

The Quality of the Dining Experience – A Literature Overview

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The importance of quality has been recognized in most service industries, as it generates revenue and has a significant impact on customer behaviour. Measurement of the quality of restaurant service has attracted increasing attention from hospitality researchers since the implementation of the DINESERV model in the mid-1990s. As a fairly new topic, it requires frequent and critical monitoring, which would shed light on current research and make needed adjustments in terms of methodological research processes and the focus of inquiry. However, to date, there have been few systematic reviews of this body of work. As such, this study aims to fill this void by conducting a qualitative analysis of research on restaurant quality since the mid-1990s. Particular attention has been devoted to a marketing perspective and different marketing attributes (food, people and price), as there is no consensus on which marketing attribute is the most important in assessing the quality of the dining experience. Food quality often seems to be accepted as the fundamental component in determining the quality of dining experience, but several studies have identified service quality (people) to be the most important factor in the restaurant industry. A qualitative study with a grounded theory approach has been used via analysis of the relevant scientific literature. Data of guests' perceptual responses has been collected from restaurant quality-related articles retrieved from major academic databases. Based on an extensive literature review, the findings reveal that restaurant quality research remains at the stage of developing industry tailored-research models. The research results also reveal that the results of numerous studies are mutually inconsistent and contradictory. Therefore, it is not possible to simplify and highlight just one quality attribute as the most important. Scholars should, therefore, adapt their research techniques to different environments and types of catering facilities. This research has raised many questions in need of further investigation. Future research should include a broader range of quality dimensions. It is suggested that the association of different marketing attributes be empirically investigated in future studies.

Keywords: restaurant industry, marketing attributes, dining experience, service quality.

Introduction

In the highly competitive restaurant industry, satisfying guests should be the critical objective of all businesses that wish to build a base of repeat customers and prosper. Ensuring proper quality in restau-

rants is limited by a number of industry-specific limitations. These limitations include volatile demand, small businesses, intense competition, a wide range of food and beverage products offered, labour-intensive production, the importance of employees' at-

titude towards guests, and many other factors that significantly affect the level of overall service quality. A current crucial challenge of all restaurateurs is knowing how to provide quality food and services that are not only compelling to guests, but also superior to business competitors. In order to gain an edge in this highly competitive environment, marketing literature has continually emphasized the importance of marketing orientation and treated it as a strategic tool. The growing recognition of customer-based marketing approaches (business-to-consumer) has suggested that implementing quality as a marketing tool is the essential element in fostering customer relationships and sustainable market share (Wang, Law, Hung & Guillet, 2014). Understanding customers' needs is the first step in delivering quality services. The best way to manage customers' expectations is to investigate what their needs and wants are, strategize how to meet them, and implement these strategies. In the relevant literature, there are several theoretical models that explore customers' expectations and assess service quality. Since the introduction of the generic SERVQUAL instrument in 1988 by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, the issue of restaurant service quality has received considerable critical attention. Several attempts have been made (Kim, Ng & Kim, 2009; Mattila, 2001; Sulek & Hensley, 2004; Vanniarajan, 2009) to develop specific quality measurement techniques fitted to the needs of the restaurant industry (DINESERV, SERVPERF, CIERM, TANGSERV). All of these techniques focus on specific aspects of service delivery (techniques are thoroughly presented in Table 1).

As food is the fundamental component of the dining experience, it indisputably has a significant impact on guests' satisfaction (Vanniarajan, 2009). Despite the importance of food quality, some other scholars preferred to focus on the service encounter aspect of service quality (Ayeh & Chen, 2013; Edvardsson, 2005; Han, Back & Barrett, 2010). Together, all these studies outlined the importance of food and people, often overlooking the significance of price as the core financial indicator of quality value. Further, examination reveals that most studies (Andaleb & Conway, 2006; Voon, 2012; Mosavi & Ghaedi, 2012) empirically investigated the role (importance) of different quality factors. Along the same line, several researchers examined the mediating role of quality

and satisfaction in explaining post-purchase behaviour and loyalty ("Sunny" Hu, Huang & Chen, 2010; Bell, Auh & Smalley, 2005; Bobâlcă, Gătej (Bradu) & Ciobanu, 2012). Nevertheless, no study has analysed restaurant quality from the marketing perspective (7P). Therefore, the significance of individual marketing attributes remains undetermined from the perspectives of quality. As such, it would be of academic significance to summarize and compare the results of different studies, as it can clarify particular issues involved.

To fill this gap, this study has focused on the selected three marketing attributes that form the fundamental part of what a restaurant offers: food, people and price. We assume that these marketing attributes have the most significant impact on guests' satisfaction, as they are essential elements of the dining experience. We focused our research on only three crucial marketing attributes (out of seven – 7P), as we assume that other marketing attributes, such as physical evidences, promotion, placement and processes can be easily avoided or replaced (food can be home delivered, promotional activities can be avoided, the restaurant can be based on a self-service concept, etc.). More specifically, the theoretical construct of this research is mainly related to our central research question: Which marketing attribute – food, people or price – is the most important in assessing the quality of dining experience?

Answering this question calls for a review inquiry into recent research of restaurant quality from the customers' perspective. This qualitative study is, therefore, exploratory and interpretative in nature. A holistic approach is utilized, integrating relevant scientific literature with in-depth analysis of the latest studies in the field of the restaurant quality management. Unfortunately, due to differences in methodology and terminology used in different studies, we had to be selective and focus our research only on those studies that undoubtedly include the selected marketing attributes. The overall structure of the study takes the form of five chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 begins by laying out the theoretical dimensions of the research; Chapter 3 is concerned with methodology, while Chapter 4 presents research analysis and findings of the study. Finally, the conclusion gives a brief summary and critique of the findings.

Literature Review

Service Quality

A large and growing body of literature has investigated the importance of service quality since the 1980s. The definition of service quality requires a specific approach to quality measurement, as it is not based on general objectivity and measurability. The approach from the standpoint of the customer is based on a highly subjective perspective. While a variety of definitions of the term “service quality” have been suggested (Grönroos, 1984, 1990; Langer, 1997; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988; Reeves & Bednar, 1995), this paper is based on the definition suggested by Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml (1985), who defined service quality as the ability of service to fulfil and exceed guests’ expectations. The key concept of satisfaction is based on Oliver’s (1980) disconfirmation theory. If the perceived performance exceeds expectations (a positive confirmation), the guest is satisfied. In contrast, if perceived performance falls short of his or her expectations, that the guest is dissatisfied. The subjective assessment toward confirmation or disconfirmation causes satisfaction-related emotions. From this perspective, only the consumer can judge the quality of services. Perceived quality captures the subjective responses to service from a “user” perspective. Uran (2003) analysed several studies on service quality in tourism and found that researchers were unanimous in defining service quality. The common characteristic of all definitions is the consumer-based concept, which makes service quality a highly subjective and relative phenomenon that differs based on who is judging the service.

Since there is no standardized definition of service quality, it is, therefore, relatively complicated to define specific quality attributes. Quality attributes (also referred to as “quality factors”) are various elements that measure restaurant service quality in relation to the service provider and the customer during service delivery. According to Uran (2008), quality attributes represent basic parameters (a kind of framework) for the description and analysis of the overall service experience. Different quality attributes with similar characteristics are then logically merged into different so-called quality dimensions. As quality attributes and quality dimensions vary according to different authors and methodologies, they cannot be generalized, although several theoretic-

cal attempts have been made to standardize service quality dimensions (Brogowicz, Delene & Lyth, 1990; Stevens, Knutson & Patton, 1995; Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1988). In this study, specific marketing attributes (price, product (food) and people (staff)) are used as key quality dimensions.

Theoretical Models of Service Quality

A large and growing body of scientific literature has investigated the theoretical concept of service quality. Several attempts have been made to capture the essential characteristics of service quality in theoretical models. These models are especially significant because they provide a theoretical basis to various techniques (instruments) for measuring service quality. Brogowicz et al. (1990) reported that the majority of these models are based on the findings of the so-called North American and Scandinavian schools of service quality management. The American School (Bitner, Faranda, Hubbert & Zeithaml, 1997; Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 1993; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1994) is mainly focused on identifying the criteria that consumers use in evaluating the quality of services. Researchers have contributed a five-step model of service quality and an instrument for measuring service quality, the SERVQUAL instrument, in which they defined five dimensions of service quality. These dimensions (also known as RATER dimensions) are Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy, and Responsiveness. Uran (2004) stated that the American approach has experienced the greatest support and use among researchers. Scandinavian researchers (Grönroos, 1990; Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 1991) determined two major aspects of service quality: the technical quality (the tangible aspect of the quality) and the functional quality (the customer’s subjective experience with the service encounter).

Despite the given definition of both qualities, other authors (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Kang & James, 2004; Kang 2006) have questioned the usefulness of such approach, because, in practice, there is no consensus about the technical and functional aspect of quality. Drawing on an extensive range of sources, the scholars set out different ways in which they had attempted to create valid and complete service quality models. Brogowicz et al. (1990) combined both the American and the Scandinavian models, and de-

veloped a new synthesized model of service quality. Candido & Morris (2000) had defined a new model with 14 steps, but an in-depth analysis has revealed that the model is mainly based on the five-step model. Overall, none of these modified models has received significant scientific validation.

Conversely, several authors highlighted the need to break the link between the traditional American and Scandinavian schools, and proposed alternative quality models. In 2007, Carr developed a model called FAIRSERV, which is based on the concept of a fair service relationship between the customer and the service provider. Lin Chan & Tsai (2009) upgraded the traditional IPA (Importance Performance Analysis) model and developed a new model called IPGA. The IPGA model is designed to optimize the use of the production resources with the aim of improving the quality of services offered. Later, Cheng Chen, Hsu and Hu (2012) upgraded the IPGA model, using complex analytic methods in an experimental two-stage hybrid model. The model was used in only one study and has not yet been the subject of proper scientific evaluation. Nevertheless, all these studies highlight the need for future development of service quality management.

Tools for Measuring Service Quality

This paper focuses on the most important standardized measurement tools. All of these tools (techniques) collect quality information based on pre-determined standards, although the customers' feedback can also be obtained by a number of qualitative techniques, including observations, interviews, playing the role of hidden guest, etc. The use of such qualitative approaches can significantly help to improve the quality of overall quality analysis (Northcote & Machbech, 2005). Despite the unquestionable significance of qualitative techniques, quantitative techniques are the main focus of this study. These techniques measure the quality level of services in different ways. Some techniques (often structured as models) measure service quality based on the gaps that occur as a result of differences between guests' expectations and perceptions (SERVQUAL, DINESERV); others are one-dimensional and focus solely on service performance (SERVPERF, Dineserv.per); some measure the quality and importance of different service attributes (SERVIMPERF);

others focus on employees' responses to critical situations (CIT – Critical Incident Technique); while still others address external evaluators (AAA Diamond, Michelin Stars).

The predominant quantitative measurement technique is the SERVQUAL instrument (Markovic & Raspor, 2009). Quality is measured based on the perception gap, as the difference between guests' expectations and perceptions. The main advantages of the SERVQUAL instrument are its clear indications of the level of service quality; the results represent a solid basis for the implementation of operational standards, and the concept concentrates on overall quality improvement (Heung et al., 2000; Ladhari, 2008; Rood & Dziadkowiec, 2011). However, many critics have questioned the usefulness of such a generalized approach (Buttle, 1996; Carman, 1990; Cronin & Taylor, 1994; Llosa, Chandon & Orsingher, 1998; Tribe & Snaith, 1998). Their concerns were primarily related to the adequacy and consistency of its dimensions, its impracticability, its generalizability and the quality of its psychometric properties. According to Aigbedo and Parameswaran (2004), all five dimensions of the SERVQUAL instrument have not yet been fully validated. Therefore, the authors propose additional metrics that would better explain the gap between expectations and perceptions. Other authors (Akan, 1995; Jensen & Hansen, 2007; Juwaheer, 2004) have highlighted the necessity of a tailored approach for the measurement of service quality. Despite all this criticism, SERVQUAL remains one of the most commonly used techniques for service quality measurement (Markovic, Raspor & Šegarić, 2012).

In the view of all that has been mentioned so far, many scholars have tried to adapt the original SERVQUAL instrument to specific characteristics of different hospitality businesses (Choi & Chu, 1999; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Ekinci & Riley, 1999; Knutson et al., 1995; Stevens et al., 1995; Tribe & Snaith, 1998; Yüksel & Rimmington, 1998) and to develop new "business-tailored" quality measurement models (Crick & Spencer, 2011; Ekinci & Riley, 1999; Eraqi, 2006; Getty & Thompson, 1994; Mills & Thomas, 2008; Raajpoot, 2002; Ryu, 2005; Qu & Ping, 1999; Wilson, 1998; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2003). Different models and their variations are presented below (Table 1).

Table 1: Service quality measurement techniques and their characteristics

Model	Main characteristics
LODGQUAL	An upgrade of the SERVQUAL instrument. Authors have demonstrated that the original SERVQUAL dimensions (responsiveness, trust and empathy in the lodging industry) cannot be completely distinguished and generally show guests' experiences with staff.
LODGSERV	An upgrade of the SERVQUAL ins., adopted for the need of the hotel industry. The model consists of five industry specific dimensions.
DINESERV	This model consists of 29 attributes that are adapted to specifics of the restaurant industry. The model is based on generic SERVQUAL dimensions.
SERVPERF	One-dimensional, straightforward approach that measures service quality after the service encounter (performance-only). A good example of this technique is guest comment cards.
Dineserv.per	The model is substantively similar to DINESERV, except that the scale of the Dineserv.per model measures quality only after the service encounter.
SERVIMPERF	An upgrade of the SERVPERF model. In addition to quality evaluation, guests also assess (rank) the significance of individual quality attributes.
TANGSERV	The model measures the quality of tangible elements. The dimensions of the model are the appearance and variety of food, the ambience (temperature and music) and the equipment.
DINESCAPE	This model measures the impact of the physical environment and social factors on the emotional state of guests.
TOURSERVQUAL	This model is primarily designed to assess the quality aspects of the wider business environment (tourist destinations). It is a modification of the SERVQUAL instrument.
QFD	QFD (Quality function deployment) is based on the transfer of guests' desires and expectations in the characteristics of goods and services offered.
CIT – the extended CIT model	CIT (Critical Incident Technique) measures the impact (response) of employees' behaviour in different critical situations.
CIEREM	This model measures guests' expectations in connection with the information provided on menus. The most commonly used dimensions are information regarding the nutritional (caloric) value and information regarding ingredients and cooking techniques.
AAA DIAMOND	An optional, American system of classification and categorization of restaurant and accommodation facilities. Facilities that meet the minimum criteria can apply for a Diamond quality label.
MICHELIN STARS	Michelin stars are considered to be the most prestigious symbol of overall restaurant quality. The biggest deficiency of the Michelin Guide is the absence of written quality criteria.

Table 2: Inclusion of quality dimensions in different service quality models

Dimension								
Model	Tangibility	Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy	Nutritional value	Ingredients	Technique of food preparation
SERVQUAL	x	x	x	x	x			
Dineserv	x	x	x	x	x			
Dineserv.per	x	x	x	x	x			
Tangserv	x							
CIERM						x	x	x

In Table 2, the intention was to analyse the inclusion of different quality dimensions in models presented in Table 1. Unfortunately, all the presented models could not be included, as some of them are not based on written criteria (Michelin stars), or their quality dimensions represent specific quality attributes in other models (interior and ambience

in the AAA methodology can be classified as the appearance of physical evidence in the tangible dimension of the SERVQUAL instrument). Therefore, we had to focus on the generic SERVQUAL instrument and its modifications (Dineserv and Dineserv.per) as well as on some state-of-the-art models, such as the Tangserv (introduced by Raajpoot in 2002) and

the CIERM model (introduced by Mills in Thomas in 2007).

The results of this comparison indicate that specific techniques, such as Tangserv and CIERM have moved away from the traditional dimensions of the SERVQUAL instrument. Our findings are consistent with those of other studies (Cronin & Taylor, 1994; Llosa, Chandon & Orsingher, 1998, Tribe & Snaith, 1998) and suggest the necessity of moving away from the traditional RATER dimensions of the SERVQUAL instrument. These results also confirm our decision to use marketing attributes as quality dimensions.

Methodology

To accomplish the main objective of the study, articles related to dining quality were retrieved in May 2014 from EBSCOHost (<http://search.ebscohost.com/>) and Science Direct (<http://sciencedirect.com/>), which are the major academic and most comprehensive databases for tourism and hospitality research journals (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Wang, Law, Hung & Guillet, 2014). In addition, the Springer database (<http://link.springer.com/>) was also utilized to search articles. Keywords used to retrieve literature included: “restaurant quality”, “dining quality”, “quality attributes”, “restaurant industry quality”, “service quality”, “service quality measurement” as well as “quality and hospitality”. Due to its complex nature, the concept of quality has been discussed in various contexts; in this study, the focus is solely on restaurant (dining) quality and its specific dimensions. As such, careful screening was needed to identify articles that were specifically related to food, people and price. The screening process started with reading titles and abstracts of each article. Any unrelated papers were omitted from further analysis as well as book reviews and editors’ notes. Articles that partially matched the topic of the research were then included in the study in a logical manner (a total of 89 articles). The exclusion of marketing attributes from standardized quality models (Table 1) presented a major obstacle in our research. From the retrieved 140 articles (all reporting on restaurant quality) only nine articles clearly emphasized the importance of food and people (Table 3 and Table 4). However, to date, no studies have determined price to be the most important quality

dimension; none of the models presented in Table 1 even include this dimension. The operationalization of results was, therefore, from the perspectives of terminological aspects, research methods, quality measurement, data collection, location and sample size. All retrieved articles regarding specific quality dimensions were published between 1995 and 2012, with a steady increase since 2004, which indicates that quality management researchers have been giving increasing attention to this topic. A review of the literature has also revealed that scholars significantly emphasize the importance of psychological factors in assessing service quality.

Analysis of research results

Food

Several studies have reported that food is the most important quality dimension that affects both the restaurant selection process and guests’ satisfaction process (Clark & Wood, 1999; Kim, Ng & Kim, 2009; Mattila, 2001; Sulek & Hensley, 2004; Vanniarajan, 2009). Surveys, such as those conducted by Abbas and Somayeh (2011) and Law and Goh (2008), have shown that the assessment of food quality is subject to guests’ purchasing power. It is, therefore, expected that the quality of food has the most significant impact only in fine dining restaurants, whilst it does not have any major impact on the perception of quality in other restaurant facilities. Conversely, Kim Ng and Kim (2009) reported that food quality is also the most important quality dimension in fast food restaurants.

A broader perspective has shown that excessive focus on the food dimension may prove to be misguided. Several studies have revealed that food is not always the most important dimension of quality. MacLaurin and MacLaurin (2000) noted that food quality is only one of the nine most important quality dimensions in themed restaurants in Singapore. Similarly, Mosavi and Ghaedi (2012) reported that food is not always the core attribute in luxurious restaurants. Collectively, these studies outline a critical role of food quality evaluation in correlation with other quality attributes. Table 3 presents results and characteristics of international studies in which food was identified as the most important quality dimension.

Table 3: Research that emphasizes the importance of food

Research	Sample	Study design
Clark and Wood (1999)	Academic staff of two universities in England. n=31	Self-administered questionnaire.
Kim, Ng and Kim (2009)	Students of one university in USA. n=4659	Modified DINESERV questionnaire.
Mattila (2001)	Students of one university in USA. n=124	Self-administered questionnaire.
Sulek and Hensley (2004)	Random guests of one Irish pub in America. n=239	Self-administered questionnaire.
Vanniarajan (2009)	Random visitors of different types of restaurants in India. n=239	Modified DINESERV questionnaire.

It is clearly apparent from this table that all presented studies have been conducted in different cultural environments, on different research samples, with different methodologies. Despite all the differences in these studies, food was highlighted as the most important quality dimension. Common characteristics of research samples were not detected.

When discussing the evaluation of food quality, it is necessary to determine specific attributes, based on which food quality is evaluated. We have noted that several authors used entirely different quality attributes to evaluate the quality of food. Some of them (Namkung & Jang, 2007; Liu & Yang, 2009) highlighted only taste and appearance, while others (Harrington, Ottenbacher & Kendall, 2011) extended the range of attributes to food safety, acceptability (taste, appearance, temperature, size of portions) and nutritional value. There are other approaches to food quality assessment. Kivela, Inbakaran and Reece (1999) highlighted the importance of the variety of items offered on the menu. A recent study by Ha and Jang (2010) involved the significance of menu appearance. The evidence presented in this section suggests that the evaluation of food quality is highly subjective. Sulek and Hensley (2004), therefore, propose that the quality of food should be simply defined by three key characteristics: food safety, attractiveness and digestibility.

People

Several studies have been published (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006; Jaafar, Lumbers & Eves, 2008; Mosavi & Ghaedi 2012; Voon, 2012) describing the role of people as the most important quality dimension in restaurant quality management. It is essential to

highlight that specific factors describing employees' characteristics are included within different quality dimensions in different quality models (Table 1). For example, The SERVQUAL and the Dineserv model include attributes describing staff characteristics in practically every quality dimension. The generalizability of much published research on this issue is, therefore, extremely problematic, as there is no consensus about quality attributes on which guests evaluate the quality of staff. Akan (1995) stressed the importance of helpfulness and professionalism, while Ariffin and Maghzi (2012) were more concerned with issues relating to hospitality. Many scholars (Akan, 1995; Claycomb & Martin, 2002; Meng & Elliott, 2008; Scanlan & McPhail, 2000) have argued that guests' satisfaction is predominantly affected by communicativeness of staff.

Other researchers, however, who have looked at psychological aspects of perceptions, have confirmed the correlation between guests' quality evaluation process and the demographic characteristics of service staff. For example, Luohe and Tsaur (2011) confirmed the link between guests' perceptions and age, Martinez-Tur et al. (2011) emphasized the importance of organizational climate, while Wall and Berry (2007) concluded that guests' quality perceptions heavily depend on the type of the food & beverage facility. This finding corroborates the idea of Kim and Kachersky (2006), Meng and Elliott (2008) and Noone et al. (2007) who suggested that guests of fine dining restaurants are more sensitive to staff attitudes.

In contrast, a study conducted by Waxman (2006) in coffee shops stressed not only the importance of staff attitude, but has also revealed a rich set

of social quality attributes which are associated to staff: warmth and a sense of belonging, familiarity, respect, trust, support, etc. This research has shown that coffee shops (and their staff) in particular play an important role in the expansion of social capital. Wall and Berry (2007) argue that it is quite natural that the human factor prevail over other tangi-

ble quality dimensions, as they can all be easily substituted. According to the authors, no other quality dimension can compensate for guests' bad experience with unfriendly staff. Table 4 presents' results and sample characteristics of studies in which the staff was undoubtedly identified as the most important quality dimension.

Table 4: Researches that emphasize the importance of people

Research	Sample	Study design
Andaleeb and Conway (2006)	Random guests of various types of restaurants in Pennsylvania (USA). n=119	Self-administered questionnaire
Voon (2012)	Random guests of gastronomic, fast food and garden restaurants in Malaysia. n=407	Self-administered questionnaire
Mosavi and Ghaedi (2012)	Random guests of luxury restaurants in Shiraz (Iran). n=830	Self-administered questionnaire
Jaafar, Lumbers and Eves (2008)	Random guests of various types of restaurants in England. n=15	Self-administered face to face interview schedule

As can be seen from the table above, all presented studies were performed in different cultural environments, on different research samples and with different methodological approaches. Despite all differences, the quality of people was identified as the most important quality dimension.

Price

Subjective assessment of quality is particularly problematic with individual perceptions of price, although basic economic indicators that reflect guests' purchasing power can be relatively easily measured (income, average spending etc.). Kim and Kachersky (2006) state that the perceived price level and its correlation to quality are exclusively the result of individual psychological processes. This view is supported by many authors (Meng & Elliott, 2008; Ranaweera & Neely, 2003; Oh, 2000; Bhattacharya & Friedman, 2001) who have argued the importance of individualism in price perception (especially to the perception of "fair price"). According to authors, a fair price has an important impact on guests' satisfaction and their perception of quality. An individual and segmented pricing approach is especially significant in service industries, as various segments of guests respond differently to different price levels. The restaurant industry tends to be highly price elastic as changes in price have a relatively large effect on the quantity of demand. Restaurant managers can minimize sensitivity to price by using tailored pricing approaches,

e.g. price differentiation, discounts, special promotions, happy hours, etc.

Conversely, the results of research conducted by Iglesias and Guillén in Spain (2004) showed that the price that is revealed to guests' only after the service encounter has no impact on guests' satisfaction. According to the authors, price is important but only in the pre-purchasing phase. A broader and contradictory theoretical perspective was adopted by Oh (2000) and Barber, Goodman and Goh (2011). These authors reject the elevation of quality in the hospitality industry as they believe that more attention should be focused on delivering fair-price services. According to this concept, satisfaction is merely a short-term emotional state that eventually becomes self-evident and expected. Service providers should, therefore, concentrate on delivering services that provide good value for the money, as from the guests' perspective quality is perceived to be a self-evident and fundamental part of services (Oh, 2000).

We have noted that in none of the presented studies was price identified as the most important quality dimension. Nevertheless, many studies emphasized the importance of different individual price attributes. We believe that price (value) perceptions should be further investigated, especially in correlation to other quality dimensions.

Discussion and Conclusion

The initial objective of the study was to determine which marketing attribute has the most significant impact on guests' overall satisfaction and perception of quality. Contrary to expectations, the most interesting finding was that the results of the presented studies are mutually inconsistent and contradictory; one marketing attribute cannot be highlighted as the most important one, although in terms of cultural context, the majority of research was conducted in America (four of nine studies) in most of them (three of four studies) food was the most important dimension of quality.

Another important finding was that all presented cases of this study were based on modified questionnaires. This finding accords with our earlier observations that showed that service quality dimensions cannot be generalized. We assume that this result may also be explained by the fact that the restaurant quality management demands a specific and terminologically adopted research approach. A good example of this is the SERVQUAL instrument, in which different quality characteristics of people (staff) could be simultaneously found in all four quality dimensions. One of the issues that emerges from these findings is the necessity for caution when comparing standardized instruments such as the SERVQUAL and Dineserv to other models and their quality dimensions. A reasonable approach to tackle this issue could be the development of a comprehensive methodology that would be based on the specifics of the restaurant industry terminology. It can, therefore, be assumed that the terminological ambiguity represents a major gap between researchers and practitioners (restaurateurs).

Measuring service quality is subjected to a number of environmental variables (sociological, cultural, psychological, etc.) which, in different environments, have different impacts on the perception of quality. This study produced results that corroborate the findings of previous work in this field (Atilgan, Akinci & Aksoy, 2003; Juwaheer, 2004; Kincaid, Baloglu, Mao & Busser, 2010; Martinez & Martinez, 2010; Markovic et al., 2012). In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that specific and customized quality attributes should be introduced to each study. The proposed attributes are employees (Markovic et al., 2012; Snoj &

Mumel, 2002); competition (Kristensen, Martensen & Grønholdt, 2000); complementarity and authenticity (Albacete-Sáez, Mar Fuentes-Fuentes & Javier Lloréns-Montes, 2007); emotions (Akbaba, 2006; Edvardsson, 2005; Ladhari, Brun & Morales, 2008; Jr., 2003; Wong, 2004); and the purpose of visit (Iglesias & Guillén, 2004). The evaluation of quality is also significantly affected by the nationality of guests' (Nield, Kozak & LeGrys, 2000), as well as some demographic characteristics, such as gender, age and cultural capital (Baek et al., 2006; Harrington et al., 2011; Hsu Hung & Tang, 2012; Law, This & Goh, 2008; Rood & Dziadkowiec, 2011). A practical implication of these findings is that both quantitative and qualitative research methods should be taken into account when evaluating overall service quality in different food & beverage facilities.

This research has raised many questions in need of further investigation. Future trials should assess the specifics of different marketing attributes, especially those correlated to traditional gastronomic facilities, such as Greek taverns, traditional Slovene *gostilnas*, Hungarian *csárda*, etc. Finally, a number of important limitations need to be considered. This study is limited by the lack of empirical research. In view of the limitations of qualitative research, it is, therefore, suggested that an empirical association of all seven marketing attributes be investigated in future studies.

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