**Research Paper**

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# CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS SERVICE QUALITY IN FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS OF DELHI & GURUGRAM

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## ABSTRACT

*E*ating is arguably an essential activity of human being that makes them revive the lost energy and rejuvenate. But these days, rapid urbanization coupled with busy lifestyle and advancement in technology has greatly changed the way of life of Indian society. The effects of these changes have altered the tradition of cooking and eating at home. Nowadays, eating out is steadily becoming a norm which was once conditional on a celebratory occasion. Moreover, the Indian diaspora presents a significant array of opportunities in the food service domain; the Indian food and beverage service industry is likely to become one of the most vibrant industries to witness rapid and unprecedented growth over the recent past.  The **NRAI (2016)** in their research finds that the Indian food services market will grow at the rate of 10% per annum till 2021. Further, it also identifies that the current market share of Indian food services is Rs. 3,091.1 billion which is estimated to be Rs. 4,981.3 billion by 2021. Additionally, people have become now more reliant on ready-to-eat meals & fast food which take less time for preparation than traditional cooking methods.

Over the last few decades, fast food has infiltrated every nook and cranny of our society. As Indian economy is growing and large number of women is joining the workforce, the trend of consumption of fast food will grow more and more, if good quality food and service is offered to customer. Today quality is an important consideration. It is often defined as "consistently meeting or exceeding customer's expectations" **Moore (1987), Lewis and Creedon (1989)**. The present research paper seeks to explore the consumer perception towards service quality in fast food restaurants located in Delhi and Gurugram cities.

**KEY WORDS:** *Fast food, Perception, Service quality, Delhi, India*

## INTRODUCTION

Fast food has become indispensable in the lives of people across societies. It is served at restaurants, drive-through, stadiums, airports, zoos, high schools, elementary schools, and universities, on cruise ships, trains, and airplanes, fuel stations, and even at hospital cafeterias. It has now become so common place that it has acquired an air of inevitability, as though a fact of modern life.

According to **Oxford Dictionary (2013)** Fast food is food which could be easily prepared, processed food served in snack bars and restaurants as a quick meal or to be taken away. Today, the fast pace of life combined with easy access, advertising, marketing and

high exposure to fast food means fast foods are often chosen over foods that are prepared at home. This is also reflected in the report published by **Zion Market Research (2017)** which predicts that global fast food market is valued at over USD 539.63 billion in 2016 and is expected to reach above USD 690.80 billion by 2022. **The Economic Times (2013)** conducted a survey on Indian fast food restaurants. In their research they found very interesting trends which are mentioned in table 1 below.

### Table 1: Growth of Fast Food Restaurants in India

|  | 2011 | 2020 | CAGR* |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Food Market** | 100 b | 240 b | 11% |
| **Fast Food Restaurants** | 15 b | 50 b | 16% |
| **Fast Food Restaurant-Chains** | 720 m | 5.6 b | 27% |

CAGR* - Compound Annual Growth Rate
*Source: Adapted from ET Bureau (2013)*

From table 1, it is clear that the food market is expected to be 240 billion by 2020 whereas the fast food restaurants and fast food restaurant chain market is expected to grow at 16% and 27% respectively.

The growth of fast food market has also evolved a new market of food- Franchising. It is perceived as a beeline to expansion and growth of a business. Though food franchising in India started with the entry of McDonald's in 1996 followed by other international brands such as Dominos, Subway, Pizza Hut and KFC, these foreign players have established themselves strongly and currently dominate the organized Indian fast food market with an aggregate share of 63 per cent (based on the number of operational outlets) **Research and Market Report 2015**).

Indian brands like Nirulas, Haldiram's, Bikanervala, etc. have also come up with their fast food business and are competing in a big way to increase their market share. To attract customers to fast food restaurant or any other outlet service quality is must. It is a major discriminator between superior/inferior product and service.

Currently Service quality is one of the major research areas. The concept of service quality was given by Parasuraman. He defines service quality as global judgment or attitude relating to overall excellence or superiority of the service **(Parasuraman et al., 1988)**. It involves a comparison of customer expectations with customer perceptions of actual service performance **(Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988).** The marketing academics **Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (in the literature, known as PZB) (1985)** attempted, proposed, developed and iterated a conceptual framework to quantify service quality by a measurable scale termed SERVQUAL.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Service quality has always been a concern for industry stake holders as it has always impacted the profit margins. The research conducted by scholars and researchers also reveals the same. As **Anderson and Zeithaml (1984)** states that the substance and determinants of quality may be undefined, but its importance to firms and consumers is unequivocal. It has demonstrated the strategic benefits of quality in contributing to market share and return on investment.

**Jiang and Rosenbloom (2005)** identified that in this technological age where instant price comparisons on the web are available at the click of a mouse, non-price competitive advantages, such as service quality, become even more critical in retaining and attracting customers.

A number of studies were also conducted on hospitality industry which is an amalgamation of accommodation, food & beverage, travel & tourism and recreational services.

**Tabaku E. and Cerri S. (2016)** assessed the quality of the service offered by the hotels in the Albanian coast and the effect of service quality on the satisfaction of hotel customers and confirmed the positive effect of service quality on customer satisfaction. **Dražen Mari et al. (2016)** analyzed the hotel tangible and intangible Service Quality Components in the Kragujevac, one of the five largest cities in Serbia and the research revealed that consumers generally tend to pay more importance to intangible attributes in hospitality and hotel industry such as confidence in the hotel's staff, and be sure that no aspect of the provided service will lead to a mistake or misunderstanding. Precision, accuracy, security, speed of service, staff's courtesy and personal attention are service quality elements which were found important to the guests of the hotel. With regard to tangible attributes clean and comfortable rooms were a requirement, while some additional elements, such as sports facilities, lawns, swimming pools or sauna do not make a decisive impact on the choice of the guest for a certain hotel. **Huang**

**(2014)** compared the different perspectives with regard to service quality between leisure travelers and hoteliers in Taiwan. The results showed that perspectives of leisure travelers differed from the hoteliers as in the facility management, and speed of service and appearance factors rather than service factor. **Giritiloglu et al. (2014)** researched the key dimensions of food and beverage service quality and measured customer perceptions in spa hotels of Turkey and revealed six quality dimensions: "assurance and employee knowledge"; "healthy and attractive food"; "empathy"; "tangibles"; "responsiveness of service delivery"; "reliability" and found that the highest customer expectations were for tangibles, assurance and employee knowledge whereas the highest gaps were for healthy and attractive food and "tangibles.**Chin and Tsai (2013)** assessed service quality of luxurious restaurants in International hotel chains in Taiwan and found reliability as the chief evaluation dimension followed by empathy and a positive relationship between quality of service and repeat patronage **Maghziet. al. (2011)** conducted a study to understand the influence of service quality and customer satisfaction on brand trust for hotel services in Dubai and the result of the study indicates that both service quality and customer satisfaction have positive influence on brand trust.

India is considered to be one of the fastest growing economies of the world. A number of studies were conducted on India by different scholars. **Anil Kumar Kalotra and, Nitya Sharma (2017)** measured Service Quality using SERVQUAL in Hospitality Industry in Delhi to assess the quality of services hospitality industry is providing and revealed that the total average SERVQUAL gap for all the five dimensions has received negative gap score which indicated that the service experiences are generating unsatisfactory perceptions among the hospitality consumers. **Shikha Bhagat (2016)** conducted an analysis on customer satisfaction level in fast food industry amongst the major competitor's in Delhi- NCR. The restaurants on which the study was conducted were Mc Donald, PIZZA HUT, KFC, Subway, Domino's etc. and the findings reveal that taste, price, variety and employee services are the key factors for satisfaction in fast food industry. **S.J.Manjunath** and **Shireen Reginald (2016)** conducted a research on customer satisfaction in fast food industry in Mysore  and the results revealed that service quality and physical design are the key factors for satisfaction in fast food industry whereas  service

quality, Product Quality, Physical Design, Price, Customer satisfaction, Physical Environment, Taste, and Promotion are the main factors influencing the behavior of consumers in Mysore and a significant positive relationship between the above mentioned attributes will serve to be a key to customer satisfaction. **C. Saranya Priyadarshini (2016)** conducted a study on consumer preference on fast food outlets in Coimbatoreand the study investigated that majority of the consumers visit fast food outlets once in a week and  spend more than 15% of their monthly income on fast food. Further, the most favorite cuisine preferred by the consumers is western junk foods and fast food is often an option due to convenience pricing whereas the discount offered at the fast food outlets are considered an effective promotional activity. **Shivani Verma (2015)** conducted a study in Ludhiana which was undertaken to measure the service quality in International fast food chains in Ludhiana. The findings show that the service quality offered did not meet the customers' expectations on most aspects. It was found that Empathy had the highest gap whereas Reliability had the lowest gap.  Additionally, the results further state that amongst the five dimensions the reliability dimension was the most significant and tangibles dimension was the least significant. Out of the five international fast food chains taken for study, Pizza Hut meets highest satisfaction levels on the service quality dimensions as perceived by the consumers.

**M.Mondurailingam and al. (2015)**, researched on service quality and customer satisfaction as well asrelationship between demographic variables and factors of customer satisfaction towards Chinese Food restaurants in Chennai. The findings show that customers are more satisfied towards Appetizers and soup varieties and there is no association between the gender and overall satisfaction level towards Chinese Food Varieties.**Thakkar, K.** and **Thatte, M. (2014),** conducted a research on consumer perception of food franchise with the objective to seek consumers' perception about two fast food franchises i.e., McDonalds and KFC in Thane and found that consumers laid high importance to factors such as quality of food, facility layout, service quality- speed and cleanliness. However, taste and quality of food items were the most important factors that influenced consumers.

## OBJECTIVES

- To establish the significance of difference between expected & perceived Service Quality of fast food restaurants located in Delhi & Gurugram (Gurgaon).
- To explore the brand preference amongst the consumers of Fast Food Restaurants (Delhi & Gurugram).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### The instrument

The empirical research was conducted using primary data with a structured questionnaire based on the different dimensions of SERVQUAL and was prepared after complete review of literature. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. The first section comprising forty five variables measured the respondents' expectations and perceptions regarding service quality in fast food restaurants. The second section examined the respondents' frequency of visit to various fast food restaurants in Delhi & NCR which composed of ten variables. The third section of questionnaire encompassing five variables measured the reasons for rise in fast food culturewhereas fourth and the lastsectionformed of demographic profile.

The level of expected and perceived service quality was measured on the basis of 45 restaurant attributes which were adapted from **Parasuraman and al. (1985).** These attributes represent five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The level of agreement with given statements was assessed using a five point Likert scale, with anchors "strongly disagree" as 1 and "strongly agree" as 5.

The questionnaires were distributed in different fast food restaurants in Delhi & Gurugram. A structured convenience sampling method was utilized to collect data. Questionnaires were distributed to the customers that were willing to participate in the research, after their dining experience (e.g. after they paid the bill). In all, two hundred questionnaires were filled. Data were analyzed using the statistical package SPSS and in order to meet the goals, descriptive and bivariate (paired sample t-test) statistical analyses were conducted.

## ANALYSIS

### Respondent's profile

To conduct the present research the data was collected from the selected fast food outlets of Delhi and Gurugram. Table 2 shows the profile of respondents in the valid percentage.

### Table 2: Profile of survey respondents

| AGE | | GENDER | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Below 20 | 19.0 | Male | 47.5 |
| 21-30 | 66.0 | Female | 52.5 |
| 31-40 | 14.0 | NATIONALITY | |
| 41-50 | 1.0 | Indian | 99.0 |
| MARITAL STATUS | | Other | 1.0 |
| Single | 73.5 | ANNUAL INCOME | |
| Married | 26.5 | Below 2.5 lac | 49.5 |
| EDUCATION LEVEL | | 2.5-5.0 lac | 19.0 |
| 10th | 1.5 | 5.0-7.5 lac | 13.5 |
| 12th | 6.0 | 7.5-10.0 lac | 7.5 |
| Graduation | 43.5 | Above 10 lac | 5.0 |
| Post-Graduation | 40.5 | OCCUPATION | |
| Doctorate | 7.0 | Student | 41.0 |
| Others | 1.5 | Self-employed | 18.0 |
| | | Public Sector | 8.0 |
| | | Private sector | 26.5 |
| | | Any other | 6.0 |

From the table 2 it is clear that in all 200 respondents from different fast food outlets located in Delhi & Gurugram were contacted. Data pertaining to gender profile of all the respondents furnished in Table 2 indicates that 52.5% of the 200 respondents were female and the remaining 47.5% were male. The majority

of the respondents (41) were students and from private sector (26.5%). As far as educational profile is concerned majority of them were graduates (43.5%), followed by post-graduates (40.5%) and while 7% of respondents were doctorates.

Of the total 73.5 % of the respondents were unmarried single whereas married were 26.5%. As far as their income is concerned 49.5% fall below the income of 2.5 lakh, 19%were between 2.5-5.0 lakh, 13.5%, were between 5.0-7.5 lakh, and 7.5% were between 7.5-10.0 lakh and 5.0 % had above 10 lakh.

➢ **Objective 1: To establish the significance of difference between expected & perceived Service Quality of fast food restaurants located in Delhi & Gurugram (Gurgaon).**

To find the significance of difference between expected & perceived service quality of fast food restaurants descriptive and bivariate analysis was done. The mean, SD, Service Quality and paired t test values are presented in table 3.

### Table 3: Consumers' expectations and perceptions of service quality in restaurants

| Attributes of Fast Food Outlets | Expectation | | Perception | | Gap | t-Value* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | |
| V1 Visually appealing | 4.0350 | .77250 | 3.9000 | .80825 | -0.135 | 2.161 |
| V2Good parking facility | **3.4372** | 1.12134 | **3.2081** | 1.21317 | -0.2291 | 2.812 |
| V3 Satisfactory cleanliness | 3.9388 | .82046 | 3.9388 | .91502 | **0** | .167 |
| V4 Appealing decor and lighting | 3.8402 | .88758 | 3.8041 | .90639 | -0.0361 | .580 |
| V5Comfortable & visually appealing furniture and fixture | 3.9545 | .86849 | 3.6990 | 1.00061 | -0.2555 | 3.615 |
| V6 Well air conditioned sitting area | 3.9681 | .97511 | 3.9424 | 1.06219 | **-0.0257** | .244 |
| V7 Appealing promotional material (brochures, menu, pamphlets, tent cards, etc.) | 3.8050 | .94416 | 3.7100 | 1.03502 | -0.095 | 1.484 |
| V8 Professionally dressed employees | 3.9500 | .94974 | 3.8945 | 1.03178 | -0.0555 | .732 |
| V9 Effective food order placement counter and food order display | 3.8838 | .97254 | 3.6802 | 1.07108 | -0.2036 | 2.524 |
| V10 Good variety of items in the menu | 3.8608 | 1.03123 | 3.7077 | 1.08014 | -0.1531 | 2.241 |
| V11Good presentation of the food | 3.8352 | 1.00015 | 3.8087 | .99534 | -0.0265 | .000 |
| V12 Neat and clean public areas such as washroom | 3.7186 | 1.12869 | 3.5779 | 1.18181 | -0.1407 | 1.800 |
| V13 Connection with Wi-Fi and internet | **2.9797** | 1.30915 | **2.5879** | 1.32232 | **-0.3918** | 3.819 |
| V14 Take-away and drive through counter facility | 3.5800 | 1.26157 | 3.2513 | 1.30932 | -0.3287 | 3.629 |
| V15 Error-free billing system | 3.9900 | .88534 | 4.0000 | .95633 | **0.01** | -.166 |
| V16Information about the order delivery time in advance | 3.6667 | .99746 | 3.6263 | .99323 | -0.0404 | .576 |
| V17 Fulfillment of service delivery promises on time | 3.7475 | .91066 | 3.5505 | .99999 | -0.197 | 2.770 |
| V18Sincerity of employees in solving the problems of consumers | 3.8477 | .90754 | 3.7005 | .98801 | -0.1472 | 1.956 |
| V19 Delivery of the right order | 3.9798 | .91773 | **4.0102** | .90908 | 0.0304 | -.701 |
| V20 Fresh food and at the right temperature | 3.9347 | .90495 | 3.8900 | .87850 | -0.0447 | .672 |
| V21 Hygienic food | 3.8773 | 1.01089 | 3.7791 | 1.02454 | -0.0982 | 1.014 |
| V22Willingness of the employees to help consumers | 3.9588 | .85212 | 3.7353 | 1.08537 | -0.2235 | 2.797 |
| V23 Sympathetic response to the customer requests | 3.8521 | .94271 | 3.6824 | 1.05709 | -0.1697 | 2.096 |
| V24 Prompt & efficient services | 3.9401 | .84811 | 3.6766 | 1.02540 | -0.2635 | 3.730 |
| V25Value for money (Food) | 3.6875 | 1.00431 | 3.3395 | 1.13205 | -0.348 | 4.179 |
| V26 Effective complaint handling mechanism | 3.6706 | 1.04783 | 3.2367 | 1.07607 | **-0.4339** | 5.103 |
| V27 Satisfactorily accessibility | 4.0000 | .90243 | 3.7396 | 1.03090 | -0.2604 | 3.213 |
| V28 Good location | 3.9824 | .98794 | 3.9412 | 1.01879 | -0.0412 | .588 |
| V29Convenient operating hours | **4.0355** | .93155 | **3.8824** | 1.03102 | -0.1531 | 2.161 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| V30 Attractive promotional discounts and happy hours | 3.6923 | 1.10195 | 3.6412 | 3.35574 | -0.0511 | .210 |
| V31 Communicative employees | 3.8876 | .88930 | 3.7381 | 1.02214 | -0.1495 | 2.054 |
| V32 Knowledgeable employees | 3.7500 | 1.02178 | 3.6812 | 1.03019 | -0.0688 | .766 |
| V33 Skillful employees | 3.9337 | .90209 | 3.8545 | .82827 | -0.0792 | .854 |
| V34 Employees behaviourinstills confidence in consumers | 3.8294 | .88396 | 3.7706 | .96093 | -0.0588 | .876 |
| V35 Satisfactoryportion size (Food) | 3.7262 | 1.03647 | 3.5858 | 1.02064 | -0.1404 | 1.749 |
| V36 Good availability of accompaniments such as sauces, utensils, napkins, etc. | 3.9529 | .92827 | 3.7588 | .97638 | -0.1941 | 2.718 |
| V37 Tasty and flavorful food | 3.9763 | .98169 | 3.7857 | 1.03902 | -0.1906 | 2.353 |
| V38 Good quality of the food | **4.1726** | .84766 | 4.0710 | .88354 | -0.1016 | 1.447 |
| V39 Safe delivery of the food services | 3.8817 | .91167 | 3.7353 | 1.01202 | -0.1464 | 2.207 |
| V40 Good safety & security | 3.9512 | .93208 | 3.7455 | 1.03979 | -0.2057 | 2.797 |
| V41 Competent employees | 3.8155 | .93910 | 3.6303 | .93850 | -0.1852 | 2.931 |
| V42 Courteous and polite employees | 3.8994 | .82119 | 3.7784 | 1.01436 | -0.121 | 1.384 |
| V43 Consideration is given to specific needs of the consumers | 3.7882 | .94329 | 3.9349 | 3.25163 | 0.1467 | -.624 |
| V44 Consumers are given personal attention | 3.5357 | 1.06041 | 3.3452 | 1.06657 | -0.1905 | 2.375 |
| V45 Best interest of consumers is kept at heart | 3.5647 | 1.05972 | 3.2588 | 1.13735 | -0.3059 | 3.087 |

Note: * t-test (2-tailed Sig.) p < 0.05

Customers' expectations and perceptions are measured on a five point Likert-type scale, where the higher the score, the greater the expectation (perception) of restaurant service. The mean scores of customers' expectations ranged from 2.97 to 4.17. The lowest expectation item was "connectivity with Wi-Fi and internet and parking facility", which indicates that restaurant customers did not expect that there would be internet or parking facility at the outlet.

On the other hand, restaurant customers' highest expectations were regarding the "quality of the food as well as operating hours of the outlet". Thus, quality of the food is an important attribute that should be considered in meeting the customers' expectations. The overall mean score for service quality expectation items was 3.82. This score indicates rather high expectations of restaurant customers regarding the service quality.

The mean scores of customers' perceptions ranged from 2.58 to 4.07. The lowest perception items were "connectivity with Wi-Fi and internet" and "parking facility", which indicate that restaurant customers did not expect the parking and internet connectivity good. On the other hand, customers' highest perceptions were regarding the "quality of the food as well as right delivery of the order". The overall mean score for service quality perceptions items was 3.68. This score indicates rather high perceptions of restaurant customers regarding service quality.

According to the results in Table, restaurant customers' expectations are higher than their perceptions of delivered service. Thus, the SERVQUAL gap is negative for all restaurant attributes. A comparison of customers' perceptions of service quality with their expectations using the paired samples t-test indicated a statistically significant difference on 45 attributes. The narrowest gaps are for the attributes "cleanliness of the outlet (0), error-free billing (0.01)" and "air-conditioned sitting area (0.257)". These low negative gap scores imply that there is a small difference between perceived and expected service. Thus, these restaurant attributes are close to the expected service quality. However, the widest gap is for theitem "effective complaint handling mechanism(0.4339) and connectivity with Wi-Fi and internet (0.3918)", indicating that customers expected much better complaint handling mechanism well as well connectivity with internet than they actually are. Finally, the overall SERVQUAL gap is -0.144. These results imply that restaurant service quality should be improved, because all restaurant attributes were assessed below customers' expectations.

> **Objective 2: To explore the brand preference of the consumersof Fast Food Restaurants (Delhi & Gurugram).**

To find the brand preferences of the consumer of fast food restaurants located in Delhi and Gurugram two hundred respondents were contacted and questions were asked regarding which fast food brand they

preferred the most. In all ten brands were mentioned in the structured questionnaire (5 international and 5 local) and the results are shown with the help of a histogram (figure 1). The five international brands were KFC,

Dominos, Subway, McDonalds and Café Coffee Day and 5 national brands were Nirulas, Haldirams, SagarRatna, Gulab and Om.
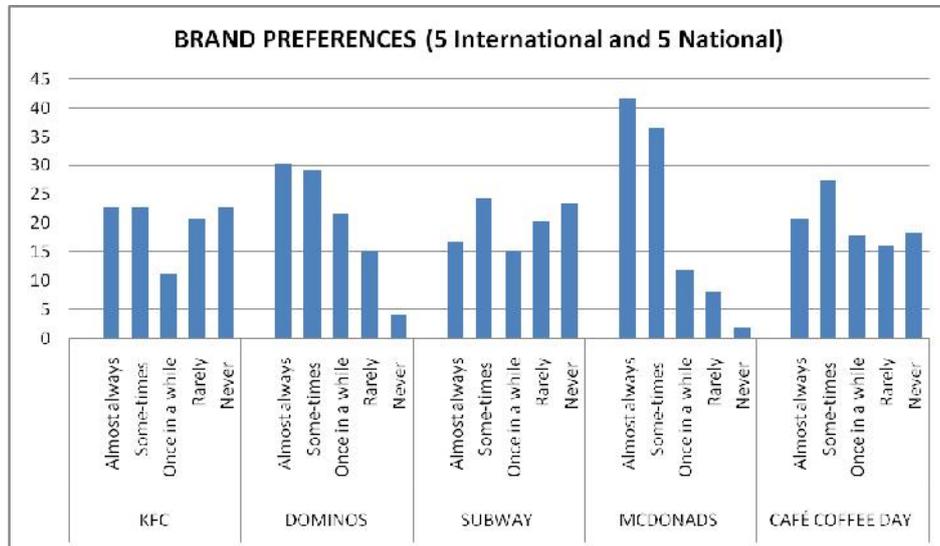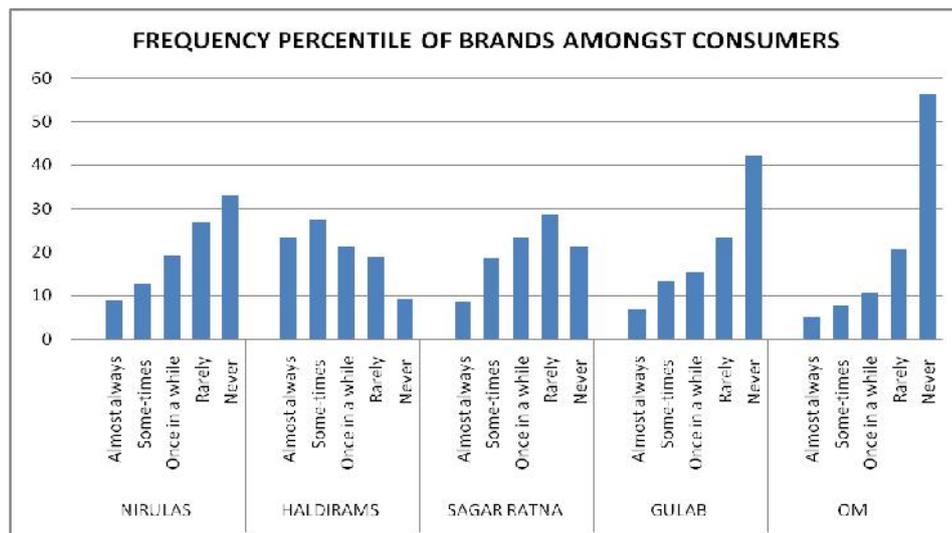
**Figure 1 Brand preference (International)**



**Figure 2 Brand Preferences (National )**



From the above figure(s) 1 and 2, it is clear that **McDonalds** is the most popular international restaurant brand followed by **Dominos, KFC, Café Coffee Day** and **Subway.** Further, the most visited domestic brands are **Haldirams** followed by **Nirulas, SagarRatna, Gulab** and **Om.** Thus, we can conclude that **McDonald** is the most preferred international restaurant brand whereas **Haldirams**is the most preferred domestic restaurant brand.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The gap between customers' expectations and their perception of delivered service has become the principal indicator for determining and assessing service

quality. The methodology is known as SERVQUAL scale and provides management with important insights about how well actual service performance meets customers' expectations. Thus, it was justified to employ the modified scale in the fast food restaurant industry to see whether delivered servicemeets, exceeds or falls below customers' expectations.The analysis of respondents' expectations scores suggested that the most importantexpectations items were "quality of the food as well as operating hours of the outlet", which falls under the dimensionsreliability and tangibles. The results reveal similarities to studies conducted by other authors. It should be noted that managers should not

ignore the restaurant attributes that were assessed with the lowest expectations scores (connectivity with Wi-Fi & internet and parking facility). Although it is a fact that the parking space is an issue in the urban areas due to increasing population and limited land and people jostle for space for parking their growing fleet of personal cars.If the mentioned dimensions meet the expected minimum, customers will focus on other dimensions in the service quality evaluation process. Hence, managers should maintain at least this expected minimum of restaurant service.

The overall mean score for service quality perceptions items was 3.68. This score indicates that the restaurants as a whole performed rather well. The top attributes were "quality of the food as well as right delivery of the order".

The results of gap analysis imply that restaurant service providers did not meet customers' expectations. The overall SERVQUAL gap is -0.144, which indicates that the overall restaurant service quality fell below customers' expectations and that there is room for service quality improvement in the fast food restaurant industry. According to the findings of this study,the narrowest gaps are for the attributes "cleanliness of the outlet (0), error-free billing (0.01)" and "air-conditioned sitting area (0.257)". These low negative gap scores imply that there is a small difference between perceived and expected service whereas the biggest gap is related to "complaint handling mechanism and Wi-Fi connectivity", meaning that customers expected better complaint handling mechanism and Wi-Fi connectivity than what it's actually is. The attributes with the widest statistically significant gaps represent serious shortfalls and require significant attention of restaurant managers in terms of making improvement efforts.

Despite its managerial implications, the study has several limitations. The results are based on a relatively small sample size chosen from a limited geographic area and gathered during a short time period. Although it is not expected that the findings would be significantly different, it would be worthwhile to expand this research throughout the country to improve the generalizability of the results. Also, the measurement of restaurant service quality was limited to 45 restaurant attributes. Even though these attributes were included in other studies and their validity is tested, there could be other relevant restaurant attributes that are likely to influence customers' expectations and perceptions about overall dining experience.

Nevertheless, the study implies two main contributions. Generally, the findings contribute to the development of a service excellence approach that helps identify customers' requirements (e.g. expectations) and secure performance improvement in restaurant settings. In this context, results may broaden the knowledge of restaurant service quality and are suitable for international comparison. In particular, the study itself is considered useful for fast food restaurant academics and practitioners, as it is the first that presents the application of the SERVQUAL instrument in the fast food restaurant industry in Delhi & NCR, and captures the measurement of both expectations and perceptions attributes. Improving service quality in fast food restaurant settings will, in turn, not only increase customer satisfaction and strengthen customer loyalty, but also improve the restaurant's reputation and generate greater revenue.

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