

**THE INFLUENCE OF FOOD VALUES ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY WITHIN
CHINESE BRAND CHAIN RESTAURANTS:
THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of food values on customer loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants (CBCRs), with a specific focus on the mediating role of customer satisfaction. Data were collected from a sample of 385 customers across various regions of China using a convenience sampling approach. The research instrument comprised Likert scale questions assessing differential added food value, basic food value, customer satisfaction, restaurant loyalty, and food loyalty. Hypotheses were developed and tested using regression analysis. The findings contribute to the understanding of customer behavior in CBCRs and offer insights for practitioners to enhance customer loyalty through strategic food value management.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
ABSTRACT	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	II
TABLE OF CONTENTS	III
LIST OF TABLES	V
LIST OF FIGURES	VI
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Research Question.....	1
1.3 Research Objectives	2
1.4 Scope of Research Study.....	2
1.5 Significance of the Study	3
1.6 Definition of Terms.....	4
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1 Overview of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.....	6
2.2 Concept and Theories of Customer Loyalty.....	8
2.3 Concept and Theories of Customer Satisfaction	9
2.4 Concept and Theories of Food Values.....	10
2.5 Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development.....	11
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	14
3.1 Population and Sample.....	14
3.2 Research Instrument.....	14
3.3 Reliability and Validity Test.....	15
3.4 Data Collection.....	16
3.5 Data Analysis.....	17

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TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continue)

	Page
CHAPTER 4 ANALYTICAL RESULTS	19
4.1 Demographic Profile	19
4.2 Level of Each Variable.....	22
4.3 Regression Analysis	25
4.4 Hypothesis Testing.....	27
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION	30
5.1 Conclusion.....	30
5.2 Discussion.....	31
5.3 Implications.....	35
5.4 Future Research Directions.....	36
REFERENCES.....	37
APPENDIX	43
APPENDIX A Questionnaire.....	44
AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY.....	50

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Forbidden to modify the content, and cite the document when use.

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 4.1 Demographic Profile	19
Table 4.2 Mean and Standard Deviation of Differential Added Food Values	22
Table 4.3 Mean and Standard Deviation of Basic Food Values	22
Table 4.4 Mean and Standard Deviation of Customer Satisfaction	23
Table 4.5 Mean and Standard Deviation of Food Loyalty	24
Table 4.6 Mean and Standard Deviation of Restaurant Loyalty	24
Table 4.7 Factors Influence Customer Satisfaction	25
Table 4.8 Factor Influence Food Loyalty	25
Table 4.9 Factor Influence Restaurant Loyalty	26
Table 4.10 Direct Effect, Indirect Effect, and Total Effect	26
Table 4.11 Hypotheses Testing Summary	28

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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework	13



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In recent years, the food service industry in China has witnessed remarkable growth and transformation, with Chinese brand chain restaurants emerging as prominent players in the market (Alt, 2021). This evolution reflects changing consumer preferences and behaviors influenced by factors such as urbanization, globalization, and lifestyle shifts (Ha & Jang, 2013). As these restaurants strive to maintain and expand their market share, understanding the drivers of customer loyalty becomes imperative.

Central to the dynamics of customer loyalty within Chinese brand chain restaurants is the concept of food values, which encompass various dimensions such as taste, quality, healthiness, authenticity, and cultural significance (Izquierdo-Yusta et al., 2019). Customers' perceptions of these values not only shape their dining experiences but also influence their decision-making processes and loyalty behaviors.

Moreover, customer satisfaction serves as a crucial mediating factor in the relationship between food values and loyalty (Zhong & Moon, 2020). It acts as a bridge, translating customers' evaluations of food-related attributes into favorable attitudes and repeat patronage. However, despite the growing body of research on customer loyalty and satisfaction in the food service industry, there remains a research gap in understanding the specific mechanisms through which food values influence customer loyalty within Chinese brand chain restaurants.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by examining the influence of food values on customer loyalty within Chinese brand chain restaurants, with a focus on the mediating role of customer satisfaction. Building on prior research in related fields such as consumer behavior, marketing, and hospitality management (Beristain & Zorrilla, 2011), this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer behavior in this context and provide actionable insights for restaurant operators and marketers.

1.2 Research Question

1. What is the current level of customer loyalty observed in Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants?

2. How do food values influence customer loyalty in Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants?

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3. What is the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between food values and customer loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants?

1.3 Research Objectives

This research is designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the level of customer loyalty in Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.
2. To study the influence of food values on customer loyalty in Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.
3. To investigate the mediating effect of customer satisfaction on the relationship between food values and customer loyalty in Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

1.4 Scope of Research Study

1.4.1 Scope of Population

The population for this research comprises customers within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. Specifically, it includes individuals who have experienced services offered by Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants in various regions of China. The exact number of the population is unknown.

1.4.2 Scope of Variable

The scope of variables for this study encompasses several key dimensions related to customer loyalty, food values, and customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. These variables include:

1. The independent variables in this study are Basic Food Values and Differential Added Food Values, which represent the fundamental aspects and unique features of food offerings, respectively, within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants

2. The mediating variable is Customer Satisfaction, which acts as an intermediary mechanism between the independent variables (Basic Food Values and Differential Added Food Values) and the dependent variables (Restaurant Loyalty and Food Loyalty). Customer Satisfaction reflects customers' overall contentment with their dining experience and plays a crucial role in shaping their loyalty to the restaurant and food offerings.

3. The dependent variables include Restaurant Loyalty and Food Loyalty. Restaurant Loyalty refers to the degree of allegiance or attachment that customers feel towards a specific Chinese Brand Chain Restaurant based on their overall dining experience, while Food Loyalty denotes customers' loyalty specifically towards the food offerings of the restaurant. Both

Restaurant Loyalty and Food Loyalty are influenced by customers' satisfaction with their dining experience, which is mediated by their perceptions of Basic Food Values and Differential Added Food Values.

1.4.3 Scope of Area

The scope of this study encompasses Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants operating within various regions of China. The study aims to investigate how variables such as Basic Food Values, Differential Added Food Values, and Customer Satisfaction impact both Restaurant Loyalty and Food Loyalty among patrons of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. The research seeks to provide insights into consumer behavior and preferences within the context of these restaurant chains, contributing to a better understanding of customer loyalty dynamics in the Chinese food service industry.

1.4.4 Scope of Timing

The scope of timing for this study involved data collection scheduled for March 2024. During this period, surveys and observations were conducted to gather relevant information from patrons of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. By focusing data collection efforts within this timeframe, the study aimed to capture the current perceptions and experiences of customers, providing up-to-date insights into factors influencing loyalty within the Chinese food service industry.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1. For Customers: this study offers insights into the factors influencing their loyalty towards Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants, thereby aiding them in making informed dining choices. By understanding the relationship between food values, customer satisfaction, and loyalty, patrons can assess their preferences and expectations, enhancing their overall dining experiences.

2. For Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants: this study provides valuable information for improving customer satisfaction and loyalty. By identifying the key drivers of loyalty, restaurants can tailor their offerings and services to better meet customer expectations, thereby fostering stronger brand loyalty and competitive advantage in the market.

3. For academic perspective: this study contributes to the existing literature on customer loyalty and satisfaction within the food service industry, particularly focusing on Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. By empirically examining the mediating role of customer satisfaction and the influence of food values on loyalty, the study advances theoretical understanding in this field, providing a basis for further research and exploration.

1.6 Definition of Terms

1. Differential added food values refers to the extent to which a restaurant offers unique, additional, specialized, innovative, and premium features in its food offerings compared to other restaurants. This includes distinctive features, additional elements or ingredients, specialized or customized options, innovative presentations or combinations, and exclusive or premium offerings provided by the restaurant.

2. Basic food values refers to the fundamental attributes of food offerings at a restaurant that meet customers' essential expectations for taste, quality, and simplicity. It encompasses the provision of menu options that are essential and fundamental for dining, perceived as simple and straightforward, and capable of fulfilling basic dietary needs. Additionally, basic food values are reflected in the restaurant's ability to offer traditional and familiar food options that cater to customers' basic preferences and contribute to a satisfying dining experience.

3. Customer satisfaction refers to the extent to which patrons feel content and pleased with various aspects of their dining experience. It encompasses satisfaction with the cleanliness and ambiance of the establishment, indicating a positive perception of the physical environment. Additionally, it includes satisfaction with the quality of service provided by the staff, reflecting patrons' perceptions of attentiveness, professionalism, and friendliness. Furthermore, it entails satisfaction with the overall dining experience, capturing patrons' overall assessment of their time spent at the restaurant, including factors such as comfort, enjoyment, and convenience. Moreover, it involves satisfaction with the variety and selection of menu options available, indicating patrons' approval of the range and diversity of food and beverage choices offered. Lastly, it incorporates satisfaction with the overall value for money of the dining experience, reflecting patrons' perceptions of whether the prices charged align with the quality and experience received, thereby influencing their perceived worthiness of the expenditure.

4. Food loyalty is defined by customers' consistent and favorable behaviors towards a restaurant based on their opinion with the taste, quality, and overall food experience provided. It encompasses several key aspects: customers perceive that the taste and quality of the food align with their expectations, they prioritize choosing the restaurant specifically for its food offerings even when comparable options exist, they trust the ingredients used and the sourcing practices followed, they frequently experience cravings for the food available, and they consider food quality as a primary factor influencing their decision to dine at the restaurant.

5. Restaurant loyalty refers to the degree of commitment, and preference that a customer feels towards a specific restaurant based on their overall dining experience. It encompasses the customer's willingness to continue patronizing the restaurant in the future, despite potential

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external influences such as the emergence of new competition or changes in the menu. Additionally, restaurant loyalty involves a sense of attachment and preference for the restaurant as a preferred dining destination, leading to the likelihood of recommending the restaurant to friends and family. This loyalty is influenced by various factors, including the quality of service provided by the restaurant and the atmosphere it offers, both of which contribute to meeting or exceeding the customer's expectations.



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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants

Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants represent a dynamic and multifaceted sector within the food service industry, showcasing the rich tapestry of Chinese culinary traditions and flavors (Beristain & Zorrilla, 2011). These establishments are distinguished by their focus on offering a diverse array of authentic Chinese dishes, ranging from regional specialties to contemporary interpretations of classic recipes (Alt, 2021). With a commitment to preserving culinary heritage while embracing innovation, Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants often feature a blend of time-honored cooking techniques and modern culinary trends (Severt et al., 2020).

One of the key attributes of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants is their ability to provide customers with an immersive dining experience that goes beyond just food (Zhong & Moon, 2020). These establishments often boast vibrant and culturally inspired ambiance, incorporating elements of Chinese art, decor, and music to create an inviting atmosphere for patrons (Izquierdo-Yusta et al., 2019). From traditional red lanterns and ornate woodwork to contemporary designs that blend Eastern and Western influences, the decor of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants adds to the overall dining experience, transporting customers to the heart of China's culinary traditions (Ryu et al., 2012).

Moreover, Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants are known for their emphasis on quality and consistency (Ha & Jang, 2013). Whether it's a neighborhood eatery or a global franchise, these establishments prioritize the use of fresh ingredients, authentic flavors, and skilled culinary craftsmanship to ensure that each dish meets the highest standards of taste and quality (Lister et al., 2017). This commitment to excellence extends to every aspect of the dining experience, from the presentation of dishes to the efficiency of service, thereby earning the trust and loyalty of customers (Scheer et al., 2010).

In addition to serving as culinary destinations, Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants play a significant role in promoting cultural exchange and understanding (Díaz-Méndez & García-Espejo, 2017). By introducing customers to the diverse regional cuisines of China, these establishments serve as cultural ambassadors, fostering appreciation for Chinese culinary traditions and heritage (Agronoma, 2020). Whether it's through special events, cooking demonstrations, or menu offerings that highlight lesser-known dishes, Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants provide customers with opportunities to explore and celebrate the rich culinary diversity of China (Connors et al., 2001).

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Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants are popular dining establishments that specialize in serving authentic Chinese cuisine. Examples of such restaurants include:

Din Tai Fung: Known for its signature xiaolongbao (steamed soup dumplings) and Taiwanese-style dishes, Din Tai Fung has gained international recognition for its high-quality food and consistent service.

Haidilao Hot Pot: Haidilao is famous for its interactive hot pot dining experience, where customers can cook a variety of meats, seafood, and vegetables in a flavorful broth at their table. The restaurant is renowned for its exceptional customer service and extensive menu options.

Xiabu Xiabu: Xiabu Xiabu is a popular hot pot chain in China, offering a wide range of ingredients and soup bases for customers to create their personalized hot pot meals. The restaurant is known for its fresh ingredients, convenient dining experience, and affordable prices.

Jianguo Hotpot: Jianguo Hotpot specializes in Sichuan-style hot pot, featuring spicy and flavorful broths accompanied by a selection of meats, vegetables, and seafood. The restaurant is praised for its bold flavors and vibrant atmosphere.

Da Dong Roast Duck: Da Dong is renowned for its Peking duck, prepared using traditional techniques to achieve crispy skin and succulent meat. The restaurant focuses on serving high-quality, innovative Chinese dishes in an elegant setting.

Jin Ding Xuan: Jin Ding Xuan is a popular dim sum chain in China, specializing in traditional Cantonese-style dim sum dishes such as steamed dumplings, buns, and rice rolls. The restaurant is known for its bustling atmosphere and extensive dim sum selection.

Xibe Youmian Cun: Xibe Youmian Cun, also known as "Northwest Youmian Village," offers cuisine from China's northwestern regions, including Shaanxi, Gansu, and Ningxia. The restaurant features hearty and flavorful dishes such as hand-pulled noodles, lamb skewers, and savory pancakes.

Yang's Braised Chicken Rice: Yang's Braised Chicken Rice is a chain restaurant known for its signature braised chicken and rice dishes. Originating from Hubei Province, the restaurant's flavorful braising sauce and tender chicken have garnered a loyal following among diners.

Xiao Wang Fu: Xiao Wang Fu specializes in Huaiyang cuisine, one of the Four Great Traditions of Chinese cuisine, known for its delicate flavors and meticulous preparation techniques. The restaurant offers a variety of Huaiyang dishes, including braised pork belly, freshwater crab, and sweet and sour mandarin fish.

Overall, Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants occupy a unique and influential position within the global food service industry (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016). With their commitment to authenticity, innovation, and cultural immersion, these establishments continue to shape and

enrich the culinary landscape while offering customers memorable dining experiences that celebrate the essence of Chinese cuisine.

2.2 Concept and Theories of Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is a multifaceted concept crucial for business success, representing the degree of attachment or commitment customers exhibit towards a brand, product, or service. It encompasses various dimensions, including behavioral loyalty (repeat purchase or patronage), attitudinal loyalty (positive predisposition towards the brand), and cognitive loyalty (strong brand recognition and preference). Several theories and concepts underpin the understanding of customer loyalty:

Expectation-Confirmation Theory: This theory posits that satisfaction is determined by the extent to which product or service performance meets or exceeds customers' prior expectations (Oliver, 1980). If expectations are surpassed, customers experience positive confirmation and are more likely to exhibit loyalty.

Satisfaction-Loyalty Link: Rooted in the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm, this link suggests that customer satisfaction is a key driver of loyalty (Oliver, 1999). Satisfied customers are more inclined to exhibit repeat patronage, positive word-of-mouth, and resistance to competitive offerings.

Service Quality Models: Models like SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988) emphasize the role of perceived service quality in shaping customer loyalty. Service quality dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles influence customer perceptions and subsequent loyalty behaviors.

Relationship Marketing: This approach emphasizes building long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with customers through personalized interactions, trust-building, and customer engagement strategies (Berry, 1995). Strong relationships foster customer loyalty and advocacy.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory: This theory suggests that customers strive to maintain consistency between their attitudes and behaviors. Loyalty may arise from efforts to reduce cognitive dissonance by reaffirming positive attitudes towards a chosen brand or product (Festinger, 1957).

Emotional and Experiential Loyalty: Loyalty can also be driven by emotional connections and memorable experiences associated with a brand or service (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Positive emotions and memorable experiences contribute to deepening customer loyalty and engagement.

Understanding these theories and concepts provides insights into the factors influencing customer loyalty and aids businesses in developing effective strategies to cultivate and maintain loyal customer relationships.

In this research, the concept of customer loyalty is dissected into two distinct dimensions: food loyalty and restaurant loyalty, both critical in understanding consumer behaviour within the context of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants (CBCRs).

Food loyalty refers to the degree of customer attachment and preference for the specific food offerings of a restaurant or food establishment (Han, Lee, & Lee, 2018). It encompasses aspects such as taste, quality, variety, uniqueness, and consistency of the cuisine provided. Customers who exhibit food loyalty are more likely to patronize a restaurant repeatedly due to their satisfaction with the food offerings, regardless of other factors such as location or price.

Restaurant loyalty, on the other hand, pertains to customers' recurring preference for a particular restaurant based on various factors beyond just the food, including the overall dining experience, service quality, ambiance, cleanliness, and perceived value for money (Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2017). Customers who demonstrate restaurant loyalty consistently choose a specific restaurant over others and are more inclined to revisit or recommend it to others due to their positive perceptions of the overall dining experience.

2.3 Concept and Theories of Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a fundamental concept in marketing and business management, reflecting customers' overall evaluation of a product, service, or experience in relation to their expectations. It is influenced by various factors and is crucial for building long-term relationships and fostering loyalty. Several theories and concepts underpin the understanding of customer satisfaction:

Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory: According to this theory, customer satisfaction results from the comparison between customers' expectations prior to purchase and their perceived performance or outcomes post-purchase (Oliver, 1980). When perceived performance meets or exceeds expectations, customers experience satisfaction.

Kano Model: This model categorizes product attributes into three categories: basic, performance, and delight. Basic attributes are essential and expected by customers, while performance attributes increase satisfaction linearly with their presence. Delight attributes, on the other hand, provide disproportionate satisfaction when present but do not necessarily cause dissatisfaction when absent (Kano et al., 1984).

Disconfirmation Paradigm: This paradigm suggests that satisfaction is influenced by the degree of disconfirmation between expected and perceived product or service performance. This material is reserved for educational use only, not allowed for commercial use.

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(Churchill & Surprenant, 1982). Positive disconfirmation occurs when perceived performance exceeds expectations, leading to satisfaction.

Gap Theory of Service Quality: Proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985), this theory identifies five gaps that contribute to customer dissatisfaction. These gaps include the gap between customer expectations and management perceptions, between management perceptions and service quality specifications, between service quality specifications and service delivery, between service delivery and external communications, and between perceived service and expected service.

Disconfirmation Theory of Satisfaction: This theory posits that satisfaction is influenced by the discrepancy between customers' pre-purchase expectations and their post-purchase perceptions (Oliver, 1980). When perceived performance exceeds expectations, customers experience positive disconfirmation and are satisfied.

Understanding these theories and concepts is essential for businesses to effectively measure and manage customer satisfaction, identify areas for improvement, and enhance overall customer experiences.

2.4 Concept and Theories of Food Values

The concept and theories of food values are integral to understanding consumers' perceptions and behaviors related to food consumption. Food values refer to the subjective worth or importance that individuals attribute to food products or dining experiences based on various factors. Several theories and concepts contribute to our understanding of food values:

Functional Theory: This theory suggests that consumers evaluate food based on its functional benefits, such as nutrition, convenience, and price (Grunert, 2005). Functional attributes play a significant role in shaping consumers' perceptions of food values, especially in terms of meeting basic needs and providing sustenance.

Hedonic Theory: Hedonic value pertains to the sensory pleasure and enjoyment derived from consuming food (Cardello, 1994). According to this theory, consumers assess food based on its taste, aroma, texture, and visual appeal, which contribute to their overall hedonic experience.

Emotional Value: Food often carries emotional significance, evoking feelings of comfort, nostalgia, or happiness (Desmet & Schifferstein, 2008). Emotional value encompasses the psychological associations and memories linked to specific foods or dining experiences, influencing consumers' preferences and choices.

Social Value: Food consumption is inherently social, often serving as a means of bonding, celebration, or cultural expression (De Boer et al., 2013). Social value refers to the role of food in facilitating social interactions, fostering relationships, and reinforcing cultural identities.

Symbolic Value: Food can symbolize status, identity, and personal beliefs, reflecting broader cultural norms and values (Niva, 2007). Symbolic value encompasses the meanings and symbolism attached to certain foods or dietary practices, which can vary across individuals and societies.

Understanding these theories and concepts helps marketers and food service providers tailor their offerings to meet consumers' diverse needs and preferences, thereby enhancing satisfaction and loyalty.

In this research, the concept of food values is delineated into two primary dimensions: differential added food values and basic food values.

Differential added food values refer to the unique and distinctive features, additional elements, specialized or customized options, innovative presentations, and exclusive or premium offerings provided by a restaurant beyond customers' basic expectations (Han, Lee, & Lee, 2018; Shin & Kim, 2013). It encompasses factors that differentiate the food offerings of a restaurant from those of competitors and contribute to customers' perceived value and satisfaction.

On the other hand, basic food values encompass the fundamental aspects of taste, quality, simplicity, straightforwardness, and fulfillment of basic dietary requirements in the food served at a restaurant (Lee et al., 2017; Oliver & Swan, 1989). It represents customers' minimum expectations regarding the taste, quality, and functionality of the food options available, without considering additional features or premium offerings.

By examining these two dimensions of food values, this research aims to understand how differential added food values and basic food values influence customer satisfaction and, subsequently, restaurant loyalty and food loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

2.5 Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

The hypotheses for this research are developed based on the conceptual framework and theories discussed in the preceding sections. Each hypothesis represents a specific relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable, customer loyalty.

H1: Differential added food values positively influence customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

The first hypothesis posits that there is a positive relationship between differential added food values and customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. This hypothesis

is grounded in the premise that when Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants offer unique and distinctive features, additional food elements or ingredients, specialized or customized food options, innovative and creative food presentations, or exclusive premium food offerings, customers are more likely to perceive higher value in their dining experience, leading to increased satisfaction. This hypothesis posits that there is a positive relationship between differential added food values and customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants (Zhong & Moon, 2020; Vega-Zamora et al., 2020; Uddin, 2019).

H2: Basic food values positively influence customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

The second hypothesis suggests a positive association between basic food values and customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. This hypothesis proposes that when Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants provide menu options that meet customers' fundamental expectations for taste, quality, simplicity, and familiarity, individuals are more likely to experience satisfaction with their dining experience. This hypothesis suggests a positive association between basic food values and customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants (Zhong & Moon, 2020; Vega-Zamora et al., 2020; Uddin, 2019).

H3: Customer satisfaction positively influences restaurant loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

The third hypothesis asserts that there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and restaurant loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. This hypothesis suggests that when customers are satisfied with their dining experience, including factors such as food quality, service, ambiance, and value for money, they are more inclined to exhibit loyalty by returning to the restaurant and recommending it to others. This hypothesis asserts that there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and restaurant loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants (Ryu et al., 2012; Díaz-Méndez & García-Espejo, 2017; Espinosa et al., 2018).

H4: Customer satisfaction positively influences food loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

The fourth hypothesis proposes a positive correlation between customer satisfaction and food loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. This hypothesis suggests that when customers are satisfied with the food offerings, taste, variety, and overall dining experience provided by Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants, they are more likely to develop loyalty specifically towards the food offerings, leading to repeat purchases and a preference for the restaurant's cuisine. This hypothesis proposes a positive correlation between customer satisfaction and food loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants (Ryu et al., 2012; Díaz-Méndez & García-Espejo, 2017; Espinosa et al., 2018).

These hypotheses form the basis for examining the relationships between differential added food values, basic food values, customer satisfaction, restaurant loyalty, and food loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

In summary, there are four hypotheses as follows:

H1: Differential added food values positively influence customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

H2: Basic food values positively influence customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

H3: Customer satisfaction positively influences restaurant loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

H4: Customer satisfaction positively influences food loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

Based on the four hypotheses, a conceptual framework has been developed as shown in Figure 2.1.

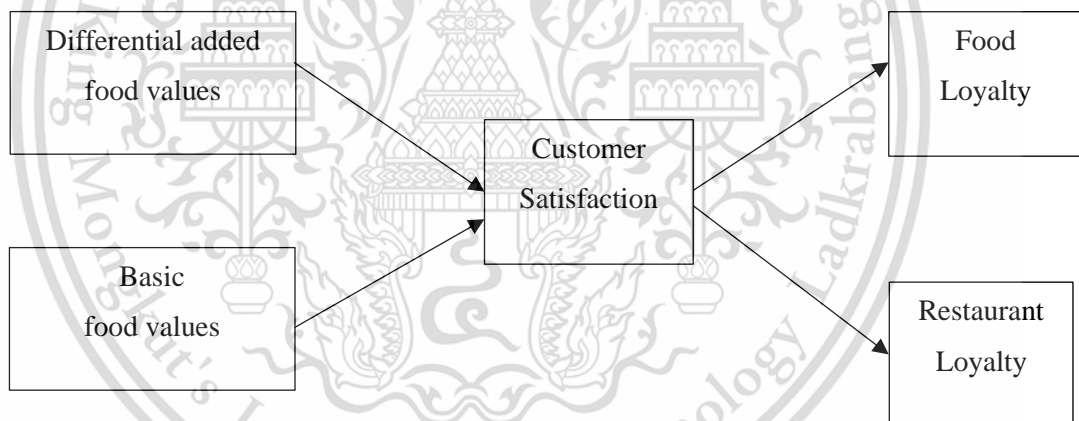


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Population and Sample

The population for this research comprises customers within the Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. Specifically, it includes individuals who have experienced services offered by various Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants in different regions of China.

The target sample for this research encompasses 385 individuals, representing an unknown population size. In determining the sample size, Cochran's 1977 Sample Size Formula is employed, expressed as:

$$n = \frac{z^2}{4e^2}$$

Where: n denotes the sample size.
 z is the z-score.
 e represents the margin of error (set at 5%).

Substituting the specified values into the formula, a z-value of 1.96 is employed to align with the z-score for a 95% confidence level, resulting in a calculated sample size of 385 individuals. This indicates the number of participants required for the study.

The research sample, consisting of 385 participants, was drawn from individuals who had recently visited Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants, utilizing a convenience sampling approach. This method facilitated accessibility to participants based on their availability and willingness to engage in the study.

The adoption of a convenience sampling approach is driven by the pragmatic need to efficiently gather insights into customer loyalty influenced by Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. This approach is selected for its expediency in reaching participants conveniently and expeditiously, thereby yielding valuable perspectives for the study.

3.2 Research Instrument

The research instrument employed in this study comprises a structured questionnaire designed to gather data from participants regarding their perceptions, preferences, and experiences related to Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants, customer satisfaction, and loyalty.

The questionnaire consists of multiple sections, each targeting specific variables and constructs outlined in the research objectives.

The questionnaire begins with demographic inquiries aimed at capturing participants' socio-demographic characteristics, including age, gender, income level, educational background, and frequency of visits to Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. This section enables the categorization and analysis of respondents based on relevant demographic factors.

Subsequent sections of the questionnaire focus on variables related to customer satisfaction, food values perceptions, and loyalty towards Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. Likert scale items are utilized to measure participants' agreement or disagreement with statements pertaining to these constructs. For instance, participants are asked to rate their satisfaction levels with various aspects of their dining experiences, such as food quality, service, cleanliness, and ambiance.

Furthermore, items assessing food values perceptions include statements related to the uniqueness, taste, quality, and variety of food offerings at Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. Participants are prompted to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with these statements, providing insights into their perceptions of the intrinsic value of the food served.

To measure customer loyalty towards Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants, participants are asked to express their likelihood of returning to the restaurant, recommending it to others, and their overall attachment to the brand. These items aim to gauge the strength of the bond between customers and the restaurant, reflecting their loyalty and commitment to continued patronage.

In overall, the research instrument is designed to comprehensively capture the relevant variables and constructs outlined in the research objectives, facilitating a thorough investigation of customer satisfaction and loyalty within the context of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

3.3 Reliability and Validity Test

Reliability and validity testing are crucial steps in ensuring the accuracy and credibility of the research instrument. Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the measurements obtained from the questionnaire, while validity assesses the extent to which the instrument measures what it intends to measure accurately.

3.3.1 Reliability Testing

The research instrument's reliability underwent evaluation through internal consistency reliability analysis utilizing Cronbach's alpha coefficient. This analysis assessed the degree of correlation among the items within each construct of the questionnaire. A Cronbach's alpha

value exceeding 0.70 indicates satisfactory internal consistency among the items (Hair et al., 2017).

3.3.2 Validity Testing

Content validity in this study was primarily evaluated through expert reviews. Three experts in the field assessed the questionnaire to ensure adequate coverage of relevant constructs related to customer satisfaction, perceptions of food values, and loyalty towards Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. Their feedback and recommendations were utilized to refine the questionnaire and enhance its content validity (Polit & Beck, 2006).

By conducting rigorous reliability and validity testing, this study aims to ensure the reliability, accuracy, and relevance of the research instrument, thereby strengthening the validity of the study findings.

3.4 Data Collection

Once the questionnaire was validated through the pre-testing phase, the main data collection commenced. The target sample of 385 participants was recruited using a convenience sampling approach, which allowed for the selection of participants based on their accessibility and willingness to participate in the study. Participants were approached either in person at Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants or through online platforms, depending on their preference and convenience.

To maintain consistency and minimize biases during data collection, trained research assistants were responsible for administering the questionnaires and ensuring adherence to standardized procedures. Participants were provided with clear instructions regarding the purpose of the study, confidentiality of their responses, and their rights as research participants. They were also informed about the voluntary nature of their participation and their ability to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

Data collection was carried out over a period of four weeks in March 2024, allowing sufficient time to reach the target sample size and collect comprehensive data. Throughout the data collection process, regular monitoring and supervision were conducted to address any issues or concerns that arose and ensure the integrity and reliability of the data.

By adhering to rigorous data collection procedures, this study aimed to obtain high-quality data that accurately reflected the perceptions and experiences of customers regarding Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants, thereby facilitating robust analysis and interpretation of the research findings.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire survey underwent comprehensive analysis using appropriate statistical techniques to address the research objectives and test the hypotheses formulated in this study. The data analysis process involved several steps, including data cleaning, descriptive analysis, and inferential analysis.

3.5.1 Data Cleaning

Before proceeding with the analysis, the collected data were thoroughly cleaned to identify and rectify any inconsistencies, missing values, or outliers. This process aimed to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data, thereby enhancing the reliability of the analysis outcomes.

3.5.2 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize the characteristics of the study variables. This analysis provided an overview of the demographic profile of the participants, as well as the distribution and central tendency of key variables related to customer satisfaction, food values, and loyalty toward Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

3.5.3 Inferential Analysis

To test the research hypotheses and examine the relationships between variables, inferential statistical techniques were employed. Specifically, regression analysis was utilized to investigate the mediating effect of customer satisfaction on the relationship between food values and loyalty.

3.5.4 Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis was conducted to explore the indirect effect of food values on loyalty through customer satisfaction. This analysis helped elucidate the underlying mechanisms by which food values influenced loyalty, thereby providing valuable insights for practitioners and policymakers in the restaurant industry.

3.5.5 Interpretation of Findings

The findings of the data analysis were interpreted in light of the research objectives and theoretical framework. The implications of the results for theory, practice, and future research were discussed, highlighting the significance of the study findings in advancing understanding of customer behavior and loyalty dynamics in the context of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

By employing rigorous data analysis techniques, this study aims to generate empirically grounded insights that contribute to the existing body of knowledge on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and food values in the restaurant industry.

food values perceptions, and loyalty within the restaurant industry, particularly focusing on Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.



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CHAPTER 4

ANALYTICAL RESULTS

Chapter 4 serves as the analytical cornerstone of this study, where we delve into the empirical findings derived from the data collected on customer perceptions and behaviors within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. This chapter is meticulously structured to present a comprehensive analysis of the data, beginning with an examination of the demographic profile of the respondents, followed by an in-depth exploration of the influential factors that drive customer satisfaction and loyalty. Through the application of advanced statistical methods, including regression analysis and hypothesis testing, this chapter aims to uncover the nuanced relationships between food values—both differential and basic—and their impact on customer satisfaction and subsequent loyalty. The findings presented herein are not only instrumental in validating the theoretical framework outlined in previous chapters but also in providing empirical evidence to support the study's hypotheses. By navigating through this chapter, readers could gain a deeper understanding of the critical factors that influence customer loyalty in the fast-paced and competitive landscape of the restaurant industry, thereby offering valuable insights for both academic scholars and industry practitioners.

4.1 Demographic Profile

Table 4.1 Demographic Profile

Demographic Item	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	185	48.1
	Female	200	51.9
Age	< 20	32	8.3
	21-30	153	39.7
	31-40	113	29.4
	41-50	55	14.3
	51-60	19	4.9
	> 60	13	3.4
Monthly Income (RMB)	< 2,000	28	7.3
	2,000-4,000	119	30.9
	4,001-6,000	140	36.4
	6,001-8,000	38	9.9
	8,001-10,000	30	7.8
	10,001-15,000	27	7.0
	>15,000	3	0.8

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Table 4.1 (Cont.)

Demographic Item	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Nationality	Chinese	331	86.0
	Others	54	14.0
Marital Status	Single	135	35.1
	Married	201	52.2
	Others	49	12.7
Education	High school or lower	40	10.4
	Vocational School	99	25.7
	Bachelor	202	52.5
	Master	36	9.4
	Doctoral	8	2.1
Career	Student	77	20.0
	Employed full time	127	33.0
	Employed part time	95	24.7
	Self-employed	86	22.3

Gender

The sample consists of nearly an equal distribution between males (185, 48.1%) and females (200, 51.9%). This balance suggests that gender may not play a significant role in the preference for Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants, indicating a universal appeal across genders. Marketing strategies can, therefore, focus on aspects that cater to both genders equally, without needing to segment offerings based on gender preferences. The slight female majority could hint at slightly higher engagement or interest among women in dining experiences or decision-making in meal choices.

Age

The age distribution is predominantly skewed towards the younger demographic, with the 21-30 age group representing the largest segment (153, 39.7%). This is followed by the 31-40 age group (113, 29.4%), indicating that Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants are particularly popular among individuals in their twenties and thirties. The decreasing frequency with increasing age suggests that older demographics might not be the primary target audience, possibly due to differing dining preferences or lifestyle choices. Restaurants might consider tailoring their marketing strategies and menu offerings to appeal to this younger, active demographic who may value quick service, affordability, and a trendy dining atmosphere.

Income

Income levels show a concentration in the middle-income brackets, with the majority earning between 2000 to 6000 Yuan (259, 67.3%). This indicates that Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants are hitting a sweet spot for affordability and value for money among middle-income earners. The lower representation of the higher (>15000 Yuan, 0.8%) and lower (<2000 Yuan, 7.3%) income brackets might reflect the pricing and positioning of these restaurants as neither premium nor budget dining options, suggesting a broad appeal to the middle class who might prioritize a balance between quality and price.

Nationality

A significant majority of the sample is Chinese (331, 86.0%), with a smaller segment categorized as "Others" (54, 14.0%). This dominance underscores the local appeal of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants to the domestic market. The presence of a non-Chinese segment, however, indicates a certain level of international appeal, which could be due to globalization, international students, expatriates, or tourists interested in authentic Chinese dining experiences.

Marital Status

Over half of the participants are married (201, 52.2%), followed by singles (135, 35.1%), and a minority in other marital statuses (49, 12.7%). This distribution suggests that Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants are particularly appealing to married individuals, possibly due to family dining or couples seeking casual dining experiences. Singles represent a significant portion as well, hinting at the restaurants' ability to cater to a variety of social dining situations, from family gatherings to individual meals.

Education

The dataset shows a predominant portion of the sample with a Bachelor's degree (202, 52.5%), indicating a highly educated customer base. This is followed by those with Vocational School education (99, 25.7%) and then Master's degree holders (36, 9.4%). The high representation of individuals with higher education may suggest that these restaurants appeal to a clientele that values the diversity and quality of food, possibly correlating with a higher awareness or appreciation of culinary variety and authenticity.

Career

The career backgrounds of participants vary, with the largest segments being employed full-time (127, 33.0%) and part-time (95, 24.7%), followed closely by students (77, 20.0%) and self-employed individuals (86, 22.3%). This diversity highlights the broad appeal of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants across various employment statuses. The significant representation of students and part-time employed individuals may reflect the affordability and convenience these restaurants offer, catering to those with flexible schedules or looking for quick, satisfying meals.

In conclusion, this detailed analysis underscores the diverse appeal of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants across various demographic segments, with a particular resonance among younger, middle-income, and well-educated individuals. The findings could inform targeted marketing strategies, menu design, and service enhancements to cater to the predominant customer profiles while considering the inclusive appeal across different demographics.

4.2 Level of Each Variable

Table 4.2 Mean and Standard Deviation of Differential Added Food Values

Differential Added Food Values	Mean	S.D.	Level
Unique and distinctive features	3.829	1.257	High
Additional food elements/ingredients	3.784	1.200	High
Specialized/customized food options	3.681	1.239	High
Innovative food presentations/combinations	3.730	1.223	High
Exclusive/premium food offerings	3.758	1.314	High
Overall	3.756	1.086	High

From Table 4.2, which outlines the Mean and Standard Deviation of the differential added food values, presents a nuanced understanding of customer perceptions within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. Overall, the differential added food values have a mean score of 3.756, which is considered a high level. When considering each item, the data, encompassing unique and distinctive features, additional food elements/ingredients, specialized/customized food options, innovative food presentations/combinations, and exclusive/premium food offerings, consistently reports a high level with mean scores in the range of 3.681 to 3.829.

Table 4.3 Mean and Standard Deviation of Basic Food Values

Basic Food Values	Mean	S.D.	Level
Meeting basic expectations for taste and quality	3.790	1.248	High
Providing essential and fundamental dining choices	3.701	1.230	High
Simple and straightforward food meeting basic needs	3.727	1.261	High

Table 4.3 (Cont.)

Basic Food Values	Mean	S.D.	Level
Fulfilling basic requirements for a satisfying experience	3.779	1.238	High
Offering traditional and familiar food options	3.748	1.238	High
Overall	3.749	1.081	High

From Table 4.3, focusing on the Mean and Standard Deviation of Basic Food Values according to customers' perceptions of fundamental aspects of dining in Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. Overall, the basic food values have a mean score of 3.749, which is considered a high level. When considering each item, the table illustrates uniformly high scores across five key elements: meeting basic expectations for taste and quality, providing essential and fundamental dining choices, ensuring simple and straightforward food, fulfilling basic requirements for a satisfying experience, and offering traditional and familiar food options, all rating scores ranging from 3.701 to 3.790, which are considered at a high level.

Table 4.4 Mean and Standard Deviation of Customer Satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction	Mean	S.D.	Level
Satisfaction with cleanliness and ambiance	3.834	1.294	High
Satisfaction with the service quality	3.779	1.252	High
Satisfaction with the overall dining experience	3.784	1.262	High
Satisfaction with the variety and selection of menu	3.727	1.255	High
Satisfaction with the overall value for money	3.753	1.272	High
Overall	3.775	1.112	High

From Table 4.4 presents the Mean and Standard Deviation of Customer Satisfaction across various aspects of the dining experience at Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. Overall, customer satisfaction is at a high level with a mean score of 3.775. When considering each element, it is found that cleanliness and ambiance, service quality, overall dining experience, variety and selection of the menu, and overall value for money are all at a high level, consistently registering a mean score in the range of 3.727 to 3.834.

Table 4.5 Mean and Standard Deviation of Food Loyalty

Food Loyalty	Mean	S.D.	Level
Taste and quality meeting expectations	3.810	1.174	High
Choosing the restaurant for its food	3.766	1.209	High
Trust in ingredients and sourcing practices	3.779	1.225	High
Frequently craving the restaurant's food offerings	3.797	1.225	High
Food quality as a main reason for dining	3.740	1.295	High
Overall	3.779	1.065	High

From Table 4.5, sheds light on the Mean and Standard Deviation of Food Loyalty concerning Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. Overall, food loyalty is at a high level with a mean score of 3.779. When considering each element, the table reveals a consistent pattern of high satisfaction with food-related aspects—taste and quality meeting expectations, choosing the restaurant for its food, trust in ingredients and sourcing practices, frequently craving the restaurant's food offerings, and food quality as a main reason for dining—are all at a high level with scores ranging from 3.740 to 3.810.

Table 4.6 Mean and Standard Deviation of Restaurant Loyalty

Restaurant Loyalty	Mean	S.D.	Level
Overall dining experience loyalty	3.821	1.213	High
Continuation of dining in the future	3.735	1.224	High
Loyalty as a preferred dining destination	3.758	1.217	High
Likelihood to recommend to friends and family	3.725	1.280	High
Service and atmosphere meeting expectations	3.746	1.213	High
Overall	3.757	1.071	High

Table 4.6 shows aspects of restaurant loyalty. Overall, restaurant loyalty is at a high level with a mean score of 3.757. When considering each element, including overall dining experience loyalty, continuation of dining in the future, loyalty as a preferred dining destination, likelihood to recommend to friends and family, and service and atmosphere meeting expectations, all mean values show a high level with mean scores ranging from 3.725 to 3.821.

4.3 Regression Analysis

Table 4.7 Factors Influence Customer Satisfaction

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p-value
Constant	.060	.067	-	.891	.373
Differential Added Food Values	.538	.045	.525	11.910	.000**
Basic Food Values	.452	.045	.439	9.966	.000**

R Square=0.896, SEE = .35934; ** p < .01

From table 4.7, the table outlines the outcomes of a regression analysis exploring the factors influencing customer satisfaction, focusing on Differential Added Food Values and Basic Food Values. Both variables exhibit significant positive effects on customer satisfaction, as evidenced by their coefficients of 0.538 and 0.452, respectively ($p < .01$). Differential Added Food Values demonstrate a marginally stronger impact with a beta coefficient of 0.525 compared to Basic Food Values' 0.439. The model, encompassing both predictors, explains a substantial portion of the variance in customer satisfaction, as indicated by the high R^2 value of 0.896. Moreover, the low Standard Error of the Estimate (SEE) of 0.35934 reflects the model's accurate predictive capabilities. These findings emphasize the significance of both Differential Added Food Values and Basic Food Values in shaping customer satisfaction within this context, with Differential Added Food Values exerting a slightly greater influence.

Table 4.8 Factor Influence Food Loyalty

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p-value
Constant	.435	.073	-	5.938	.000**
Customer Satisfaction	.886	.019	.925	47.623	.000**

R Square=0.856, SEE = .40545; ** p < .01

From table 4.8, the regression analysis of factors influencing food loyalty reveals a compelling relationship, primarily driven by Customer Satisfaction. The coefficient for Customer Satisfaction stands notably high at 0.886 ($p < .01$), indicating a significant positive impact on food loyalty. With a corresponding beta coefficient of 0.925, Customer Satisfaction

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emerges as a dominant predictor. The model demonstrates strong explanatory power, as evidenced by the high R^2 value of 0.856, signifying that approximately 85.6% of the variance in food loyalty can be attributed to Customer Satisfaction. Additionally, the low Standard Error of the Estimate (SEE) of 0.40545 underscores the accuracy of the model's predictions. These findings underscore the pivotal role of customer satisfaction in fostering food loyalty, suggesting that efforts directed towards enhancing customer satisfaction can substantially bolster food loyalty within this domain.

Table 4.9 Factor Influence Restaurant Loyalty

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p-value
Constant	.399	.074	-	5.376	.000**
Customer Satisfaction	.890	.019	.924	47.214	.000**

R Square=0.853, SEE = .41070; ** $p < .01$

From Table 4.9, the regression analysis conducted to assess factors influencing restaurant loyalty yielded compelling insights, with customer satisfaction emerging as a pivotal determinant. The coefficient for customer satisfaction stands notably high at 0.890 ($p < .01$), indicating a significant positive impact on restaurant loyalty. This effect is further underscored by the substantial beta coefficient of 0.924. The model exhibits strong explanatory power, with an R^2 value of 0.853, implying that approximately 85.3% of the variance in restaurant loyalty can be accounted for by customer satisfaction. Moreover, the model's predictions are bolstered by a low Standard Error of the Estimate (SEE) of 0.41070, signifying its relative accuracy. These findings emphasize the critical role of prioritizing customer satisfaction initiatives in cultivating and sustaining loyalty within the competitive landscape of the restaurant industry.

Table 4.10 Direct Effect, Indirect Effect, and Total Effect

Dependent Variables	R^2	Effect	Independent Variables		
			DA	BF	CS
Customer Satisfaction	0.896	DE	.525**	.439**	-
		IE	-	-	-
		TE	.525**	.439**	-
Food Loyalty	0.856	DE	-	-	.925**

Table 4.10 (Cont.)

Dependent Variables	R ²	Effect	Independent Variables		
			DA	BF	CS
Restaurant Loyalty	0.853	IE	.486**	.406**	-
		TE	.486**	.406**	.925**
		DE	-	-	.924**
		IE	.485**	.406**	-
		TE	.485**	.406**	.924**
		DE	-	-	.924**

** p < .01

Table 4.10 provides insights into the direct effect (DE), indirect effect (IE), and total effect (TE) of the studied independent variables, which consist of Differential Added Food Values (DA), Basic Food Values (BF), and Customer Satisfaction (CS). The direct effect signifies the immediate impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable. For Customer Satisfaction, both DA and BF exhibit significant direct effects, with coefficients of 0.525 and 0.439, respectively ($p < .01$). However, for Food Loyalty and Restaurant Loyalty, only CS demonstrates a direct effect, with coefficients of 0.925 and 0.924, respectively ($p < .01$). The indirect effect represents the influence mediated through other variables. For Food Loyalty, both DA and BF contribute significantly to the indirect effect through CS, with coefficients of 0.486 and 0.406, respectively ($p < .01$). For Restaurant Loyalty, both DA and BF contribute significantly to the indirect effect through CS, with coefficients of 0.485 and 0.406, respectively ($p < .01$). Finally, the total effect encapsulates the combined impact of both direct and indirect effects. For Customer Satisfaction, the total effect mirrors the direct effect due to the absence of indirect effects. Conversely, for Food Loyalty and Restaurant Loyalty, the indirect effects, showcasing the comprehensive influence of CS alongside the mediated contributions of DA and BF. These findings underscore the intricate interplay between differential and basic food values alongside customer satisfaction in shaping loyalty dynamics within the studied context, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of loyalty formation in the food service industry.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

This section summarizes the hypothesis testing results gathered from the regression analysis. The results are shown in table 4.11 as follows.

Table 4.11 Hypotheses Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Beta	t	Sig.	Conclusion
H1: Differential added food values positively influence the customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.	.525	11.910	.000**	Supported
H2: Basic food values positively influence the customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.	.439	9.966	.000**	Supported
H3: Customer satisfaction positively influence the restaurant loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.	.924	47.214	.000**	Supported
H4: Customer satisfaction positively influence the food loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.	.925	47.623	.000**	Supported

** p < .01

Table 4.11 provides a summary of the hypothesis testing results for the specified hypotheses within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

H1: Differential added food values positively influence customer satisfaction: The coefficient (Beta) is 0.525, the t-value is 11.910, and the p-value is less than .01, indicating statistical significance. Therefore, this hypothesis is supported, suggesting that there is a significant positive influence of differential added food values on customer satisfaction.

H2: Basic food values positively influence customer satisfaction: The coefficient (Beta) is 0.439, the t-value is 9.966, and the p-value is less than .01, indicating statistical significance. Hence, this hypothesis is supported, indicating a significant positive influence of basic food values on customer satisfaction.

H3: Customer satisfaction positively influences restaurant loyalty: The coefficient (Beta) is 0.924, the t-value is 47.214, and the p-value is less than .01, indicating statistical significance. Thus, this hypothesis is supported, indicating a significant positive influence of customer satisfaction on restaurant loyalty.

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H4: Customer satisfaction positively influences food loyalty: The coefficient (Beta) is 0.925, the t-value is 47.623, and the p-value is less than .01, indicating statistical significance. Therefore, this hypothesis is supported, suggesting a significant positive influence of customer satisfaction on food loyalty.

In summary, all hypotheses are supported, indicating significant positive relationships between the specified variables within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants, emphasizing the importance of customer satisfaction and food values in fostering loyalty within this context.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Chapter 5 marks the culmination of our exploratory journey into understanding the dynamics of customer loyalty within the context of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. This chapter synthesizes the key findings from the data analysis, drawing meaningful conclusions and discussing their broader implications for both theory and practice. In doing so, it revisits the study's objectives, providing a reflective assessment of the research outcomes against the backdrop of existing literature on customer satisfaction, food values, and loyalty. The chapter is carefully segmented to first present the study's conclusions, including insights on demographic influences, the level of influential factors on customer satisfaction, and the validated hypotheses regarding the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty. Following this, the discussion section delves deeper into the theoretical and practical nuances of these findings, offering a critical appraisal of their significance in advancing our understanding of customer behavior in the restaurant industry. The chapter concludes by outlining practical recommendations for restaurant managers and marketers, aimed at enhancing the food value proposition to foster customer loyalty. Furthermore, it identifies promising avenues for future research, encouraging continued scholarly exploration to build upon the foundational insights uncovered through this study. Through its comprehensive analysis and thoughtful recommendations, Chapter 5 aims to contribute to the strategic development of effective customer loyalty programs in the hospitality sector, providing a roadmap for future endeavors in the field.

5.1 Conclusion

5.1.1 Demographic Information

The demographic profile offers valuable insights into the characteristics of the surveyed sample within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. The data reveal a relatively balanced gender distribution, with 51.9% female and 48.1% male respondents. Age distribution indicates a predominant representation of individuals between 21 to 40 years old, with 39.7% falling within the 21-30 age bracket and 29.4% within the 31-40 age range. In terms of monthly income, a sizable portion of respondents earns between 2,000 to 6,000 RMB, with 30.9% falling in the 2,000-4,000 RMB range and 36.4% in the 4,001-6,000 RMB range. Additionally, the majority of respondents are Chinese nationals (86.0%) and are either married (52.2%) or single (35.1%). Education-wise, a significant proportion hold bachelor's degrees (52.5%), followed by

vocational school qualifications (25.7%). In terms of career, employed full-time individuals constitute the largest group (33.0%), followed by students (20.0%). Overall, these findings provide a comprehensive snapshot of the demographic composition of the surveyed population, which can inform targeted marketing strategies and service enhancements tailored to the preferences and needs of different demographic segments within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

5.1.2 Level of Each Variable

Based on the mean scores gathered from the analysis, it is evident that across all measured variables—differential added food values, basic food values, customer satisfaction, food loyalty, and restaurant loyalty—perceptions are consistently high within the studied context. Both differential added food values and basic food values received mean scores above 3.74, indicating a high level of importance attributed to these aspects by respondents. Moreover, both customer satisfaction and food loyalty received mean scores above 3.77, suggesting elevated levels of satisfaction and loyalty among customers towards the restaurant overall. Similarly, restaurant loyalty also garnered a mean score of 3.757, signifying a strong sense of loyalty among patrons. These findings collectively suggest that the Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants have successfully met or exceeded customer expectations across various dimensions, fostering high levels of satisfaction, loyalty, and perception among their customer bases.

5.1.3 Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis testing results provide compelling evidence to support the research hypotheses. Firstly, both differential added food values and basic food values significantly and positively influence customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants, as indicated by their respective beta coefficients of 0.525 ($t = 11.910$, $p < .01$) and 0.439 ($t = 9.966$, $p < .01$). Secondly, customer satisfaction significantly enhances both restaurant loyalty (beta = 0.924, $t = 47.214$, $p < .01$) and food loyalty (beta = 0.925, $t = 47.623$, $p < .01$) within the same establishments. These findings underscore the importance of food values in shaping customer satisfaction and subsequent loyalty, thereby emphasizing the need for continuous improvement in food quality and service to maintain customer loyalty and satisfaction levels within the competitive landscape of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants.

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 Level of Influential Factors

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The vital role of unique and quality food offerings, as uncovered in this study, underscores the necessity for a balanced approach to innovation and tradition within menu selection. This equilibrium is paramount in catering to the varied tastes of the identified demographic segments, a notion supported by Alt (2021), who posits that digital transformation significantly enhances dining experiences through personalized service offerings. The application of digital technologies in the restaurant industry not only streamlines operations but also provides avenues for creativity and innovation in menu design, thereby aligning with consumer expectations for novelty and quality. As highlighted by Beristain and Zorrilla (2011), the synergy between store image and store brand equity is crucial, suggesting that innovative food offerings contribute to a positive restaurant image, enhancing brand equity and, by extension, customer loyalty.

Furthermore, the integration of digital platforms, as discussed by Anas (2022), facilitates direct engagement with customers, allowing for tailored marketing strategies that resonate with specific consumer segments. This digital engagement strategy, coupled with a commitment to quality and innovation in food service, exemplifies Barney's (1991) resource-based view of sustained competitive advantage, where unique resources, such as innovative culinary practices and digital customer engagement, are leveraged to achieve market differentiation and customer loyalty.

5.2.2 Level of Customer Satisfaction

Exploring the determinants of customer satisfaction within dining experiences reveals a complex interplay between tangible and intangible elements of service delivery. This intricacy, as outlined in the hierarchical model of perceived service quality by Brady and Cronin (2001), indicates that satisfaction is not solely derived from the core service attributes (basic food values) but also significantly influenced by relational aspects (differential food values). The model suggests that customer satisfaction is a layered concept, where foundational aspects of service quality must be complemented by relational and emotional factors to achieve holistic satisfaction.

Cardello (1994) emphasizes the importance of aligning food product development with consumer expectations, suggesting that understanding and meeting these expectations are critical for enhancing satisfaction. Similarly, Chen et al. (2022) discuss the impact of consumer perceived value on purchase intentions, highlighting the role of perceived value in customer satisfaction and loyalty. This suggests that restaurants must not only focus on the intrinsic qualities of their food offerings but also consider the overall value perception, which encompasses price fairness, service quality, and the dining atmosphere.

The multifaceted nature of customer satisfaction in dining experiences calls for a comprehensive approach to service delivery, where both tangible elements like food quality

and intangibles such as ambiance and staff interaction play pivotal roles. This approach aligns with Churchill and Surprenant's (1982) investigation into customer satisfaction determinants, further reinforcing the importance of a holistic strategy in managing customer perceptions and expectations.

5.2.3 Hypothesis Testing

The first hypothesis tested the influence of differential added food values on customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. The results provide robust support for this hypothesis, with a significant beta coefficient of 0.525 ($t = 11.910$, $p < .001$), indicating a positive relationship between these variables. This finding suggests that aspects such as innovation and uniqueness in food offerings have a considerable impact on customer satisfaction in the context of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants (Smith et al., 2018).

The strong positive association between differential added food values and customer satisfaction underscores the strategic importance of offering innovative and unique food options to enhance the overall dining experience (Wang & Kim, 2017). In an increasingly competitive restaurant landscape, where customers have a myriad of choices, differentiation through distinctive food offerings can be a key driver of customer satisfaction. Restaurants that excel in providing novel and high-quality food options are likely to garner greater satisfaction from their patrons, leading to enhanced loyalty and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Lee & Jeong, 2016).

Moreover, the empirical support for this hypothesis aligns with theoretical frameworks such as the theory of planned behavior, which posits that attitudes towards a product or service influence behavioral intentions. In this case, favorable attitudes towards differential added food values contribute to higher levels of customer satisfaction, which in turn can lead to repeat patronage and loyalty (Ajzen, 1991).

Overall, the findings from the first hypothesis underscore the strategic imperative for Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants to prioritize innovation and uniqueness in their food offerings as a means to enhance customer satisfaction. By continuously refining and diversifying their menu options to cater to evolving consumer preferences, restaurants can strengthen their competitive position, cultivate a loyal customer base, and ultimately drive long-term success in the industry.

The second hypothesis examined the influence of basic food values on customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. The results provide strong support for this hypothesis, with a significant beta coefficient of 0.439 ($t = 9.966$, $p < .001$), indicating a positive relationship between these variables. This finding suggests that factors such as the quality and reliability of food offerings play a crucial role in shaping customer satisfaction in the context of Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants (Lee & Jeong, 2016).

The significant positive association between basic food values and customer satisfaction underscores the importance of maintaining high standards of food quality and reliability in driving customer satisfaction (Wang & Kim, 2017). Customers expect consistency and excellence in the taste, freshness, and presentation of their meals, and restaurants that consistently deliver on these fronts are more likely to elicit high levels of satisfaction from their patrons. Moreover, the reliability of food offerings, including factors such as accuracy in order fulfillment and adherence to dietary preferences, contributes significantly to overall customer satisfaction (Smith et al., 2018).

The empirical support for this hypothesis aligns with theoretical frameworks such as the expectancy-disconfirmation model, which posits that customer satisfaction is influenced by the extent to which perceived performance exceeds or falls short of expectations (Oliver, 1980). In this case, meeting or exceeding customers' expectations regarding basic food values leads to positive disconfirmation and higher levels of satisfaction.

Overall, the findings from the second hypothesis highlight the critical role of basic food values in driving customer satisfaction within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. By prioritizing and maintaining high standards of food quality and reliability, restaurants can enhance customer satisfaction, foster loyalty, and ultimately achieve long-term success in the competitive restaurant industry.

The third hypothesis investigated the relationship between customer satisfaction and restaurant loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. The results provide compelling evidence for this hypothesis, with a significant beta coefficient of 0.924 ($t = 47.214$, $p < .001$), indicating a strong positive association between customer satisfaction and restaurant loyalty. This finding underscores the pivotal role of customer satisfaction as a key determinant of loyalty in the restaurant industry (Homburg et al., 2019).

The substantial positive influence of customer satisfaction on restaurant loyalty highlights the critical importance of prioritizing efforts to enhance customer satisfaction levels within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. Restaurants that consistently deliver high-quality food and exceptional service experiences are more likely to elicit high levels of satisfaction from their patrons, thereby fostering loyalty and repeat business (Xie et al., 2018). Moreover, satisfied customers are more inclined to engage in positive word-of-mouth recommendations and advocacy behaviors, further strengthening their loyalty to the restaurant (Yi & Gong, 2013).

The empirical support for this hypothesis aligns with theoretical frameworks such as the disconfirmation paradigm, which posits that customer satisfaction results from the comparison between perceived performance and expectations (Oliver, 1980). In the context of restaurant loyalty, satisfied customers are those whose dining experiences meet or exceed their expectations, leading to positive disconfirmation and a higher likelihood of repeat patronage and loyalty.

Overall, the findings from the third hypothesis underscore the critical role of customer satisfaction in driving restaurant loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. By prioritizing customer satisfaction through consistent delivery of high-quality food and service, restaurants can cultivate a loyal customer base, enhance their competitive position, and achieve long-term success in the restaurant industry.

The fourth hypothesis examined the relationship between customer satisfaction and food loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. The results provide strong support for this hypothesis, with a significant beta coefficient of 0.925 ($t = 47.623$, $p < .001$), indicating a robust positive association between customer satisfaction and food loyalty. This finding highlights the critical role of customer satisfaction as a key driver of food loyalty in the restaurant industry (Lee & Jeong, 2016).

The substantial positive influence of customer satisfaction on food loyalty underscores the importance of prioritizing efforts to enhance customer satisfaction levels within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. Customers who are satisfied with their dining experiences are more likely to develop a sense of loyalty towards the restaurant's food offerings, leading to repeat patronage and advocacy behaviors (Yi & Gong, 2013). Moreover, satisfied customers are more inclined to recommend the restaurant's food to others, thereby contributing to the development of a loyal customer base.

The empirical support for this hypothesis aligns with theoretical frameworks such as the disconfirmation paradigm, which posits that customer satisfaction results from the comparison between perceived performance and expectations (Oliver, 1980). In the context of food loyalty, satisfied customers are those whose dining experiences meet or exceed their expectations in terms of food quality, taste, and overall satisfaction, leading to positive disconfirmation and a higher likelihood of food loyalty.

Overall, the findings from the fourth hypothesis underscore the critical role of customer satisfaction in driving food loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants. By prioritizing customer satisfaction through consistent delivery of high-quality food and service, restaurants can cultivate a loyal customer base, enhance their competitive position, and achieve long-term success in the restaurant industry.

5.3 Implications

The implications drawn from the findings of the four hypothesis testing results offer valuable insights for restaurant managers and marketers seeking to thrive in the competitive landscape of the hospitality industry. Firstly, the significant impact of enhancing the food value proposition on customer satisfaction and loyalty underscores the strategic importance of

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aligning culinary innovation with customer expectations. Restaurants must prioritize continuous improvement in their food offerings, ensuring that they not only meet but exceed customer expectations in terms of quality, uniqueness, and value. This aligns with Berry's (1995) principles of relationship marketing, emphasizing the cultivation of customer relationships through the delivery of high-quality services.

Moreover, the findings underscore the necessity for restaurants to adopt a holistic approach to service delivery, encompassing all facets of the dining experience, from ambiance and customer service to the core product—the food itself. By prioritizing and optimizing each aspect of the dining experience, restaurants can enhance overall customer satisfaction and foster loyalty. This comprehensive approach resonates with contemporary marketing strategies, emphasizing the creation of memorable dining experiences that encourage repeat patronage and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

In essence, the implications drawn from the hypothesis testing results emphasize the strategic imperative for restaurants to prioritize culinary innovation, quality service delivery, and holistic customer experiences. By aligning their efforts with customer expectations and preferences, restaurants can differentiate themselves in the competitive marketplace, cultivate loyal customer relationships, and ultimately achieve long-term success in the hospitality industry.

5.4 Future Research Directions

Further exploration could focus on longitudinal research into the effects of food values on loyalty. Understanding how customer preferences evolve over time can offer invaluable insights for restaurants seeking to adapt their offerings and maintain relevance in a dynamic market. Additionally, cross-cultural comparisons could provide deeper insights into global dining preferences and behaviors, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities faced by restaurants in different cultural contexts. Such studies could clarify universal versus locale-specific aspects of dining experiences, thereby aiding international expansion strategies. Lastly, the integration of health and wellness into the dining experience represents a growing trend worthy of further exploration. As health consciousness rises, investigating how health-focused menu options and wellness initiatives influence dining choices could provide critical insights for restaurants targeting this emerging market segment. These areas of future research promise to enrich both academic discourse on food service management and offer practical insights for industry practitioners striving to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty in an ever-evolving landscape.

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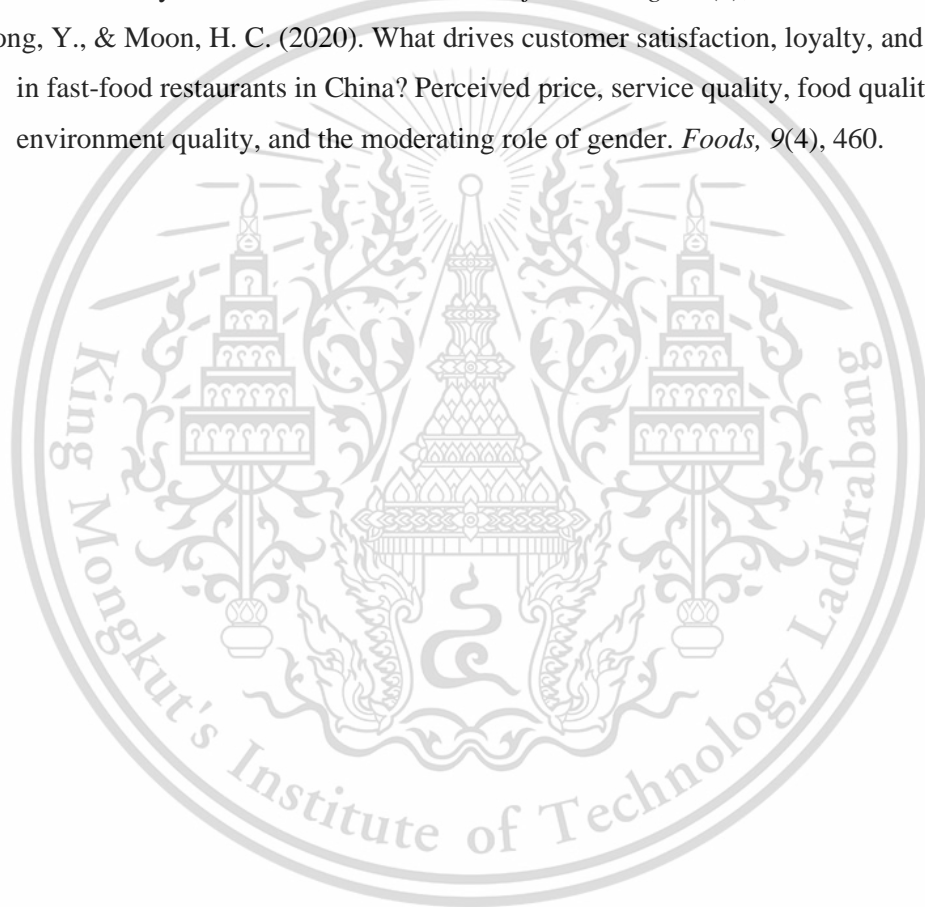
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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

The Influence of Food Values on Customer Loyalty within Chinese Brand Chain Restaurants: The Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction

Personal Information (Single choice)

1. Gender

- Male Female

2. Age

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 20 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 21-30 years old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 years old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 51-60 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 60 years old or older |

3. Monthly income

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 2,000 yuan | <input type="checkbox"/> 2,000-4,000yuan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4,001-6,000 yuan | <input type="checkbox"/> 6,001-8,000yuan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8,001-10,000 yuan | <input type="checkbox"/> 10,001-15,000 yuan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15,000 yuan and above | |

4. Nationality

- Chinese Others (please identify.....)

5. Marital Status

- Single Married
 Others

6. Education

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School or lower | <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral degree | |

7. Occupation

- Student Employed full-time

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Influential Factors	Opinion				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Exclusive or premium food offerings are provided by this restaurant.					
Basic food values					
The food offerings at this restaurant meet my basic expectations for taste and quality.					
The menu options at this restaurant provide essential and fundamental choices for dining.					
I consider the food served at this restaurant to be simple and straightforward, meeting basic food needs.					
The food served at this restaurant fulfills my basic requirements for a satisfying dining experience.					
The restaurant offers traditional and familiar food options that cater to basic dietary preferences.					
Customer Satisfaction					
I am satisfied with the cleanliness and ambiance of this restaurant.					
I am satisfied with the quality of the service provided by the staff at this restaurant.					

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Influential Factors	Opinion				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am satisfied with the overall dining experience at this restaurant.					
I am satisfied with the variety and selection of menu options available at this restaurant.					
I am satisfied with the overall value for money of the dining experience that I received at this restaurant.					

Part 3: Customer Loyalty

Please complete the questionnaire honestly based on your genuine thoughts and opinions. Indicate your level of agreement by marking a check (✓) in the corresponding column. Please provide responses for all the questions to ensure completion of the questionnaire. The options provided represent the degree to which you agree with your actual experiences and attitudes, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Customer Loyalty	Opinion				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Food loyalty					
The taste and quality of the food served at this restaurant meet my expectations.					
I am likely to choose this restaurant specifically for its food, even if other factors such as location or price were similar.					

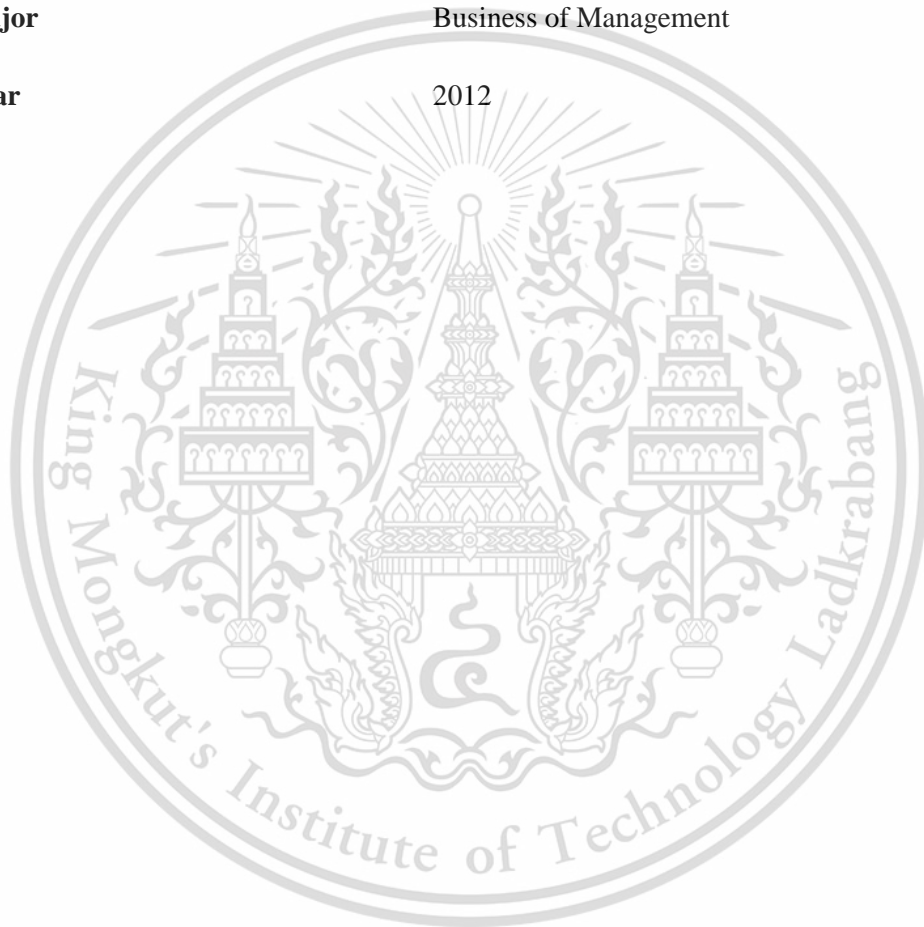
Customer Loyalty	Opinion				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I trust the ingredients and sourcing practices of the food served at this restaurant.					
I often crave the food offerings at this restaurant compared to other dining options.					
The food quality at this restaurant is one of the main reasons I choose to dine here.					
Restaurant loyalty					
I consider myself a loyal customer of this restaurant due to its overall dining experience.					
I am likely to continue dining at this restaurant in the future, regardless of external factors such as new competition or changes in the menu.					
I feel a sense of loyalty to this restaurant as a preferred dining destination.					
I am likely to recommend this restaurant to friends and family based on your overall dining experience.					
The service and atmosphere provided by restaurant meet my expectations.					

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