

Exploring the Drivers of Customer Loyalty in the Restaurant Industry: A Systematic Literature Review and Future Research Agenda

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the determinants of customer loyalty in the restaurant industry and identify opportunities for future research. A systematic literature review was conducted using the PRISMA protocol, involving a final sample of 33 articles published between 2015 and 2024. The databases used include Scopus journals, with inclusion and exclusion criteria applied to ensure relevance and quality. Key factors influencing restaurant loyalty were identified, including satisfaction, service quality, and food quality, which are crucial for fostering long-term relationships and ensuring repeated patronage. Additional significant factors include brand image, price fairness, sensory experiences, sustainable practices, and customer engagement. Enhancing customer satisfaction through excellent service, quality food, and positive dining experiences is paramount for building a loyal customer base. The study highlights key factors for improving customer loyalty in restaurants, such as satisfaction, service quality, and sustainable practices. It offers valuable insights for both academics and practitioners, suggesting future research on mobile food-ordering apps and sustainability. The findings emphasize the importance of understanding these factors to develop effective strategies for enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Customer loyalty in the restaurant industry has become a critical area of research due to its significant impact on business sustainability and profitability. As the industry evolves with changing consumer preferences, technological advancements, and heightened competition, understanding the factors that drive customer loyalty has become essential for restaurant managers and scholars alike. The rise of digital technologies particularly mobile applications have become pivotal in fostering a loyal customer. These innovations enhance convenience, engagement, and service quality, but also pose challenges in maintaining customer loyalty. Studies show that engagement, convenience, and safety directly enhance customer loyalty in restaurant ordering apps, while interactivity influences loyalty indirectly through engagement (Londoño-Giraldo et al., 2024). Additionally, satisfaction with mobile food-ordering applications (MFOAs) plays a crucial role in strengthening restaurants' brand satisfaction and customer loyalty, highlighting the need for collaboration with MFOA providers (Dirsehan & Cankat, 2021).

Numerous researchers have investigated various aspects of brand loyalty across different industries. Despite these extensive studies, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding a systematic literature review (SLR) that specifically focuses on restaurant loyalty. This absence highlights the importance and necessity of conducting this study to better understand the unique dynamics and factors influencing customer loyalty in the restaurant industry. Addressing this gap will contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge and provide valuable insights for both academics and practitioners in the field (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022; Sofia et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2023).

Restaurant loyalty enhances long-term profitability by increasing repeat visits, reducing customer acquisition costs, and strengthening a restaurant's competitive position. Loyal customers not only return frequently but also promote the restaurant through positive word-of-mouth and recommendations. Maintaining strong customer loyalty helps secure consistent revenue, build a solid reputation, and sustain business growth. The following are the views of several authors regarding restaurant loyalty (Table 1).

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Table 1. View on Restaurant Loyalty

Author(s)/Year	View
Espinosa et al. (2018)	Restaurant loyalty is viewed as a positive prediction by the overall restaurant brand image (ORBI), which influences repeat visits and recommendations.
Hanzaee & Esmailpour (2017)	Restaurant loyalty is achieved through immediate rewards and is more effective with social rewards in casual dining contexts.
Kwon et al. (2021)	Restaurant loyalty is positively impacted by marketing communications, particularly advertisement/promotion and SNS content through consumer engagement.
Zhong & Moon (2020)	Restaurant loyalty is seen as a result of perceived price, food quality, service quality, and physical environment quality, with happiness mediating satisfaction and loyalty.
Pan & Ha (2021)	Restaurant loyalty is defined by the strength of brand love, particularly in short-term relationships and takeaway contexts, with hedonic value strengthening the loyalty link.
Ing et al. (2020)	Restaurant loyalty is influenced by transaction-specific characteristics such as food quality, service quality, atmosphere, convenience, and price perception.
Xu et al. (2022)	Restaurant loyalty is positively influenced by true-to-fact authenticity and brand image, especially among younger consumers.

Research on restaurant loyalty has identified various determinants that influence customers' repeated patronage and positive word-of-mouth. One major factor is service quality, which includes elements such as food quality, service speed, and the behavior of restaurant staff (Sun & Moon, 2023). Studies have shown that high service quality leads to increased customer satisfaction, which in turn fosters loyalty (Bihamta et al., 2017). Moreover, the physical environment and ambiance of a restaurant also play a significant role in shaping customer experiences and loyalty (Kim & Stepchenkova, 2018; Zhong & Moon, 2020).

Another critical determinant of restaurant loyalty is brand trust. Trust in a restaurant brand is built through consistent quality, positive customer experiences, and effective communication strategies (Sun & Moon, 2023; Toshmirzaev et al., 2022). The role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in building brand trust and loyalty has gained attention in recent studies, particularly in the context of ethnic halal restaurants where CSR activities targeting employees, community, and environment significantly enhance brand loyalty (Jin et al., 2016; Pan & Ha, 2021). These findings highlight the importance of ethical and responsible business practices in fostering long-term customer loyalty.

Conducting a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on restaurant loyalty is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, an SLR provides a comprehensive and unbiased synthesis of existing research, offering a clear picture of what is currently known about customer loyalty in the restaurant sector. By systematically reviewing and categorizing previous studies, an SLR helps in recognizing trends, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks that have been employed, thus providing a solid foundation for future research.

Secondly, the restaurant industry has undergone significant changes over the past decade, driven by technological advancements, evolving consumer preferences, and global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes have introduced new variables that influence customer loyalty, such as the rise of mobile food-ordering applications, increased emphasis on sustainable practices, and the importance of health and safety measures. An SLR enables researchers to capture these contemporary developments and assess their impact on customer loyalty.

Furthermore, an SLR aids in the evaluation of the quality and robustness of existing studies. By following a systematic approach to identify, select, and critically appraise relevant research, an SLR minimizes bias and enhances the credibility of the conclusions drawn. This rigorous process not only improves the reliability of the synthesized evidence but also provides a valuable resource for practitioners who seek to implement evidence-based strategies to foster customer loyalty in their establishments. In conclusion, conducting a Systematic Literature Review on restaurant loyalty is of paramount importance. It offers a thorough understanding of the current state of research, identifies emerging trends and gaps, and provides a reliable basis for both academic inquiry and practical application. As the restaurant industry continues to evolve, an SLR will serve as a critical tool in advancing our knowledge and developing effective strategies to enhance customer loyalty, ultimately contributing to the success and sustainability of restaurants in a competitive market. To ensure a structured and transparent analysis, the following section presents the methodology used in this study. It details the criteria for

article selection, data sources, and analytical approach, providing a systematic foundation for examining customer loyalty in the restaurant industry.

2. METHOD

This study follows the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flow diagram. The process consists of three stages: Identification, Screening, and Retrieval. This diagram helps to transparently and systematically present the article selection process, from the identification stage to the final inclusion stage.

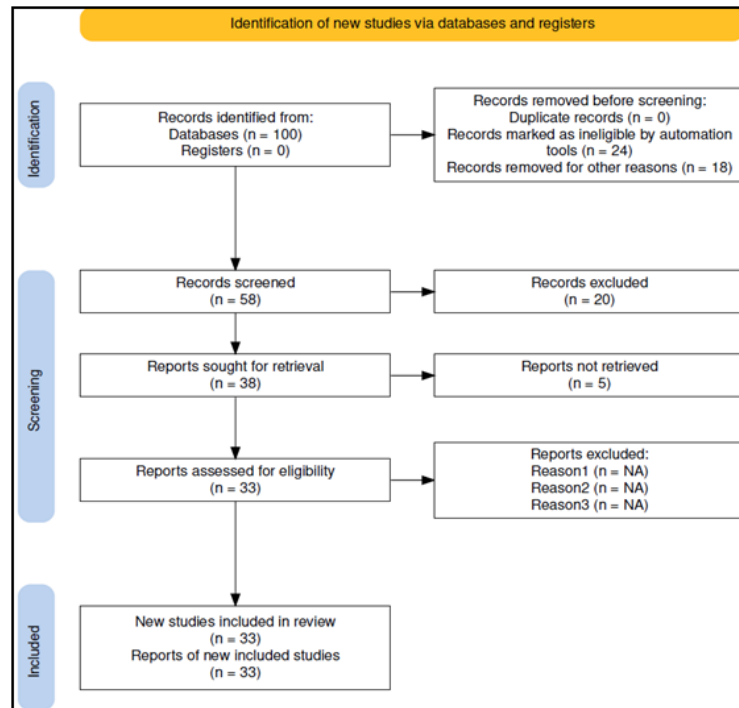


Figure 1. Flow Diagram Using PRISMA

Identification Stage: This stage involves filtering the identified articles to determine their eligibility based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. From the 58 articles remaining after the identification stage, the titles and abstracts were evaluated to assess their relevance to the research topic. This study focuses on Q1 and Q2 journals to ensure the inclusion of high-impact and methodologically rigorous research. Articles from lower-ranked journals were excluded to maintain the credibility and reliability of the review.

Screening Stage: This stage involves filtering the identified articles to determine their eligibility based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. From the 58 articles remaining after the identification stage, the titles and abstracts were evaluated to assess their relevance to the research topic. A total of 20 articles were excluded for being outside the context of restaurant loyalty.

The final inclusion criteria required that studies:

- Be published between 2015 and 2024
- Appear in Q1 or Q2 journals
- Focus on restaurant loyalty
- Be classified as research papers
- Be written in English
- Be available in full text

Exclusion criteria included:

- Studies published in Q3 and Q4 journals
- Articles outside the topic of restaurant loyalty
- Review papers, editorials, or commentaries instead of empirical research
- Studies not available in full text or not written in English

Retrieval Stage: This is the process of obtaining the full texts of the articles that passed the screening stage. A total of 38 reports were sought for full-text retrieval, but 5 reports were not successfully retrieved. Of the 33 reports that were successfully retrieved, all were assessed for eligibility by reading the full texts, and none were excluded at this stage, resulting in all eligible reports being included in the final review. At the final stage, 33 studies were included in the systematic review, and all reports from these studies were included in the final analysis. The PRISMA diagram ensures that the article selection process is conducted transparently and systematically, making the review results reliable and free from bias.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to summarize various research studies conducted on customer loyalty in the restaurant industry. With the increasing competition in this industry, understanding the factors that influence customer loyalty has become increasingly important for restaurant owners and managers. The articles included in this summary are published in high-reputation journals, with 97% of them published in quartile 1 (Q1) journals and 3% in quartile 2 (Q2) journals. This research encompasses various countries and types of restaurants, providing a global and comprehensive perspective on restaurant loyalty.

Table 2. Article Recapitulation Summary

No	Author's/Year	Journal Name/ Quartile	Objective Study	Type Restaurant/ Country	Key Findings
1	Naehyun (2015)	International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration (Q1)	To examine whether relationship quality moderates the effects of restaurant experiences on customer loyalty	Full-service restaurants/ USA	Relationship quality significantly moderates the relationship between restaurant experiences and customer loyalty
2	Bahri-Ammari et al. (2016)	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management (Q1)	To examine the relationship between satisfaction, congruence, nostalgic connections, trust, brand attachment, and behavioral loyalty in the luxury restaurant sector	Luxury Restaurant/ Tunisia	Satisfaction, nostalgic connections, and brand attachment significantly influence behavioral loyalty.
3	Naeyhun et al. (2016)	Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management (Q1)	To examine the effects of brand prestige on trust, perceived risk, satisfaction, and loyalty in the context of upscale restaurants	Luxury Restaurant/ USA	Brand prestige positively influences trust and customer satisfaction, which in turn positively influence customer loyalty.
4	Bihamta et al. (2017)	British Food Journal (Q1)	To examine the impact of service quality factors (physical quality, staff behaviour) and brand equity factors (brand quality, brand awareness, brand image) on food quality satisfaction and brand loyalty	Hotel Restaurants/Malaysia	Physical quality and staff behaviour significantly influence food quality satisfaction, which in turn positively affects brand loyalty. Brand quality, brand awareness, and brand image also significantly influence food quality satisfaction and brand loyalty.
5	Hanzaee & Esmailpour (2017)	Journal of Islamic Marketing (Q1)	To examine how restaurant reward programs affect customer loyalty, with a focus on the type and timing of rewards and how these factors interact with restaurant type	Fast food and casual dining restaurant/ Iran	Immediate rewards lead to higher customer loyalty than delayed rewards. Social rewards are more effective in casual dining contexts, while economic rewards show no significant difference in fast food

No	Author's/Year	Journal Name/ Quartile	Objective Study	Type Restaurant/ Country	Key Findings
					contexts.
6	Moorthy et al. (2017)	Journal of Foodservice Business Research (Q1)	To determine the impact of service quality and price fairness on customer loyalty in newly opened cafés and restaurants in Penang, Malaysia	Newly opened cafés and restaurants/ Malaysia	Service quality dimensions (tangibles, reliability, assurance, empathy) and price fairness positively affect customer loyalty.
7	Peng et al. (2017)	International Journal of Hospitality Management (Q1)	To explore how sensory stimuli in teppanyaki restaurants affect customers' emotions and loyalty	Teppanyaki restaurants/ Taiwan	Visual and auditory stimuli in teppanyaki restaurants significantly enhance customer emotions and loyalty
8	Kukanja et al. (2017)	Total Quality Management & Business Excellence (Q1)	To develop and test a marketing-oriented model that assesses the impact of different marketing quality dimensions (7P) on guests' quality perception and loyalty development in the restaurant industry	Independently operated restaurants/ Slovenia	People, placement, and product/physical evidence have a statistically significant influence on guests' overall quality perception, with the 'people' dimension being the most significant for loyalty development.
9	Kim & Stepchenkova (2018)	Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism (Q1)	To examine how experiential value perceived by customers influences emotions, self-connective attachment, and brand loyalty	Family restaurant/ South Korea	Dimensions of experiential value (atmosphere, escapism, customer ROI, service excellence) influence emotions and self-connective attachment, which in turn affect brand loyalty.
10	Espinosa et al. (2018)	Journal of Product & Brand Management (Q1)	To study how repeat customers utilize their established overall restaurant brand image (ORBI), overall restaurant loyalty, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions (revisit, recommend) to reengage with a casual-dining restaurant brand	Casual-dining restaurants/ USA	ORBI positively predicts loyalty and satisfaction. Loyalty and satisfaction mediate the relationship between ORBI and intentions to recommend, while loyalty alone mediates the relationship between ORBI and intentions to revisit.
11	Wu & Cheng (2018)	Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management (Q1)	To test the relationships among experiential quality, perceptual evaluation, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, experiential involvement, experiential satisfaction, and experiential loyalty	Fast food (smart restaurant)/ China	Perceptual evaluation, perceived usefulness, experiential involvement, and experiential satisfaction contribute to experiential loyalty.
12	Shapoval et al. (2018)	Journal of Foodservice Business Research (Q1)	To examine how Millennials perceive service quality in restaurants with Green practices and the moderating effects of gender on the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty	Green restaurants/ USA	Eco-tangibles, tangibles, and assurance are important factors for Millennial consumers' satisfaction and loyalty at Green restaurants, with gender as a significant moderator.

No	Author's/Year	Journal Name/ Quartile	Objective Study	Type Restaurant/ Country	Key Findings
13	Uddin (2019)	British Food Journal (Q1)	To investigate the factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty in the fastfood restaurant industry in Bangladesh	Fast food restaurants/ Bangladesh	Food quality, price, and service quality positively influence customer satisfaction, which in turn positively affects customer loyalty.
14	Cha & Borchgrevink (2019)	Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism (Q1)	To investigate the relative effects of perceived value and food safety on customer satisfaction and loyalty	Limited-service and table-service restaurants/ USA	Perceived value and food safety significantly influence customer satisfaction, which in turn affects customer loyalty.
15	Zhong & Moon (2020)	Foods (Q1)	To investigate the factors that can influence customer satisfaction, loyalty, and happiness, with a particular focus on the moderating role of gender	Fast-food restaurants/ China	Perceived price, food quality, service quality, and physical environment quality positively affected customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction and happiness can lead to a sense of loyalty. Gender differences affect food quality perceptions based on price and satisfaction levels based on service quality.
16	Kwon et al. (2020)	Journal of Product & Brand Management (Q1)	To empirically analyze the effects of marketing communications (advertisement/promotion and SNS content) on consumer engagement (CE), brand trust, and brand loyalty	Family restaurants/ USA, South Korea	Advertisement/promotion and SNS content significantly positively affect CE and trust. CE has a significant positive effect on brand trust and loyalty. There are no significant differences between US and Korean consumer groups
17	Ing et al. (2020)	Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics (Q1)	To examine the relationships between transaction-specific characteristics (food quality, service quality, atmosphere, convenience, and price perception), customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty	Full-service restaurants/ Malaysia	All transaction-specific characteristics positively influence customer satisfaction, with price perception being the strongest predictor. Satisfaction had a stronger effect on behavioral loyalty compared to attitudinal loyalty.
18	Kim & Hall (2020)	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management (Q1)	To identify whether sustainable restaurant practices increase diner loyalty by applying Value Theory	Various types of restaurants/ South Korea	Sustainable restaurant practices positively influence diner behavior and loyalty through hedonic and utilitarian values, moderated by environmental concern
18	Chen et al. (2020)	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management (Q1)	To examine the role of nostalgia in influencing consumers' loyalty intentions at traditional restaurants in China	Traditional restaurants/ China	Consumers who feel nostalgic at traditional restaurants perceive higher value in their dining experience, leading to higher loyalty intentions.
20	Dirsehan & Cankat (2021)	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services (Q1)	To investigate the role of mobile food-ordering applications (MFOAs) in developing restaurants' brand satisfaction and loyalty during the	Various types of restaurants/ Turkey	MFOA satisfaction plays a critical role in developing restaurants' brand satisfaction and loyalty. Satisfaction with MFOAs leads to higher brand

No	Author's/Year	Journal Name/ Quartile	Objective Study	Type Restaurant/ Country	Key Findings
			pandemic period		satisfaction and loyalty.
21	Pan & Ha (2021)	Sustainability (Q1)	To investigate the effects of relationship duration, perceived value, and restaurant type on the relationships between brand love and brand loyalty during the COVID-19 pandemic	Fine-dining, takeaway restaurants/ South Korea	Brand love negatively influences brand loyalty during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hedonic value strengthens the brand love–loyalty link more than utilitarian value, especially in short-term relationships.
22	Trivedi & Sama (2021)	Journal of Consumer Behaviour (Q2)	To observe the effect of celebrity endorsement and perceived food quality on brand love, leading to brand loyalty and e-WOM	Celebrity-owned restaurants/ India	Celebrity endorsement and perceived food quality positively influence brand love, which subsequently impacts brand loyalty and e-WOM
23	Xu et al., (2022)	International Journal of Hospitality Management (Q1)	To explore the effects of consumer brand authenticity, brand image, and age on brand loyalty in time-honored restaurants	Time-honored restaurants/ China	True-to-fact authenticity positively influences true-to-self authenticity; brand image positively influences brand loyalty, particularly among younger consumers
24	Severt et al. (2022)	International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration (Q1)	To assess the relationships between corporate social responsibility (CSR), perceived quality, price fairness, satisfaction, and conative loyalty in local food restaurants	Local food restaurants/ USA	CSR significantly influences perceived quality, price fairness, and satisfaction. Satisfaction has the strongest influence on conative loyalty.
25	Huang & Chen (2022)	Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism (Q1)	To examine the relationships among brand experience, customer engagement, and brand loyalty in the context of Taiwan's chain restaurants	Chain restaurants/ Taiwan	Emotional engagement is a main driver of brand loyalty.
26	Toshmirzaev et al. (2022)	Frontiers in Psychology	To examine the relationships among CSR activities, brand trust, supportive communication intention, and brand loyalty in a halal restaurant franchise	Ethnic halal restaurants/ South Korea	CSR activities for employees have the most significant impact on brand trust, followed by CSR for the community and environment. Trust significantly influences supportive communication intention and brand loyalty.
27	Lim et al. (2022)	Journal of Foodservice Business Research (Q1)	To explore the relationship between food choice motives, subjective well-being, and loyalty behavior among vegan restaurant customers in South Korea and Singapore	Vegan restaurants/ South Korea, Singapore	Health, mood, and natural content significantly affect subjective well-being; perceived vitality significantly affects customer loyalty at vegan eateries
28	Martinez-Ruiz et al. (2023)	International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science (Q1)	To examine the impact of food values on customer satisfaction and loyalty across different types of restaurants	Traditional and fast-food restaurants/ Spain	Offering food with added value increases satisfaction and loyalty in traditional restaurants but not in fast-food restaurants; basic values increase satisfaction in both types

No	Author's/Year	Journal Name/ Quartile	Objective Study	Type Restaurant/ Country	Key Findings
29	Satti et al. (2023)	Journal of International Food & Agribusiness Marketing (Q1)	To examine the indirect relationship between sensory marketing, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty in the restaurant industry of Pakistan	Various types of restaurants/ Pakistan	Customer satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between sensory marketing and customer loyalty
30	Agu (2023)	Journal of African Business (Q1)	To identify common service failures and recovery strategies in micro restaurants and examine their effects on customer satisfaction and loyalty, mediated by failure severity	Micro restaurant/ Micro Restaurant	Service recovery strategies significantly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty, with 'sincere apology' having the highest influence. Failure severity mediates the relationship between service recovery strategies and customer satisfaction/loyalty
31	Sun & Moon (2023)	Nutrients (Q1)	To apply DINESERV to a food brand (Shake Shack) and assess the moderating impact of healthiness on the relationship between taste and brand loyalty	Casual dining restaurants/ South Korea	Brand trust is positively associated with taste, employee service, and ambience. Brand loyalty is positively associated with taste, healthiness, price fairness, ambience, and brand trust. Healthiness negatively moderates the relationship between taste and brand loyalty.
32	Londoño-Giraldo et al. (2024)	Heliyon (Q1)	To examine factors impacting user engagement and loyalty in mobile applications for restaurant deliveries during COVID-19	Restaurant delivery apps/ Colombia	Engagement, convenience, and safety positively influence loyalty; interactivity affects loyalty indirectly through engagement
33	Cankül et al. (2024)	International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science (Q1)	To examine how gastronomic experience impacts the restaurant image and customer loyalty	Certified tourism business restaurants/ Turkey	Gastronomic experience positively affects the restaurant image and enhances customer loyalty

Country and Type of Restaurant

Most studies were conducted in the United States, with 9 articles exploring various types of restaurants such as full-service, casual dining, green restaurants, and local food restaurants. Findings from these studies indicate that service quality, food quality, brand image, and environmentally friendly practices significantly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. For instance, the study by [Espinosa et al. \(2018\)](#) found that the brand image of a restaurant positively predicts customer loyalty and satisfaction, which in turn mediates the intention to revisit and recommend the restaurant.

South Korea contributed 6 articles investigating family restaurants, vegan restaurants, and various other types of restaurants. These studies highlight the importance of affective and sensory experiences in enhancing customer engagement and loyalty. For example, [Kim & Hall \(2020\)](#) found that sustainable practices in restaurants positively influence customer behavior and loyalty through hedonic and utilitarian values moderated by environmental concern. Malaysia contributed 4 articles examining hotel restaurants, full-service restaurants, and new cafes. The study by [Bihamta et al. \(2017\)](#) showed that service quality and brand equity factors significantly influence food quality, satisfaction, and brand loyalty in hotel restaurants. Studies in China, with 4 articles, highlight the influence of nostalgia, brand authenticity, and sensory experiences on customer loyalty in

fast food and traditional restaurants. Zhong & Moon (2020) found that price quality, food quality, service quality, and physical environment quality positively affect customer satisfaction, which in turn enhances customer loyalty.

Key Findings

Various studies from countries like Tunisia, Slovenia, Iran, and Pakistan also provide important insights into customer loyalty in different restaurant contexts. These studies show that factors such as relationship quality, restaurant reward programs, and sensory marketing have a significant impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Overall, this research highlights that service quality, food quality, price fairness, sensory experiences, and sustainable practices are key factors influencing customer loyalty in the restaurant industry. These findings provide valuable guidance for researchers and practitioners in developing effective strategies to enhance customer loyalty in various types of restaurants and geographic contexts. This summary not only enriches the academic literature but also provides a practical framework for implementing more effective marketing strategies in the restaurant industry.

Distribution Theories

Figure 2. displays the distribution of theories used in 33 research articles related to customer loyalty in the restaurant industry. The most frequently used theory is SERVQUAL, appearing in 4 articles. SERVQUAL measures service quality based on five main dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Additionally, there is a category labeled "Unspecified," which appears in 12 articles, indicating that several articles do not explicitly mention the theory used. Other theories, each used in one article, include Self-Determination Theory, Brand Resonance Model, Cognitive Theory of Emotions, Cognitive-Attitudinal-Behavioral Framework, DINESERV Model, EKB Model, Justice Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory, Service Dominant Logic, Social Identity Theory, SOR Theory, Stakeholder Theory, Technology Acceptance Model, TRA, Value Theory, and Value-Percept Theory.

This distribution reveals that research on customer loyalty in the restaurant industry employs a variety of theoretical approaches to understand the complex dynamics between customers and service providers. Although SERVQUAL dominates, there is significant variation in the theories used by researchers, including those from psychology, marketing, and consumer behavior. The substantial number of articles that do not specify a theory also suggests the use of more general frameworks or approaches. This variety is essential for researchers and practitioners to consider in developing effective strategies to enhance customer loyalty.

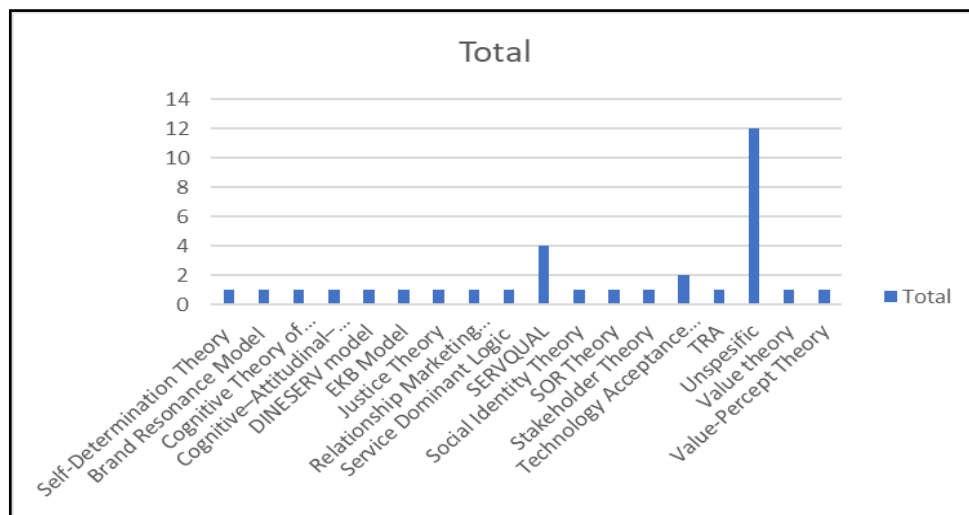


Figure 2. Distribution Theories

Distribution of Articles Across Journals

The articles summarized in this study are distributed across 23 reputable journals, highlighting significant

research activity in restaurant customer loyalty (Figure 3). The *Journal of Foodservice Business Research* and the *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism* have the highest number of articles, each contributing three papers. Other key journals include the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, and *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, each with two articles.

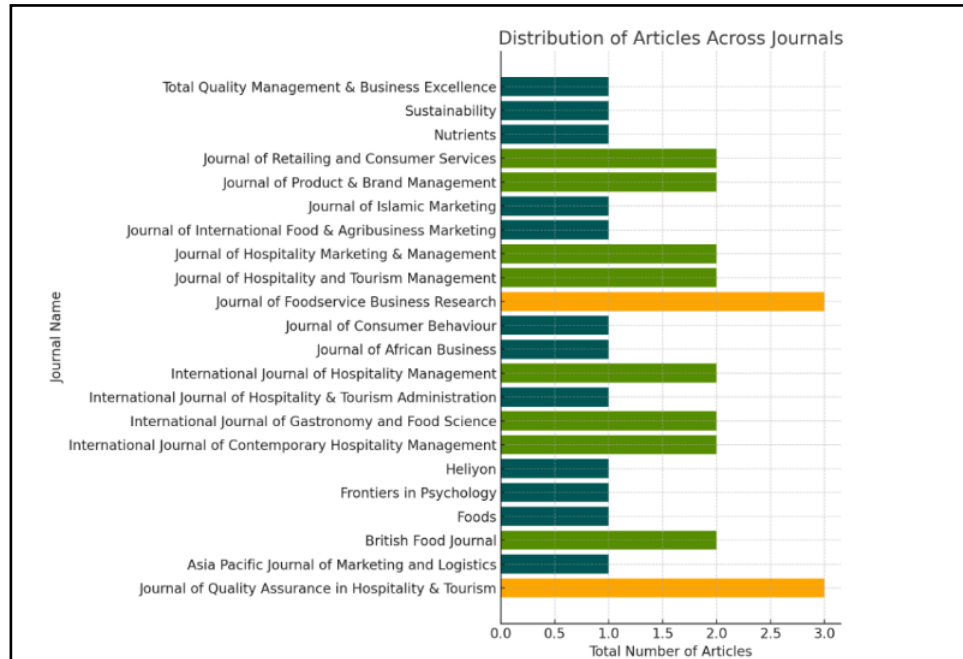


Figure 3. Distribution of Articles Across Journals

Key Determinants of Restaurant Loyalty

Figure 4 emphasizes key factors influencing customer loyalty in the restaurant industry, ranked by the frequency of their appearance in academic articles. Satisfaction, service quality, and food quality emerge as the top three factors, underscoring their critical roles in fostering customer loyalty. This indicates that enhancing customer satisfaction through excellent service, quality food, and positive dining experiences is paramount. Additionally, brand image, price fairness, and sensory experiences also significantly impact loyalty, emphasizing the importance of a positive brand perception, fair pricing, and a pleasant dining atmosphere. Sustainable practices and customer engagement are increasingly important, particularly among environmentally conscious consumers, highlighting the need for restaurants to adopt and promote sustainable practices and engage with customers personally.

Other factors such as relationship quality, brand attachment, and positive and negative emotions also play vital roles in influencing customer loyalty. Building strong customer relationships, creating emotional connections, and ensuring positive customer experiences are essential strategies for enhancing loyalty. Moreover, immediate and social rewards, perceived value, brand trust, and customers' subjective well-being are influential factors that restaurants can leverage to foster loyalty. Implementing immediate rewards, such as discounts and special offers, as well as social rewards like recognition and loyalty programs, can encourage repeat visits. By focusing on these critical areas, restaurants can improve customer satisfaction and loyalty, ensuring long-term success in a competitive market. Emphasizing trust-building through reliability, transparency, and consistent quality, along with creating a positive environment that enhances customers' well-being, can further solidify customer loyalty.

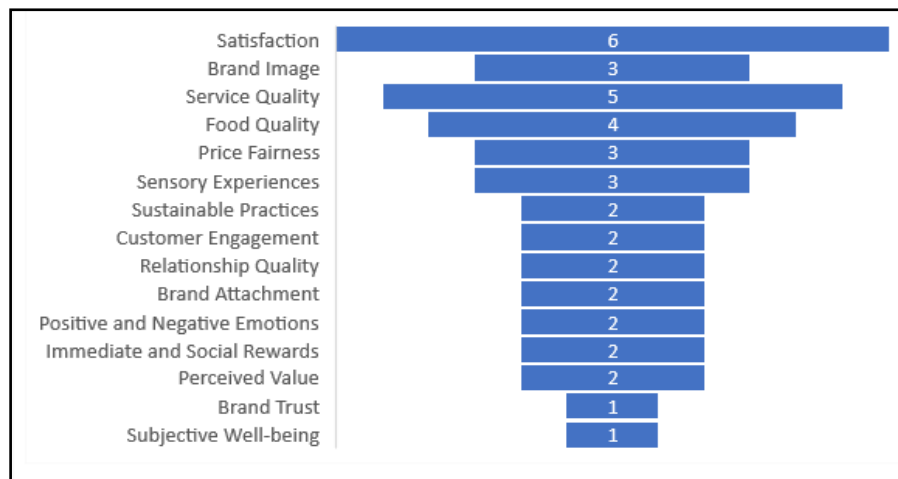


Figure 4. Key Determinants of Restaurant Loyalty

4. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that customer loyalty in the restaurant industry is primarily driven by satisfaction, service quality, and food quality. These factors are essential for fostering long-term customer relationships and ensuring repeated patronage. Enhancing customer satisfaction through high-quality service, superior food, and positive dining experiences is crucial for building a loyal customer base. Additionally, brand image, price fairness, sensory experiences, sustainable practices, and customer engagement significantly influence customer loyalty. The study emphasizes the importance of developing a strong brand identity, implementing fair pricing strategies, creating a pleasant dining atmosphere, and adopting environmentally friendly practices. Furthermore, engaging customers through personalized interactions and effective communication is vital for strengthening customer relationships and loyalty. By focusing on these critical areas, restaurants can improve customer satisfaction and loyalty, ensuring long-term success in a competitive market. To enhance customer loyalty, restaurants should integrate sustainable practices, such as using eco-friendly packaging, reducing food waste, and sourcing ingredients from sustainable suppliers. Additionally, leveraging digital technologies, including mobile food-ordering applications and AI-driven chatbots, can enhance customer convenience and engagement. Restaurants can also adopt data-driven personalization strategies to offer tailored promotions and recommendations, further strengthening customer relationships. Future research should explore the impact of emerging trends, such as mobile food-ordering applications and sustainable practices, on customer loyalty to provide deeper insights into evolving consumer preferences and behaviors. Additionally, further studies should examine how emotional factors, such as customer trust, nostalgia, and brand attachment, influence loyalty in different restaurant segments. Investigating the role of artificial intelligence and automation in improving customer experiences and service efficiency would also provide valuable insights into the future of restaurant management.

Academic research should prioritize the exploration of emerging trends, such as the impact of mobile food-ordering applications on customer loyalty, to provide valuable insights into how these technologies influence customer behavior. Furthermore, a focus on sustainable practices is essential, with studies investigating how environmentally friendly initiatives affect customer perceptions and behaviors in the restaurant industry. Additionally, examining the emotional aspects of customer experiences, such as the impact of positive and negative emotions on loyalty, can help in understanding the psychological drivers behind customer retention. Cross-cultural research is crucial to explore how cultural differences affect customer loyalty, offering a global perspective and identifying best practices adaptable across different regions. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to observe changes in customer loyalty over time, particularly in response to new trends and market dynamics, to understand the long-term effects of various strategies on customer loyalty.

In practice, enhancing service quality is paramount. Restaurants should invest in comprehensive staff training programs and develop robust service protocols to ensure consistent and high-quality customer service, directly enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. Improving food quality by sourcing high-quality ingredients and maintaining consistency in food preparation can significantly boost customer satisfaction and encourage repeat visits. Strengthening brand image through effective marketing strategies and building a positive brand identity can attract new customers and retain existing ones. Implementing fair pricing strategies that offer good value for money can help retain price-sensitive customers and enhance their loyalty. Creating positive sensory experiences by designing an engaging and pleasant dining environment can encourage repeat patronage.

Sustainable initiatives, such as implementing carbon footprint labeling on menus and promoting ethical sourcing, can also appeal to environmentally conscious consumers and strengthen brand loyalty. Engaging customers through personalized interactions and effective communication strategies, including social media engagement and personalized offers, can build stronger customer relationships and enhance loyalty and satisfaction. By implementing these recommendations, both academics and practitioners can contribute to advancing the understanding of customer loyalty in the restaurant industry and develop effective strategies to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty, ensuring long-term success in a competitive market.

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