Do satisfied customers recommend restaurants? The moderating effect of engagement on social networks on the relationship between satisfaction and eWOM

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Abstract

Purpose – Academics and managers scour to understand which perceived quality factors are paramount to consumers during their restaurant experiences and how they influence their emotions, satisfaction, propensity to loyalty and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). However, previous studies are divergent regarding the impacts of satisfaction on eWOM. This survey aims to (a) investigate the impacts of perceived quality by restaurant consumers on positive emotions, negative emotions and satisfaction; (b) verify the impacts of satisfaction on the propensity to loyalty and eWOM; (c) test whether the consumers' behavioural engagement in the SNS (CBE-SNS) moderates the relationship between satisfaction and eWOM.

Design/methodology/approach – This survey included 416 university students in Peru who completed an electronic form about their experiences at à la carte restaurants. PLS-SEM tested the hypothetical model based on S-O-R Theory (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974).

Findings – The perceived quality by consumers regarding their restaurant experiences positively impacts satisfaction and positive emotions and negatively affects negative emotions. Satisfaction strongly influences the propensity to loyalty but weakly the eWOM. The CBE-SNS moderates the intensity of the relationship between satisfaction and eWOM.

Originality/value – This study is the first to concomitantly test the relationships between perceived quality, positive and negative emotions, satisfaction, the propensity to loyalty, e-WOM and CBE-SNS. Consumer engagement moderates the relationship between satisfaction and eWOM. Accordingly, to stimulate positive eWOM, restaurants must provide their customers with experiences with high perceived quality, impacting their satisfaction, emotions and propensity for loyalty, and developing strategies to increase CBE-SNS.

Keywords Social media, Electronic word-of-mouth communication, Consumer experience, Foodservice, Consumer satisfaction, S-O-R theory

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

In recent decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of people eating in restaurants in several countries (Zhang *et al.*, 2021). Such growth occurred in different categories of restaurants. Among them, the à la carte restaurants stand out. Souki *et al.* (2020)

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state that à la carte restaurants offer their consumers food and drinks at individual prices for each dish on the menu. Therefore, consumers can choose the dishes and drinks on the menu separately rather than ordering a pre-set combination of items at a fixed price.

Lim *et al.* (2022) affirm that, among à la carte restaurants, some offer full service and are pretty sophisticated (fine-dining restaurants). However, Shen *et al.* (2021) argue that less refined à la carte restaurants also offer full service, with food and drinks from an individual price list on menus, with waitpersons serving customers at tables for casual dining. Casual à la carte restaurants are less formal than fine dining and charge more affordable bills, allowing the presence of audiences such as students, friends and families (Souki *et al.*, 2022b). Casual à la carte restaurants are this study's object.

Several studies aimed to understand which attributes of perceived quality consumers consider in their restaurant experiences and how they impact their attitudes and behavioural intentions. Shahzadi *et al.* (2018) identified that food quality, service quality and restaurant atmosphere positively affect consumers' behavioural intentions in Pakistan, such as intentions to revisit, recommendations and positive word-of-mouth communication (WOM). Souki *et al.* (2020) developed a model to assess the perceived quality by consumers of à la carte restaurants and their impacts on attitudes and behavioural intentions. This study includes tangible (infrastructure, food quality, accessibility and convenience) and intangible (service quality, customer orientation, atmosphere, social endorsement, reputation and status) factors.

However, none of the mentioned studies used the stimulus-organism-response theory (S-O-R) proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). Leung *et al.* (2021) argue that the S-O-R theory describes the relationships between environmental stimuli, cognitive and emotional states (organism), and people's behaviour (response). These authors argue that physical or social stimuli influence people's cognitive and emotional states, affecting their future behaviours. Laato *et al.* (2020) highlight that marketing researchers adopt the S-O-R theory to understand how environmental factors can constitute stimuli that influence consumers' cognitive and affective processes (organism), inducing behavioural responses. Such authors point out that this three-part conceptualisation allows the formulation of complex models that explain how affective and cognitive layers (organism) can mediate the connections between stimuli and behavioural responses (actions).

Several authors have used the S-O-R theory to study restaurant consumer experiences (Lim *et al.*, 2022; Souki *et al.*, 2022b; Oh and Kim, 2021). However, these studies did not use the S-O-R theory to describe the relationships between (a) the perceived quality by consumers of à la carte restaurants (stimuli) and satisfaction and positive and negative emotions (organism) and (b) satisfaction and electronic word-of-mouth communication (eWOM) and propensity to loyalty (responses). Furthermore, no previous studies contemplated the à la carte restaurants consumers' behavioural engagement in the SNS (CBE-SNS) as a moderator of the relationship between satisfaction (organism) and eWOM (response). This study fills this gap in the scientific literature.

This survey aims to (a) investigate the impacts of perceived quality by consumers of à la carte restaurants (stimulus) on positive emotions, negative emotions and satisfaction (organism); (b) verify the impacts of consumer satisfaction (organism) on the propensity to loyalty and eWOM (response); and (c) test whether the CBE-SNS moderates the relationship between satisfaction (organism) and eWOM (response).

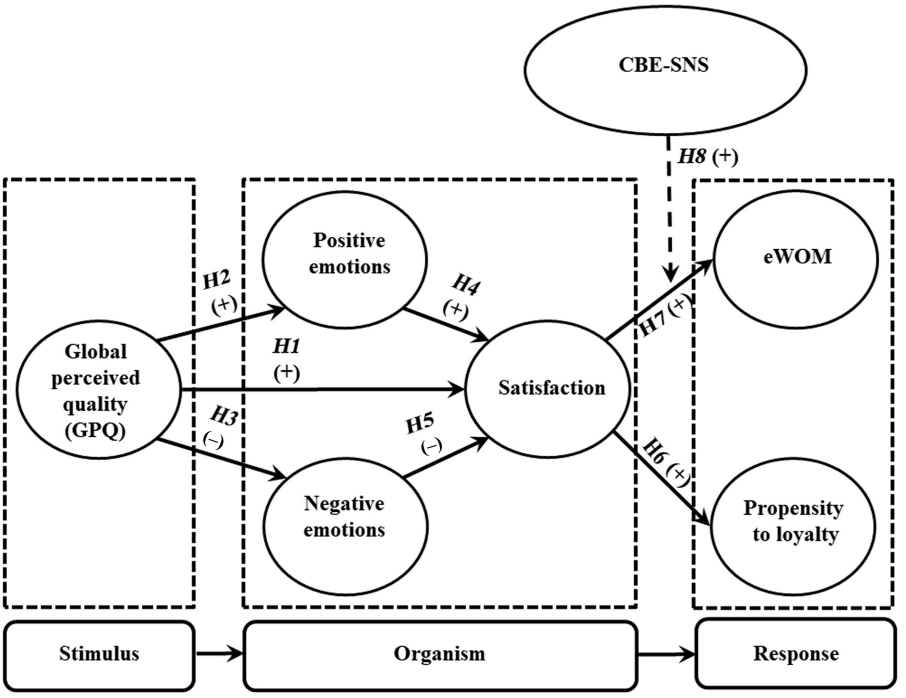
This study contributes to academia by using the S-O-R theory to prove the impacts of perceived quality by consumers of à la carte restaurants (stimulus) on satisfaction and positive and negative emotions (organism), in addition to the subsequent effects on eWOM and propensity to loyalty (responses). This survey also reveals that the CBE-SNS moderates the relationship between satisfaction (organism) and eWOM (response). Another academic contribution is to show that adopting digital technologies and the CBE-SNS influence the

relationship between the organism and behavioural responses. Therefore, this study's results suggest that further research includes variables that may moderate the relationship between stimulus and organism and between organism and response.

As a managerial contribution, this study indicates that restaurant managers should provide their customers with experiences that confer a high-quality perception to influence their emotions, satisfaction and propensity to loyalty. The dimensions that most contribute to the global perceived quality by restaurant consumers are atmosphere, service quality, infrastructure, food quality, status and customer orientation. Hence, restaurant managers might consider these dimensions as stimuli for attracting customers with similar profiles identified in this study. However, customers with favourable perceptions of quality in restaurants may not share their experiences through positive eWOM. In this way, restaurants must consider CBE-SNS to establish strategies for each customer profile to influence eWOM positively.

2. Theoretical framework and research hypotheses

This study used the S-O-R theory to test the relationships between the hypothetical model's constructs (Figure 1). The perceived quality by consumers regarding their experiences in restaurants (stimulus) is measured through the tangible and intangible factors of the model proposed by Souki *et al.* (2020). The perceived quality factors impact restaurant consumers' positive and negative emotions and satisfaction (organism). The model also checks consumer satisfaction impacts on the propensity to loyalty and eWOM (response). Lastly, the researchers tested whether CBE-SNS moderates the relationship between their satisfaction (organism) and eWOM (response).



Source(s): Research data

Figure 1. Hypothetical research model

2.1 Perceived quality (stimulus) and its impact on satisfaction (organism)

Perceived quality refers to the assessment that consumers make about the excellence of a product or service compared to others (Zeithaml, 1988). Monitoring the quality of services is crucial for companies in tourism, hospitality and restaurants (Rajput and Gahfoor, 2020). In restaurants, perceived quality includes tangible dimensions such as infrastructure, accessibility or food quality and intangible dimensions such as service quality, restaurant atmosphere, social endorsement, status and consumer orientation (Souki *et al.*, 2020). As advocated by the S-O-R Theory, such dimensions were considered stimuli in this study.

According to Oliveira *et al.* (2023b), another relevant construct for understanding consumer behaviour is satisfaction. Oliver (2014) defines consumer satisfaction as a state of contentment or pleasure generated by comparing consumers' expectations and the evaluation they make about the performance of a product or service during their consumption experiences. Satisfaction is a post-consumption evaluation that involves cognitive and affective components.

Consumers who rate their experiences' quality better tend to be more satisfied (Oliveira *et al.*, 2023b). Ahmed *et al.*, 2023 and Souki *et al.* (2020) demonstrated that perceived quality is an antecedent of restaurant consumer satisfaction. Lim *et al.* (2022) used the S-O-R theory to prove that perceived quality is a stimulus that influences fine diners' satisfaction (organism) with their gastronomic experience. This study recurs to the S-O-R theory and considers the quality perceived by restaurant consumers as a stimulus that affects their satisfaction (organism). Hence, the following hypothesis is:

H1. Perceived quality directly and positively impacts the satisfaction of consumers at à la carte restaurants.

2.2 Impacts of perceived quality (stimulus) on positive and negative emotions (organism)

Emotions are responses of a biological nature related to the way people feel, how they react to stimuli and the physiological bodily changes that occur in response to stimuli (Bastiaansen *et al.*, 2019). Such authors affirm that emotions can be positive or negative and constitute the main driving element of human behaviour. However, Kim and Hwang (2022) and Song and Kim (2021) argue that studies on negative emotions in tourism, hospitality and restaurants are scarce compared to those related to positive emotions.

Oh and Kim (2021) suggest including specific items to measure positive and negative emotions. Leung and Wen (2021) included separate items to measure positive and negative emotions in their study of consumer experiences in digital food orders. This study mentions these positive emotional states: happy, relaxed, comfortable and passionate. In contrast, this investigation cited the following negative emotional states: frustrated, annoyed, disappointed and angry. Souki *et al.* (2020) included positive (happy, excited, calm, optimistic and enthusiastic) and negative (angry, annoyed, frustrated, upset and disgruntled) emotions in their survey on à la carte restaurants.

Consumers may have positive or negative emotional responses to perceived quality during their consumption experiences (Oliveira *et al.*, 2023a; Souki *et al.*, 2022b; Jung *et al.*, 2021). Considering the above and consonant with the S-O-R theory, the present study proposes that customers' perceived quality regarding their restaurant experiences is an external stimulus that influences their emotions (organism-emotional states). Hence, the following hypotheses are:

H2. Consumers' perception of the high quality of their restaurant experiences positively and directly impacts their positive emotions.

H3. Consumers' perception of the low quality of their restaurant experiences negatively and directly impacts their negative emotions.

2.3 Positive and negative emotions and their impact on consumer satisfaction (organism)
Several studies demonstrate the relationships between positive emotions (Souki *et al.*, 2020; Serra-Cantallops *et al.*, 2018) and consumer satisfaction in their experiences in food service. On the other hand, some studies focused on the inverse relationship between negative emotions and customer satisfaction (Oliveira *et al.*, 2023a; Song and Kim, 2021). Song and Qu (2017) state that negative emotions play a critical role in restaurant customers' satisfaction, but this topic has been neglected in the scientific literature. Some investigations evaluated the relationship between positive and negative emotions and restaurant customers' satisfaction (Leung and Wen, 2021; Souki *et al.*, 2020; Song and Qu, 2017).

Considering the above and based on the S-O-R theory, this study tests whether consumers' positive and negative emotions (organism-emotional states) with their restaurant experiences impact their satisfaction (organism-cognitive and emotional states). Thus, the following hypotheses are:

H4. Positive emotions directly and positively impact the à la carte restaurant consumers' satisfaction.

H5. Negative emotions directly and negatively impact the à la carte restaurant consumers' satisfaction.

2.4 Relationship between satisfaction (organism) and propensity to loyalty (response)
Souki *et al.* (2020) state that the propensity to loyalty refers to the consumers' behavioural intention to keep a relationship with companies or brands, acquiring their services or products on an ongoing basis, even if they receive proposals from competing companies. Several studies demonstrate the direct and positive relationship between satisfaction and restaurant consumer loyalty (Ahmed *et al.*, 2023; Rajput and Gahfoor, 2020). This investigation uses the S-O-R theory to propose that consumers' satisfaction with their experiences in à la carte restaurants is an organism (cognitive and emotional states) that influences their propensity to loyalty (responses). Therefore, the following hypothesis is:

H6. Consumers' satisfaction with their experiences in à la carte restaurants directly and positively impacts their propensity to loyalty.

2.5 Relationship between satisfaction (organism) and eWOM (response)
The evolution of information and communication technologies expanded the interaction between consumers and organisations. Consumers increased their engagement and became more proactive in generating and sharing content through the internet (Souki *et al.*, 2022a). Sann *et al.* (2020) point out that tourism, hospitality and restaurant customers interact more frequently with other customers and companies through eWOM than those from different economic sectors. Hwang (2018) highlights that consumers share their gastronomic experiences through their smartphones, posting text and pictures of the food and the restaurants' facilities on SNS. Content published by restaurant consumers on SNS generates more credibility and trust than those provided by companies (Hwang, 2018). Thus, the recommendations and views of other users are especially relevant for companies in food service (Sann *et al.*, 2020). Line *et al.* (2020) and Chen *et al.* (2021) highlight that many restaurant consumers read and share information about their experiences on SNS, making monitoring the eWOM crucial for restaurants.

Several authors studied the antecedents and consequences of eWOM and, more particularly, the impacts of consumer satisfaction with their experiences and eWOM in hospitality and restaurants (Kim and Hwang, 2022; Serra-Cantallops *et al.*, 2018). However, the results they obtained are divergent, as some studies have shown that customer

satisfaction/dissatisfaction affects eWOM (Kim and Hwang, 2022), and others have failed to demonstrate such a relationship (Serra-Cantallops *et al.*, 2018).

Given the arguments above, the present study resorts to the S-O-R theory to propose that consumers' satisfaction with their experiences in à la carte restaurants is an organism (cognitive and emotional states) that impacts their eWOM (behavioural response). Therefore, the subsequent hypothesis is:

H7. Customer satisfaction with their a la carte restaurant experiences directly and positively impacts their eWOM through SNS.

2.6 Moderating effect of CBE-SNS on the relationship between satisfaction (organism) and eWOM (response)

Bailey *et al.* (2021) state that consumers can present a more passive or active involvement in the SNS. Correia *et al.* (2018) state that the CBE-SNS refers to more active manifestations such as following, liking or commenting on the posts of other users, sharing content published by third parties and creating and publishing content on SNS (e.g. images, videos, audio and texts). On the other hand, more passive engagement involves reading comments and viewing photos, videos and content other users have created. Therefore, the CBE-SNS presents a more applied approach and, according to the metrics adopted by companies, to measure their performance in the SNS (Dessart, 2017).

According to Dolan *et al.* (2016), consumer interaction in SNS must consider its intensity (between low-passive or high-active) and its valence (between negative and positive). Therefore, managers must monitor the elements that stimulate the CBE-SNS and their impact on the eWOM (Souki *et al.*, 2022b; Tussyadiah *et al.*, 2018).

The results of studies on the effects of consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction on eWOM are divergent, as some authors have confirmed this association (Kim and Hwang, 2022), and others do not demonstrate such a relationship (Serra-Cantallops *et al.*, 2018). Thus, studying the role of CBE-SNS can help understand the divergences between the previously mentioned results.

Furthermore, no previous studies have used S-O-R theory to ascertain whether engagement levels (low or high) affect the direction and/or strength of the relationship between consumers' satisfaction with their experiences at à la carte restaurants (organism-cognitive states and emotional) and eWOM (behavioural responses). Thus, the following hypothesis is:

H8. CBE-SNS moderates the relationship between their satisfaction with à la carte restaurant experiences and their eWOM.

3. Methodology

This investigation is descriptive and quantitative, with cross-sectional data collection. The hypothetical model's constructs were classified according to the S-O-R Theory (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). This model incorporated the quality factors perceived by consumers of à la carte restaurants (Souki *et al.*, 2020), in addition to the eWOM (Line *et al.*, 2020; Serra-Cantallops *et al.*, 2018) and the CBE-SNS (Correia *et al.*, 2018; Dolan *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, all constructs and measurement items came from previous studies and were adapted and validated by four marketing and consumer behaviour experts (Table 1).

The research participants completed an electronic form with five-point agreement or disagreement scales, where one (1) means "totally disagree" and five (5) indicates "totally agree". Moreover, the scale includes the option DK/NA (don't know/does not apply).

	Constructs	Number of items	Sources
Stimulus-Global Perceived Quality (GPQ)	Accessibility and convenience	3	Souki *et al.* (2020)
	Reputation	3	
	Infrastructure	10	
	Social endorsement	4	
	Status	5	
	Services quality	9	
	Atmosphere	4	
	Customer orientation	4	
	Food quality	7	
Organism	Positive emotions	5	Souki *et al.* (2020)
	Negative emotions	5	
	Satisfaction	4	
Responses	Propensity to loyalty	5	Souki *et al.* (2020)
	eWOM	5	Adapted from Serra-Cantallops *et al.* (2018) and Line *et al.* (2020)
Moderator construct	CBE-SNS	5	Adapted from Dolan *et al.* (2016) and Correia *et al.* (2018)

Source(s): Developed by the authors

Table 1. S-O-R theory, constructs, number of items and sources

The participants' sociodemographic profile, their CBE-SNS and their eWOM about their experiences in à la carte restaurants were also evaluated. Fifteen consumers participated in a pre-test to check for possible failures in understanding the form's questions.

This survey sample consisted of 416 students from universities in Peru, selected for accessibility and convenience (Malhotra *et al.*, 2017). Respondents' participation was voluntary. It is worth mentioning that the researchers chose university students for this study because they wanted to compare their results with those obtained by Souki *et al.* (2020) with Brazilian university students. Moreover, in Peru, casual a la carte restaurants have an informal atmosphere and charge affordable prices for low-income consumers, including students.

Kim *et al.* (2022) argue that restaurants have different consumer profiles, including university students. Thus, samples with students are suitable for contemplating one of the profiles included in the population of interest (restaurant consumers and SNS users). Furthermore, student samples are typically more homogeneous, reducing the Type II error and favouring theory extraction (Taylor *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, this study's authors recognise the existence of different profiles of consumers of casual dining à la carte restaurants but emphasise that university students are one of them.

The G* Power 3.1.9.4 software (Faul *et al.*, 2009) evaluated sample size and the power of statistical analyses (Hair *et al.*, 2017; Chin and Newsted, 1999). Satisfaction was the construct with the highest number of predictors in the model as it was impacted (arrows) by the perceived quality and positive and negative emotions. Thus, considering the satisfaction predictors, the significance level of 5%, the statistical power of 0.08 and the mean effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$, which represents a moderating effect of $R^2 = 13\%$), the minimum recommended sample size is 107 cases. However, the sample must have at least 205 respondents if more demanding parameters are considered, including a significance level of 1%, a statistical power of 0.01 and an average effect size of $f^2 = 0.15$. Ringle *et al.* (2014) recommend doubling or tripling the above sample to obtain more consistent models. This study had 416 participants, representing 3.89 times more respondents than the least rigorous parameter and

2.03 times more cases than the most conservative criterion. Finally, the post-hoc analysis of the G* Power 3 revealed a statistical power of 0.999, indicating that this research's sample is adequate.

Structural equation modelling using partial least squares (PLS-SEM) tested this research's hypothetical model. Hair *et al.* (2014) highlight that PLS-SEM estimates PLS based on regression to describe the variance of the unobserved construct, minimising errors and maximising the R^2 values of the endogenous (target) constructs. Ringle *et al.* (2014) recommend the PLS-SEM when the data do not have a normal distribution, or the structural models have many constructs and observed variables. PLS-SEM uses a two-step evaluation process, the first for the measurement model and the second for the structural model (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Henseler *et al.* (2009) recommend initially evaluating the reliability and validity of the scale measurement items. In the second step, researchers should test the hypothetical relationships between the constructs of the structural model if no problems are found during the first step (Hair *et al.*, 2017).

SmartPLS analysed this survey's data. This software is recommended for studies in marketing (Hair *et al.*, 2019b) and restaurant consumer behaviour (Ahmed *et al.*, 2023; Rajput and Gahfoor, 2020; Souki *et al.*, 2020). SmartPLS allows analysing of complex structural models contemplating the relationships between multiple variables (Ringle *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, such software is indicated when research data do not have a normal distribution (Hair *et al.*, 2019b), which is common in applied social science studies (Oliveira *et al.*, 2021). As Hair *et al.* (2019a) advocated, Kolmogorov–Smirnov tested whether the data had a normal distribution. The results demonstrate that the p-value of the tested variables equals 0.000, confirming that the data do not present a normal distribution.

SmartPLS can assess an exogenous variable's moderating effect on endogenous constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2014). This survey assessed the moderating effect of CBE-SNS on the relationship between satisfaction and eWOM. Akter *et al.* (2017) argue that although PLS-SEM can be used on small sample sizes, it is also valuable for analysing large and complex datasets.

4. Data analysis and discussion of results

4.1 Description of the sample

This survey's sample consists of 416 students, 82.0% at the undergraduate level and 18.0% at the graduate level from higher education institutions in Peru. Moreover, 39.4% of the sample comprised men, 59.6% of women and 1.0% of the participants did not answer this question. Finally, 79.1% of respondents are between 18 and 26 years.

4.2 Measurement model estimation method

This study's measurement model was tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The first step was to specify which variables compound the model's constructs. Subsequently, the researchers evaluated the constructs' variables factor loadings. The factor loadings must be greater than 0.6 (Hair *et al.*, 2019a). As Aguirre-Urreta and Rönkkö (2018) recommended, the present study used the bootstrapping technique, which takes several samples from the original research data to estimate the model. The bootstrapping test showed that the factor loadings were significant with a p-value <0.05. Table 2 presents the model constructs, their measurement items, factor loadings, t-test and their significance.

The CFA assessed the constructs' convergent validity, discriminant validity and reliability (Hair *et al.*, 2019a; Malhotra *et al.*, 2017; Kline, 2015). Table 3 shows the indicators of convergent validity of the measurement model. The composite reliability (CR) of all constructs surpassed 0.7 (Malhotra *et al.*, 2017).

	Constructs	Measurement items	Factor loadings	Test *t*
Stimulus-Global Perceived Quality (GPQ)	Accessibility and convenience	*The last à la carte restaurant I visited . . .*		
		It is well located	0.8847	13.776
		It is easy to get	0.8630	10.924
		It is located in an easily accessible region for its customers	0.8555	12.750
	Reputation	*The last à la carte restaurant I visited . . .*		
		It is quite well known/famous	0.8996	21.019
		It has a good reputation (people speak highly of this restaurant)	0.8700	20.623
		Have a recognised brand in the restaurant industry	0.8818	18.266
	Infrastructure	*The last à la carte restaurant I visited . . .*		
		It has a beautiful external appearance	0.7007	9.773
		Have a spacious environment	0.7290	6.753
		Have comfortable facilities	0.8189	8.638
		Have pleasant lighting	0.7235	10.105
		Features attractive interior decor/design	0.7977	8.055
		It has attractive colours	0.7298	8.137
		They have a clean and hygienic environment (bathroom/lounge/tables/outdoor area/kitchen)	0.7840	8.791
		It has comfortable and clean bathrooms	0.7379	7.914
		Allows customers to move through the organisation of space and facilities easily	0.7398	9.168
		Has tables with adequate/beautiful appearance (cutlery, tablecloths, glasses and napkins)	0.7969	11.020
	Social endorsement	*The last à la carte restaurant I visited . . .*		
		It is highly valued by my friends and/or family	0.7839	13.408
		It's a place where the people I like to hang out with frequent	0.8234	12.724
		It is a place that my friends and/or family visit regularly	0.7946	8.888
		It's a place that my friends and/or family recommend	0.8212	13.597
	Status	*The last à la carte restaurant I visited . . .*		
		It is frequented by people with a high social status	0.8751	11.322
		It is frequented by successful people	0.8631	14.391
		Gives its patrons prestige	0.8037	11.666
		It's a trendy restaurant	0.7055	9.892
		It's a fine/chic restaurant	0.8042	9.384
	Services quality	*The last à la carte restaurant I visited . . .*		
		Provides a sufficient number of employees to serve customers well, even during peak hours	0.7389	9.173
		Offers polite and kind staff to serve customers	0.8456	8.108
		It has employees with the necessary knowledge to answer customer questions related to the dishes and drinks offered	0.7886	9.956
		It has employees always willing to help customers	0.8485	9.601
		Have honest and transparent employees in customer relations	0.8365	10.250
		It has employees who solve customer needs and desires quickly and effectively	0.8217	11.751
		Delivery orders on time	0.6409	9.505
		Deliver orders correctly (no errors)	0.6714	8.046
		They have a waiting time for fast bill delivery	0.6114	7.373

(*continued*)

Table 2. Constructs, measurement items and their factor loadings

	Constructs	Measurement items	Factor loadings	Test *t*
	Atmosphere	*The last à la carte restaurant I visited has . . .*		
		A pleasant atmosphere	0.8953	16.950
		A warm and friendly environment	0.8610	16.246
		A good relationship between people (customers, owners, employees/waiters)	0.8554	14.212
		Nice customers	0.7898	14.634
	Customer orientation	*The last à la carte restaurant I visited . . .*		
		Cares and strives to solve customer problems	0.8796	16.560
		Cares about customer opinion and satisfaction	0.8572	18.643
		Is honest, fair and transparent with customers	0.8617	15.678
		Handles customer complaints in a correct and timely manner	0.8072	13.574
	Food quality	*The last à la carte restaurant I visited . . .*		
		Offers dishes that look great (visually appealing)	0.7827	11.373
		Offers fresh food	0.8474	11.291
		Offers dishes with a pleasant odour (smells)	0.8795	9.160
		Serve food at the proper temperature	0.8143	10.062
		Serve tasty foods	0.8509	11.286
		Offers dishes with good quality ingredients	0.8663	10.983
		Prepares food to a high/strict standard of hygiene/ quality	0.7818	9.941
Organism	Positive emotions	*The last à la carte restaurant I visited made me feel . . .*		
		Happy	0.8361	20.124
		Excited	0.8532	25.464
		Calm	0.6871	17.786
		Optimistic	0.8215	17.983
		Enthusiastic	0.7991	19.798
	Negative emotions	*The last à la carte restaurant I visited made me feel . . .*		
		Angry	0.9113	17.015
		Annoyed	0.9341	16.868
		Frustrated	0.9081	18.300
		Upset	0.9135	15.581
		Disgruntled	0.9146	14.758
	Satisfaction	*The last à la carte restaurant I visited . . .*		
		Met my expectations	0.8767	34.782
		It made me satisfied with my decision to attend it	0.8915	53.177
		Offered me pleasant and/or fun experiences	0.8497	28.756
		It gave me pleasure to visit	0.8825	36.263
Responses	Propensity to loyalty	I plan to visit this restaurant if I decide to have lunch or dinner out	0.8795	28.270
		I plan to return to this restaurant, even if other people invite me to visit other restaurants	0.8220	22.442
		I consider this restaurant as a great option among the ones available	0.8730	26.157
		I intend to continue frequenting this restaurant in the future	0.8755	28.770
		The next time I go out for lunch or dinner, I will definitely choose the last restaurant I visited	0.7704	18.743

Table 2. (*continued*)

	Constructs	Measurement items	Factor loadings	Test *t*
	eWOM	I checked in on social media when I arrived at the restaurant, showing where I was	0.8291	9.799
		I posted photos or videos of the restaurant and/or its food on social media	0.8632	12.815
		I made comments about the restaurant on social media	0.8783	10.773
		I shared my experiences at the restaurant on social media	0.8962	14.275
		I evaluated the restaurant on social networks, websites and/or specialised applications	0.7142	4.475
Moderator construct	CBE-SNS	*Frequently I . . .*		
		I view posts from my contacts on social media	0.6604	4.815
		I like the posts my contacts make on social media	0.6650	6.189
		I comment on posts from my contacts on social media	0.7769	8.654
		I share content posted by my contacts on social media	0.7999	9.270
		I publish content with texts, photos and/or videos on subjects of interest to me on social media	0.7131	6.469

Note(s): The significance (α) for all construct measurement items is less than 0.006
Source(s): Research data

Table 2.

Constructs	AVE	CR	R^2	CA
Accessibility and convenience	0.753	0.902	0.251	0.839
Atmosphere	0.725	0.913	0.690	0.873
Social endorsement	0.649	0.881	0.351	0.823
Infrastructure	0.573	0.930	0.659	0.917
Customer orientation	0.726	0.914	0.595	0.874
Status	0.660	0.906	0.359	0.870
Food quality	0.693	0.940	0.631	0.926
Services quality	0.579	0.924	0.660	0.907
Reputation	0.781	0.915	0.427	0.861
GPQ	0.324	0.966	–	0.964
Satisfaction	0.766	0.929	0.678	0.898
Negative emotions	0.840	0.963	0.139	0.952
Positive emotions	0.643	0.899	0.418	0.860
eWOM	0.704	0.922	0.161	0.894
Propensity to loyalty	0.714	0.926	0.561	0.900
CBE-SNS	0.526	0.847	–	0.776

Note(s): AVE-Average Variance Extracted; CR-Composite Reliability; R^2 – Pearson's Determination Coefficient; CA-Cronbach's Alpha
Source(s): Research data

Table 3.
Convergent validity and reliability

Hair *et al.* (2019b) suggest that the model constructs' Cronbach's alpha coefficient (CA) should be greater than 0.6 for scales under development and 0.8 for previously tested scales. In this research, only the CBE-SNS presented a CA of 0.776. Therefore, all the constructs used in this study's model have adequate CA.

The average extracted variance (AVE) tested the constructs' convergent validity. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), this indicator evaluates the average percentage of variance shared between the latent constructs. Table 3 confirms the convergent validity of

the model's first-order constructs, as all AVEs were more significant than 0.50 (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2017).

According to Hair *et al.* (2019a, b), discriminant validity (DV) assesses the degree to which two similar concepts are distinct. The method used in this research to test DV was the heterotrait–monotrait ratio of common factor correlations (HTMT), as Henseler *et al.* (2015) recommend for PLS-SEM. Hair *et al.* (2019a) argue that the HTMT criterion is the mean value of the indicator correlations across constructs relative to the geometric mean of the average correlations of indicators measuring the same construct. Hence, HTMT reliably estimates the actual correlation between two constructs. High HTMT values indicate problems with discriminant validity. Hair *et al.* (2019b) and Henseler *et al.* (2015) affirm that HTMT values should be less than 0.90 if the model includes conceptually similar constructs. However, they suggest a more conservative value of 0.85 when the constructs differ. In the present study, none of the HTMTs was higher than the recommended standard, and the highest value for the entire model was 0.82 (Table 4). Therefore, HTMT confirms that DV is appropriate for all constructs in the model.

4.3 Hypothetical model's nomological analysis

According to Hair *et al.* (2017), structural models assess whether the measurement items of the constructs are valid and reliable and support hypothetical relationships predicted by the theory. In this way, structural models check the causal relationships between the constructs of a nomological chain (Hagger *et al.*, 2017), which is pivotal in testing the research hypotheses.

The structural model was evaluated by its path coefficients ($\wp$) and significance (α), as Hair *et al.* (2019a) recommend (Figure 2). Path analysis demonstrates the impacts of one construct on others through arrows that indicate cause-and-effect relationships.

Another indicator to be evaluated is the model's Pearson coefficient of determination (R^2). This coefficient reveals which part of the variance of the endogenous variables is explained by the structural model, which indicates its quality. According to Ringle *et al.* (2014), R^2 has a negligible effect when it is less than or equal to 2%, has a medium effect when it is equal to 13% and has a high impact when it is equivalent to or greater than 26%. The R^2 values of the constructs included in the structural model of the present study are in Figure 2.

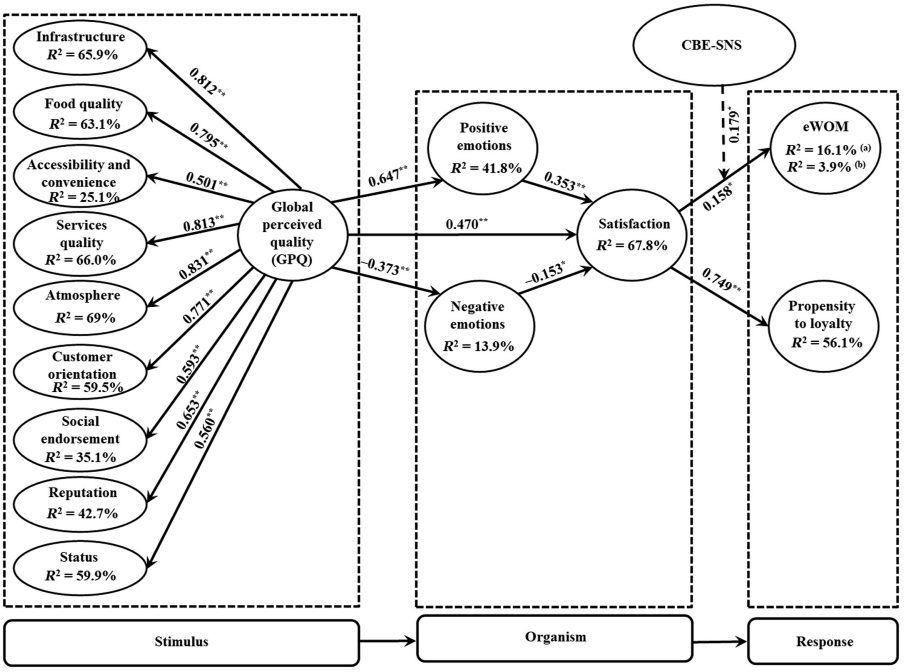
This research's hypotheses refer to the impacts of the GPQ on satisfaction (H1) and positive emotions (H2), and negative emotions (H3). The GPQ impacted satisfaction ($\wp = 0.470$), positive emotions ($\wp = 0.647$ and $R^2 = 41.8\%$) and negative emotions ($\wp = -0.373$ and $R^2 = 13.9\%$). Other studies confirm that the quality perceived by restaurant consumers impacts their positive (Shahzadi *et al.*, 2018) and negative emotions (Jung *et al.*, 2021). It is worth mentioning that the values found in the present survey are very close to those verified in the research by Souki *et al.* (2020) for the impacts of GPQ on positive emotions ($\wp = 0.635$ and $R^2 = 40.2\%$), negative emotions ($\wp = -0.371$ and $R^2 = 13.8\%$) and satisfaction ($\wp = 0.332$). The GPQ, associated with positive emotions ($\wp = 0.353$) and negative emotions ($\wp = -0.153$), helped explain consumer satisfaction ($R^2 = 67.8\%$). These results confirm H4 and H5 and are consistent with Souki *et al.* (2020), who revealed an $R^2 = 74.0\%$ for consumer satisfaction in their experiences in à la carte restaurants. All relationships were significant, supporting the five hypotheses regarding satisfaction (H1–H5).

This study's results demonstrated that satisfaction significantly impacts the propensity to loyalty ($\wp = 0.749$ and $R^2 = 56.1\%$), confirming H6. The values found in this investigation converged ($\wp = 0.779$ and $R^2 = 60.6\%$) with those of Souki *et al.* (2020). This result is also consistent with previous studies in the restaurant sector that demonstrate that satisfaction is an antecedent of propensity to loyalty (Rajput and Gahfoor, 2020). Finally, this research's

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1 - Accessibility and convenience	1.000														
2 - Reputation	0.514	1.000													
3 - Infrastructure	0.395	0.608	1.000												
4 - Social endorsement	0.283	0.472	0.443	1.000											
5 - Status	0.254	0.658	0.619	0.474	1.000										
6 - Services quality	0.405	0.487	0.561	0.427	0.401	1.000									
7 - Atmosphere	0.417	0.513	0.792	0.531	0.469	0.719	1.000								
8 - Customer orientation	0.293	0.441	0.544	0.454	0.423	0.803	0.706	1.000							
9 - Food quality	0.473	0.511	0.576	0.448	0.385	0.645	0.693	0.643	1.000						
10 - Positive emotions	0.276	0.437	0.567	0.493	0.436	0.556	0.651	0.675	0.550	1.000					
11 - Negative emotions	0.285	0.301	0.293	0.193	0.112	0.352	0.354	0.323	0.398	0.401	1.000				
12 - Satisfaction	0.387	0.487	0.620	0.555	0.417	0.688	0.721	0.677	0.743	0.806	0.493	1.000			
13 - Propensity to loyalty	0.311	0.418	0.514	0.634	0.379	0.532	0.562	0.552	0.650	0.679	0.354	0.825	1.000		
14 - eWOM	0.035	0.188	0.269	0.232	0.342	0.180	0.211	0.221	0.125	0.259	0.141	0.214	0.297	1.000	
15 - CBE-SNS	0.170	0.153	0.205	0.074	0.201	0.182	0.233	0.168	0.120	0.183	0.048	0.130	0.208	0.369	1.000

Source(s): Research data

Table 4.
Discriminant validity – Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT)



Note(s):
* - Path is significant at 1% ($p < 0.01$)
** - Path is significant at 0.1% ($p < 0.001$)
R^2 - Corresponds to the explained variance of the constructs
[a] - With CBE-SNS
[b] - Without CBE-SNS
Source(s): Research data

Figure 2.
The structural model

structural model confirmed that satisfaction impacted eWOM ($\wp = 0.158$), with a significance of 0.009, supporting H7.

4.4 Moderating effect of CBE-SNS on the relationship between satisfaction and eWOM

The moderating effect of CBE-SNS on the relationship between satisfaction with their a la carte restaurant experiences and eWOM (H8) was tested using two models. The first model did not embrace the moderator construct, and in the second such construct was included. According to Hair *et al.* (2017), the moderating effect occurs when the relationship between two constructs is not constant but depends on the values of a moderating variable. Therefore, the moderator construct changes the direction or strength of the relationship between two constructs that compound a structural model (Hair *et al.*, 2017).

The results demonstrate that the R^2 of eWOM in the first model (without CBE-SNS) was 3.9%. However, R^2 increased to 16.1% in the second model (with CBE-SNS). The moderator construct has an effect (f^2) of 0.179 with a significance of 0.003 (two-tailed) on the relationship between satisfaction and eWOM (Figure 2). This effect is large and significant for the moderation of relationships, according to the parameters indicated by Hair *et al.* (2017): (1) $f^2 = 0.005$ – small; (2) $f^2 = 0.010$ – mean; (3) $f^2 = 0.025$ – large. Therefore, the results support

H8 by demonstrating that CBE-SNS moderates the relationship between their satisfaction with restaurant experiences and eWOM.

Bidirectional interactions show how the relationship between an independent variable (X) and a dependent variable (Y), moderated by a third variable (M), occurs (Dawson, 2014). Thus, in this research, the independent variable or construct is satisfaction, the dependent one is eWOM, and the CBE-SNS moderates the relationship between satisfaction and eWOM. Figure 3 shows the bidirectional interaction effects for standardised variables.

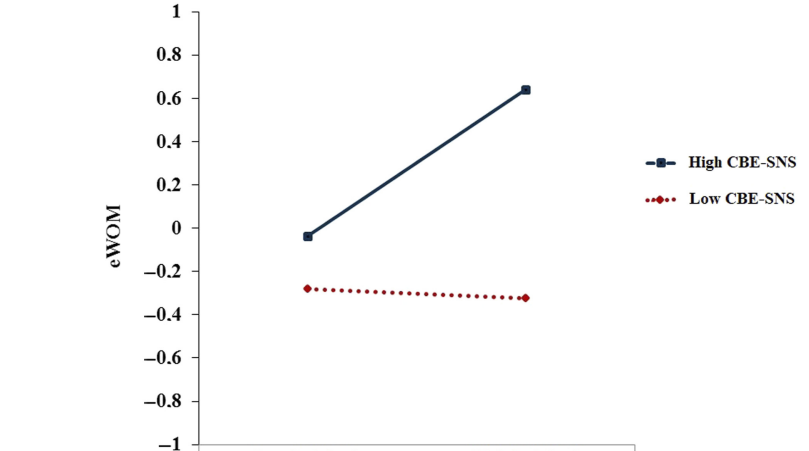
A variable M can moderate the relationship between two variables (X and Y), weakening or strengthening it depending on its variation (Gardner *et al.*, 2017). Figure 3 shows a blue line that indicates the relationship between the satisfaction of consumers of à la carte restaurants and eWOM when CBE-SNS is high (one standard deviation above the mean). Satisfaction impact on eWOM is more evident and positive for consumers highly engaged in SNS. In contrast, the red-dotted line demonstrates the relationship between consumer satisfaction and eWOM when CBE-SNS is low (one standard deviation below the mean).

As Bailey *et al.* (2021) mentioned, people with a low CBE-SNS have a more passive posture. Thus, they tend not to seek information or share their experiences on social networks but are limited to observing content shared by others or companies (Correia *et al.*, 2018). In this way, people with slight CBE-SNS communicate negligible through eWOM, even though they are highly satisfied or dissatisfied with their experiences.

In contrast, people with a high level of CBE-SNS tend to participate more actively in online communications to seek information, share their experiences and influence others (Bailey *et al.*, 2021; Correia *et al.*, 2018). Hence, consumers satisfied with their experiences in à la carte restaurants and highly engaged in SNS are inclined to share their experiences through eWOM.

5. Conclusions and academic and managerial contributions

This study used the S-O-R theory in an unprecedented way to demonstrate the direct impacts of quality perceived by consumers of à la carte restaurants (stimulus) on their positive



	Low Satisfaction	High Satisfaction
Low CBE-SNS	−0.281	−0.323
High CBE-SNS	−0.035	0.639

Source(s): Research data

Figure 3.
Effects of bidirectional interaction between satisfaction and eWOM moderated by CBE-SNS

emotions, negative emotions and satisfaction (organism) and the repercussions of satisfaction on the propensity to loyalty and eWOM (responses). Furthermore, this study revealed that CBE-SNS moderates the relationship between satisfaction and eWOM. Although the literature has other studies that used the S-O-R theory to analyse restaurant consumer behaviour, none of them simultaneously described the constructs and relationships of this research's hypothetical model. Therefore, this study is singular, contributing to theory and restaurant managers.

As a managerial implication, this study demonstrates that the dimensions that most contribute to the global perceived quality by restaurant consumers studied are atmosphere, service quality, infrastructure, food quality, status and customer orientation. The results also suggest that restaurants must provide their customers with experiences stimulating the perception of high quality, influencing their emotions, satisfaction and propensity to loyalty. However, customers satisfied with their restaurant experiences may not share them through positive eWOM. In this way, restaurants should consider the CBE-SNS to establish strategies for each customer profile, positively influencing the eWOM.

This research contributes to the theory and corroborates prior studies (Oliveira *et al.*, 2023a; Leung and Wen, 2021; Jung *et al.*, 2021; Souki *et al.*, 2020) that defend the importance of including specific and separate items for assessing consumers' negative and positive emotions about their experiences. By having independent measurement indicators for positive and negative emotions, this study reveals that consumers who favourably perceive the global quality of their restaurant experiences (stimulus) tend to feel more positive emotions than negative emotions (organism). Moreover, global perceived quality better explains positive emotions than negative emotions.

This study also contributes to the theory, proving that positive and negative emotions (organism-emotional states) mediate the relationship between global perceived quality (stimulus) and consumer satisfaction with their restaurant experiences (organism-cognitive and emotional states). Positive and negative emotions contribute to the explanatory power of consumer satisfaction and, consequently, to its future repercussions, such as the propensity to loyalty and eWOM (behavioural responses). However, positive emotions have a more pronounced direct effect on satisfaction than negative emotions. These results respond to the gap identified by Song and Kim (2021) and Song and Qu (2017) that research on restaurant consumer behaviour has focused mainly on positive emotions. Finally, ascertaining the distinct relationships mentioned above would be impossible if positive and negative emotions were measured with a single construct.

Although previous studies have explored the impacts of consumer satisfaction with their hotel and restaurant experiences and eWOM, their results are divergent, as in some, satisfaction impacted eWOM (Kim and Hwang, 2022), and in others not (Serra-Cantallops *et al.*, 2018). Accordingly, the present study contributes academically by using the S-O-R theory to demonstrate the direct impacts of consumer satisfaction in casual à la carte restaurants (organism) on the propensity to loyalty and eWOM (responses). It also proves that the CBE-SNS is an independent construct that amplifies the strength of the relationship between satisfaction and eWOM, demonstrating its moderating effect. Such moderation occurs because people with low CBE-SNS do not communicate through eWOM regardless of whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied. On the other hand, people with high CBE-SNS tend to intensify their eWOM only when delighted (Figure 3). Hence, this study provides a possible explanation for the divergent results of previous research that contemplate the impacts of consumer satisfaction on eWOM. This study suggests that future investigations that recur to the S-O-R Theory should consider variables that potentially moderate the relationship between stimuli and organism and between organism and responses.

Finally, another managerial contribution is that restaurant managers can use or adapt this survey's questionnaire and the structural model to research perceived quality, emotions, satisfaction, propensity to loyalty, and CBE-SNS and eWOM.

6. Research limitations and recommendations for future research

This study has some limitations. The first limitation is that the data were collected through a single cross-section. Future surveys may collect data at different moments (multiple cross-sections) or may continuously monitor the evolution of consumer ratings (longitudinal) to understand their behaviour better over time.

This study's second limitation is that casual dining à la carte restaurants have different consumer profiles, such as families, groups of friends, co-workers and university students. However, this research's participants in were exclusively university students from Peru. It is worth noting that Kim *et al.* (2022) defend using student samples in this type of research, as they are part of the target audience. However, further research may test or adapt the proposed model to different restaurant consumer profiles.

This study's third limitation is that the various dimensions of perceived quality may impact positive and negative emotions differently (Oh and Kim, 2021). Thus, it is suggested that future studies test the direct effects of the dimensions of perceived quality (first-order constructs) on positive and negative emotions.

Finally, further research may adapt or expand this study's model to other types of restaurants, such as buffet or self-service, fine dining, rodizio, fast food and food by the kilo (Lim *et al.*, 2022; Leung *et al.*, 2021; Souki *et al.*, 2020).

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