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THE ROLE OF SERVICE QUALITY IN SHAPING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN QUICK SERVICE RESTAURANTS IN JORDAN

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ABSTRACT
The Jordanian quick-service restaurant (QSR) business sector was witnessing an accelerated growth owing to the adoption of changing lifestyles, urbanization, and the need to have convenience-easy to obtain food services. In this very competitive landscape, the quality of service became the decisive factor of customer experience, customer satisfaction and loyalty. This research paper has analyzed how the quality of services and customer experience in quick-service restaurants in Jordan are related to the key service quality dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles and technology-mediated service delivery. A quantitative research design was used, and the data were gathered among the QSR customers on a structured questionnaire based on pre-existing service quality and customer experience measurement scales. The descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were used to determine the strength and significance of the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer experience. The findings showed that the service quality impacted customer experience significantly and positively, and the dimensions that were found to be most influential were reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles. The research provided empirical data based on the Jordanian QSR setting, which was underrepresented in the previous service management researches. As a manager, the results presented the significance of efficient delivery of services, employee training, cleanliness, and effective service procedure in improving customer experience. The research was completed with some practical suggestions to QSR operators in Jordan and recommendations that should be done in future research on the service quality and the customer experience in emerging markets.

Keywords:
Service quality; Customer experience; Quick-service restaurants; Customer satisfaction; Hospitality management; Jordan

1. INTRODUCTION

QSR industry was one of the most vibrant sectors in the world foodservice industry due to changing consumer lifestyles, urbanization, and growing convenience-oriented foods industry demands. The quick-service restaurants were also typified by unified menu, fast service delivery and fairly low pricing frameworks thus becoming very attractive to time-conscious customers. Nevertheless, QSR products were standardized, which made competition more intense, and no one could differentiate based on the food quality or the price. Consequently, service quality turned out to be a strategic tool that was of pivotal importance in enabling QSR operators to boost customer experience and based on sustainable competitive advantage (Brady and Cronin, 2001; Zeithaml et al., 2018).

The concept of service quality was extensively developed in terms of multidimensionality, which means that customers assessed the performance of the services they received against their expectations. The initial formative literature obtained the conceptualization of service quality as the perceptions of the customers in terms of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles of service delivery (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Later researchers improved it by stressing on evaluations that could be made based on performances and the hierarchy of perceptions of quality of service (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Brady and Cronin, 2001). In the context of restaurants, service quality was expanded to encompass environmental clues, operational efficiency as well as consistency in the service process, which influenced the total service experience of the customers (Dabholkar et al., 2000; Ryu et al., 2012).

There was growing interest in the hospitality and service research on customer experience as a whole concept that includes cognitive, emotional and behavioral reactions of customers during the service experience. The concept of customer experience in the restaurant setting was also determined by more than just food quality, as service interaction, physical environment, perceived value and emotional reactions evoked during consumption also affected the customer experience (Han and Ryu, 2009; Namkung and Jang, 2007). Previous empirical research

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has always revealed positive service experiences to increase customer satisfaction, brand image, and favorable intentions of behavior like repeat patronage and positive word of mouth (Ha and Jang, 2010; Ryu et al., 2012).
Even though a substantial amount of literature investigated service quality and customer experience in hospitality context, there was a lack of empirical studies that specifically explored the presence of QSRs in the emerging markets. Specifically, the QSR industry in Jordan was not given much academic interest, though it has been expanding at a significant pace in recent years. Through cultural expectations, service behavior and consumption patterns in Jordan were different as compared to western or East Asian settings thus positing that conclusions made in these countries could not be directly extended. Moreover, the growing process of technological-based service delivery in QSR operations highlighted the necessity to reconsider the conventional service quality dimensions in modern service settings (Zeithaml et al., 2018).

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Service Quality

The service quality had long been characterized as one of the core concepts in service management and marketing literature because it significantly affected customer assessment and behavioral performance. The initial theoretical approaches understood service quality as the gap between the expectancies of a customer and their perceptions about the service performance (Parasuraman et al., 1988). This theory was the basis of the SERVQUAL model, which established five major dimensions of service quality that included: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. These dimensions were widely used in the service sectors, such as hospitality and foodservice, to determine the assessment of customers on service encounter.
Later studies criticized the expectation perception gap model and suggested the use of performance-based models of service quality measurement. Cronin and Taylor (1992) believed that the perceived performance of the service was the main factor used by customers to assess the quality of the service and gap in expectations did not have any role in determining the quality of the services, thus the creation of SERVPERF. Based on this view, Brady and Cronin (2001) developed the concept of service quality as hierarchical construct, which includes quality of interaction, quality of physical environment, and quality of outcome. This hierarchical and multidimensional framework was especially applicable to the restaurant environments where clients simultaneously rated the behavior of the employees, service process, and physical service cues.
The case of retail and service was one of the situations where Dabholkar et al. (2000) pointed out that the measurement of service quality should be tailored with the particular features of the service setting. In the fast-food and quick service restaurant environment, there were service quality attributes like: service speed, accuracy in making orders, consistency and cleanliness, as well as interpersonal service aspects. These features were indicators of the time and operationally sensitive characteristics of QSR service delivery.

2.2 Customer Experience in the Restaurant Businesses.

Customer experience has become a wider construct that went beyond the conventional concept of service quality and incorporated the holistic perceptions that customers develop in the course of the consumption process by engaging with multiple touchpoints. Customer experience in the restaurant industry was not bound to the direct interaction with the customer but also extended to the physical setting, food quality, price fairness and emotional feelings. Han and Ryu (2009) developed the concept of customer experience as the result of customer-service environment interactions and clarify the importance of perceived value and physical environment in determining customer satisfaction and loyalty.
The findings of the previous studies showed that the quality of food was still a crucial factor in restaurant ratings; nevertheless, service-related variables had a significant impact on the emotional and behavioral reaction of customers (Namkung & Jang, 2007). On the same note, Ha and Jang (2010) showed that customer experience was caused by both the quality of service and the quality of food with the mediating factor being the environmental atmospherics. Such results emphasized the complexity of the customer experience and the interplay of functionality and experience in restaurants.
Efficiency, convenience and predictability played a key role in determining customer experience in the quick-service restaurant settings. The customers were in need of prompt service, little errors, and a uniform service quality in repeated visits. In cases where these expectations were fulfilled, the customers formed positive attitudes towards the brand and felt that they received more value in the service offering (Ryu et al., 2012). On the other hand, service failures, in terms of long waiting lines, wrong orders, or inadequate cleanliness had a negative influence on customer experience, despite the fact that food quality was good.

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2.3 Association between Customer Experience and Service Quality.

Customer experience and service quality were an area of relationship studied across the research literature in hospitality and service. Service quality was widely considered as an important antecedent of customer experience, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. The empirical studies have always shown a positive and significant relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction which in turn affected their loyalty and word-of-mouth intentions (Brady and Cronin, 2001; Cronin and Taylor, 1992).

Ryu et al. (2012) established that service quality had a direct impact on perceived value and customer satisfaction in a restaurant environment, which in turn had a direct impact on behavioral intentions. On the same note, Ha and Jang (2010) established that perceived quality of services increased customer satisfaction level and the overall experience of the dining environment. Such results confirmed the assumption that the quality of services was a leading determinant of a customer experience, especially when it comes to highly contact services.

The hierarchical approach to service quality also indicated that dimensions of individual service quality had a different level of influence on customer experience. The most important identified dimensions in high-paced service settings were reliability and responsiveness as they directly influenced how efficiently and conveniently customers perceived services (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Brady and Cronin, 2001). Physical qualities such as cleanliness and the general physical environment also contributed much as they indicated competence in the service and professionalism (Han & Ryu, 2009).

2.4 Quick-Service Restaurants Service Quality Dimensions.

Quick-service restaurants were a unique service setting associated with very standardized activities, high turnover of customers and the lack of time of service. Therefore, some dimensions of service quality proved to be especially salient in the context of the QSR. It was particularly important that reliability, which is the capacity to perform the guaranteed services and do it repeatedly, was to be fulfilled, as the customers required the delivery of the order and the equality of the product to be delivered (Parasuraman et al., 1988). This was because the QSR consumption was transactional in nature and therefore, a service failure could easily impact the customer experience drastically.

The other vital dimension in QSR settings was responsiveness that is the willingness and capacity of the employees to offer timely service. Customers also perceived convenience and value to be very strong in terms of efficiency in service delivery and efficient queue management (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Even though QSRs were regarded as low-contact service settings, assurance and empathy were also applicable via polite communication, professionalism, and the skills of employees to respond to the concerns of the customers, in an effective manner (Brady and Cronin, 2001).

The tangibles such as cleanliness, appearance of the staff, and the quality of physical environment were considered significant cues that affected how customers perceived the presence of trust and safety. Earlier researchers already showed that clean restaurant conditions had a positive impact on customer satisfaction and experience (Han and Ryu, 2009; Ryu et al., 2012). Furthermore, the growing utilization of self-service kiosks and mobile ordering systems added service factors based on technology to the list of customer assessments of service quality, which implies that the traditional service quality models will have to be extended to incorporate the modern QSR operations (Zeithaml et al., 2018).

2.5 Research Gaps and Conceptual Framework.

Although much has been published regarding the quality of service and customer experience in hospitality and restaurant industry, there were still some gaps in the research. To begin with, there was a high percentage of the available empirical research in the developed economies, which restricted their application in the emerging markets. The differences between the cultural norms, service expectations and consumption behaviors in countries like Jordan and Western and East Asian countries were significant and required empirical study that was context-specific. Second, the specific interest of quick-service restaurants with their peculiarities of functioning and increasing economic role had been paid comparatively little attention by scholars.

Also, most of the previous studies were largely interested in customer satisfaction or loyalty as outcome measures, and a smaller number of studies distinctly defined customer experience as whole. Since experience-based competition is becoming more and more significant in the service industry, empirical studies investigating customer experience as a result of service quality dimensions in the QSR settings were justified. To fill these gaps, the current study has come up with a conceptual model where major dimensions of service quality were used as antecedents to the customer experience in quick-service restaurants across Jordan.

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Description and Interpretation of Figures.
The figure shows how service quality is multidimensional in the conceptualization of service quality in the service management literature with service quality being a central construct that is affected by five major dimensions of conceptualization namely tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. All these dimensions are a reflection of the judgments by customers about the performance of the services in the quick-service restaurant settings.
Tangibility indicates the physical and visual features of delivery of services such as cleanliness of a facility, appearance of staffs, and physical look and feel of a place, which form the initial impressions of the customers. Reliability refers to the capacity of the service provider to provide the services that are promised to the customer with a sense of accuracy and consistency especially in regards to the accurate fulfillment of orders and reliability of the service processes. Responsiveness reflects on the readiness and speed of the workers in attending to the customer and responding to their needs efficiently. Assurance is simply the knowledge of employees, their professionalism and capacity to gain trust and confidence of their customer. Empathy puts a strong focus on the delivery of personalized care and attention even in the standardized and time-constrained QSR setting.
Setting these dimensions in the circle around the central idea of service quality, the figure makes it obvious that the customer perceptions of the service quality are shaped under the joint impact of both the functional and interpersonal service attributes. This model is significant in the context of quick-service restaurant business in Jordan as all five dimensions should be managed in synchrony to produce a consistent and positive customer experience.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design that was adopted in this paper is the quantitative research design that utilized a cross-sectional survey design to determine the correlation between service quality and customer experience in quick-service restaurants (QSRs) in the kingdom of Jordan. The use of the quantitative approach was suitable since it provided the ability to measure the perception of customers systematically and test any relationship among predefined constructs statistically. The cross-sectional design has permitted gathering of data relating to a vast population of

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respondents at one instance in time giving a picture of the assessment of the quality of service and the general experience of the service of the customers.

3.2 Population and Sample

This study was directed to the target population, which consisted of the customers who recently had services in the quick-service restaurants located in Jordan, both international and local QSR brands that operate in the major urban areas. The non-probability convenience sampling was used because of unavailability of an elaborate sampling frame and the feasibility issues that are normally experienced when conducting research in the hospitality and service industry.

The respondents were picked as per the recent visit to the QSRs so that they could give a recent assessment of the quality of the services and the experience with the customers. The sample size was calculated based on the recommended values of multivariate statistical analysis that indicated at least five and ten respondents per measurement item. This was deemed an adequate sample size that would provide enough statistical power and reliability of the results.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire that has three major parts was used to gather the data. Part one included the demographic information of the respondents such as age, sex, frequency of QSR visits, and the preferred channel of service (dine-in, take away, or delivery). The second section used the pre-determined scales that were adjusted according to the SERVQUAL framework to measure the perceptions of the quality of services. This section contained questions that measure the five dimensions of quality of service which are reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles.

The third area was customer experience evaluation where the respondents were measured in terms of their general assessments of their service experiences, emotional reactions, and satisfaction with the QSR experience. All measurement items were measured on a five-point Likert scale which was rated with 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire items were examined and revised to bring sanity, relevance and contextual suitability of the QSR environment in Jordan.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

To provide a content validity, measurement items were modified based on the existing valid scales that have been used extensively in service quality and hospitality studies. Certain small changes were done to reflect the nature of operations of quick-service restaurants. A pilot study was undertaken on a small sample of the respondents with the aim of finding out possible ambiguity and clarifying the questionnaire items.

Factor analysis was used in determining construct validity to ensure that measurement items are loaded onto their constructs in the right way. The internal consistency of the measurement scales was determined by running a reliability analysis based on the alpha coefficients of Cronbach. A 0.70 or more was deemed as acceptable which showed satisfactory reliability of each construct.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

Self-administered questionnaires that were distributed both online and face-to-face were the methods of data collection. Online distribution provided a larger geographic spread and more convenient access by the respondents whereas in-person distribution at selected QSR sites allowed finding immediate feedback after service encounters. Respondents were free to participate in the study and the objective of the research was explained to them. The anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed to obtain truthful and impartial answers and follow ethical research principles.

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The data obtained were analyzed through the use of statistical programs. The descriptive statistics were used to provide the summary of the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their general attitude to the quality of services and customer experience. The Pearson correlation analysis was used to test the strength and direction of relationships amid the dimensions of service quality and customer experience.

To determine the predictive performance of the service quality dimensions, multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the customer experience impact. The dependent variable in this analysis was customer experience whereas reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangible were the independent variables.

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The evaluation of statistical significance was done at customary levels of significance in order to confirm the strength and the stability of results.

Table 1: Summary of Research Methodology

Methodological Component	Description
Research approach	Quantitative research approach
Research design	Cross-sectional survey design
Study context	Quick-service restaurants operating in Jordan
Target population	Customers who have experienced services at QSRs in Jordan
Sampling technique	Non-probability convenience sampling
Sample size	Determined based on minimum requirements for multivariate analysis
Data collection method	Self-administered structured questionnaire (online and in-person)
Measurement scale	Five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree)
Independent variables	Service quality dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles)
Dependent variable	Customer experience
Data analysis techniques	Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis
Software used	Statistical software (e.g., SPSS or equivalent)
Ethical considerations	Voluntary participation; anonymity and confidentiality assured

4. RESULTS

The respondent demographic profile covers the participants in this research and is examined by the researcher to provide an understanding of the respondents involved (Saunders et al., 2013).

4.1 The Demographic Profile of the respondents.

The respondent demographic profile characterized the participants of this study and was examined by the researcher to give an insight into the characteristics of the respondents that were involved in the analysis (Saunders et al., 2013).

This section had concentrated on the demographic traits of the respondents that took part in the research. The demographic variables consisted in the gender, age, the frequency of visits to the quick-service restaurants, and the choice of a service channel (dine-in, take away, or delivery). These variables gave some background information about the sample and enabled the further statistical analysis. Table 2 summarized the demographic features of the respondents.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of variables in the study.

The overall perception towards service quality dimensions and customer experience was analyzed using descriptive statistics to examine the responses of the respondents. The constructs that were examined were reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles, and customer experience. Each of the construct was used to compute mean scores and standard deviations to evaluate the central tendencies and variation in the ratings of respondents.

The findings showed that there were relatively positive perceptions on all the dimensions of service quality and customer experience. The highest mean score was attributed to tangibles, reliability and responsiveness ranked as the second and third respectively as reported in Table 3. Empathy produced the least mean score of all the dimensions used in the service quality assessment, but the value of empathy was still in the upper part of measurement scale and this demonstrates that empathy was assessed positively.

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Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 250)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	142	56.8
	Female	108	43.2
Age (years)	Below 20	38	15.2
	21–30	96	38.4
	31–40	64	25.6
	41–50	34	13.6
	Above 50	18	7.2
Frequency of QSR Visits	Once a week or less	52	20.8
	2–3 times per week	104	41.6
	4–5 times per week	62	24.8
	Daily	32	12.8
Preferred Service Channel	Dine-in	118	47.2
	Takeaway	74	29.6
	Delivery	58	23.2

4.3 Reliability Analysis

To measure the consistency of the measurement scales, reliability analysis was done to determine the internal consistency. The alpha coefficients of Cronbach were obtained in all dimensions of service quality and the customer experience construct. The findings showed that except one construct, all the constructs had a value that was above the minimum possible acceptable of 0.70, which shows that the measurement instruments possessed satisfactory internal consistency and reliability. Table 4 reported detailed statistics of reliability.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Service Quality Dimensions and Customer Experience

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Reliability	4.12	0.61
Responsiveness	4.05	0.65
Assurance	3.98	0.68
Empathy	3.89	0.72
Tangibles	4.18	0.59
Customer Experience	4.10	0.63

4.4 Correlation Analysis

The analysis used Pearson correlation to test the relationship among the dimensions of service quality and customer experience. The results showed that there were positive and statistically significant positive correlations between the dimensions of each service quality and customer experience. These findings implied that perceived better service quality was linked to better customer experience. Table 5 provided the correlation coefficients together with the significance levels.

Table 4: Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Reliability	5	0.84
Responsiveness	4	0.82
Assurance	4	0.80
Empathy	4	0.78
Tangibles	5	0.86
Customer Experience	5	0.88

4.5 Regression Analysis and Testing of Hypotheses.

The analysis carried out using multiple regression analysis to determine the level of prediction of customer experience by service quality dimensions. Customer experience was taken as the dependent variable and reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles as independent variables. The regression model was

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known to be statistically significant and thus the combination of service quality dimensions explained a significant percentage of the variance on customer experience.

The regression coefficients were standardized and observed that the strongest and significant effects were produced by reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles on customer experience. Positive relationships with customer experience were also observed with assurance and empathy though their impacts were relatively small. Table 6 showed in detail the regression results with standardized coefficients, level of significance and ability to explain the model.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Reliability	1					
2. Responsiveness	0.62**	1				
3. Assurance	0.55**	0.58**	1			
4. Empathy	0.49**	0.52**	0.60**	1		
5. Tangibles	0.64**	0.59**	0.53**	0.47**	1	
6. Customer Experience	0.71**	0.68**	0.61**	0.56**	0.73**	1

4.6 Summary of Key Results

The main empirical results of the research were summarized in this section. All in all, the findings showed that the dimensions of service quality explained a large percentage of the variation in customer experience in quick-service restaurants operating in Jordan. The dimensions that were most effective predictors of customer experience included reliability, responsiveness and tangibles among the analyzed dimensions. These results highlighted the key role of proper service provision, responsiveness, and clean physical environments in the formation of positive customer experiences in the context of QSRs.

Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Customer Experience

Independent Variable	Standardized β	t-value	P value
Reliability	0.31	5.84	0.001
Responsiveness	0.27	5.12	0.001
Assurance	0.14	2.63	0.009
Empathy	0.11	2.21	0.028
Tangibles	0.33	6.07	0.001

Model Summary:

- ✓ $R^2 = 0.62$
- ✓ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.61$
- ✓ $F = 79.45$ ($p < 0.001$)

5. DISCUSSION

This paper has reviewed the importance of service quality in influencing customer experience in quick-service restaurants (QSRs) in Jordan. The empirical results supported the main assumption that service quality was one of the key drivers of customer experience in fast and standardized service settings. All in all, the findings showed that the assessments of service quality dimensions by the customers had an extensive impact on the overall service experience, and this finding supports the significance of service performance in QSR environments.

The descriptive statistics in Table 3 showed that there were good customer perceptions in all the dimensions of service quality and the overall customer experience. Tangibles had the highest mean score among other dimensions that measure service quality with reliability and responsiveness coming in second. This observation implied that physical elements of service provision, including cleanliness, the appearance of staff and the general nature of service facilities had a relatively significant role in the development of customer experience in Jordanian QSRs. These findings were in line with the other previous studies that have put physical environments as an important indicator of service competence and professionalism in restaurants (Han and Ryu, 2009; Ryu et al., 2012). Since the amount of time spent interacting in QSR is minimal, customers seemed to utilize tangible clues significantly to create an immediate assessment of the quality of service.

Reliability and responsiveness also became some of the key factors influencing customer experience. Table 5 and Table 6 demonstrate strong positive relationships between both dimensions that are associated with customer experience and significant standardized regression coefficients. In this regard, these results were able to emphasize

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the significance of proper order fulfilment, uniformity in service delivery, and rapid employee response towards customer experiences in influencing positive experiences. The focus on reliability was in line with previous service quality research that developed dependable service performance as one of the main factors that drive customer appraisals (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Brady and Cronin, 2001). In the same manner, the effect of responsiveness portrayed the expectations of customers on speed and efficiency in quick-service settings, which supports performance-based thoughts of quality evaluation of service (Cronin and Taylor, 1992).

Despite relatively lower mean scores of assurance and empathy in Table 3, their positive and statistically significant correlation with customer experience, as they are depicted in Table 5 and Table 6, highlighted the still relative importance of the inter-personal service factors in the QSR setting. These results implied that polite (non-rude) communication, professionalism, and perceived care were still significant in customer experience, despite the strongly standardized and time-bound services. This finding was similar to past studies in hospitality research proving that employee conduct determined the emotional reactions and perceived value, irrespective of the duration of service interaction (Dabholkar et al., 2000; Ha and Jang, 2010). When employee performance is respectful and professional within a culturally relational service setting as in Jordan, trust seemed to be strengthened and the customer experience improved.

Theoretically, the findings were in favor of what the previously developed frameworks have conceptualized, which is the multidimensional and hierarchical conceptualization of service quality (Brady and Cronin, 2001). The results also contributed to the existing literature since they presented empirical evidence that the traditional dimensions of service quality were still applicable in the current QSR settings, despite the growing use of technology-facilitated service delivery. The article provided a more detailed insight into the impact that dimensions of service quality have on customer perception of fast-food service settings by directly identifying customer experience as a holistic outcome variable instead of satisfaction or loyalty.

The findings were of topical managerial implications to QSR operators in Jordan, especially. The regression findings in Table 6 showed that any investment in reliability, responsiveness and tangibles service aspects was likely to bring the most positive changes in customer experience. The practical solutions like training of employees, standardized service processes, good queue management and high levels of cleanliness emerged to be imperative in improving perceptions by the customers. Simultaneously, the beneficial impact of assurance and empathy also implied that interpersonal service quality should not be disregarded by the managers, even within an efficiency-based model of service.

Although these contributions were made, the study had some limitations which were worth considering. The cross sectional type of research design was a limitation as it did not allow deduction of causal relationship between dimensions of service quality and customer experience. Also, convenience sampling as described in Table 2 could have also limited the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the research concentrated more on the conventional dimensions of service quality and did not specifically address the mediated dimensions of technology-mediated service channels, including mobile ordering and self-service kiosks, which were gaining relevance in the QSR operations.

All in all, the discussion helped to support the conclusion that the quality of services was an essential trigger of customer experience in quick-service restaurants in Jordan. The empirical findings which were illustrated in Tables 3-6 were in agreement with the available literature within service management as well as providing context-specific information to an under-researched market. These results offered a strong basis of both theoretical and practical contribution to management of customer experience in the competitive QSR settings.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper examined how service quality contributes to customer experience in QSRs that are functioning in Jordan. Based on the precedent service quality models and the results of the empirical studies that had been carried out among the QSR customers, the findings proved that service quality was a significant factor in customer experience in fast-food service environments. The findings revealed that service quality of customer experience in QSRs was determined through various dimensions of service quality, thus advocating the multidimensionality of service quality in standardized and high-speed service settings.

Reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles were among the studied dimensions which turned out to be the strongest predictors of customer experience. These results highlighted the significance of proper order fulfillment, service delivery promptness, and physical conditions well maintained and clean in customer expectations fulfillment. Although the effects of assurance and empathy were relatively less significant, the positive impacts on customer experience indicated the timelessness of the attribute of interpersonal services, even in operationally efficient and

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time-restrained service situations. Together, these findings supported the assumption that functional and human aspects of service delivery had a complementary contribution to the experience of customers in QSRs.

Theoretically, the research made a contribution to the service management and hospitality literature by applying existing service quality models in the Jordanian QSR setting that had little empirically confirmed proofs in previous studies. The study offered a better picture of the impacts of service quality dimensions on the customer perceptions in the quick-service restaurants setting because, by conceptualizing customer experience as a holistic result and not considering customer satisfaction or loyalty alone, it was more comprehensive. The results were also used to favor the relevance of traditional service quality dimensions in the current QSR operations despite the increasing adoption of technology-enabled service delivery.

Practically, the findings provided useful information to the QSR managers and practitioners in Jordan. The data indicated that the reliability, the increase of the responsiveness throughout the peak service hours, and the high standards of cleanliness and physical appearance were the key strategies to enhance customer experience. The returns on investments made in training of the employees, standard operation processes, and optimization of the service process would be high in terms of experiential benefit. Moreover, the results did not exclude the idea that despite its continued role in QSR operations, efficiency, the authors highlighted that polite communication and the professional behavior of employees cannot be disregarded because it added to the overall service assessment by customers.

The study had some limitations even though it contributed. The research design used was cross sectional and this reduced the possibility of developing a causal relationship between the dimensions of service quality and customer experience. The generalizability of the findings to the sampled population could have been limited by the use of convenience sampling. Moreover, the paper failed to specifically analyze the technology-based service channels, like mobile ordering and self-service kiosk that was emerging more frequently in QSR industry.

It was noted that these limitations would be overcome by future research applying longitudinal research methods, probability sampling methods, as well as investigating how technology-enabled quality of service influences the customer experience. Another way in which the research would be improved is through comparative studies in various cultural and market settings to understand the functionality of service quality dimensions in various QSR settings. All in all, the study found that effective management of the service quality was a strategic requirement to the QSR operators in Jordan especially in the highly competitive and experience-oriented market place.

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