

WHERE AND WHAT SHOULD I EAT? The role of perceived value and store location in restaurant consumer behavior

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Brazilian Association of Food Industries - ABIA (2022), dining out had a significant share in the national market, representing 27% of sales in the food industry in 2022. The customer's gastronomic experience in restaurants is influenced by the quality of service, food, and ambiance (Campbell, DiPietro & Remar, 2014). These factors are considered prerequisites for consumer loyalty, resulting in repeat sales, positive word-of-mouth, and willingness to pay more (Jani & Han, 2011; Kang et al., 2012; Namin, 2017).

In a competitive market, delivering high-quality services is crucial for gaining an advantage and satisfying customers (Han & Ryu, 2007). Perceived value plays an important role in this relationship, influencing the likelihood of revisiting a restaurant (Otto & Ritchie, 2000; Petrick & Backman, 2002; Petrick, 2004). Perceived quality, perceived value, and customer satisfaction lead to positive word-of-mouth, willingness to pay more, and intention to revisit, impacting the financial performance of restaurants (Chen, 2011).

Finally, it is necessary to consider one of the most significant external events of the last decade. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant changes in consumer habits. During the restrictions, restaurants were forced to close, and as the restrictions are relaxed, consumers and retailers have adapted to a new reality. Recent studies emphasize the need for evaluations in this new post-pandemic context (Babin et al., 2020; Hubbard & Carriquiry, 2019), as some studies conducted during the health crisis caused by COVID-19 consider that changes in retail and service strategies have persisted in the post-pandemic period (Gupta et al., 2023). Research discusses the shift in consumer behavior, with an intention to value local commerce and a stronger connection with street restaurants (Zielke et al., 2023). Therefore, this article considers that the restaurant's location is a moderating factor that influences the relationship between restaurant qualities and positive consumer behaviors, as research indicates a preference for local retail and services in the post-pandemic period.

In light of this, the present article aims to examine the influence of service quality, food quality, and restaurant environment on the intention to revisit, positive word-of-mouth, and willingness to pay, considering the mechanism of perceived customer value. Additionally, the study will investigate how the restaurant's location (i.e., comparison between standard street store versus alternative location) affects these relationships. The study seeks to understand customers' beliefs and behaviors in the use of hospitality services post-pandemic, providing insights for managers to deal with the crisis more effectively (Foroudi, H. Tabaghdehi & Marvi, 2021).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Food Quality

According to Olson and Jacoby (1972), consumers use intrinsic and extrinsic cues to infer the quality of a product. In the case of food products, intrinsic cues refer to characteristics such as appearance, color, shape, and structure, which cannot be changed without altering the physical properties of the product (Ophuis & Trijp, 1995). On the other hand, extrinsic cues are not related to the physical composition of the product but include aspects such as price, brand, store name, country of origin, nutritional and production information (Ophuis & Trijp, 1995; Teas & Agarwal, 2000). Furthermore, Namkung and Jang (2010) argue that food quality indicators encompass freshness, healthiness, taste, and presentation, in other words, perceived quality.

The quality of food, such as taste, shape, and appearance, can influence customers' internal evaluations, increasing their willingness to revisit a restaurant (Jacoby, 2002; Konuk, 2019). The perception of food quality has also been positively associated with behavioral intentions, significantly impacting the customer's gastronomic experience and being crucial for the restaurant's success (Namkung & Jang, 2007). In this study, we will consider the six dimensions proposed by Namkung and Jang (2007) for the construction of food quality perception: presentation, variety, healthy options, taste, freshness, and temperature.

2.2. Environmental Quality

Since the introduction of the term "environment" by Kotler (1973), the influence of physical stimuli on consumer behavior has been widely studied in the field of marketing (Bitner, 1992; Turley & Milliman, 2000). Over the past decades, researchers have recognized the importance of environmental elements in customers' service quality evaluation and repeat purchase behavior in various service contexts (Baker, 1986; Bitner, 1992).

In the context of restaurants, the quality of the environment is considered crucial for explaining service quality, influencing positive behaviors and intention to revisit (Kincaid et al., 2010; Namkung & Jang, 2008). According to Restaurant Hospitality, the environment is one of the most important factors for customer loyalty in full-service restaurants, along with cleanliness, high-quality food, and the use of fresh ingredients (Restaurant Hospitality, 2005). In studies on Indian restaurants in the USA, the ambiance and the appearance of the dishes were also considered important features for customers (Josiam & Monteiro, 2004).

Elements present in the service environment include visual and auditory cues such as space, design, color, lighting, and music (Namkung & Jang, 2008). These elements have the power to influence customers' perception of service quality and can affect their behavior (Lin, 2004). Color, lighting, and music are examples of environmental cues that can impact customers' emotions and behaviors (Namkung & Jang, 2008).

2.3. Service Quality

The quality of service in restaurants has been widely studied as a fundamental attribute (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Ha & Jang, 2010). Zeithaml (1988) defined service quality as the overall evaluation or superiority of service by the customer. In the restaurant industry, service quality is assessed through intangible benefits such as responsiveness, courtesy, care, and professional behaviors demonstrated by the service staff (Stevens, Knutson & Patton, 1995).

The interaction between customers and service providers plays a significant role in the evaluation of restaurant services, as the interpersonal skills of employees are crucial to the success of the hospitality industry (Nikolich & Sparks, 1995). The performance of employees who have direct contact with customers is essential for customers' perception of the quality of the services offered. Stevens, Knutson, and Patton (1995) used the DINESERV scale, an adaptation of the SERVQUAL scale, to measure service quality in restaurants, analyzing the interaction between customers and service providers during service delivery. They concluded that service quality is an important factor in customers' evaluation.

2.4. Revisit Intention

Behavioral intention is an essential part of loyalty and refers to the stated likelihood of engaging in a behavior (Oliver, 1997). Customers' intention to repurchase is a crucial component of behavioral intention, along with the intention to engage in positive word-of-mouth (Oliver, 1997).

Warshaw and Davis (1985) described repurchase intention as the degree to which an individual consciously formulates plans to engage or not engage in a specific future action.

While repeated purchase behavior is influenced by a favorable attitude towards a product/service, individuals often engage in repurchase behaviors without a psychological attachment (e.g., loyalty/commitment) (Guiltinan, 1989). In this sense, Han, Hsu, and Lee (2009) conceptualized repurchase intention as the stated likelihood of repurchasing a specific product/service, regardless of a favorable attitude towards it.

Revisitation intention is an important research topic, often explored in the tourism field, and has been identified as a significant behavioral intention (Jani & Han, 2011). Tourists' behaviors include destination choice, subsequent evaluations, and future behavioral intentions (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Subsequent evaluations are related to visitors' perceived value and satisfaction, while future behavioral intentions pertain to the willingness to revisit the same destination in the future and recommend it to others (Som et al., 2012; Ryu, Han & Jang, 2010). Revisiting the destination and sharing positive experiences are essential sources of profitability (Marinkovic et al., 2014).

In this article, revisitation intention was used in the context of restaurants and refers to customers' stated likelihood of repurchasing a restaurant's products.

2.5. Positive Word of Mouth

There are several management approaches aimed at stimulating positive word-of-mouth, indicating its importance for marketing professionals (Brown et al., 2005). Word-of-mouth is the idea that information about products, services, companies, among others, can spread from one consumer to another, either personally or through communication channels (Brown et al., 2005).

In this article, the focus is on promoting positive word-of-mouth, such as recommendations to others. Positive word-of-mouth involves letting others know that one does business with a company or store, making positive recommendations about a company, praising the quality of a company, among others (Brown et al., 2005). This form of non-commercial interpersonal communication is considered more credible than mass media advertising, as consumers trust individual comments from other consumers about a specific product or service more (Bickart & Schindler, 2001).

Previous research in the hospitality industry has highlighted the crucial role of customer reviews in restaurants (Zhang et al., 2010). Empirical studies have shown a positive link between customer satisfaction and repurchase intentions (Fernandes & Calamote, 2016; Tsiotsou, 2006). In the hospitality field, empirical findings generally support the assertion that customer satisfaction positively influences behavioral intentions, including the intention to recommend (Huang et al., 2014; Namin, 2017; Ryu & Han, 2010; Ryu, Han & Kim, 2008).

2.6. Willingness to Pay

Willingness to pay is the maximum value that a customer is willing to pay for a product or service (Cameron & James, 1987; Krishna, 1991). In marketing literature, it is considered a measure of the value that an individual attributes to a product or experience in monetary terms (Homburg, Koschate & Hoyer, 2005; Rao & Bergen, 1992). Premium prices, which are paid above the fair price and justified by the value of the product, can indicate the consumer's willingness to pay (Miao & Mattila, 2007; Rao & Bergen, 1992). Willingness to pay is also seen as crucial in generating favorable behaviors (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996).

Behavioral intentions have been used as a surrogate measure of actual behavior in the hospitality industry (Dutta et al., 2008; Kang et al., 2012), being understood as an indicator of actual behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). As consumer preferences and demands change, the strategies employed by foodservice operations to maximize profitability and achieve an appropriate price balance also change (Campbell, DiPietro & Remar, 2014).

2.7. Mediating Effect of Perceived Value

The perceived value by the customer is the result of comparing perceived benefits and perceived costs (Zeithaml, 1988). It is a subjective and personal measure attributed by the customer and considered important for both marketing professionals and researchers (Cronin et al., 2000).

Studies show that product and service quality are predictors of perceived value by the customer (Zeithaml, 1988; Chen & Hu, 2010). The quality of food can also affect the perceived value by the customer, as it is a key element of perceived product quality in restaurants (Ryu, Han & Kim, 2008; Ryu, Lee & Kim, 2012).

Furthermore, physical environment characteristics such as decor and seating comfort provide cues about the nature of service offerings and influence perceived value by the customer (Han & Ryu, 2009). The dining atmosphere in restaurants can also have significant effects on perceived value by customers and influence their behavioral intentions (Liu & Jang, 2009).

Several studies have shown that perceived value influences customer behavioral intentions, such as revisit intention and willingness to pay (Jin et al., 2013; Quintal & Polczynski, 2010). High levels of perceived value are also related to future purchase intentions and positive consumer behaviors (Baker et al., 2002).

Perceived value is considered a mediator between quality evaluation and behavioral intentions, influencing outcomes such as revisit intention, willingness to pay, and positive word-of-mouth (Sweeny et al., 1999). Thus, perceived value plays a significant role in determining consumer behaviors. Therefore, this article suggests the following hypothesis:

***H1(a), H1(b) e H1(c).** Perceived value positively mediates the relationship between food quality (H1a), environment quality (H1b), service quality (H1c), and revisit intention.*

***H2(a), H2(b) e H2(c).** Perceived value positively mediates the relationship between food quality (H2a), environment quality (H2b), service quality (H2c), and positive word-of-mouth.*

***H3(a), H3(b) e H3(c).** Perceived value positively mediates the relationship between food quality (H3a), environment quality (H3b), service quality (H3c), and willingness to pay.*

2.8. Street Restaurants versus Restaurants in Other Locations

The location of restaurants plays a crucial role in the customer experience and business performance in the food service industry (Brown, 2005). There are different types of locations, such as street restaurants, malls, food trucks, and fairs, each offering distinct experiences to customers and presenting unique challenges and opportunities for restaurant owners.

Street restaurants have specific characteristics that attract different types of customers. They are often associated with a casual and relaxed atmosphere, with outdoor seating and the opportunity to interact with the urban environment. Additionally, they offer a variety of culinary options, including regional and ethnic dishes. These restaurants are valued for their authenticity and the unique experience they provide to customers.

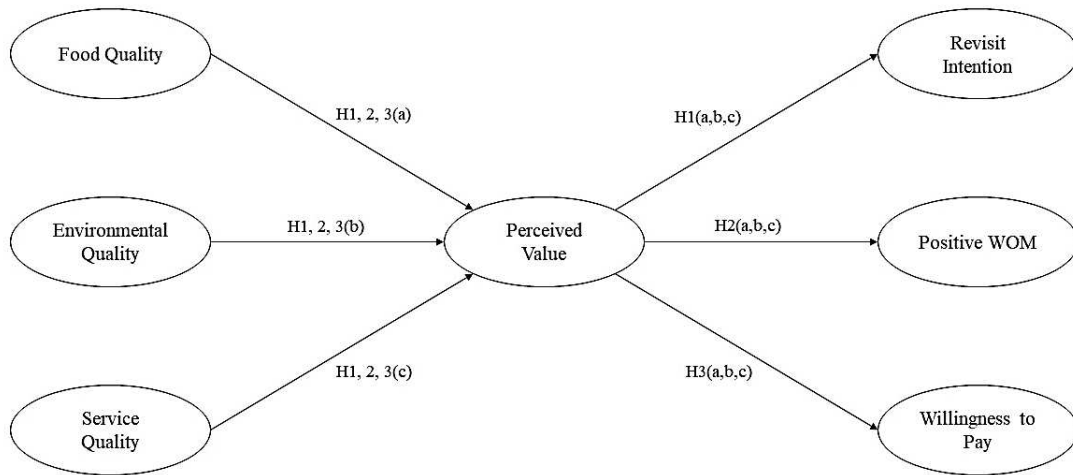
On the other hand, restaurants located in alternative locations such as malls, food trucks, and county fairs offer different advantages. Malls offer convenience and comfort to customers, with easy parking and indoor environments. Food trucks are known for their mobility and ability to reach different audiences in various locations. County fairs provide a lively atmosphere and the opportunity to experience a variety of food options in one place.

Studies have explored the differences between street restaurants and restaurants located in other places in terms of customer preferences, perceived value, and consumption behavior. The location can influence customers' perception of food quality, ambiance, and service. For example, street restaurants may be perceived as more authentic, with a unique atmosphere,

while restaurants in malls may be perceived as safer and more comfortable. However, considering the evidence and attention given to local retailers and services post-pandemic (Gupta, Mukherjee, & Garg, 2023; Zielke et al., 2023) for various motivations, but mainly as a strategy to increase security by frequenting retailers near their homes. These new pieces of evidence, combined with authenticity, may explain more positive responses in the condition of street restaurants compared to other restaurant options. Therefore, understanding customer preferences and behaviors regarding different types of restaurant locations is essential for the owners and managers of these establishments.

H4(a), H4(b) e H4(c). *The location of the restaurant (street or other) moderates the relationship mediated by perceived value between food quality (H4a), ambiance quality (H4b), service quality (H4c), and the intention to revisit, positive word-of-mouth, and willingness to pay, resulting in significant differences between these two groups.*

Figure 1. Theoretical Model



Source: Developed by the authors (2023)

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The research design adopted for the empirical phase of the study was a survey for data collection, using Structural Equation Modeling with conditional analyses to examine the relationship between restaurant attributes and consumer response variables.

To construct the data collection instrument, the following constructs were considered: (i) Food quality (FQ); (ii) Environment quality (EQ); (iii) Service quality (SQ); (iv) Perceived value (PV); (v) Revisit Intention (IR); (vi) Positive word-of-mouth (PWOM); and (vii) Willingness to pay (WP). The scales used were developed and validated in previous studies (e.g., academic publications in high-impact international journals). A translation procedure was conducted from English to Portuguese and then back to English, with the assistance of 5 marketing academics, to ensure that the scale items were suitable for the Brazilian cultural context. Thus, a total of 28 items were used to measure the constructs that integrated the research model: The 6-item scale used by Ryu et al. (2012) to measure FQ; The 4-item scale used by Ryu et al. (2012) to measure SQ; The 4-item scale used by Ryu et al. (2012) to measure EQ; The 3-item scale used by Ryu et al. (2012) to measure PV; The 3-item scale used by Kim and Moon (2009) to measure IR; The 4-item scale used by Brown et al. (2005) to measure PWOM; and the 4-item scale used by Zeithaml et al. (1996) to measure WP. The WP construct

was measured using a 7-point semantic differential scale ranging from "not likely at all" to "very likely," while all other indicators followed a 7-point Likert scale.

The data were collected through a self-administered online survey (conducted in the first quarter of 2023), using a cross-sectional approach (Hair et al., 2011; Fink, 2013). The sample was drawn from a panel of students, faculty, and staff members of a federal public university in the southeastern region. Additionally, the survey was also disseminated to the external audience of the academic community, through links shared in groups and social networking sites. Prior to administering the questionnaire to the target sample, a qualitative pre-test was conducted, where the questionnaire was reviewed by a group of 10 individuals for overall instrument revision. This qualitative validation allowed for assessing the suitability of the format and content of the instrument, testing its accessibility and vocabulary, as well as examining the semantics and relevance of the selected items. After these analyses, the data collection phase was initiated.

In this phase, respondents answered some demographic questions. They were then instructed to think about a specific restaurant and answer the following questions with that specific restaurant in mind. All respondents chose local restaurants to base their responses on. Before the section that led them to answer the construct items, they went through a screening question to verify if they had visited the restaurant within the past three months. For those who had not visited the restaurant within the past three months, the questionnaire ended. This strategy was adopted to avoid biasing the responses to items from those who might not have had a recent experience in mind.

To reduce primacy and recency effects (Gershberg & Shimamura, 1994), the questionnaire items and sections were randomly shuffled. Additionally, the measures of independent and dependent constructs were also separated from each other, following guidelines from Hulland et al. (2018). Lastly, during the data collection administration, a reminder was sent to the target audience of the university community to ensure a higher response rate. For social media groups, as information flows quickly in online brand communities, daily announcements were made to reach more people. In the end, the sample resulted in 446 valid cases.

4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Out of the 1035 individuals who started the survey, 555 did not complete the questionnaire, and 34 observations were removed for not meeting the established criterion of having visited the restaurant within the last three months. Therefore, a total of 446 VALID respondents were obtained. The age of respondents who frequent street restaurants ranged from 17 to 68 years old (Mage = 33.75; SDage = 12.91), with the majority being women (N female = 232, 65.9%), and over half having a high level of education (N = 224, 63.7%). As for those who frequent restaurants in other locations, the age of respondents ranged from 17 to 62 years old (Mage = 31.04; SDage = 12.1), with the majority also being women (N female = 63, 67%), and having a high level of education (N = 54, 57.5%).

4.1. Validity and reliability of the scales

To test the proposed model, following suggestions from the study conducted by Harrigan et al. (2017), the technique of partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used. This estimation technique is considered appropriate and more efficient for simultaneously estimating a series of separate multiple regression equations, as the model involves relationships between independent and dependent variables (Hair et al., 2011). The SmartPLS 4.0 software (Ringle, Wende & Becker, 2022) was employed for data analysis, including validation of the structural and measurement model measures, as well as for analyzing the mediation relationship.

To assess the reliability of the scales, the study utilized commonly used parameters in the marketing field (Zambaldi et al., 2014), such as Cronbach's alpha and the Composite Reliability (CR) index. As shown in Table 2, the values for these parameters ranged from 0.6 to 0.95 for all constructs, indicating that the model indicators measure the same phenomenon in different ways, thereby constituting valid measures (reliable measurements) for their corresponding constructs (Hair et al., 2021). Additionally, the Harman's single-factor test was conducted to investigate the presence of common method bias (CMB). The obtained explained variance value was 29.72%, indicating the absence of bias stemming from the data collection instrument itself (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Table 2. Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted, and Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	CA	CR	AVE	Fornell-Larcker							
				WP	IR	FQ	EQ	SQ	PV	PWOM	
WP	0.685	0.754	0.513	0.716							
IR	0.812	0.817	0.726	0.500	0.852						
FQ	0.808	0.833	0.517	0.356	0.645	0.719					
EQ	0.781	0.796	0.603	0.244	0.401	0.596	0.776				
SQ	0.730	0.742	0.560	0.326	0.451	0.624	0.523	0.749			
PV	0.759	0.777	0.675	0.419	0.667	0.696	0.487	0.576	0.821		
PWOM	0.870	0.905	0.721	0.428	0.747	0.508	0.349	0.355	0.563	0.849	

Source: Developed by the authors (2023)

Note: AC = Cronbach's Alpha, CR = Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted

Next, it was found that all constructs had Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values greater than 0.5 and a square root of the AVE for each construct greater than its correlation with other latent variables in the model, indicating satisfactory convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2021; Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

4.2. Evaluation of the structural model

To uncover the mediating effect of perceived value on intention to revisit, willingness to pay, and positive word-of-mouth, as well as to compare between groups, the software SmartPLS 4.0 (Ringle, Wende & Becker, 2022) was used. This test is necessary to assess the relationships between constructs within the structural model (Hair et al., 2018). A multi-group bootstrap analysis with 10,000 samples and a confidence interval of 95% was conducted. The highest value of the variance inflation factor (VIF) was found to be 2.912, which is below the suggested threshold of 5, as recommended by Hair et al. (2018).

The results of the structural model were evaluated to highlight predictive relevance, the relationships between constructs, and the strength and quality of the structural model. The model was assessed by measuring the adjusted coefficient of determination (R^2), the predictive relevance of the model (Q^2), the comparative effect size (f^2), and the predictive power of the model based on the PLSpredict tool (Hair et al., 2021). The R^2 values obtained for the dependent variables "Willingness to pay," "Intention to revisit," and "Positive word-of-mouth" were 0.174, 0.433, and 0.315, respectively. This means that the three independent variables account for 17.4%, 43.3%, and 31.5% of the variance in each dependent variable (Hair et al., 2021). For Q^2 , values greater than zero are expected, indicating that the exogenous variable has predictive relevance for the endogenous variable (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2011). Therefore, it can be

considered that the model has predictive power. Regarding f^2 , the independent variables do not have a significant effect size in relation to the dependent variables.

For analyzing the significance of paths and supporting or rejecting hypotheses, confidence intervals were observed. The results obtained (Table 3) show that the quality of the food positively impacts the intention to revisit, willingness to pay, and positive word-of-mouth for consumers of street restaurants, both with and without the mediation of perceived value. However, for consumers of restaurants in other locations, the impact of food quality on willingness to pay was only significant when mediated by perceived value. The quality of the environment did not have a significant impact on any dependent variable, even with the mediation of perceived value for both groups. Lastly, the quality of service had a significant impact on dependent variables, with and without the mediation of perceived value, only for consumers of street restaurants.

Table 3. Path coefficients with mediation

	Street			Others			β (Street) - β (Others)
	β	LLCI*	ULCI*	β	LLCI*	ULCI*	
FQ->WP	0.259	0.102	0.399	0.262	-0.165	0.595	-0.003
FQ->IR	0.541	0.408	0.655	0.663	0.446	0.834	-0.122
FQ->PWOM	0.425	0.280	0.551	0.432	0.141	0.667	-0.007
EQ->WP	-0.030	-0.188	0.115	0.106	-0.211	0.367	-0.136
EQ->IR	-0.004	-0.126	0.113	0.090	-0.115	0.270	-0.094
EQ->PWOM	0.040	-0.092	0.167	0.126	-0.141	0.363	-0.086
SQ->WP	0.220	0.066	0.362	0.055	-0.545	0.398	0.165
SQ->IR	0.172	0.046	0.299	-0.151	-0.364	0.000	0.323
SQ->PWOM	0.139	0.000	0.272	-0.203	-0.475	0.031	0.342
FQ->PV->WP	0.116	0.027	0.217	0.292	0.113	0.513	-0.176
FQ-> PV->IR	0.214	0.129	0.314	0.251	0.122	0.419	-0.037
FQ-> PV->PWOM	0.196	0.108	0.298	0.293	0.129	0.506	-0.097
EQ-> PV->WP	0.008	-0.020	0.041	0.057	-0.047	0.160	-0.049
EQ-> PV->IR	0.015	-0.039	0.063	0.049	-0.031	0.153	-0.034
EQ-> PV->PWOM	0.014	-0.036	0.058	0.058	-0.044	0.170	-0.044
SQ-> PV->WP	0.071	0.015	0.144	-0.017	-0.119	0.069	0.088
SQ-> PV->IR	0.130	0.064	0.221	-0.014	-0.112	0.055	0.144
SQ-> PV->PWOM	0.120	0.054	0.208	-0.017	-0.128	0.072	0.137

* LLCI = Lower limit of the indirect effect within the 95% confidence interval

** ULCI = Upper limit of the indirect effect within the 95% confidence interval

Source: Developed by the authors (2023)

Thus, hypotheses H1(a), H2(a), and H3(a) were supported for both groups. Hypotheses H1(b), H2(b), and H3(b) were not supported in either group. Regarding hypotheses H1(c), H2(c), and H3(c), support was observed only for those who frequent street restaurants, with no support for restaurants in other locations, indicating a difference between the groups. Therefore, only H4(c) was supported, as there was a difference between the groups only for the relationship between service quality and the dependent variables.

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research focuses on the aspects of restaurants (food quality, ambience quality, and service quality) to strengthen consumer behaviors that lead to positive attitudes towards these establishments. Additionally, the perspective of behavior change among consumers due to the COVID-19 pandemic has forced managers to seek more efficient ways to deal with crisis situations. This study proposed and empirically tested a model of customer value perception mediation, as well as the moderation of restaurant location. In this regard, this research confirms theories and provides theoretical implications for the existing body of knowledge regarding the influence of restaurant qualities on positive customer behaviors.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The results of the study confirm that perceived value mediates the relationship between service quality and the dependent variables (willingness to pay, intention to revisit, and positive word-of-mouth), supporting previous studies (Chen & Hu, 2010; Kukanja, Gomezelj Omerzel & Kodrič, 2017; Shahzadi et al., 2018). However, this relationship only occurs for those who frequent street restaurants. On the other hand, the relationship between food quality and the dependent variables is fully mediated by perceived value only in relation to willingness to pay. This relationship was observed in both groups. Food quality is positively associated with intention to revisit, which aligns with previous studies (Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020; Ryu & Han, 2010). Regarding the quality of the environment, perceived value did not mediate any of the relationships, thus there is no significant impact on the dependent variables for both groups.

The findings of the present study suggest that food quality emerges as the most important factor in shaping perceived value in the restaurant sector compared to other attributes (Ryu, Han & Kim, 2008; Slack et al., 2021). Additionally, this study confirms the positive effect of perceived value on the development of willingness to pay, intention to revisit, and positive word-of-mouth, examining the mediating role of perceived value.

The present study suggests that service quality is an important predictor of positive behavioral intentions (intention to revisit, willingness to pay, and positive word-of-mouth), both directly and mediated by perceived value, only for consumers of street restaurants. Meanwhile, food quality emerges as an important predictor in both groups, while the quality of the environment is not considered significant.

Based on the study results, service quality proved to be a crucial factor for street restaurant consumers. Both directly and through perceived value, service quality positively influenced behavioral intentions such as intention to revisit, willingness to pay, and positive word-of-mouth. On the other hand, food quality was an important predictor in both groups, highlighting its relevance in attracting and satisfying customers regardless of the restaurant's location. Surprisingly, the quality of the environment did not emerge as a significant factor for behavioral intentions in both groups, indicating that other aspects such as service and food have a greater impact on the customer experience.

Based on these findings, street restaurants should prioritize quality service, providing exceptional customer service. Additionally, maintaining a high standard of food preparation is crucial to meet customer expectations. While the quality of the environment may have a less relevant role, it is still important to create a pleasant and clean atmosphere in the establishment. In summary, for street restaurants, investing in quality service and maintaining a high standard of food preparation are key aspects to increase customer satisfaction, promote positive intentions for revisiting, positive word-of-mouth, and enhance willingness to pay.

5.2. Practical implications

The findings of this study have important practical implications for restaurant owners and managers. Firstly, it is crucial for street restaurants to prioritize service quality. Providing exceptional customer service, with attentive and friendly staff, can significantly enhance the overall dining experience and positively influence customers' intentions to revisit, willingness to pay, and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Restaurant staff should be trained to deliver personalized and attentive service to create a memorable experience for customers.

Secondly, maintaining a high standard of food quality is essential for both street restaurants and restaurants in other locations. The study findings highlight the importance of food quality as a predictor of positive customer behaviors. Restaurant owners should focus on sourcing high-quality ingredients, ensuring proper food handling and preparation, and consistently delivering flavorful and well-presented dishes. Paying attention to the authenticity and uniqueness of the food offerings can also contribute to creating a positive dining experience for customers.

Additionally, while the study did not find a significant impact of the environment on customer behaviors, it is still important for restaurants to create a pleasant and clean atmosphere. Restaurant owners should strive to create a welcoming ambiance, paying attention to factors such as lighting, music, and decor. Maintaining cleanliness and comfort in the dining area can contribute to a positive overall impression and customer satisfaction.

Overall, the practical implications of this study emphasize the importance of focusing on service quality and food quality in both street restaurants and restaurants in other locations. By prioritizing these aspects, restaurant owners and managers can enhance customer satisfaction, foster positive customer behaviors, and ultimately drive business success.

6. CONCLUSION

The perception of value has proven to play a fundamental role in the relationship between restaurant qualities (food, service, and ambiance) and positive consumer behaviors (intention to revisit, positive word-of-mouth, and willingness to pay) in this study. Consumers perceive value in restaurants that offer quality food and excellent service. Although there is no direct influence of ambiance quality on the perception of value, it is important to be mindful of the evolving consumer behaviors, particularly in an environment affected by a pandemic. Consumers who perceive value in products and services are more likely to revisit the restaurant, engage in positive word-of-mouth, and are also willing to pay more.

Furthermore, this study opens up new research opportunities. Investigating how risk perception influences the relationship between restaurant qualities (food, service, ambiance) and consumer behaviors, specifically in different types of restaurants such as fast food versus upscale restaurants, would be pertinent. It would be valuable to examine whether consumers perceive health, hygiene, or safety risks differently in each type of restaurant and how this affects their perception of value, intention to revisit, positive word-of-mouth, and willingness to pay. Additionally, exploring coping strategies adopted by consumers to deal with these risks, such as relying on online reviews or seeking information about safety measures implemented by restaurants, could provide valuable insights for restaurant owners in risk management and adapting their marketing and operational strategies to meet consumer expectations in different contexts.

Furthermore, the study sample was limited to Brazilian customers. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other cultures and populations. To establish the external validity of the study, further research should be conducted in different cultures using diverse samples.

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