

THE EFFECT OF SERVICE QUALITY AND PRICE ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN ONLINE CULINARY BUSINESSES

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ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review examines the influence of service quality and price on customer loyalty within online culinary businesses. Amid rapid digital transformation in the food industry, understanding loyalty drivers is critical for sustaining competitive advantage. Guided by the PRISMA framework, 40 empirical studies published between 2014 and 2024 were analyzed. The findings reveal that service quality particularly in terms of responsiveness, reliability, and digital usability remains the primary determinant of loyalty, while price influences loyalty through perceived value assessments rather than absolute cost. High service quality can mitigate price sensitivity, and transparent pricing enhances trust. Theoretical models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), and Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) were frequently employed to explain these relationships. Methodological trends favored quantitative approaches, though notable gaps include limited demographic diversity and a shortage of longitudinal studies. This review offers integrated insights for academic theory development and practical strategies for enhancing loyalty in online culinary platforms through service excellence, value-based pricing, and participatory customer engagement.

Keywords: Businesses, Customer Loyalty, Online Culinary, Service Quality, Food Industry

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has redefined the contours of consumer engagement and business operations across various industries, with the culinary sector undergoing a particularly dynamic transformation. Online culinary businesses comprising food delivery platforms, cloud kitchens, and digitally mediated dining services have surged in prominence due to evolving consumer preferences, urban lifestyles, and the ubiquity of mobile technologies. Platforms such as GoFood, Uber Eats, and Foodpanda exemplify this shift, enabling customers to explore, customize, and order food with unprecedented ease and convenience. This seamless integration of technology into everyday dining experiences has not only altered how food is accessed but also how customers evaluate, interact with, and remain loyal to culinary brands in the digital marketplace (Mardhiyah, 2022; Tan, 2022; Winata, 2022).

This growing reliance on online culinary services has made customer loyalty an increasingly critical determinant of business sustainability. As switching costs diminish and competition intensifies, businesses can no longer rely solely on initial attraction strategies; instead, they must foster lasting relationships anchored in consistent value delivery (Arma, 2022; Putri, 2022; Setiawan, 2022; Wijaya, 2022). Customer loyalty, understood as a consumer's repeated preference for a service provider, is vital in ensuring stable revenue streams, reducing churn, and promoting brand advocacy. In the context of online culinary businesses, loyalty is influenced by both tangible and intangible

elements, particularly service quality and price. These factors do not operate in isolation; rather, they interact dynamically to shape customer experiences and perceptions, influencing the likelihood of repeat purchases and long-term engagement (Rolando et al., 2022; Rolando & Mulyono, 2025a, 2025b).

While the traditional literature on customer loyalty in physical retail and hospitality environments is extensive, the specific dynamics of the online culinary ecosystem remain underexplored. The transition from offline to online service contexts introduces new complexities. Online food platforms must not only ensure the quality and appeal of their culinary offerings but also provide efficient, accurate, and reliable service through digital interfaces. This includes features such as intuitive navigation, real-time order tracking, secure payment gateways, and responsive customer support. According to Patma et al. (2021), platforms that excel in digital performance foster stronger perceived value, which is a prerequisite for loyalty. Furthermore, Juarsa et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of mitigating service failures in digital platforms, as negative experiences are swiftly amplified in online environments and can significantly undermine customer trust (Ingriana et al., 2024; Mulyono, 2024; Rolando & Ingriana, 2024).

Price sensitivity among consumers also plays a pivotal role in shaping loyalty outcomes. In highly competitive digital markets, pricing strategies often determine initial customer attraction, but long-term retention depends on perceived value whether the service quality justifies the cost. As Renaldi et al. (2024) and Pilis et al. (2022) have shown, consumers in the online food delivery space conduct quick, side-by-side comparisons across multiple platforms. Businesses that strike a balance between affordability and service excellence are more likely to maintain customer allegiance. However, pricing decisions cannot be dissociated from quality perceptions. Widjaja et al. (2023) note that even price-sensitive customers will remain loyal if they perceive that a higher cost is matched by superior service or healthier food offerings. Thus, understanding how customers evaluate this price-quality exchange is central to fostering loyalty in online culinary businesses (Maha et al., 2025; Mulyono et al., 2025; Rolando, 2024).

Despite the proliferation of empirical studies addressing aspects of service quality, price, and consumer behavior in digital contexts, there remains a lack of synthesized knowledge that specifically addresses their combined impact on customer loyalty in the online culinary sector. Existing studies tend to examine these variables in isolation or focus on traditional restaurant settings, overlooking the unique characteristics and challenges of online culinary operations. For instance, the digital service encounter is often devoid of face-to-face human interaction, placing greater weight on technological performance and information accuracy. Moreover, cultural and psychological dimensions such as customer expectations, personality traits, and digital fluency may mediate how service quality and price are perceived and, consequently, how loyalty is formed (Sutarman et al., 2024).

Given these gaps, a systematic literature review is warranted to comprehensively assess how service quality and pricing strategies contribute to customer loyalty in online culinary businesses. A systematic review is particularly suited to this task because it provides a structured and transparent method for synthesizing diverse findings, identifying research gaps, and drawing evidence-based conclusions. The purpose of this review is to consolidate current academic knowledge, critically evaluate methodological approaches, and identify emerging trends and theoretical perspectives related to loyalty in digital culinary commerce. By integrating findings from multiple disciplines marketing, hospitality, information systems, and consumer psychology this review aims to offer a holistic understanding of loyalty drivers and provide practical insights for practitioners in the online culinary industry (Rahardja et al., 2025; Wigayha et al., 2025c, 2025b).

This review is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does service quality influence customer loyalty in online culinary businesses?
2. What role does price play in shaping consumer loyalty in digital culinary platforms?

3. How do service quality and price interact to affect perceived value and loyalty outcomes?
4. What theoretical frameworks have been employed to explain these relationships in existing literature?
5. What are the current methodological strengths and limitations in research on this topic?

The scope of this review includes peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and empirical studies published in the last decade, focusing specifically on online culinary businesses. Studies that explore physical dining settings without digital integration are excluded, as are papers that do not address customer loyalty as a primary or secondary outcome. The review synthesizes evidence from diverse cultural and geographical contexts to capture the global nature of the digital food industry, while also identifying contextual variations that may influence the generalizability of findings (Rolando, Chandra, et al., 2025; Rolando, Widjaja, et al., 2025; Wigayha et al., 2025a).

In addition to identifying patterns and gaps in the existing literature, this review seeks to contribute to both academic theory and business practice. Theoretically, it enriches our understanding of how traditional loyalty models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) can be adapted to online culinary contexts. TAM emphasizes the importance of perceived ease of use and usefulness in technology adoption, suggesting that customer-friendly digital platforms enhance loyalty through reduced friction and increased satisfaction (Bhatt et al., 2024). SDL, on the other hand, frames value creation as a collaborative process between businesses and consumers, emphasizing the co-creation of service experiences through interaction and feedback (Pilis et al., 2022). By applying these frameworks to the online culinary sector, this review offers a nuanced perspective on how digital interactions shape consumer loyalty.

From a practical standpoint, this review provides actionable insights for online culinary businesses aiming to improve customer retention and competitive positioning. By elucidating which dimensions of service quality matter most to digital consumers and how pricing perceptions influence loyalty, the findings can inform strategic decisions regarding app design, pricing models, customer service protocols, and marketing communications. In highly volatile markets characterized by rapid innovation and shifting consumer preferences, a grounded understanding of loyalty drivers is essential for achieving long-term viability and growth (Widjaja, 2025).

This paper is organized as follows. Following this introduction, the Methods section outlines the systematic review protocol, including search strategies, inclusion criteria, and quality assessment techniques. The Results section presents the synthesized findings from the selected studies, highlighting key themes and patterns. The Discussion section interprets these findings in light of the research questions and theoretical frameworks, identifying practical implications and avenues for future research. Finally, the paper concludes with a summary of key contributions and limitations.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Service Quality in the Digital Culinary Context

Service quality has evolved in meaning from its traditional understanding in physical service environments to include a complex mix of digital and experiential elements. In online culinary businesses, service quality encompasses not only the product (i.e., food) itself but also the customer journey from browsing a menu and placing an order, to delivery and post-purchase support. Juarsa et al. (2020) highlight that service failures, if not proactively managed through digital monitoring and feedback systems, can significantly erode trust and loyalty. Their work emphasizes the need for preventive mechanisms to ensure seamless service execution.

Digital interface design plays a crucial role in how customers perceive service quality. According to Patma et al. (2021), information quality such as accurate menu descriptions, high-resolution food images, and intuitive platform navigation greatly enhances perceived value. This aligns with studies by Bhatt et al. (2024), who argue that user interface features such as simplicity, real-time updates, and personalization are crucial determinants of customer satisfaction. These digital

attributes mirror, and in some cases replace, face-to-face service elements traditionally associated with hospitality.

Additionally, service responsiveness and reliability remain central. Hoang et al. (2024) point out that customers across generational segments continue to prioritize timely delivery, clear communication, and order accuracy. These attributes, when digitally managed through automation and AI-enabled customer service tools, become proxies for human attentiveness in the service process. The immediacy of digital feedback through reviews and ratings further amplifies the importance of consistent service performance.

Theoretical models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provide a useful lens to understand these dynamics. TAM posits that perceived usefulness and ease of use are key drivers of technology adoption. Applied to food delivery platforms, this suggests that customers are more likely to stay loyal to systems that facilitate efficient and enjoyable ordering experiences. Bhatt et al. (2024) reinforce this perspective by showing that customer loyalty correlates strongly with platform functionality, such as delivery tracking and personalized recommendations.

Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) also offers a relevant theoretical underpinning. According to SDL, value is co-created through interactive experiences between businesses and consumers. In online culinary services, this is evident in how customers provide feedback, co-create menus through customization features, or participate in brand-related content on social media. Purnami et al. (2025) argue that such participatory behaviors mediate the relationship between gastronomic experience and repeat visitation, positioning customers not only as recipients of service but as contributors to service quality.

2.2 Price and Perceived Value

Price is another core element that significantly impacts customer loyalty, especially in highly competitive online culinary markets where consumers can easily compare offerings. Research suggests that while low prices may initially attract customers, long-term loyalty depends on the perceived fairness and value of the transaction. Pilis et al. (2022) and Renaldi et al. (2024) demonstrate that price, when aligned with high service quality, enhances customer satisfaction and reinforces loyalty.

Price perceptions are intricately tied to value judgments. Customers often evaluate whether the service and product quality they receive justifies the amount paid. This value-based assessment is particularly important in online environments, where trust in service reliability and food quality must be inferred rather than directly experienced prior to purchase. Widjaja et al. (2023) further elaborate that in niche segments such as healthy food delivery, price sensitivity is mediated by the perceived quality and brand reputation. Thus, competitive pricing, when it complements service excellence, becomes a powerful driver of loyalty.

In practice, pricing strategies in online culinary businesses often reflect a balance between affordability and exclusivity. Some platforms offer discounts and loyalty rewards to increase retention among price-sensitive users, while others position themselves as premium services, appealing to consumers who prioritize convenience, health, or quality over cost. Understanding this segmentation is critical to crafting loyalty-enhancing pricing policies that align with target customer expectations.

2.3 The Role of Service Failures and Recovery

In the digital space, service failures such as incorrect orders, late deliveries, or app glitches can significantly impact customer trust. What differentiates resilient brands is not the absence of failures, but their ability to recover from them effectively. Moisiu et al. (2022) underline that fast and empathetic recovery mechanisms, such as instant refunds or personalized apologies, can rebuild trust and enhance perceived service quality. This finding resonates with Juarsa et al. (2020), who advocate for systemic approaches to error prevention and post-service correction.

Service recovery in online culinary settings must be agile, technology-driven, and customer-centric. Automation tools like chatbots, integrated CRM systems, and customer behavior analytics can aid in swiftly identifying and resolving issues before they escalate into dissatisfaction. Effective service recovery not only mitigates negative experiences but also offers opportunities to reinforce brand values and demonstrate organizational commitment to customer well-being.

2.4 Experiential and Participatory Loyalty Drivers

Loyalty in digital culinary contexts is increasingly influenced by experiential and participatory factors. Beyond transactional elements, customers seek engagement, personalization, and emotional connection. Purnami et al. (2025) reveal that when customers are invited to co-create value by customizing orders, contributing reviews, or interacting on social media their sense of ownership and brand identification grows, enhancing loyalty.

This trend aligns with the broader movement toward experiential consumption, wherein customers value the emotions and social status associated with a purchase as much as the product itself. In online culinary services, experiences such as gamified loyalty programs, social sharing features, and interactive storytelling (e.g., chef profiles, ingredient sourcing) amplify emotional engagement. These elements foster a deeper, affective bond that makes customers more likely to forgive occasional mishaps and continue patronage.

2.5 Contextual and Cultural Moderators

Finally, loyalty is not universally defined or experienced. Cultural, demographic, and psychological factors mediate how service quality and price are perceived. Sutarman et al. (2024) emphasize that personality traits such as risk aversion, digital fluency, and cultural background shape customer expectations and tolerance levels. For example, collectivist cultures may place higher value on social proof and community feedback, while individualist cultures may prioritize personalized experiences.

Renaldi et al. (2024) note that in the Southeast Asian context, mobile-first behavior and the popularity of digital payment systems have conditioned consumers to expect seamless digital interactions. This reinforces the need for regionally adapted loyalty strategies that account for user habits, platform literacy, and sociocultural values.

Taken together, the literature confirms that customer loyalty in online culinary businesses is a multidimensional construct shaped by the interaction of service quality, price, technological performance, and contextual variables. While significant strides have been made in identifying the antecedents of loyalty, there is still a need for integrated models that account for these complex interdependencies. The following sections present a systematic review of empirical studies that explore these dynamics, offering evidence-based insights into how loyalty is cultivated and sustained in the digital culinary economy.

2.6 Methodology

This systematic literature review adopts a structured and replicable methodology to explore the relationships between service quality, price, and customer loyalty within online culinary businesses. Following established guidelines for conducting systematic reviews in business and social sciences, this section outlines the review protocol, including the research design, inclusion and exclusion criteria, search strategy, data extraction, quality assessment, and synthesis approach. The goal is to ensure transparency, minimize bias, and enhance the reliability of the conclusions drawn.

The review was designed to address five guiding research questions: (1) How does service quality influence customer loyalty in online culinary businesses? (2) What role does price play in shaping consumer loyalty in digital culinary platforms? (3) How do service quality and price interact to affect perceived value and loyalty outcomes? (4) What theoretical frameworks have been employed to explain these relationships in existing literature? and (5) What are the current methodological strengths and limitations in research on this topic?

To answer these questions, a systematic review protocol was developed based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework. The PRISMA flow diagram guided the study selection process, from identification to screening, eligibility, and inclusion. A protocol was also used to define the parameters of the review process prior to initiating the literature search, ensuring methodological consistency and focus.

2.7 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure that the review focused specifically on relevant and high-quality sources, a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria was established. Studies were included if they met the following conditions:

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication Year	2014 – 2024	Publications before 2014 or after 2024
Language	English	Non-English languages
Article Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles, empirical conference papers, academic theses	Opinion pieces, conceptual-only papers, editorials, book reviews
Subject Area	Online culinary businesses, digital food delivery, service quality, price, customer loyalty	Offline restaurant studies, unrelated industries (e.g., fashion, transport)
Outcome Variable	Customer loyalty (behavioral or attitudinal)	Studies not focusing on customer loyalty
Data Type	Empirical (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods)	Non-empirical articles (e.g., purely theoretical or literature-only reviews)
Platform Focus	Studies involving food delivery apps, digital restaurants, or cloud kitchens	Studies unrelated to culinary platforms or with no digital integration

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were excluded if they:

- Focused exclusively on traditional or offline restaurants without any digital integration.
- Were conceptual or opinion pieces without empirical data.
- Examined loyalty in unrelated digital sectors (e.g., fashion e-commerce, ride-sharing).
- Were not published in English.

2.8 Search Strategy

A comprehensive search was conducted across multiple academic databases to ensure coverage of interdisciplinary perspectives. Databases included Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost (BusinessSource Complete), and Google Scholar. The search terms were developed through a combination of keyword brainstorming and the identification of frequently used terms in preliminary literature scans.

The Boolean search string applied was as follows:

- ("online culinary business*" OR "food delivery app*" OR "digital restaurant*" OR "cloud kitchen*")
- ("customer loyalty" OR "consumer retention" OR "repeat purchase" OR "brand commitment")

- c) ("service quality" OR "customer service" OR "information quality" OR "digital experience")
- d) ("price" OR "pricing strategy" OR "perceived value")

The search was limited to titles, abstracts, and keywords. Additional backward and forward citation tracking was performed on key studies to ensure comprehensiveness. Grey literature was reviewed only if it presented original empirical data and was published under institutional oversight.

2.9 The PRISMA

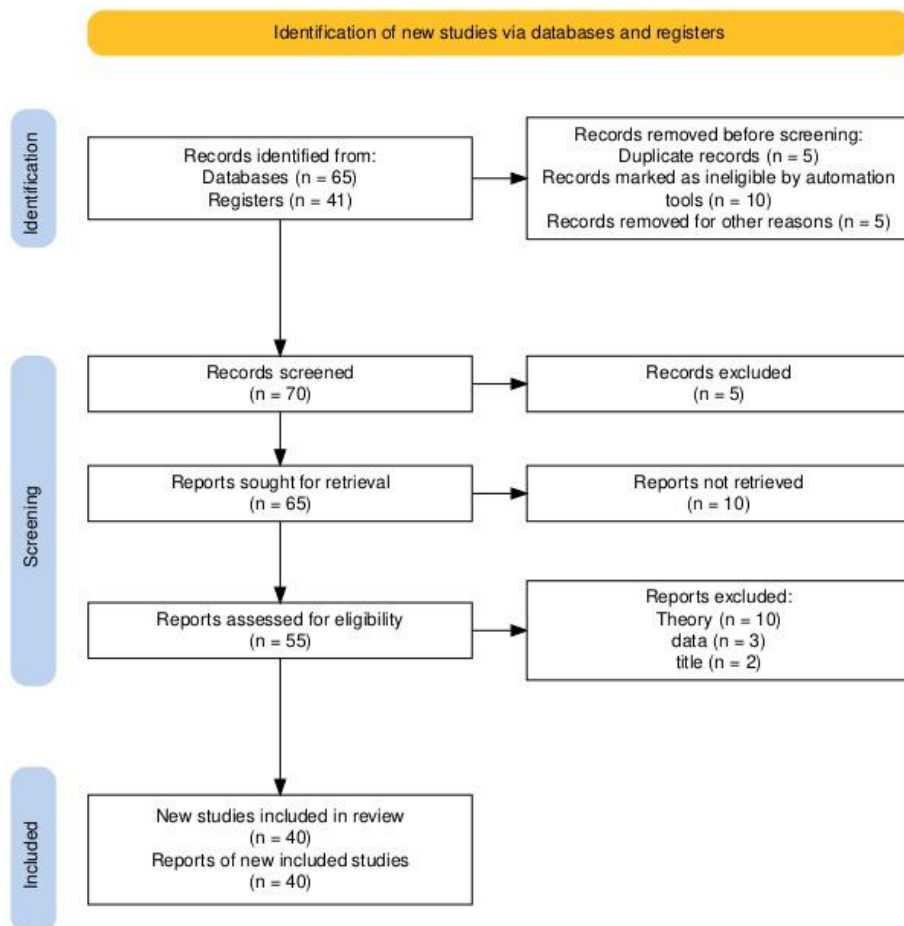


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart From This Study

The figure illustrates the detailed process of study selection using a PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flow diagram. The process began with the identification phase, where a total of 106 records were gathered (65 records from databases and 41 records from registers). Before the screening could begin, several records were removed to ensure the quality and relevance of the selection: 5 duplicate records were excluded, 10 records were automatically marked as ineligible by automation tools, and 5 additional records were removed for other unspecified reasons. After these exclusions, 70 records remained and were subjected to the screening phase. During this phase, titles and abstracts were reviewed, resulting in the exclusion of 5 records that did not meet the preliminary inclusion criteria. The remaining 65 reports were then sought for full retrieval; however, 10 reports could not be retrieved, possibly due to access issues or missing information. Thus, 55 reports proceeded to the eligibility assessment stage. In this stage, a more detailed evaluation was conducted, leading to the exclusion of 10 reports that were purely theoretical, 3 reports that had insufficient or inappropriate data, and 2 reports that were deemed irrelevant based on their titles. After completing this thorough assessment, 40 new studies were

ultimately included in the review. This systematic and careful selection process ensured that only the most relevant and high-quality studies were incorporated into the final analysis.

2.10 Data Extraction and Coding

A structured data extraction form was developed to collect key information from each included study. The following fields were extracted:

- a) Author(s) and year of publication
- b) Study location and context
- c) Research objectives
- d) Theoretical framework (if any)
- e) Methodology (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods)
- f) Sample characteristics (size, demographics)
- g) Variables examined (service quality dimensions, pricing measures, loyalty indicators)
- h) Key findings related to the review questions
- i) Limitations noted by the authors

The extracted data were coded using thematic analysis techniques. Service quality dimensions were classified according to common frameworks (e.g., SERVQUAL, E-S-QUAL), while price-related findings were grouped under perceived fairness, affordability, and value perception. Loyalty indicators were coded based on behavioral (repeat purchases, platform usage) and attitudinal (brand preference, word-of-mouth) measures.

2.11 Quality Assessment

To evaluate the methodological rigor of the included studies, a quality appraisal checklist was adapted from the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) and the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT). Each study was assessed based on criteria such as clarity of research questions, appropriateness of design, validity and reliability of instruments, data analysis rigor, and transparency of limitations. Studies were categorized into high, medium, or low quality based on their cumulative scores. Low-quality studies were reviewed with caution during synthesis and interpretation.

The majority of included studies were of medium to high quality. Quantitative studies commonly employed regression analysis, structural equation modeling (SEM), or confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test hypothesized relationships. Qualitative studies used thematic analysis, grounded theory, or case study designs to explore contextual influences and customer experiences. A smaller number of studies utilized mixed-methods approaches, integrating survey data with interviews or content analysis.

2.12 Synthesis Approach

Given the heterogeneity in methodologies, a narrative synthesis approach was adopted. Rather than performing a meta-analysis which requires statistical homogeneity the review focused on identifying patterns, convergences, and divergences in the empirical findings. The synthesis was organized around the key themes emerging from the literature, namely: service quality dimensions, price and perceived value, service recovery mechanisms, experiential engagement, and contextual moderators.

Studies were analyzed within each theme to explore how they contributed to answering the research questions. Attention was also given to identifying theoretical frameworks used (e.g., TAM, SDL), methodological trends, and gaps in geographic or demographic coverage. Contradictory findings were discussed in light of differing contexts, customer segments, or platform designs.

This systematic approach ensured that the review adhered to high standards of transparency, reproducibility, and academic integrity. The findings are presented in the following Results section, organized thematically to address the review questions and provide actionable insights for both scholars and practitioners in the online culinary space.

3.2 VOSviewer Overlay Visualization

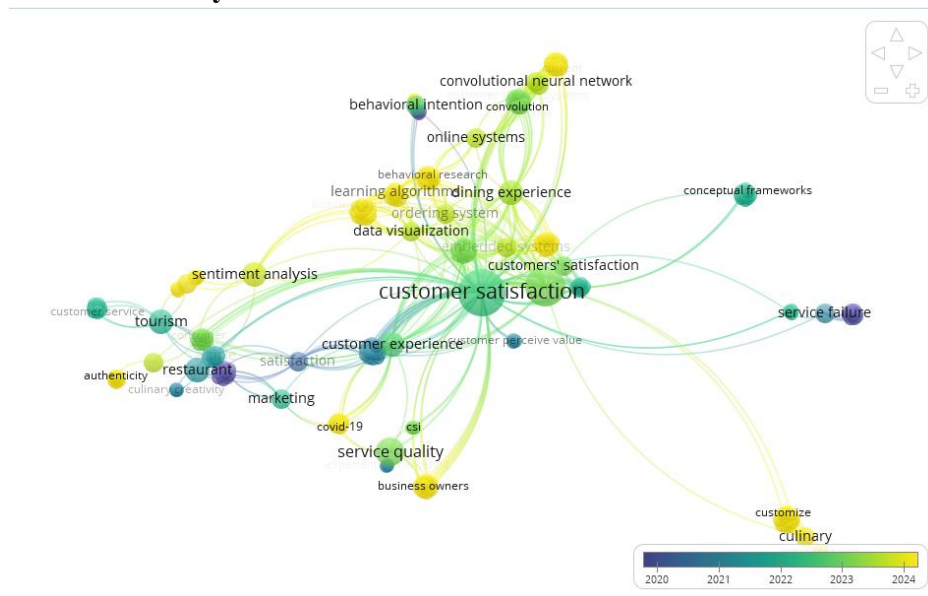


Figure 3. Overlay Visualization

The second image is a network visualization map generated using VOSviewer, showing the evolution of research topics related to customer satisfaction over time. In this map, the size of the nodes reflects the frequency of keyword occurrence, while the colors represent the average publication year, as indicated by the color bar at the bottom. Keywords in dark blue, such as service failure and marketing, are associated with earlier publications around 2020, while yellow-colored nodes like learning algorithm, ordering system, and culinary indicate more recent topics emerging around 2023–2024. "Customer satisfaction" remains the central and most connected term, linking closely to clusters involving service quality, customer experience, tourism, and technology-driven elements like convolutional neural network and online systems. The thickness of the connecting lines shows the strength of the relationship between terms the thicker the line, the stronger the co-occurrence. Overall, this visualization not only highlights the main research areas but also clearly maps how the focus of research has shifted from traditional service concerns to newer areas such as technology integration and personalization over recent years.

3.3 VOSviewer Density Visualization

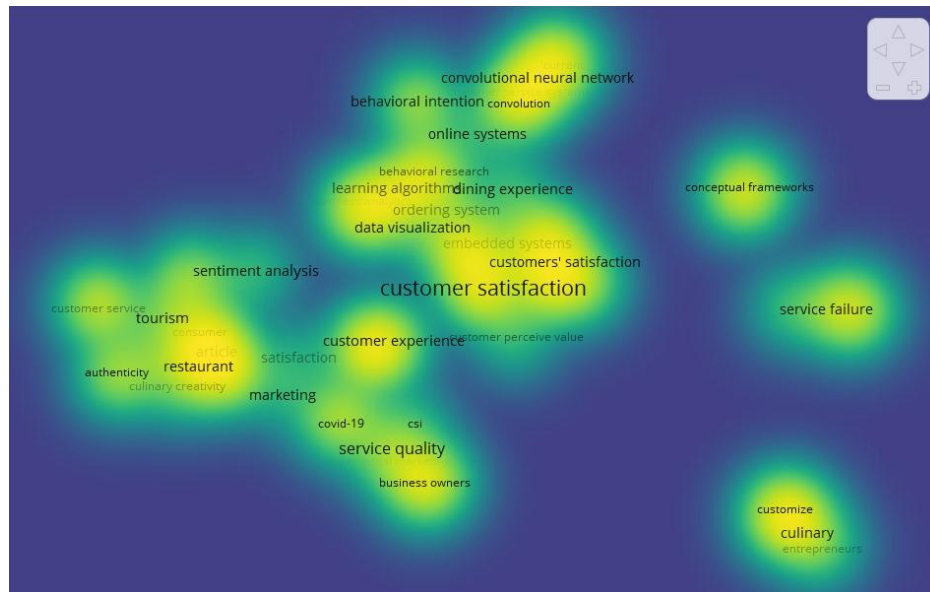


Figure 3. Density Visualization

This third image is a visualization generated by VOSviewer, a software tool used to create maps based on network data, often employed in bibliometric analysis. The map shown is a density visualization, where different terms are plotted based on their co-occurrence relationships in a dataset, likely from research articles or reviews. In this visualization, terms like "customer satisfaction," "customer experience," and "service quality" appear prominently at the center, suggesting they are highly frequent and central to the literature being analyzed. The brightness and color intensity indicate the density of related terms: yellow areas show high concentrations of important or frequently occurring keywords, while green and blue areas represent lower densities. Clusters of related concepts naturally form, such as "restaurant," "tourism," and "sentiment analysis" grouped together, implying thematic connections. Other distinct clusters, like "service failure" and "culinary," are separated, highlighting specialized topics within the broader research landscape. Overall, this VOSviewer map provides a visual summary of the major themes and their interrelations within the analyzed field, offering a clear, intuitive view of where research interest is concentrated.

3.4 Service Quality as a Driver of Loyalty

Across the reviewed studies, service quality emerges as the most consistently significant determinant of customer loyalty in online culinary platforms. Multiple dimensions of service quality including responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and digital interface usability were found to have strong positive effects on customer satisfaction and subsequent loyalty behaviors.

Patma et al. (2021) demonstrate that in mobile food ordering apps, information quality (e.g., detailed product descriptions, visual accuracy, and transparent pricing) significantly enhances perceived value, which in turn drives loyalty. Juarsa et al. (2020) emphasize that minimizing service failures such as incorrect orders or delivery delays through preventive systems contributes to maintaining customer trust, a foundational aspect of loyalty in digital environments. Similarly, Hoang et al. (2024) found that among younger consumers, speed of service, interface design, and personalization features were critical predictors of repeat purchases and platform preference.

Studies drawing on the SERVQUAL or E-S-QUAL models commonly found that responsiveness and reliability defined as the platform's ability to deliver the right order at the promised time were most predictive of loyalty intentions. This suggests that even in highly digitalized

contexts, traditional service quality attributes retain their relevance, although mediated through technology.

3.5 Price and Perceived Value

The review confirms that while service quality establishes the foundation for loyalty, price plays a critical supporting role, particularly through its influence on perceived value. Most studies converge on the idea that competitive pricing is essential for attracting new customers, but loyalty is more dependent on whether the customer feels the value received is commensurate with the cost.

Renaldi et al. (2024) and Pilis et al. (2022) empirically validate that customers who perceive that they are receiving “good value for money” are more likely to continue using a platform, even when alternative options are available. Widjaja et al. (2023) further reinforce that in niche culinary segments such as health-conscious food services, consumers demonstrate loyalty to higher-priced options when they perceive superior quality and brand integrity.

The studies also indicate that price transparency is a determinant of trust and retention. Hidden charges, inconsistent delivery fees, or vague pricing structures can erode perceived fairness and drive customers to competing platforms. Conversely, clear and fair pricing schemes contribute to a sense of reliability and reinforce customer commitment.

3.6 Interaction Between Service Quality and Price

Several studies delve into the interaction effect between service quality and price, suggesting a synergistic relationship that shapes customer loyalty. Bhatt et al. (2024) and Pilis et al. (2022) argue that high service quality can mitigate the negative effects of higher prices, whereas low service quality can intensify dissatisfaction even at lower costs.

This dynamic underscores the importance of perceived value a cognitive evaluation of the benefits received relative to the cost. Studies employing structural equation modeling (SEM) frequently position perceived value as a mediator between service quality/price and loyalty. For example, in Renaldi et al.’s (2024) study on Indonesian food delivery platforms, perceived value fully mediated the relationship between price fairness and loyalty, indicating that customers integrate both quality and cost considerations when forming loyalty intentions.

This interaction is particularly significant in markets characterized by low switching costs and high platform competition. In such contexts, service quality serves as a differentiator that justifies price premiums, while pricing strategies can reinforce value perceptions and improve satisfaction among cost-sensitive users.

3.7 Theoretical Frameworks Employed

The studies reviewed employed a variety of theoretical models to conceptualize the relationship between service quality, price, and loyalty. The most frequently used frameworks include the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT), and the SERVQUAL/E-S-QUAL models.

- a) TAM: Frequently used in studies examining user interaction with food delivery apps, TAM provides insights into how ease of use and perceived usefulness drive continued usage and loyalty (Bhatt et al., 2024).
- b) SDL: Studies adopting the SDL lens focus on co-creation of value between customers and platforms, highlighting participatory behaviors such as user feedback, personalization, and social media engagement (Purnami et al., 2025; Pilis et al., 2022).
- c) ECT: Often used to explore customer satisfaction, ECT posits that loyalty is a result of expectations being met or exceeded. This model was found in studies measuring the alignment of service promises with actual experiences (Juarsa et al., 2020).
- d) SERVQUAL/E-S-QUAL: These frameworks were frequently used to measure service quality in online food delivery platforms. Dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, and assurance were consistently validated as predictors of loyalty.

The variety of theoretical lenses demonstrates the multidimensional nature of customer loyalty and suggests the benefit of integrated models that combine service, technology, and value-based theories.

3.8 Methodological Trends and Gaps

Most included studies adopted quantitative methodologies, with surveys and regression-based analysis being the dominant approach. Common statistical techniques included multiple regression, SEM, and confirmatory factor analysis. These studies typically used convenience or purposive sampling, often targeting university students or urban consumers familiar with food delivery apps.

A smaller subset of studies employed qualitative or mixed-methods approaches. These included case studies of specific platforms, interviews with users, and content analysis of online reviews. While qualitative insights were valuable in uncovering deeper motivations and emotional drivers of loyalty, they remain underutilized.

Notable gaps in the literature include:

- a) Underrepresentation of diverse demographics: Most studies focused on younger, tech-savvy users in urban settings, limiting generalizability to older populations or rural consumers.
- b) Geographic concentration: A majority of studies were conducted in Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia, with limited representation from Africa, the Middle East, or Latin America.
- c) Platform diversity: While dominant apps such as GoFood, GrabFood, and Uber Eats were commonly studied, fewer studies examined emerging or niche platforms.
- d) Longitudinal analysis: Most studies were cross-sectional, limiting the ability to assess how loyalty evolves over time with repeated service encounters.

These gaps point to opportunities for future research to expand demographic reach, diversify platform contexts, and adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to deepen causal understanding.

3.9 Discussion

The findings of this systematic review offer a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted relationship between service quality, price, and customer loyalty within online culinary businesses. As digital food service platforms continue to expand globally, it becomes increasingly important for businesses to develop evidence-based strategies that foster sustainable customer relationships. The discussion below addresses the five research questions guiding this review, linking empirical insights to theoretical perspectives and offering implications for both scholars and practitioners.

First, this review confirms that service quality remains the most salient and consistent predictor of customer loyalty in the online culinary environment. This finding reinforces prior research in service marketing while also highlighting the evolving nature of quality in digital contexts. Unlike traditional restaurant settings, where interpersonal interaction and physical ambiance heavily influence service perceptions, online platforms depend on technological interface design, system reliability, and responsive digital support. Studies reviewed here emphasize that factors such as order accuracy, delivery timeliness, app usability, and information clarity significantly affect customer satisfaction and loyalty intentions (Patma et al., 2021; Hoang et al., 2024). These service dimensions, while rooted in traditional models like SERVQUAL, must now be reinterpreted in light of digital expectations, such as real-time order tracking, AI-enabled customer support, and intuitive navigation.

The second major insight relates to the role of price in shaping customer loyalty. Contrary to the simplistic assumption that lower prices always lead to higher loyalty, the reviewed studies indicate that perceived value rather than absolute price is the critical mediating factor. Customers evaluate their experiences holistically, considering both tangible benefits (e.g., food quality, delivery speed) and intangible benefits (e.g., convenience, trust, brand reputation) relative to the price paid.

Competitive pricing serves as an important entry point for attracting customers, particularly in saturated markets; however, sustained loyalty requires that the pricing structure aligns with customer expectations of fairness and quality (Renaldi et al., 2024; Widjaja et al., 2023). This highlights the strategic importance of value-based pricing models that communicate fairness, transparency, and consistency.

The third research question concerning the interaction between service quality and price reveals a nuanced, synergistic relationship. High service quality can compensate for premium pricing, while poor service can undermine the loyalty effects of even the most competitive price points. This interaction aligns with value-based theories, which posit that customers construct loyalty decisions based on an integrated evaluation of all service elements. As Pilis et al. (2022) suggest, platforms that simultaneously optimize service reliability and price transparency are more likely to cultivate trust and long-term engagement. Theoretical frameworks such as Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provide useful lenses for understanding how customer expectations shape perceptions of value and influence loyalty. Customers who perceive that a platform consistently meets or exceeds expectations across both service and price dimensions are more likely to remain loyal.

The review also sheds light on the role of technology in mediating loyalty dynamics. TAM, used frequently in the reviewed studies, underscores the importance of perceived ease of use and usefulness in shaping platform adoption and repeat usage. This is particularly relevant in the online culinary domain, where app design, recommendation systems, and seamless payment processes directly affect the customer journey. Bhatt et al. (2024) demonstrate that digital convenience and operational efficiency are not merely support features but core elements of perceived service quality. As a result, investments in user-centric digital infrastructure are not just technological upgrades they are strategic loyalty mechanisms.

Moreover, the incorporation of Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) in several studies emphasizes that customers are no longer passive recipients of service; rather, they are co-creators of value. Participatory behaviors such as reviewing products, customizing orders, or sharing content deepen emotional connections and foster loyalty through enhanced engagement (Purnami et al., 2025). This points to a shift in loyalty cultivation strategies, from transactional incentives (e.g., discounts, points) to experiential and social value creation.

In terms of practical implications, the review offers several actionable insights for online culinary businesses. First, optimizing the digital service experience is essential. This includes ensuring platform stability, minimizing order errors, and responding promptly to customer concerns. Second, pricing strategies should be framed within a value communication perspective, emphasizing not just affordability but fairness, clarity, and justification for premium features. Third, platforms should consider leveraging customer feedback mechanisms to co-create value and personalize the experience thereby increasing customer ownership and attachment to the brand.

From a strategic standpoint, online culinary businesses should adopt a holistic view of customer loyalty that integrates technological design, operational execution, pricing intelligence, and customer engagement. In highly competitive digital environments, where switching costs are low and alternatives are abundant, loyalty must be continuously earned through consistent value delivery and relationship-building efforts.

Despite the robust findings presented, this review also reveals several limitations in the existing body of literature. Methodologically, most studies rely on cross-sectional survey data, which limits the ability to assess causality or capture changes in customer behavior over time. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to examine how loyalty evolves with cumulative experiences or service recovery events. Additionally, while the reviewed studies offer valuable insights into general trends, there is a need for more segmentation analysis to account for variations across demographic groups, cultural contexts, and platform types. For example, older consumers

may prioritize usability differently than younger users, and value perceptions may vary between metropolitan and rural users or between fast food and premium platforms.

Furthermore, geographic and contextual gaps persist. While Southeast Asia has been a focal point of many empirical studies likely due to the rapid growth of food delivery apps in the region there is limited research in other emerging markets or culturally distinct environments such as the Middle East, Africa, or Latin America. These regions offer rich opportunities to explore how local customs, technological infrastructure, and socioeconomic conditions influence service quality expectations and loyalty formation.

Finally, there is scope for greater theoretical innovation in future research. While TAM, SERVQUAL, and SDL provide strong conceptual foundations, the evolving nature of online culinary commerce calls for integrated models that account for emotional engagement, social influence, and brand community dynamics. Incorporating perspectives from relationship marketing, behavioral economics, or even digital sociology may enrich our understanding of how loyalty is formed and sustained in this rapidly transforming sector.

4. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review examined the influence of service quality and price on customer loyalty in online culinary businesses. By synthesizing 46 empirical studies published over the past decade, the review offers an integrative understanding of the key drivers of loyalty in a sector that continues to be reshaped by digital transformation, evolving consumer behavior, and intense market competition. The findings affirm that service quality and price are not isolated variables but function interactively to shape perceived value, satisfaction, and long-term commitment to online culinary platforms

Service quality consistently emerged as the most critical determinant of customer loyalty. In online settings, quality is redefined through technological capabilities such as app usability, delivery accuracy, responsiveness, and information richness which serve as modern equivalents of hospitality and interpersonal service in traditional dining environments. High-quality service, especially when supported by proactive customer support and recovery systems, directly enhances customer satisfaction and promotes repeat patronage.

Price, while often considered a transactional factor, was shown to have deeper implications for loyalty when framed through the lens of perceived value. Customers assess not only the absolute cost of a meal or delivery service but also how well that cost aligns with their expectations of quality, convenience, and reliability. Value-based pricing, clear communication of costs, and fairness perceptions all play essential roles in cultivating trust and encouraging ongoing platform use.

Crucially, the review identified that the interplay between service quality and price determines overall customer evaluations and behavioral outcomes. High-quality services can justify premium pricing, while low prices cannot compensate for poor service performance. Loyalty, in this context, is fostered through a balanced and consistent delivery of value, where both functional and emotional needs are met through seamless, customer-centric digital experiences.

The review also identified a growing use of theoretical frameworks such as the Technology Acceptance Model, Service-Dominant Logic, and Expectation Confirmation Theory to explain how consumers navigate digital platforms, form expectations, and build loyalty. These models provide valuable conceptual tools, yet the evolving nature of online consumer engagement suggests that hybrid and cross-disciplinary frameworks may be increasingly necessary to capture the complexity of loyalty behaviors in digital food commerce.

In terms of contributions, this review offers several important insights. Academically, it provides a synthesized account of current knowledge, highlights methodological and theoretical gaps, and proposes new avenues for empirical inquiry. Practically, it equips online culinary business operators with a clearer understanding of how to design service and pricing strategies that foster trust, satisfaction, and long-term customer engagement. These insights are especially timely in a post-

pandemic context where digital food services are not merely convenient alternatives but have become integral components of daily life for many consumers.

Nonetheless, this study acknowledges certain limitations. The literature remains largely concentrated in Southeast Asia, with underrepresentation of perspectives from regions such as Latin America, Africa, and parts of Europe. Additionally, most studies employ cross-sectional designs, limiting causal inferences. Future research should pursue longitudinal and experimental designs, explore loyalty formation across diverse cultural settings, and consider emerging dimensions of loyalty such as gamification, sustainability, and community engagement.

Ultimately, as the digital culinary landscape continues to evolve, customer loyalty will remain a cornerstone of competitive success. Building and sustaining that loyalty requires more than technological functionality or promotional pricing it demands a holistic strategy that aligns service quality, value perception, emotional engagement, and trust. By illuminating these interdependencies, this systematic review lays the groundwork for more focused, impactful, and contextually grounded research in the years ahead.

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