

# SATISFYING THE PALATE: A SERVPERF APPROACH TO FINE DINING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

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## Abstract

*This research does a thorough investigation of customer satisfaction in the restaurant business, using the SERVPERF model as its theoretical foundation. The SERVPERF model evaluates service quality via four dimensions—tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—and functions as an essential tool for finding and quantifying gaps between client expectations and perceptions. The research entails conducting an extensive poll of patrons from premier fine dining establishments to assess their experiences and satisfaction levels. The study seeks to clarify key elements affecting customer satisfaction and identify opportunities for improvement using statistical data analysis. The data reveal that, although Fine-Dining establishments often excel in tangibles and confidence, there are significant shortcomings in responsiveness that need correction. This research contributes to the existing literature on service quality in the fine dining sector and provides actionable insights for fine dining management to promote customer satisfaction and loyalty. In conclusion, the study underscores the need of a balanced approach to service quality, arguing that consistent improvements across all SERVPERF dimensions are essential for achieving service excellence and maintaining competitive advantage in the dynamic Fine-Dining service industry.*

**Keywords:** Fine - Dining Services, SERVPERF model, Customer Satisfaction, Service Reliability, Empathy Response, Quality Service Assurance

## INTRODUCTION

Service quality has emerged as a contemporary and dynamic element in marketing strategy. The flexibility of service sectors to adapt to changing needs is crucial for their market sustainability (Alfred, 2017). To maintain continuous success, service companies invest substantially in effectively responding to external developments. Implementing rigorous standards of excellence is crucial due to the many benefits, both monetary and non-monetary, that result from a commitment to quality (Bhatia et al., 2015). The degree of pleasure with the service may indicate the extent to which present Fine Dinings meet customer needs and how well the service provider corresponds with the consumer's ideal service provider perspective (Damodaran, 2017). Numerous factors affecting client pleasure include cost, product quality, service quality, and the overall reliability of the organisation (Bhat, 2005). The emergence of a new class of technologically adept institutions has heightened competitive advantages in the service industry (Ayyappan & SakthiVadivel, 2013). In a sophisticated marketplace, non-price factors such as exceptional customer service have more importance. To guarantee sustained prosperity and advancement, emerging service-providing institutions must implement a customer-centric approach (Kamble et al., 2011).

Essentially, client satisfaction correlates with trust—a satisfied customer views their finances as secure and well managed. This sense of security cultivates loyalty, converting sporadic clients into steadfast advocates. Moreover, content patrons are more likely to recommend Fine-Dining establishments to others, so augmenting word-of-mouth marketing, which remains one of the most effective forms of promotion. client satisfaction in fine dining beyond basic service delivery; it entails fostering relationships and tailoring experiences to meet client demands, so ensuring the bank remains a dependable partner in their financial journey. The major aim of this research was to determine the impact of service quality in fine dining establishments on customer satisfaction and to find the most effective characteristic that confers a competitive advantage to these restaurants over their rivals.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer happiness is a vital determinant that affects the long-term financial stability and sustainability of a company in a more competitive market. Customer satisfaction is affected by multiple facets of service excellence, including tangibility (physical infrastructure, furnishings, and staff conduct), reliability (the capacity

to consistently deliver promised support), responsiveness (the readiness to assist customers and offer timely help), assurance (the proficiency of personnel and their ability to foster trust), and empathy (the consideration and individualised attention the organisation provides to its customers) (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Academic definitions of service quality conform to two conflicting paradigms: the 'Disconfirmation paradigm' and the 'Performance-based paradigm.' SERVQUAL and Weighted SERVQUAL are the primary models developed from this framework (Parasuraman et al., 1985). The performance-based concept of service quality refutes the disconfirmation paradigm; instead, SERVPERF was proposed, depending only on performance metrics (Taylor & Cronin Jr, 1994). The authors asserted that it represented a more dependable and valid method for assessing service quality. They evaluated four different measuring models: SERVPERF, SERVQUAL, Weighted SERVPERF, and Weighted SERVQUAL. Their research determined that the SERVPERF (Performance alone) model was more dependable (Cronin Jr & Taylor, 1992) and efficacious than the other three models, as it effectively encapsulates the essence of service quality (Brady et al., 2002).

The SERVPERF model, an advancement of SERVQUAL, integrates the dimension of preferences, acknowledging that customer satisfaction is affected by both the objective quality of services and their alignment with individual preferences (Unuvar & Kaya, 2016). In the fine dining industry, where personalised services are paramount, understanding and catering to client preferences is key (Fragoso & Espinoza, 2017). Research indicates the need of including customer preferences into service quality assessment, resulting in the development of the SERVPERF model (Dabholkar et al., 1996).

In the era of service sector digitalisation, seamless and intuitive user experiences are important. Customers want not just expedient service but also tailored interactions, swift problem resolution, and a cutting-edge digital interface that enhances their service experience. When fine dining services exceed these expectations, customer happiness and retention improve (Vy & Tam, 2021). Conversely, poor service, unresponsive support, or rigid regulations may quickly erode trust, prompting customers to seek alternatives. Therefore, Fine – Dinings must continuously evolve and invest resources to understand customer needs via feedback mechanisms and data analysis (Al-Slehat, 2021).

### 1.1 Assurance:

In the fine dining business, excellent service assurance is the essential component that fosters trust, loyalty, and customer satisfaction (Ayinaddis et al., 2023). It acts as an implicit guarantee that every interaction, whether in-person or digital, will meet or exceed expectations. When fine dining establishments provide consistently exceptional service, they not only resolve difficulties but also anticipate needs, ensure seamless experiences, and cultivate confidence (Supriyanto et al., 2021). An well executed quality assurance strategy enhances the customer experience, converting routine transactions into moments of delight. Every encounter, from instantaneous digital purchases to swift dispute resolution, is an opportunity to strengthen credibility. This fosters a deep reservoir of trust, transforming satisfied customers into brand advocates (Aripin, 2023). The impact is significantly enhanced when quality assurance identifies and mitigates pain points (Phi & Huong, 2023). It involves not just preventing errors but also fostering a smooth experience that seems effortless for the customer. In a competitive market, this emphasis on quality acts as a crucial differentiator, giving Fine-Dining a distinctive edge (Aripin et al., 2023). The invisible hand governs every interaction, ensuring consumers leave feeling valued, secure, and motivated to return (Mintah et al., 2024). Therefore, based on the aforementioned findings, the present study put forth the following hypothesis:

*H1: Assurance of Quality Service positively impacts Customer Satisfaction*

### 1.2 Tangibility:

The tangibility of service excellence in the fine dining business signifies the convergence of intangible services and physical components, aligning customer expectations with actual experiences. The design of a fine dining arrangement, the aesthetics of its mobile application, and the comfort of its furnishings are indicative of this. These apparently little variations act as substantial indications that influence customer impressions of the whole service (Bungatang & Reynel, 2021). Tangible components underscore a well designed, modern corporate environment including soft illumination, sleek counters, properly dressed staff, and comfortable seating. This promptly cultivates a sense of trust and ease before any interaction takes place. An intuitive program with a smooth interface and clear imagery evokes a sense of efficiency and simplicity (Usman, 2015). Customers, both consciously and subconsciously, link these physical characteristics to the institution's reliability and service quality (Ali et al., 2021). Physical signs such as printed pamphlets, branded merchandise, and the quality of gift cards substantially impact the customer experience. When implemented well, these qualities foster positive feelings, reinforcing the belief that the bank is methodical, professional, and client-centric (Nguyen et al., 2020). The physical aspect of service quality forms the first layer of impression creation, converting abstract trust into a concrete experience for clients, therefore enhancing satisfaction and loyalty (Yousafzai et al., 2003). In light of the aforementioned data, the present research posits the following hypothesis:

*H2: Tangibility aspect of Quality Service positively impacts Customer Satisfaction*

### 1.3 Empathy:

Empathy involves overseeing the relationships between service providers and clients to guarantee individualised attention is delivered. The features of this dimension include concentrated client attention, staff demonstrating remarkable concern for clients, a robust focus on consumer interests, employee understanding of customer wants, and flexible operation hours (Setiono & Hidayat, 2022). Fine dining that exemplifies empathy, offering flexible options or reassuring words, cultivates a deeper connection (Ngo et al., 2020). This emotional connection cultivates trust and loyalty, since the customer feels valued (Rajai & Modi, 2022). Empathy extends beyond human interactions; it is seen in the way Fine Dining establishments organise their services—offering tailored products, optimising processes, or guaranteeing clarity in communication. These thoughtful initiatives indicate that Fine – Dinings really understands and prioritises customer welfare (Abdullah & Kasmi, 2021). Ultimately, empathy in service quality transforms customer satisfaction into loyalty. Clients who see their worries as recognised and esteemed exhibit loyalty, generate referrals, and view Fine – Dinings as a partner in their trip pursuits rather than just a service provider (Shrestha, 2021).

*H3: Empathy aspect of Quality Service positively impacts Customer Satisfaction*

### 1.4 Responsiveness:

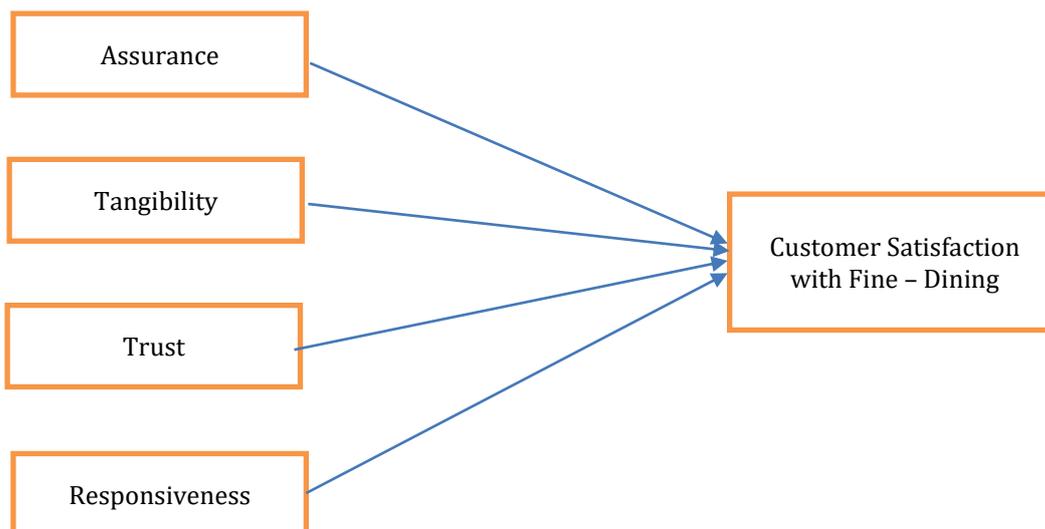
Responsiveness is a characteristic of service that signifies the readiness of service providers to assist consumers swiftly and provide services. This dimension include alerting customers about the accuracy of service delivery timings, assuring timely service to clients, exhibiting a readiness to assist, and being equipped to address client demands (Sudirjo et al., 2024). The responsiveness of Fine Dining in immediately answering questions, resolving issues, and reacting to concerns cultivates an atmosphere of care and reliability. In a fast-paced world, where time is of the essence, customers demand immediate responses that demonstrate the prioritisation of their needs (Aripin & Paramarta, 2024). A responsive fine dining establishment swiftly intervenes via a call, message, or app notification, mitigating stress before discontent occurs. This speed not only resolves the problem but also reinforces Fine Dining's commitment to customer satisfaction. Fine dining prioritises the customer's time and tranquilly (Awwad et al., 2024). Alongside problem-solving, responsiveness involves proactively notifying customers on transaction changes, service alterations, or new offerings. This kind of engagement cultivates trust and diminishes uncertainty, leading customers to feel valued and at ease (Ananda et al., 2023). Responsiveness in the fine dining sector includes not just promptness but also forethought and meticulous care. When fine dining establishments respond promptly, consumers perceive a feeling of attentiveness and confidence, so augmenting their satisfaction and loyalty in a more competitive market (Mir et al., 2023). In light of the aforementioned data, the present research posits the following hypothesis:

*H4: Responsiveness aspect of Quality Service positively impacts Customer Satisfaction*

### 1.5 Customer Satisfaction:

Customer satisfaction in service is fundamental to trust and lasting relationships. It beyond the mere provision of personalised services; it entails fostering an environment where customers feel valued, recognised, and confident in their fine dining choices. In a market where products sometimes seem alike, consumer satisfaction becomes the essential differentiator (Gonu et al., 2023). A satisfied consumer is not only loyal; they become a strong advocate for Fine Dining. When Fine Dinings exceed expectations via personalised service, seamless digital interactions, or proactive communication, consumers are more likely to recommend their favoured Fine Dinings to family and friends. This marketing approach is essential, transforming satisfied customers into informal brand supporters (Almansour & Elkrgli, 2023). Content customers have a diminished likelihood of switching to competitors (Senanu & Narteh, 2023) and are more predisposed to acquire more products and services, hence augmenting revenue (Tegambwage & Kasoga, 2024). Customer satisfaction in fine dining services involves cultivating a relationship of trust (Abdul Sathar et al., 2023). It converts transactional exchanges into meaningful interactions, in which the customer experiences comprehension and support (Sutriani et al., 2024). By prioritising customer satisfaction, Fine – Dinings not only attract customers but also foster loyalty, advocacy, and sustainable growth in a highly competitive industry (Phi & Huong, 2023).

Based on above literature review the following model of study was developed



**Figure 1. Conceptual model of Study**

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study largely focusses on an initial descriptive analysis including many groups. A descriptive cross-sectional research design was used to collect preliminary data using a survey approach, succeeded by a forward stepwise analysis. Customers must have dined at least once in any of the Fine Dinings. A systematic survey was developed using the SERVQUAL methodology. The data was systematically gathered by a questionnaire employing the "Likert Scale." The survey has 20 questions related to Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction, with a five-point Likert scale. The study is descriptive due to the established character of the banking sector in India and the significant preceding research undertaken in this field. Thus, the poll only included those who have used the Fine-Dining services. The samples were collected using the "Snowball Sampling Method," in which responses were obtained from friends and family, followed by their acquaintances and relatives. The data was collected from May to June 2024 with a standardised questionnaire. A total of 220 respondents submitted their responses, of which 14 were eliminated for various reasons and removed from the study. The definitive data set of 206 responses was used for the final study.

## ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

### 1.6 Demographic Analysis:

Table No. 1 below provides a demographic study of respondents classified by gender, age, occupation, and yearly income. Of the 203 responses, 66% are male and 34% are female, demonstrating a significant male majority. The predominant age group among responders is 26 to 35 years, comprising 38%, followed by 31% aged 36 to 45, 27% under 25, and just 4% in the 46 to 60 age range. This suggests that the poll mostly focusses on young people. Forty-five percent of respondents are engaged in service-related occupations, establishing it as the largest category. Businessmen comprise 27% of the sample, while students and professionals account for 19% and 9%, respectively, reflecting a varied occupational distribution with a notable emphasis on the service and commercial sectors. The income distribution indicates that 48% of respondents earn between ₹2.5 lakh and ₹5 lakh yearly, while 26% earn between ₹5 lakh and ₹10 lakh. Only 6% of respondents make more than ₹10 lakh, while around 20% earn less than ₹2.5 lakh. The data indicates a majority of middle-income respondents, with a small proportion of high-income individuals.

**Table no. 1 – Demographic Analysis**

Particular		Frequency	Per cent
Gender	Male	134	66%
	Female	69	34%
Age	< 25	55	27%
	26-35	78	38%
	36-45	62	31%
	46-60	8	4%
Occupation	Service	92	45%
	Student	38	19%

Annual income	Businessman	54	27%
	Professional	19	9%
	< 2.5 lakh	40	20%
	2.5 – 5 lakh	97	48%
	5 – 10 lakh	53	26%
	>10 lakh	13	6%
<b>Total</b>		<b>203</b>	<b>100</b>

### 1.7 Reliability Analysis:

Table 2 presents the results derived from the descriptive statistical analysis of the mean and standard deviation of service quality attributes and overall customer satisfaction. The statistics were derived from the data shown in Table 1. The service quality criteria most valued by Fine – Dining industry clients, in descending order, are empathy (M=4.57), assurance (M=4.01), tangibles (M=3.95), and responsiveness (M=3.01). Nonetheless, the predominant number of consumers express satisfaction with the service quality provided by Fine – Dinings.

**Table 2 – Reliability Analysis**

Particulars	Mean	S. D.	Reliability- alpha
<b>Assurance</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>0.84</b>	<b>0.758</b>
<b>Tangibility</b>	<b>3.95</b>	<b>0.72</b>	<b>0.749</b>
<b>Empathy</b>	<b>4.57</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>0.804</b>
<b>Responsiveness</b>	<b>3.01</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>0.710</b>
Satisfaction level of consumer	4.50	0.79	0.853

Cronbach's coefficient was used to assess the level of internal consistency across several service quality metrics and overall customer satisfaction (Ashraf & Venugopalan, 2018). The anticipated values were 0.804 for the empathy dimension, 0.758 for the assurance dimension, 0.749 for the tangibility dimension, 0.710 for the responsiveness dimension, and 0.853 for total customer satisfaction. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or above is often deemed suitable for exploratory research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). All the reliability values exceed 0.70. The metrics used in this research are precise and dependable.

### 1.8 Correlation between exogenous and endogenous variables

Table 3 displays the results of the inquiry into the correlation coefficient used to establish the relationship between consumer satisfaction and aspects of service quality. The correlation study revealed a moderately positive relationship between service quality measurements and total customer satisfaction.

**Table - 3: Correlation between exogenous and endogenous variables**

	Assurance	Tangibility	Empathy	Responsiveness	Satisfaction level
Assurance	<b>1*</b>				
Tangibility	0.214**	<b>1*</b>			
Empathy	0.358**	0.365**	<b>1*</b>		
Responsiveness	0.201**	0.105**	0.514**	<b>1*</b>	
Satisfaction level	0.367**	0.584**	0.412**	0.251**	<b>1*</b>

The research identified a robust and favourable correlation between four attributes of service quality and customer satisfaction. The correlation between responsiveness and contentment was minimal ( $r = 0.251$ ;  $p < 0.02$ ), whereas the linkage between tangibility and pleasure was the strongest ( $r = 0.584$ ;  $p < 0.00$ ). Empathy and satisfaction demonstrated the second most robust correlation ( $r = 0.412$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), followed by assurance and tangibility. The findings indicate that timeliness is the paramount element of service quality, whereas tangibility, exhibiting the greatest correlation coefficient, is the most influential service quality practice affecting customer happiness. The study's null hypotheses are therefore validated.

### 1.9 Coefficient Value:

Table 4 shows the results of a multiple regression experiment designed to examine how various service quality criteria impact overall customer satisfaction. The results show that the regression model is adequate to some degree, with an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 0.63 and a multiple determination coefficient (R<sup>2</sup>) of 0.66. Both of these values are quite close to one. This shows that the independent factors account for about 63.000% of the variation in the value of the dependent variable, Overall Customer Satisfaction (Service Quality Dimensions).

**Table - 4 Coefficient value**

Factors	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Constant	-0.120	4.521	0.51

Assurance	0.254	3.547	0.001
Tangibility	0.368	2.514	0.002
Empathy	0.514	3.698	0.000
Responsiveness	0.231	3.541	0.00
R square	0.747		
Adjusted R	0.740		
F	30.14		
N	209		

The F-statistic for the suggested model is 30.14, which is significant at the 1% level ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating its appropriateness. This indicates a statistically significant association between service quality measures and total client satisfaction. The findings indicate that overall customer satisfaction with Fine – Dining services is positively and significantly affected by the tangible elements, responsiveness, dependability, and assurance aspects of service quality. This indicates a statistically significant correlation between overall customer satisfaction and service quality criteria.

## FINDING & CONCLUSION

### 1.10 Theoretical Contribution:

In fine dining, tangibility refers to the physical attributes of the facilities, technology, and service behaviour, all of which influence first impressions. An appealing branch or easy application may improve client satisfaction. The SERVPERF technique assesses four fundamental attributes of service quality: tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. By identifying weaknesses in these areas, Fine – Dinings may determine where customer satisfaction may be lacking. In a highly competitive market, delighted customers are more likely to demonstrate loyalty (Shrestha, 2021) and recommend Fine Dinings to others. Reliability, the foundation of trust, guarantees that Fine Dinings regularly meet obligations, including timely transactions and accurate tailored assistance, therefore bolstering client confidence. Responsiveness assesses the speed at which Fine-Dining addresses queries, manages services, or resolves issues—expeditiousness is crucial in an age of immediate service expectations (Sutriani et al., 2024). Furthermore, assurance relates to the competence and courtesy of Fine-Dining staff, fostering customer confidence that their individual needs are effectively addressed. Thus, empathy, often disregarded, relates to providing individualised services. Understanding unique customer requirements, providing customised solutions, and demonstrating genuine concern converts standard transactions into mutually beneficial relationships (Ngo et al., 2020). The SERVPERF idea is crucial in the service industry for its methodical approach to understanding and improving service quality. By focussing on both tangible and intangible aspects of service delivery, Fine-Dinings can reduce service gaps, enhance customer satisfaction, and develop lasting relationships with clients, thereby fostering increased trust, loyalty, and market share in the competitive fine dining sector.

### 1.11 Managerial Implications:

In the fine dining industry, service quality is paramount, directly affecting customer satisfaction, loyalty, and company success. The SERVPERF model, emphasising four critical dimensions—tangibility, dependability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—offers a robust framework for evaluating service quality in this sector. Integrating SERVPERF features into standard fine dining service operations not only fulfils the needs of present customers but also confers a competitive advantage by fostering long-term loyalty. As digital innovations transform the service sector, the integration of technological efficiency and personalised service ensures that Fine Dinings not only fulfil but surpass their clients' expectations. In this business, customer pleasure is a fundamental principle rather than an objective. Utilising the SERVQUAL approach, Fine - Dinings may systematically discern service deficiencies, prioritise improvements, and customise plans to align with client expectations. This not only improves happiness and loyalty but also fosters long-term success and stability in the competitive hotel sector. Future Scope of study can include variables like Food Quality and Location to enhance service qualities

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The accuracy of the underlying data supports the present inquiry. The sample units were chosen from a diverse population. We received just 206 replies due to time constraints, limiting the capacity to get conclusive conclusions. The findings of the research conducted in Gujarat cannot be extrapolated to other locations. The research demonstrates bias since it depends on the viewpoints of respondents gathered via a questionnaire. In contrast, the analysis and interpretation may be comprehensive, since the questionnaire could have overlooked essential components. The respondent's dependability is a restriction of the study, since the quality component is very subjective and interpretive, possibly affecting the outcomes.

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