Determinants of customer satisfaction in Kabul: evidence from the restaurant industry

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Abstract: This is the first study that investigates customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry in Kabul, Afghanistan. The study explored whether: 1) restaurant atmosphere; 2) employee conduct; 3) food quality; 4) harassment; 5) respect for family privacy; 6) competitions; 7) locations, impact the level of satisfaction customers express about the restaurant industry. Using the linear regression analysis, the paper found that, customers currently prioritise cultural issues, such as respect for family privacy rather than service quality factors, such as food quality, employee behaviour, and restaurant atmosphere. The paper concludes that due to lack of competition, customers these days value a restaurant, where they feel relaxed with their families and there is a great deal of respect for females. This paper attempts to provide empirical evidence on customer satisfaction, improve managerial decision making, and impact the overall growth of the restaurant industry in Kabul.

Keywords: customer satisfaction; customer relationship management; CRM; service quality.

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1   Introduction

Broadly affected by globalisation, the tastes and needs of customers in the restaurant industry have been impacted by travel, trade, exposure to various cultures, and the tastes of various foods that undergo significant changes from time to time. In order to meet such a demand and change, the restaurant industry in Kabul, Afghanistan must take proper actions to pay more attention to, satisfy, maintain a professional relationship with, and monitor customers' behaviour that affects business growth, and take proper related investment decisions. Therefore, understanding the determinants of customer satisfaction supported by contextual evidence from Kabul should be of importance to every restaurant owner. This research investigates determinants of customer satisfaction and makes sound recommendations on strategies that should result in better customer satisfaction level, and customer retention within the restaurant industry in Kabul.

Today, unique customer satisfaction defines business success (Bolton, 1998), brings huge economic value to the firm (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Haghighi et al., 2012), ensures the state of being competitive, paves the ground for customer retention and sustainable growth (Bendaraviciene and Vilkyte, 2019), ensures less marketing expenditure (Luo and Homburg, 2007) and provides a company an improved chance to outperform competing firms in the industry to name a few among many advantages.

Luo and Homburg (2007) write, "customer satisfaction is an important driver of a firm's profitability" (p.133). Today, companies focus on customer satisfaction when designing their mission statements (Fournier and Mick, 1999). Bruhn and Grund's (2000) study shows that, "companies with a bigger share of loyal customers benefit from …

higher price willingness, positive recommendation behaviour, and less switching tendency" (p.S1018). Most importantly, the significance of customer satisfaction comes from the fact that companies have shown a great tendency towards retaining current customers rather than acquiring new customers (Bruhn and Grund, 2000). This is because it costs almost 25 times more to acquire than to retain customers (Gallo, 2014).

Being a subjective phenomenon (Olivar, 1980), customer expectation (for further details, refer to Assouad and Overby, 2016) from a product, such as food can be shaped by several factors including, taste preferences, hygiene level, education, and age. Furthermore, education level, lifestyle, experience at better restaurants, awareness about cleanliness and various diseases, level of income, social classes, and background determine the level of expectation. For example, the expectation level of lower-income American consumers has been primarily low with difficulty of understanding the concept of expectation itself (Halstead et al., n.d); while middle or upper-class consumer satisfaction varies significantly.

We propose that customers' expectations within Kabul can also be described to have been affected by the above factors. Customer expectations in Kabul have been shaped and consistently kept low due to unprofessional business practices, unavailability or incapability of monitoring and regulatory bodies, and perhaps due to the existence of the excessive amount of low-quality food items, and counterfeit restaurant supplies imported from the neighbouring countries. Since restaurants do not hold a broader prospect for their business, customers surprisingly remain not in their considerations and focus. Considering the above, we form our research question and hypotheses.

Research question: What factors may determine or not customer satisfaction levels in the restaurant industry in Kabul?

- Hypothesis 1:
    H0   Customers approve of restaurants' atmosphere.
    H1   Customers are not happy with the restaurants' atmosphere.

- Hypothesis 2:
    H0   Customers are happy with the way wait-staffs behave with them.
    H1   Customers are not happy with the way wait-staffs behave with them, which negatively affects satisfaction.

- Hypothesis 3:
    H0   Customers are happy with food quality.
    H1   Food quality is poor, which affects customer satisfaction.

- Hypothesis 4:
    H0   Customers are not harassed in the restaurant environment.
    H1   Customers have been harassed in the restaurant environment, which affects satisfaction.

- Hypothesis 5:
    H0   Customers choose any restaurant when they dine with their family members.
    H1   Customers carefully select their restaurants when dining with family members to maintain better privacy and avoid possible troubles.

- Hypothesis 6:

  H0   As a result of tough competition, restaurants in Kabul work hard to meet customers' demands in a better way.

  H1   There is no competition among restaurants in Kabul, which affects negatively customer satisfaction levels.

- Hypothesis 7:

  H0   Restaurant location is not a determinant factor when customers dine at a restaurant.

  H1   Restaurant location is a significant factor when customers dine at a restaurant.

However, there are relatively newly established restaurants making good attempts to modernise the kitchen, pay careful attention to hygiene, respect customers, decorate the physical environment, and communicate with their customers using technology. Although there is a good trend for such restaurants, they remain comparatively fewer in number.

1.1   Statement of the problem

In spite of good efforts made by few restaurants, what feels as a big gap is a serious outlook toward customers as a valuable asset and a true indicator of business growth.

Almost no or very few restaurants maintain a customer database, receive customer feedback, or ask for customers' reviews of their services. Observations show some managers collect customer feedback occasionally. However, it can be a random experience of a few restaurants that cannot represent the real picture in the industry. Meanwhile, there is no systematic way of keeping records of customers' data. Restaurants in Kabul, indeed, lack serious attention to factors that satisfy their customers, boost customer relationship management (CRM), and create a unique customer experience that will result in customer retention.

Customer satisfaction although studied in other industries, such as banking, has surprisingly remained unexplored in the restaurant industry. There are extremely limited researches to investigate factors of satisfaction or dissatisfaction in Kabul restaurants. The general pieces of literature that exist broadly have concentrated to explain the significance of customer experience, CRM, and customer retention strategies that may only help to understand the concept managerially and theoretically. This leaves the ground to extract key information from the industry in Kabul as well as the provision of contextual data and experiments that can contribute to enhancing satisfaction levels and decision making at restaurants in Kabul.

1.2   Significance of the study

This study attempts to fill the gap identified above and helps to tackle problems or factors that result into poor customer experience and satisfaction. The final results of this study will help restaurant owners and managers to effectively deliver service quality (SQ) that is designed to meet the specific needs and wants of customers, build and sustain long term relationships, and administer consumer data management and one-on-one marketing strategies. The paper also attempts to deliver the message that restaurant managers need to rethink not only about the quality of foods they serve but also about the ambiance and

the overall services they provide. The overall goal of this research will be to assist restaurant managers to understand the significance of customer satisfaction and retention in increasing profitability and potential for growth.

Customers, indeed, deserve to express themselves, communicate their ideal expectation levels, and be actively involved though apparently in an indirect way, in the decision-making process in the restaurant industry.

Study objectives: Considering the above, this research paper wants to achieve the below research objectives:

- To explore the determinants, which discourage or encourage customer satisfaction in restaurants existed in Kabul. Mainly, this paper investigates variables that can be the root causes of poor customer satisfaction.

- To investigate the reasons why customers choose to dine at various restaurants at Kabul in spite of being not sure of hygiene and health standards.

- To study whether SQ factors can impact customer satisfaction.

2 Literature review

A vast number of kinds of literature have been produced in the area of customer satisfaction in the food industry (Dastane and Fazlin, 2017; Gilbert et al., 2004; Macarthur et al., 2004; Liao and Chuan, 2004) revealing that a large number of factors play significant impact on customer satisfaction among which on-time delivery of services, nice behaviour of employees, quality of services and foods, price and some emotional factors (Dastane and Fazlin, 2017), the environment, furniture, music performance, respect to customers' feedback, privacy of customers, appropriate use of customers' information (p.380), and so many other factors lead to a better and higher level of customer satisfaction.

Some argue that customer satisfaction has now become a cliché and old phenomenon giving its place to new concept called customer retention that focus to keep customers as long as the company survives to operate [Kristian and Panjaitan, (2014), p.143]; some still emphasises that customers' satisfaction is considered 'standard of excellence' [Dastane and Fazlin, (2017), p.381] in any organisation and asserts that customer satisfaction might seem unachievable unless managers satisfy the wants and needs of customers.

Customer satisfaction has been defined broadly when customers experience a higher quality of service or products that will motivate them to repurchase or reuse the product or services in the future (Liao and Chuang, 2004). Bendaraviciene and Vikyte (2019) believe that to satisfy customers, the term 'wants and needs' play an important factor; when the wants and needs of customers are addressed well by a product or service of a company, satisfaction happens (as cited in Yuksel and Yuksel, 2008). Yet, if a company fails to meet its customers wants and needs, dissatisfaction happens, which can be critical to the success and failures of the company.

Below, you will find significant factors that stimulate customer satisfaction each of which is explained in the light of satisfaction literature.

2.1   Service quality

Almost all researchers somewhat agree on the contribution of SQ on consumer satisfaction. In a study of customer satisfaction of 4 to 5-star hotels in Vietnam, Phi et al. (2018) propose that SQ positively impacts the level of satisfaction. In their study, SQ is defined as the usefulness of physical environment and furniture, simplicity of hotel websites, understanding of customers' feelings and that the management maintained good care of their customers. Other studies (Assouad and Overby, 2016; Bendaraviciene and Vilkyte, 2019) similarly show that the so-called five dimensions of the SQ model improve satisfaction levels.

Moreover, Tripathi and Dave (2016) indicate that satisfaction originates from SQ, which is the customer's judgment about a service or product. Their study categorises SQ as what and how customers receive a product or services and indicate that how customers receive services or products is a big motivator of satisfaction. They further add that SQ is when customers 'feel special' (p.33) and find added value in the physical environment whereas what (food) part of SQ can be satisfied by eating at home too. Suggesting culture as an integrated part of the SQ model, later in their study, they propose that the higher SQ, the more chance of satisfaction and intention to repurchase.

Better trained employees will deliver better SQ. Similar to the findings of Dastane and Fazlin (2017), George and Jones (1991) study emphasises on the wants and needs of customers. They propose the provision of services should be adjusted that fit customers' expectations – not too much – and not too little. Sometimes, service delivery level exceeds the expectation, such as – repeated visits from customers and can be bothersome and sometimes service delivery level fails to meet expectations, such as – doctors treating all patients the same, which is again a point of concern. With this in mind, the challenge is to realise customers' wants – they propose – and deliver services that meet their wants (George and Jones, 1991). Hence, customers have their definitions of SQ making the job for service provider harder to justify.

In their study there remain many questions unanswered. What if the employee or the service provider fails to meet customers' desires appropriately? What if customers receiving two kinds of service delivery feels discriminated? While George and Jones (1991) proposition of varying the degree of SQ based on 'perceived quality' of customers may sound perfectly matching the organisational structure of many service industries, it poses server discriminations among customers in the restaurant industry.

2.2   Customer relationship management

In addition to SQ, the use of CRM has been a significant factor facilitating customer satisfaction (Mithas et al., 2005; Kim and Mukhopadhyay, 2011; Krasnikov et al., 2009; Payne and Frow, 2005). Payne and Frow (2005) believe CRM was first used during 1990 and since then has been widely defined as any technology means of solutions to business. Although they shed doubt on such a definition, in their study they define CRM as a "holistic approach to managing customer relationship to create shareholder value" (p.168) that in their viewpoint broadly encompasses the use of technology and IT solutions, value creation, as well as proper use of customer data.

CRM is the widespread use of information technology (IT) to connect with customers. Companies need to keep in touch with their customers to have a better understanding of their needs and concerns to deliver customised services (Cohen and

Moore, 2000). CRM originating from the relationship marketing, a concept developed during 1970' and 1980' (Payne and Frow, 2006) has become an effective tool in building customer relationships as well as the base for individual marketing, the customer-oriented approach that attempts to deliver services to an individual customer.

CRM is interested in maintaining customers' personal information, such as contact details and home addresses to use them to receive feedback on their services or products. Cohen and Moore (2006, p.12) believe we need customer contact details to send them a "how did we do survey." It seems consumer data cannot be maintained unless with the help of IT, which is an inseparable CRM component. IT simply uses customers' data to have better decision making. Recent literature indicates that CRM has been an effective means of organisations learning about their customer behaviour, findings insights about their consumption patterns and use of information to deliver services or products that exclusively meet the needs of their customers (Mithas et al., 2005).

CRM, however, can have negative results if not implemented properly (Payne and Frow, 2006; Jayachandran et al., 2005). Often positive outcomes from CRM can be expected only if the information is used in a more appropriate manner that ensures customer retention and satisfaction (Saini et al., 2010). Although researchers point to a few failures of CRM in the literature, evidence shows that such failures have been due to "less mature technologies … [or] inappropriate procedures" [Krasnikov et al., (2009), p.72] related to CRM application. The study of Jayachandran et al. (2005) indicates that the undesired outcome of CRM application can be because that customers' information does not match with the designed structure of the technology. These researchers later warn of potential losses as a result of CRM technology mismanagement. However, in situations, where CRM application is applied with care and thought, it has highly impacted firms' profitability over time by providing timely access to customer data (Krasnikov et al., 2009).

CRM seems to have grasped the interest of B2B transactions. Saini et al. (2010) propose that successful CRM implementation positively impacts B2Bs rather than B2Cs because of several items that include established long term relationship because of higher switching cost, literally saves time, product post-purchase services, such as installations and maintenances, and has a better understanding of customers. One cannot understand CRM, without a thorough analysis of technological inventions in IT and their role in recording, maintaining, analysing, and overall decision-making process.

2.3 *Information technology*

Firms with a greater percentage of IT utilisation have achieved a better competitive advantage in managing and sustaining relationships with their customers. Although the logic behind technology utilisation seems deeper than just to manage the relationships, the focus has been to increase firms' productivity and cost-efficiency, decrease marketing costs and contribute to the overall wellbeing of the company (Sun, 2006b). In fact, technology helps firms to learn about their customers and process customers' data for decision-making purposes easily.

Once the information is retrieved from customers, it is stored in a database, which can be used to track customer purchase patterns, accommodate their concerns and needs, adapt to new behavioural changes, and ultimately deliver better services. It is particularly important that the development of artificial intelligence, as well as statistical forecasting

software, can do a lot to communicate with customers by realising customers interest and tastes, predicting fresher needs and purchases behaviour, and helping develop customised services or products (Sun, 2006a) that will ultimately result into sustained profitability (Jayachandran et al., 2005).

Because of their unique solutions to business, firms invest massively in technology to record, maintain and analyse customer-related data. For example, Allnoch (1997) in his article entitled, 'Forecasting software ensures fast-food consumer satisfaction' believes that technology contributes to increased customer satisfaction. Besides that technology improves inventory management, he adds that with the help of technology, such as certain software, fast food restaurants in California have immensely improved services resulting to better customer management and a higher level of customer satisfaction.

Moreover, Sun (2006a) confess that recent technological advancements have helped managers to retrieve enhanced data from their customers on the occasion they make a purchase and repurchase of a product, their attitude when seeing a new product, promotion, a website ad, as well as surfing behaviours, and with the help of statistical software, they can convert these data into useful information that help in decision making related to maintaining the current customers, growing their numbers using cost-effective strategies, and building long-lasting relationship between the company and the clients (pp.594–597).

The two famous kinds of CRM IT facilities firms so far have benefited from are software that keeps and record data and mostly assist sales and inventory management and the software applications with the ability to analyse the data that help in the decision-making process (Jayachandran et al., 2005).

The discussion of IT to facilitate CRM is extremely relevant to this study. Today, Kabul restaurants engage with their customers through social media and can extract useful information form their comments, posts and other online interactions. Although research shows that around 80% of customers call a business (Sun, 2006b), this seems to be likely irrelevant with the growing trend of social media life of Afghans.

Satisfaction can fade away over time particularly in a toughened cut-throat competition environment and therefore can mean a temporary experience. A company's satisfied customers at a time can be competitor's customers particularly when the restaurant industry does not have high switching costs, unlike other industries. For example, studying the degree of satisfaction, Chandrashekaran et al. (2007) found that customers with the weaker intensity of satisfaction tend to switch to another service or product provider. In their study, they propose the higher the level of satisfaction, the better the chance to stay loyal to a company; the weaker the bond, the higher the chance to switch to alternatives. These researchers seem to be the very few ones to investigate the intensity of satisfaction and identify endangered customers who might switch at later stages. Therefore, this urges managers and decision-makers to timely monitor for satisfaction measures and apply customer retention strategies, that relatively look to strengthen customer-business relationship permanently or at least for a longer period.

Unlike other industries (i.e., e-commerce) in which switching can be costly (Chen and Hitt, 2002), it seems customers bear little or no switching cost in the restaurant industry; however, restaurants can be impacted if customers start to switch from restaurants to restaurants. This must alert managers to pay careful attention to retaining their customers. Customer retention gains significance as signalled above and is discussed below.

2.4   Customer retentions

Customer retention is concerned about building a lasting relationship with customers after the stage that customers are satisfied. This means there are doubts that satisfaction by itself may lead to better business growth, sustaining customers and encouraging the repurchase behaviour. An interesting study in customer satisfaction literature is the study of Lewis (2004), who has studied the impacts of loyalty programs on customer retention. Generally speaking, he believes incentives enhance the intention to purchase in a larger proportion and ensure repeat visits almost in any industry including hotels. Satisfied customers can mean decreased costs as it avoids considerably expensive marketing expenditures and can increase revenue because of repeated purchases (Luo and Homburg, 2007).

Luo and Homburg (2007) study found that customer satisfaction reduces marketing costs and positively attributes to the excellence of employee performance, "the two neglected outcomes of customer satisfaction". Another good piece of literature in customer retention is the work of Siu et al. (2013). They study how well companies handle customer complaints on the occasions, where customers experience 'service failure' and the impacts complaint resolution may have on customer satisfaction. A clear suggestion is customers should believe that complaints are treated justly and a final fair decision is taken, or the customer start retaliating and can easily generate negative word-of-mouth (WOM) circulations.

Customers can be acquired through many channels including WOM circulations, advertisements, free trials, and other marketing channels. Datta et al. (2015) study suggest that customers acquired through WOM and promotional programs stay longer with the firm than customers obtained through free trials, due to the reason that this last category of customers exhibits weaker longevity and intensity of relationships with the firms because of the lack of knowledge about the benefits of the product or services. They imply that customers retained by marketing channels other than free trails choose to be a firm's regular customer because they find value and have a lot of reasons to stay loyal to the firm; however, free trails obtained customers cannot realise the importance and benefits of a product or services and are generally switching to alternative as result of marketing campaigns. So they advise managers to think more on promotional marketing acquired customers than customers who are attracted through fee trails.

2.5   Restaurants and families

'Special place for families' is a famous sign that attracts one's attention almost in any restaurant entrance in Kabul. Kabul, generally, is the home for such customers who favour a dining setting where they feel more private and secure and are less in contact with other customers on the occasion when they go to a restaurant with their families or females who may prefer to dine alone. For this purpose, family refers to a male customer who goes to a restaurant with his wife, sisters, mother or other female relatives. Culture, dining habit, the common social perception about women, women socio-economic status, education, and food consumption behaviour pattern stimulate and generalise the behaviour in which certain types of customers prefer exclusive services when dining with a female relative.

They believe that the common outlook that explains such behaviour is the fact that there are chances of harassment and possible troubles from the unprofessional behaviour of waiters or other customers, for example. So to mitigate or avoid the problems, this category of customers chooses a place where they can have good customer experience, feel relaxed with their families and nobody bother or annoy them. This significant area of literature is particularly consistent with the purpose of this paper as it investigates how customer satisfaction is encouraged or discouraged in the restaurant industry in Kabul that unfortunately has remained almost unstudied. Western researchers, perhaps, have not paid attention because women are treated similar to many other customers. In western countries, there is no or weak gender segregation, and women do not face limitations typical of Afghan women.

Perhaps, due to their nature, women almost anywhere in the world receive attention when they go out in the public, such as in a restaurant setting. However, exhibiting the kind of behaviour i.e., being attracted by a woman and showing a desire for future communications and building relationships in the Afghan context seems unacceptable; therefore, there is a need to meet the demands of these types of customers separately. Practically, these customers seek better experience and look for places that suit their desired dining ambiance or setting.

Most of the literature discussed above signals the importance of customer satisfaction, SQ, and fulfilment of customers' demands and the impact they may have on a firm's growth. Dastane and Fazlin (2017) and George and Jones (1991) believe customer satisfaction is nothing but to tailor services that meet customers' wants and needs. Phi et al. (2018) believed that to produce superior experience, restaurants need to understand customers' feelings. Tripathi and Dave (2016) supported the idea that customer privacy and personality should be respected and not judged.

While one can learn a lot from the existent literature, unfortunately, there is no empirical study to guide us how placing signs of 'Special place for families' have reduced the tensions of female customers and customers who dine out with their families to have a better customer experience as it seems the only mitigating techniques of Kabul restaurant managers. This paper explores if the behaviour of seeking a private place and lack of interest to dine outside can be explained by factors, such as street or employee harassments or any other unprofessional behaviour in restaurant atmosphere and suggests managerial applications. However, such female-centric restaurant services in traditional societies require the attention of researchers in the area.

2.6 Past and present studies

One of the prominent organisations that continuously measures customer satisfaction levels in the USA is the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). Actively working in 11 industries, ACSI obtain and analyse customers' data in restaurant industry considering staff behaviour, 'table service speed, order accuracy', menu diversity, quality of food, mobile app and website. Wait-staff behaviour, and food quality measures are highly relevant to the current study whereas other factors, such as the quality of mobile apps and websites seem less relevant.

Table 1 Summary of past and present studies

No.	Authors and years	Title of works	Name of journal	Results/findings
1	Liu (2019)	Customer satisfaction and firms' innovation efforts in marketing taking shipping logistics companies as an example	Journal of Coastal Research	Firms need to innovate to satisfy and retain customers.
2	Biesok and Wyród-Wróbel (2018)	European customers satisfaction index model: comparison of evidences Poland and Lithuania	International Conference on European Integration	"Image affects the expectations of customers, expectations shape the perceived quality and value, and both these factors affect satisfaction" (p.166).
3	Kalia et al. (2016)	E-service quality, consumer satisfaction and future purchase intentions in e-retail	e-Service Journal	There is a positive relationship between online service quality and online customer satisfaction.
4	Lemon and Verhoef (2016)	understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey	Journal of Marketing	The paper provides an integrated understanding of customer journey
5	Askariazad and Babakhani (2015)	An application of European customer satisfaction index (ECSI) in business to business (B2B) context	Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing	Trust impacts loyalty Future sales are impacted by corporate image
6	Sugiati et al. (2013)	The role of customer value on satisfaction and loyalty (study on hypermart's customers)	International Journal of Business and Management Invention	There is a positive relationship between customer value and customer satisfaction CRM creates customer value
7	Biesok and Wyród-Wróbel (2011)	Customer satisfaction – meaning and methods of measuring	Book Chapter (Marketing and Logistic Problems in the Management of Organization)	There is a positive relationship between satisfaction level and product value, and positive emotions attached to purchasing experience. If products exceed expectation, it cannot change satisfaction levels.

Table 1   Summary of past and present studies (continued)

No.	Authors and years	Title of works	Name of journal	Results/findings
8	Johnson et al. (2001)	The evolution and future of national customer satisfaction index models	*Journal of Economic Psychology*	The authors proposed amendments to Norwegian customer satisfaction barometer (NCSB). They proposed price attractiveness to the model.
9	Anderson et al. (1997)	Customer satisfaction, productivity, and profitability: differences between goods and services	*Marketing Science*	There is a positive relationship between ROI, and productivity; productivity and customer satisfaction in goods sector, but not in the service sector.
10	Spreng et al. (1996)	A reexamination of the determinants of consumer satisfaction	*Journal of Marketing*	Satisfaction happens when expectations congruency match desire congruency.
11	Anderson et al. (1994)	Customer satisfaction, market share, and profitability: findings from Sweden	*Journal of Marketing*	There is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and return on investment (ROI) – though immediately the affects cannot be seen.
12	Hauser et al. (1994)	Customer satisfaction incentives	*Marketing Science*	The paper suggests continues measurement of satisfaction.
13	Fornell (1992)	A national customer satisfaction barometer: the Swedish experience	*Journal of Marketing*	Customer satisfaction Barometer increases when "homogeneity and heterogeneity in demand is matched with supply (p.14).
14	Fornell (1992)	A national customer satisfaction barometer: the Swedish experience	*Journal of Marketing*	Customer satisfaction barometer increases when "homogeneity and heterogeneity in demand is matched with supply" (p.14).
15	Kotler and Murray (1975)	Third sector management – the role of marketing	*Public Administration Review*	The paper argues why non-profit NGOs need marketing.
16	Kotler and Levy (1969)	Broadening the concept of marketing	*Journal of Marketing*	"No organization [can] avoid marketing." Organisations need to study their customers.

In their most recent report about customer satisfaction levels in the USA, ACSI announces that restaurant has generally served customers not very well and struggling to meet customers' satisfaction benchmarks. ACSI (2021) data shows restaurants have failed to meet current benchmarking criteria by showing –2.3 below benchmarking on average. To develop the industry and prepares the steps required for maintaining customers, ACSI has sets benchmarks. The benchmark set for restaurant industry is 80 in 2021, which is 3% more than the benchmark in 2020. As a general thought, what is important about ACSI is that they actively work to measures customer satisfaction levels in various industries in the USA.

Following ACSI model, other countries have also attempted to monitor satisfaction levels. The European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI) analyse data to direct marketing strategies and contribute to professional growth of businesses in European (EU) countries (Relation Monitor, 2021).

ACSI and ECSI are not the only organisation that deal with customer satisfaction, other countries have also attempted to study satisfaction at various industry. Customer satisfaction barometer (CSB) in Sweden, Norwegian customer satisfaction barometer (NCSB) in Norway and other national satisfaction models are developed for the same purpose of measuring productivity and economic growth in relation to customers.

It is important to note that not only private business pay attention to keeping customers satisfied, but also public organisations regularly monitor their performance in the service delivery to citizens. For example in their report in 2018, the Government of New South Wales (NSW) (New South Wales Government, 2018) compared customers' expectation and their actual experiences in the service of delivery of the Government to identify gaps. Although the report shows a minor gap of –1 to –4, the quality of service delivery in the state offices has gone high since 2015. Other notable point about this report is that satisfaction level varies across age groups. Retired citizens with over $180,000.00 yearly income make the highest satisfied age group while younger generation with yearly income of less than $180,000.00 forms the less satisfied respondents. Teenagers and early 20s majority of whom are male students make the second category.

We have attempted to summarise related literature in the Table 1 from most recent to earlier studies. The table illustrates authors' names, title of works, name of journals and brief findings.

2.7 The present study

As it became clear, customer satisfaction and factors affecting satisfaction have been studied well. Nevertheless, customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry in Kabul, Afghanistan has not been the focus of any studies so far although there are, relatively, customer satisfaction surveys conducted on regular basis related to bank industries in Afghanistan. The existing literature, in other words, lacks the availability of the relevant studies that provide insights and analysis on CRM, customer satisfaction and retention that help managers and decision-makers to deal with complex situations and decision-making procedures – *in the context of business in Kabul*.

This paper will contribute to a number of ways from the provision of empirical evidence on customer satisfaction in restaurants in Kabul to establishments of proofs that can help in decision making process in the relevant industry to exploration of contextual

evidence that function to excel the operation and management, and positively impact the overall growth of the fast-food restaurants in Kabul.

3   Methodology

This study is interested to investigate the relationship between dependent variable (DV), customer satisfaction and the independent variable (IV), SQ that is impacted by

1   food quality

2   employee conduct

3   harassment

4   location

5   competition

6   atmosphere

7   respect for family privacy when going to a restaurant with families; therefore, the paper seeks to benefit a quantitative methodology.

A qualitative study was not the best option as we fail to explain the relationships between these variables and fail to answer the research question properly. The study uses regression analysis to explain what percentage of satisfaction or dissatisfaction can be explained by the IVs, uses statistical analysis to construct proportions, in case of dissatisfaction, the inverse proportion concerning existent variables that contributes to answering the research question.

3.1   Research diagram

To increase the robustness and the validity of the data, we selected the respondents of this research from various backgrounds and categorised as follows:

Group A   This group includes people who eat at least one of their daily meals in a restaurant regularly and composed of American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) students. These students have experience of dining at various restaurants and locations in Kabul city. The survey was posted on the AUAF Facebook page community and requested members to fill and share their experiences. Using my network in this community, I have also emailed the survey to colleagues, who distributed the survey, subsequently, in their networks.

Group B   To choose this group, we selected random restaurants at different locations and selected customers randomly to fill a survey. To facilitate the understanding and avoid the possibility of biased or wrong answers, the survey was translated into Dari and before attempting, the purpose of the survey was clearly explained. In occasions that the respondents could not read the text, the survey questions were asked orally and recorded the responses accordingly.

Group C We visited the city centres, shopping malls, business markets, education centres, and some random shops to diversify data. All respondents, similar to the above groups, are randomly selected. They came from different backgrounds and varied from window shoppers at modern malls to students who study English, preparatory courses for university entrance exam to professionals, as well as employees who frequent such centres.

The rationale behind choosing the target groups as specified above is that it limits any data collection biasedness and includes a diverse background of demographics with the experience of dining at various restaurants distributed at different locations in Kabul. Group A, being the professionals, helped understand the highest expectations of service or food delivery; the data that came from Group B are true representation of customer satisfaction levels who actually dine or frequent to dine at these restaurants, so it was a suitable option to retrieve data from them as to know why they may dine outsides. The data obtained from the last group of respondents, due to it is scattered over different locations, segments of a population group, and education level, increases data accuracy rates.

Except for the first group, personal relationships did not contribute to data collection. All respondents are chosen on random bases. The majority of qualitative data helped to estimate the broader picture of customer satisfaction. We have used the secondary resources, important relevant literature as well as the primary resources, such as the survey, and random interviews with customers.

3.2 Primary data

The primary data are collected by distributing the survey questions that were designed to study what factors may or may not influence customer satisfaction in Kabul restaurants. To get the primary data from professionals, NGO employees, government servants, educated demographic, that are mainly cable of speaking and reading in English, the online Google Form developed in English was distributed through means of social media, such as Facebook and email correspondence within our own networks. The data from people with little or no English literacy came from Farsi/Dari translation of the survey made available in hard copies and distributed in the busy city centres, business markets, streets, and some random restaurants.

Furthermore, some random interviews were also conducted with females to realise how realistic they may have responded to some sensitive questions, such as being harassed or not harassed, what feelings and reactions they have exhibited after facing troubles in restaurants environments as well as how secure they may have felt if they were accompanied by their family, a male partner or relatives when dining outside. As a result of these interviews, we have made general conclusions about a certain aspect of satisfaction of female customers.

3.3 Survey questions

The study designed the survey questions that mainly explore what degree of customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction can be explained by SQ or lack of SQ respectively. The study identified seven IVs and is interested to study how

1   food quality

2   employee conduct

3   harassment

4   location

5   competition

6   atmosphere

7   respect for family privacy when going to a restaurant with families discourage or promote satisfaction levels.

The survey is first written in English, then translated into Dari and distributed to relevant populations.

3.4   Sampling

Kabul is estimated to have 4.1 million inhabitants (Shaheed, 2018). For this study, the population is divided into two categories. The first group consists of lower-income demographics who cannot afford to eat at restaurants and is excluded from the survey. The second group is composed of the segment of the population who can afford to eat out, but may or may not dine out at restaurants. This latter category makes the target population for this study and is composed of professionals, students, employees, government servants, educated personnel, self-employed human forces, and entrepreneurs. From this population, we took the sample size of 70 respondents from which 64% were male and 36% were female.

3.5   Data collection

First, the survey questions were designed. Next, we used the Google Form to facilitate the data collection process. The online survey was then circulated among professional and personal networks. Using our network in Kabul, we have shared the survey through online means of communication, such as Facebook and emailed our contacts whose education levels varied from school diplomas to master's degree holders and include a diverse ethnicity and background some of which also distributed the survey into their networks.

   To reach out to people without the ability of English literacy, the Farsi translated version of the survey was circulated to people in the streets, city centres, and other public places in Kabul. One limitation noted was a large number of populations was reluctant and doubted to share information. Some of them indicated that their information might be misused.

3.6   Research diagram

SQ in the restaurant industry can be impacted by many factors, yet in the context of this study, only a few of them appear to be very important. For example, being a male dominant society and ubiquitous culture of bothering women in the community, females are harassed when they are not accompanied by males continuously at schools,

universities, restaurants, and workplaces. Added to this is the occasion of the dining of a male partner with female family members and vice-versa. A female customer might feel safer when accompanied by a male partner; however, this does not stop harassing women automatically. Going to a restaurant with a female partner has troubles related to women's safety, family honours and dignity. Therefore, the below factors has been choosing with care and precision. Figure 1 represents factors that affect SQ.

Figure 1 Factors affecting SQ
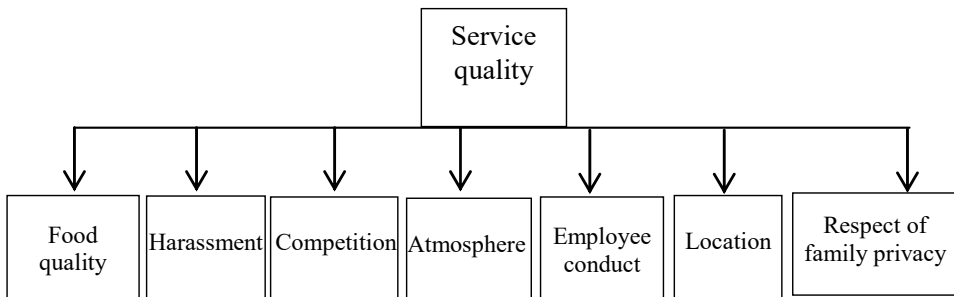
The major objectives authors want to achieve conducting the survey and some random interviews are to know about factors that may or may not impact on the level of customer satisfaction, customers' expectation, reasons they visit restaurants or eat a specific food, study if they have visited restaurants even if their expected level of satisfaction has not been in place and some other important issues discussed in the body of the paper.

This study has one DV, which is customer satisfaction and has various IVs that are outlined below.

- atmosphere
- food quality
- employee conduct
- harassments
- going to a restaurant with family members
- competition
- location.

3.7   Research framework

This research framework is two folds. Firstly, it proposes that the lack of SQ leads to unsatisfied customers. Lack of SQ consists of the low quality of food, lack of attention to customers, restaurant employee unprofessional behaviour and concerned hygiene level, which subsequently, results in unsatisfied customers. Secondly, SQ in our case, food quality, special treatment, professional employee conduct, standard hygiene level are responsible for better customer satisfaction. The research hypotheses are based on the first category of this research framework.

In both cases, lack of SQ is the IV and unsatisfied/satisfied customers is the DV. Each of IVs has the potential to influence satisfaction/dissatisfaction levels independently.

Table 2   Independent variables

| No.	Variables	Explanation
1	Food quality	Food quality refers to excellence of meal in consideration of taste, freshness, ingredients, and being Halal or legally permissive. For this paper, it also refers to the observation of health standards in the restaurant environment in a physical environment, foods or beverages, dishes, and how cleanliness is maintained through the overall service delivery.
2	Competition	The availability of alternative options of dining, such as cafés, fast food services, or other restaurants represents competition. In this context, restaurant choices can be affected by how easy it is to reach (traffic), level of security and the customer's accessibility to transportation and availability of time.
3	Employee conduct	Employee conduct is the professional manner, ethical behaviour in the delivery of services and/or food to customers and the overall business to customer communications during purchase decisions or actual time when customers eat their meals.
4	Location	Location is a factor when customers choose to select a restaurant in Kabul due to an underdeveloped traffic system and the all-day busy streets.
5	Respect for family privacy	Families in this study refer to sisters, mother, wife, fiancée or any other female relatives. Families usually get to gather in restaurants to meet each other, give a party to one another, or celebrate life events such as engagement or wedding anniversaries.
6	Atmosphere	The atmosphere of a restaurant refers to how pleasant or unpleasant, welcoming or unwelcoming environment a customer may judge, which is part of 'perceived quality' and may vary from customer to customer.
7	Harassment	Harassment is the intentional, sometimes unintentional, verbal and or non-verbal invasion to someone's privacy, personality, or social mores in a way that bothers the person. Harassment against women in consideration of prevalent Islamic rules in Afghanistan is considered a crime and subject to punishment.

The IVs are separately discussed in Table 2.

3.8 Regression analysis

The regression analysis has been a useful statistical measure to study the relationship between dependent and IVs and contribute to decision making (Williams et al., 2009). In this study, we used the data analysis option in Microsoft Excel 2010 to run the regression and see what impacts the IVs can have on the expression of satisfaction of customers in the restaurant industry. The regression equation used in this study is as following:

$$Y = B0 + B1x1 + B2x2 + B3x3 + B4x4 + B5x5 + B6x6 + B7x7 + e \tag{1}$$

In the above equations, B0 represents the *y intercept*, and B1, B2, …, B7 are the *slop intercept forms*. The value of x depends on the values perceived from the dataset.

Figure 2 Research framework
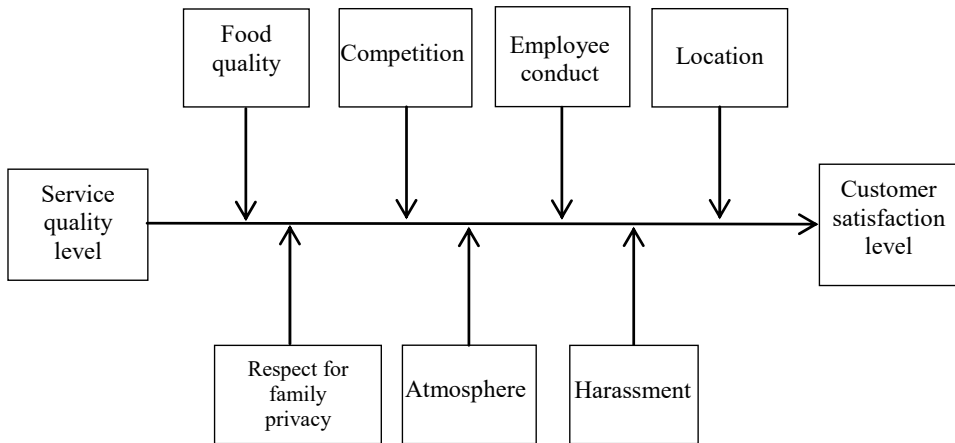
3.9 *Research limitation*

The research is subject to limitations similar to many other papers. The major challenge was obtaining data from random customers, approaching females and convincing respondents that their personal data is not collected or misused. For example, the study could not almost obtained data from demographics below high school due to this limitation.

Other limitation is that the majority of data are collected online although offline survey respondents were equally given a chance to fill the survey. In Afghanistan only a specific category of people are connected to the Internet that not represent the real expectations of all Afghans who are not connected via social media platforms. Students, professionals, government and NGO employees, parents and some other category form Afghan Internet users; while other categories such as farmers, labours (with purchasing power of eating at a restaurant in Kabul) and semi-professionals who are not connected to the Internet form other community members. With online limitation being said, we clearly see the type of demographic being surveyed who possesses better social standing, have different expectations and taste preferences. Lower income people who afford to dine at restaurants have clearly remained out of sight of this study.

The time the data is collected is also a big limitation of the study. Authors collected data when the country experienced kinds of conflicts, internal war, civil unrest, target killing and many other political unrests. So one cannot ignore respondents' priorities and concerns at the time of filling the survey. We agree that these respondents would responded to our survey differently when the country was at peace and basic humanitarian needs were met. So security remains a big challenge to collect and reach wider populations.

The research was also limited in scope. Many factors were intentionally not included in the research model, such as price, the efficiency of orders, waiting times, and dynamics related to tribalism; most of them are recommended for further studies. The areas (Table 3) are recommended for further studies.

Table 3   Topics for future studies

| No.	Topic	Descriptions/possible research questions
1	Security	• How security can impact customers' decision making of going to eat in a city, which is as conflicted as Kabul.
		• What role security has played in shaping Kabul residents eating customs, people's feasting parties and the creation of a perception in which food delivery can be preferred over physical restaurants.
2	Customers' expectation	• How customers' level of expectation is affected by lack of opportunity where they can compare standards.
		• Can low expectations explain customer satisfaction?
3	Monitoring body for health and other regulation standards	• How a monitoring body, such as the Ministry of Health can benefit both restaurant management and customers?
		• Can a monitoring body increase customer satisfaction?
		• What role corruption can play if monitoring regulations are in place in a city, such as Kabul.
4	Eating alone vs. eating with female family members	• How satisfaction judgments can be explained when people dine alone vs. when they are a companied by female relatives or colleagues.
		• Does it mean it is time for restaurant managers to think of female employees to better serve customers at Kabul restaurants?
5	Price	• How does incorrect billing affect satisfaction?
		• Considering the slow growth in GDP, how can price fluctuations affect satisfaction?
	Ethics	• Can satisfaction be explained by observation of ethical standards?
6	Customer retention	• What can restaurants do to retain customers?
7	Hospitality	• Afghans are generally termed as hospitable. Has hospitability, as one of the Afghans' significant cultural attributes, contributed to better customer satisfaction and relationship in the restaurant industry?
8	CRM	• How can CRM increase satisfaction and customer retention?

4   Results

The previous section outlined the methodology of analysing the data. It was stated that a quantitative approach fits the nature of the study as it explains the relationships of independent and DVs in a more appropriate way. This chapter illustrates the key findings using the proposed linear regression model.

4.1   Respondents' profile

Females construct 36% and males make 64% of respondents, all of whom come from the target population. Respondents had a diverse educational background that included high school diplomas, bachelor's, master's and above degree holders. Figure 3 represents the

education level of respondents that is normally distributed around higher education first degree.

Figure 3 Respondents education (see online version for colours)
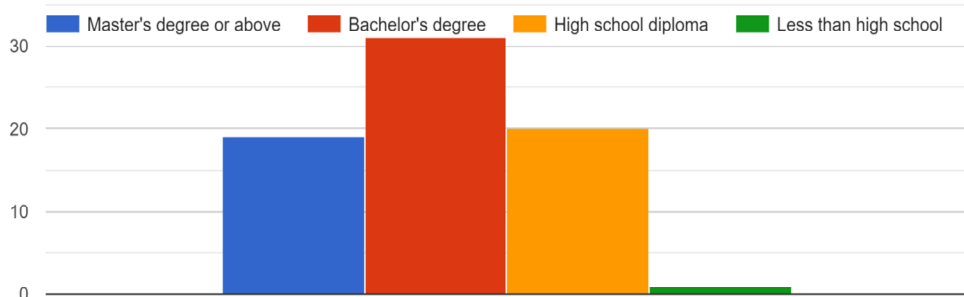
The target population normally visits restaurants at least once a month, and usually, they are accompanied by friends, work colleagues or family members. The eating habit of respondents is positively skewed toward the rights with 'every day' the lower band and 'a few days a month' the upper. When they go to restaurants, they spend 365.00 AFN on average. The majority of respondents spend more than 200.00 AFN per meal. Please refer to Figure 4 for details about the purchasing power of respondents.

Figure 4 Purchasing power (see online version for colours)
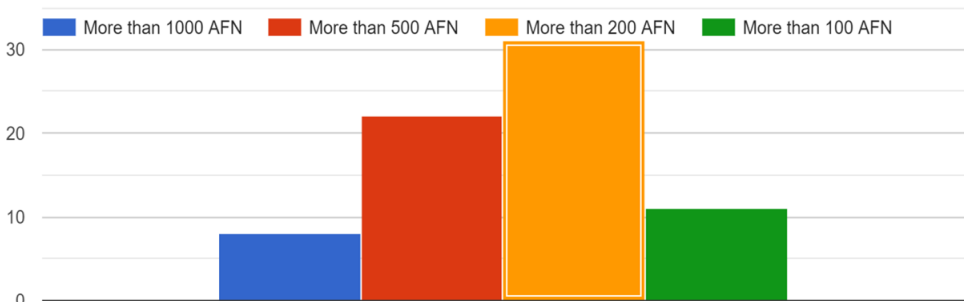
4.2 Cronbach's alpha

Before attempting to find out the results, we developed Cronbach's alpha to measure the 'internal consistency' of data to understand whether the collected data is respectable to run the selected model for this study. Cronbach's alpha explains whether the survey questions move in the same path, are written with preciseness and care after a thorough situation analysis of the topic and are relevant. A summary of Cronbach's alpha analysis is presented in Table 4.

As can be seen in Table 4, the total number of questions is 28 and the sum of each question score variance is 24.31771. The variance of the sum of all respondents' answers is 100.4386. Using the following equation in Excel, we got 0.785955 for the Cronbach's alpha.

$$\infty = \frac{N.\acute{C}}{v + (N-1).\acute{C}} \tag{2}$$

where

N the number of items

$\acute{C}$ average covariance between items-pairs

v average variance.

After rounding, we got 0.79 for Cronbach's alpha. A value of 0.75 or upper is considered to be used in research publications and respectable (Kenhove et al., 2003; Huang et al., 2010) – although similar to the correlation coefficient, +1 and or –1 show greater internal consistency. Azimi and Claver (2018) proposes the Table 5 to accept or reject Cronbach's alpha.

Table 4   Cronbach's alpha

Cronbach's alpha	
# of questions	28
Sum of the items variance	24.31771
Variance of total score	100.4386
Cronbach's alpha	0.785955

Table 5   Cronbach's alpha interpretation

Range	Internal consistency and reliability
A = 1.00	Perfect
$0.90 > \alpha \geq 0.80$	Excellent
$0.70 > \alpha \geq 0.60$	Acceptable
$0.59 > \alpha \geq 0.50$	Poor
$0.5 > \alpha$	Unacceptable

In this study, the value of alpha is almost excellent; therefore, we move forward with Cronbach's alpha of 0.79.

4.3   Outlier detections

After coding the data in Excel and a primary test of regression analysis, an outlier was detected. Outliers are usually because of errors in data entry and can be spotted using 'standard residuals'. They have the potential to question the validity of the study results and challenge model selection; therefore, it should be detected and avoided (Williams et al., 2009).

Table 6 represents the existent of outlier that was detected and removed from sample observation.

Table 6 was generated when the regression was first applied. But after noticing 2.154559066 in standard residuals colon, which is an outlier, it was removed from the dataset and another regression was then applied. The results of all types of regression applied during the model selection of this paper appear at the end of the paper in appendixes.

Table 6   Outlier detection

Residuals	Standard residuals
–0.505811406	–1.432478208
–0.449412372	–1.272753881
–0.265885028	–0.752997075
0.760779845	2.154559066
–0.195111059	–0.552562353
0.281902545	0.798359324
0.318372792	0.90164453
–0.079332023	–0.224671473

4.4   Residual plots

Residuals are the measures of variability of predicted outcomes concerning their actual values. Plotting every individual IV against its residuals, Figure 5 illustrates that the dataset is evenly distributed around zero and suggests a regression model will be a fair representation of X and Y relationship – though the strength of the relationship can vary.

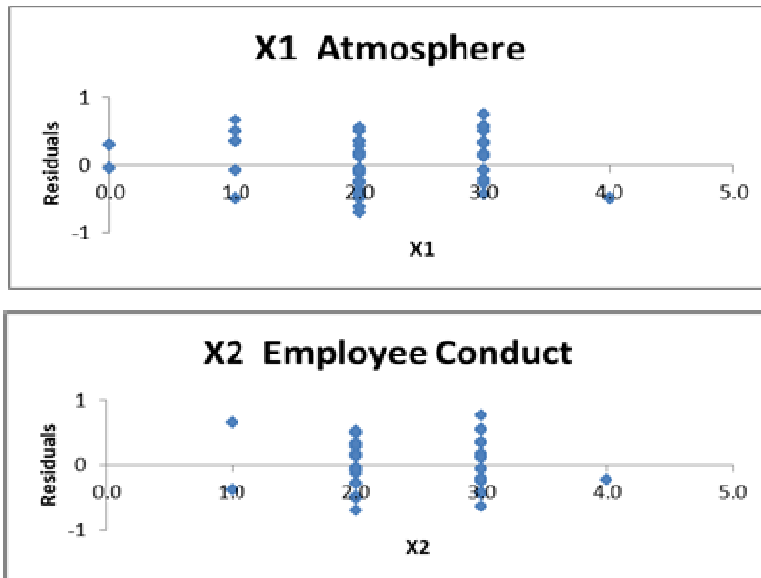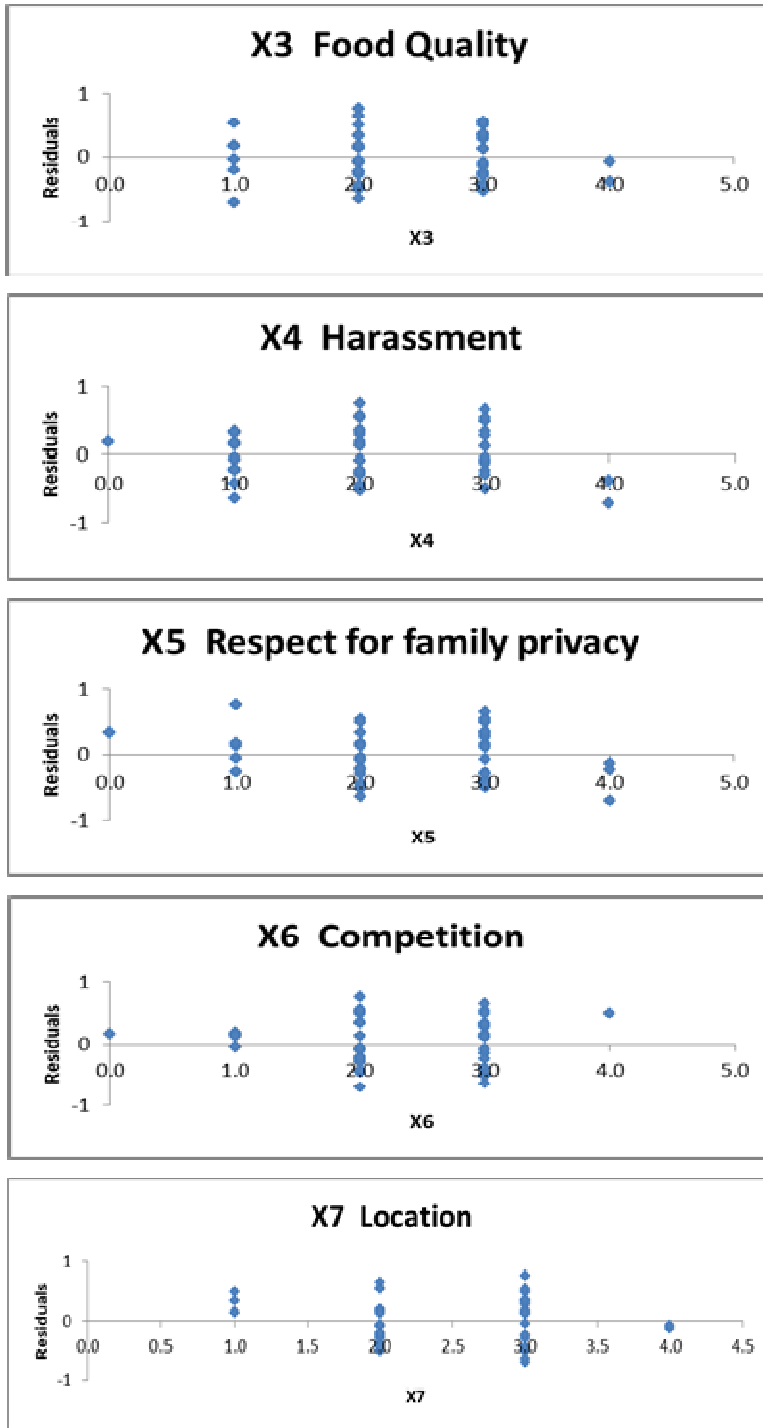**Figure 5**   Residual plots against X (see online version for colours)

**Figure 5**   Residual plots against X (continued) (see online version for colours)

4.5 Normal probability plot

Normal probability plot is an indicator of whether our dataset is normally distributed and fit the regression line. As can be seen from Figure 6, the dataset is normally distributed, but there are some data that does not fit the line properly. The closer the data points to the regression line, the better the normality; the farther the data points from the line, the more the normality decreases. So, it is concluded that the dataset in our case has a linear relationship – yet that is not very strong. There are some data points that are slightly scattered from the regression line; however, it does not affect the overall results.

Figure 6 Normal probability plot (see online version for colours)
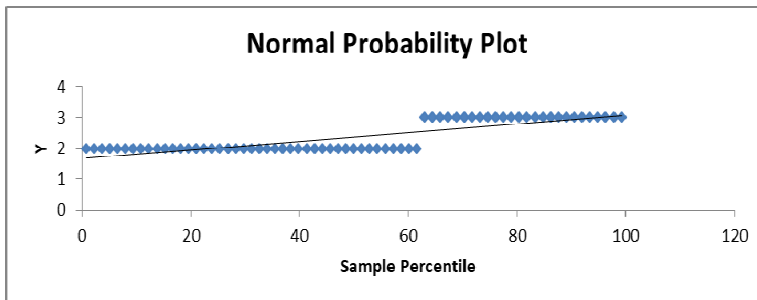
4.6 Descriptive statistics

The total respondents in this study were 70. Every X's mean and standard deviation is outlined. The mean and standard deviation of Y is 2.385714 and 0.4902782 respectively. Since all IVs have almost similar means and standard deviations, it can be concluded that that dataset is approximately normally distributed.

Table 7 Descriptive statistics

Variable |	Obs	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
+					
X1 |	70	2.271429	.7598899	0	4
X2 |	70	2.414286	.6017573	1	4
X3 |	70	2.442857	.7733929	0	4
X4 |	70	2.114286	.8434377	0	4
X5 |	70	2.428571	.7531851	0	4
X6 |	70	2.285714	.7049074	0	4
X7 |	70	2.471429	.6306525	1	4
+					
Y |	70	2.385714	.4902782	2	3

4.7   Correlation coefficeint

Correlation and covariance measure whether the DV, customer satisfaction level, can be affected by the IVs,

1   food quality

2   employee conduct

3   harassment

4   location

5   competition

6   atmosphere

7   respect for family privacy when going to a restaurant with families.

Running the correlation and covariance in Excell, it is found out there is a positive relationship between all the seven factors and the satisfaction level. It is important to note that the degree of intensity of the relationship can vary from one IV to another. One notable issue is that the seven factors do not perfectly positively impact on the expression of satisfaction. In other words, there is no positive perfect relationship between customer satisfaction and the factors that can influence its level. For further details on correlation coefficient and covariance of dependent and IVs, refer to Table 8.

Table 8   Correlation coefficent of variables

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	Y
X1	1							
X2	0.23	1						
X3	0.00	0.01	1					
X4	–0.18	–0.15	0.37	1				
X5	0.05	–0.05	0.26	0.45	1			
X6	0.12	–0.01	0.39	0.41	0.31	1		
X7	0.06	0.24	0.11	0.17	0.30	0.21	1	
Y	0.10	0.24	0.26	0.31	0.49	0.47	0.48	1

Correlation coefficent of varaibles can be calculated using the below formula.

$$r_{XY} = \frac{\text{covariance of X and Y}}{(\text{sample standard deviation of X})(\text{sample standard deviation of Y})}$$

$$= \frac{\text{cov}_{XY}}{(s_X)(s_Y)} \tag{3}$$

where

r_{XY} sample correlation coefficient

s_X sample standard deviation of x

s_Y sample standard deviation of y.

In Table 9, the relationship of every single variable affecting each other is clearly illustrated. Regarding multivariate observations, the regression analysis would only give us a general indication of how all IVs would impact the expression of satisfaction.

Table 9   Correlation coefficient interpretation

Correlation coefficient (r)	Interpretation
r = +1	Perfect positive correlation
0 < r < +1	Positive linear relatonship
r = 0	No linear relatonship
–1 < r < 0	Negative linear relatonship
r = –1	Perfect negative correlation

The correlation coefficient, according to Williams et al. (2009), can be interpreted in consideration to the value of (r). In our case, the correlation coefficient (r) has a positive linear relationship, which means that linear regression model cannot be chllanged and is a good model for studying the relationship between Xs and Y.

4.8   Regression results

Tables 10–12 summarise regression results. In Table 10, R-square explains that 51% of change in satisfaction levels can be explained by the degree of change in

1   restaurant atmosphere

2   employee conduct

3   food quality

4   harassment

5   respect for family privacy when going to a restaurant with families

6   competition

7   location.

In other words, the seven independent factors are responsible to increase or decrease satisfaction judgments for around 51%. The other half of satisfaction level should be correlated to other factors, which can be the subject of an independent study and suggested for future studies above.

Table 10   Regression summary output

Regression statistics	
Multiple R	0.714362694
R-square	0.510314059
Adjusted R-square	0.45412059
Standard error	0.360653588
Observations	68

Some studies propose the use of 'adjusted R-square' for multivariate regression; however, as a general rule, R-square replaces adjusted R-square almost in any study. Standard error is 36%. This indicates how far the actual data can be from the regression line, which is 36% in this case. Since it is a multivariate regression, further details are elaborated on standard error in the below section.

Table 11   ANOVA

	Df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	7	8.268566928	1.181223847	9.081376742	1.2441E-07
Residual	61	7.934331623	0.13007101		
Total	68	16.20289855			

According to Table 11, significance F has a small value that indicates there is a low chance that our result is generated randomly. One notable point about 51% variations in Y is the amount of contribution of each independent factor formation of satisfaction levels that need further clarifications and is discussed in Table 12.

The IVs are shown in the first colon with other statistical information on the right colons. Each of the variables has different coefficients, but the same Y-intercept, which is 0.484532454. Using this information, we can form our regression equation for X1, X2, X3, X4, X5, X6, and X7 respectively, which is as follows:

$$Y = 0.4845 - 0.0223x + 0.0223x + 0.02022x - 0.0053x$$
$$+ 0.2433x + 0.2189x + 0.1840x \tag{4}$$

For a better result, we strive to lower the value of standard error. This means the lower the standard error, the better the result can be. This study has an overall standard error of 36%. On the other hand, the t-stats lie on the opposite side; they need to have larger values for more effective outputs. The larger the t-stats are, the better the results are too. X4 with the t-stat of –0.0815; X3 with t-stat of 0.2960, and X1 with t-stat of –0.3604 have lower values. In the following sections, the strength of the relationship between Xs and Y using *P-value* and other statistical measures is furtherly studied.

Table 12   Regression

	Coefficients	Standard error	t-stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Int.	0.484532	0.294125	1.647363	0.104625	–0.103608	1.072673
X1	–0.022311	0.061892	–0.360482	0.719731	–0.146073	0.101451
X2	0.146849	0.077756	1.888586	0.063704	–0.008633	0.302332
X3	0.020227	0.068312	0.296098	0.768160	–0.116371	0.156826
X4	–0.005355	0.065643	–0.081577	0.935249	–0.136617	0.125907
X5	0.243346	0.070992	3.427792	0.001095	0.101388	0.385303
X6	0.218911	0.072921	3.001995	0.003883	0.073094	0.364727
X7	0.184001	0.076725	2.398179	0.019551	0.030579	0.337424

4.8.1 Restaurant atmosphere

Almost all respondents agreed that restaurants pay careful attention to the physical environment, provide modern furniture and pleasant experience. The study shows that 78% of respondents are happy with the restaurant atmosphere. However, the data analysis results show that the restaurant atmosphere does not have a 'significant correlation' with customer satisfaction levels. In other words, the restaurant atmosphere has not been a significant contributing factor to customer satisfaction. Moreover, the corresponding *p-value* relatively cannot either support the idea of satisfaction judgments being related to the atmosphere. According to the results, *p-value* = 0.719731597 and $\alpha = 0.05$.

$\alpha = 0.05$

corresponding p-value = 0.719731597

$\alpha = 0.05 <$ p-value = 0.719731597

According to Williams et al. (2009, p.384), the decision rule with the *p-value* approach is to 'reject *H0 if p-value* $\leq \infty$'. Since the p-value is higher than the alpha, we fail to reject the null hypothesis:

H0   Customers approve of restaurants' atmosphere.

H1   Customers are not happy with restaurants' atmosphere.

Decision rule: Failed to reject the H0.

Considering the above, customers are happy with the restaurants' environment, yet this is not 'statistically significant' to impact the level of satisfaction, and may remain irrelevant in measuring customer satisfaction at restaurants. Overall, the findings in this area remain marginal.

4.8.2 Employee conduct

The study suggests that wait-staff highly respect customers when they receive and deliver their orders, yet they deliver meals with dirty outfits and hands. It is worth to mention delivering foods with unpleasant appearances, such as food stains on the cloths culturally is not considered disrespecting customers. Whether they respect customers or not, the study has weak evidence to support that customers are not happy with restaurant employees and correlate it with the expression of satisfaction in the restaurant industry.

Similar to the restaurant atmosphere, employee behaviour is not 'statistically significant' to measures, influence or explain the change in satisfaction levels after we consider *p-value*. The corresponding *p-value* is 0.063704451 and bigger than $\alpha = 0.05$; therefore, the H0 cannot be rejected and H1 remains unsupported.

p-value = 0.063704451

$\alpha = 0.05$

p-value = 0.063704451 $\geq \alpha = 0.05$.

H0   Customers are happy with the way wait-staff behave with them.

H1   Customers are not happy with the way wait-staff behave with them, which negatively affects satisfaction.

Decision rule: There is no evidence to support H1.

4.8.3 Food quality

More than half of the target population state that they have eaten in restaurants that do not cook fresh food every day when in fact, the type of food they eat should be cooked fresh every day. Similarly, they doubted the type of meat restaurants use is not *Halal* or legally permissive while restaurants are allowed to only use permissive meats, and they did not believe if the restaurants observe better health standards. Respondents also reported that they choose a better private dining area rather than the quality food. Please see Figures 7(a) and 7(b) for further details.

   It is suggested that the quality of food remains irrelevant in the restaurant dining culture. In spite of the above concerns, they normally eat out at restaurants that they are not sure about hygiene and other kitchen standards.

   Therefore, it should be no surprise if regression results show that customer satisfaction cannot be related to food quality either. A clear reason is that although customers are aware of the use of substandard ingredients and illegal meats, they still dine out at restaurants. The corresponding *p-value* is 0.76816025; therefore, it does not meet our decision rule.

   p-value = 0.76816025

   $\alpha = 0.05$

   p-value = $0.76816025 \geq \alpha = 0.05$.

H0   Customers are happy with food quality.

H1   Food quality is poor, which affects customer satisfaction.

Decision rule: We failed to reject the H0.

4.8.4 Harassment

The majority of respondents, including both male and female, reported that they have not been harassed or noticed attempts of harassment in restaurant environments. Figure 8 illustrates responses that reject the idea of any behaviour that results in annoyance or irritation. Harassment is also not generally correlated with customer satisfaction; therefore, making our findings marginal. The results of the data analysis show that harassment does not exist so that it could negatively impact customer satisfaction levels. *P-value* shows 0.935249882 which is greater than alpha. Therefore, customers have not been harassed in the restaurant industry.

   p-value = 0.935249882

   $\alpha = 0.05$

   p-value = $0.935249882 \geq \alpha = 0.05$.

H0   Customers are not harassed in the restaurant environment.

H1   Customers have been harassed in the restaurant environment, which affects satisfactions.

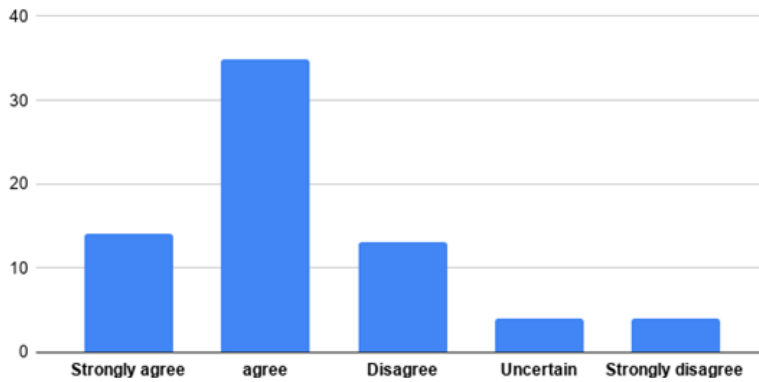*Decision rule:* Failed to reject the H0.

Figure 7   Food quality (see online version for colours)

I suspect if some restaurants observe better health standards.

Uncertain 2.9%
Disagree 10.0%
Strongly agree 25.7%
agree 60.0%
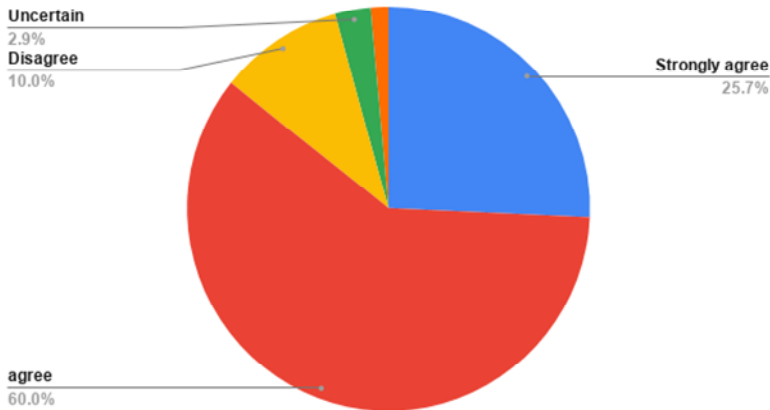
(a)

I suspect whether the type of meats restaurant use are lawfully permissive.

(b)

4.8.5 *Going to restaurants with family*

Although customers trust restaurants' environments, they speculate that they may face troubles, such as verbal arguments, or any irritation associated with family honour if they go with their family to a restaurant. It is worthy to imagine a situation where you go out with your loved ones to relax with such a proposition in mind. Considering the fact they may face difficulties or unpleasant, embarrassing situations, customers carefully select which restaurants to go if accompanied by family members. Please see Figures 9(a) and 9(b) for further details.

Figure 8   Harassment – female customers (see online version for colours)

I normally get harassed or annoyed by restaurant employees
or other customers at restaurants- Female Respondents

Strongly agree
3.8%

Strongly disagree
19.2%

agree
11.5%

Disagree
65.4%
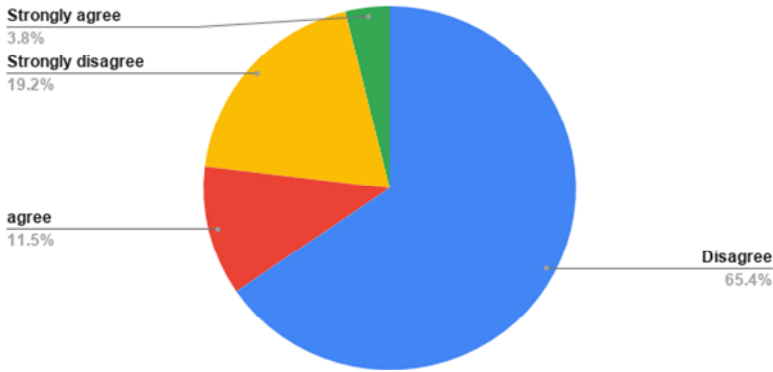
Figure 9   Respect for family privacy (see online version for colours)

I might face troubles when I go to a restaurant with my family.

Strongly disagree
11.3%

agree
33.8%

Strongly agree
16.9%

Uncertain
2.8%

Disagree
35.2%
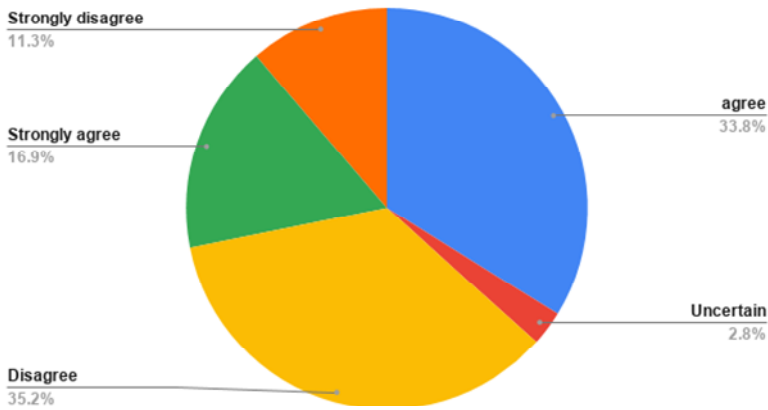
(a)

When dining with my family, I am careful selecting my
restaurant in order to maintain better privacy.
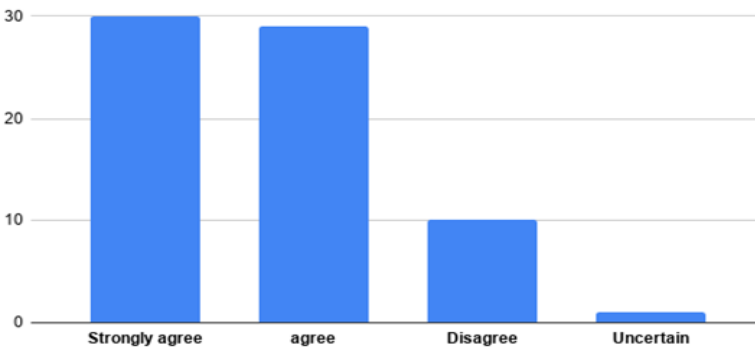
(b)

This factor, therefore, is 'statistically significant' to explain the change in customer satisfaction. The corresponding coefficient value, illustrated in Table 12, is 24% meaning that going to restaurants with family, as a factor, contributes to increased customer satisfaction for around 24%. P-value is relatively lower than alpha making a significant relation with X and Y variables.

p-value = 0.001095462

$\alpha = 0.05$

p-value = 0.001095462 ≤ $\alpha = 0.05$.

H0 Customers choose any restaurant when they dine with family members.

H1 Customers carefully select their restaurants when dinning with family members in order to maintain better privacy and avoid possible troubles.

Decision rule: We have enough evidence to reject the H0 and support H1.

4.8.6 Competition

Based on the data, 54% of respondents reported that they eat at the same restaurants just because there are no best alternatives. Similarly, 58% of them occasionally have dined at restaurants where they are not satisfied with their food and other services. The above-average of respondents indicated that they wish to experience their favourite restaurants, where they may be satisfied with their foods or services; nonetheless, they remain hopeless as there are no such dining services to meet or satisfy their satisfaction ambitions.

Above all, 66% believe restaurants do not strive for excellence in their service delivery to customers. Please see, Figures 10(a) and 10(b) that elaborate lack of competition furtherly.

All of what was stated above has a clear message: there is a lack of competition in the restaurant industry. Results of regression data analysis show that competition has a strong 'positive correlation', is 'statistically significant' to explain Y variable and determines the direction for customer satisfaction. The more and better competition among restaurants, the better satisfied the customers can be. Conversely, a decrease in competition level means less expression of satisfaction from the restaurant industry. Looking at Table 12, *p-value* for competition variable is 0.00388346 and is < than ∞ = 0.05.
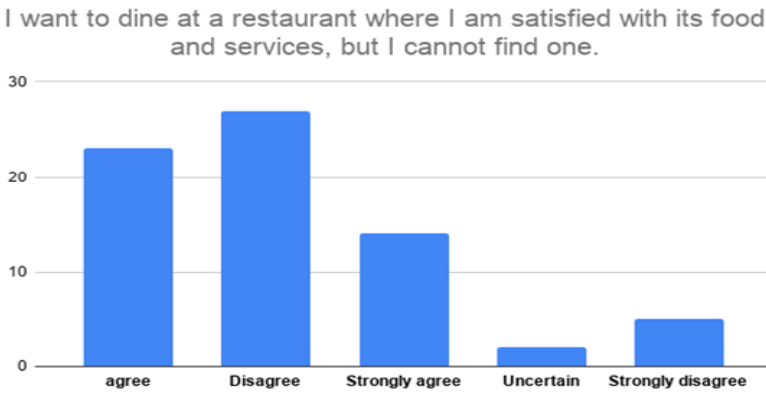
p-value = 0.00388346

$\alpha = 0.05$

p-value = 0.00388346 ≤ $\alpha = 0.05$.

H0 As a result of tough competition, restaurants in Kabul work hard to meet customers demand in a better way.

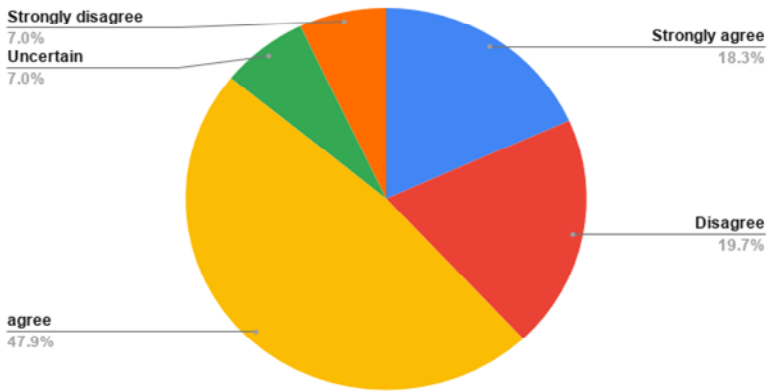H1 There is no competition among restaurants in Kabul, which affects negatively customer satisfaction levels.

Decision rule: We have enough evidence to reject H0 and support H1.

Figure 10 Competition (see online version for colours)

I want to dine at a restaurant where I am satisfied with its food and services, but I cannot find one.

(a)

Restaurants do not strive to improve the standards.

(b)

4.8.7 *Location*

First, customers associate the quality of food and services to restaurant locations. A restaurant with relatively better services and foods might be judged as poor by customers just because of its location. Due to limited, underdeveloped transportation systems and heavy traffic, 62% of customers usually dine at restaurants that are easily reachable for them. Figure 11 explains the relationship between the quality of foods and restaurant locations in Kabul city.

Restaurant location, in addition to the lack of competition and respect for family privacy when dinning with a female family member in restaurants, strongly has a positive correlation with the expression of satisfaction judgments. The location coefficient explains 18% of the change in customer satisfaction. The *p-value* is also lower than alpha that meets to decision rule of rejecting H0 developed by Williams et al. (2009).
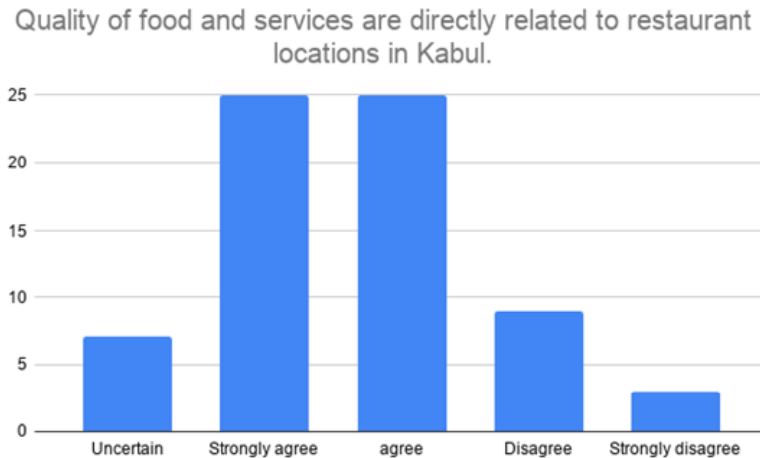
p-value = 0.019551133

$\alpha = 0.05$

p-value = $0.019551133 \le \alpha = 0.05$.

H0   Restaurant location is not a determinant factor when customers dine at a restaurant.

H1   Restaurant location is a significant factor when customers dine at a restaurant.

Decision rule: We have enough evidence to reject H0 and support H1.

Figure 11 Restaurant location (see online version for colours)

We have so far analysed the result of linear regression and explored the size of impacts, correlations and whether the seven independent factors have been 'statistically significant' to measure satisfaction levels. Below, we focus on how these findings answer the proposed research question. This research studied what factors discourage or encourage customer satisfaction in restaurants in Kabul city. Results related to competition, location and family factors contribute to the research question. However, the other IVs cannot provide a suitable answer to the research questions. Therefore, findings in those areas remain marginal.

4.9   Summary of findings

This section presented the results of data using linear regression analysis. To make sure the data fits the linear regression model, the normal probability line and residuals against IVs were plotted. The result indicated there is a linear relationship between satisfaction level and the identified seven IVs. To measure the 'internal consistency' of the survey questions, Cronbach's alpha was tested that showed 0.79, which is an acceptable level of consistency. To interpret the results and test hypotheses, mainly linear regression analysis has been used – although the histograms and pie charts generated as a result of data collection facilitated better explanations of the results.

   A general finding is that customers enjoy dining at restaurants without putting the SQ factors, mainly atmosphere, employee conduct, food quality into considerations. This means these factors are not that important for the current customers, and therefore, cannot

influence the decisions either to dine or not dine at restaurants at Kabul. In other words, either restaurant's atmosphere is good or bad, either wait-staffs behave professionally or unprofessionally, either food quality is good or bad and either food ingredients are standard or substandard, customers satisfaction remain almost unaffected.

Table 13   Summary of hypothesis testing results

No.	Hypotheses	P-value vs. alpha	Decision
1	H0: Customers approve of restaurants' atmosphere.	*p-value* = 0.104625 > α = 0.05	Accepted
	H1: Customers are not happy with the restaurants' atmosphere.		
2	H0: Customers are happy with the way wait-staffs behave with them.	*p-value* = 0.719731 > α = 0.05	Accepted
	H1: Customers are not happy with the way wait-staffs behave with them, which negatively affects satisfaction.		
3	H0: Customers are happy with food quality.	*p-value* = 0.768160 > α = 0.05	Accepted
	H1: Food quality is poor, which affects customer satisfaction.		
4	H0: Customers are not harassed in the restaurant environment.	*p-value* = 0.935249 > α = 0.05	Accepted
	H1: Customers have been harassed in the restaurant environment, which affects satisfaction.		
5	H0: Customers choose any restaurant when they dine with their family members.	*p-value* = 0.001095 < α = 0.05	Rejected
	H1: Customers carefully select their restaurants when dining with family members to maintain better privacy and avoid possible troubles.		
6	H0: As a result of tough competition, restaurants in Kabul work hard to meet customers' demands in a better way.	*p-value* = 0.003883 < α = 0.05	Rejected
	H1: There is no competition among restaurants in Kabul, which affects negatively customer satisfaction levels.		
7	H0: Restaurant location is not a determinant factor when customers dine at a restaurant.	*p-value* = 0.019551 < α = 0.05	Rejected
	H1: Restaurant location is a significant factor when customers dine at a restaurant.		

However, the interesting finding is that SQ factors, such as respect for family privacy, competition and locations are the main determinants of customer satisfaction. Respect for family privacy is more or less a cultural consideration that is well understood when customers dine outside in a traditional society, such as Afghanistan. Restaurant location is relevant to explain customer satisfaction because there is a great tendency to dine at 'your neighbourhood' due to lack of time and difficulty of travelling from one side to the other side of the city. Competition is found to be a true determinant of customer satisfaction. As a result of the lack of competition, customers have expressed lower

satisfaction levels because of lower food quality and unprofessional employee behaviour. For a detailed study of which hypothesis is accepted or rejected, please refer to Table 13.

In Table 13, all hypotheses are tested against *the p-value* of each variable with the alpha of $\alpha = 0.05$ and at 95% significance level. The decision rule, according to Williams et al. (2009), is related to the *p-value* that is if *p-value* $\leq \alpha = 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected; however, if *p-value* $\geq \alpha = 0.05$, the researcher is failed to reject the null hypothesis.

5 Discussion

This research studied whether

1 food quality

2 employee conduct

3 harassment of customers by restaurant employees or other customers

4 location

5 competition

6 atmosphere

7 respect for family privacy impact customers' satisfaction levels.

It was hypothesised that the majority of the target population feel unsatisfied with the quality of service in the restaurant industry because of reasons related to the above seven factors. It was put forward that lower competition, unpleasant physical environment, and the existence of unprofessional, annoying behaviour – *particularly for female customers* – affect customers at first hand and may impede restaurants' growth at later stages.

This study has unique findings that can well be explained in relation to cultural, political and socio-economical phases of Afghans lives and other contextual cues in Kabul. Unlike the study of Phi et al. (2018), Assouad and Overby (2016) and Bendaraviciene and Vilkyte (2019), currently, Kabul residents consider food quality, employee conduct, and restaurant ambient less significant in determining dining at a restaurant. In other words, we could not found any relationship between food quality, employee conduct, restaurant's atmosphere and customer satisfaction. While this may surprise many readers from various cultures and countries, it is important to note that these customers have other priorities, such as a high degree of respect for family honour, reputation and personal dignity where a family can dine as well as relax with their loved ones without the fear of being bothered by other customers or restaurant employees. To them, quality food, modern furniture, music and other factors that make the ambient of a restaurant, and whether wait-staff behave professionally are not priorities; what matters most is a great deal of respect for female gender.

That is why going to the restaurants with female family members has been a real category of concerns for almost all restaurant customers in Kabul. This concern is understandable and true because the majority of Afghans still highly appreciate their traditional values, dining customs, cultural boundaries, and sometimes social values

pretended to be associated with Islam as well as reasons related to social, economic and political instability in the country.

Men still dominate the society and the illiteracy rate is translated as 'terrible' by the media (TOLONews, 2018). Violation and violence against women persist and people's perception of important events is heavily affected by tribalism, racism, and consideration to regions and language. Added to that, it is still uncommon for an ordinary Afghan woman to go to a restaurant for lunch or dinner without her family or other relatives. In most cases, if a female wants to go out, it has to be in close coordination sometimes in sole consent of a male member of the family. A significant consideration is the exhibition of fears and/or anxieties, which are associated with the decision of going out with family members together for lunch or dinner. This means the majority of potential restaurant customers are reluctant to dine outside and remain unserved.

Considering the above, restaurants should be affected more than the customers. In fact, restaurants experience huge opportunity costs because of the lost opportunity of serving customers who wish to dine with their families. If we put the average purchasing power of restaurant customers, which is 365.00 AFN per meal, the industry has missed a valuable opportunity of generating income that could be obtained if this segment of the target population was served properly. When they go to a restaurant, they are more or less concerned to protect family honour and human dignity; good customer experience does not happen as a result. Overall, the findings related to the behaviour of men while going to a restaurant supports the proposed research question and is in line with the results of Tripathi and Dave (2016) and Dastane and Fazlin (2017), making customer satisfaction highly dependent on this factor.

Lack of competition in the restaurant industry has been a major contributing factor in satisfaction level. It is common for a restaurant manager to remain uninformed or take no actions against the strategic moves of other restaurants because the spirit to change for better food or service cannot be seen. Customers eat the same food – *and that not freshly cooked* – at the same restaurant not because they like the type of food, but because they cannot find a better alternative in the neighbourhood. Based on the findings of this study, 68% of customers showed doubt about food quality; 85% of them suspected the health standards, and around 50% of respondents were not sure if the types of meats they eat at restaurants are legally permissive – yet at the same time, they regularly dine at these restaurants at least once a month. The use of substandard ingredients questions the food quality, hygiene standards, price and overall satisfaction levels.

The only solution to this problem would be increased cut-throat competition. Competition in the restaurant industry in a city, which is as *insecure* as Kabul, for sure takes time and is heavily dependent on peace and conflicts on the first hand, foreign direct investments policies, and the attempts of the Afghan government to attract tourists, facilitate franchising and other trade options on the second hand.

The behaviour of customers – although not being satisfied with the food quality, they serve to be regular diners at these restaurants – challenge the stereotyped definitions of customer satisfaction. For example, Liao and Chuang (2004) state that satisfied customers make a repurchase of the product and have the intention to revisit; however, findings from this study show that in spite of being dissatisfied with restaurants, customers revisit restaurants and repurchase foods. One other important definition of customer satisfaction was the provision of SQ in which service providers make sure to treat customers well, serve the highest standard of excellence, cater food quality, and so forth (Assoud and Overby, 2016). It seems the way customers behave in the restaurant

industry sheds doubts on whether SQ can function to determine satisfaction levels. Restaurants rarely provide SQ, yet customers, without caring about SQ, enjoy their meal and time at restaurants.

However, the definition of Dastane and Fazlin (2017), and George and Jones (1991) seems consistent with the context of this study. They trust satisfaction can increase when restaurants target the 'needs and wants' of their customers. Customers believe Kabul restaurants rarely pay attention to what and how customers want to dine. They want quality food with improved health standards at a place where they are respected and their privacy, when accompanied by their families, shall be paid attention to. That is why the need for a place, where they feel secure and respected along with their families still needs to be fulfilled. This primary finding can be supported by Tripahti and Dave (2016), whose study shows that restaurant' intangible features, such as well treatment of customers cause customers satisfaction rather than tangible features, such as food or drinks. This means that food by itself has not been a determinant factor, but the way customers were served and threated impacted their satisfaction levels.

Now, the exhibition of such behaviour, as identified above, can be well explained in relation to consideration of restaurant competitions in the industry. Lack of competition can only explain why customers – though not happy with restaurants' services and foods – reuse or reselect the same restaurants. Why would customers have to eat the foods they do not like? A simple answer would be that they do not have any other choice. Competition, or lack of choices, is correlated with other factors, such as food quality, employee conduct, and treating customers with care and respect. Increased competitions enhanced service delivery, food quality, and employee behaviour result in overall improved performance in the industry.

Results about the existence of harassment at Kabul restaurant were surprising. One of the biggest concerns male customers show is whether they are bothered or harassed by restaurant employees, other customers or just in the way to visiting a restaurant when they are accompanied with a female partner, who could be either a co-worker, a friend, a classmate, or family relatives – although culturally, Afghans show a great deal of respect for women and elderly people.

Harassment in the context of Afghanistan can take various forms. One type of most common harassment is verbal, which is called in colloquial language *Porza Goftan*, a sexual complimentary remark or sometimes a comment to attract the attention of females. Many women when they are alone may feel happy to receive such comments; as it has been unavoidable, some just ignore and pretend that they are careless about it; and some may find it seriously upsetting, depending on family backgrounds, education, experience, and the number of exposures to such behaviours. What is significant is that the nature of such remarks is socially and culturally considered unpleasant, offensive and a *taboo.*

Expressing the experience being harassed seems also not an easy task. Being a sensitive issue, harassment is not highlighted and remains almost a secret in any situation and if revealed to a third party, it can damage reputations, family honour, and self-dignity and may impact the promised marriages or relationship. In order to protect their honour, we suspect that female customers have been reluctant to share their true experiences. The interesting point is that females feel protected when they are guarded, in other words accompanied, by a male family relative, which presumably could have led to the rejection of disturbance or annoyance in a restaurant atmosphere. However, other types of harassment can interfere, such as a bad, threatening or sexual look on such occasions.

From the perspective of this research, a regular visit of wait-staff from your dining table assuming various excuses is counted as harassment, that is unseen by the respondents.

A significant point to note is that the selected linear regression model measures the relationship of dependent and IVs only at a specific time. This means things will change and new factors will emerge to affect our DV as the time changes. Our selected model only studied whether customer satisfactions can be impacted by the seven identified IVs during a specific time in which the country is at the verge of political instability, civil unrests, and peace negotiations. Customer expectation and satisfaction level in Afghanistan will change as the country approaches a more resilient and trusted political stability.

There is no doubt that the nature of data generally affects results. The data in this study is subject to many limitations including the time in which they are collected, type of demographics, as well as cultural boundaries. The data is collected when the country experienced heightened security conflicts from a population with demographic particulars while bearing types of cultural limitations. If time changes, peace comes and the country develops, we hope we collect data that direct us to new insights. Being highly data-driven, this paper would have different results from the same populations considering the environment, level of socio-economic development, other factors such as security and freedom of speech. Since the data of this paper were collected in a time when the country experienced or experiences kinds of conflicts and political unrests, so it should only exhibit customers satisfaction during that time.

5.1   Recommendations

Several major areas of concern were pointed out in this study. To address these concerns and improve customer satisfaction and restaurant standards one of the important considerations is employee behaviour. Employees are the doorkeepers and represent the business itself. A bad employee is likely to cause dissatisfaction; however, trained employees will deliver better-customised services and observe better hygiene standards. Training employees on professional conduct, better hygiene, and ethical practices in restaurant environment can help to revive customers trust.

Another area that is in need of improvement is that restaurants need to maintain customers' database. A database not only improves communication of restaurants with their customers, but also gives managers a chance to better market their products or services in a more customised way. They can use customers' information to effectively deliver tailored services that meet the wants and needs of today's customers. The first step to serve customers better is to understand customers' tastes and needs, so a database that records what and how customers want can help better target their needs in a more customised way.

The other significant area for improvement is the strategies that can tackle harassment in the restaurant industry. Based on the findings of this paper, Afghan families proportionally have remained unserved or dissatisfied with the restaurants in Kabul. Therefore, it is recommended that restaurant mangers take serious steps to mitigate the chance of any troubles when customers visit a restaurant with their families and make sure to provide a catering environment, where family privacy is respected, and customers are treated with care and dignity. The restaurant industry, as a result, should experience a gradual increase in the number of guests who enjoy their times with their loved ones eating their favourite foods.

6 Conclusions

This paper studied variables that affect customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry in Kabul and explored whether the seven identified factors positively impact satisfaction levels. The so-called seven factors in this study refer to

1   restaurant atmosphere

2   employee conduct

3   food quality

4   harassment

5   dining with female family members

6   competitions

7   locations.

It was predicted that customers express dissatisfaction because of low-quality foods, the existence of harassment, particularly for female customers, unprofessional employee behaviours and lack of competition as one of the main determinants. Therefore, this research aimed to contribute to the below objectives:

•   to explore the determinants which discourage or encourage customer satisfaction in restaurants in Kabul

•   to investigate the reasons why customers choose to dine at various restaurants at Kabul in spite of being not sure of hygiene and health standards

•   to study factors, which impact the behaviour of customers when dining with their families.

Using mainly a quantitative approach, this paper has unique findings. The study mainly found that

a   restaurant locations

b   respect for family privacy

c   competition are the main determinants of customer satisfaction in Kabul restaurants.

Kabul residents have associated restaurant locations with better services. This means a restaurant in a strategic location of the city should have better services, foods, and health standards, and restaurants in other areas of the city should pay less attention to food, services, and employee behaviour or health standards. However, what may be a surprising finding for some readers is that without considerations to food quality, customers choose to dine at any easy-to-reach restaurants due to lack of time and heavy traffic. Regarding the consideration of family privacy, the interesting finding is that Kabul residents value family privacy more than quality food and carefully choose where they may dine if a companied by female family members. This is due to what they value most when they dine outside. The study suggests that poor customer satisfaction is as a result of lack of competition in the industry.

Unlike many other studies in which food quality, atmosphere and employee behaviour can determine satisfaction, this paper shows that these factors including harassment ultimately turned to be less associated with customer satisfaction, which may surprise readers outside of Afghanistan.

Considering the restaurant atmosphere, wait-staff behaviour, and food quality, the findings of this study contradict with researches that we outlined them in the literature review most of which come from the western culture and developed countries.

However, if we put the context of this study into consideration, these findings should not be a source of shock or excitement because people in Kabul prioritise other things one of which is family privacy when they visit a restaurant.

This means during the continued war and conflicts as well twenty years of NATO forces presence in Afghanistan, Afghans' values have remained unchanged. As political situations change and competition emerges, customer's wants and needs as well their expectations and determinants of satisfaction start to change. They may start looking at other factors, such as food quality, employee behaviour, hygiene, and ethical standards, and make them their priority. Overall, being the first study addressing customer satisfaction in restaurant industry in Kabul, it is expected this research sets the mindset and prepares Kabul residents to think not only about food quality, hygiene standards, restaurant atmosphere, employee conduct, but also require exclusive treatment and care from every service provider, which may be totally unrelated to foods and restaurants.

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