Product Innovation of Hunan Catering Business Influence on Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality and Customer Loyalty: A Case Study of Hua Tian Hotel

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Abstract

This article aimed to study 1) the situation of customer loyalty in the catering business in Hua Tian Hotel and 2) the causal model relationship between the factors affecting customer loyalty in the catering business in Hua Tian Hotel. The formula for determining sample size is 20 times the number of observed variables. This research included a sample of 260 participants due to the presence of 13 observed variables. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure the characteristics of the sample were consistent. This quantitative research primarily involved the design of questionnaires. The statistical procedures used for data analysis included percentages, means, standard deviations, and the Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r), also known as Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The findings indicated that the quality of catering services has a direct impact on customer satisfaction, which in turn directly influences customer loyalty. These relationships were found to be statistically significant at the 0.01 to 0.05 level. This study provided organizations with a comprehensive understanding of the significance of product innovation in the hospitality industry. It emphasized the need to thoroughly investigate customer needs and market preferences, integrating product innovation effectively into operational practices.

1. Product innovation had a direct impact on customer loyalty.
2. The quality of catering enterprises had a direct impact on customer satisfaction.

3. Customer satisfaction had a direct impact on customer loyalty.

The research findings were applicable to a wide range of businesses seeking to improve customer loyalty. By understanding the relationship between product innovation, service quality, and customer satisfaction, organizations can develop targeted strategies to enhance their operations and achieve long-term success.

Keywords: Catering Industry; Hunan Catering Industry; Product Innovation; Customer Satisfaction; Customer Loyalty

Introduction

Following the onset of COVID-19 at the end of 2019, catering enterprises are confronted with more obstacles than they have ever faced before (Zhang et al., 2021). People's ordinary lives are progressively returning to normal under the normal circumstances of pandemic prevention and management today, after a period of adjustment. However, it has been seen that negative economic repercussions have persisted, particularly for specific organization and individual entrepreneurs who have demonstrated minimal resilience to pressure. At the time, catering establishments such as hotels, as well as private enterprises in a variety of forms, can be found all throughout China. They serve as "capillaries" for the development of China's economy (Zhang et al., 2021). As well as providing for the basic needs of their residents, they account for more than 80% of all employment, more than 70% of all scientific and technological developments, more than 60% of total GDP, and more than 50% of total tax revenue (Zhang et al., 2021). Among the industries most affected by the concentration of small and medium-sized enterprises were catering and lodging, filmed entertainment, wholesale and retail, transportation and tourism, and wholesale and retail, among other things. They make money by relying on the density and activity of the crowd. However, as a result of the epidemic's significant reduction in population flow, their profits have been reduced to almost nothing. In many cases, this scenario contributes to the demise of the company, not only in terms of short-term capital liquidity, but also in terms of long-term financial depression. Hereby, some research questions are to be investigated:

1. How does the situation of the customer loyalty in catering business in Hua Tian Hotel?

2. What are the factors effecting the product innovation of Hunan catering business and its effect on customer loyalty with mediating effect of customer satisfaction?

Catering business is the service that provides the food services.

Research Objectives

This study created 2 Objective:

1. To study the situation of the customer loyalty in catering business in Hua Tian Hotel.

2. To study the casual model relationship between the factors effecting the customer loyalty in catering business in Hua Tian Hotel.

Literature Review

Hunan cuisine boasts a rich and ancient history, with its origins dating back to the Eastern Zhou Dynasty. The region's culinary heritage evolved significantly over the centuries, culminating in a diverse array of dishes with unique ingredients, cooking techniques, and flavor profiles (TravelChinaGuide, 2022). During the Warring States Period, Hunan cuisine had already achieved a high level of sophistication, setting the stage for further development. The Western Han Dynasty witnessed a proliferation of food varieties in Hunan, each distinguished by its distinct ingredients and cooking methods. The Tang Dynasty marked a period of culinary abundance, with Hunan dishes becoming popular choices for various occasions such as birthdays, weddings, funerals, and celebrations (TravelChinaGuide, 2022). As time progressed, the influence of Hunan cuisine expanded beyond the region, gaining popularity throughout China. One distinctive characteristic of Hunan cuisine is its bold and fiery flavors, which can be attributed to the introduction of pepper to Chinese culinary traditions. This fiery nature has greatly contributed to the cuisine's appeal and widespread recognition. Over the course of history, Hunan cuisine has been influenced by various chefs and notable individuals from the region, resulting in continuous modification and innovation to cater to the tastes of different eras.

In light of its prominence and significant growth in the catering industry, the research by Prasetya et al. (2019) aimed to analyze the quality of food and perceived service quality at Ambassador catering and its impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Similarly, Suley et al. (2019) focused on investigating the direct effect of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on customer loyalty, examining how perceived service quality and trust play intervening roles. As the food truck business gains popularity in Malaysia, Gopi et al. (2020) aimed to explore the relationship between food trucks' service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

In Tran et al.'s (2022) research, they utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining thematic analysis and the SEM-PLS technique, to explore how the perceptions of Vietnamese Gen Z regarding product-service quality, environmental awareness, and pro-environmental

behavior impact their purchase intention and loyalty towards eco-friendly fashion products. Yang et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between digital customer experience and customer loyalty, employing a human-computer interaction approach to understand the associations better.

Fan et al. (2022) offered managerial recommendations for creating an appealing community e-commerce platform to stimulate customer engagement behavior. Salamah et al. (2022) focused on investigating the influence of mobile commerce service quality dimensions on customers' perception of service quality and overall satisfaction. Narayan et al. (2022) aimed to highlight the significance and application of Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, and big data in enhancing customer quality and satisfaction in the hotel sector. They also comprehensively analyzed the common factors affecting customer satisfaction and loyalty. Lei et al. (2022) conducted a study on the main factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty in city express delivery services. Their findings will be valuable for addressing issues related to low customer satisfaction and loyalty among city express enterprises. The study by AlOmari et al. (2022) focused on examining the relationships between service quality, patient satisfaction, patient loyalty, and medication adherence in the Syrian healthcare setting from a patient's perspective. Yamaguchi et al. (2022) explored the impacts of core product quality, service quality, social network quality, and event satisfaction on participant engagement in sports using the conceptual framework of consumer experience quality and customer engagement theory. It is crucial to investigate whether players tend to pay attention to advertised products, even if they do not recall them.

Awuku et al. (2023) aimed to assess differences in innovation practices in the telecommunication industry, customer perception of service innovations, and how service innovation practices influence the loyalty of mobile subscribers. Finally, Agarwal et al. (2023) conducted a survey with 419 cloud experts/users in India to study factors influencing cloud service quality and their relationship with customer satisfaction and loyalty using a Likert scale-based questionnaire. Product brand influence significantly affect consumer behavior and their purchase intention.

Using a quantitative approach and random sampling techniques, Juwitasary et al. (2020) conducted their research to assess the effect of e-service quality on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the context of an e-marketplace in Indonesia. Hidayatullah et al. (2020) illustrated the influence of marketing information systems, service quality, and customer satisfaction on customer loyalty. Alqadri et al. (2020) analyzed the impact of brand image and service quality on customer

satisfaction and loyalty at PT. Technologies such as NFTs create capabilities for academic manuscripts and scholarly publications as individual brands, offering a decentralized solution using open-access tools.

Woen et al. (2021) aimed to determine the effect of service quality, product quality, promotion, and price fairness on customer satisfaction and loyalty at Burger King outlets in Yogyakarta. On the other hand, Pratama et al. (2021) focused on the effects of service quality, price, and location on customer loyalty at PT.

In a business-to-business context, Xue et al. (2021) investigated the repurchase intentions of customers in the Pakistan textile and clothing industry. These studies, along with other influential works by Haris et al. (2021), have contributed to the understanding of various factors influencing customer loyalty in different catering and service industries. Consumer purchasing behavior is affected by standards and quality control such as halal signs.

The continuous evolution and adaptability of Hunan cuisine demonstrate the spirit of product innovation within the catering industry. Chefs and culinary experts have creatively modified traditional dishes, incorporated new ingredients, and developed novel cooking techniques to cater to the changing preferences of consumers over time. Product innovation has been a driving force behind the enduring popularity of Hunan cuisine, both within the region and beyond its borders.

In today's dynamic hospitality industry, catering enterprises like Hua Tian Hotel must continue to embrace product innovation to stay competitive and meet the evolving demands of their customers. By understanding the historical significance of product innovation in Hunan cuisine, businesses can draw valuable insights to enhance their offerings and ensure customer satisfaction and loyalty. The next section explores the impact of product innovation on customer satisfaction, service quality, and customer loyalty in the context of Hua Tian Hotel.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the relationship between the concepts and the supporting by the relevant studies, the conceptual framework is formed.
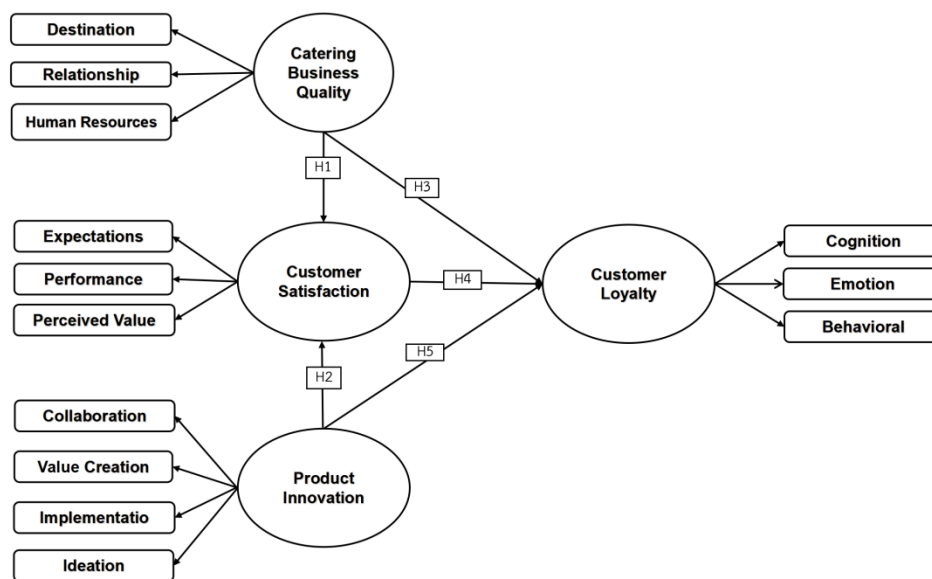
Fig.1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

The research design involves multiple steps to achieve the study's objectives. The first step is to design the questionnaire, ensuring its quality by conducting Item–Total Correlation (IOC) and calculating Cronbach's Alpha for internal consistency reliability. Once the questionnaire meets the required quality standards, it will be distributed to the respondents.

Population and Sample The sample size of 260 respondents for the study assessing consumer satisfaction in catering services at Hua Tian Hotel is justified based on guidance from Hair et al. (2010), which recommends that the sample size should be at least 20 times the number of observed variables in the study. representing a diverse range of customers from both local and tourist segments. Data will be collected through the distribution of the questionnaire to the selected respondents. The questionnaire will encompass items related to catering business quality, product innovation, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Participants will be requested to provide their responses based on their experiences with Hua Tian Hotel's catering services.

After data collection, the researcher will conduct statistical analysis using appropriate methods. To test the research hypotheses, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will be employed, allowing for the examination of direct effects between catering business quality, product innovation, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Ethical considerations will be carefully addressed throughout the research process. Informed consent will be obtained from all

participants, ensuring their voluntary participation. The respondents' confidentiality and privacy will be safeguarded, and all data will be used solely for research purposes. The study acknowledges certain limitations, such as the use of a single research site (Hua Tian Hotel) and the focus on catering services. The findings may not be entirely generalizable to other hospitality establishments or regions. Additionally, the research relies on self-reported data, which might be subject to response biases. The study's findings will contribute valuable insights to the hospitality industry, specifically in the context of catering services. Understanding the impact of catering business quality and product innovation on customer satisfaction and loyalty can assist hotels like Hua Tian in refining their strategies to meet customer expectations and enhance brand loyalty. The study's implications may also extend to other businesses seeking to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty through product innovation and service quality enhancements.

Research Results

Objective 1. The results showed According to the findings of the current study, Hunan catering services such as Hua Tian Hotel should properly integrate product innovation into their operations by thoroughly investigating the demands of their customers as well as the preferences of the market. Consumer or market research, for example, might be conducted to determine what is in demand by consumers or the market. The Ansoff Matrix might thus prove to be one of the most beneficial tools for a company to employ.

Demographic of Sample contact: There are 260 samples in this study and 103 (39.62%) of the sample are males while 157(60.38%) of the sample are females. This means there are more females customers than the males customers in the Hua Tian Hotel. Demographic information of respondents according to Table 4.1, it could be seen that there are 15 respondents (5.77%) are below 20 years old; 33 respondents (12.69%) are between 20 to 29 years old; 110 respondents (42.31%) are between 30 to 39 years old; 76respondents (29.23%) are between 40 to 49 years old; and 26 respondents (10.00%) are 50 years old and above. This showed that around half of the customers of the Hua Tian Hotel is between 30 to 39 years old and management of Hua Tian Hotel should aware of it and customized relevant strategies for the specific age segment.

Table 1. Demographics of respondents.

Characteristics	Numbers	Percentge
1. Gender		
Male	103	39.62%
Female	157	60.38%
2. Age		
Below 20	15	5.77%
20–29	33	12.69%
30–39	110	42.31%
40–49	76	29.23%
50 and above	26	10.00%
3. Frequency for visit		
1–2	30	11.54%
3–5	117	45.00%
6–10	85	32.69%
11 and above	28	10.77%

The table above shows the number of times respondents visited Huatian Hotel. The survey showed that 117 respondents (45.00％) visited Huatian Hotel's catering services 3–5 times; followed by 85 people (32.69％) visited Huatian Hotel's catering services 6–10 times; 30 Respondents (11.54％) visited Huatian Hotel's catering services 1–2 times; only 28 people (10.77％) visited Huatian Hotel's catering services 11 times. It can be said that customers of Huatian Hotel have return visit behavior.

Table 2 Observed Variables

Latent Variables	Observed Variables	Tactor Loading	S.E.	T–value	P	R2
Product Innovation	Collaboration	0.779	0.059	13.203	***	0.607
	Ideation	0.785	0.043	18.256	***	0.616
	Implementatio	0.694	0.053	13.094	***	0.481
	Value Creation	0.663	0.054	12.278	***	0.439
Catering Business Quality	Destination	0.728	0.056	13.000	***	0.530
	Relationship	0.711	0.062	11.468	***	0.506
	Human Resources	0.708	0.057	12.421	***	0.501
Customer Satisfaction	Expectations	0.715	0.047	15.213	***	0.512
	Performance	0.767	0.056	13.696	***	0.588
	Perceived Value	0.752	0.048	15.667	***	0.565
Customer Loyalty	Cognition	0.698	0.054	12.926	***	0.487
	Emotion	0.742	0.052	14.269	***	0.55
	Behavioral	0.724	0.071	10.197	***	0.525

All variables with constructs passed the CFA factor loading test and no items should be discarded. In addition, all variables passed the goodness of fit of CFA, including CFI, GFI, IFI and RMSEA. Therefore, this study should be continued without changes to the project and structural models.

Objective 2. The results showed that Confirmatory factor analysis A confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the measurement model developed in this study to examine the proposed relationships and the fit between the observed and latent variables.
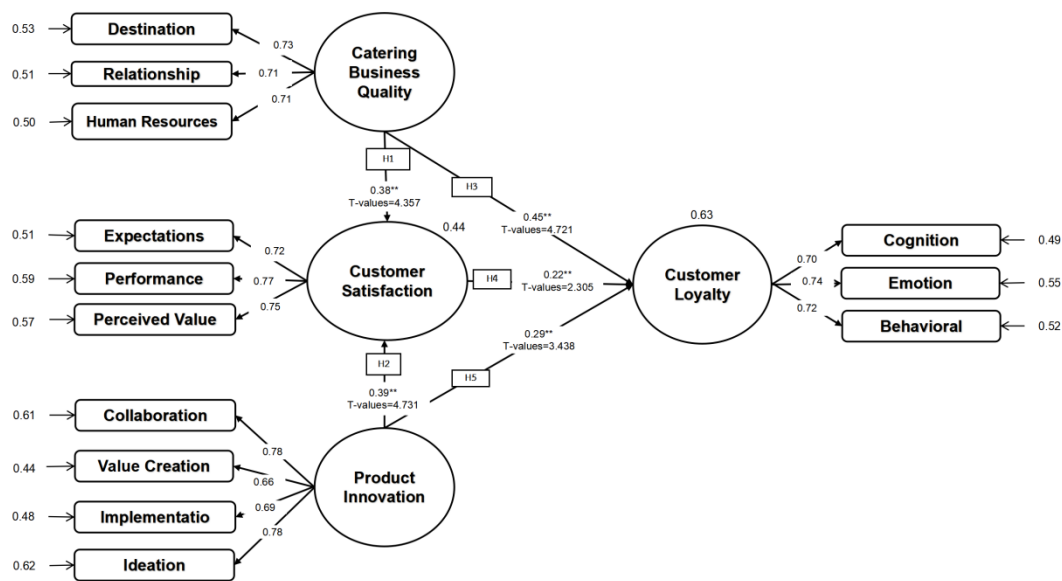
χ^2=77.544 df=59. χ^2/df=1.314 P–Value=0.053. RMSEA=0.035. GFI=0.958. AGFI=0.936

Figure 2. final structural equation of the study

One of the most important elements of CFA is the factor load of constructs. This study includes four main variables, the first is the quality of catering enterprises, which has three constructs, namely destination, relationship and human resources. The factor load of the construct is as follows:

Table 3 Summarizes the goodness of fit statistics of the final model

Goodness–of–fit statistics	Criterria	Results
Chi–square (P–value)	>0.05	0.053
CMIN/df	<3.00	1.314
Goodness–of–fit Index (GFI)	>0.90	0.958
Adjusted goodness–of–fit Index (AGFI)	>0.90	0.936
Standardized Root mean square residual (SRMSR)	<0.05	0.0345
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	<0.10	0.035
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	>0.90	0.941
Non–normed fit index (NNFI)	>0.90	0.980
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	>0.95	0.985

Table 4 Hypothesis test results of the final structural equation model

Hypotheses	Path Coefficient (β)	T–value	Results
H1: CBQ-->CUS	0.380	4.357	Supported
H2: PRI -->CUS	0.394	4.731	Supported
H3: CBQ-->CUL	0.446	4.721	Supported
H4: CUS-->CUL	0.218	2.305	Supported
H5: PRI-->CUL	0.289	3.438	Supported

The hypotheses were tested by SEM and the results showed as follows: The result showed that H1 was support, which Catering Business Quality has direct effect of Customer Satisfaction; H2 was supported, Product Innovation has a direct effect on Customer Satisfaction; H3 was supported, Catering Business Quality has a direct effect of Customer Loyalty; and H4 and H5 were supported, Customer Satisfaction has direct effect of Customer Loyalty and Product Innovation has a direct effect of Customer Loyalty. Regression Weights: (Group number 1 – Default model)

Table 5. Fitness analysis results of structural equation model (after adjustment)

Latent Variables	Observed Variables	Factor loading	SE	T–value	P	R^2
Catering Business Quality	Destination	0.728	0.056	13.000	***	0.530
	Relationship	0.711	0.062	11.468	***	0.506
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	Behavioral	0.724	0.071	10.197	***	0.525

All the variables with the constructs passed the test of the factor loading in CFA, which no item should be dropped. In addition to that, all the variables passed the goodness of fit of the CFA, including CFI, GFI, IFI and RMSEA. Hence, this study should conduct continually without changing the items and structural model.

Discussions

Research Objective 1: To study the customer loyalty situation in Hua Tian Hotel's catering business. By surveying customer needs and market preferences. For example, consumer or market research can be done to determine what consumers or markets want, and the Ansoff Matrix may be one of the most useful tools a company can use. The use of hotel art and varied Riewoldt (2006)

have adopted. Riewoldt (2006) asserted that improvements in hotel design provide visitors with an experience that is distinct in terms of décor and aesthetics (as cited in Nhepera, 2017). Studies agreed that art-oriented illuminations and atmosphere produce sentiments that impact visitors' imaginations while also offering emotionally unique experiences for the guests involved. Hotel design innovations can include both gradual and drastic changes to the physical components of the building, with the goal of enhancing the distinctiveness of the interior design and creating a comfortable atmosphere for the guests (as cited in Nhepera, 2017). Tangible components of a hotel include the quality and availability of physical facilities, as well as the artwork around the hotel, as well as in-room amenities such as tea and coffee stations. All these contribute to the overall visitor experience (Nhepera, 2017). They went on to say that the physical appearance of hotel staff, the cleanliness of the hotel, and the quality of the cuisine are all physical characteristics that consumers use to rate the overall quality of a hotel's service. Indeed, this has affected the consumer experience in their catering service in the hotel. Hence, it is recommended the future studies to include more types of innovation instead of just product innovation.

Objective 2 To investigate the causal relationship between factors influencing customer loyalty in the catering business of Hua Tian Hotel. The results of the hypothesis test using SEM show that the quality of the catering business has a direct effect on customer satisfaction (H1),

product innovation has a direct effect on customer satisfaction (H2), the quality of the catering business has a direct effect on customer loyalty (H3), customer satisfaction has a direct effect on customer loyalty (H4), product innovation has a direct effect on customer loyalty (H5), analysis of results by linking relevant theories or previous research evidence. Analysis of H1 and H3 results: The results showing that the quality of the catering business has a direct impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty are consistent with the research of Prasetya et al. (2019) and Suley et al. (2019) that found that service quality and food quality have a direct effect on customer satisfaction and loyalty

Analysis of H2 and H5 results: Results showing that product innovation has a direct impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty is in line with a study by Gopi et al. (2020) that found that the service quality of a food truck business has a direct impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty. H4 Results Analysis: The results showing that customer satisfaction has a direct effect on customer loyalty are in line with a study by Lei et al. (2022) that found that customer satisfaction is a key factor influencing loyalty in urban delivery services

This research has provided insights into the importance of product innovation in the hospitality industry. Especially in the context of the catering business. Understanding the impact of quality, catering business, and product innovation on customer satisfaction and loyalty can help hotels like Hua Tian improve their strategies to meet customer expectations and increase brand loyalty.

Knowledge from Research

The use of hotel art and varied room designs has evolved as a cutting-edge technique that many boutique and premium hotels have adopted. Riewoldt (2006) asserted that improvements in hotel design provide visitors with an experience that is distinct in terms of décor and aesthetics (as cited in Nhepera, 2017). Studies agreed that art-oriented illuminations and atmosphere produce sentiments that impact visitors' imaginations while also offering emotionally unique experiences for the guests involved. Hotel design innovations can include both gradual and drastic changes to the physical components of the building, with the goal of enhancing the distinctiveness of the interior design and creating a comfortable atmosphere for the guests (as cited in Nhepera, 2017). Tangible components of a hotel include the quality and availability of physical facilities, as well as the artwork around the hotel, as well as in-room amenities such as tea and coffee stations. All these contribute to the overall visitor experience (Nhepera, 2017). They

went on to say that the physical appearance of hotel staff, the cleanliness of the hotel, and the quality of the cuisine are all physical characteristics that consumers use to rate the overall quality of a hotel's service. Indeed, this has affected the consumer experience in their catering service in the hotel. Hence, it is recommended the future studies to include more types of innovation instead of just product innovation.

Another recommendation is given to the future studies. The current study is just included the product innovation instead of the whole type of innovation, but in catering services in hotels such as Hua Tian Hotel, it is much more than just the products but hotel layout, marketing and so on. According to Ottenbacher and Gnoth (2005), there are four basic aspects (or origins) of innovation: marketing innovations, product or service innovations, process innovation, and organisational innovation (as cited in Nhepera, 2017). Prior research revealed that the primary objectives of innovation processes in either services or goods are to acquire competitive advantage, expand market share, and boost customer loyalty, with the latter two being the most important. In contrast, the root of innovation would be a response to changes in the market such as consumers' demands and expectations (Nhepera, 2017).

Findings from a single case study at Hua Tian Hotel may not be representative of the entire catering industry in Hunan or other geographical areas. The unique characteristics of Hua Tian Hotel may limit the generalizability of the results. The study may be limited by the number of participants or customers involved. A small sample size can affect the reliability and external validity of the findings. Hua Tian Hotel may have specific characteristics, management practices, or customer demographics that are unique to the business. These context-specific factors may not be applicable to other catering businesses. The study may be limited by a specific time frame, capturing a snapshot of customer perceptions. Long-term effects of product innovation on customer satisfaction, service quality, and loyalty may not be fully explored. The study may focus primarily on customer perspectives and not fully explore the viewpoints of other stakeholders, such as employees, managers, or suppliers, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding. Gathering data on product innovation, customer satisfaction, service quality, and loyalty may pose challenges, such as incomplete records, difficulty accessing relevant information, or reliance on historical data.

Conclusion

The current study aims to examine the product innovation and catering business quality of Hunan catering business influence on customer loyalty. Quantitative method is used in this study with help of a questionnaire survey. The results revealed there is an effect of product innovation of Hunan catering business influence on customer satisfaction and there is an effect of catering business quality of Hunan catering business influence on customer satisfaction.

According to Santos (2014), it is necessary to use creative ways in order to attract new clients and to give a consistently distinct customer experience (as cited in Nhepera, 2017). Another empirical examination of innovation efficiency conducted by Fan and Zhou (2012) found that it provides hotels with the potential to apply innovative ideas in order to achieve sustained customer pleasure and

Suggestions

1. Integrate product innovation strategically: To effectively implement product innovation, catering services should thoroughly investigate customer demands and market preferences. This can be achieved through consumer or market research to identify trends and opportunities.

2. Utilize the Ansoff Matrix: The Ansoff Matrix is a valuable tool for planning and analyzing expansion efforts. By understanding the four components of the matrix (market penetration, product development, market development, and diversification), businesses can make informed decisions about their growth strategies.

3. Adopt a phased approach to product innovation: Instead of introducing product innovation in a disruptive manner, businesses should consider a gradual and controlled approach. This allows for careful monitoring of market reactions and adjustments as needed.

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