

## **Service quality and customer satisfaction in restaurant industry in Vietnam - A comparison between meta-analysis and empirical study**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The main aim of this study is to summarize customer satisfaction literature and concern factors by using meta-analysis in restaurant service context. A conceptual framework was developed to understand the different models and relationship between factors that have been collect to examine these constructs. Though reviewing previous published studies in recent years, the meta-regression analysis shows that the factors that suitable for examine how the customers feel in enjoy meal in the restaurant, thereby highlighting the essential factors for attract customers in the future. A meta-analysis of 35 research studies was collected from the leading tourism and hospitality journals listed in the Web of Science. Based on the overview of constructive result, the model was tested byusing 334 respondents from three traditional restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City– Vietnam. These findings suggest that the precision of meta-analysis findings in the literature has an identical relationwith important consequences for research and practice in empirical findings. On the other hand, the implications of the results will discuss for future research ideas.*

**KEYWORDS:** *service quality, brand image, customer perceived value, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, word-of-mouth, meta-analysis.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

According to Hanafiah, Harun & Jamaluddin (2010), the restaurant foodservice business is recognized as food service industry, with services and consumers developed around the world in the recent year. Previous research has indicated that service quality might be related to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty because the customers evaluated satisfaction levels based on service quality that create the different framework of reference for assessment (So`derlund, 2002). In addition, service quality helps customers demonstrate whether the restaurant accomplish their demands. Therefore, the restaurants should improve the service quality to response diversified needs of prospective target customers. Moreover, the service quality of traditional restaurant that perceived by its potential customers have an important role in affecting the customer perceived value as well as determining its brand image position within a competitive environment. On the other hand, high quality service produces higher levels of customer satisfaction, which in turn leads to higher levels of positive consumption behaviors, such as loyalty, recommendation or positive word-of-mouth. (Chow, 2007). Therefore, many of theories and models have been researched in foodservice industry. However, until now, very few studies have identifiedthe important factors affecting customer satisfaction, word-of-mouth and customer loyalty. Meta-analysis is a statistically method for collecting the empirical results from previous studies. Its purpose is to explain the collected data and differences characteristic in study findings. Based on extensive review and combination of 23 articles of related factors in recent years, this study will identify suitable framework as well as explain relationship of factors.

In the second section, relevant studies were summarized to extend an appropriate framework. An extended review of literature indicates that a little previous studies have integrated relevant constructs into a comprehensive framework and empirically test, especially for the service quality of traditional restaurant context in Vietnam. Finally, the conclusions and suggestions of this study are discussed for future researches.

### **II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

Service quality is considered as one of the most important concepts in service marketing that relate to customer behavior. Therefore, the researchers have various definition that depend on the purpose and research field. According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), service quality is the difference between received

customer expectations of the service and received customer perceptions of the real service. From this definition, Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed service quality measurement scale (SERVQUAL) based on five dimensions: Reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. The SERVQUAL scale has been widely used for studies of service quality. However, several scholars have modified SERVQUAL specially for restaurant industry (Juwaher and Ross, 2003). In addition, others scholars also created service quality scales such as DINESERV (Stevens, Knutson and Patton, 1995). According to Stevens et al. (1995), DINESERV is asserted as an accurate measurement scale for assess customer satisfaction of a restaurant service quality. DINESERV scale include 29 items of service quality factor that divide five categories: assurance, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and tangibles.

On the other hand, Oliver (1981) argued that customer satisfaction is the outcome of the relationship between the expectations and actual performance. The goods, environment and services are three elements of quality that help to build brand image (Taylor et al., 1994). Bong Na et al. (1999) asserted that brand image cannot be perceived unless customer perception about the brand image is created. For example, Abdelmo'tiet al. (2012) suggested that the service quality contributes for image development process of a restaurant because service quality is useful tool in the brand advertising and promotion activities. When the restaurant receives good responses, restaurant brand image will be improved. For this reason, the development of service quality will be given to positive brand image and extend various business market. Based on the above discussion, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Service Quality has significant effect on Restaurant Brand Image

Previous studies (Howat & Assaker, 2013; Tam, 2004a; Yu et al., 2014) conclude that service quality drives customers' perceived value. If the customers spend less money, time and energy compared to the service quality they receive, then the customer will perceive a high perceived value of service. In other words, the better the service quality, the higher the customers' perceived value (Howat & Assaker, 2013; Tam, 2004a; Yu et al., 2014).

Besides, according to Parasuraman (1998) said that service quality as perceived and evaluated base on customer experiences. Actually, the customer has more opportunities to choose different restaurants wherever has the best quality service can be. Therefore, service quality has positive influence on customer perceived value (Sweeney, Soutar, & Johson, 1999). Based on the above discussion, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: Service Quality has significant impact on Customer Perceived Value

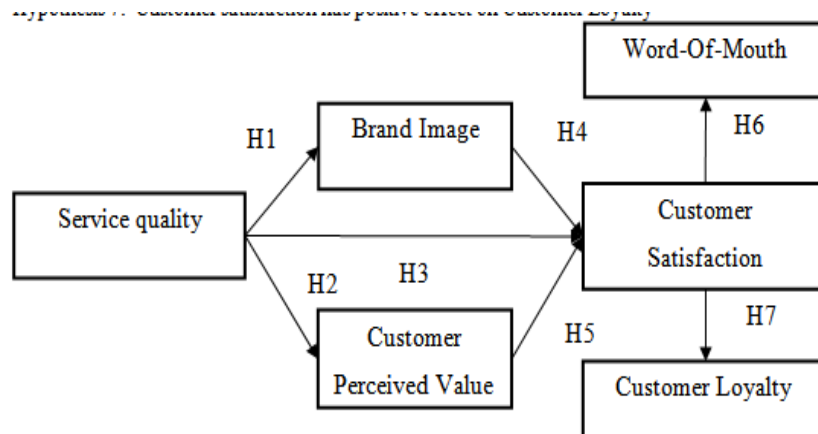
In recent researches, many scholars examine the relationship between perceived value and satisfaction it can be stated that the majority of researchers (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). For specially, Hollebeek (2013) recognize customer perceived value and customer satisfaction as the significant of customer assurance. Moreover, Kim et al. (2013) considered that customer perceived value leads to customersatisfaction, that leads to prospective customer loyalty. Moreover, this opinion was agreed by Rajah et al. (2008), who found that the good perceived value of customer, the satisfaction of them will be better.

Besides, in restaurant service context, Yuksel and Yuksel's (2002) showed that customer satisfaction is almost important factor in marketing activities. That a reason why high level of satisfaction will lead to customer loyalty. In the other words, when the customer feel comfort or satisfy about restaurant service, they maybe have the positive word-of-mouth to the others (Yuksel, 2002; Oh, 2000). Based on the above discussion, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5: Customer perceived value has positive effect on Customer satisfaction

Hypothesis 6: Customer satisfaction has positive effect on Word-Of-Mouth

Hypothesis 7: Customer satisfaction has positive effect on Customer Loyalty



**Fig. 1.** The conceptual model

### III. EMPIRICAL STUDY

#### 3.1 Study 1

##### 3.1.1 Meta-Analysis

According to Glass (1976), meta-analysis was used to review previous research to support the interpretation and comprehension of research findings. For instance, meta-analysis contributes a methodology for integrating relevant data gathered from diverse studies. Furthermore, this methodology was used to estimate the proposed hypotheses. Nevertheless, in tourism and hospitality research, most of researchers rarely use meta-analysis in study application.

In this research, we summarized empirical studies that tested the relationship between factors in the service restaurant context and addressed these statistics: sample size, correlation or t-test. Previous studies were examined 7 hypotheses with 8 factors that including: service quality, brand image, customer perceived value, customer satisfaction, and word-of-mouth. The final dataset includes of 33 samples published in 28 articles. These articles were listed in Table 1.

##### 3.1.2 Data Collection

The collected studies from many academic sources of various data system such as Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Proquest, ABI/INFORM and Google Scholar.

Our samples included of 28 empirical studies. The top management journals such as Information Journal of Management, Tourism management, Industrial Marketing Management, Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research, Journal of marketing management, etc.

**Table 1**

Summary of the journals

Journal title	The number of articles
International Journal of Hospitality Management	8
Tourism management	1
Industrial Marketing Management	2
Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research	2
Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review	2
Journal of marketing management	1
Journal of Social and Development Sciences	1
Social and Behavioral Sciences	1
Cornell Hospitality Quarterly	1
African Journal of Business Management	1
Journal of Global Business and Technology	1
The International Journal of Organizational Innovation	1

##### 3.1.3 Results

There are seven hypotheses with eight variables in 28 published articles. The sample size of each hypothesis is vary. The highest number is 4.373 samples and the lowest is 790 samples. Table 2 shows the results of meta-analysis of each hypothesis in examining the relationship between above seven hypotheses.

**Table 2** Results of Meta-Analysis

Hyp	Variable		K	Total	Effect Size & 95% Confidence Interval			Heterogeneity			
	Independent	Dependent			Studies	N	R	LCI	UCI	p-value	R <sup>2</sup> -value
1	Service quality	Brand Image	3	820	0.642	0.204	0.866	0.000	13.82	123.225	98.377
2	Service quality	Customer Perceived Value	3	1111	0.658	0.623	0.690	0.000	13.82	71.081	97.186
3	Service quality	Customer satisfaction	5	2206	0.637	0.611	0.661	0.000	18.47	232.620	98.280
4	Brand Image	Customer satisfaction	3	790	0.402	0.341	0.459	0.000	13.82	16.316	87.742
5	Customer Perceived Value	Customer satisfaction	6	2465	0.547	0.522	0.571	0.000	26.13	119.890	93.327
6	Customer satisfaction	Word-of-mouth	3	1257	0.779	0.757	0.800	0.000	13.82	42.000	95.238
7	Customer satisfaction	Customer Loyalty	10	4373	0.588	0.569	0.606	0.000	27.88	292.943	96.928

Based on the table 2, it can be seen that each hypothesis has own its value correlation through meta-analysis. Within each category, the correlations are arranged from largest to smallest effect magnitude. Overall, service quality had a significant impact on customer perceived value, brand image and customer satisfaction with combined effect sizes of 0.658, 0.642, and 0.637, respectively, and P values less than 0.05. Moreover, the index of heterogeneity 97.2%, 98.3% and 98.2% show that these hypotheses have highly heterogeneity. Besides that, Q-value is higher than chi-square and p-value less than 0.05, it means that the subset of effect sizes are also highly heterogeneous. Therefore, hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 were supported. The combined effect sizes of brand image and customer perceived value on customer satisfaction were 0.402 and 0.547 with P values less than 0.001. This confirms the significant impact of brand image and customer perceived value on customer satisfaction, supporting hypotheses H4 and H5. On the other hand, customer satisfaction is the strongest correlate of word-of-mouth, and the effect size ( $r= 0.779$ ) approaches a large effect. Moreover, customer satisfaction also has high effect to customer loyalty with effect size ( $r= 0.588$ ). Therefore, H7 and H8 in the meta-analysis is significant with P values less than 0.001.

Due to the heterogeneity of hypotheses, the current study collected 28 studies aiming for descriptive conclusions which cannot be explained easily at the level of individual articles. To have comprehension view, seven hypotheses were analyzed through an accurate meta-analysis method. Based on final results, the relationship between service quality on restaurant brand image, customer perceived value, customer satisfaction, word-of-mouth and customer loyalty were strong supported. Consequently, the proposition that service quality plays a meaningful role in restaurant services was confirmed.

However, to examine in depth the multidimensional of conceptual framework, this research conducted experimental study in the setting of traditional restaurants in Vietnam. Research procedure of study 2 was followed to allow comparison the result with study 1 in different environment.

### 3.2 Study 2

#### 3.2.1 Data collection

This study employed a descriptive research design. The target subject for this survey was customers who dining out at traditional restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. A total of 390 questionnaires were distributed to customers who visited three traditional restaurants in central of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam in over one-month period from 15 of June to the end of August, 2017. There are Lotus 1 Restaurant, Lotus 2 Restaurant and Liberty Restaurant. The survey was conducted during the weekend for lunch from 11AM to 1 PM and dinner customers from 6PM to 9PM. However, there are only 349 samples (89.5%) have been answered and 334 usable samples were obtained, giving a response rate of 85%. 15 questionnaires were used for data analysis because of incomplete information, about 3.8% total of questionnaires.

#### 3.2.2 Study instrument

The measurement instruments used to appreciate each of the components in the survey were selected based upon reliability and usage in previous studies to measure the same variables contained in the present study. All of the items in questionnaires derived from previous researches that mentioned in literature review part. Specifically, service quality dimensions based on the study of Weiss, Feinstein, & Dalbor (2005), following the items of brand image based on the work of Eliwa (2006), the items of customer perceived value and customer satisfaction from the study of Ryu and Lee (2011), word-of-mouth from study of Babin, Barry (2005) and customer loyalty from the research of Seyanont (2007). The objects of surveys at traditional restaurants are both Vietnamese and foreigner, therefore, two versions of the questionnaire (Vietnamese and English) prepared to distributed.

**Table 3**  
Demographic profiles of respondents (n=334)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	162	48.5
Female	172	51.5
Age		
< 18	13	3.9
18-24	92	27.5
25-31	109	32.6
32-38	71	21.3
> 39	49	14.7
Marital		
Single	192	57.5
Married	142	42.5
Average Income		
< 5 million VND (<\$200)	99	29.6
5 million – 10 million (\$200- \$400)	148	44.3

>10 million VND (>\$400)	87	26.0
Number of visit to Vietnamese restaurant		
Regularly	44	13.2
Every week	33	9.9
One time per month	72	21.6
Seldom	185	55.4
Purpose of visit Vietnamese restaurant		
Try Traditional Vietnamese Food	179	53.6
Business	50	15.0
Convenient meal	105	31.4
Information resource of Vietnamese restaurant		
Internet	44	13.2
Guidebook	16	4.8
Newspapers	24	7.2
Friend & Family	237	71.0
Hotel staff	13	3.9

### 3.2.3 Data Analysis

Research method has a key role in gathering information and suitable data for research purpose. It helps to analyze the data and examine the relationship of factors in the conceptual framework (Kumar 2008). A qualitative and quantitative method is approached in this research. The qualitative methodology collects primary data, and offers details about the quantitative data obtained from existing restaurants records. To understand the overall insight of the demographic characteristics and the opinions of customers, a questionnaire is designed. It conducts by survey at some of traditional restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City. Collected data were analyzed by SPSS 18 software.

Table 4  
Descriptive Analyses for Questionnaire Variables

Research Construct	Research Item	Factor Loading	Eigen Value	Accumulative Explained	Item Total Correlation	Cronbac h'sα
KMO = 0.820	Food Quality		3.561	36.851%		0.839
	FQ3	0.823			0.693	
	FQ1	0.778			0.657	
	FQ5	0.770			0.646	
	SQ1	0.744			0.628	
	FQ2	0.682			0.568	
	TRA6	0.626			0.510	
	Tangible		1.535	66.629%		0.635
	TRA2	0.792			0.491	
	TRA3	0.769			0.464	
	SQ2	0.690			0.384	
KMO=0.815	Brand Image		3.157	54.278%		0.831
	BI7	0.774			0.646	
	BI6	0.767			0.637	
	BI2	0.739			0.607	
	BI1	0.738			0.605	
	BI5	0.701			0.559	
KMO = 0.876	Customer Perceived Value		3.691	61.521%		0.874
	PV4	0.833			0.739	
	PV3	0.812			0.708	
	PV6	0.783			0.673	
	PV5	0.777			0.669	
	PV2	0.758			0.648	
	PV1	0.739			0.625	
KMO = 0.725	Customer Satisfaction		2.279	75.979%		0.842
	CS1	0.884			0.683	
	CS2	0.874			0.711	
	CS3	0.857			0.728	
KMO = 0.717	Word-Of-Mouth		2.338	77.945%		0.858
	WOM3	0.905			0.769	
	WOM2	0.897			0.754	
	WOM1	0.845			0.671	
KMO = 0.680	Customer Loyalty		2.017	67.248%		0.756

CL3	0.848	0.626
CL2	0.834	0.602
CL1	0.777	0.528

3.2.4 Result

Table 4 shows the results of the influences of service quality on brand image restaurant, customer perceive value and customer satisfaction. The result shows that service quality has significant influence on the brand image restaurant ( $\beta=0.491$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), customer perceived value ( $\beta=0.638$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and customer satisfaction ( $\beta=0.130$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) The result indicates that Hypothesis 1,2 and 3 are partially supported. Support for hypothesis 5 and 6 were also found the effect of brand image and customer perceived value on customer satisfaction ( $\beta=0.231$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) ( $\beta=0.550$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Finally, customer satisfaction was found in relationship with both worth-of-mouth ( $\beta=0.736$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and customer loyalty ( $\beta=0.752$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Therefore, hypotheses 5 and 6 are also supported.

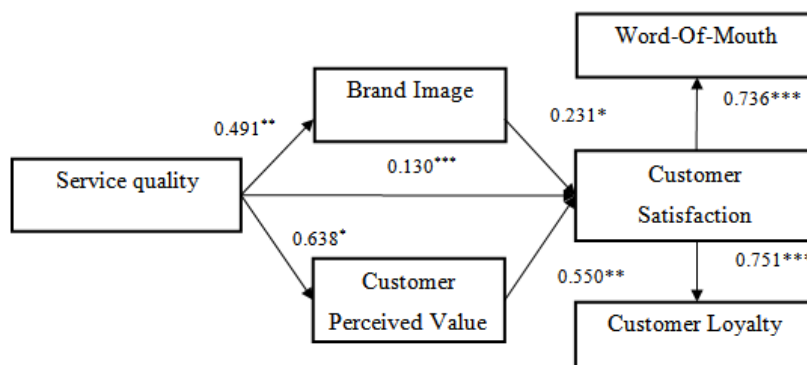
**Table 5**  
Hypotheses and Results of the Empirical Tests

Paths	Path coefficient	t-value	Hypothesis result
Service quality Brand Image →	0.491	5.47	Confirmed
Service quality Customer Perceived Value →	0.638	6.24	Confirmed
Service quality Customer satisfaction →	0.130	2.77	Confirmed
Brand Image Customer satisfaction →	0.231	3.67	Confirmed
Customer Perceived Value Customer satisfaction →	0.550	5.77	Confirmed
Customer satisfaction Word-of-mouth →	0.736	7.42	Confirmed
Customer satisfaction Customer Loyalty →	0.752	8.66	Confirmed

Note: \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.5$ , +  $p < 0.1$

**IV. COMPARATIVE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings from both studies offer support to the same direct effect, as shown in fig.1.



**Fig.2.**Structural model results for assessment service quality in Vietnamese restaurant

Firstly, the study results reveals that, for the traditional restaurants in Vietnam, the service quality, brand image restaurant and customer perceived value have significant influences on customer satisfaction. These hypotheses were supported by factor and regression analysis.

In addition, the customer perceived value dimension has strongest influence on customer satisfaction. The results of factor analysis indicated that 67% of the total variance explained. Although, this research has some finding similarities with some previous researches (Chow et al., 2007; Ryu and Han, 2010), it is necessary to know how this study is unique from previous studies. It means that this study found a direct positive relationship between service quality, brand image restaurant, custom perceived value and customer satisfaction. It is important for traditional restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City to pay more attention to providing friendly



services that make customers feel valued and cared for. Improvement of visual appeal, food taste, freshness and provision of accurate and reliable service might help restaurant operators meet or exceed customer expectations and improve repeat patronage and willingness to recommend. By acknowledging the importance of customer perceived value, owners of restaurants should concentrate on improving service quality of the restaurants as well as marketing strategies suitable in Vietnam restaurant industry. With a population of 88 million people, Vietnam has the second largest population in Southeast Asia and the eighth largest in Asia. Moreover, more than half of the population is under 30 years old. From the result of survey, almost one- third of customers are from 25 to 31 years old, 32.6%. Additionally, considering and analyzing trends in the modern lifestyle, it can be concluded that the technological advances have strong role. While traditional advertising media such as newspapers, magazines, television are not retaining a key role as before, the demand for a new advertising media is inevitable. For instance, a restaurant web site may become an information channel which provides the customers with all the basic information about it such as the price, menu, service, promotion and so on. Besides, restaurant should use different ways of communication, one of them being social network.

Secondly, the findings of this study indicated that the service quality factor had a positive effect on brand image and customer perceived value. Regression analysis results showed that the R square was .54, which means 54.4 % of the variance in the brand image restaurant and 52.1% of the variance in customer perceived value that can be explained by service quality variable. Especially, food quality is one of the most important components of a eating out experience. The finding is similar with previous researches that have empirically investigated the role of food quality in restaurant industry. Food quality has been measured using a number of various attributes. Kivela et al. (2000) considered several attributes of food quality such as food taste, various menus to analyze the effect of quality of food on customer satisfaction and return patronage. Raajpoot (2002) used food presentation, serving size, menu design, and variety of food to measure product quality (food quality) in the food service industry. Furthermore, Sulek and Hensley (2004) stated that three general food characteristics determine food quality: safety, appeal, and dietary acceptability. Among those characteristics, appeal includes several items such as taste, presentation, texture, color, temperature, and portion size. In this study, the components about selected presentation, menu item variety, taste, and freshness to assess food quality.

These findings are in agreement with the previous findings that service quality directly affected both customer perceived value and brand image for Chinese restaurants in Hong Kong (Ryu et al, 2008). Normally, firstly, a customer assesses the brand image when they enter a restaurant, which happens before any actual services or foods are delivered. Thus, the emotions created by the perception of the brand image may affect the response of customer to the service and food quality in restaurants (Bitner, 1990; Boulding et al., 1993). Thus, if the customer has a high perception of the brand image of restaurant, their expectations for service and food quality may also be higher.

The importance of brand image, store image, organization image, corporate image, or destination image has been discussed in the literature review. The present research has proposed the restaurant image factor in explaining customer satisfaction. Therefore, this study provides a more comprehensive view in understanding the role of restaurant image base on opinion of customer. The findings of this study identified that service quality positively influence customers' perception of the restaurant image. Restaurant managers should improve the dining environment and enhance service to build customers' favorable image. Specifically, this study finds that the food quality is the most important factor that influences the restaurant image. Therefore, restaurant managers should continually build a variety of menu and supplement traditional dishes from other regions of Vietnam. However, restaurant managers still keep main dishes to establish distinctive image that differentiate it from its competitors.

For instance, a restaurant can utilize deliciously food presentation and use fresh materials (e.g. vegetable and meat with through quarantine regulations). In Vietnam, safe hygiene food and product quality are always the great interest of manager restaurant and of every consumer. As the current trend, consumers are more concerned about their health and safety than product price, particularly high quality products. Besides that, dining environment is also important factor. Thus, managers should change décor regularly with traditional Vietnamese style.

Thirdly, this study demonstrates that the customers who are satisfied with their dining experience are more likely to return to the restaurants, and also provide positive word-of-mouth to the others. These hypotheses were supported by factor and regression analysis. The results indicated that word-of-mouth variance explained by 54% customer satisfaction and customer loyalty variance explained by 56% customer satisfaction. These results are similar to previous studies (Ng, 2005). Therefore, the most important implication is to increase their customer's satisfaction, give them good experience and keep them returning to the restaurants. Improving customer satisfaction in the Vietnamese traditional restaurants can not only have positive word-of-mouth and strengthen customer loyalty, but also enhance the reputation of restaurants, thus increase sales and revenue in the long run.

Overall, this report is a comprehensive research of restaurant business in Vietnam. This research conducted a short interview with three restaurants when the owners were asked about the findings, they agreed with the result of current research. Vietnam's restaurant industry has grown rapidly since the country opened its economy. For example, to develop culinary tourism, traditional restaurants should have good strategies to attract and create positive evaluate of customers as well as encourage customer to enjoy traditional cuisine. Because of the success of traditional restaurant business relies on service quality and customer satisfaction, which lead to enhances consumer repeat patronage. Moreover, satisfaction is considered to act as an antecedent to loyalty of customers.

In the competitive restaurant industry, it has become increasingly important to understand customer wants and needs in order to provide the customer with the best possible product. If restaurant supply good service quality, outstanding brand image and perceive of customer, customers will feel satisfied with the service they have received. Moreover, people who are satisfied with a given service will have positive comments to the others and become repeat customers.

## **V. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

For the first purpose, meta-analysis study evaluated the effect of service quality on restaurant brand image, customer perceived value, customer satisfaction, word-of-mouth and customer loyalty. Based on that, there are 7 hypotheses are given to assess and several conclusions are find out in this study. Both of them are significant. This study includes published articles on conference papers, journal papers, etc. However, there are some papers that maybe a limitation of this study and direct influence on meta-analysis result. Consequently, in future meta-analytical studies, the researchers should be collect data from unpublished papers more to have comprehension view.

Besides, although our empirical study confirms insights into the relevance of service quality and customer satisfaction in restaurant industry. However, to analyze deeply about restaurant industry, some suggestions are given for future research. First of all, the study should collect bigger samples to increase the reliability of the research. In addition, a study that would include more restaurants in different geographic locations could be conducted. Besides, the study focus on qualitative research by distribute questionnaire. Future research should use more other methods such as in-depth interview to understand deeply relationship of factors in conceptual framework. Because all variables in this study were measured and created in many countries in the world, the revised version of questionnaire might not be enough when conducted in Vietnamese culture. In the future, additional research should develop items of survey to assess factors instead of the old items with less understanding of customer perceptions. This study has placed its focus on traditional restaurants. Other studies may also dive deeper into the culture factors that affect customer satisfaction. To develop the research scope, the future studies may expand this research by comparing the relative importance of customer loyalty and future intentions of customers such as intention behavior or return intention factor.

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