Food Quality Similarity --

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Food Quality Impacts Customer Satisfaction and Purchase Recommendations in a Bandung Culinary Business

Abstract

This study investigates the structural relationships driving customer behavioral intentions and advocacy within the vibrant culinary sector of Bandung, Indonesia. Specifically, the research models the impact of food quality on customer intention and customer satisfaction, while examining how these variables subsequently trigger customer recommendations. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the study analyzes the empirical data through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), supplemented by Latent Variable (LV) Prediction and the Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT). The measurement model establishes robust convergent validity (AVE > 0.680), excellent internal consistency reliability and a complete absence of multicollinearity. Discriminant validity assessments via the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio further confirm the distinctiveness of all latent constructs.

The structural path analysis reveals that food quality exerts a remarkably strong, positive impact on customer intention and significantly boosts customer satisfaction. Additionally, customer intention significantly and positively influences both customer recommendation and customer satisfaction. Heightened customer satisfaction, in turn, significantly enhances the generation of positive recommendations. Ultimately, these findings prove that food quality acts as the primary catalyst in a powerful behavioral chain reaction. By maintaining exceptional culinary standards, restaurant operators in Bandung can effectively capture consumer intentions, maximize dining satisfaction, and secure organic market growth through invaluable word-of-mouth recommendations.

Keywords: Food Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Intention, Recommendation, PLS-SEM, Bandung Culinary.

Introduction

The culinary tourism sector acts as a vital economic engine for many developing cities, and few places embody this dynamic as vividly as Bandung, Indonesia. Renowned as a premier gastronomic destination, Bandung attracts millions of domestic and international visitors annually, all eager to experience its innovative food concepts and rich culinary heritage. However, this high demand also triggers intense competition among local restaurant operators, street food vendors, and culinary entrepreneurs. (Wang & Ko, 2024; Yıkmış et al., 2024) To survive and thrive in this saturated market, businesses must look beyond simple transactions and deeply understand the underlying psychological and behavioral mechanisms that convert first-time diners into loyal, passionate brand advocates.

While traditional marketing strategies often emphasize aggressive pricing or prime locations, modern hospitality research increasingly highlights the foundational role of product excellence. Specifically, food quality serves as the primary touchpoint through which consumers evaluate their overall dining experience. Exceptional food quality does not merely fulfill physiological hunger; it shapes consumer perceptions, builds emotional connections,

and directly triggers a cascade of positive behavioral outcomes. (Hashemi et al., 2023) When a culinary establishment consistently delivers superior taste, presentation, and freshness, it fundamentally alters how consumers form their future intentions and experience satisfaction.

Despite the acknowledged importance of culinary quality, the intricate behavioral pathways connecting food quality to long-term brand advocacy require deeper exploration, particularly within highly competitive regional food hubs. (Sgroi & Marino, 2022). While existing literature widely documents independent relationships between quality, satisfaction, and loyalty, fewer studies map the comprehensive, multi-directional chain reaction where customer intention actively reinforces customer satisfaction, which in turn acts as the final bridge to organic word-of-mouth recommendations. Understanding these simultaneous pathways is crucial, as modern consumers do not evaluate experiences in isolation; instead, their psychological commitments (intentions) and emotional states (satisfaction) constantly interact to dictate their ultimate willingness to recommend a brand to others.

Existing research traditionally focuses on specialized or fragmented determinants of the dining experience. For instance, scholars heavily emphasize technical operational standards, such as how hygiene perceptions determine ethnic food loyalty (Zhang et al., 2022) or how food safety performance directly builds trust across online ordering platforms (Hoyos Vallejo & Chinelato, 2025). Other researchers view the food experience through a broader socio-cultural lens, proving that regional food culture dictates patronage intentions primarily when customer satisfaction mediates the relationship (Khoshkam et al., 2023). While these studies establish the isolated importance of culture, safety, and hygiene, they frequently overlook how fundamental, everyday product components—specifically the combined elements of food freshness, presentation, and taste—simultaneously trigger subsequent cognitive commitments and emotional evaluations.

Furthermore, current literature displays a clear division when modeling the precise structural path from customer satisfaction to ultimate loyalty behaviors. While studies frequently utilize the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework to link store quality directly to repurchase behaviors (Tordoya-Espinoza et al., 2025), others argue that external variables, such as brand image, must moderate the relationship between satisfaction and repurchase intentions in competitive industries (Veas-González et al., 2024). Additionally, the rapid rise of digital platforms has shifted significant scholarly attention toward online food delivery services. Researchers in this domain aggressively investigate how app convenience and delivery factors influence continuance intentions and customer loyalty using symmetrical and asymmetrical methods like PLS-SEM and fsQCA (Siddiqi et al., 2024; Foroughi et al., 2024).

Consequently, this heavy academic focus on digital convenience and external moderators creates a notable theoretical omission: researchers rarely explore the dual, direct role of customer intention as both an outcome of product quality and an active driver that fuels customer satisfaction and subsequent word-of-mouth recommendations within a single, integrated physical dining framework. Most existing models treat intention merely as the final endpoint of the consumer journey.

This study directly addresses this gap. By shifting the focus back to core culinary quality (freshness, presentation, and taste) within a traditional culinary hub like Bandung, this research constructs a robust, predictive structural model. It explicitly positions customer intention as a vital intermediary mechanism that actively shapes customer satisfaction, which then serves as the final catalyst for organic customer recommendations. By testing this comprehensive, multi-directional chain reaction, this study provides a more unified behavioral framework that explains how physical product quality systematically transforms consumer psychology into active brand advocacy.

Method

This study adopts a quantitative survey-based approach to investigate the relationships between food quality, customer intentions, satisfaction, and recommendations. The target population comprises university students in Bandung, Indonesia, who have previously consumed the culinary products under study. Specifically, the research utilizes a sample of 137 students from STIE Pasundan Bandung. To ensure that every member of the accessible student population possesses an equal probability of selection, the data collection process employs a simple random sampling technique.

Food Quality as independent variable, the study operationalizes this construct using three key dimensions: freshness, presentation, and taste. Intention to Buy as mediating variable, this measures the customers' behavioral commitment and likelihood of repurchasing the culinary products. Satisfaction as mediating variable, this captures the customers' overall emotional evaluation and fulfillment regarding their dining experience. Recommendation as dependent variable, this represents the final outcome variable, measuring the customers' willingness to engage in positive word-of-mouth advocacy.

To guarantee the accuracy and robustness of the measurement model, the study executes rigorous data quality testing covering convergent validity, discriminant validity, internal consistency reliability, and collinearity diagnostics. The analysis evaluates individual item reliability through indicator outer loadings and constructs a Cronbach's alpha assessment to confirm internal consistency reliability. It also calculates the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to verify convergent validity. To prove that each latent variable represents a distinct concept, the study cross-examines the data using both the traditional Fornell-Larcker criterion and the modern Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations. The analysis computes Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all indicators and constructs to ensure the complete absence of multicollinearity issues.

Following the data quality validation, the study employs Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) as the primary data analysis technique. PLS-SEM serves as an ideal analytical tool for this study because it efficiently handles complex causal relationships, simultaneously estimates multiple mediating pathways, and maximizes the explained variance (R2) of the endogenous target constructs. Furthermore, the analysis supplements the standard PLS structural path estimation with advanced predictive analytics, specifically

utilizing Latent Variable (LV) Prediction and the Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT) to rigorously validate the model's out-of-sample predictive relevance.

Result and Discussion

To ensure the quality of the measurement model, the analysis evaluates convergent validity, internal consistency reliability, and multicollinearity across all four latent variables. The results confirm that the scales meet all standard psychometric criteria. The assessment of Food Quality demonstrates high data quality. Its indicators exhibit strong outer loadings ranging from 0.699 to 0.893, confirming that each item correlates well with its underlying construct. The variable achieves an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.680, which exceeds the 0.50 threshold and establishes robust convergent validity. Furthermore, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.882 indicates excellent internal consistency reliability. Finally, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values between 1.639 and 3.121 remain safely below the conservative threshold of 5.0, proving that the indicators do not suffer from excessive collinearity.

Similarly, Intention to Buy displays strong measurement properties. The outer loadings for this construct range between 0.772 and 0.878, while the AVE reaches 0.707, indicating that the construct captures more than 70% of its indicators' variance. The scale also shows high reliability, supported by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.861. Regarding collinearity, VIF values range from 3.063 to 3.779, remaining well within acceptable limits.

Table 1. The Result of Convergent Validity, Internal Consistency Reliability, And Multicollinearity

Item	Food Quality	Intention	Satisfaction	Recommend	AVE	CR	VIF
FQ.1	0.699				0.680	0.882	1.723
FQ.2	0.849						2.714
FQ.3	0.891						3.121
FQ.4	0.893						3.116
FQ.5	0.774						1.639
I.1		0.834			0.707	0.861	3.779
I.2		0.772					3.730
I.3		0.878					3.635
I.4		0.875					3.063
S.1			0.931		0.839	0.936	2.351
S.2			0.906				1.662
S.3			0.915				2.446
S.4			0.912				2.393
R1				0.913	0.824	0.929	3.691
R2				0.923			3.179
R3				0.867			2.943
R4				0.926			3.290

The Satisfaction variable shows exceptionally strong performance. Its indicators produce very high outer loadings between 0.906 and 0.931. This construct yields an outstanding AVE of 0.839 and a remarkable Cronbach's alpha of 0.936, signifying superior validity and near-perfect reliability. It also maintains low collinearity risk, with VIF values spanning from 1.662 to 2.446. The outer loadings range from 0.867 to 0.926, paired with a solid AVE of 0.680. The construct achieves excellent internal reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.929. Its VIF values range between 2.943 and 3.691, confirming the absence of multicollinearity issues. Overall, these findings justify the use of all four constructs for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 2. The Result of Discriminant Validity the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio and Fornell-Larcker Criterion

HTMT				
	Food Quality	Intention	Recommendation	Satisfaction
Food Quality				
Intention	0.889			
Recommendation	0.748	0.742		
Satisfaction	0.740	0.790	0.719	
Fornell Lacker				
	Food Quality	Intention	Recommendation	Satisfaction
Food Quality	0.825			
Intention	0.827	0.841		
Recommendation	0.688	0.669	0.898	
Satisfaction	0.696	0.715	0.674	0.916

The analysis evaluates discriminant validity using two primary approaches: the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Both methods confirm that all latent constructs in the model represent distinct conceptual entities.

First, the HTMT analysis demonstrates strong discriminant validity, as all paired correlation ratios remain below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (or the threshold of 0.90). The highest ratio occurs between Intention and Food Quality (0.889), followed closely by the ratio between Satisfaction and Intention (0.790). All other construct pairs, including Recommendation and Food Quality (0.748), Recommendation and Intention (0.742), Satisfaction and Food Quality (0.740), and Satisfaction and Recommendation (0.719), fall safely within the acceptable range. These values indicate that the indicators measure unique constructs rather than overlapping phenomena.

The Fornell-Larcker criterion reinforces these findings by comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) against the inter-construct correlations. The square roots of the AVE for Food Quality (0.825), Intention (0.841), Recommendation (0.898), and Satisfaction (0.916) sit along the diagonal of the matrix. For nearly all constructs, the diagonal value exceeds any off-diagonal correlation in its corresponding row and column. Although the correlation between Intention and Food Quality (0.827) slightly exceeds the square root of the AVE for Food Quality (0.825), it remains below the square root of the AVE for Intention (0.841). Combined with the compliant HTMT results, the data establishes sufficient discriminant validity overall for the measurement model.

Table 3. The result of Latent Variable (LV) Prediction and Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT).

LV Prediction				
	Q^2predict	RMSE	MAE	
Intention	0.654	0.607	0.423	
Recommendation	0.442	0.782	0.549	
Satisfaction	0.461	0.762	0.581	
CVPAT PLS SEM vs Indicator average (IA)				
	PLS loss	IA loss	t value	p value
Intention	0.916	1.650	3.440	0.001
Recommendation	1.072	1.658	2.579	0.011
Satisfaction	1.033	1.642	2.366	0.020
Overall	1.007	1.650	3.198	0.002

To evaluate the predictive relevance of the model, the analysis employs Latent Variable (LV) Prediction and Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT). The LV Prediction results demonstrate strong predictive power across all target constructs, as all Q2 values remain strictly above zero. Specifically, the model achieves the highest predictive relevance for Intention Q2_predict = 0.654, RMSE = 0.607, MAE = 0.423. It also exhibits robust predictive capabilities for both Satisfaction Q2_predict = 0.461, RMSE = 0.762, MAE = 0.581 and Recommendation Q2_predict = 0.442, RMSE = 0.782, MAE = 0.549.

To rigorously validate these predictive capabilities, the CVPAT compares the PLS-SEM model's prediction losses against a baseline Indicator Average (IA) model. The PLS model consistently generates lower prediction losses than the IA baseline across all constructs. For Intention, the PLS loss (0.916) underperforms the IA loss (1.650), yielding a highly significant difference ($t = 3.440$, $p = 0.001$). Similarly, the PLS model outperforms the baseline for Recommendation ($t = 2.579$, $p = 0.011$) and Satisfaction ($t = 2.366$, $p = 0.020$). Ultimately, the overall CVPAT assessment confirms that the PLS model achieves significantly lower average loss (1.007) compared to the IA model (1.650, $t = 3.198$, $p = 0.002$). This confirms that the PLS-SEM model delivers superior and statistically significant predictive power over the simple indicator average.

Because all Q2_predict > 0, the model possesses genuine predictive relevance. CVPAT, the PLS losses are significantly lower than the IA losses ($p < 0.05$), that PLS model predicts outcomes better than a naive average.

Table 4. The Result of Path Analysis And Hypotheses

Path	Beta	P Value	fsquares	Decision
Food Quality -> Intention	0.827	0.000	2.157	Significant
Food Quality -> Satisfaction	0.330	0.040	0.076	Significant
Intention -> Recommendation	0.384	0.001	0.152	Significant

Intention -> Satisfaction	0.443	0.002	0.137	Significant
Satisfaction -> Recommendation	0.399	0.005	0.164	Significant
	R-square		R-square adjusted	
Intention	0.683		0.680	
Recommendation	0.526		0.516	
Satisfaction	0.546		0.537	

The path analysis reveals significant relationships across all tested hypotheses, demonstrating how food quality, customer intention, and satisfaction drive recommendations.Food quality exerts a remarkably strong, positive impact on customer intention (beta = 0.827, p = 0.000), presenting a substantial effect size (f2 = 2.157). Additionally, food quality significantly boosts customer satisfaction (beta = 0.330, p = 0.040), though it yields a smaller effect size (f2 = 0.076). Customer intention also plays a crucial role in driving subsequent behaviors and attitudes. It significantly and positively influences both customer recommendation (beta = 0.384, p = 0.001, f2 = 0.152) and customer satisfaction (beta = 0.443, p = 0.002, f2 = 0.137). Furthermore, customer satisfaction significantly enhances the likelihood of recommendations (beta = 0.399, p = 0.005), demonstrating a medium effect size (f2 = 0.164).

The model displays robust explanatory power for all three endogenous variables. Specifically, the predictors account for 68.3% of the variance in Intention (R2 = 0.683, Adjusted R2 = 0.680). Meanwhile, the model explains 54.6% of the variance in Satisfaction (R2 = 0.546, Adjusted R2 = 0.537) and 52.6% of the variance in Recommendation (R2 = 0.526, Adjusted R2 = 0.516). Overall, these findings confirm that all proposed pathways are statistically significant.

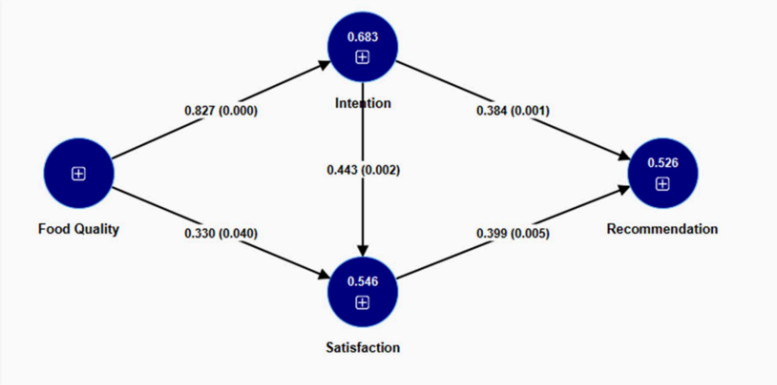

Figure 1. The Result of Path Diagram

This study investigates the structural relationships governing customer behavior in Bandung's vibrant culinary sector. The empirical results demonstrate that food quality acts as a foundational driver of customer outcomes, exerting a strong positive impact on customer intention and significantly boosting customer satisfaction. This finding aligns perfectly with the work of Tahir et al. (2023), who highlight that culinary quality inherently shapes the sustainable behaviors and preferences of both casual and fine dining consumers. Furthermore, our results mirror the conclusions of Ahn, Slevitch, and Sung (2025), who argue that quality determinants directly dictate how consumers form their satisfaction and repeat usage intentions within modern food service environments. When culinary businesses in Bandung consistently deliver exceptional food quality, they directly cultivate heightened customer satisfaction and foster stronger behavioral intentions.

Beyond the direct effects of food quality, customer intention emerges as a powerful mediator in the culinary experience. The data reveals that customer intention significantly and positively influences both customer recommendation and customer satisfaction. This multi-directional influence underscores a psychological feedback loop: when a consumer forms a firm intention to patronize a culinary establishment, this psychological commitment strengthens their subjective satisfaction and drives them to actively recommend the food to others. These dynamic echoes the Optimal Experience Theory utilized by Maharani and Marsasi (2024), which demonstrates how positive future intentions stem from deeply engaging consumer-brand relationships and fulfilling culinary experiences.

Finally, the structural model establishes that customer satisfaction significantly enhances positive customer recommendations. This critical pathway proves that highly satisfied diners serve as organic advocates for Bandung's culinary brands. Our evidence corroborates the PLS-SEM and NCA findings of Koay, Cheah, and Chang (2022), who establish that customer satisfaction bridges the gap between service quality and long-term customer loyalty. Similarly, our results support Ahmed et al. (2023), who map the intricate relationships showing how restaurant service satisfaction directly feeds into consumer loyalty and word-of-mouth advocacy. This is further reinforced by Thuannadee and Praneetpholkrang (2026), whose recent work highlights that customer satisfaction ultimately dictates final behavioral intentions and loyalty outputs in food delivery and restaurant platforms. Ultimately, by maintaining superior food quality and capturing consumer intentions, Bandung's culinary businesses can spark a powerful chain reaction that drives satisfaction and yields valuable word-of-mouth recommendations.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study clarifies the critical pathways that drive customer advocacy and loyalty within Bandung's competitive culinary sector. The empirical evidence demonstrates that food quality serves as the ultimate catalyst for the entire consumer journey, directly boosting customer satisfaction and anchoring customer intentions. By delivering exceptional culinary quality, businesses do not merely satisfy immediate consumer needs; they cultivate a psychological commitment that actively transforms diners into brand advocates.

Furthermore, the structural model reveals a powerful behavioral framework where customer intention and customer satisfaction function as vital mechanisms. Customer intention actively strengthens subsequent satisfaction and triggers positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Concurrently, heightened customer satisfaction directly converts local diners into passionate promoters who voluntarily generate valuable recommendations for culinary brands.

Ultimately, these findings offer actionable strategic insights for restaurant operators and culinary entrepreneurs in Bandung. To secure long-term success and generate organic market growth, management must prioritize consistent culinary quality as their core strategy. By doing so, businesses trigger a highly beneficial chain reaction that captures consumer intentions, maximizes satisfaction, and ultimately secures a steady stream of customer recommendations in Bandung's bustling food industry.

References

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