

Estudio del servicio al cliente y su relación con el gasto en restaurantes pymes

Study of customer service and the relationship with expenditure in restaurants SMEs

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Abstract

The economic units of the restaurant industry are important because they represent 12.2% of the total businesses in the country and contribute to the generation of two million jobs; unfortunately, they face difficulties such as the scarcity of financial resources, absence in the implementation of technology and informality, which are factors that limit the performance of these relevant companies and cause poor service. The objective of this research work is to study customer service and the relationship with expenditure in restaurants, to determine the variables that allow the continuity and increase of sales. The methodology used was quantitative and the hypothesis test was carried out through a multiple linear regression analysis. The results show that the variables: "treatment received, attitude of the staff and conflict resolution" and "authenticity of the business", are significant in the business competitiveness. In this way, the research provides empirical evidence to the study of small and medium-sized enterprises in the service sector and to decisions-making to make investments.

Key Words: *Service, Restaurants, SMEs*

Resumen

Las unidades económicas de la industria restaurantera son importantes debido a que representan el 12.2% del total de negocios en el país y contribuyen a la generación de dos millones de empleos; lamentablemente, enfrentan dificultades como la escasez de recursos financieros, ausencia en la implementación de tecnología y la informalidad, los cuales son factores que limitan el desempeño de estas empresas y provocan un servicio deficiente. El objetivo de este trabajo de investigación es estudiar el servicio del cliente y la relación con el gasto en los restaurantes, para determinar las variables que permitan la continuidad y el incremento de ventas. La metodología utilizada fue cuantitativa y la prueba de hipótesis se realizó a través de un análisis de regresión lineal múltiple. Los resultados muestran que las variables: "trato recibido, actitud del personal y solución de conflictos" y "autenticidad del negocio", son significativas en la competitividad empresarial. De esta manera la investigación aporta evidencia empírica al estudio de las pequeñas y medianas empresas del sector servicios y a la toma de decisiones para realizar inversiones.

Palabras clave: *Servicio, Restaurantes, PyMEs*

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Introduction

Globalization has caused changes in the global economic and technological environment, therefore competition between companies is more dynamic (Pin et al. 2024) and has reconfigured the structure in the way products as well as services are produced and marketed (Correa, 2020). However, smaller organizations face difficulties that limit their development and sometimes it is complicated to generate competitive advantages that allow them to survive in the markets, due to the scarcity of economic resources and the fact that capacities are limited, especially in food businesses (Correa, Pino & Ortega, 2024).

In Mexico, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are classified according to the number of workers (Patiño et al. 2022), are relevant due to their large number of units and the generation of formal jobs in the localities where they are located (Gutiérrez et al. 2014; Ibarra, González y Demuner, 2017; Becerra-Godínez et al. 2022; Correa et al. 2024). They are an excellent channel for the distribution of wealth and a key element in the reduction of social inequality, however, the environment where they develop conditions the continuity or disappearance of companies in the market (Chaves-Maza y Fedriani, 2023). The study of companies related to gastronomy is important due to the preservation of ancestral knowledge and their cultural diversity (Correa, 2022), in addition to food being an essential part of human beings as a biological need (Gutiérrez, et al. 2014).

The generation of competitive advantages as an efficient service in the production of goods helps small companies increase their sales and create value in the process. SMEs are very heterogeneous due to the diversity of lines of business and business culture of each unit, so their study is complex (Aguilar, 2023). They are considered one of the main engines of development that drive the economy (Véliz et al. 2023) and constitute an important source of income for thousands of families (Correa, 2017, p.14). In this sense, it is relevant the analysis of business competitiveness and the variables that determine economic performance. In the state of Zacatecas, there is no research work that allows us to understand customer service and the relationship with expenditure in restaurants, the contribution that this paper intends to make is to fill the gap that exists in the literature on SMEs.

There is currently a lack of studies on the competitiveness of small-enterprises dedicated to the food sector, such as restaurants. However, this paper analyzes service and expenditure from the customer's perspective because both variables are critical for business development (Correa, 2022). The main objective of this document is to study the relationship of internal variables, through the construct called "customer service" and the relationship with "expenditure" in restaurants, to determine how they influence competitiveness in SMEs in the food and beverage service by means of a linear regression analysis using the least squares technique for hypothesis testing.

The document is structured first with the study of the research problem that includes the analysis of the difficulties faced by restaurants, and then the theoretical framework composed of the definition of concepts; after the context and the theoretical section of Resources and Capacities are developed. Next, the methodology is presented with the measurement of variables used and finally the analysis of the results and the discussion; lastly, there are the conclusions reached and the limitations of the study.

Statement of the Research Problem

With the Covid-19 pandemic, the tertiary sector, specifically the food and beverage businesses, were the most affected business segment with the loss of jobs, the decrease in productive activities and in some cases the closure of businesses (Correa, 2022). This is explained by the social confinement and the decrease in the number of customers as well as commercial relations between organizations (Correa et al. 2024), coupled with the high mortality rate in the service sector (García & López, 2014). Given the importance of restaurant businesses in the local economy, this section analyzes the problems that these economic units are going through, due to the fact that productivity has deteriorated and they do not show any growth (Martínez, 2002, p.15).

Micro and small organizations face a series of difficulties that slow down their competitiveness. In the literature reviewed, it is explained that the insufficient creation of opportunities in formal economy

aggravates unemployment and stimulates creation of companies in the informal sector (García & López, 2014; Correa et al., 2024), as an example are the gordita stalls and torta, tacos establishments and traditional fondas that are generally small and family businesses (Gutiérrez et al. 2014). Operating within the informal economy limits the monitoring and measurement of the production process and the level of income, therefore it is not possible to know the variables that affect competitiveness (Véliz et al 2023). More of than half of the population involved in sector service sector does so in the in the informality, in addition to the fact that most micro-enterprises have low productivity (Cordera, 2018, p.63), poor administrative management, lack budget control and no formal accounting (Martínez & Scherger, 2024).

This type of informal business operates in spaces that are not suitable for the production of the service (García and López, 2014; Patiño et al. 2022) and there is no capacity to enter national markets due to the complex competitive environment and lack of investment. They are difficult to study because of the diversity of segments in which they operate the sizes and variety of businesses (Ivanova, 2024). Another aspect that makes it difficult to study the performance of smaller companies is the unstable economic environment as well as the lack of constant sales, which causes that not enough income is generated (Saavedra, 2020).

Aguilar (2023) provides that the problems of SMEs lie in the management of adequate personnel, since they present difficulties in the way they hire trained employees, coupled with the high rates of staff turnover due to the fact that salaries are generally not well paid, since they are below the national average (Gutiérrez et al. 2014). Not to mention that sometimes jobs in the sector are not covered by social security benefits that are expensive and the service is of very poor quality (Rubio & Baz, p. 66).

Another aspect is that the SMEs have long waiting times in the processes, as well as deficiencies in quality, inefficient working methods and defective products. They generally have low production volumes and the implementation of technology remains a fundamental problem (Correa, 2020). In some cases, micro entrepreneurs do not have training in business administration and have limited levels of schooling, in general they are undercapitalized with serious deficiencies of working capital and investment (Correa, 2017, p.19).

Herrera-González (2021) adds that in customer service companies have deficiencies in process improvements, due to the fact that they do not have an adequate service design. They generally fail to meet the agreed deadlines for the delivery of goods or service, do not carry out market studies and face quality problems in the service they offer, which causes complaints and claims from the customer. This results in deficiencies in customer service management, which has a negative impact on business competitiveness.

For their part Morales-Morales et al. (2023) point out that the problem in small companies lies in the lack of insertion in world markets, due to the fact that trends in globalization are changing. For the authors Pin et al. (2024) SMEs are not interested in the acquisition of knowledge and skills aimed at capacity growth, therefore, there is a lag in process, quality and logistics. Based on the above, we can argue that the study of the micro-business environment is complex due to the various problems that are present in performance, together with the organizational culture that is not oriented to the creation of competitive advantage and business growth.

Specifically in restaurants, for Gutiérrez and others (2014) the main challenge faced by food and beverage companies is competition of identical lines of business that are located in the same area and that have a slow growth, coupled with the fixed operating costs and the high price of raw materials. Another serious problem is that municipal procedures and operating permits, as well as the payment of the state and federal taxes, are time-consuming and bureaucratic.

The authors Ruano-Arcos et al. (2024) point out that restaurants constantly face the obstacle of the scarcity of economic resources and the implementation of innovation, they lack sufficient financial means, infrastructure and qualified labor. Another perspective is that of García & López (2014) who argue that most restaurants do not provide frequent training to staff, which generates turnover; a difficulty that remains an area of opportunity in the service sector.

Concomitantly, since the eighties there has been a diversification of diet, which has an impact on changes in living conditions (Cárdenas, 2010), as an example Alcántara, Calderón & López (2024) point out that 80% of the adult population in Mexico consumes carbonated beverages and has poor eating habits,

which means that 75% of women and 73% of adult men are overweight and obese. This causes the presence of diseases such as diabetes mellitus, kidney problems and heart disease among the population that attends restaurants.

Correa (2022) provides that this type of business modifies the family diet, because it markets products that are not healthy and cause the indiscriminate consumption of resources such as water and electricity. Another perspective is that of Alcántara et al. (2024) who write that there are dietary deficiencies, which alter people's metabolism and increase the presence of chronic non-communicable diseases in the population, explained by the consumption of processed foods such as soft drinks, sauces, dressings, and cookies that are marketed in restaurants.

In administrative terms, there is no mastery of basic processes and an understanding of the importance of competitiveness in businesses, especially in smallest ones. Traditional restaurants such as taco or typical food businesses have difficulties in equipping machinery or equipment and do not have the financial resources to invest (Correa, 2020; Patiño-Delgado et al. 2022). Technological kitchen appliances are insufficient and lack a variety of dishes (Correa, 2022); sometimes customers are dissatisfied because the food does not meet the nutritional balance.

Correa (2022) in his recent research points out that the lack of systems to measure customer satisfaction and service quality remain a fundamental problem, coupled with inefficient communication and the lack of a diner-oriented vision, resulting in a lack of inadequate planning and decision-making that do not allow continuity to internal processes in restaurants. On the other hand, Rubio & Baz (2005, p.22) carry out a very interesting analysis and prove that companies in our country are not competitive because electricity, which is a basic input for production, is expensive, labor and tax regulations are complicated, which sometimes makes them difficult to comply with. Another limitation that slows down competitiveness is that workers do not have the educational levels (Correa, 2020) that allow adding value to the production process, so it is considered that the service in restaurants is deficient.

Another aspect that undoubtedly affects the performance of businesses and sometimes the definitive closure of these units is insecurity and the increase in crime rates (García & López, 2014). Based on the above analysis of the previous section, where the difficulties faced by restaurants were discussed, which causes the stagnation of the development and growth of these companies, generating effects on the local economy; the following research question arises: what is the relationship between customer service and expenditure in restaurants?

Theoretical Section

Conceptual Framework

Business competitiveness in restaurants

SMEs are the backbone of the Mexican economy (Ibarra et al., 2017), therefore studying the concepts associated with competitiveness is relevant; an approximation to the definition of competitiveness appears in 1965, when Igor Ansoff was the first author to study strategy and competitive advantages, key terms in business analysis; to date, its contributions are notable in performance (Correa, 2020), because it is possible to study competitiveness and strategy.

The literature reviewed converges that the definition of competitiveness is a difficult concept to pin down because it has multiple interpretations depending on the segment, which can be industrial, business or individual. Other authors such as Robbins & Coulter (2005, p.464) define the concept of productivity as the production of goods and services divided by inputs required for production. In this research work, productivity and competitiveness are used interchangeably. For their part Ibarra et al. (2017) provide that there is no single definition, however, Porter (2020, p.179) contributes to the study of competitiveness and points out that it is key in determining the success or failure of companies, it is made up for innovations and business culture. Michael Porter defines competitiveness as "improvement in cost, differentiation, implementation of technology and innovations applied in the company's value chain".

The term “competitiveness” is related to the conditions of the environment and the ability of the entrepreneur to generate advantages over his competitors (Rubio & Baz, 2005, p.9); it is a term that corresponds exclusively to companies regardless of their size. Thus, a competitive business is one that manages to develop goods and services, reduce its costs and implement innovations based on its internal resources. Another definition is provided by Rodríguez et al. (2023) who contribute to the study of competitiveness and define it as the ability of a company to systematically maintain competitive advantages through the creation of goods and services by taking advantage of technological, economic and human resources.

Competitiveness according García & López (2014) is the ability of companies to generate competitive advantages in the face of rivalry with other companies and is usually measured by quantitative indicators such as economy profitability, financial leverage (Chaves-Maza & Fedriani, 2023) and qualitative indicators such as: behavior, customer perception and innovation. A classic definition is that of the Oxford Dictionary of Economics, which conceptualizes it as the ability to compete in markets for goods and services (Oxford Reference, 2024). Another interesting concept is provided by Gutiérrez et al. (2014) who define it as the ability to develop attributes for business development and the creation of value that generates competitive advantages over competitors.

For Acerenza (2009, p.16) competitiveness is defined by tangible and intangible factors, for example, in the tangible ones are the product and the Price, while in the intangible elements the quality, innovation, creativity, attitude and aptitude of the entrepreneur stand out. From the previous discussion, in this research work it is defined that competitiveness is determined by the use of internal resources as well as the capabilities that the company has, from their competitive advantages can be obtained on which the strategy and decision-making in the organizations are based. Regarding the definition of restaurants, this document uses the concept proposed by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography [INEGI] (2024) where it is specified that they are generic food preparation businesses for the purpose of selling them.

Customer Service and the expenditure

Companies are important in economic and social relations, because they are a source of employment and satisfy various needs of society through the service they provide, and it can be perceived subjectively by the customer who receives it through experience, trust, quality and satisfaction (Gutiérrez et al. 2014). It is essential in the generation of competitive advantages and is related to the company's marketing (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012), sales, logistics and technology of the organization (Porter, 2020, p. 339).

Customer service can be defined as the intangible activity or benefit that one party offers to another (Gutiérrez et al. 2014). For his part, the author Martínez (2002, p.153) argues that the best service is not necessarily the one that is most attractive to the consumer because the following attributes must be considered: the value for money, appearance of the service and the guarantee valid for the indicated time. The service is provided according to what the customer wants and the degree of satisfaction; in this way, Robbins & Coulter (2005, p.346) state that customer satisfaction and loyalty are explained by employees with a positive attitude who are friendly, optimistic and sensitive, who receive training regarding the importance of customer service as well as the treatment they perceive from employees who are in contact with the customer.

A very interesting analysis can be found with Longenecker et al. (2012, p. 410), who point out that customer service is a business strategy designed to achieve greater profitability and achieve consumer satisfaction through segmentation focused on highly defined customer strata, with the purpose of getting him to return and buy more than once and thus achieve lasting relationship. Once the customer is satisfied by means of excellent service, they can pay and refer them to friends and acquaintances. According to Zárraga, Molina & Corona (2018) in the study of customer service, staff have a lot of influence because they are responsible for presenting the service, the authors argue that exist a relation positive between customer service and satisfaction.

For Kotler & Armstrong (2012, p.233), customer service is an element of the product strategy and usually includes support services that are part of the total offer that increases the value of the products; the authors

mention that post-sale follow-up is the key to building lasting customer relationships. Another more recent perspective is by Herrera-González et al. (2021) who point out that companies must provide customer response in the shortest possible time and with the minimum cost to customer needs.

According to García (2016) customer service is one of the great demands of companies that require adequate attention, in order to make them feel satisfied according to expectations and perceive an adequate monetary value for what they pay. Therefore, in this research article, customer service is determined by the organizational culture and internal process carried out by food and beverage microenterprises to satisfy customer needs through service and thus generate competitive advantages.

The relationship between customer service and expenditure has been studied (Yi & La, 2004; Erfle, Forrester & Yao, 2018; Rahayu, 2023; Cachón 2023); by example the author Rahayu (2023) points out that the customer service is determined by tangible resources, quality, assurance and empathy; for his part Erfle et al. (2018) propose that consumers when purchasing service look at the price and the total expenditure, argue that the total amount of money spent by an individual when ordering food on a restaurant is the result of individual action. For Cachón (2023) customer service is a key and relevant process in restaurants, among the attributes most valued by customer are price, service time and atmosphere. With the above, it is evident that there is a relationship between customer service and expenditure in restaurants. The authors Yi & La (2004) argues that the prior research mainly focused on the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty, find that costumer service does not necessarily result on higher visit to businesses.

Contextual Framework

Restaurants are currently conditioned by adaptation to the environment (Cruz & Miranda, 2019), which is changing and complex. In the countries of the American continent, small and medium-sized enterprises representing 95% of production units can be more competitive due to their ease of adapting to changes (Ibarra et al. 2017). We will begin the contextual section by analyzing the Latin American environment. In Peru, the restaurant sector has a higher frequency of consumers in the Easter period, business manager's point out that 27% use the strategy of good service, 23% the price, 24% the quality of dishes, and 17% the traditional flavor to be more competitive (Farfán et al. 2020).

In the Mexican context, the authors Ibarra et al. (2017) point out that there are approximately 4'150,000 business units, of which 99.8% are SMEs. Recently, INEGI (2024) reports based on data from the 2019 Economic Census, that restaurants represent 12.2% of the total businesses in the country and produce around two million jobs, which means 7.5% of the total jobs generated. Restaurants with a "la carte" or "comida corrida" food preparation services generate high levels of production and employment with few economic units, while tacos, gorditas and tortas businesses have less production and many economic units.

The service sector is very varied and it is estimated that there are 1'899,812 establishments (INEGI, 2024b), which includes hotels, restaurants, hospitals, cinemas, beauty salons and recreational activities; contributes more that 20% of total jobs (Correa, 2022). In our country, this important sector has experienced growth, especially in the restaurant sector (Chávez-Maza & Cavazos-Arroyo, 2024), they are also relevant because boost the competitiveness of companies that are in the same area (Correa, 2022) such as grocery stores, transport companies and sometimes nightclubs.

In a study in the state of Baja California, the authors Cruz & Miranda (2019) provide that the variables the influence the competitiveness of food and beverage companies are the use of technology and customer relationship, they find that 96% of restaurants have bank terminal for customer collection, 83% manage a email account to maintain communication with suppliers, 78% of business use computers for daily restaurants activities and 57% have a reservation service. Regarding the management of the restaurant's image, 83% of businesses have a website, 74% use Facebook on social networks and 61% serve users through chat. In the state of Hidalgo, Figueroa, Cavazos & Cerón (2023) who studied service companies, found that organizations that emphasize customer focus tend to increase revenue through knowledge of the diner's requirements, as well as the competitive strategy used. These three variables are positively and significantly related to organizational performance.

In the Zacatecan context, the author Correa (2022) makes important contributions based on a structural equation model in which he studies the resources and capacities in restaurants; the results indicate that the variables that have an impact on competitiveness are the resources “attachment to customs” and “the value of authenticity”. As well as the capabilities “treatment received, the attitude of the staff towards the customer and the solution of problems” and the variable “infrastructure of the premises, the employee’s clothing and presentation of the menu”. With the above data, the importance of food businesses and their contribution to job creation can be confirmed. To continue with research, the Theory of Resources and Capabilities is analyzed, a current of thought that contributes to the study of companies.

Respect to the context of the restaurant Industry, Cachón (2023) adds that 88% of SMEs prioritize the customer experience and 70% of customers attend business that offer extraordinary service in food and beverages, for his part Correa (2022) finds that in Zacatecas the average numbers of diners are in 30 years old, 63% are women and 90% of customers are professionals, 94% attend with their family and have an expenditure of \$806 Mexican Pesos.

Resource-Based Theory

In this section, the existing knowledge related to food SMEs is discussed with the foundations of the Resource-Based Theory (RBT). According to Fong, Flores & Cardoza (2017), the roots of this theory are located in the contributions of the classic authors of economic thought such as David Ricardo, Joseph Alois Schumpeter y de Edith Penrose at the end of the 50’s of the last century. Penrose in her book “*The Theory of Firm Growth*” (1959), contributed to the study of entrepreneurial resources and capabilities; the document is considered to be the first formal contribution to this current thought.

In the classic literature, Barney (1991) points out that resources are acquired for a specific purpose and are essential to achieve competitive advantages, he adds that they must be heterogeneous, valuable as well as difficult to replace, therefore, the amount of resources that the companies possess are important in competitiveness (Correa, 2017, p 35). Thus, small companies can compete with large ones, especially if they emphasize good customer service and achieve quality by optimizing the use of resources and capabilities in organizations (Longenecker et al. 2012, p.20; Chávez-Maza & Cavazos-Arroyo, 2024). For the authors García & López (2014), companies depend fundamentally on their resources and the way they are managed to obtain competitive advantages that are considered key to the progress and achievement of objectives of restaurant companies.

For his part, Correa (2017, p.33) provide that small companies, given their characteristics, have resources and capacities that are scarce; finds that machinery and equipment are the resources that influence competitiveness, as well as innovation capabilities in product and marketing, findings that are consistent with Correa & González (2017). In recent research, Rodríguez et al. (2023) explain that the RBT is key to achieving competitive advantages, under the approach that internal resources are what allow companies to select opportunities. The same authors in their study in restaurants in the state of Colima, through an analysis of structural equations confirm the existence of the relationship between internal business capacities and competitiveness, finding as variables the management of human capital, quality and financial capabilities.

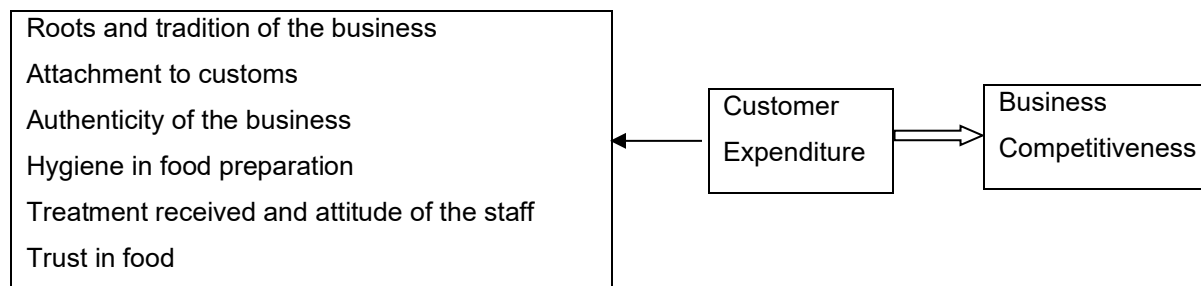
Other RBT approaches that measure customer perception were found in the literature, such as those presented by Becerra-Godínez et al. (2022), who study customer service through the DINESERV instrument applied in restaurants in the state of Aguascalientes; they found that the reliability, responsiveness and empathy, appearance and clothing of the staff are elements that generate competitive advantages. Another contribution in the state of Baja California in restaurants is made by García & López (2014) who find that innovation, human resources, quality assurance, accounting, finance and ICTs are variables that have an impact on business competitiveness and determine customer loyalty.

Considering the above, Ivanova (2024) points out that the implementation of innovations helps to raise the levels of competitiveness and efficiency in companies, likewise, she contributes that strategic decisions determine the competitiveness of business. Other perspectives indicate that competitiveness in restaurants

is based on the price, quality and perceived value of the product (Correa, 2002) and in the marketing innovations that it makes in business (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012; Chávez-Maza & Cavazos-Arroyo, 2024).

Longenecker et al. (2012, p.85) point out that in order to evaluate the company internally, it is necessary to understand the difference between resources and capabilities. Resources are the inputs that can be used in the business and are classified into tangible and intangible (Correa, 2017, p.36) and capabilities are the integration of resources to achieve a competitive advantage. Another contribution to the RBT is by Correa (2022), who carries out an empirical analysis based on this theory in restaurants through a structural equation model and studies resources such as trust in food, hygiene in food preparation, roots and traditions of the business, adherence to customs and the value of authenticity. Capacities are classified into infrastructure; composed of the clean bath, business lighting and ease of parking, accessibility, staff efficiency, treatment received, attitude towards the customers and problem solving. To conclude this section, according to Cruz & Miranda (2019), in SMEs, competitive advantage is explained through entrepreneurial capabilities and customer service, collaboration with suppliers, faster service, the use of applications for reservations and customer databases. Nasution & Rafiki (2018) corroborate that customer service is positively related to the performance of the organization. Based on the past studies, theoretical framework for this study is developed as follow (figure 1):

Figure 1. A Hypothesis Framework
Resources of customer service



Methodology

The study was quantitative, correlational, longitudinal and non-exploratory (Hernández, Fernández & Baptista, 2010, p.119), the non-probabilistic sampling, determined by convenience, because there are no data on the number of customers who visit restaurants that allow estimating a sample size. For data collection the sequence was as follows. First, a pilot test was applied to calculate the accuracy of the instrument and test the questionnaire (Ramírez, 2015, p. 25), once tuned, it was carried out through a questionnaire based on the review of literature and was applied personally to customers to ensure the quality of the information and avoid errors of interpretation. The study was carry carried out in two restaurants in the metropolitan area of Zacatecas, the demarcation is composed of the capital city Zacatecas and the magical town of Guadalupe to customers who attend to taste food and who agreed to answer the questionnaire, in the period from November 2019, 2020 to July 30, 2024. These businesses were selected for their location, the diversity of food, price and service that offer, as well as tradition and for large influx of customers.

Variables Measurement

The instrument was designed with a dimension that is called "customer service" composed of six questions, which are the independent variables (X). A single question for the dependent variable (Y) called "customer spending" based on Robbins & Coulter (2005, p.466) who argue that competitiveness is measured by the sales revenue that a company receives when it sells the service.

The questionnaire was collected personally through interviews and a Microsoft form. The answers were evaluated using a five-choice Likert scale where: 1=never, 2 =almost never, 3 =rarely, 4 =almost always and 5 =always (Hernández et al. 2010, p.247). The total number of people who answered correctly was two hundred and twenty-six. For the independent variables of customer service (X), the scales indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement of each of the questions answered by the client (Malhotra, 2008, p.274). The dependent variable (Y) was measured with a metric scale by means of the expenditure in Mexican pesos (\$) that the customer makes during the visit to the restaurant (Robbins & Coulter, 2005 p. 466; Correa, 2017, p.54).

For the hypothesis test, the statistical technique of multiple linear regression was developed, which aims to find which variables of the model exert influence on customer spending to enable the study of the relationship between the dependent variable (Y) and the independent predictor variables (X) (Mendenhall, 1990, p.493; Spiegel & Stephen, 2002, p.288; Ruiz, 2015, p.63). According to Malhotra (2008, p.542), this type of analysis is a flexible procedure that allows to know the association relationship between the metric dependent variable (Y) and the independent variables (X).

The data were analyzed in the SPSS V.20 statistical package, in the first instance the internal consistency was evaluated by means of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, and then the model was evaluated corroborating the predictive capacity. To explain the results of the multiple regression analysis, the general form of the $Y=f(x)$ model is used, according to Spiegel & Stephens (2002, p. 4), resulting in the follow equation:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \beta_6X_6 + \mu \quad (1)$$

The variable (Y) is calculated by means of equation two:

$$\hat{Y} = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + b_6X_6 + \mu \quad (2)$$

Where: \hat{Y} = predicted value; Y = customer spend on each visit to the restaurant;

a: represents the intersection; b: regression coefficients, according to the results of the observations;

$X_1 - X_6$: these are the variables of the construct "customer service"; μ = random error term.

In the multivariate regression model, the least squares technique is used to estimate the parameters in such a way that the error is reduced (Spiegel & Stephens, 2002, p. 287; Malhotra, 2008, p.553). On the other hand Render, Stair & Hanna (2012, p.118) point out that the best regression line is the one that has the minimum sum of the squares of errors. In our case, the dependent variable "y" is the customer's expenditure on consumption when visiting a restaurant and "customer service" measured by internal resources which are shown in table 1.

Table 1
Operationalization of Resources and Capacities variables

Variable	Indicator
Y = dependent (metric variable)	Customer spending on restaurant visit
X ₁ = Roots and traditions of the business	In a restaurant, do you consider the roots and tradition in the locality important?
X ₂ = Attachment to customs	How relevant is the preparation of typical food with adherence to regional customs?
X ₃ = Authenticity of the business	How transcendent is the value of authenticity in the restaurant's gastronomy?
X ₄ = Hygiene in food preparation	When you go to a restaurant, do you perceive hygiene in food preparation?
X ₅ = Treatment received and attitude of the staff	Do staff efficiency, staff attitude, and problem-solving take you into account when attending a restaurant?
X ₆ = Trust in food	Generally speaking, do restaurants give you confidence in food?

Note. Variables and indicators.

For the hypothesis test, the model establishes the null hypothesis that the variables considered in equation two, do not influence customer spending, which in our case can be interpreted as the competitiveness of the restaurant, based on Correa's model (2022a) in equation three:

$$H_0: \beta_1=0; \beta_2=0, \beta_3=0, \beta_4=0; \beta_5=0, \beta_6=0 \quad (3)$$

Where:

H₀: Customer service resources are not relational by the customer's expenditure in the restaurants.

Results and Discussion

Based on the information collected, table two shows the descriptive statistics of the people who answered the questionnaire, includes the age, gender, education of the customer, the people with whom they frequent the restaurant, the means of transport used; as well as the reason for attending the restaurant, the consumption expenditure and finally the range of investment per customer.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of customers

Average age	30 years
Age range	18 – 70 years
Gender	Male 39% Female 61%
Schooling	Secondary 1.33% Baccalaureate 10.18% Professional 88.49%
Restaurant assistance	Couple 16.82% Friends 20.35% Family 62.83%
Means of transport used	Public transport 8.40% Taxi 4.87%

	Own car 86.73%
Reason for visiting the restaurant	Getting to know the gastronomy 18.15% Leisure 28.32% Work / Business 4.42% Coexistence 49.11%
Average investment in consumption when attending restaurants	\$812 Mexican pesos / \$42.67 US Dollar*
Investment range per client	\$80 - \$4,000 Mexican pesos / 4.02 – 210.19 USD*

*Exchange rate: 19.03 MXN/USD

As can be seen in table two, the people who attend the restaurants are young people with an average age of 30 years, 61% are women and 39% men, 88.49% of the customers are professionals. 62.83% of customers attend the restaurant in the company of their family, 86.73% of diners travel in their own vehicle. 49.11% of customers go to a restaurant to spend time with their family. The average investment per person is \$812 Mexican pesos in consumption, which is equivalent to \$42.67 US dollars. The minimum that each customer invests is \$80 Mexican pesos equivalent to \$4.02 US dollars, and the most spent on food and beverages are \$4,000, which is equal to \$210.19 US dollars.

To continue with the analysis of results, the hypothesis test is presented, where the multiple regression analysis technique was used. In the model the independent variables are the services (X) and the dependent is the customer's expenditure on consumption (Y). Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which is very close to the recommended .70. The result is presented in table three.

Table 3
Calculation of the reliability coefficient

Number of Dimensions Elements	Cronbach's alpha
6	.676

Table four shows the correlation and determination coefficients, as well as the level of significance of the model.

Table 4
Model overview

R	R ²	Std. error of the estimate	Degrees of freedom	F	Significance	Durbin-Watson
.221	.049	619.48	225	1.882	.085*	1.892

* = $p < .10$

The table above (4) shows the correlation coefficient (R) between the analyzed variables of the research model that expresses the strength of the linear relationship (Render et al. 2012, p.121), followed by the coefficient of determination (R²), this value indicates the percentage of variation between the variable "expenditure when attending the restaurant" and the independent variables "customer service" of the research model described on table one. The statistical value F shows the validity of the six variables included in the study. The Durbin-Watson statistic contrasts the autocorrelation between the residue corresponding to each observation, as the value is close to 2, the residuals are uncorrelated, therefore the data comply with the independence of residuals. The results of the hypothesis test are presented in table 5.

Table 5
Hypothesis testing

Variable	B	error	Beta	T	Sig.	Collinearity	
						VIF	Tolerance
Constant	88.504	465.923	-	.190	.850	-	-
X ₁ Roots and tradition of the business	26.976	53.546	.039	.504	.615	1.376	.727
X ₂ Attachment to customs	-27.895	58.988	-.041	-.473	.637	1.712	.584
X ₃ Business authenticity	-114.923	63.855	-.151	-1.800	.073**	1.615	.619
X ₄ Hygiene food preparation	94.024	61.229	.108	1.536	.126	1.133	.883
X ₅ Treatment received, staff attitude, and conflict resolution	155.274	80.524	.132	1.928	.055**	1.086	.920
X ₆ Food confidence	5.272	74.869	.005	.070	.944	1.182	.846

** = $p < .10$

The standardized value of Beta (β) is a coefficient that allows determining the strength in the dependent variable. Based on the above analysis, table 5 shows the B coefficient, which presents a constant value of 88.50 for “the customer’s expenditure on his visit to the restaurant”. The result presents a positive symbol and indicates the projection of expenditure of financial resources, although the variable is not significant and the error term is high. This can be explained because consuming in a restaurant can be considered a luxury and people currently have other priorities such as stocking the pantry with basic food or the education of their children, and in some situations the investment is destined to health care. Regarding the collinearity test, it was carried out through the variance inflation factor (VIF), which serves to identify the presence of linear relationships between the variables of the independent model (Aguilar, 2024), tolerance values are greater than 1; the VIF (8.104) is less than 10, so there is evidence that there is no collinearity between the independent variables studied.

Continuing with the analysis of the results, the statistical “t” is a test that contrast the null hypothesis, therefore, the variables roots and tradition of the business (X₁), attachment to customs (X₂), hygiene in food preparation (X₄) and trust in food (X₆), are not significant in the competitiveness of restaurants in the research model, so H₀ is accepted, since it has no relationship with the expenditure made by the diner. Therefore, these described variables are excluded from the analysis and we only found two variables that influence competitiveness as shown in table 6.

Table 6
Significant variables of the model

Variable	B	Std, Error of the estimate	Beta	T	Significance
Constant	88.504	465.923	-	.190	.850
X ₃ Business authenticity	-114.923	63.855	-.151	-1.800	.073**
X ₅ Treatment received, staff attitude, and conflict resolution	155.274	80.524	.132	1.928	.055**

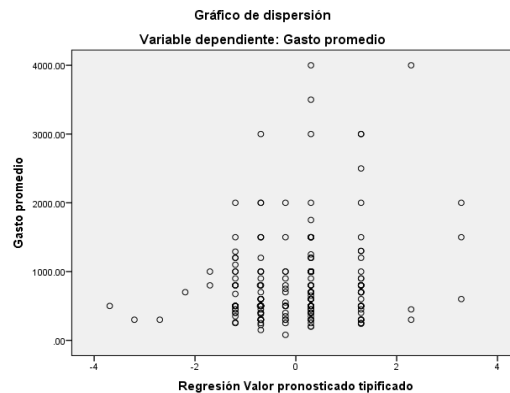
** = $p < .10$

In table 6, the results show that the variable (X₃) called “business authenticity” ($p < .10$), is significant in the competitiveness of food and beverage business, the prediction of the regression lines is $y = 88.50 -$

114.92= -26.42. The sign is negative, this result indicates that the customer can visit a business that is authentic and offers innovation, but is not willing to increase the expense. Therefore, to attract customers, the authenticity of the restaurant is a key element. Thus; business must implement innovations in the product (Correa & González, 2017) since this variable is significant in small businesses.

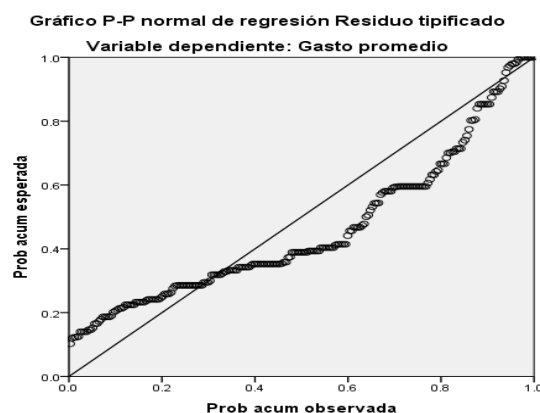
The second variable that allows the diner to increase spending is the treatment received, the attitude of the staff and the solution of problems (X_5) ($p < .10$). The prediction of the regression line is $y=88.50+155.27x$. The above data indicates that each customer can spend up to \$243.77, which is equivalent to \$12.80 US dollars, including drinks, when the service is adequate and the needs are met optimally (Longenecker et al., 2012, p.410). This finding is consistent with those reported by the authors Becerra-Godínez et al. (2022) who report that reliability, competent and trained staff are relevant elements to increase revenue in restaurants. With findings described above, we answer the research question. For the verification of the estimated model, the hypothesis of linearity, homoscedasticity and normality are contrasted. The first condition that the dependent and independent variables must meet is the linearity of their relationship, which is verified through the graphs of residuals, where it can be seen that it does comply with the linearity, which do not show a marked pattern, as can we see in residual dispersion on figure 2:

Figure 2
Residual dispersion



The second assumption that the data must meet is that of homoscedasticity, which is detected by the residual plot, which contrast the distinct variance, and for the hypothesis of multivariable normality of the error term, normal behavior can be observed, as shown in figure 3.

Figure 3
Typified residual



Conclusions

Using the Theoretical Foundations or Resources and Capabilities in food and beverage service small enterprises, through the linear regression statistical hypothesis test, the variables that can increase the customer's expenditure on their visit to the restaurant were estimated. The analysis allows us to know the variables that are significant in "customer service" and are determined by the treatment received, the attitude of the staff and the resolutions of conflicts ($T=1.928$), as well as the authenticity of the business ($T=-1.800$). It is concluded that these resources and capabilities are relevant in the competitiveness of restaurants, especially in small ones.

According to the analysis and the interpretation of the results, the research model is expected to contribute to the study of SME management, with the optimization of resources and eliminating duplication of activities (Martínez, 2002, p. 15), to improve coordination and direct efforts towards a common purpose (Chiavenato, 2006, p.149) and companies in the food and beverage services sector can be more competitive and make it easy to develop internal capabilities, with the purpose of improving customer service and increasing sales so that more and well-paid jobs can be generated.

The creation of competitive advantage in food and beverage business is done through the provision of an adequate service (Longenecker et al. 2012; Kotler & Armstrong, 2012) and capabilities: treatment received; staff attitude and conflict resolution. This is related to the methods of production and organization in companies; which agrees with what was stated by Ibarra et al. (2017). Regarding the authenticity of the business, it is required that there is a link with companies in the tourism sector such as artisanal companies (Correa, 2017) and promotion with larger organizations in the primary sector such as the mining industry or with commercial companies (Gutiérrez et al. 2014) to take advantage of this variable, it is necessary to disseminate the dishes that make it unique or the differentiation of typical stews of the local gastronomy.

In order for micro and small enterprises to be competitive, the economy must be highly efficient and productive. Based on the results to increase competitiveness; SMEs in the food service sector must constantly train staff in customer service issues as well as in conflict management and resolution. These results are very consistent with Correa (2022) who finds that staff effectiveness is a significant variable in business competitiveness, so organizations must orient long-term decision-making towards the knowledge economy in order to be productive (Rubio & Baz, 2005, p.9).

Finally, it is concluded that restaurants should focus on monitoring the production process and showing the customer their attributes of authenticity such as the elaboration of the product and the sequence of its processes as happens in large companies. According to Ruano-Arcos et al. (2024) small entrepreneurs must innovate, undertake, and tolerate risk to be more competitive understanding the needs of customer (Longenecker et al. 2012, p.20; Morales-Morales et al. 2023; Chávez-Maza & Cavazos-Arroyo, 2024). The competitive environment that characterizes large organizations requires small businesses to make a continuous effort to offer services according to the needs of clients, with the implementation of technological tools (Correa, 2020) and the making of investments according to the possibilities of each business to increase competitive capacity, grow and generate more jobs.

The limitations of this research lie in the development and validation of the measurement scale of the construct "customer service", because variables such as price, quality of the product service, business financing and technology implementation are not included for the study, therefore, it is suggested to include these variables in future studies. Regarding the measurement of competitiveness, the analysis through customer spending is limited. For future research, it is convenient to deepen the study of competitiveness and customer service in other types of companies and include the variables that were not studied in this research in business such as grocery stores or stationeries to contrast the results.

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