

The Mediating Effect Of Restaurant Attributes On Motivation And Dining Experience In Japanese Restaurants In The Philippines

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Abstract

This research is anticipated to contribute to the field of hotel and restaurant management, as well as Japanese restaurant operators, by providing them with information about this study on the impact of Japanese restaurants on customers' dining experience. Filipinos select Japanese Restaurants based on ambiance, value, authenticity, quality, and menu variety. A descriptive research design indicates that as the level of push and pull increases, the level of DINESERV as a factor affecting the dining experience in the Japanese restaurant would also tend to increase, and vice versa. The result revealed that Japanese restaurants describe the relationship between two or more variables, and it was used to collect and assess data drawn from 250 respondents who have dined in a Japanese restaurant in the National Capital Region. Japanese restaurant customers agree that push and pull motivations correlate with DINESERV and are very satisfied with the restaurant's attributes. The Pearson correlation revealed a high relationship between push and pull motivations and DINESERV. Lastly, the CB-SEM or the Covariance-base Structural Equation Modelling using AMOS was utilized to determine the mediating effect between push and pull motivations, DINESERV of restaurant attributes on motivation, and dining experience in Japanese restaurants.

Keywords: Restaurant attributes, push and pull motivators, DINESERV, Japanese Restaurants Structural Equation Modelling



Introduction

The Philippines is a multicultural country as it combines different cuisines together, Arago et al. (2019). Thus, as a developing country, profound changes to culinary systems have resulted in impacts from diverse nations, such as Spain, Korea, Japan, America, and China, which receive more recognition for their contributions to ethnic restaurants in the Philippines. Moreover, in relation to Montefrio et al. (2020), the global food industry is changing rapidly, and it has become a motive to offer exciting culinary food.

Although international cuisine in the Philippines is growing dramatically, this paper illustrates Japanese cuisine, particularly consumers' preferences. As stated by Santos (2021), Japan has brought a wave of the Philippines' cultural influence, where it has to be given a spotlight, from the popularity of anime, food, technology, fashion, and lifestyle, effects of these products on Filipinos, their appropriation by cultural industries, and the level of influence they have in society should be investigated and analyzed. Thus, the Japanese restaurant has become more popular. It is continually developing in the Philippines, and this study is focused on the cuisine and how much it influenced the country. In contrast, this paper examined customers' behavior, motives, and dining experiences through well-known Japanese restaurants in the Philippines. Nippon News (2017) reported that around 69,300 restaurants in Asia, elevated by 53 percent, compared to data analysis from 2015 and results for roughly 60 percent of all Japanese restaurants worldwide. Known for its taste and exoticism that gives a unique dining experience, it stimulates consumers' cultural interest in ethnic cuisine.

Customers' intentions to dine at a particular establishment are influenced by positive restaurant recommendations, which increase the likelihood that customers will do so. Understanding a customer's wants, needs, and perceptions is necessary for restaurateurs who wish to attract and keep customers, Jalilvand et al. (2017). The positioning of the restaurant's brand, customer base, repeat purchases, and profitability are all affected when the restaurant's service quality attributes meet or exceed customer expectations. The customers' perception of the restaurant's brand influences their dining choices. A restaurant's ability to cultivate a strong brand image helps it to stand out from its rivals. As stated by Nguyen et al. (2018a), the

fact characteristics of restaurants, such as the taste of food, the restaurant's value, physical environment, and availability of nutrition on a diet, were all indicated in keeping the excellent work part of the figure that says customers valued these aspects and were pleased with the restaurant's overall performance.

Crompton's push and pull motivators have been used in tourism studies to show how people decide where to visit. Push motivators are psychological motivators that predispose a person to do something, like dining out or traveling. Pull motivators draw people to a specific spot. Following the study of Kim et al. (2019), push factors drive or create desire. Push and pull factors are choices made in two different timeframes despite appearing conceptually different. In other words, the decision-making process consists of two distinct but sequential stages, and the choice can be made consciously or unconsciously. As a result, an internal motivation first compels (pushes) a consumer to take action. Then, the attraction (pulls) of external resources brings the consumer to the desired location (Kim et al., 2018).

Consumers' behavioral intentions can be boosted by DINESERV factors—fast-food restaurant components. Quality of food and service are important considerations, but so are setting and decor as well as overall cost, ease, and value of the meal. Following the study of Abezie (2019), although the SERVQUAL Model includes 29 questionnaires, the DINESERV Model includes five service quality dimensions and 29 questionnaires for each (tangibles, reliability, assurance, empathy, and responsiveness).

Regarding restaurant attributes, customers are happy with the Japanese restaurant's service. Restaurant atmosphere directly affects a customer's dining experience. Unrelated factors affect consumer purchases more than the product itself. Tuzunkan (2016) stated that a good-looking physical environment could attract more customers with its aesthetic design; however, to achieve this goal, owners and managers will need to invest.

In the push and pull motivators, cleanliness/hygiene of the restaurant contributed to their decision to dine in a Japanese establishment. Consequently, they are attracted by a pristine environment, which significantly influences their behavior and decision-making, which encourages them to eat and produces a favorable response to returning. Additionally, cleanliness or hygiene's significance correlates with service



quality and product safety. The study of Truong et al. (2017) linked that cleanliness could motivate, enhance positive reactions, and adjust customer behavior through aspects such as the pleasure and satisfaction of the experience, trust in the service, and attribution of prestige to the customer.

Last, for DINESERV dimensions, every restaurant offers both food and service. When customers dine in a restaurant, they experience food and service interactions. Every server should be able to provide prompt service, mainly when serving a customer's needs, so that their perceptions of service quality are enhanced. In addition, Neupane and Devkota (2017) say responsiveness, which refers to employees' willingness and eagerness to serve and promptness of services, is another critical aspect of service that helps exceed customers' expectations.

In contrast, Liu and Felicen (2021) concluded that it creates a close connection between customers and the ethnic dining restaurant of their choice. Hence, a traditional Japanese restaurant has become an essential attraction for Filipino consumers. Its uniqueness and variation are often signified as authenticity. This feature enormously influences consumers' behavior, which is a significant facet of ethnic cuisine and distinguishes them from local foods (Gupta et al., 2021)

Therefore, to expound between consumers and the Japanese food industry, it is imperative to be conscious of local customers to understand the authenticity of Japanese cuisine, prominent factors of purchase decisions that are perceived in consumers' behavior, and determine their satisfaction level on a unique dining experience. According to Park et al. (2021), when a customer wants to purchase something, their primary determination to respond is the tangible product or service rendered by the business. This mentality of modern business helps marketing become aware of consumers, where their broadening aspect does not concern the price and the product intrinsically but with the capacity of the restaurant industry to deliver an enjoyable and exhilarating customer ambiance. This trend is conspicuous in the food service industry. Karamustafa and Blker (2020) stated that consumers usually realize that service quality can be gleaned from the restaurant's physical environment and the aesthetics of the place or ambiance. Therefore, this has become one of the variables of customers' influence on motivation and their thoughts about dining experiences. Consequently, Japanese cuisine, as an ethnic restaurant, is often used to

create an authentic dining experience for customers, such as music, ethnic art, and stereotypic cues. Overall, the physical atmosphere plays a significant role in the success of providing a well-off dining experience for customers (Bichler et al., 2020)

Moreover, as research shows by Chua et al. (2020), preferences change depending on a consumer—with who they are, how much income they have, and how much time they have. Also, in the study by Parsa et al. (2017), some customers tend to choose the elevated ambiance and service establishments offer even if they perceive them to be at extortionate rates. Therefore, to provide a better understanding, this paper seeks a practical management approach to the progress of a Japanese restaurant.

Limited research has explored restaurant attributes affecting customer satisfaction and dining experience in Japanese restaurants in the Philippines, which are of central interest to Japanese operators. Internationally, there have been only a small number of studies focusing on restaurant attributes in Japanese restaurants that influence customer perception, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions (Lee, 2015; Lim, 2010; Thanavisarnkajon & Jankaew, 2020; Fanelli & Nocera, 2018; Sung-Min, 2016). An additional research gap is a sample of the population. In Japanese restaurants' context, COVID-19 has restricted the food and service industry. The government issued social distancing in reacting to reduced restaurant demand drivers. Moreover, the economic slowdown in supply chain interruption has also affected dining circumstances, whereas COVID-19 has significantly affected the restaurant industry. This correlates with products offered in a Japanese restaurant's menu, which would also tend to increase its price. In addition, consumers staying at home because of safety protocols and restrictions against the pandemic relates to lower disposable incomes. The problem is that customers may affect their perceived quality and intention to dine in a restaurant. A massive uncertainty towards a restaurant may differ from the context of what it used to be in a normal situation. Therefore, the case during the midst of the pandemic may alter their motivations and behavior intentions, from how consumers order restaurant food to their perceptions of dining out during this unprecedented time. Finally, external factors that may impact customer perceptions make it impossible to reach a conclusive verdict.



The Japanese restaurant in Manila offers a variety of dishes, including many types, textures, and flavors, and this restaurant has become popular in Metro Manila due to its authentic Japanese cuisine. Moreover, as Lai et al. (2020) stated, each local cuisine embodies a city's intangible heritage. Tourists can better comprehend a destination's culture by sampling the local cuisine. Every regional cuisine represents an area's intangible cultural heritage; thus, sampling the local fare is a good way for visitors to learn about the local way of life. Aside from the fact that more people are looking for healthier foods, many people want to dine in Japanese restaurants since the traditional foods they serve are high in vegetables and low in sugar.

The purpose of this study is to propose a strategy for Japanese restaurant operators to use when discovering the wants and needs of their customers, whereby the researchers would also find the explanation as to why Filipinos constantly desire to try different cuisines. It is helpful for other studies to serve as background or information about the impact of Japanese restaurants in the Philippines and factors influencing customers' dining decisions. It likewise determined whether push and pull motivators have a relationship with DINESERV factors when it comes to customers' dining experiences.

This research is expected to contribute, and it is anticipated that the study's findings will benefit students, consumers, future researchers, the field of hotel and restaurant management, and Japanese restaurant operators. It assesses their understanding by providing information from the study on the effect of the Japanese restaurant on customers' dining experience. Therefore, this study could provide a springboard for future research on this topic or ethnic restaurants. It assists them in better understanding the customer's experience when dining in an ethnic restaurant. Moreover, this research helps enhance their prospects, especially when tackling Japanese restaurants. They can benefit from this because it is set as proof and evidence for future studies and as a reference for their papers. Therefore, if one's topic is related to the study of every customer's insights on restaurants in the Philippines, this research may help them with their studies and learn more about the influence of Japanese restaurants in the Philippines. This endeavor also shows Japanese restaurants in the Philippines ways to develop marketing and operational effectiveness, thereby improving lucrativeness.

Literature Review

Food and beverage service industry

Food and beverage services can be considered the whole process of creating, presenting, and serving food and drinks to customers. This, however, is one of many factors to satisfy the customer. In line with Nam et al. (2018), customer loyalty depends on effective management. More precisely, assessing the customer experience and its associated touchpoints is critical to provide adequate services from the customer's perspective. Moreover, based on the study of Velazquez et al. (2017), the type, quantity, and quality of food and beverages consumed can be affected by individual perceptions of the food environment and its physical features, which can affect dietary quality and health outcomes overall. Davis et al. (2018) stated that food and beverage service is only one aspect of the more significant hospitality industry.

Ragimun and Widodo (2019) expressed that most of the food and beverage industry's development is crucial for the community since it helps meet the country's demand for processed foods and beverages and contributes significantly to the added value of primary agricultural products. Since COVID-19 affects business, however, experts predict that the pandemic will have a profound and long-running economic, political, social, and cultural impact on the world Al-Marzouqi and ben Yahia (2021). Additionally, they concluded that adapting to the new normal has become critical because the COVID-19 crisis has lasted so long.

Therefore, it correlates with the industry, which is the process of producing goods and services. It is also the bearer of production and the organized activity of making goods and services. Thence, as stated by Donthu and Gustafsson (2020), numerous businesses have been forced to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in unheard-of disruptions across almost all industry sectors. Moreover, the study additionally says that consumers developed an ability to adapt quickly and improvise to circumvent government-imposed constraints. These industries had to adjust to new social norms capacity standards, and control time limits (Ntounis et al., 2021).

Numerous guidance documents and assets have been established at the local, national, and global levels, both in the private and public sectors,



to assist the food industry during this unexpected period. They are constantly updated in light of new knowledge Nakat and Bou-Mitri (2021) Additionally, shifts in consumer acceptance of relatively new preparations are likely to spur the creation of new products (Santeramo et al., 2018). In the medium and long term, the industry will have to deal with the nearly complete integration of customers into their processes (Bartodziej, 2017)

Foodservice industry in the Philippines

The food service industry market in the Philippines is primarily driven by an increase in price-conscious customers willing to try new restaurants with a diversified menu trying to offer interesting cuisines from around the world and those accommodating progressively busy lifestyles. Following Baluyot and Pampolina (2021), customer satisfaction is one of the most pressing issues in today's foodservice industry. In this pandemic, customer satisfaction and service quality are becoming increasingly crucial in supporting an industry's economic position. This is not limited to customer satisfaction. Kim and Qu (2020) stated that successful businesses in the service sector have been predicted to depend significantly on the intangible nature of provided services and the customer-focused nature of the workforce.

COVID-19 has suffocated many restaurants, causing income and job losses, while others rely on government assistance Juan et al. (2021). Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic shocked the whole world, it also caused job loss for many workers. The pandemic's impact on the hospitality industry includes job loss, revenue loss, loan availability, emerging new markets, market demand, hostile behavior toward foreigners, and issues affecting hospitality workers and hotel cleaners Davahli et al. (2020). After several months, the food industry has begun to function. Requiring these food handlers to obtain sanitary, business, and operating permits is critical to ensuring the safety of consumers purchasing their products via online platforms (Limon, 2021).

Cuisines

Lai et al. (2020) state that each local cuisine embraces a city's intangible heritage. Experiencing local cuisine enables tourists to understand a destination's culture better. Every local cuisine represents a destination's intangible heritage, so trying the local cuisine is a good way for tourists to

comprehend the culture of a destination. Additionally, customers can obtain authentic cultural experiences through ethnic cuisine. Some people make efforts to travel and seek food that they desire. In contrast to food neophobia, Akyuz (2019) says involvement in food has been shown to enhance a person's motivation to try domestic foods and travel in search of novel food experiences.

The majority of people try different cuisines due to the shows they watch. In line with Basaran and Sunnetcioglu (2021), participants stated that the animes they watched reflected various aspects of Japanese culture. Elements of popular culture are incorporated into animes to preserve a general cuisine, culture, values, norms, and knowledge of Japanese culture. Such rice is a primary food in Japanese cuisine that accounts for a sizable portion of the diet. Japanese restaurants typically serve cooked rice baked rice, make sushi, fry fish fillets, and boil and fry their food's ingredients (Jeong & Shin, 2016; Koga et al., 2017).

Restaurant attributes

Positive recommendations are made in the restaurant industry, and customers' intention to dine at particular establishments rises, influencing referent beliefs. Additionally, restaurant owners must thoroughly understand their customers' needs, wants, and perceptions to attract and keep customers in this fiercely competitive industry (Jalilvand et al. (2017). Wu et al. (2020) state that a restaurant's service quality attributes impact customer satisfaction, loyalty, brand positioning, and profitability if they meet customer expectations. The critical part of brand image is due to its influence on customers' future dining decisions. As a result, a strong brand image helps differentiate a restaurant from its competitors (Erkmen & Hancer, 2019).

Push and pull motivators

Crompton's push and pull motivators have been utilized in various tourism studies to demonstrate processes that lead to an individual's personal decision to visit a particular location. A push motivator is a psychological motivator in which a person is predisposed to do something, such as dining out or traveling. In contrast, a pull motivator attracts people's attention to a specific spot Lin et al. (2021). As stated by Kim et al. (2019), push factors are regarded as influences that drive or produce a desire. Therefore, it is imperative to remember that push and pull factors are two choices made in two disparate timeframes, even though they appear to be conceptually



distinct from each other Valls et al. (2018). In other words, the choice is formed in two different but sequential stages and can be made either consciously or unconsciously.

DINESERV

DINESERV is an adapted model to understand consumers' behavioral intentions in food service industries Akpan and Aderele (2020). These are factors to be considered affecting customers' dining experience, specifically in Japanese restaurants. In light of Abezie (2019), DINESERV is reliable for assessing customer perceptions of service quality. Unlike the SERVQUAL Model, DINESERV includes 29 questionnaires conducted into five service quality dimensions (reliability, assurance, tangibles empathy, and responsiveness). Candido et al. (2020) agreed that service quality is the distinction between customers' expectations of the service and their perspectives of actual service performance throughout five quality dimensions (tangibles, reliability, assurance, empathy, and responsiveness).

Theoretical Framework

The researchers used DINESERV, which regards the theoretical concept of the study. Hence, a DINESERV theory is based on the restaurant industry adaptation of the SERVQUAL scale that uses the knowledge gained during the development and refinement process of the restaurant Candido et al. (2020). Moreover, Stevens et al. (1995) were researchers who originally drafted DINESERV. DINESERV factors are reliability assurance, empathy, tangibles, and responsiveness, which are integrated with service quality standards. Therefore, DINESERV is pertinent in the restaurant industry that influences customer satisfaction. Therefore, DINESERV aims to gather data and distribute it to restaurant operators and owners so that they can measure and evaluate, as well as take action to close the gap and adjust to the needs and demands of consumers.

Moreover, this DINESERV factor is reliable and is used as a simple tool for determining how consumers perceive the quality of a restaurant. Per Abezie (2019b), the five DINESERV methods are reliable for assessing customer perceptions of service quality. On top of theoretical findings, DINESERV is the appropriate instrument for measuring the mediating effect of restaurant attributes on motivation and dining experience in Japanese restaurants.

Method

This study intends to be quantitative research to understand factors influencing customers' dining experiences in Japanese restaurants. The descriptive research design was used in the paper to analyze the research data. The researchers conducted a predictive causal method study to carry out the study's purpose. Moreover, a predictive causal method study aims to describe the relationship between two or more variables, and it was used to collect and assess data.

The study was conducted in NCR, Metro Manila. This locale was selected using Tatler Asia and TripAdvisor's dining or travel guide (2022); all top and best Japanese restaurants are in this region. Both media companies are identical in form. They share a similarity in construing the best Japanese restaurants. Researchers did not divulge the name of the Japanese restaurant due to data privacy. McNamara (2018) found that Asia Tatler Group is the region's leading luxury media company. Filieri et al. (2015) discovered that TripAdvisor influences customers due to other users' advice fostered through positive word-of-mouth. It is concluded from their studies that these travel or dining guide websites are known as the most trusted brands to connect with influential customers across the region. Thus, these helped researchers gather numbers of Japanese restaurants and determine if they were appropriate to understand customers' efficiency in conducting the study. This location was ideal for the researchers to survey and to gather information about customers' authentic dining experiences.

Furthermore, the researchers used G* Power, a statistical software, to determine the sample size of the given population. Based on the G* Power, the respondent's target sample size is 111, with an effect size of 0.30, the margin of error is 0.05, and the actual power is 0.95. However, 250 responses were utilized to fit and be accepted in the modeling technique. The researchers used the questionnaire as a data-gathering tool. A combination of researcher-made and adapted survey questionnaire was used for this study to exploit the mediating effect of restaurant attributes on motivation and dining experience in Japanese Restaurants in the Philippines. The survey questionnaire for restaurant attributes was adapted from Liu & Tse (2018). Following this, the researchers also adapted the instrument from the study from Josiam et al. (2015) to assess the 'push and pull motivation'. Lastly, a DINESERV model by Hassan (2021) was adapted to determine its



dimensions. The researcher-made survey questionnaire, which was from the related works of literature, is used to collect data about the behavioral intentions and motivation of the customers towards Japanese Restaurants in the Philippines. The three industry experts validated and ran the instrument in pilot testing. Below is the result of the Cronbach alpha:

Table A. Result of Reliability Analysis

<i>Major Variables</i>	<i>Cronbach Alpha</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Restaurant Attributes	0.946	Excellent
Push and Pull Motivators	0.814	Good
DINESERVE	0.955	Excellent

Legend: $\alpha \geq 0.9$ excellent; $0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$ good; $0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$ acceptable; $0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$ questionable; $0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$ poor; $0.5 > \alpha$ unacceptable

Researchers asked for respondents' consent before they were asked to proceed in answering questionnaires, which was indicated in the caption. Respondents were encouraged to respond freely because researchers explained the purpose of the study to assure them that their responses and expressed opinions remain confidential and that their private information is protected. Researchers also complied with the requirement of R.A. No. 10172 or the Data Privacy Act 2012, stating that all shared information gathered from respondents was treated with strict confidentiality and only used for research purposes.

Weighted mean was used to determine restaurant attributes, assess push and pull motivations, and determine DINESERV dimensions of Japanese restaurants. Pearson correlation was used to determine the significant relationship between push and pull motivations and DINESERV. The CB-SEM through AMOS was used to confirm whether restaurant attributes mediate the relationship between push and pull and DINESERV as factors that affect the dining experience in Japanese restaurants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Summary Of Attributes Of Japanese Restaurants Attributes

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Food quality	4.41	Very satisfied
Satisfaction	4.24	Very satisfied
Physical environment	4.30	Very satisfied

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Return patronage intentions	4.27	Very satisfied
Composite Mean	4.34	Very satisfied

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree; 1.50 – 2.49 Disagree; 2.50 – 3.49 Moderately Agree; 3.50 – 4.49 Agree; 4.50 – 5.00 Strongly Agree

It can be cleaned from Table 1 that Japanese restaurants are excellent in providing the needs and wants of customers in terms of restaurant attributes (4.34). This indicates that customers appreciate their dining experiences. Japanese restaurants prepare appetizing foods with pleasant flavor and scent and serve guests at the correct temperature (4.41), ranked first among indicators. This means that the staff of Japanese restaurants are well-trained and knowledgeable about their work and Japanese culture. The Japanese restaurant has also effectively satisfied its patrons (4.40), second among factors. This suggests that chefs and the entire staff of Japanese restaurants are well-trained in serving high-quality food. In addition, the physical setting of the Japanese restaurant contributed significantly to client happiness (4.30). This indicates that Japanese restaurants satisfy consumers' expectations of what they will see, feel, and experience in Japanese culture. Last, despite being the least significant among indicators, return patronage intentions also had a positive outcome (4.27). This indicates that customers are very satisfied with the service in Japanese restaurants regarding restaurant quality.

Table 2. Summary Of Push And Pull Motivations Of Japanese Restaurants' Customers

<i>Motivations</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Cleanliness Hygiene	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Practicality of restaurant	4.21	Agree
Value	4.20	Agree
Social supper	4.13	Agree
Social aspect	4.02	Agree
Kitchen challenge	2.89	Moderately agree
Composite Mean	Composite Mean	Agree

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree; 1.50 – 2.49 Disagree; 2.50 – 3.49 Moderately Agree; 3.50 – 4.49 Agree; 4.50 – 5.00 Strongly Agree

As shown in the summary in Table 2, respondents strongly agree that cleanliness/hygiene is the most significant motivator, which is ranked highest (4.66), followed by practicality of restaurant with a verbal interpretation of agree (4.21), whereas this was essential to their decision-making as it



increased their desire to participate or dine. Moreover, respondents also agree that value (4.20) is crucial because they consider price or portioning as both factors that affect purchasing motives. In addition, it is noteworthy to mention that social supper is also imperative. In contrast, respondents agree (4.13) that this indicator is a social motivation with an interest to socialize, enjoy, and create a bonding experience altogether. On top of that, respondents also agree with the social aspect (4.02) because when they hear people talk about the restaurant, it also catches their attention to dine. Last, regarding the kitchen challenge, respondents moderately agree (2.89) that they are motivated to dine. Overall, the composite mean of the assessment of push and pull motivations of Japanese restaurant were verbally interpreted as agree (4.01).

Table 3. Summary Of Dineserv Dimensions Of Japanese Restaurants

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Empathy	4.49	Very satisfied
Responsiveness	4.39	Very satisfied
Assurance	4.36	Very satisfied
Reliability	4.35	Very satisfied
Tangibles	4.14	Very satisfied
Composite Mean	4.35	Very satisfied

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree; 1.50 – 2.49 Disagree; 2.50 – 3.49 Moderately Agree; 3.50 – 4.49 Agree; 4.50 – 5.00 Strongly Agree

In summary, among DINESERV dimensions, customers are very satisfied with empathy (4.49), and it is ranked first. It is a good thing since not all restaurants can provide this service. Implementing a health protocol when dining in and ensuring food safety for customers makes them safe. It, however, showed that overall, customers are very satisfied with responsiveness (4.39). It was also determined that respondents are very satisfied regarding assurance (4.36). Respondents are likewise very satisfied (4.35) in terms of reliability. Data shows that in terms of tangibles, respondents are also very satisfied (4.14), although it got the lowest rank among given indicators. Every Japanese restaurant provides comfortable seats to enhance dining experiences and satisfy a customer's needs, making customers more relaxed while dining in. The overall composite means shows customers are very satisfied (4.35).

Table 4. Relationship Between Push And Pull And Dineserv As Factors That Affect The Dining Experience In Japanese Restaurants

		<i>Push and pull</i>	<i>DINESERV</i>
Push and pull	Pearson correlation		0.491** (High relationship)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	200	200
DINESERV	Pearson correlation	0.491** (High relationship)	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	200	200

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

1 – perfect relationship; 0.80 to 0.99 very high relationship; 0.60 to 0.79 moderately high relationship; 0.40 to 0.59 high relationship; 0.20 to 0.39 moderately low relationship; 0.01 to 0.19 very low relationship; 0 – no relationship

Based on Table 4, there is a high relationship between the level of push and pull and the level of DINESERV. This means that as the level of push and pull increases, the level of DINESERV as a factor that affects the dining experience in Japanese restaurants would also tend to increase or vice versa. This can be supported by the study of Lin et al. (2021) on customer behavior, where motivation is a factor that influences a customer to do a specific activity, such as relying on hospitality services, where customer motivation benefits hospitality businesses. According to research, several motivation theories explain why a customer interacts in a particular behavior, so factors of the push and pull framework affect them, and this helps businesses understand their competitive analysis based on consumer preferences. In this study, push factors are internal drives that encourage customers to interact in a specific behavior. While pull factors, on the other hand, are external factors that influence the value of consumer behavior. Likewise, push and pull motivation originated from a study of motivation in which these pull factors are used in consumer restaurant selection. Many restaurants use this push-and-pull motivation to see if it affects customer selection when they visit a restaurant. Some researchers conducted studies and discovered that attributes are also factors that influence a consumer's restaurant selection, which, in theory, are related to pull factors. Kivela et al. (1999) state that this attribute is a new tool for analyzing a restaurant's dining services. It demonstrates that these restaurant attributes are essential in different restaurants that affect diner selection. Whereas DINESERV is

relevant to other businesses, it will also assist other restaurants in identifying their competitive advantages over competitors.

Table 5. Summary Of Model Fit Indices

<i>Model Indices</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Standard Values</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Chi-square/degrees of freedom	0.000	< 5	Good fit
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	1.000	> 0.80	Good fit
Normal fit index (NFI)	1.000	> 0.90	Good fit
Comparative fit index (CFI)	1.000	> 0.90	Good fit
RMSEA	0.641	< 0.05	Poor Fit

The researcher evaluated the model based on multiple indices. These are chi-square, chi-square/df, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Normal Fit Index (NFI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI); the result of the model fit is shown in the table below.

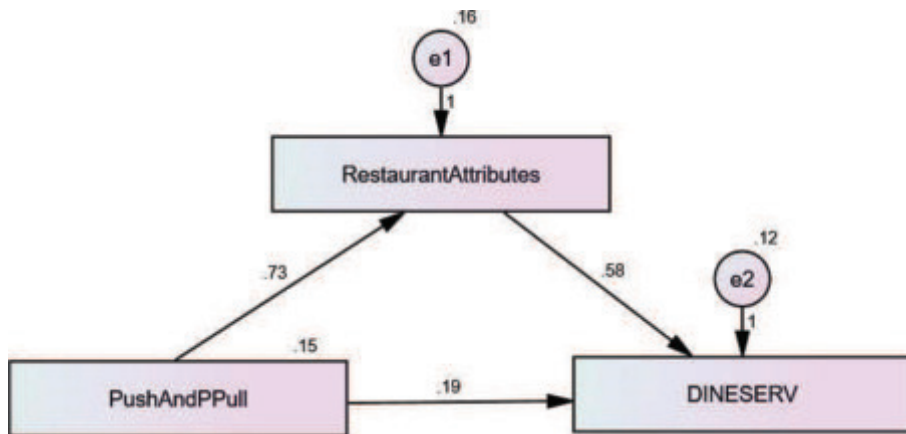


Figure 1. SEM model

Researchers evaluated the model based on multiple indices. These are chi-square, chi-square/df, the goodness of fit index (GFI), normal fit index (NFI), and comparative fit index (CFI). The result of the model fit is shown in Table.

Researchers hypothesized that restaurant attributes mediate the relationship between push and pull motivators and DINESERV. Therefore, this model answers the objective to confirm whether restaurant attributes mediate the relationship between push and pull and DINESERV as factors

that affect the dining experience in Japanese restaurants. The model shows that there is a relationship between push and pull and restaurant attributes (0.73). Prior studies indicate consumption motives and suggest that their choice depends on the goal (Brendl et al., 2003; Van Osselaer et al., 2005). Correspondingly, attributes are more important for specific motives, whereas customer attributes are more likely to be pondered pertinent to the service and product. Chernev (2004) indicates that customers are more prone to focus on attributes that match their goal-oriented nature or motives.

On the other hand, there is a weak relationship between push and pull and DINESERV (0.19). Table 5 shows a high relationship between push and pull and DINESERV because restaurant attributes are not presented and are only termed as generic for Japanese restaurants without their attributes. It means that restaurant attributes are more likely associated with five dimensions of DINSERV, which must be relevant to service quality. Meanwhile, this model shows that there is a strong direct relationship from restaurant attributes going to DINESERV.

Restaurant attributes affect the service quality of the customer's dining experience. Thus, according to Kim et al. (2009), service quality was one of the most critical elements affecting customer satisfaction and revisit intention. Also, it determines the value proposition and provides appropriate serving size from its food quality attributes, which leads to customer satisfaction with the overall value of their dining experience in Japanese restaurants. This is in line with push and pull motivators. Therefore, it is concluded that restaurant attributes mediate, which heightens to provide a more excellent dining experience between push and pull and DINESERV of Japanese restaurant customers.

Restaurant attributes are the most vital factors in the dining experience of Japanese restaurants. Therefore, when it comes to service quality from DINESERV dimensions, considering restaurant attributes helps intensify customers' dining experience. It is hypothesized that these attributes enhance customers' dining experience between food quality, physical environment, and service quality. This is consistent with the findings of Ponnampalani and Balaji (2014), where food-related attributes and restaurant atmosphere are relevant attributes of service quality that significantly affect the customer experience in dining restaurants. Thus, the model confirmed a mediating effect on restaurant attributes.



The model is well-made, as all standard values are interpreted as a good fit. This means data are consistent that the model behavior is reasonable on value where the model predicts responses accurately. RMSEA is 0.587, which indicates an act of poor model fit. It helps in measuring the goodness of model fit, and it is essential to determine whether models with minimal degrees of freedom are effective at obtaining the value of an indicator. It suggests that it frequently mistakenly indicates a poorly fitting model when getting the RMSEA with a small number of degrees of freedom (df) or a small sample size. Kenney states that RMSEA values of 0.05 or less indicate a close model fit, whereas values of 0.08 or less indicate a fair approximation error. However, RMSEA with 0.01, 0.05, and 0.08 are shown as excellent and good. These criteria were not intended to distinguish between models that fit well and those that do not, but rather to evaluate model fit and determine the SEM's test of precise fit. It measures the goodness of model fit, and it is essential to determine whether models with minimal degrees of freedom are effective at obtaining the value of an indicator. Based on the indices used in the model, restaurant attributes mediate the relationship between push and pull and DINESERV as factors that affect the dining experience in Japanese restaurants. It further implies that even though there is a strong relationship between push and pull variables and DINESERV indicated on the model, Table 20 shows an indirect relationship between restaurant attributes and other variables. Even though push and pull motivators to restaurant attributes had highly significant roles with DINESERV. For push and pull to DINESERV, however, there is a low-lying relationship indirect correlation between these two variables. The mediator, however, is vital to correspond with push and pull motivators and DINESERV dimensions.

Table 6. Hypothesis Test Results

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>C.R.</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Result</i>
H1	R.A <---P&P	.726	.074	9.791	***	Accepted
H2	D <---P&P	.187	.077	2.431	.015	Not accepted
H3	D <---P&P	.578	.060	9.582	***	Accepted

Legend: R.A- Restaurants Attributes, P&P-Push and Pull, and D-DINESERV

From a research model in Figure 1 and the hypothesis results in Table 6, it is observed that restaurant attributes of Japanese restaurants are perceived by customers, which has a significant correlation effect on push

and pull and DINESERV. According to the data, regression weights of hypothesis 1 on push and pull to restaurant attributes are equal to 0.726, indicating a positive and significant impact on customer motives and dining experience in Japanese restaurants. The higher the quality of Japanese restaurants, the more significant, in turn, leads to customer satisfaction and loyalty. On the contrary, the poorer the quality of delivered service in Japanese restaurants, the higher the perceived risk of trust and brand it becomes, and vice versa.

On the other hand, regression weights of hypothesis 2 pertaining to push and pull and DINESERV were not accepted to have a positive and significant effect on each other, with a weight of 0.187. This indicates that push and pull as motivation does not affect or positively influence customer perception of Japanese restaurants. However, the regression weight of hypothesis 3 between the restaurant attributes and DINESERV is equal to 0.578. This signifies that the higher the quality of delivered service, the higher it leads to a positive motivation of behavioral intention of return, satisfaction, and dining experience, and vice versa, which was accepted.

Hence, as aforementioned, without the mediator or restaurant attributes, hypothesis 2 between push and pull and DINESERV will appear as dependent on one another. In contrast, they would have a directly significant relationship with each other. Therefore, the study's results indicated that each relevant restaurant quality attribute has a positive influence and significant effect on customer behavior intentions ($H1=0.726$; $H3=0.578$). Moreover, important attributes in common positively influence customer expectation and perception of delivered service.

Future researchers in the same field on this study can further continue to expand more factors that are possible to be mediated. It is to discover, to a greater extent, to create a more profound and more comprehensive view of customer motives, satisfaction, and dining experience in restaurants. Authors hope new studies will lead to innovative discoveries in this area.

RECOMMENDATION

For Japanese restaurant operators, results implied that restaurant attributes and DINESERV dimensions had not obtained the total ability because customers are not extremely satisfied. On the other hand, for push



and pull motivators, this study found that customers generally agreed that there is also room for improvement to increase their motivation to dine in. Therefore, Japanese restaurants should consider the following to improve and increase customers' dining experience and motivation towards Japanese restaurants.

Japanese restaurants have to examine parking areas and building exteriors. Therefore, the owner of a Japanese restaurant may suggest that an underground parking area be constructed for the convenience of diners. Considering that some Japanese restaurants have limited parking, they should improve the given space for their customers to park; they may also provide a parking location nearby or other parking areas for the restaurant's customers only. It should be provided by the restaurant, given that Japanese restaurants are located in the city of Manila, which is one of the most important factors to have to visually attract more customers by providing a place to park their cars, where it will affect customer's restaurant dining experiences if they should have made this improvement for the benefit of their restaurant. They should consider giving customers anticipation to achieve a more authentic dining experience. In contrast, the physical environment of Japanese restaurants should feature a more traditional feel like Japan, with a low table set on tatami flooring and more decoration of unique Japanese flowers, artwork, scrolls, and traditional music.

To increase dining preference with a group of companions, Japanese restaurants should consider offering discounts or providing sets of bundles by offering two or more individual menu items as a package deal with a slight discount. This would encourage customers to dine when there is a special occasion, and customers mostly appreciate value.

Therefore, the outcome findings of this study allow them to better understand consumers' decision-making motivations and dining experiences by providing them with assessed and determined information on the effect of the Japanese restaurant on customer dining experience. In contrast, its result features data to have know-how on the course of action to comprehensively improve consumers' involvement and stimulus towards it. A specific Japanese restaurant was included in the study.

Restaurateurs, however, should consider the variables used because restaurant attributes, push and pull motivators, and DINESERV dimensions are significant elements to measure the restaurant's overall performance.

Thus, other Japanese restaurants are highly vouched to consider this study as their basis if they are confident that it is in line with its products and services or if it is authentic Japanese cuisine. Moreover, restaurateurs should track customers' motivation and dining experience by measuring the perceived quality of relevant variables.

Finally, for future researchers, this study can provide a springboard to assist them in understanding the customer's dining experience in Japanese restaurants. This study may help supplement their prospects, which they can use to set out as proof and evidence for future studies on their reference paper. Even though a great deal of findings within this study are significant, it is essential to consider the study's limitations. This study was limited to respondents being only gathered in Metro Manila because consumers may have different perceptions of purchasing power to dine in due to income in respective provinces. Thus, to increase the likelihood that results can be generalized to a larger population and to improve the confidence in findings, future researchers should aim to collect a larger random sample from various locations.

Conclusions

This study demonstrated that determining restaurant attributes is vital in gaining insights into customers' needs and wants. It produced a salient aspect of the customer's decision-making process. Therefore, it can be concluded that understanding restaurant attributes allows Japanese restaurant operators to invest assertively in ways that show the outstanding aspects of these variables that influence the decision-making process. Customers place a positive sentiment on food quality, physical environment, satisfaction, and return patronage intention.

On the other hand, diner motivations were assessed in a push-and-pull framework. This study helped investigate why customers eat out and how they select restaurants by giving them a deeper understanding of the customer's perspective. This study found that customers were pushed to dine out in Japanese restaurants, where inclusively, it placed more emphasis on the social supper. In contrast, there was only a medium involvement in kitchen challenges. Meanwhile, on the pull factor, customers were pulled into Japanese restaurants, and overall, the study found that it placed a high involvement in value, social aspect, cleanliness or hygiene, and practicality of restaurant.



Moreover, this study also determined the DINESERV dimensions. The result confirmed that five DINESERV variables positively influenced customers' dining experience, given Japanese restaurant quality. Results revealed that empathy is the most vital factor influencing customers' satisfaction with Japanese restaurants' service quality among service quality factors. Thus, customers' dining experience put more value on empathy by validating their emotions and feelings, which leads to satiated customers, followed by responsiveness, assurance, and reliability. At the same time, tangibles were the least significant factor found in the study.

This study also identified the significant relationship between push and pull and DINESERV as factors affecting the Japanese restaurant dining experience. Pearson correlation clearly shows the level of customers' perception of their dining experience. The result proves that there is a high relationship between the level of push and pull and the level of DINESERV. This means that as the level of push and pull increases, the level of DINESERV as a factor affecting the dining experience in Japanese restaurants also tends to increase. It is concluded that these two variables are dependent on one another.

Finally, the study confirmed that restaurant attributes indicate a strong relationship between push and pull and DINESERV as factors that affect the dining experience in Japanese restaurants. A structural equation model (SEM) was employed. The result shows that restaurant attributes contribute a significant role between push and pull and DINESERV as factors that affect the dining experience in Japanese restaurants. It is concluded that restaurant attributes are the most critical variables. Regarding restaurant attributes correlating from its base to DINESERV, there is a relevant attribute between these significant variables. Food-relevant attributes, environment, and fulfillment are related to DINESERV dimensions, whereas they parallel one another, leading to satisfied customers and loyalty. Meanwhile, push and pull motivators are also highly associated with restaurant attributes, whereas attributes are more relevant for specific motives of customer desires. Hence, restaurant attributes influence consumers' intention to increase their intention to dine in Japanese restaurants. Overall, restaurant attributes provide a solid base between push and pull and DINESERV as factors that affect the dining experience in Japanese restaurants.

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Appendix A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Please read all questions carefully. The survey has been designed to facilitate easy answering. The answer requires either a check mark (✓) or an indication of the appropriate response. All surveys are confidential. Only researchers will see and process the questionnaire.

PART I. Restaurant Attributes

The following questions pertain to restaurant attributes. Please indicate how much you are satisfied or not satisfied with each statement. Use the scale to assess: **5 – Extremely Satisfied; 4 – Very Satisfied; 3 – Moderately Satisfied; 2 – Slightly Satisfied; 1 – Not Satisfied at all.**

<i>Food Quality</i>	5	4	3	2	1
1. Food arrived on time.					
2. The ingredients that the restaurant uses are fresh.					
3. Servings are substantial/reasonable in size.					
4. The food was excellent.					
5. Food is presentable.					
<i>Physical Environment</i>	5	4	3	2	1
1. Quality of dining equipment (cutlery served hot and sanitized).					
2. Spacing chairs & tables in the new normal followed safety protocols.					
3. The temperature of air-conditioning was pleasant.					
4. The ambiance (lighting, decoration, aroma enticing) is excellent.					
<i>Satisfaction</i>	5	4	3	2	1
1. I had a pleasant dining experience at the restaurant.					
2. I appreciated the staff's service.					
3. The overall feeling I got from the restaurant was satisfactory.					
<i>Return Patronage Intentions</i>	5	4	3	2	1
1. I intend to return to the restaurant.					
2. I recommend restaurants to family, friends, and co-workers.					
3. The staff works with urgency.					

PART II. Push and Pull Motivations

Direction: Use the scale to assess push and pull motivators:

5 – Strongly Agree; 4 – Agree; 3 – Moderately Agree; 2 – Disagree; 1 – Strongly Disagree



<i>Push</i>					
<i>Kitchen Challenge</i>	5	4	3	2	1
1. I lack knowledge of recipes, so I rather dine in.					
2. I do not know how to cook.					
3. I do not like to cook.					
4. Cooking is too much effort for me.					
5. I do not have the equipment to cook.					
<i>Social Supper</i>					
1. My friends want to go out to eat.					
2. There is a special occasion.					
<i>Pull</i>					
<i>Value</i>	5	4	3	2	1
1. Portion size is noteworthy.					
2. The value I receive is practical.					
3. The price of the food is relatively good.					
4. Overall value for a dining experience is satisfactory.					
<i>Social Aspect</i>					
1. Hear people talking about it.					
<i>Cleanliness/Hygiene</i>					
<i>Practicality of Restaurant</i>	5	4	3	2	1
1. The food is safe.					
2. The restaurant is clean.					
1. The location of the restaurant is accessible.					
2. The restaurant offers a variety of food types/selections.					
3. The restaurant accommodates my needs.					

PART III. DINESERV

Direction: Kindly rate the DINESEV in a Japanese Restaurant. Please use the scale to assess: **5 – Extremely Satisfied; 4 – Very Satisfied; 3 – Moderately Satisfied; 2 – Slightly Satisfied; 1 – Not Satisfied at all.**

<i>Tangibles</i>	5	4	3	2	1
1. The Japanese restaurant has a parking area, and building exteriors are visually attractive.					
2. The Japanese restaurant dining area is visually attractive.					
3. Japanese restaurant seats in the dining room are comfortable.					

<i>Reliability</i>	5	4	3	2	1
1. Japanese restaurant food was served at the time promised					
2. The Japanese restaurant bill provided to me was accurate					
3. A Japanese restaurant quickly corrects anything wrong.					
<i>Responsiveness</i>	5	4	3	2	1
1. Japanese restaurant maintains their speed quality during busy times.					
2. Japanese restaurant provides prompt and quick service.					
<i>Empathy</i>	5	4	3	2	1
1. A Japanese restaurant makes you feel special.					
2. Japanese restaurant anticipates your individual needs wants during COVID-19.					
3. Japanese restaurant has employees who are sympathetic and reassuring if something is wrong.					
<i>Assurance</i>	5	4	3	2	1
1. A Japanese restaurant makes you feel personally safe, especially against the health protocols of COVID-19.					
2. Japanese restaurant has employees who can answer questions thoroughly.					
3. Japanese restaurant has staff who seem well-trained, competent, experienced.					