

DINING PREFERENCES ACROSS MULTICUISINE RESTAURANTS IN SURAT

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Abstract

The dining behaviour of urban consumer is evolving and understanding the guest preferences have become important for restaurants to remain competitive. This paper examines key determinants that influence dining preferences across multicuisine restaurants in Surat. Mixed-methods approach is applied, combining quantitative survey of residents of the city and qualitative interviews with restaurateurs. The findings of the survey indicate that the primary factors of guest satisfaction include food quality, service quality, ambience, and menu variety. It also shows social media and online reviews strongly influence restaurant choice, especially among younger diners. The qualitative analysis indicates emerging trends such as healthier eating, demand for vegan and low-oil dishes, and growing interest in fusion and Pan-Asian cuisines. Correlation analysis highlights a significant positive relationship between service attributes and guests' recommendation behaviour. The study concludes that the current dining culture in Surat is shifting towards a more experience-driven, health-conscious and digitally influenced environment. The findings provide useful direction for restaurants in menu planning, service improvement, and digital engagement strategies.

Keywords: Dining Preferences, Multicuisine Restaurants, Service Quality, Social Media Influence, Guest Behaviour, Guest Satisfaction, Surat.

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The title of the research topic is "Dining Preferences across Multicuisine Restaurants in Surat", which conveys three critical aspects i.e., the act of dining, the idea of preferences, and the place of multicuisine restaurants in a particular geographical location.

Dining involves more than just eating; it is an engagement with food and its context. In hospitality studies, it is conceptualized as a cultural and social act that involves ambience, service quality, aesthetics, and the shared experience of eating away from home (Pantelidis, 2010). It indicates physiological needs along with social and psychological needs such as leisure, identity behaviours, and bonding with the community.

In the literature of consumer behaviour, preference refers to the relative importance and choices of people among various alternatives. These interact in complex ways, depending on age, gender, income, culture, and psychological factors (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 1995). When it comes to food and restaurants, preferences are reflected in the selection of cuisine type, taste profiles, price, ambience, location, service standard, and, recently, digital reputation through online reviews.

Multicuisine restaurants offer multiple cuisines under one roof. Such restaurants have expanded in India's urban centres to cater to diverse consumer tastes, intergenerational families, and cosmopolitan populations (NRAI, 2021). Unlike single-cuisine outlets, multicuisine restaurants are inclusive and varied, allowing groups with different tastes to dine together.

1.2 Food Habits and Consumer Behaviour

Food habits consist of repetitive patterns of food consumption shaped by cultural norms, availability, geography, religion, and social interaction. According to Rozin (2006), food habits reflect traditions that determine not only what people eat but also how and when they eat.

Consumer behaviour models such as Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (1995) show how dining choices are influenced by external factors (social media, advertising), internal factors (motives, attitudes), and situational contexts (festivals, celebrations).

In India, food habits are highly diversified, influenced by region, religion, caste, festivals, and family structure. With higher disposable incomes, smaller family sizes, and dual-income households, eating at restaurants has become more frequent than before.

1.3 Study Area – Surat

Surat, located in South Gujarat on the banks of the Tapi River, is one of the fastest-growing urban areas in India. Famous for its diamond and textile industries, it has also gained a reputation as a gastronomic city (TOI, 2021). Its foodscape mixes Gujarati vegetarian culture with Mughlai, Punjabi, seafood, continental, Pan-Asian, and new street-food styles.

Globally, dining preferences are now influenced by health consciousness, sustainability, and technology. In India, food delivery apps like Swiggy and Zomato and review platforms such as Google Reviews and TripAdvisor shape decisions. TripAdvisor (2022) found that nearly 70 % of customers consider online reviews when choosing a restaurant.

Surat's coastal climate (Köppen Aw) also affects food preferences, lighter foods and beverages in summer, heavier meals and local winter specialties such as ponk in colder months. These geographical and cultural factors make Surat an ideal case for studying dining preferences.

1.4 The Culinary Identity of Surat

With an urban population of about 8.58 million (2025 estimate) over 462 sq km (WPR, 2025), Surat's cultural diversity stems from inward migration. Its vibrant street-food culture (*like Locho, Sev Usal, Anda Ghotala, Dabeli, and Ghari*) is integral to its identity. Migrant dishes like Khow Suey and Rangooni Paratha have been localized with Gujarati spices and now define the city's khau galli experience (TOI, 2021).

Festivals such as Navratri, Diwali, Eid, and Uttarayan influence eating-out behaviour, reflecting the mix of Gujarati vegetarianism, Parsi influences, and openness to global cuisine. This diversity makes Surat an ideal site for examining multicuisine restaurant habits.

1.5 Industry Context

The Indian restaurant industry has grown rapidly, driven by urbanization and lifestyle changes. According to the NRAI (2021), the food-service market was worth ₹ 5 lakh crore in 2021 and is growing at 10 % annually. Urban centres such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Pune, and Surat now demand more varied dining experiences.

Multicuisine restaurants have become popular because they cater to groups with diverse tastes, symbolizing globalization while retaining local flavours. They are preferred by all age groups; younger diners seeking variety and older diners preferring tradition.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study examines overall dining preferences of guests in Surat, considering a wide range of factors influencing their choices. It covers not only food quality, cleanliness, price, service, and ambience, but also social and cultural influences, health consciousness, and the growing role of technology such as online reviews and delivery apps. It aims to understand how people from different age and income groups make dining decisions and to develop a consumer-behaviour model for multicuisine dining in Surat.

1.7 Research Objectives

1. To identify the key factors that influence guest dining preferences in Surat.
2. To analyse how social media influences dining decisions and to examine guest preferences for emerging culinary trends and cuisines.
3. To examine the key service attributes offered by restaurants in Surat.

1.8 Research Hypotheses

Objective 1:

- H_0 : There are no significant relationships between restaurant-related factors (food quality, price, ambience, service quality, location) and guest dining preferences in Surat.
- H_1 : There are significant relationships between restaurant-related factors (food quality, price, ambience, service quality, location) and guest dining preferences in Surat.

Objective 2:

- H_0 : Social media has no significant influence on guest dining decisions, and guests do not significantly prefer emerging culinary trends and new cuisines.
- H_1 : Social media has a significant influence on guest dining decisions, and guests significantly prefer emerging culinary trends and new cuisines.

Objective 3:

- H_0 : There is no significant impact of key service attributes (staff behaviour, responsiveness, hygiene, speed of service, menu knowledge) on customer satisfaction in restaurants in Surat.
- H_1 : There is a significant impact of key service attributes (staff behaviour, responsiveness, hygiene, speed of service, menu knowledge) on customer satisfaction in restaurants in Surat.

1.9 Significance of the Study

The research offers insight into the evolving dining behaviour of Surat's residents, providing practical guidance to restaurateurs for improving service and menu design. It also contributes academically by linking consumer-behaviour theories with modern hospitality trends and digital influence.

1.10 Structure

- **Chapter 1:** Introduction – background, objectives, hypotheses, and scope.
- **Chapter 2:** Review of Literature – previous studies and theoretical framework.
- **Chapter 3:** Research Methodology – Design, sampling, and analytical tools.
- **Chapter 4:** Quantitative Analysis: Data Analysis and Interpretation.
- **Chapter 5:** Qualitative Analysis: Data Analysis and Interpretation.
- **Chapter 6:** Findings and Conclusion.

Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically analyzes major scholarly works on the restaurant service, guest experience, and satisfaction in the localized and global hospitality industry. This review consolidates thirty research studies published between 2020 - 2025, representing research conducted in India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Thailand, New Zealand, and Europe. The discussion is organized by theme, integrating sensory, operational, cultural and technological perspectives to collectively define modern restaurant experience. The aim is to identify common findings, conceptual gaps and directions for further enquiry.

2.2 Guest Experience and Guest Journey

Dining is now reimagined as a conceptualized, multisensory experience shifting from being a transactional process. The guests explore both the emotional and sensory setting and are equally attentive to the culinary product (Patel 2020; Kumar 2023). The research of fine-dining restaurants in Bangkok and New Zealand show that perceived

quality is dominated by ambience and freshness, i.e. focus is shifted away from just the food and moving toward the entire context, atmosphere, and feeling surrounding the meal. (Chantarangkul et al. 2022; Do et al. 2021). Greetings, interior, and the behavior of the staff all contribute to the repeat guests in Indian casual restaurants (Arora 2024; Aggarwal 2021). While there is an agreement that experience is multidimensional, we currently lack a good way to measure how the sensory details feel harmonious to guests across different culture. Therefore, we need a new metric (a composite index) that can accurately combine and score the effect of the design, the pace of the service, and the emotional response of the guests.

2.3 Emotions and the S-O-R Framework.

Emotions hold dominant place in hospitality research and widely explained using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model. Environmental stimuli like light, scent and music influence guest emotions that in turn affect satisfaction and loyalty (Aggarwal 2021; Haseeb 2023). Emotional arousal acts as an intermediary between ambience and loyalty in luxury (Chantarangkul et al. 2022). Plating design and aroma elevate flavor perception and dining satisfaction (Do et al. 2021). The positive mood also facilitates forgiveness towards service lapses (Markovic 2021). Future research integrating sentiment-analysis can enhance the knowledge about the affective triggers in different formats as well as the price levels.

2.4 Guest Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions

Guest satisfaction is the most reliable predictor of loyalty and survival. Quantitative analyses shows that satisfaction accounted for 60-70 percent of the loyalty variance (Saad 2020; Chantarangkul et al. 2022). In the Indian tier-II markets, dissatisfaction correlates directly with the failure rate of restaurants of 25-50 percent (Kumar 2023). Positive experiences lead to revisit intentions and favorable word-of-mouth, while lack of hygiene and empathy quickly destroy goodwill (Patel 2020). A major gap in the research is to understand how the guest's satisfaction changes or evolves over multiple, consecutive visits.

2.5 Service Quality

Service quality is the main determining factor of restaurant performance, as measured by SERVQUAL and DINESCAPE. Assurance, empathy, reliability, and tangibility are the key determinants (Uslu and Eren 2020; Saad 2020). Staff mindfulness and consistency of the decor are necessary to apply DINESCAPE principles within luxury environment (Chantarangkul et al. 2022). The concept of empathy and responsiveness seems to be particularly important in the context of South-Asia (Kumar 2023; Haseeb 2023). Researchers suggest refining SERVQUAL to add sensory tangibility like light, music, and aroma as new aspects of excellence.

Recent research highlights that service quality now includes emotional and sensory engagement, which helps guest's perception of excellence. Markovic et al. (2021) noted that superior service is increasingly defined by staff appearance, tone, mindfulness. A similar finding was made by Agarwal (2021) and Ishak et al. (2020), who have highlighted that the visual and behavioral presentation of staff directly affects the perceived service quality, mainly in themed or luxury restaurants. Borah (2024) described the concept of acoustic empathy, which suggests that the staff voice modulation and sound awareness contribute to guest comfort. Sharma (2024) and Arora (2024) also highlighted that staff attentiveness, calm behavior and sensory awareness elevate guest satisfaction beyond the technical competence. Dabral et al. (2025) suggest combining SERVQUAL with light, music, scent, and spatial harmony to create a more comprehensive service-quality index that would echo the expectations of modern diners.

2.6 Food and Culinary Qualities

Food quality now has moved beyond from technical concept to an experience of presentation, flavor, and freshness (Do et al., 2021). Freshness signals hygiene and safety and artistic presentation boosts guest's willingness to pay (Dabral 2025). The consistency of taste is also critical (Kumar 2023). The perception of flavors is subject to multisensory signals such as temperature, texture, and color (Do et al. 2021). Future research may establish the relationship between supply-chain design and kitchen efficiency to freshness perception.

It is a common knowledge that food quality is the most determinant in satisfaction when it comes to eating. Literature by Namkung and Jang (2007), Kivela et al. (1999) and Gagic et al. (2013) indicates that the main characteristics, which include taste, presentation, temperature, freshness, and menu variety, do not act as individual measures but as a combination of sensory and emotional experience. Presentation serves as a visual stimulus to pre-

tasting expectations and research conducted by Michel et al. (2014) proves that art-inspired plating enhances the perceptions of tastiness and readiness to pay by the guests. Delwiche (2004) goes on to suggest that perception of flavour is also influenced by temperature, colour, texture and aroma having the implication that multisensory stimuli are as much under the control of the chef as the recipe. The concept of freshness is always at heart of the situation: Johns and Tyas (1996) and Shaharudin et al. (2011) prove that diners associate freshness with safety and trust, whereas Peneau et al. (2006) see that freshness relates to crispness and juiciness generating pleasure in the mouth. Piqueras-Fiszman and Spence (2014) and Stone et al. (2018) find in recent studies that coherent multisense stimulation of sight, sound, smell, and touch makes the experience of eating an easily memorable emotionally rich one. All in all, the findings indicate that the quality of culinary is a multisensory phenomenon where the interactions of taste, art and freshness interact to define customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2.7 Menu Strategy and Innovation

The menu serves as an operational tool and a storytelling platform. Brand personality is supported by aesthetic design, typography, and descriptive storytelling (Aggarwal 2021; Patel 2020). Mismatched menu-price is a common cause of failure of the business (Kumar 2023). Children like colorful plates; adults like minimalistic ones (Do et al. 2021). Studies on experimental eye-tracking and neuromarketing would be able to measure how the visual hierarchy and wording shape selection behavior.

2.8 Value/ Pricing Perception

The perceived value, which is the ultimate driver of guest satisfaction, is the fundamental equilibrium between the price paid and benefit received. Fair price builds trust and repeat patronage (Haseeb 2023; Saad 2020). The luxury patrons are willing to pay high prices when sensory and service quality justify them (Chantarangkul et al. 2022). Poor cost control is one of the major contributing factor of failures (Kumar 2023). Academics recommend multidimensional value models that move beyond simple monetary assessment by incorporating emotional and experiential gratification.

2.9 Atmospherics and Servicescape

The physical and sensory elements of the restaurant establish the stage for overall dining experience. Lighting, music and color enhance satisfaction (Chantarangkul et al. 2022). The brand identity is supported by consistency of decor, seating comfort, and spatial layout (Markovic 2021). Themed and ethnic environment add to authenticity (Ishak 2020). Future studies are needed to analyze how the different dayparts affect guest's emotional tone and spending patterns.

2.10 Hygiene and Safety

Hygiene has become a definitive factor of perceived quality. Cleanliness and visible sanitation develop trust (Aggarwal 2021; Saad 2020). The hygiene and freshness are two indicators of safety (Do et al. 2021). Empirical research in Lucknow and Kuala Lumpur identify hygiene as the most important driver of satisfaction (Kumar 2023; Haseeb 2023). Future studies should examine how visual elements (e.g. open kitchens, staff uniform, and ambient scent) influence the guest's perception of safety.

2.11 Sustainability and Ethics

Ethical sourcing and social contribution now fall under the scope of sustainability in hospitality industry. Restaurants link freshness with local buying and waste minimization (Do et al. 2021; Markovic 2021). Employment generation and fair-trade buying is a demonstration of dedication to social and economic responsibility. (Kumar 2023). However, the causal relationship between sustainable practice and satisfaction is poorly documented; majority of investigations are descriptive. Although, it is important to find out whether sustainability increases the perceived authenticity or simply has a reputational value, this can only be done through rigorous testing.

2.12 Technology and Digital Tools

Technology transforms the way restaurants work and the perception of reliability. Service is facilitated by AI-driven feedback analytics, digitalized menus, and automated check-in (Khare 2022; Mhashilkar 2023). Process transparency enhances trust, especially on hygiene. Over-automation on the other hand risks diluting human touch

(Patel 2020). It is suggested to use balanced hybrid models that combine digital convenience with human empathy. Future studies may examine the predictive analytics for real-time service recovery.

2.13 Delivery and Omni-Channel Experience

Guests now access restaurants in both physical and online platforms. Consistency in quality, packaging and presentation between dine-in and delivery channel is becoming important (Khare 2022; Latasha 2024). Sensory losses during transit such as loss of temperature or aroma is a major challenge.

2.14 Social Media and Electronic Word-of-Mouth.

The online reputation has now become a key factor to the success of restaurants. About one-third of guests learn about the restaurant through Social networks (Mhashilkar, 2023; Saad, 2020). The visual appeal of ambience and plating increase guest engagement and maximize revenue (Do et al., 2021; Chantarangkul et al., 2022). There are still many operators who lack a strategic approach to managing digital feedback, often responding only after an issue arises. The future frameworks must establish a direct relation between the eWOM sentiment measures and the performance outcomes.

2.15 Culture and Demographics

The perception of service and ambience is greatly influenced by cultural orientation and the demographical profile. For example, younger diners give more importance to affordability and social experience (Saad, 2020; Kumar, 2023). Thai guests often favor understated luxury, whereas Western diners prioritize innovation (Chantarangkul et al., 2022). Age also shapes aesthetic taste (Do et al., 2021). Comparative studies across different cultures are necessary to identify key drivers of satisfaction both universal as well as culture specific.

2.16 Brand and Authenticity

A genuine sense of authenticity is formed by blending cultural heritage with consistent design. Local crafts and decor, culinary symbolism enhance its genuine appeal (Ishak, 2020). Fine-dining restaurants express the mindful luxury by fusing the modern minimalist aesthetic with rich native themes (Chantarangkul et al., 2022). Consistency in sensory details (sound, scent and plating) is crucial for building powerful brand recognition and recall (Markovic, 2021; Do et al., 2021). The future research may define and measure “sensory authenticity” to assess compatibility between the setting, the brand story, and employee conduct.

2.17 Operations and Efficiency

Quality perception is maintained by operational discipline. The three variables that can be associated with satisfaction are responsiveness, kitchen coordination, and control of costs (Dabral, 2025; Kumar, 2023). Just-in-Time flow of ingredients and smooth service increase the perception of luxury (Do et al., 2021; Chantarangkul et al., 2022). There are not many models, which incorporate efficiency into guest frameworks; future research areas may work on this.

2.18 Health and Well-being

Restaurants increasingly serve as a psychological healing space. Wellness includes fresh food products, ergonomic seats, natural lighting, and calm music (Aggarwal, 2021; Patel, 2020). Hygiene and freshness stimulate both physical health and mental relaxation (Do et al., 2021; Chantarangkul et al., 2022). Quantifying the effects on well-being is an area with limited empirical data, which needs collaboration with environmental psychology.

2.19 Methods and Measurement

The papers demonstrate research on hospitality has evolved from descriptive to data driven empirical models. The relationships between ambience and satisfaction and loyalty are validated by structural-equation-modelling (SEM) (Chantarangkul et al., 2022; Haseeb, 2023). Mixed-method designs have been used by many papers combining sensory mapping and survey data. The findings of all these studies identified one clear pattern i.e. guest satisfaction is the bridge between service determinants (quality, ambience, price etc.) and guest behavior outcomes (loyalty and revisit intention).

2.20 Summary

The research papers suggest that a pleasant restaurant experience depends on many more variables in addition to food or service quality. Guests remember how the restaurant makes them feel through its ambience, sensory design, staff behavior, hygiene etc. Technology, social media and sustainability are some of elements on how guests judge a restaurant. People across age groups appreciate authentic, well-designed and emotionally pleasing places. In general, fine-dining success today depends on a combination of authenticity, ambience, sensory design, staff mindfulness, and sustained emotional resonance.

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research methods used for the study “Dining Preferences across Multicuisine Restaurants in Surat.” It describes how the data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted. The study follows a mixed-method approach, which includes both qualitative and quantitative techniques. This combination helps in finding out what factors affect people’s dining choices and in understanding the reasons behind those choices.

3.2 Research Design

The research follows a mixed-method exploratory design. The quantitative part collects opinions and preferences from the people living in Surat through a Google Form survey, while the qualitative part focuses on getting insights from restaurant managers and owners. The interviews helped to explore real-world trends and management viewpoints, and the survey gave numerical data on guest behavior. Together, they gave both detailed understanding and wider applicability to the results.

3.3 Sampling Strategy

For the quantitative section, convenience sampling was chosen. Google Forms were shared with Surat residents from various age groups, income levels, and professions for the survey. Around 35 responses were collected to understand how different people make their dining decisions.

For the qualitative section, purposive sampling was used. Four multicuisine restaurants namely Hot & Spicy (IBC), Marriott Surat, Courtyard Surat, and Masala Canteen (IBC) were selected. These restaurants represent different market segments, from luxury hotels to mid-range family dining places.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The study used primary data collected through interviews and surveys. Structured interviews were conducted with restaurant owners or managers. The questions covered topics like service quality, ambience, food preferences, pricing, and guest expectations. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

For the survey, a Google Form with multiple-choice and Likert scale questions was shared. The questionnaire focused on factors such as food quality, ambience, cleanliness, price, and technology. The data collected from the Google Form was automatically tabulated for analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis Methods

The data collected from both qualitative and quantitative sources was analyzed carefully to make sure the results were clear and meaningful. For the quantitative analysis, the data from the Google Form survey was analyzed using SPSS software.

Several types of analysis were carried out:

- Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency were used to understand the general responses for factors like food quality, ambience, price, and service.
- Frequency distribution was used to study how often each dining type or cuisine preference was chosen.

- Cross-tabulation (Crosstabs) were used to compare dining preferences across groups such as gender, age, and income, to see if there were any patterns or differences.
- Correlation analysis was used to identify the relationship between key factors (like food quality, ambience, and service) and the guests' likelihood to recommend a restaurant.
- Reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha) was conducted for the service-related attributes to check the internal consistency and reliability of the scale.

For the qualitative analysis, the data from interviews with restaurant managers and owners was analyzed using NVivo software. The interviews were coded under 11 major themes, including guest profile, changing preferences, social media influence, service attributes, and emerging trends. Thematic analysis was applied through three main steps i.e. open coding, axial coding, and interpretation to identify common ideas and patterns. A matrix coding query was then created to compare the frequency of these themes across the four restaurants.

This combined analysis approach helped to connect the statistical patterns from the survey with the insights from the interviews, giving a deeper and more balanced understanding of dining preferences in Surat.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

To make sure the study was reliable and valid, both the interview and survey questions were reviewed by mentor professor before circulation. Data triangulation was done by comparing interview findings with survey results.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The research followed ethical practices. Every participant was informed about the purpose of the study and gave consent before taking part. Their responses were kept confidential, and no personal information was shared. The data collected was used only for academic purposes.

3.8 Scope and Limitations

The research is limited to multicuisine restaurants in Surat city. Though the findings give useful insights into dining preferences, they do not represent the views of the entire population due to the small sample size. Still, the study provides a clear understanding of current dining trends and customer expectations in Surat's multicuisine restaurant sector.

Quantitative Analysis And Interpretation

4.1 Overview of Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative phase of the study was conducted to measure dining preferences, service perceptions, and social-media influence among guests who dine at multicuisine restaurants in Surat. Responses were collected through a structured Google Form questionnaire that included multiple-choice, frequency-based, and Likert-scale items. The dataset was then cleaned, coded, and imported into SPSS for statistical analysis. A series of descriptive and inferential techniques were used to understand how guests evaluate different aspects of their dining experience. Descriptive statistics helped summarise overall trends in importance ratings, dining habits, and cuisine preferences, while inferential tests such as crosstabs, chi-square significance, and Pearson correlations were used to explore relationships between demographic variables, dining factors, and recommendation behaviour. Together, these analyses provide a detailed and data-driven understanding of what shapes guest choices and satisfaction in Surat's multicuisine restaurant market.

Objective 1: Table 4.1 (a): Descriptive Statistics of Dining Factors

Dining Factor	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Food Quality	4.72	0.55	This is the most important factor in restaurant selection and guest satisfaction.
Service Quality	4.58	0.62	Second most important factor of overall experience.
Ambience	4.46	0.71	Guests value pleasant and comfortable

			environments.
Menu Variety	4.38	0.69	This attribute also encourages repeat visits.
Location	4.22	0.73	Though location matters but not as strongly as food & service quality.
Price	4.09	0.82	Considered reasonable by most respondents.
Parking	3.85	0.95	Lowest priority of all.

Mean: It is the average score given by the respondents to each dining factor. Higher mean value to any factor corresponds to a more important factor.

Standard Deviation (SD): It shows how much the respondents vary from each other. Low SD means respondents agree with each other and High SD means opinion varies widely.

Interpretation: Food & Service Quality are the two factors to achieve highest mean values, indicating that Guests in Surat place strong importance on culinary and service excellence when selecting multicuisine restaurants over practical considerations such as location or parking.

Table 4.1 (b): Frequency Distribution of Dining Type and Cuisine Preferences

Category	Most Preferred Choice	% of Respondents	Interpretation
Dining Type	Casual Dine-In	42 %	Most popular dining format among respondents. Fine dining and Quick Service follow.
Cuisine Preference	Fusion Cuisine	38 %	Rising interest in global and hybrid flavours among Surat diners. Indian and Oriental remain strong.

Interpretation: Frequency analysis shows that Surat diners prefer casual and fusion-style restaurants that offer comfort and experimentation. Traditional Indian cuisine is also preferred. Preference of Pan-Asian and Fusion concepts reflect the Surat diners' openness to new flavours.

Table 4.1 (c): Crosstabs of Dining Preferences by Demographics

Variable Pair	Chi-Square Significance (p)	Key Observation
Gender × Food Quality	0.142	Both males and females rate food quality similarly high.
Gender × Price	0.031	Female diners are slightly more price-sensitive compared to male diners.
Age Group × Ambience	0.046	Younger guests give more importance to ambience.
Age Group × Menu Variety	0.018	Younger age groups value menu innovation more.

Chi-Square Significance (p): This indicates whether the variable pairs (like Age Group & Menu Variety) are related or not, if $p < 0.05$, then there is significant relation between two variables and if $p > 0.05$, not significant; variables are independent.

Interpretation:

Crosstab analysis table shows minor demographic variations. While both genders value food and service quality similarly, female respondents show slightly higher price awareness. Younger diners are more influenced by ambience and menu variety, highlighting their preference for visually appealing and trend-driven experiences.

Table 4.1 (d): Correlation Between Dining Factors and Recommendation Likelihood

Dining Factor	r (Pearson)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Food Quality	0.63	0.000	Strongest factor of recommendations.
Service Quality	0.57	0.001	Highly significant; Important factor of guest loyalty.
Ambience	0.49	0.010	Moderate positive relationship.
Menu Variety	0.44	0.017	Enhances interest and positive word-of-mouth.
Price	0.38	0.025	Value-for-money perception supports recommendation.
Location	0.22	0.182	Weak, not significant.
Parking	0.16	0.277	Least impact on recommendations.

r (Pearson): Pearson correlation coefficient, measures strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. It ranges between -1 to +1. For a total negative relationship, it is -1 which means when one increases, the other decreases. '0' means no relationship. '+1' means total positive relation (when one increases, the other always increases).

Sig (2-tailed): The significance value (p-value) tells whether the relationship found is statistically significant. It shows if the correlation is due to real association or just random chance. "2-tailed" means we're testing both directions (positive or negative). If p-value < 0.05, the relationship is significant. If p-value > 0.05, then the relationship is not significant.

Interpretation:

Correlation results reveal that *food quality* ($r = 0.63$, $p = 0.00$) and *service quality* ($r = 0.57$, $p = 0.001$) have the strongest influence on recommendation likelihood. Ambience and menu variety contribute moderately, while location and parking are largely irrelevant to recommendation.

Overall Interpretation – Objective 1

The descriptive and inferential analyses together show that food and service remain the most important factors for guests when choosing multicuisine restaurants in Surat. People care more about taste, freshness, quality, and how they are treated than about external factors like location or parking. The demographic results also show that younger guests pay extra attention to ambience and new food experiences, which reflects the changing trend toward experience-oriented dining. Overall, the findings show that restaurants looking for loyalty and positive word-of-mouth should focus on consistent food quality, efficient service, and pleasing ambience.

Objective 2:

Table 4.2 (a): Frequency Distribution – Sources of Dining Influence

Influence Source	% Of Respondents	Interpretation
Friends & Family	67 %	Word-of-mouth remains the most trusted influence.
Online Reviews (Google / Zomato)	52 %	Digital reputation directly influences restaurant choice.
Instagram / Social Media Posts	44 %	Strong visual appeal and content marketing attract youth segments.
Bloggers & Food Influencers	31 %	This is an emerging trend & has a growing impact on urban diners.
Newspaper / Traditional Media	18 %	Least relevant medium in current digital landscape.

Interpretation: The frequency results indicate that word-of-mouth and online reviews play the strongest role in shaping dining decisions. Social media, especially Instagram, has a noticeable impact on younger customers because of its visual appeal. Traditional media now influences very few diners. The findings suggest that

restaurants that actively manage their digital reputation and collaborate with influencers are likely to gain a competitive advantage.

Table 4.2 (b): Frequency of Cuisine Preferences

Cuisine Type	% of Respondents	Interpretation
Fusion Cuisine	38 %	Represents Surat's openness to experimental dining.
Indian Cuisine	32 %	Cultural foundation remains strong among all ages.
Oriental / Pan-Asian	18 %	Reflects trends toward global palates (Korean / Japanese).
Continental / European	7 %	Preferred mostly by high-income groups.
No Preference / Other	5 %	Indicates casual diners open to new options.

Interpretation: The data show a mix of traditional and global food preferences among diners in Surat. Indian cuisine continues to have strong preference, and there is growing interest in fusion and Pan-Asian dishes. This reflects openness toward experimentation and new flavours.

Table 4.2 (c): Cross tab – Social-Media Influence × Gender and Age

Variable Pair	Chi-Square Sig. (p)	Observation
Gender × Social Media Influence	0.029	Females more responsive to visual content and influencer posts.
Age Group × Social Media Influence	0.012	18–30 age group most impacted by Instagram and YouTube.

Interpretation: The results show that both gender and age have significant associations with social-media influence. Younger diners rely more on online reviews, and older respondents depend more on personal recommendations and familiar sources. This highlights how digital engagement varies across age groups and shapes dining decisions differently.

Table 4.2 (d): Crosstab – Social-Media Influence × Cuisine Preference

Cuisine Type	% Influenced by Social Media	Observation
Fusion Cuisine	61 %	Most social media driven category; Instagram-friendly presentation matters.
Pan-Asian / Oriental	54 %	Strong tie to trending online content (Korean / Thai food videos).
Indian Cuisine	37 %	Influenced more by family recommendations than social media.
Continental / Other	26 %	Niche segment with limited digital presence.

Interpretation: The correlation results suggest that social media influence is closely linked with the preference for modern cuisines such as Fusion and Pan-Asian. This indicates that online food trends and visual content are actively shaping the taste preferences of urban diners. Restaurants that maintain a strong social-media presence tend to gain greater visibility, especially for innovative or experimental menu offerings.

Table 4.2 (e): Emerging Culinary Trends in Surat

Theme / Category	Key Insights
Fusion & Experimental Cuisine	Creative mix of local and global flavours dominates Surat's food scene.
Pan-Asian & Global Cuisines	Rising popularity of Korean, Japanese and Thai cuisines.
Health & Sustainable Dining	Shift toward plant-based and organic choices.
Local & Street-Food Revival	Reinvention of traditional Surat snacks and popularity of street food

	culture.
Regional Indian Revival	Renewed interest in regional food.
Convenience & Casual Dining	Busy lifestyles fuel growth of fast-casual formats.
Dessert & Café Culture	Emergence of coffee and dessert spaces.
Experiential / Night-time Dining	Dining as social recreation coupled with street food culture.

Interpretation: The open-ended responses reflect Surat's growing cosmopolitan and creative food identity. Fusion and Pan-Asian dishes show global cuisine are adapted to suit local tastes. The rise of health-oriented choices, café culture, and experiential dining shows of a more modern and urban dining mindset. Overall, these responses highlight that the city is balancing traditional preferences with openness to new culinary ideas.

Overall Interpretation – Objective 2

The descriptive and inferential analyses together show that digital and social media platforms are playing a major role in how diners in Surat discover and choose restaurants. Instagram and online reviews strongly influence decisions, especially for Fusion and Pan Asian cuisines. The trends suggest a hybrid food culture where innovation and authenticity coexist. Diners are open to new dishes and appealing ambience, they also still value familiar Indian flavours. This indicates that restaurants in Surat can benefit by strengthening their digital marketing, improving the visual appeal of their menus, and creating more engaging dining experiences to attract modern urban guests.

4.3 Objective 3 – Key Service Attributes

Table 4.3 (a): Descriptive Statistics of Service Attributes

Service Attribute	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Speed of Service	4.21	0.69	Guest highly value Speed of Service
Staff Attentiveness	4.45	0.63	This is the most appreciated aspect, showing that guests value attentive staff.
Staff Politeness	4.39	0.61	Polite behaviour is consistently noticed and well received by guests.
Staff Knowledge	4.15	0.73	Staff knowledge is rated positively, though with slightly more variation in responses.
Personalized Service	4.09	0.76	Personalization is liked by guests; But opinion has varied widely in the responses.

Interpretation: Overall, the service-related results show that guests in Surat place strong value on attentive and polite staff, which received the highest ratings. Speed of service and staff knowledge were also rated positively, indicating that guests generally find service efficient and reliable. Personalized service received the lowest mean score and the highest variation among all attributes. This shows that while some guests appreciate personal attention, others may not consider it essential. The mixed responses also suggest that personalization is not consistently experienced across restaurants, making it an area with scope for improvement.

Table 4.3 (b): Reliability Statistics for Service Attributes

Statistic	Value	Interpretation
Cronbach's Alpha	0.907	Excellent internal consistency (> 0.9). It confirms that the five items collectively measure "Service Quality."
N of Items	5	All five service-related items form a reliable scale.

Cronbach's Alpha is a reliability statistic that tells us how well a group of items (questions) measure the same underlying concept. If its value is > 0.90, then the reliability level is excellent.

Interpretation: The reliability test produced a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.907, which reflects excellent internal consistency among the five service-related items. This result shows that respondents viewed speed, attentiveness, politeness, staff knowledge, and personalized service as connected elements of the broader idea of service quality.

Table 4.3 (c): Correlation Between Service Attributes and Recommendation Likelihood

Service Attribute	r (Pearson Correlation)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Speed of Service	0.47	0.012	Moderate positive relationship; faster service improves recommendation likelihood.
Staff Attentiveness	0.58	0.001	Strong and significant relationship; most influential factor.
Staff Politeness	0.55	0.002	Strong positive association with guest satisfaction.
Staff Knowledge	0.44	0.018	Moderate correlation; knowledgeable staff enhance guest trust.
Personalized Service	0.49	0.006	Significant positive impact; personal attention improves loyalty.

Interpretation: The correlation results show that all five service attributes have a positive relationship with guests' likelihood to recommend the restaurant. Staff attentiveness ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) and staff politeness ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$) are the strongest service attributes, indicating that the quality of staff interaction plays the most important role in guest satisfaction. The other attributes i.e. speed of service, staff knowledge, and personalization also showed significant positive correlations, suggesting that these factors further support the overall experience and contribute to guest loyalty.

Overall Interpretation of Objective 3

The analysis clearly shows that service quality is a major factor influencing guest satisfaction and loyalty in Surat's multicuisine restaurants. The descriptive results show that the way staff interact with customers strongly shapes the overall dining experience. The reliability test, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.907 confirms that the five service items together form a coherent and dependable measure of service quality. Correlation analysis finds that all service attributes (especially staff attentiveness and politeness) have a significant positive relationship with guests' likelihood to recommend the restaurant. These results suggest that restaurants that focus on improving key service skills and responsiveness are likely to see higher guest satisfaction, stronger recommendations, and more repeat visits.

Qualitative Analysis

5.1 Overview of Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis is carried out to understand how restaurateurs view guest preferences, service expectations, and emerging trends within Surat's multicuisine restaurant sector. The interview transcripts were uploaded into NVivo, eleven thematic codes were developed that aligned with the research objectives i.e. Guest Preferences, Social Media and Emerging Trends, and Service Attributes. Each transcript was coded according to these themes, allowing the analysis to capture both the number of references and the depth of insights provided by each participant. The matrix coding query further enabled a comparison of how different restaurants reflected these themes, offering a clearer picture of shared patterns and unique perspectives across the industry.

5.2 Theme-Wise Findings and Interpretation

Changing Guest Preferences

This theme captures the shift towards health-conscious dining, including vegan and customized, low-oil preparations. Courtyard (5 references) and Marriott (3 references) have shown this trend strongly. As the Courtyard respondent noted, "Guests often ask not to put oil and prefer vegan options." These patterns suggest that higher-end restaurants are increasingly adapting their menus to meet wellness-oriented expectations, indicating that many diners now view food as part of a broader lifestyle preference. In contrast, traditional establishments such as Hot & Spicy showed limited demand from guests in this direction, suggesting a clear divide between modern, health-focused diners and those who prefer familiar, traditional options.

Definition of the Perfect Dining Experience

Masala Canteen (6 references) and Courtyard (5 references) consistently highlighted ambience, comfort, and presentation as essential parts of a “perfect dining experience.” As Masala Canteen respondent explained, “Dining is not just food, but the feeling guests carry when they leave.” These insights show that experience design is an important differentiator. Guests in the mid to premium segments increasingly value ambience and personal touches alongside the quality of the cuisine.

Emerging Dining Trends

Courtyard showed emerging culinary trends (3 references) strongly, demonstrating more openness to new cuisines and modern plating styles. Marriott (2 references) and Hot & Spicy (2 references) also reflected some level of trend adoption. As the Courtyard respondent mentioned, “People are open to Thai, Japanese, or Pan-Asian food now.” These patterns suggest that sensitivity to food trends is closely linked to a restaurant’s market positioning. Outlets that cater to more cosmopolitan or professional audiences tend to incorporate global influences more quickly.

Impact of social media and bloggers

Both Marriott and Courtyard reported that influencer posts significantly boost their visibility and reach. The other two restaurants stated that they rely more on word-of-mouth than on digital campaigns. Social media serves as an important trust signal for the restaurants that actively engage online.

Service Attributes Valued

All respondents highlighted the importance of speed, politeness, and hygiene as core elements of service. Marriott and Courtyard emphasized on regular staff training and maintaining uniformity in guest interactions. All the four responses indicated that service excellence is the most valued driver of guest satisfaction.

Feedback Mechanisms

This code showed weak presence across all four (only 1–2 mentions). Restaurants in Surat largely rely on informal feedback, reflecting an underdeveloped data-driven service culture.

5.3 Cross-Restaurant Comparison (NVivo Matrix Insights)

Theme	Courtyard	Hot & Spicy (IBC)	Marriott	Masala Canteen (IBC)	Dominant
Changing Guest Preferences	5	0	3	1	Courtyard
Definition of Perfect Dining	5	1	1	6	Masala Canteen
Emerging Dining Trends	3	2	2	1	Courtyard
Service Attributes Valued	3	2	2	3	Shared
Feedback Mechanisms	1	0	1	1	Shared
Impact of Social Media	5	0	2	3	Courtyard

Courtyard shows the greatest adaptability to changing guest preferences, while Marriott shows a more structured and professionally managed service approach. Masala Canteen places strong emphasis on creating an emotional and memorable dining experience, and Hot & Spicy maintains a more traditional and familiar style of operation.

Together, these differences illustrate the clear segmentation within Surat's restaurant landscape, ranging from modern fine dining to experience-focused mid-scale dining and traditional restaurants.

5.4 Summary of Qualitative Insights

The qualitative analysis shows that guests in Surat increasingly value health-conscious dining, pleasant ambience, and elements of personalization. Courtyard and Masala Canteen represent opposite ends of this evolution. Social media plays a strong role in shaping curiosity and influencing choices, mostly among younger and higher-income diners who are more responsive to online content and emerging food trends. Service quality remains top most priority for the diners. Hygiene and polite staff behavior are basic standards that guests consistently look for when choosing a multicuisine restaurant.

Findings And Conclusion

6.1 Overview

This chapter brings together the findings from both the quantitative survey and the qualitative interviews to present a comprehensive understanding of dining preferences in Surat's multicuisine restaurants. We have followed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, where the quantitative data collected from guests were first analyzed using SPSS, and the qualitative insights from restaurateurs were examined afterward through NVivo. Combining the two sets of findings helped us to interpret the patterns that emerged in the data and the reasons behind those patterns. This results in a more complete and meaningful explanation of guest behavior and restaurant practices.

6.2 Objective 1 – Key Factors Influencing Guest Dining Preferences

Quantitative Findings: The survey results show that guests place the highest importance on food quality and service quality when choosing a multicuisine restaurant in Surat. These were followed by ambience and menu variety, both of which also received strong mean scores. While price remains an important consideration, it appears secondary to the overall dining experience.

Qualitative Insights: The interviews with restaurateurs support these patterns. They noted that guests are increasingly conscious about healthier eating, often requesting low-oil, vegan, or lighter meal options. Restaurateurs also mentioned that ambience and presentation have become more influential, as diners associate these features with comfort, value, and modern dining expectations.

Integrated Interpretation: Both data sets indicate that dining preferences in Surat are moving from purely functional eating toward a more experience-driven approach. Guests want food that is healthier and which satisfies taste buds, supported by attentive service and pleasing ambience. Emotional satisfaction and health awareness are now emerging as priorities in addition to traditional priorities such as price and menu variety, shaping a more holistic expectation of what a dining experience should offer.

6.3 Objective 2 – Social Media Influence and Emerging Culinary Trends

Quantitative Findings: More than half of the respondents (52%) indicated that social-media platforms such as Instagram and online reviews influenced their restaurant choices. Fusion cuisine, Pan-Asian dishes, and health-focused menus are popular among younger diners, indicating growing preferences toward global food trends.

Qualitative Insights: The restaurateurs, particularly from Courtyard and Marriott, observed these trends in their interviews. They mentioned that many guests have referred to Instagram posts or influencer content as the reason for visiting. They also highlighted the rising interest in Korean/Thai/Japanese flavors and fusion dishes by the diners who are looking for innovation and visually appealing food experiences.

Integrated Interpretation: These findings show that social-media visibility has become a key factor in restaurant discovery and guest decision-making. Diners rely on online visuals and reviews as trust indicators of food quality and ambience. This digital influence also accelerates the adoption of new culinary trends across the city. As a result, social media not only serves as a marketing tool but also actively shapes consumer expectations within Surat's dining landscape.

6.4 Objective 3 – Service Attributes

Quantitative Findings: The survey results indicate that staff attentiveness, politeness, and menu knowledge received the highest mean scores among all service attributes. The correlation analysis showed that these factors have a strong positive relationship with guests' willingness to recommend the restaurant.

Qualitative Insights: The interview responses also supported these findings. Restaurateurs highlighted that consistent staff training is important for maintaining service standards. They also mentioned that personalized interactions make the service experience an exceptional one.

Integrated Interpretation: These findings confirm that service quality is central to building long-term customer loyalty. Though ambience and promotional efforts attract first-time visitors, it is the service quality like polite behavior, timely assistance, and knowledgeable staff that encourages repeat visits and generates positive word of mouth.

6.5 Overall Synthesis

Both data sources highlight several consistent themes. First, food quality and service quality continue to be the strongest influence on overall guest satisfaction. Second, ambience and presentation add to perceived value and create a sense of emotional comfort for diners. Third, digital engagement through social media plays an important role in shaping guests' initial impressions of the restaurant. Finally, growing health awareness and interest in innovative cuisines reflect the changing preference of diners in Surat.

These insights show that the dining culture in Surat is evolving with the expectations of traditional taste and hospitality and of modern preferences for wellness, experience, and technology.

6.6 Recommendations for Restaurants

1. **Strengthen digital presence:** Restaurants should focus on building an authentic and consistent online presence. Social-media posts, visuals, and reviews need to reflect the actual dining experience so that guest expectations match reality.
2. **Enhance service training:** Regular training sessions on politeness, attentiveness, and personalized guest interaction can significantly enhance service quality and encourage repeat visits.
3. **Design health-conscious menus:** Adding choices such as vegan dishes, low-oil preparations, and light fusion items can help restaurants appeal to the growing number of health-aware diners.
4. **Create structured feedback systems:** Encouraging guests to leave online reviews and monitoring these reviews regularly can help restaurants identify areas for improvement and strengthen their digital reputation.
5. **Balance ambience with affordability:** Though ambience contributes to the dining experience, it should complement the core offering of cost-effectiveness.

6.7 Conclusion

The combined insights from the survey and interviews show the emerging dining preferences in Surat. Guests now look for a complete experience that includes healthier food choices, courteous service, appealing ambience, and reliable digital reputation. Restaurateurs acknowledge these changing expectations and are adapting through improved service standards, innovative menus, and active social-media engagement. Together, these developments highlight the rise of a health-conscious, experience-driven, and digitally connected dining culture in Surat's hospitality sector.

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