sampling refers sample collection which is conveniently accessible to the researcher (32). A total of 556 responses were collected. The collected data was then analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Science AMOS 23.

Results and Discussion

First section of the questionnaire gathered information about the demographic profile of the customers of Dhabas. As presented in the *Table 1*. Majority of the respondents were male (62%). In the age-related questions, it was found that around 75% respondents were in below 25 years (34.8%) and 25-35 years bracket (40.8%). More than half were salaried (52.8%) and 32.5% were students, rest were business owners (7.5%) and others category (7.0%). Nearly 76% were on Indian nationality and others were of other nationalities. When the marital status of the respondents were analyzed around 76% were married and others were single. The educational qualification of 41.1% respondents was post graduate, 28.9% were graduate, 17.8% had studied upto 12th and rest was in others category. By analyzing their visiting status, it was found that majority were one-time visitors (59.3%) (understandably as Dhaba are located along the highways and attract visitors traveling on these highways), nearly 22% were repeat visitors and rest were rarely visitors. The purpose of the visit by these respondents were holiday for 62.4%, business related work for 18.7%, education for 11.6% and others for 7.1%.

Table 1 -Demographic profile of sample population

Characteristics	Frequency	%age
Gender(n=556)		
Male	347	62.0
Female	209	38.0

Age(n=556)		
Below 25 years	194	34.8
25-35 years	227	40.8
36-45 year	92	16.5
46- 55 years	26	4.6
Above 55 years	17	3.0
Occupation (n=556)		
Salaried	294	52.8
Business owner	42	7.5
Student	181	32.5
Others	39	7.0
Nationality (n=556)		
Indian	422	75.9
Others	134	24.1
Marital Status (n=556)		
Single	422	75.9
Married	134	24.1
Qualification (n=556)		
Up to 12	99	17.8
Graduate	161	28.9
Post-Graduate	229	41.1
Others	67	12.0
Visiting Status (=556)		
Rarely Visitor	104	18.7
Repeat visitors	122	21.9
One Time	330	59.3
Main Purpose of visit (n=556)		
Business/work related	104	18.7
Holiday	347	62.4
Education	65	11.6
Others	40	7.1

Source- Primary data

A reliability test to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire was conducted as presented in <i>Table 2</i> . The value of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.902 which is excellent. Table 2 -Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.902	.900	25

Source- Authors' analysis

An item-wise statistical analysis was carried for each item presenting the mean value of the responses for each item along with the standard deviation. This analysis may be helpful in ascertaining the most important factor in the perceived service quality of the customers. The statistical analysis is presented in *Table-3*.

Table 3 -Item Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Dhaba is responsible for providing very tasty food	3.8327	1.07506	556
The food was nutritious	4.0342	1.04179	556
Road side Dhaba introduced fresh food	3.9388	1.01335	556

Dhaba have modern and comfortable furniture	4.0414	1.02759	556
Dhaba have attractive lobby	3.8903	1.05379	556
Dhaba have visually appealing brochures and pamphlets etc	3.8112	1.08816	556
Dhaba have availability of non-smoking area	3.7716	1.08053	556
Staff performing the services at the right time promised	3.6349	1.14913	556
Staff is well trained and knowledgeable	3.8453	1.09766	556
Dhaba Staff is experienced	4.0629	.98346	556
Staff has advanced and accurate information about billing	3.9353	1.01135	556
Willingness of staff to provide help promptly	3.9209	1.00137	556
Availability of staff to provide service	3.8975	1.04248	556
Prompt breakfast menu provided by Dhaba	3.8381	1.04617	556
Quick delivery of service	4.0342	1.01017	556
Staff are friendly	3.9083	1.08247	556
Staff has ability to instill confidence in customer about Dhaba's	3.8795	1.02133	556
Courteous Staff of Dhaba	3.8597	1.03197	556
Staff gives special attention to customer	3.9424	1.04507	556
The dhaba staff understands the need of the customer	3.9065	1.04419	556
The staff working at the dhaba listens to the complaint carefully	3.9478	1.05308	556
Dhaba workers have a deep connection with their Dhaba	3.7716	1.10200	556
I really enjoyed myself at the dhaba	3.8759	.96650	556
The overall feeling I get from roadside restaurants puts me in a good mood	3.9011	.97497	556
I am pleased to have visited this Road side Dhaba	3.8741	.91157	556

Source- Authors' analysis

Table 4 -Levels of agreement for perceived service quality

Mean scores	Level of agreement
4-5	Very high
3-4	High
2-3	Average
1-2	Low

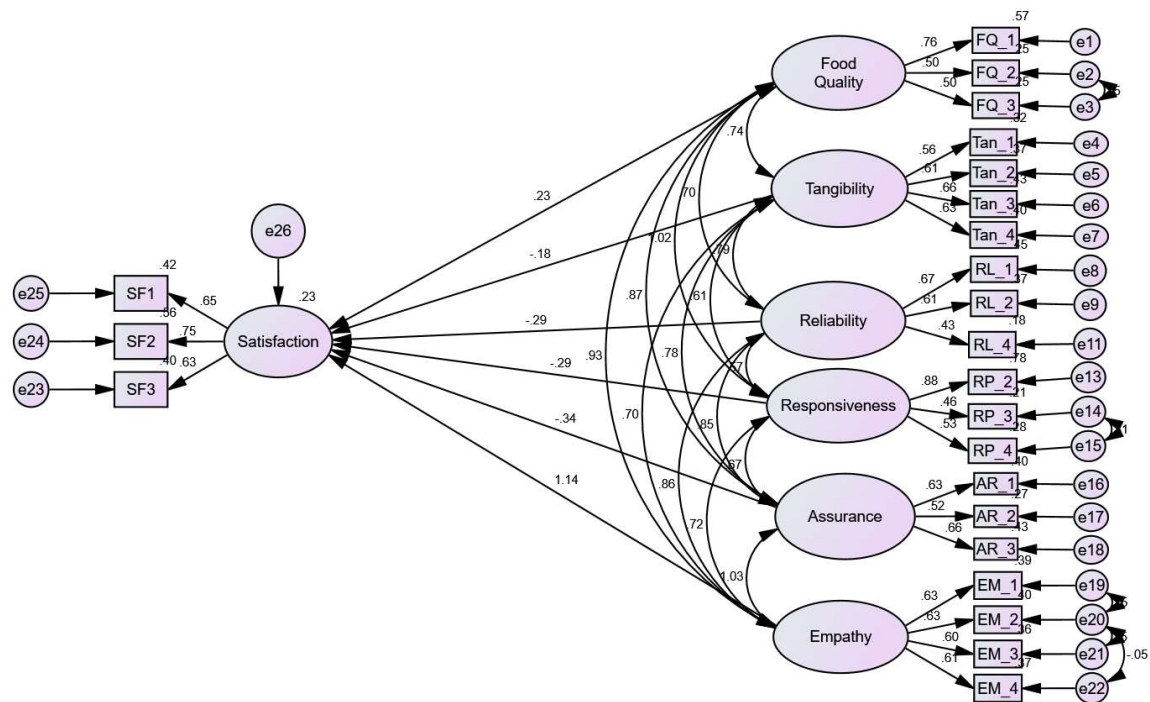
Adapted from (33)

From the above *table-3* it can be inferred that the experience of the dhaba staff has the highest mean value of 4.0629, followed by the item related to modern and comfortable furniture (4.0414), the item related to nutritional aspect of the food (4.0342) and quick delivery of service (4.0342). The level of agreement for these mentioned items is 'very high' whereas it is 'high' for all other items. This reflects that the dhaba have been performing well in terms of the perceived service quality. The level of agreement for the satisfaction related items is also high. Further to structured equation modeling (SEM) was performed on the data.

Table 5 -Results of SEM fit Indices

Fit Metric	CMIN/DF	χ^2	DF	GFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA	P Value
SEM	3.11	635.6	204	.909	.903	.942	.062	.000

Figure 1 -Structural equation model used in this study with the input and output path diagram



Source- Authors' analysis

(TAN1 “Dhaba have modern and comfortable furniture”, TAN2 “Dhaba have attractive lobby”, TAN3 “Dhaba have visually appealing brochures and pamphlets etc”, TAN4 “Dhaba have availability of non-smoking area”, RL1 “Staff performing the services at the right time promised”, RL2 “Staff is well trained and knowledgeable”, RL3 “Dhaba Staff is experienced”, RL4 “Staff has advanced and accurate information about billing”, RP1 “Willingness of staff to provide help promptly”, RP2 “Availability of staff to provide service”, RP3 “Quick delivery of service”, RP4 “Prompt breakfast menu provided by Dhaba”, AR1 “Staff are friendly”, AR2 “Staff has ability to instill confidence in customer about Dhaba’s”, AR3 “Courteous Staff of Dhaba”, EM1 “Staff gives special attention to customer”, EM2 “The dhaba staff understands the need of the customer”, EM3 “The staff working at the dhaba listens to the complaint carefully”, EM4 “Dhaba workers have a deep connection with their Dhaba”, FQ1 “Dhaba is responsible for providing very tasty food”, FQ2 “The food was nutritious”, FQ3 “Road side Dhaba introduced fresh food”, SF1 “I really enjoyed myself at the dhaba”, SF2 “The overall feeling I get from roadside restaurants puts me in a good mood”, SF3 “I am pleased to have visited this Road side Dhaba”).

To ascertain the impact of perceived service quality on hypothesis were tested and presented in Table 6. The results reflect that assurance dimension has the most influence on customer satisfaction followed by empathy dimension, whereas all other dimensions do not have any influence on customer satisfaction. As the p-value for assurance is 0.002, for empathy is 0.024, for food quality 0.179, for reliability is 0.579, for responsiveness is 0.649 and for tangibility is 0.351. The level of significance for p-value is 0.05. The values above 0.05 are rejected and considered as insignificant.

Table 6 –Impact of service quality on customer satisfaction

	Beta coefficient	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Assurance -> Satisfaction	0.215	0.205	0.07	3.087	0.002
Empathy -> Satisfaction	0.164	0.165	0.073	2.257	0.024
Food Quality -> Satisfaction	0.09	0.08	0.067	1.343	0.179
Reliability -> Satisfaction	-0.031	-0.026	0.056	0.555	0.579

Responsiveness -> Satisfaction	-0.026	-0.016	0.056	0.456	0.649
Tangibility -> Satisfaction	-0.068	-0.04	0.073	0.933	0.351

Conclusion

To conclude, the analysis of the perceived service quality of the roadside dhaba was carried out. The analysis presented that the dhaba are performing well in terms of perceived service quality. Particularly these four items the experience of the dhaba staff has the highest mean value of 4.0629 (Dhaba Staff is experienced), followed by the item related to modern and comfortable furniture ‘Dhaba have modern and comfortable furniture’ (4.0414), the item related to nutritional aspect of the food (4.0342) ‘The food was nutritious’ and quick delivery of service (4.0342) ‘Quick delivery of service’. In terms of the six dimensions studied, assurance and empathy are significant for customer satisfaction.

Like any study, this study also has its limitations. Firstly, the study is carried out only for the dhaba located along the highways in

Haryana, hence the sample size is restricted may not be generalized to other parts and type of food service outlets. Secondly, convenience sampling technique was used for data collection which has limitation for generalization of the results (34). The future studies may focus on data collection from more locations providing a diversity to sample size. The other methods of data collection such as random sampling etc. can be used for future studies. There are scant studies in the Indian settings in the field of service quality in food service organizations. Therefore, the Indian researchers may focus to study this aspect.

Abbreviations

Nil

Acknowledgment

Nil

Author Contributions

Conceptualization and study design: Parmesh Dutt, Rakesh Ahlawat

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Supervision: Sanjay Jamwal, Saras Verma

Ethics Approval

The informed consent of all the respondents had been obtained. Ethics approval for this study is not required.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding

This study did not receive any funding.

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