CUSTOMER SATISFACTION DURING THE POST COVID-19 PANDEMIC: TESTING THE EFFECT OF FOOD QUALITY, PACKAGING, AND CUSTOMER TRUST

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Abstract: The objective of this study was to evaluate the influence of food quality and packaging on consumer trust and satisfaction. The present study obtained a total of 84 respondents, as evidenced by the data collected through the administration of online questionnaires. The data was analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The data undergoes processing utilising WarpPls version 8. The results of this study indicate that there is a notable influence of both product quality and packaging on consumer trust and happiness. Furthermore, the present study elucidates that elevated levels of trust throughout the Covid-19 pandemic will exert an impact on consumer satisfaction.

Keywords: food quality, packaging, customer trust, and customer satisfaction

JEL Classification: M29, M31

A. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on many industries, including the food and beverage sector (Ma et al., 2021). Some of the new realities that have emerged as a result of shifting consumer preferences and consumption patterns must be accommodated by the industry. Several researchers explained that consumption patterns changed during the pandemic (Barton, 2022; Orgiles et al., 2020; Philippe et al., 2021). According to Marty et al. (2021), people's behavior changed during the lockdown, and they paid greater attention to nutrition and food quality.

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The passage of time has altered people's lifestyles. Due to globalization, the community independently improves the economy using a variety of innovative business ideas. This has resulted in extremely rapid expansion throughout the business world, including the food and beverage industry. The increasing number of new businesses has made competition in this industry more intense. Therefore, business actors must consider ways to increase customer acquisition and competitiveness. According to Soriano (2002), service quality and food quality are the most influential factors in determining customer satisfaction. Good product quality is determined by the rate at which it meets customer expectations and leaves a positive impression. Customers will be more satisfied with a company's brand if the products it sells are of higher quality.

Customer trust is a consumer's perception of a product based on the extent to which customer expectations are met and customer satisfaction with product performance is derived from transaction or interaction experiences (Tjiptono, 2006). The impression of the company's brand will be determined by the level of satisfaction consumers receive from consuming food and beverages. If the quality of the food offered meets customer expectations, a positive impression can be made on their minds. The greater the number of positive impressions made, the greater the level of customer confidence. By continuing to uphold this confidence, a brand can earn customer loyalty. Thus, businesses' competitiveness will increase.

In business competition, customer satisfaction must be the primary objective. Customer satisfaction is a result of comparing customer expectations to the company's actual performance (Kotler, 2013). According to Naik and Gantasala (2010), customer satisfaction is the most valuable company asset because it has a significant impact on business growth. Every consumer has unique needs that they hope to satisfy by purchasing a product. Customer satisfaction can be achieved if the product is of high quality and meets the needs of the customer. If customer satisfaction persists, it can influence repurchase decisions, foster harmonious and loyal relationships between businesses and consumers, and result in consumer referrals to other potential customers (Adhari, 2021). All of these advantages will affect the company's brand image, increase sales, and contribute to a rise in business revenues.

Qin et al. (2009), there are four dimensions of product quality in the food and beverage industry: freshness, presentation, well-cookedness, and food variety (diversity of food). Therefore, care must be taken when serving food to maintain food and beverages according to the business's standards. In reality, however, the process of serving food presents its own challenges, and consumers will be keenly aware of even the smallest error. The taste of food that does not meet customer expectations (too sweet or too salty), an improper level of doneness (undercooked or overcooked), and an unappealing appearance are common issues that frequently arise. These issues arise due to a lack of proper standardization in the production process, thereby diminishing the quality of the product and affecting the overall business image.

The purpose of this study was to determine how food quality and packaging affect consumer confidence and satisfaction. The findings of this study indicate that there is a positive relationship between the quality of a product and its packaging, and the levels of customer trust and happiness. Additional findings indicate that the level of consumer trust has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. The findings of this investigation provide support for the expectation-disconfirmation theory.

In the subsequent sections, an examination of the existing literature and the formulation of hypotheses will be presented. Subsequently, the empirical investigation and its findings have been deliberated over. In the discourse portion, an analysis was conducted about the ramifications of the findings from both a theoretical and practical standpoint, afterwards addressing any limits and potential areas for future investigation.

B. LITERATUR REVIEW

1. Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT)

The concept of Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) was initially introduced by Oliver (1980) as a means to explain the discrepancy between consumers' anticipated consuming experiences before making a purchase and the actual experiences they encounter after the purchase. Disconfirmation arises when there is a discrepancy between anticipated outcomes and actual experiences (Guan et al., 2023). Multiple research conducted on Electronic Data Transfer (EDT) has provided evidence supporting the notion that positive disconfirmation can foster consumer trust, satisfaction, and desire to repurchase (Cai & Chi,

2021; Lankton et al., 2014). The use of EDT is prevalent in the examination of consumer happiness and discontent, as well as post-purchase and post-adoption behaviour (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993). Consumers possess a tendency to establish predetermined expectations for their gastronomic encounters, including their dining experiences. Subsequently, these expectations might engender a phenomenon known as expectation-disconfirmation, whereby individuals compare their initial anticipations with the actualities of their dining experience, exerting an influence on their overall contentment (Deng et al., 2023).

2. Food Quality

The food and beverage industry places great emphasis on quality. Various characteristics, including nutritional value, physicochemical properties, safety, sensory attributes, and shelf-life stability, determine quality (Hassoun et al., 2023; Kusumayati & Aldieniyah, 2020). In addition to sensory properties, shelf life, and freshness, microbiological and technological parameters also play a significant role in determining food quality (Hassoun et al., 2023). Kutsanedzie et al. (2019) explained how to measure the intrinsic attributes of food to determine its quality. Texture, color, taste, softness, amino acid composition, proximate composition, and safety characteristics based on the presence of pathogenic microorganisms or toxic substances reveal intrinsic characteristics (Loizzo et al., 2019). Texture is another defining characteristic of a food product because it affects satiety, the consumer's organoleptic experience (which includes the senses of smell, sight, taste, and touch), and the acceptance of the food product as a whole (Guimarães et al., 2020).

To avoid problems with production, storage, distribution, marketing, traceability, and food safety, food quality can be viewed as the result of all actors in the food chain working together (Chen et al., 2021). Villamiel and Méndez-Albiñana (2022) explain that food quality is a characteristic of food that can satisfy consumers, including appearance (size, shape, color, gloss, and consistency), texture, flavor, and nutritional value. Food quality has a substantial effect on customer satisfaction (Nilashi et al., 2021; Toudert & Bringas-Rábago, 2021), purchasing decisions, and intent to purchase (Nilashi et al., 2021). Naturally, the company's reputation can be enhanced by the benefits it will receive from

producing high-quality goods. If the products provided to customers are of high quality, the company's reputation can be enhanced. In addition, it can reduce costs, increase market share, have an international impact, and instill a sense of product responsibility in order to maintain the highest level of customer satisfaction. Inadequate food quality can result in malnutrition and numerous life-threatening diseases (Meenu et al., 2021).

3. Customer Trust

Strong customer trust due to past customer experiences (Sahin et al., 2011). When all transactions are carried out in accordance with the provisions and based on honesty, the company's reputation will increase, which can also increase the trust of customers. The convenience of shopping will be increased by the presence of employees who are responsible for buyers. The confidence that arises from the customer can be taken based on how far the customer has the confidence to choose a product. Consumers who believe it will be easier to accept the products offered (García-Marzá, 2005). Consumers have high confidence in the quality of the food they buy and that food operators are able to produce and sell food according to specified standards (Bozic, 2017). Trust makes consumers believe that the food is of high quality and safe for consumption (Skripnuk et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2021). Trust of a product, of course, affects its quality, which by providing the best quality in terms of performance quality, features, reliability, conformance, and durability, is very significant in the level of customer confidence to make a purchase or repurchase.

4. Packaging

Packaging is crucial for protecting the product and satisfying customer expectations (Ahmed et al., 2022). Young et al. (2020) explained that packaging serves as a means of transport, provides product information, and ensures product safety. Packaging is an activity or product that extends the shelf life of a packaged product by producing packaging, where this activity involves designing creative packaging designs to attract potential buyers' attention. Packaging, according to Klimchuk and Krosevec (2007), is comprised of information design elements that include shape, structure, material, color, image, and typography in

order to market the product. So, based on the previous definition of packaging, we can say that packaging is an activity or activity that extends the shelf life of the wrapped product by making packaging. This activity involves making creative packaging designs to get the attention of potential buyers.

5. Customer Satisfaction

Satisfaction is a person's pleasure or displeasure in relation to product performance versus customer expectations (Kundu & Datta, 2015). The effect of evaluating activities that have been received as expected is satisfaction (Kotler, 2006). Oliver and Rust (1997) explain that customer satisfaction occurs when customers have pre- and post-purchase expectations. Providing quality food (Toudert & Bringas-Rábago, 2021), food product attributes (Lagerkvist et al., 2017), customer experience (Lin, 2015), providing friendly service (Juliana et al., 2021; Serhan & Serhan, 2019), and service recovery contribute to high customer satisfaction (Cheng et al., 2019; Jin et al., 2019). Customer satisfaction has an effect on the identity of a product in that the satisfaction of a customer will entice other potential customers to try the offered products. Customer satisfaction influence repurchase intention (Setiobudi & Audrey, 2021) and customer loyalty (Ratnasari & Sasongko, 2018).

C. HYPOTHESIS

1. Food Quality and Customer Trust

Food quality and customer trust are two factors that are closely related in the food industry. High-quality food is essential for building and maintaining customer trust, and customer trust, in turn, can positively impact the perception of food quality. When customers consume high-quality food, they are more likely to trust the food provider and have a positive experience. This trust can lead to increased customer loyalty and repeat business (Soliha et al., 2021). On the other hand, if the food quality is poor, it can damage a customer's trust in the food provider, leading to negative word-of-mouth and decreased customer loyalty. Moreover, food quality is an important aspect of food safety, and customers are becoming increasingly concerned about the safety of the food they consume

(Petrescu et al., 2019). If a food provider can demonstrate their commitment to food safety and consistently provide high-quality food, this can increase customer trust. Sun and Anwar (2022) explain that the greater the product's quality, the greater its demand. A high-quality product will increase consumer confidence in the product. Wu et al. (2021) said that the characteristics of food could help build trust and confidence.

H1: Food quality can significantly increase customer trust.

2. Packaging and Customer Trust

Packaging is essential for attracting the attention of customers. It is not only the packaging's form that makes it appealing. The presence of an informational label on the packaging that relates to the food is also crucial for fostering customer confidence (Wu et al., 2021). It has been demonstrated that product descriptions strongly influence consumer perception (Skripnuk et al., 2021). The majority of studies indicate that providing detailed, credible, and transparent packaging signals contributes to the development of in-depth information-based interactions and positively influences consumer behavior by fostering trust (Petrescu et al., 2019). The benefits of packaging include, among others, protection or protection, information, ergonomics, brand identity, distribution facilitation, aesthetic value, and communication media. The quality of packaging can inspire confidence, enhance one's self-image, and influence potential buyers' purchasing decisions.

H2: Packaging can significantly increase customer trust.

3. Product Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Customers have certain expectations for the products they purchase, and the quality of the product plays a major role in meeting or exceeding those expectations. If the product meets or exceeds expectations, the customer will be satisfied with their purchase. On the other hand, if the product fails to meet these expectations, the customer will likely be dissatisfied. When assessing food quality, consumers frequently use direct visual and physical cues associated with specific foods (e.g., color, firmness, size, and price) (Wu et al., 2021). Customer satisfaction can be increased when food quality is evaluated based on its

attributes (taste, aroma, nutritional value, color, and so on) (Liu & Tse, 2018; Serhan & Serhan, 2019). According to Skripnuk et al. (2021), the level of satisfaction with food reflects how well the product meets the consumer's needs. H3: Food quality can significantly increase customer satisfaction.

4. Packaging and Customer Satisfaction

Packaging is another effective means of attracting consumers to purchase a product. Few studies explain the significance of packaging in enhancing customer satisfaction. Packaging can affect the number of customers if it provides customers with an exceptional experience (Juliana et al., 2021). Different parts of a product's packaging work together to influence whether or not a consumer buys it (Bahrainizad & Rajabi, 2018).

H4: Packaging can significantly increase customer satisfaction.

5. Customer Trust and Customer Satisfaction

Customer confidence is the willingness of consumers to rely on a brand's ability to perform as promised. Customer satisfaction is influenced by a diner's confidence in a restaurant's ability to provide superior service and cuisine (Singh & Sirdeshmukh, 2000). Through a variety of activities, providers must earn their customers' trust. Errors in service will diminish customers' confidence, which will ultimately affect their level of satisfaction. Bakar et al. (2020) explain that service failure will have an emotional impact on customers and will diminish customer satisfaction over time. Singh and Sirdeshmukh (2000) discovered that assessing a customer's level of trust has a direct impact on their satisfaction with their purchase.

H5: Customer trust significantly can increase customer satisfaction.

D. METHOD

1. Respondent

The sample techniques employed in this study was convenience sampling. The utilisation of this sampling technique is justified due to its convenience in locating suitable respondents. The number of customers of Dear Butter in

Makassar is quite low due to its recent introduction in the market of Makassar. Data collection in this study involved the utilisation of questionnaires, which were afterwards subjected to analysis in order to provide an explanation for the observed events. The utilised questionnaire is an online-based format. The administration of questionnaires took place during the dates of June 28 and July 20, 2022. A total of 84 participants expressed their interest in participating in the survey. The survey results indicate that 64.29% of the participants identified as female, whereas 35.71% identified as male. The mean age of the participants who took part in the survey was 30.56 years. The respondents who completed the questionnaire were categorised into several jobs, including students (46.43%), private employees (22.62%), housewives (16.67%), self-employed individuals (5.95%), and individuals in other occupations (8.33%).

2. Measurement and Analysis

There are 4 variables used in this study, including: food quality, packaging, customer trust and customer satisfaction. each variable is explained using the developed indicators/items. the indicators/items can be seen in Table 1. each item is measured using 5 scales, where a scale of 1 indicates strongly disagree and a scale of 5 indicates strongly agree. the analysis in this study uses a partial least squares structural equation model. the data was processed using warppls version 8.

E. RESULT

1. Measurement Model

This study employs a two-step approach for the measurement model: (1) testing convergent validity and reliability, and (2) testing discriminant validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Convergent validity testing considers the loading factor and average variance extracted (AVE). The loading factor value must be greater than 0.5 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) or, for social science research, greater than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017), while the AVE value must be greater than 0.5. (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Both composite reliability and Cronbach alpha must be greater than 0.60 for reliability testing (Hair et al., 2017). Table 1 demonstrates that the convergent validity and reliability values exceed the minimum value.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the developed instrument is valid and reliable.

Table 1 Convergent Validity and Reliability

Variable and Items				
Food Quality (AVE=0,744; CR= 0,927; Cronbach Alpha = 0,908)				
 If the aroma of the food served is appetizing, it can stimulate the appetites of customers. The food is juicy, not dry, and bursting with flavor. 				
• The amount of food served corresponds to the standard portion size listed on the menu.	0.846			
 The presentation of the food is unique and intriguing. Food served to consumers must be clean (hygienic) and free of harmful foreign objects 				
				such as hair and insects.
 Food served to consumers must be perfectly cooked, but not overcooked. 	0.808			
There are food varieties with creative innovations that attract the attention of consumers.	0.838			
Packaging (AVE=0,829; CR= 0,936; <i>Cronbach Alpha</i> =0,897)				
• Consumers desire the form of the package.	0,921			
The packaging model is unique compared to other packaging models.				
• Inside the packaging, there is an attractive color match with the packaging.	0,903			
Customer Trust (AVE=0,812; CR= 0,928; Cronbach Alpha = 0,883)	*			
I believe that the maid service has been excellent				
I believe that the facilities are excellent				
• I believe the brand has an excellent reputation.	0,901			
Customer Satisfaction (AVE=0,863; CR=0,950; Cronbach Alpha = 0,920)				
• Consumers are pleased with the variety of foods available from.	0,917			
 Customers are pleased with the presentation of the food served by. 				
Consumers are generally pleased with the food served because it meets their expectations.	0,922			

The validity of the determinants indicates that the square root of the AVE must exceed the correlation between variables (Hair et al., 2017). For testing the validity of the determinants, Fornell and Larcker's method was used (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The research instrument is valid, as shown in Table 2, because the square root of the AVE is greater than the correlation between variables.

Table 2 Determinant Validity

	Food Quality	Packaging	Customer Trust	Customer Satisfaction
Food Quality	(0.863)	0.779	0.766	0.858
Packaging	0.779	(0.910)	0.702	0.829
Customer Trust	0.766	0.702	(0.901)	0.808
Customer Satisfaction	0.858	0.829	0.808	(0.929)

2. Structural Model

The following step involves testing the structural model. The test outcomes are displayed in Table 3 and Figure 2. The R2 values range from 0.65 to 0.84, indicating that the modeled variable can explain 0.65 to 0.84 percent of the variance in each dependent variable. According to the results of hypothesis testing, all hypotheses are accepted.

Supported/Not Hypothesis Relationship Result Food Quality → Customer Trust $\beta = 0.478*$ H1 Supported Packaging → Customer Trust $\beta = 0.367*$ Supported H2 Food Quality → Customer Trust $\beta = 0.364*$ H3 Supported Packaging → Customer Satisfaction $\beta = 0.345*$ H4 Supported Customer Trust → Customer Satisfaction $\beta = 0.287**$ Supported H₅

Table 3 Hypothesis Testing

F. DISCUSSION

The results of this research show that food quality can increase customer trust. The findings of this investigation are consistent with prior research (Skripnuk et al., 2021). The interdependence of food quality and consumer trust plays a pivotal role in determining the level of success a business may achieve within the food industry. The quality of food is of utmost importance in establishing and sustaining client confidence. When patrons consistently experience food of superior quality, safety, and taste, their inclination to place faith in the establishment is heightened. The provision of food of superior quality not only fulfils the expectations of customers, but significantly surpasses them, resulting in favorable experiences and a perception of dependability. The confidence placed in the quality of the cuisine is closely linked to the perception of the restaurant's integrity, since patrons perceive that the establishment is dedicated to safeguarding their welfare. On the other hand, in cases when the quality of food is inconsistent or below standard, it undermines the confidence of customers, who may begin to doubt the restaurant's dedication to meeting their expectations and ensuring their well-being.

The results of this investigation suggest that the manner in which products are packaged has the potential to impact the level of trust that customers place in

them. The findings of this study are consistent with prior studies (Budirdjo, 2016; Chayorini & Rusfian, 2011; Shukla et al., 2023). There exist other factors that can elucidate the outcomes of this study. This study has determined that the colour of packaging plays a significant role, the utilization of specific colour combinations generates an aesthetic perception characterized by simplicity and elegance (Swasty et al., 2021), which will make consumers curious about the brand's products and entice them to purchase and try them. In addition, the white color itself conveys a sense of cleanliness, and the glossy cardboard used will attract attention. Customers will experience an enhanced sense of assurance as a result of the alignment between the chosen colour and their own preferences. Additionally, the topic of discussion pertains to packaging design. According to a number of scholars, the design of packaging has the potential to enhance client trust (Budirdjo, 2016; Chayorini & Rusfian, 2011). The utilisation of visually appealing packaging is likely to persuade consumers to perceive the product as being of superior quality.

The quality of food can improve customer satisfaction. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research findings (Al-Tit, 2015; Hidayat et al., 2020; Kannan, 2017; Toudert & Bringas-Rábago, 2021). The level of customer satisfaction is determined not only by the sensory aspects of food, such as flavour and presentation, but also by the overall dining experience. Customer happiness is influenced by several factors, including attentive and courteous service, clean and comfortable dining places, and rapid service delivery. Food quality and customer happiness are closely interconnected factors that have the potential to significantly impact a restaurant's reputation and overall performance. Restaurants that constantly prioritise the quality of their cuisine and make efforts to meet or surpass consumer expectations are more inclined to receive favourable word-of-mouth, retain repeat customers, and achieve long-term success in the fiercely competitive foodservice sector.

According to the findings of this study, packaging can increase customer satisfaction. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research findings (Adebisi & Akinruwa, 2019; Barbosa et al., 2023; El Gammudi et al., 2016; Suhaini & Hasmini, 2018). Packaging plays a crucial role in customer satisfaction because it is the first thing that a customer interacts with when they receive a product. Good packaging not only protects the product during transit but also provides a visual representation of the brand and its values. With good

packaging materials to protect the product properly, such as the packaging material used by Dear Butter, it will be very helpful to protect the product if the outer layer of the material used is not easily absorbed by water so as to prevent the product from becoming softer. This will result in consumer satisfaction because the product is not packaged, and it will automatically increase consumer confidence in the products sold. Packaging plays a crucial role in customer satisfaction, and businesses should consider these factors when designing and choosing packaging for their products. By providing protection, accurately representing the brand, being convenient, and being environmentally friendly, packaging can greatly influence customer satisfaction.

Customer trust influences customer satisfaction. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research findings (Haryono et al., 2022). The degree of trust within the customer-provider relationship is indicative of the level of satisfaction experienced by the consumer (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). The restaurant sector places significant importance on customer trust and happiness, recognising their crucial role in fostering enduring success and financial viability. Trust serves as the fundamental basis upon which client happiness is established. When patrons place their trust in a restaurant, they possess a sense of assurance in the establishment's capacity to continuously fulfil its commitments, encompassing aspects such as the quality of cuisine, level of service, cleanliness, and adherence to safety standards. The establishment of trust engenders optimistic anticipations, and when these anticipations are fulfilled or surpassed, it results in elevated levels of client contentment. Customers who are content with their experience are more inclined to revisit the restaurant, endorse it to others, and provide favourable feedback. These actions can have a substantial influence on the restaurant's reputation and financial performance.

G. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the impact of food and packaging quality on consumer confidence and satisfaction. According to the findings of this study, the quality of food and packaging can increase both consumer confidence and satisfaction. Customers who value food quality will have an impact on customer satisfaction, according to additional findings.

This study contributes to expectation disconfirmation theory. First, the investigation of trust can provide insights into the cognitive processes through which customers develop their expectations for a certain product or service. This trust encompasses the confidence placed in the brand, manufacturer, or service provider. When individuals possess a substantial degree of confidence in a certain brand or supplier, they are inclined to hold optimistic anticipations regarding the quality and performance of the associated product or service. The significance of disconfirmation, which refers to the perception of a difference between one's expectations and the actual reality, cannot be understated when evaluating levels of pleasure. If the product or service is able to meet or beyond these favourable expectations, it will result in a high level of consumer satisfaction. Conversely, if the product or service fails to satisfy these expectations, consumer satisfaction will be low.

Second, the hypothesis is further supported by research on consumer satisfaction, which assesses the degree to which consumers perceive their expectations to have been fulfilled or unfulfilled. Consumer satisfaction data can be utilised to detect instances where expectations are not met and to gain insights into the emotional valence (good or negative) connected with consumer experiences. Therefore, doing research on trust and happiness can provide valuable insights into consumer processes within the framework of Disconfirmation of Expectations Theory. This knowledge can assist firms in enhancing their products or services and fostering favourable connections with their customers.

There are multiple managerial implication. First, food quality is one of the food and beverage industry's top priorities. People are typically satisfied when the quality of the food is exceptionally high. Several aspects of food quality must be considered, including nutritional value, physicochemical properties, safety, sensory characteristics, and shelf life stability. Second, there are numerous customers purchasing food to take home. Need packaging that is both attractive and protective for food brought into the home.

The research area is limited to the city of Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, which is a limitation of this study. Few consumers are willing to complete the survey, so the number of respondents is limited. In the future, it is preferable to select a research object with a large customer base so that it is simple to recruit participants.

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