

### THE INFLUENCE OF SERVICE AND TASTE OF CAFE UNI IN PADANG PARIAMAN

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#### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the quality of service and the taste of food at Cafe Uni, a café that serves traditional regional dishes with authentic interior design and cultural atmosphere. The focus of the research is on how Cafe Uni maintains taste consistency despite the challenge of limited availability of spices, as well as how its service strategies create customer satisfaction and loyalty. This approach is relevant given that culture-based culinary businesses have great potential to attract market interest while preserving tradition. The research employed a qualitative approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews with the owner and staff of Cafe Uni, as well as direct on-site observations. Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive qualitative method, linking field findings to relevant theories such as the SERVQUAL model for service quality, the expectancy-disconfirmation model for customer satisfaction, and the concept of experiential marketing for dining experiences. The findings reveal that Cafe Uni successfully preserves authentic flavors by sourcing spices directly from their regions of origin, either through staff traveling home or via cargo shipments. The quality of ingredients is maintained through proper temperature-controlled storage to preserve their color and texture. Friendly, smiling, and interactive service creates a welcoming atmosphere for customers, even for those dining alone. The integration of authentic taste, quality service, and cultural ambiance significantly enhances customer satisfaction and fosters repeat visits. This study provides practical insights for regional culinary business owners in managing unique dining experiences to remain competitive in the market.

**Keywords:** service quality, taste, customer satisfaction, traditional regional cuisine, dining experience

#### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kualitas pelayanan dan cita rasa makanan di Cafe Uni, sebuah cafe yang menyajikan menu khas daerah dengan konsep interior dan atmosfer budaya yang autentik. Fokus penelitian diarahkan pada bagaimana Cafe Uni menjaga konsistensi cita rasa meskipun terkendala ketersediaan rempah-rempah, serta bagaimana strategi pelayanan yang diterapkan mampu menciptakan kepuasan dan loyalitas pelanggan. Pendekatan ini relevan mengingat kuliner berbasis budaya memiliki potensi besar dalam menarik minat pasar sekaligus melestarikan tradisi. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam kepada pemilik dan pegawai Cafe Uni, serta observasi langsung di lokasi. Analisis data dilakukan dengan metode deskriptif kualitatif, mengaitkan temuan lapangan dengan teori-teori yang relevan, seperti model SERVQUAL untuk kualitas pelayanan, expectancy-disconfirmation model untuk kepuasan pelanggan, dan konsep experiential marketing untuk pengalaman bersantap. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Cafe Uni berhasil mempertahankan cita rasa autentik dengan mendatangkan rempah-rempah langsung dari daerah asal, baik melalui staf yang pulang kampung maupun pengiriman kargo. Kualitas bahan baku dijaga melalui penyimpanan pada suhu yang sesuai, sehingga warna dan tekstur tetap segar. Pelayanan*

*yang ramah, penuh senyum, dan interaktif mampu menciptakan suasana nyaman bagi pelanggan, bahkan bagi yang makan sendirian. Integrasi antara cita rasa, pelayanan, dan atmosfer budaya terbukti meningkatkan kepuasan pelanggan serta mendorong niat kunjung ulang. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan praktis bagi pelaku usaha kuliner daerah dalam mengelola pengalaman bersantap yang unik untuk bersaing di pasar yang kompetitif.*

**Kata kunci:** *kualitas pelayanan, cita rasa, kepuasan pelanggan, kuliner khas daerah, pengalaman bersantap*

## **Introduction**

Indonesian cuisine is one of the culinary riches that is recognized by the world for its strong, unique, and authentic taste. This richness of flavor was born from the combination of various spices that are abundant in the archipelago, such as galangal, ginger, kencur, candlenut, turmeric, chili, and other spices that are processed through the typical cooking techniques of each region. Indonesian cuisine is not just a food offering, but also a form of reflection of the diversity of cultures and traditions from Sabang to Merauke. Each region has different culinary characteristics, which are born from history, geographical conditions, and local customs. This culinary diversity is not only enjoyed by the Indonesian people, but has also penetrated the international arena. The presence of Indonesian restaurants and cafes in various countries is proof that Indonesian cuisine has global appeal. This phenomenon encourages the emergence of various culinary businesses in regions that carry local concepts, one of which is Cafe Uni in Padang Pariaman, which raises the typical taste of the region as its main attraction.

Cafe Uni is an example of a culinary business actor who has succeeded in combining the quality of food taste with an authentic cultural experience. Not only offering regional specialties, this café also presents a cultural atmosphere through traditional music played on the spot. The presence of cultural elements in the dining experience is an important factor in creating consumer satisfaction. In line with the opinion of Prahalad & Ramaswamy, (2004), customer satisfaction is an emotional response that arises when the performance of a product or service exceeds customer expectations. In the context of a café, this satisfaction can be obtained through a combination of delicious taste, friendly service, and a supportive atmosphere. With the increasing number of people living and working in an area, culinary business opportunities will be increasingly wide open. Not only through cafes and restaurants, but also through shops or supermarkets that sell regional foodstuffs, which can ultimately encourage opportunities for Indonesian foodstuffs to the international market.

The theory used in this study refers to the popular service quality theory known as the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988). This model assesses service quality based on five main dimensions, namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Afaf, 2024). In the context of a café, high-quality service can increase customers' positive perception of the business and encourage their loyalty. In addition, this study also utilizes the concept of customer satisfaction put forward by Keller & Kotler, (2006), which states that

satisfaction is the level of a person's feeling after comparing the perceived performance of the product or service with the expectations they have. The relationship between service quality, taste, and customer satisfaction is the main focus of this study, considering that the culinary industry relies heavily on positive impressions built through direct interaction with consumers.

A number of previous studies have discussed the relationship between service quality, taste, and customer satisfaction in the context of the culinary business. First, research by Zhong & Moon, (2020) on traditional restaurants in Yogyakarta shows that food taste and service quality have a significant effect on customer satisfaction, with taste having a more dominant influence. Second, a study by Maranatha dkk., (2023) on cultural-themed cafes in Bali found that a strong cultural atmosphere can increase customer satisfaction, but slow service is an obstacle that must be fixed. Third, research by Hamzah Muchtar dkk., (2024) A typical Padang restaurant in Jakarta revealed that taste consistency is the main key to retaining customers, followed by staff friendliness. Fourth, the results of Fauzi dkk., (2021) research on coffee shops in Bandung confirms that excellent service quality is able to increase positive perceptions of the taste of food and beverages, even though objectively there is no significant difference in the quality of ingredients. Fifth, a study by Alwin & Rahmadanik, (2023) Fusion restaurants in Surabaya show that menu innovation combined with friendly service is able to create a unique dining experience and increase repeat visits.

Although there have been many studies that have examined this topic, research on Cafe Uni has a number of differences that are both differentiating as well as new research. The first difference lies in the context of the location, where Cafe Uni operates in the Padang Pariaman area, which is thick with Minangkabau culture, so that the influence of culture on the dining experience becomes more prominent. The second difference is the approach used, which is to combine the analysis of service quality with the taste of food in a balanced manner, while most previous studies tend to focus on one aspect. A third difference is the particular attention to the integration of regional music as part of the dining experience, which has rarely been studied in depth in previous research. The novelty of this research lies in the effort to connect the quality of service and taste of food with cultural elements that are presented consistently, thus providing a new perspective for the study of customer satisfaction in the culinary sector based on local traditions.

The urgency of this research is based on the rapid development of the culinary industry in Indonesia, especially businesses that promote local cultural wealth. With the increasing popularity of Indonesian cuisine abroad, business actors are required to maintain and improve the quality of services and tastes to be able to compete, both in the domestic and international markets. In the local context, this research is important to provide strategic input for business actors such as Cafe Uni to retain old customers while attracting new customers. Furthermore, the findings of this study are

expected to be a reference for culinary businesses in other regions in managing a combination of service quality, taste, and cultural elements to create a competitive advantage.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the quality of service at Cafe Uni, identify the taste of the food served, and examine the relationship between the two aspects in shaping customer satisfaction. This research also aims to provide a comprehensive overview of strategies that can be carried out to minimize the negative impact of suboptimal service and taste, so as to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. With this approach, it is hoped that the research will not only make a theoretical contribution to the study of service management and customer satisfaction, but also provide practical benefits for the development of tradition-based culinary businesses in Indonesia.

### **Research Methods**

The research method used is a qualitative method carried out by researchers to explore information. In data collection, the techniques used are interviews and direct observations (Juniatmoko, 2019). The data collection technique through interviews is carried out by researchers to dig up information dig up data from individuals who will be used as sources to obtain information. The method of data collection by interviews provides questions directly to consumers at Cafe Uni in Padang Pariaman. The interview will be conducted in May 2025. This research focuses on the taste and quality of service provided by Cafe Uni to consumers, and how to develop these cafes and restaurants. In collecting information, in addition to using the direct interview method by giving several questions to the source, the researcher also searches for information via the internet through journals and books on the internet that are related to the research, so that the data or information obtained can be in accordance with the research. Indonesian cuisine has a taste that is identical to its spices, so it has its attraction. By going to Khasanya, Indonesian cuisine is popular, famous to foreign countries.

### **Results And Discussion**

These existing Indonesian cafes and restaurants are starting to be popular with the local community, foreign tourists, and people who live here who miss regional cuisine. Regional cuisine is still the number 1 food for the people here; they prefer regional cafes compared to local restaurants or other modern restaurants. The reason is that the taste certainly does not disappoint with the distinctive and unique taste of the spices. With its uniqueness, Indonesian cuisine is loved and famous abroad (Putri & Najib, 2024). At that time, café and restaurant owners wanted to have an association, so that they could stay in touch to establish a family in the region and could enjoy regional food when they missed regional cuisine, so finally the idea came up to make a Uni café in the region.

Based on the results of interviews conducted with the owners and employees of Café Uni, it was revealed that the background of the establishment of this café began with the desire to have a gathering place that could present the experience of enjoying regional specialties. The owner of Cafe

Uni specifically chose an interior with a very thick feel of regional culture, so that when consumers visit, they can feel the atmosphere as if they were directly in their hometown. In terms of taste management, employees revealed that the biggest challenge is the availability of authentic spices that are difficult to find at the café location. To overcome this, they have a special strategy, which is to bring spices directly from the area of origin when there are staff returning to the village or deliver them via cargo services. In addition, maintaining the quality of raw materials is a top priority, especially in terms of color and texture, to keep it fresh when served to customers. This effort is carried out by storing foodstuffs in a room with a temperature that suits the needs of each type of material.

In terms of service, Cafe Uni employees emphasized the importance of creating a comfortable atmosphere for customers. They apply a friendly service method, full of smiles, and try to talk to consumers so that they don't feel awkward, even when eating alone. This approach is believed to be able to provide a pleasant dining experience, encourage customer satisfaction, and build a desire to return to Cafe Uni in the future. The results of this study show that Cafe Uni's success in attracting attention and retaining customers lies not only in the quality of authentic food taste, but also in the management's ability to create a well-rounded dining experience. The café owner explained that the main motivation in establishing Cafe Uni was to create a gathering space for people who wanted to enjoy regional food while feeling the atmosphere that represented their hometown. The selection of interiors with local cultural nuances is an important part of this strategy, so that customers not only get typical food, but also feel an atmosphere that strengthens the cultural identity of the region. This is in line with the concept of experiential marketing put forward by Serra-Llobet dkk., (2022), where consumer experience is built through sensory, emotional, and cognitive stimuli that are able to form a deep impression of a brand or place of business.

In terms of taste management, the results of interviews with employees revealed that the main challenge is to maintain flavor consistency in the midst of a limited supply of original spices. Spices are an important element in shaping the authentic taste of regional food, so the strategy to bring them directly from the area of origin, either through staff returning home or through cargo delivery, is an effective solution. This strategy is in line with Kotler, (2020) view of product quality, where one of the indicators of product quality is conformity with the specifications expected by customers. In the culinary context, such conformity includes taste, aroma, texture, and appearance that is consistent with the original standards. Consistency of taste is a crucial factor because customers who have had positive experiences tend to compare their next visit to previous experiences, so significant differences in taste can lower their satisfaction levels.

In addition to taste, this study also identifies that the quality of raw materials is very well maintained through proper storage management. Café employees explained that food ingredients are

stored according to the temperature and conditions needed so that their color, texture, and freshness are maintained. This reflects the application of food quality management principles that emphasize the importance of controlling temperature, humidity, and storage techniques to maintain product quality until it reaches consumers. According to the theory of Total Quality Management (TQM) adapted to the culinary sector Pressman & Wildavsky, (1984), the quality of food products is the result of all controlled processes, starting from the selection of raw materials, processing, to presentation.

The quality of service is another aspect that receives special attention from Cafe Uni. Based on the results of the interview, employees revealed that they apply service methods that always prioritize friendliness, a smile, and active communication with customers. This approach aims to eliminate awkwardness, especially for customers who come alone. These findings are in line with the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), which emphasizes five main dimensions of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (empathyv (Akmal dkk., 2023)). In the case of Cafe Uni, the dimensions of empathy and responsiveness seem to stand out as the staff seeks to understand the customer's condition and respond to it with a friendly attitude. This not only increases customer satisfaction but also strengthens the emotional connection between the customer and the café.

The study also found that the presence of cultural elements such as regional music played in cafes enriches the customer's dining experience. Traditional music serves as a cultural atmosphere amplifier, which is presented through interior design and food menus. According to Adam dkk., (2021) servicescape theory, physical environmental elements such as layout, décor, lighting, and music can influence customers' perception of service quality and comfort. In the context of Cafe Uni, the integration of regional music into the café environment serves as an emotional stimulus that strengthens the brand identity while differentiating it from competitors who do not consistently prioritize cultural aspects.

When compared to previous research, these findings show a consistent pattern while introducing new perspectives. Zhong & Moon, (2020) research in a traditional restaurant in Yogyakarta shows that taste has a more dominant influence on satisfaction than service, while at Cafe Uni, the two are both strategically managed and complementary. The study of Maranatha dkk., (2023) in Bali highlighted the strength of the cultural atmosphere but identified weaknesses in the speed of service, while Cafe Uni seemed to be able to maintain the quality of service without sacrificing the cultural atmosphere. Hamzah Muchtar dkk., (2024) research at Padang restaurant in Jakarta emphasizes the importance of taste consistency, which is also found at Cafe Uni, but this study adds a new dimension in the form of a unique spice logistics strategy. Fauzi dkk., (2021) findings at a Bandung coffee shop associate service with taste perception, in line with the finding that

at Cafe Uni, staff friendliness strengthens the overall culinary experience. Meanwhile, Alwin & Rahmadanik, (2023) at a fusion restaurant in Surabaya highlighted menu innovation as a differentiating factor, while Cafe Uni relied more on the authenticity of the menu as the main selling point.

From the perspective of customer satisfaction, the expectancy-disconfirmation model theory Aiken dkk., (2021) It is relevant to explain the phenomenon in Cafe Uni. This model states that satisfaction occurs when perceived performance exceeds customer expectations. Based on research findings, Cafe Uni customers get more than just good food; They get a whole cultural experience, from authentic tastes, regional interiors, traditional music, to warm interactions with staff. This combination creates added value that exceeds the customer's initial expectations, thus driving their intention to return for a visit. Another interesting finding is how Cafe Uni is taking advantage of market opportunities from the growing number of locals and immigrants in the region. By offering authentic regional specialties, Cafe Uni not only meets the emotional needs of customers who long for the taste of their hometown, but also attracts new customers who want to try a different culinary experience. This can be analyzed using niche marketing theory (Keller & Kotler, 2006), where cafes position themselves in a special market segment that focuses on culinary based on regional culture, thus being able to build strong customer loyalty.

From the results of this study, it can also be concluded that the success of Cafe Uni is not only the result of a single factor, but a combination of various elements that support each other. Consistent taste is the main foundation, the quality of raw materials is maintained, friendly service builds emotional bonds, while the cultural atmosphere is a unique differentiator. This combination is in line with the concept of holistic marketing, which emphasizes that all aspects of the business must be integrated to create optimal customer value. In the culinary industry, this integration means aligning product quality, service, atmosphere, and brand identity. By referring to various theories and comparing the findings with previous research, it is clear that Cafe Uni has successfully harnessed the power of local culture as an effective differentiation strategy. However, challenges remain, especially in maintaining consistency in spice supply and maintaining service standards amid the potential for an increase in the number of customers. Therefore, the sustainability of this strategy requires a strong commitment from management to continue to maintain quality on all fronts, as well as innovations that still respect the authenticity of the culture carried.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results of research and discussion, it can be concluded that Cafe Uni's success in attracting and retaining customers lies in the combination of authentic food taste, friendly service quality, and strong cultural atmosphere. The background of the establishment of this café is driven by the desire to present a gathering place that is able to provide a typical regional dining experience,

not only through the menu served but also through interior design and traditional music that builds an atmosphere like being in your hometown. This strategy is able to create emotional value for customers, especially those who miss the taste and feel of the original culture.

Flavor consistency is maintained through efforts to procure spices directly from the area of origin despite logistical challenges, while the quality of raw materials is maintained by storage methods according to the needs of each type of foodstuff. The services provided prioritize friendliness, smiles, and active communication, so that they are able to make customers feel comfortable, even for those who come alone. The integration of these aspects is in line with the theory of service quality (SERVQUAL), customer satisfaction (expectancy-disconfirmation model), and the concept of experiential marketing, which emphasizes the importance of emotional experience in building loyalty.

The findings of this study show that Cafe Uni is able to position itself in a culturally based culinary niche market, utilizing the power of tradition as a differentiation that is difficult to replicate. These advantages have a positive impact on customer satisfaction, which in turn drives repeat intent and word-of-mouth recommendations. However, the sustainability of this success depends on the ability of management to maintain the quality of products and services in the midst of market dynamics. This research also provides practical contributions for other regional culinary business actors in managing the integration of tastes, services, and cultural elements as a strategy to create a unique and satisfying dining experience, so that they can compete in an increasingly competitive culinary industry.

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