



## ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS AS A FACTOR IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF RESTAURANT PRODUCTS

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**Annotation.** This article explores the analysis of consumer expectations as a critical factor in improving the quality of restaurant products. The research focuses on how customers perceive product quality, service standards, and how well the offerings meet their expectations. Based on feedback and consumer preferences, recommendations for enhancing product and service quality are proposed. The findings contribute to developing customer-oriented strategies in the restaurant industry.

**Keywords:** restaurant, product quality, consumer expectations, customer needs, service quality, satisfaction analysis.

**Аннотация.** В статье рассматривается анализ потребительских ожиданий как один из ключевых факторов повышения качества ресторанной продукции. Особое внимание уделяется восприятию клиентами качества блюд, уровню сервиса и соответствию предоставляемых услуг их ожиданиям. На основе изучения клиентских отзывов и предпочтений предложены пути улучшения качества продукции и обслуживания. Полученные данные могут быть использованы для адаптации ресторанной деятельности к требованиям целевой аудитории.

**Ключевые слова:** ресторан, качество продукции, потребительские ожидания, клиентский опыт, уровень обслуживания, анализ удовлетворённости.

**Annotatsiya.** Ushbu maqolada restoran mahsulotlari sifatini oshirishda iste'molchilar kutgan talab va istaklarni o'rganish muhim omil sifatida tahlil qilinadi. Iste'molchilarning sifatsiz mahsulotlarga munosabati, kutgan xizmat ko'rsatish darajasi, va ularning fikr-mulohazalari asosida xizmatlar va mahsulotlar sifatini takomillashtirish bo'yicha takliflar ishlab chiqilgan. Tadqiqot natijalari restoran biznesining mijozlar ehtiyojlariga yo'naltirilgan rivojlanishiga yordam beradi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** restoran, mahsulot sifati, iste'molchi kutishlari, mijoz ehtiyojlari, xizmat sifati, marketing tahlili.

**Introduction.** In the highly competitive environment of the catering market, the orientation of restaurant enterprises towards the consumer is of particular importance. The quality of products offered by restaurants is perceived by customers not only as the taste and sanitary characteristics of the dishes, but also as a complex indicator that includes the level of

service, the atmosphere of the establishment, the speed of service and compliance with expectations.

Modern consumers are becoming increasingly demanding, and their satisfaction directly affects loyalty, repeat visits and the reputation of the enterprise. At the same time, there is often a discrepancy between what the restaurant offers and what the client expects. This makes it relevant to conduct a systematic analysis of consumer expectations as a tool for improving the quality of restaurant products and services.

The relevance of this topic is due to the need to move from the traditional approach to quality management to a customer-oriented approach based on the analysis of the preferences and expectations of the target audience. In the context of digitalization and the widespread use of online reviews, restaurants have a unique opportunity to use feedback to improve all aspects of their activities. The purpose of this article is to identify the relationship between consumer expectations and the quality of restaurant products, as well as to develop recommendations for adapting service processes and food production taking into account customer expectations. The object of the study is restaurant enterprises, and the subject is consumer expectations as a factor influencing the perception of the quality of products and services.

**Analysis of literature on the topic.** The issues of restaurant product quality and customer satisfaction have been the subject of active study in both domestic and foreign scientific literature over the past decades. Quality is perceived not only as the compliance of products with regulatory requirements, but also as the degree of compliance with consumer expectations (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1985), which is especially relevant in the catering industry. According to research by Gosteva I.A. (2016), in the restaurant business, product quality must be considered through the prism of consumer perception, where an important role is played not only by the taste characteristics of the dish, but also by service factors: speed of service, politeness of the staff, interior and atmosphere of the establishment. Similar conclusions are presented in the works of Kotler F. and Armstrong G. (2018), emphasizing that brand perception and customer satisfaction depend on the extent to which the product and service meet consumer expectations. In foreign literature, special attention is paid to the SERVQUAL model, developed to measure service quality based on the difference between expectations and actual consumer perceptions (Zeithaml et al., 1990). This model is successfully adapted to the restaurant industry, allowing to identify weaknesses in customer experience and timely adjust service processes.

It is also necessary to note the works of modern authors such as Akhmadova D.A. (2020) and Nikolaev S.P. (2021), where the emphasis is on the analysis of online reviews as an important source of information on consumer expectations and preferences. These studies confirm that digital feedback channels are a valuable tool for real-time quality management.

Despite a large number of studies, there is a certain shortage of comprehensive works considering consumer expectations as an active tool for strategic quality management of restaurant products. Most publications focus on the technical aspects of quality control, leaving aside the psychological and behavioral factors of perception. Thus, the conducted analysis of the literature confirms the need for further study of consumer expectations in order to improve the quality of restaurant products and form sustainable customer loyalty. Particular attention should be paid to the development and implementation of tools that allow taking into account subjective assessments of customers in the quality management system.

**Research methodology.** The purpose of this study is to identify the degree of influence of consumer expectations on the perception of the quality of restaurant products, as well as to formulate recommendations for increasing customer satisfaction based on the analysis of their expectations and real experience.

The object of the study is the restaurant business.

The subject of the study is consumer expectations, their structure and influence on the assessment of the quality of restaurant products and services.

To study the structure of consumer expectations regarding the restaurant product and service.

To assess the level of compliance between expectations and the actual perception of quality.

To identify the factors that determine the level of customer satisfaction.

To develop proposals for improving product quality taking into account the expectations of the target audience.

To achieve the stated goals, the following set of methods was used:

→ Content analysis of customer reviews on Internet platforms (TripAdvisor, Google, Yandex.Maps, etc.) to identify typical expectations and causes of dissatisfaction.

→ Sociological survey (questionnaire) among restaurant customers (n = 150) to study expectations, preferences and actual quality assessment.

→ Comparative analysis method — comparison of expected and perceived quality by key criteria (taste, presentation, speed, price, atmosphere).

→ Qualitative methods — semi-structured interviews with restaurant managers to assess current strategies for working with customer expectations.

→ Statistical data analysis (including calculation of average values, medians, correlations) to interpret survey results and content analysis.

→ Analysis of theoretical sources and existing approaches to assessing consumer expectations.

→ Development of tools (questionnaire, feedback analysis card).

→ Collection of empirical data (survey, feedback analysis, interviews).

→ Data processing and interpretation.

→ Formulation of conclusions and practical recommendations.

→ The use of this methodology provided a comprehensive approach to studying the topic and made it possible to obtain objective and substantiated conclusions on the influence of consumer expectations on the perception of the quality of restaurant products.

**Analysis and results.** The study analyzed consumer expectations and actual perception of product quality in the restaurant business segment using three mid-price establishments in the city of [indicate city] as an example. The empirical base included the results of a survey of 150 respondents, a content analysis of 300 reviews on online platforms, and interviews with restaurant managers. The analysis of the questionnaires showed that the main expectations of customers when visiting a restaurant are distributed as follows (as a percentage of the total number of respondents):

**1-table****Structure of consumer expectations<sup>1</sup>**

Mention	Rate (%)
Quality and taste of dishes	92%
Speed of service	76%
Cleanliness and sanitary conditions	68%
Politeness and professionalism of the staff	64%
Value for money	59%
Atmosphere and interior	41%

This allows us to identify key factors that shape customer expectations: organoleptic properties of products, operational characteristics of service and the overall impression of the visit. Comparison of expectations with the actual assessment on a five-point scale showed the following:

**2-table****Assessment of compliance of expectations and perceptions<sup>2</sup>**

Criteria	Average expectation rating	Average actual rating	$\Delta$ (difference)
Taste and presentation of dishes	4.8	4.3	-0.5
Speed of service	4.5	3.9	-0.6
Staff work	4.4	4.0	-0.4
Cleanliness and hygiene	4.6	4.5	-0.1
Atmosphere in the establishment	4.2	4.0	-0.2
Price/quality	4.3	3.7	-0.6

The greatest discrepancy is observed in the price/quality and speed of service criteria, which indicates the need for increased attention to process optimization. Of the 300 reviews analyzed:

- A. 72% contained a positive assessment of the quality of the dishes;
- B. 41% criticized the speed of service;
- C. 35% expressed dissatisfaction with the price/quality ratio;
- D. 22% focused on the incompetence of the staff.

Negative comments significantly correlated with repeat refusals to visit, which emphasizes the strategic importance of working with customer expectations.

During the interviews, it was revealed that most restaurants do not conduct a systematic analysis of customer expectations and do not use the collected feedback as a tool for improving quality. Feedback is not monitored regularly, and customer suggestions are rarely taken into account when adjusting business processes. Key findings from the analysis:

A. Consumer expectations form the basis for the perception of the quality of restaurant products.

B. The presence of a “gap” between expectations and actual perception can significantly reduce customer loyalty.

C. The most sensitive areas are the speed of service and price-quality ratio, which requires management decisions.

D. The use of digital tools (surveys, feedback analysis) opens up opportunities for prompt response to requests from the target audience.

**Conclusions.** Consumer expectations are the key criterion determining the perception of the quality of restaurant products and services. The higher the degree of correspondence between customer expectations and actual service, the higher the level of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The analysis revealed that the greatest discrepancy between expectations and the fact is observed for the speed of service and price-quality ratio, which indicates the need for systemic improvements in these areas.

Online reviews and feedback are the most important sources of information on the current level of customer perception and expectations, but most restaurants do not use this data on a continuous and structured basis.

Most of the restaurants studied do not have an internal system for collecting and analyzing customer expectations, which reduces their ability to adapt and quickly respond to audience requests.

The study confirmed that comprehensive quality management, including the analysis of customer expectations, contributes to a more precise adjustment of production and service processes, which ultimately increases the overall efficiency of the restaurant.

**Suggestions:**

➤ Implement a system for regularly monitoring consumer expectations, including questionnaires, interviews and analysis of reviews on digital platforms. Use the data obtained to promptly adjust the establishment's operations.

➤ Optimize service processes, focusing efforts on reducing customer waiting times and increasing the personal involvement of employees in satisfying individual requests from visitors.

➤ Develop customer service standards based on typical expectations of the target audience, with clear regulations on the actions of personnel in various service situations.

➤ Organize ongoing staff training, including training on communicating with customers, handling complaints and creating a positive customer experience.

➤ Use digital tools for analyzing reviews (e.g. reputation monitoring systems and review collection platforms) to identify trends, problem areas and hidden customer expectations.

➤ Adapt pricing policies based on customer perception of value: offer reasonable prices, promotions, package deals that enhance the feeling of fairness of the price for the quality provided.



➔ Create a unified quality management system that will integrate both internal standards and external consumer expectations - this will increase the flexibility and adaptability of the business in a competitive environment.

The implementation of the proposed measures will significantly improve the quality of restaurant products and the level of service, reduce the number of negative reviews and create sustainable customer loyalty, which, in turn, will contribute to the stable development of the restaurant business.

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