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## Restaurant attributes and customer switching intention in casual dining restaurants: A mediation analysis

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### Abstract

The intricate relationship among restaurant attributes, customer satisfaction, and their intention to switch is explored in current investigation. Furthermore, mediating effect of customer satisfaction has been emphasized. This study collected 563 valid samples from customers through a structured questionnaire at casual dining restaurants. To analyze the data, we used smart PLS. The outcomes demonstrate that customer satisfaction and switching intention are substantially affected by restaurant attributes, and customer satisfaction works an intervening role amongst the restaurant attributes and the switching intention. The results also reveal that food-related attributes are the most prominent attribute that affects customer satisfaction in casual dining restaurants. The motive of restaurant managers should be to reduce post-purchase dissonance. The most critical challenge for restaurant managers is to reduce switching and create a distinct competitive image. The effort should be to reduce switching by increasing satisfaction. Satisfaction can be focused on by emphasizing the food, atmospheric, and service-related attributes in the same order.

**Keywords:** Restaurant attributes, atmospherics, customer satisfaction, switching intention, customer behaviour, mediation

### Introduction

A large portion of the global economy is based on the service sector. Meeting the expectations of customers is of paramount importance for any service organization. With the rising demands, knowledge, and expectations of customers, service organizations are under immense pressure to satisfy the customers' needs. The business environment has become more competitive and intense than before, hence, customer satisfaction has become crucial for maintaining market position and increasing profits (Gilbert *et al.*, 2004) <sup>[25]</sup>. A continual relationship between organization and customers enhances profits, sales, and reduction of marketing costs. The attention of the service organizations has transposed to maintain customers (Kandampully *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[40]</sup> as preserving or retaining existing customers is a significantly more prudent strategy than pursuing new customers.

With an increased working population, more disposable income, and limited time for cooking nowadays, people prefer to eat out more. Food and eating out have developed into essential aspects of people's lives (Okumus *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[62]</sup>. Casual dining restaurant is a segment between quick service and fine dining restaurants. The focus is on full service which is moderately priced with a good image, service, and interior design (Nasyira *et al.*, 2014) <sup>[57]</sup>. The casual dining industry has become a significant part of the service sector. There is a plethora of restaurants in the market and restaurateurs need to differentiate themselves from the competitors. The restaurants that fail to meet the expectations of customers will not survive for long, as the customers will switch over to other competing restaurants. For maintaining a long-term relationship, customer satisfaction can be taken as a foundation of the casual dining restaurant. With an improved understanding of the components involved in the termination process, it will be easier to prevent and avoid termination while attempting to recover lost customers and attract new customers.

Customer relationship has always been in top priority of marketers however, greater attention should be paid to customer switching. If customer switching is controlled, it will ultimately lead to a strong and elongated customer relationship.

Customer switching means shifting of customers from one service organization to another one (Dolnicar, 2002; Shin and Kim, 2008) [21, 74]. In 1995, Keaveney laid forth the first model of customer switching and found eight causes of customer switching. These factors are price, discomfort, service interruption, service encounter failure, competitive issues, staff reaction towards service failure, moral issues, and natural factors.

Customer switching behaviour has been taken up by many authors however, a narrow researches have been carried out that focussed on the influence of satisfied customers through restaurant-related attributes and switching intention of the customers in the Indian restaurant sector. Additionally, most of the research relies upon theoretical frameworks created in the western social orders. The study of post-purchase behaviour is important for each and every restaurant to enable the managers to develop strategies to reduce the customer switching on the basis of reasons that lead to unfavourable behaviour of the customers.

The principal goal of the current investigation is to determine the causal association that exists between restaurant attributes, consumer satisfaction, and switching intention furthermore, to explore the intermediating function of customer experience in association amongst restaurant attributes and intention to switch in casual dining restaurants. The paper starts with a conceptual backdrop of existing literature and hypotheses. After that, the research procedure is explained as well as analysis is represented. This paper has been concluded with discussion and implications.

### Theoretical Background

The theoretical structure of the current research is backed by S-O-R theory which was propounded by Jacoby (2002). S stands for stimulus and it expresses the factors that are able to control an individual's intrinsic feelings. The organism (O) acts as a mediator between the stimulus and the response. The intention and the action represent the response (R). In the current study restaurant attributes are the stimulus and consist of tangible and intangible components. Tangible components include food and physical facilities and intangible components include employees' contact with the customers (Ryu and Han, 2010) [69].

The restaurant industry is significantly influenced by the following determinants that influence customer satisfaction namely atmospherics, cuisine excellence and service attribute. Meal is tangible and prominent attribute that pulls the customers back to a restaurant. A significant determinant of the dining experience is the level of quality of food served (Namkung & Jang, 2007) [56]. Five factors pertaining food are the kind of food, service quality, cleanliness, location, service speed has turned out to be crucial dimensions that affect customer satisfaction and repurchase intention (Qu, 1997; Pettijohn *et al.*, 1997; Namkung & Jang, 2007; Abdullah *et al.*, 2018) [65, 64, 56, 1]. Food-related attributes like appearance, menu options, healthy meal, flavour, freshness and appropriate temperature, are substantially associated with customer satisfaction and post-purchase intentions of the customers (Namkung and Jang, 2007; Hanaysha, 2016) [56, 31]. Study administered by Pettijohn *et al.* (1997) [64], and Roy *et al.* (2020) [67] arrived at the conclusion that priority is given to culinary quality when determining customer satisfaction and affects the

inclination of the patron to revisit the dining establishment.

### H1a: Food-related attributes have favourable impact on customer satisfaction

Service has features of intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability which are important barometers to access an organization's performance (Shin and Kim, 2008) [74]. The imperative antecedent for success of a service organization in case of restaurants are timely delivery of the ordered food, availability of staff as and when required by the customer, knowledge of restaurant products, professional behaviour of staff, willingness to help customers, and the language used by the staff. Bitner (1990) [10] developed a model and presented that customer fulfilment and the quality of service provided are positively correlated. This was further supported by Lee *et al.* (2000) [49], Kaura *et al.* (2015) [41] in their studies. When a customer receives a service, they compare it to the expectations they had, and this comparison determines whether they are satisfied or not. Service organizations try to differentiate their service quality from the competitors (Shemwell *et al.*, 1998) [73].

### H1b: Service-related attributes have favourable impact on customer satisfaction

Atmospherics is the surrounding where service is delivered. According to Bitner (1990) [10], A service is generated and utilized concurrently so, the service is experienced inside the environment of the service organization. Food and service should be good but along with the atmospherics factors like light, decor, interior, music, and spacing also play a momentous part in overall satisfaction and future purchase behaviour (Zhong and Moon, 2020) [79]. There exists a clear correlation amongst the physical space and customer satisfaction. (Ryu and Han, 2010) [69]. Physical environment like seating arrangement, music, and decoration plays significant part in forming the overall satisfaction and post purchase behaviour of the restaurant customers (Yuksel and Yuksel's, 2003) [80]. Hence the hypotheses framed for the study.

### H1c: Atmospherics-related attributes have favourable impact on customer satisfaction.

#### Customer contentment and intention to switch

The fundamental determinant for building a prolonged bond with customers is the satisfaction. The most powerful consideration in marketing is customer satisfaction, as it is a substantial element for loyal customers. Normally, a dissatisfied customer will not return to the same service provider. That customer will look for the substitutes available in the marketplace (Anderson and Srinivasan, 2003) [27]. When customer satisfaction is high, there are a few plans for switching (Bedi, 2010; Kandampully and Duddy, 2001; Kwon and Han, 2014) [9, 39, 48].

The mental process of considering replacing or changing a service provider is known as switching intention (Bansal and Taylor, 1999) [8]. It is a decision to terminate purchases from a specific service provider in the future (Colgate and Lang, 2001) [16]. Dissatisfaction is a result of variation between one's expectancy and the actual performance. When expectations are high and actual performance is low, the customer will be dissatisfied. Customer switching is a result of dissatisfaction (Ranaweera and Prabhu, 2003) [66]. There will be switching, complaints and negative

recommendation when clients are not satisfied. Customer satisfaction is a significant factor to predict customers' behavioural intentions. It is considerably and inversely related to switching intention (Mittal and Lassar, 1998; Henning-Thurau *et al.*, 2002; Chih *et al.*, 2012) <sup>[55, 32, 14]</sup>. It was concluded by Martins *et al.* (2013) that delighted customers have less switching intention than dissatisfied customers. Nikbin *et al.*, (2012) <sup>[60]</sup> reiterated that customer satisfaction has an inverse relationship with the switching intentions of customers. The post-dining behavioural intentions are significantly affected by the dining satisfaction (Kivela, 1997) <sup>[46]</sup>. Consequently, the subsequent hypothesis is as follows:

**H<sub>2</sub>: Customer satisfaction has unfavourable impact on switching intention**

**Restaurant attributes and switching intention**

Low level of service quality leads to unfavourable behavioural intention and high switching intention (Aydin and Ozer, 2005) <sup>[6]</sup>. Poor service results in dissatisfaction and customers will move to alternative service provider (Howorth *et al.*, 2003) <sup>[36]</sup>. The number of patrons it attracts is positively influenced by the restaurant's qualities, such as the standard of service, cuisine quality, and ambiance. Conversely, the absence of these qualities may discourage consumers. The major reasons of customer patronage in casual dining are found to be food quality, service quality and atmosphere. Hence, the hypotheses framed.

**H<sub>3a</sub>:** Food-related attributes have an unfavourable impact on switching intention

**H<sub>3b</sub>:** Service-related attributes have an unfavourable impact on switching intention

**H<sub>3c</sub>:** Atmospheric-related attributes have an unfavourable impact on switching intention

**Restaurant attributes, customer satisfaction and switching intention**

The characteristics of a restaurant contribute towards level of satisfaction experienced by customers (Ngcwangu *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[59]</sup>, which subsequently influences their behavioral intentions (Canny, 2014) <sup>[13]</sup>. Customer satisfaction acts as an intermediary between the quality of service and the desire to make a purchase (Cronin *et al.*, 2000; Bou-Llusar *et al.*, 2001) <sup>[18, 11]</sup>. Service efficiency vigorously affects switching intention via customer satisfaction and higher service performance leads to higher customer satisfaction Han *et al.*, 2011 <sup>[30]</sup>; Perutkova, 2009 <sup>[63]</sup>; Mattila, 2001 <sup>[53]</sup>. High restaurant attributes give rise to the customer satisfaction and favourable behavioural intention. The exogenous variables i.e. restaurant attributes and patronage intention are mediated by customer satisfaction (Abdullah *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[1]</sup>. From the findings mentioned in literature, the subsequent hypothesis is put forth.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** Customer satisfaction acts as a mediator in the

relationship between restaurant characteristics and the propensity to switch

**Research Approach**

**Respondents and Data Collection**

The eligibility criterion for the respondents is of age more than 18 years and experience of visiting restaurants frequently in the past. The respondents were intercepted at the restaurants where they were spending time and experiencing the restaurant qualities encompass elements such as the variety of menu options, the quality of cuisine, the degree of service, and the physical ambiance. Hence, it became easy for them to recall and respond to the questions. The survey was done during the weekends when more people go out for casual dining. The sample population was the restaurant customers of Haryana, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh in India. The respondents were contacted personally through non-probability judgment and convenience sampling techniques. In aggregate, 600 questionnaires were distributed to respondents and after eliminating the incomplete and biased responses, 563 responses were finally coded for analysis.

**Instrument Development**

A structured questionnaire was formulated in accordance with the literature review. There were two sections; the foremost objective of the initial segment was to assess the demographic composition about the respondent. The subsequent segment contained a range of items to find the level of agreement derived from the dining pleasure during the meal at the casual dining restaurant. The statements related to food, service, atmospherics, customer satisfaction, and switching intention were embedded in this section. The interviewed were directed to ensure their replies employing a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 signifies serious disagreement and 5 signifies strong agreement. A preliminary study with 100 people was first carried out to assess the reliability of each construct.

Food-related attributes were measured using 7 items scale, service-related attributes were measured using 9 items scale, and atmospherics-related attributes were measured by using 7 item scale. Customer satisfaction was assessed using 7-item scale. A 6-item scale was developed for measuring switching intention. Statements related to safety, presentation, variation, healthy options, flavour, freshness, and temperature of food were included in food-related attributes. In service-related attributes, there were statements related to timely delivery of food, availability of staff, and knowledge of menu items, professional conduct, complaint resolution, willingness of staff to help, politeness, and honesty of staff of the restaurant. Interior design, moving area, background music, well-dressed staff, cleanliness, and lighting of the restaurant were asked in atmospherics-related attributes. Table 1 provides information regarding origin of the items addressed in the questionnaire.

**Table 1:** Source of statements in Questionnaire

Measure	Source	No. of Items	Cronbach's
Food-related Attributes	Fu and Parks, 2001 [23]; Han and Hyun, 2012 [29]; Rozekhi <i>et al.</i> , 2016 [68]	07	.877
Service-related Attributes	Cronin <i>et al.</i> , 2000 [18]; Fu and Parks, 2001 [23]	09	.905
Atmospherics-related Attributes	Fu and Parks, 2001 [23]; Andaleeb and Conway, 2006 [3]; Han <i>et al.</i> , 2011 [30]; Ryu <i>et al.</i> , 2012 [70]	07	.887
Customer Satisfaction	McCullough <i>et al.</i> , 2000; Fu and Parks, 2001 [23]; Dewitt and Brady, 2003; Ryu <i>et al.</i> , 2012 [70]; Han and Hyun, 2012 [29]; Calvo-Porrall and Levy Mangin 2015 [12]; Rozekhi <i>et al.</i> , 2016 [68]	07	.891
Switching Intention	Kim <i>et al.</i> , 2006 [43]; Malhotra and Malhotra, 2013 [50]; Hyun and Perdue, 2017 [37]	06	.900

Source: Literature Review

**Analysis**

**Respondent's Profile**

Table 2 displays the demographics of the respondents. The representation based on gender includes 53.1% male and 46.9% female respondents. The bulk of participants (61.82%) were aged between 25 and 35. Most of the respondents were married and having children (40.7%) followed by married (32.7%) and unmarried (26.6%) respondents. Regarding occupation, private employees account for 45.3% with 255 samples, followed by

government employees with 18.1%. It can be seen that 55.4% of respondents were post-graduates.

The data related to gender and the frequency of their visit to a restaurant per month are presented in Table 3. Approximately 23.8% (N=134) of male respondents visit a restaurant twice a month, while the percentage of female respondents is only 17.4%. In aggregate 59.33% of respondents visit restaurants twice or more than 2 times a month. 41.05% of females reported that they visit restaurants twice a month.

**Table 2:** Profile of Respondents

Variable		Frequency (N=563)	Percentage
Gender	Male	299	53.1
	Female	264	46.9
Age (in Years)	Less than 25	78	13.85
	25-35	348	61.82
	35-45	95	16.87
	45 and above	42	7.46
Relationship Status	Unmarried	150	26.6
	Married	184	32.7
	Married having children	229	40.7
Occupation	Student	73	13.0
	Self Employed	90	16.0
	Private Employee	255	45.3
	Government Employee	102	18.1
	Others	43	7.6
Educational Level	Graduation	120	21.3
	Post-Graduation	312	55.4
	Professional Degree	76	13.5
	Doctorate	44	7.8
	Any other	11	2.0
	Total	563	100

Source: Primary Data

**Table 3:** Monthly Restaurant Visit Frequency

		Every month	Twice a month	Beyond twice per month	Total
Gender	Male	100	134	65	299
	Female	129	98	37	264
	Total	229	232	102	563

Source: Primary Data

**Reliability Analysis**

The hypotheses were tested utilizing smart PLS 3 (Ringle *et al.*, 2014) [72] by the use of PLS-SEM. A two-stage analytical process was conducted, where the measurement model was examined preceding the assessment of the structural model. In present study, the influence of exogenous constructs on endogenous constructs was predicted using PLS-SEM.

The measurement model was assessed using composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio, and Cronbach's alpha

(CA). Thereafter theoretical model was analyzed by examining correlation and discriminant validity (DV). Variance inflation factor (VIF), F<sup>2</sup>, R<sup>2</sup> (coefficient of determination), Q<sup>2</sup> (predictive relevance) and standardized root means square residual (SRMR) were also tested hypothesis.

**Measurement Model:** Reflective measurement methods were evaluated for reliability and validity.

**Cronbach's Alpha:** The uniformity of results across time is

an indicator of reliability.

A scale is called reliable if it consistently gives accurate findings when measurements are carried out repeatedly. Cronbach's Alpha was utilized to examine the dependability of instruments in investigation. The values obtained from the measuring instruments demonstrated a high degree of validity i.e. 0.877 for food-related attributes, 0.905 for service-related attributes, and 0.887 for atmospherics-related attributes, 0.891 for customer satisfaction, and 0.900 for Switching Intention. The investigation met the Cronbach's alpha limit exceeding 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994; Hair *et al.*, 2013) [61, 27]. This suggests that the reflective latent variables are highly reliable and internally consistent.

**Table 4:** Validity and Reliability

	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>rho_A</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</b>
FRA	0.877	0.88	0.905	0.575
SRA	0.905	0.908	0.922	0.569
ARA	0.887	0.891	0.912	0.596
CS	0.891	0.894	0.915	0.606
SI	0.9	0.901	0.923	0.667

**Note:** FRA= Food-related attributes; SRA= Service-related attributes; ARA= Atmospheric-related attributes; CS= Customer Satisfaction; SI= Switching Intention

Two methods were used to evaluate the discriminant validity. Cross-loadings of the indicators were first verified, with the loadings on related constructions required to be higher than others (Dey *et al.*, 2020) [20].

The second test was Fornell-Larker (1981) [22], where the under root of AVE's of variables on the diagonal are higher than their inter-item correlation values.

**Table 5:** Discriminant validity (Fornell-larcker criterion)

	<b>ARA</b>	<b>CS</b>	<b>FRA</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>SRA</b>
ARA	0.772				
CS	0.622	0.778			
FRA	0.668	0.682	0.759		
SI	-0.549	-0.542	-0.489	0.817	
SRA	0.676	0.564	0.595	-0.531	0.754

**Note:** FRA= Food-related attributes; SRA= Service-related attributes; ARA= Atmospheric-related attributes; CS= Customer Satisfaction; SI= Switching Intention

The acceptable threshold for HTMT is 0.9 (Gold *et al.*, 2001) [26]. In the existing study, all the HTMT values lie within 547 to 765, it can be concluded that all the constructs are unique as per the empirical standards. This indicates that the items of the constructs do not measure the same thing (Henseler *et al.*, 2016) [34].

**Table 6:** Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

	<b>ARA</b>	<b>CS</b>	<b>FRA</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>SRA</b>
ARA					
CS	0.694				
FRA	0.750	0.765			
SI	0.611	0.602	0.547		
SRA	0.744	0.621	0.660	0.579	

**Note:** FRA=Food-related attributes; SRA=Service-related attributes; ARA=Atmospherics-related attributes; CS=Customer Satisfaction; SI Switching Intention

After confirming the validity and reliability of the constructs, the findings of the structural model were studied to establish the relationship between the constructs and their

Composite reliability (CR): Bagozzi and Yi (1988) [7], and Hair *et al.* (2011) [30], have proposed that internal consistency reliability or composite reliability should meet or exceed a threshold of 0.7 to be deemed adequate. According to the current study, The CR values vary from 0.905 to 0.923. (Table 2) and can be considered more than satisfactory.

Convergent validity (AVE): Fornell and Larcker (1981) [22] recommended a convergent validity criterion of at least 0.50. The present study's Average Variance Extracted (AVE) varied between 0.569 and 0.667. (Table 4). The findings showed that the measurement model's convergent validity has been demonstrated in the current study.

predictive importance. Smart PLS3 was used to test the structural model.

**Saturated Model Result**

**Model predictive power (R<sup>2</sup>)**

According to Sarstedt *et al.* (2014) [72], the R<sup>2</sup> is a metric that assesses a model's predictive power. R<sup>2</sup> threshold values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 in previous studies have been used to denote significant, average, and poor associations, respectively (Hair *et al.*, 2011; Henseler *et al.*, 2009) [28, 35]. In the current research, the variations by the independent variables namely FRA, SRA, ARA are found to be average (0.526) 52.6 percent and (0.393) 39.3 percent variances for customer satisfaction and switching intention respectively (Table 7).

**Model's Predictive Relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>)**

For calculating Q<sup>2</sup>, blindfolding method in PLS is applied. If Q<sup>2</sup> has a value larger than 0, it suggests that the framework has predictive significance. The Q<sup>2</sup> value of the present study is positive, indicating the predictive efficacy of this model (Table 7).

**Effect Size F<sup>2</sup>**

The values 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 portray minimal, intermediate, and tremendous importance, correspondingly (Chin, 1998; Henseler *et al.*, 2009) [35]. This investigation exhibits that there is a minor effect of all the constructs on the switching intention except food-related attributes (Table 7).

**Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)**

The results of this investigation fall below the 3.3 threshold limit (Hair *et al.*, 2011; Kock 2015) [30, 47]. It can be concluded that the study is bias-free (Table 7).

**SRMR**

A value below 0.08 is deemed to indicate a satisfactory alignment (Table 7).

**Table 7:** Saturated model results

Construct	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>	VIF	SRMR
S_In	0.393	0.389		0.256		0.053
CS	0.526	0.524	.053	0.314	2.110	
FRA			.001		2.352	
SRA			.038		2.022	
ARA			.032		2.411	

**Note:** FRA=Food-related attributes; SRA=Service-related attributes; ARA=Atmospheric-related attributes; CS=Customer Satisfaction; SI=Switching Intention

With the purpose of ascertaining the significance of the relationship, hypotheses were examined after the assessment of goodness of fit. Customer satisfaction is significantly and positively correlated with all direct hypotheses (H1 to H4): food-related attributes ( $\beta=0.443$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), service-related attributes ( $\beta=0.147$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), and atmospherics-related attributes ( $\beta=0.227$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) (Table 8).

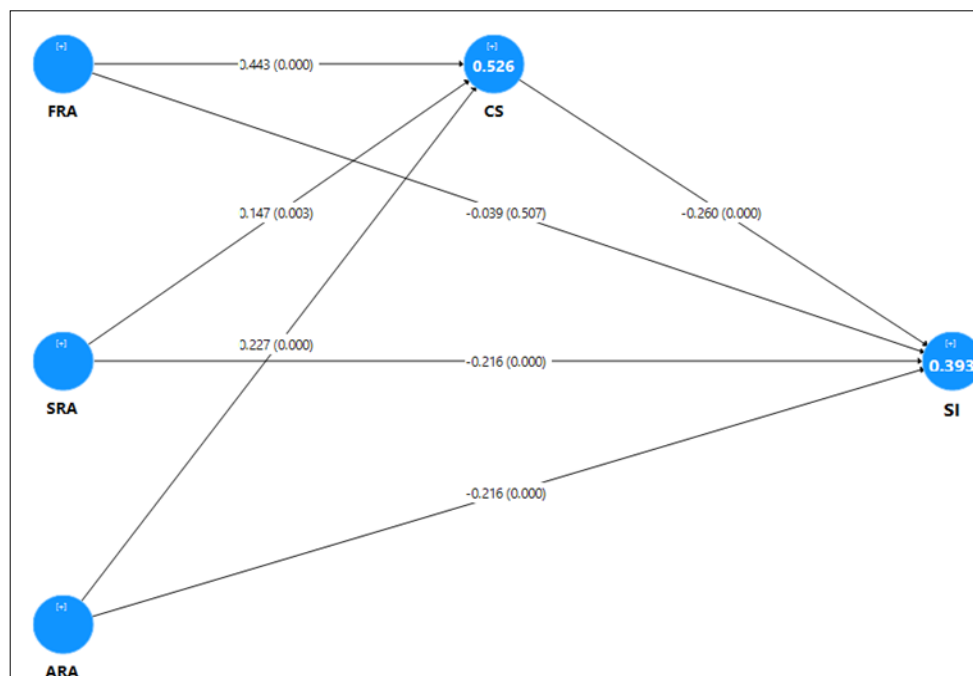
Restaurant features have a favourable and substantial outcome on the degree of contentment among the customers with  $R^2 = .526$  ( $p<0.01$ ). The most prominent attribute is food

( $\beta=.44$ ,  $T=9.85$ ,  $p<.01$ ) followed by atmospherics ( $\beta=.227$ ,  $T=4.42$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and service-related attributes ( $\beta=.147$ ,  $T=2.927$ ,  $p<.01$ ) respectively. Hence hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c are supported. Table 8 reports that customer satisfaction influences the switching intention (with  $\beta=-.26$ ,  $T=4.122$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Customer satisfaction accounts for 26% of the variance in customer intention to switch. However, an unfavourable correlation exists amongst customer satisfaction and switching intention, confirming hypothesis 2. Hence, it can be explained that as the level of satisfaction increases, the intention to switch goes down.

The attributes of the restaurant serve as the independent variables, while the desire to switch is the dependent variable. Customers' intentions to switch are inversely related to the quality of the restaurant which shows that if restaurant attributes are high then switching intention is low. It is found in Table 8 that service-related attributes and atmospherics-related attributes have a significant, direct but inverse impact on the intention to switch. Nevertheless, the influence of food-related features on switching intention is deemed minor.

**Table 8:** Result of the direct relationship

Hypothesis	STD Coefficient	S.E.	T-Values	P-Values	Results
H1a: FRA-CS	0.443	0.045	9.852	0	Supported
H1b: SRA-CS	0.147	0.05	2.927	0.004	Supported
H1c: ARA-CS	0.227	0.051	4.422	0	Supported
H2:CS-SI	-0.26	0.063	4.122	0	Supported
H3a FRA-SI	-0.039	0.06	0.653	0.514	Not Supported
H3b: SRA-SI	-0.216	0.054	4.005	0	Supported
H3c: ARA-SI	-0.216	0.057	3.782	0	Supported



**Fig 1:** Bootstrapping results showing the direct and indirect relationships

**Mediation Analysis**

A variable that elucidates the impact of an exogenous construct on an endogenous construct in a more desirable way is referred to as a mediator (Wu and Chen, 2015) [76]. The study examines how the characteristics of restaurants are related to customers' propensity to switch, with consumer satisfaction acting as a mediator. The effect of food-related characteristics on the intention to switch is

statistically significant ( $\beta=-.154$ ,  $T=3.046$ ,  $P=.002$ ). By considering the mediating variable, the influence of food-related variables on switching intention diminishes ( $\beta=-.039$ ,  $T=.653$ ,  $P=.514$ ). The strong indirect impact of food-related qualities on customer switching intention through customer satisfaction has been identified ( $\beta=-.115$ ,  $T=3.908$ ,  $P=00$ ). This indicates that the connection between food-related characteristics and the propensity to switch is

entirely influenced by consumer satisfaction (Table 9). The overall effect of service-related attributes on switching intention was crucial ( $\beta=-.254$ ,  $T=4.618$ ,  $P=.00$ ). With the integration of mediating variable, the influence of service-related attributes on switching intention remains significant ( $\beta=-.216$ ,  $T=4.005$ ,  $P=.00$ ). The indirect impact of service-related attributes on switching intention by customer satisfaction is also found significant ( $\beta=-.038$ ,  $T=2.512$ ,  $P=.012$ ). This indicates that the connection between service-related characteristics and the desire to switch is partly influenced by customer satisfaction. The total effect of

atmospherics-related attributes on switching intention was significant ( $\beta=-.275$ ,  $T=4.918$ ,  $P=.00$ ). With the integration of mediating variable (customer satisfaction), the impact of atmospherics-related attributes on switching intention remains significant ( $\beta=-.216$ ,  $T=3.782$ ,  $P=.00$ ). The indirect effect of atmospherics-related attributes on switching intention by customer satisfaction was also found significant ( $\beta=-.059$ ,  $T=3.221$ ,  $P=.001$ ). Consumer satisfaction mediates the relationship between atmospherics-related qualities and the likelihood of switching.

**Table 9:** Show Hypothesis and STD Coefficient ( $\beta$ )

Hypothesis	STD Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	S.E.	T-Values	P-Values	Results
H4a: FRA-CS-SI	-0.15	0.05	3.046	0.002	Supported
H4b: SRA-CS-SI	-0.254	0.055	4.618	.00	Supported
H4c: ARA-CS-SI	-0.275	0.056	4.918	.00	Supported

## Discussion

This paper has taken into consideration the relationship between restaurants attributes i.e. food, service, and atmospherics-related attributes and the switching intention. Additionally, the research examines the mediating role of customer satisfaction in these interactions. Within the restaurant industry, overall satisfaction is not solely influenced by food quality; the quality of service provided and the physical environment also play substantial roles in shaping such satisfaction (Yuksel and Yuksel, 2003<sup>[80]</sup>; Ryu and Han, 2010)<sup>[69]</sup>. The determination and recognition of the components of switching intention help the restaurants to reduce the level of switching of customers. Food-related attributes are the most influential ones and significant predictors of customer satisfaction. A restaurant's main offering is its cuisine. The satisfaction of consumers depends on the quality of the food delivered to them (Sabir *et al.* 2014)<sup>[71]</sup>. Food quality has become crucial for influencing and satisfying customers (Susskind & Chan, 2000)<sup>[75]</sup>. The results are consistent with previous research cited above.

The results align with the conclusions drawn by prior scholars like Yuksel and Yuksel (2003)<sup>[80]</sup> as the atmospherics like seating arrangement, music, and decoration are found to contribute significantly in moulding satisfaction and intention to switch among customers. Service-related attributes are also important antecedents that influence consumer intent to switch and satisfaction. When service is provided according to the needs of the customer, he or she will be satisfied and behaviour towards the organization will be positive (Kim *et al.*, 2020; Sabir *et al.*, 2014; Adriatico *et al.*, 2022)<sup>[45, 71, 2]</sup>. Service delivery can have various dimensions like knowledge of the menu items, their ingredients, preparation etc., resolving the complaints of customers if any, and speaking politely and respectfully with customers. Service quality leads to a satisfied customer base and this outcome aligns with previous study findings (Bitner, 1990; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Lee *et al.*, 2000; Aydin and Ozer, 2005)<sup>[17, 10, 49, 6]</sup>.

Additionally, the findings suggest that the negative correlation between restaurant attributes and customers' propensity to switch is mediated by customer satisfaction. This conclusion is reinforced by the research of Cronin *et al.* (2000)<sup>[18]</sup>, Bou-Llusar *et al.* (2001)<sup>[11]</sup>, and Abdullah *et al.* (2018)<sup>[1]</sup>. It is signified that customer satisfaction fully mediates the food-related attributes and switching intentions

and the robustness of this negative correlation is emphasized by the satisfaction at the casual dining restaurant.

## Conclusion and Implications

Switching of a single customer will not have an adverse effect but when the number of customers who switch is large, it will be a serious problem for the existence of the restaurant. In the current competitive environment, high customer satisfaction helps restaurateurs to have reduced switching intention. The results of the research have a substantial impact on the development of approaches for casual dining restaurants. Managers need to improve the dining experience of the customers at every possible interaction with them. Nowadays, customers not only seek a restaurant that offers a variety of menu items but they want a great experience of warm services and the physical environment. So, the focus of restaurant managers should be on improvement of the physical settings like lighting, music, appearance of staff, interior design, and décor and enhancing the level of service that the restaurants provide. The aim should be to provide great experience.

Switching intention can be reduced by enhancing the service quality in terms of timely delivery of food, availability of staff as and when required, employee-customer interaction, and timely solution of complaints. Priority should be given on delivering consumers with superior service so that he/she neglect any inadequacy in atmospherics or food. The manager must focus on employee training so that the services offered are higher than the expectations of the customers. The decision of a customer to stay with an organization is of immense importance because it provides confirmation of establishing a lasting consumer relationship.

The motive of restaurant managers should be to reduce post-purchase dissonance and to create a distinct competitive image. The satisfaction can be focused by emphasizing the food, atmospherics, and service-related attributes. The study enhances comprehension of consumer behavior and service marketing by pinpointing the elements of consumer satisfaction and switching intention.

The study focused only on casual dining restaurants hence the findings cannot be generalised for different types of restaurants. The restaurant attributes included in the study are responsible for creating customer satisfaction. The results confirm that major portion of variance in satisfaction is caused by restaurant attributes. There might be some

other variables like mood, reason of eating out, social environment that may also be responsible for switching intention, which needs to be studied by future researchers. So, there is a possibility of the inclusion of certain moderators in the model that influence the effectiveness of the underlined relationship. Further studies are required to be conducted on actual switching behaviour as most of studies have covered switching intentions only.

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