

## ~ ЕКОНОМІКА ТУРИЗМУ ТА ГОТЕЛЬНО-РЕСТОРАННА СПРАВА ~

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### QUALITY OF PROVIDED GASTRONOMIC SERVICES – MYSTERY SHOPPING RESULTS

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**Abstract:** The study is devoted to the analysis of service quality in the region of Eastern Slovakia, thereby filling a certain gap. So far, there have been only nationwide research and surveys in the mentioned area. The aim of the study is to obtain knowledge and empirical data on the quality of services in Eastern Slovakia. The author achieves this goal by analyzing the quality of services in selected Slovak cities. The method is data collection, analysis and generalization. The author uses the Mystery Shopping method. To measure the effectiveness of services, the authors used the following models: SERVQUAL, DINESERV and Kano. By evaluating various criteria—staff professionalism, service speed, hygiene, and overall atmosphere—this approach provides an objective assessment of the customer experience. The findings help businesses identify strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to refine their service strategies, enhance customer satisfaction, and maintain competitiveness in the evolving gastronomic sector. The basic research question of the paper can be formulated as follows: To what extent do the above factors affect customer satisfaction. The results show that some business entities provided very high-quality services, while shortcomings were found elsewhere. Stable customers were acquired by those establishments whose services were of high quality. The presented study also contains recommendations. These consist of analyzing customer feedback, training staff, investing in technology, and also accepting trends.  
**Keywords:** Mystery Shopping method, gastronomic services, Eastern Slovakia, quality factors

### ЯКІСТЬ НАДАННЯ ГАСТРОНОМІЧНИХ ПОСЛУГ – РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ ТАЄМНИХ ЗАКУПІВЕЛІ

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**Анотація.** Дослідження присвячене аналізу якості послуг у регіоні Східної Словаччини. Поки що у згаданій сфері проводились лише загальнодержавні дослідження та опитування. Метою дослідження є отримання знань та емпіричних даних щодо якості послуг у Східній Словаччині. Авторка досягає цієї мети, аналізуючи якість послуг у вибраних містах Словаччини. Метод полягає в зборі, аналізі та узагальненні даних. Автор використовує метод Mystery Shopping. Для вимірювання ефективності послуг авторка використовує такі моделі: SERVQUAL, DINESERV і Kano. Оцінюючи різні критерії — професіоналізм персоналу, швидкість обслуговування, гігієну та загальну атмосферу — цей підхід забезпечує об'єктивну оцінку клієнтського досвіду. Отримані результати допомагають компаніям визначити сильні та слабкі сторони, дозволяючи їм удосконалювати свої стратегії надання послуг, підвищувати задоволеність клієнтів і підтримувати конкурентоспроможність у гастрономічному секторі, що розвивається. Основне дослідницьке питання статті можна сформулювати так: якою мірою перераховані фактори впливають на задоволеність споживачів. Результати показали, що одні суб'єкти господарювання надали дуже якісні послуги, а в інших були виявлені недоліки. Стабільних клієнтів придбали ті заклади, чії послуги були якісними. Представлене дослідження також містить рекомендації. Вони складаються з аналізу відгуків клієнтів, навчання персоналу, інвестування в технології, а також визначення прийняття тенденцій.

**Ключові слова:** метод Mystery Shopping, гастрономічні послуги, Східна Словаччина, фактори якості

#### JEL Classification: M300

**Formulation of the Problem.** The quality of gastronomic services is a crucial factor influencing customer satisfaction, business success, and overall competitiveness in the industry. However, challenges such as inconsistent service quality, hygiene concerns, and the lack of standardized evaluation methods persist in the sector. Increasing customer expectations and the need for continuous innovation necessitate a comprehensive assessment and improvement of service standards. Despite the growing importance of customer experience in gastronomy, research on

service quality in Eastern Slovakia remains limited. Existing studies primarily focus on broad national or international contexts, leaving a gap in localized, detailed assessments.

This study aims to address this gap by analyzing service quality in selected Slovak cities using the Mystery Shopping method. The key research question is: To what extent do different factors, such as staff professionalism, hygiene, and service speed, influence customer satisfaction in the gastronomy sector? Understanding these factors is crucial for businesses seeking to enhance their services and for policymakers aiming to establish quality standards in the industry. By identifying service deficiencies and best practices, this research contributes to practical recommendations that can drive improvements in the gastronomic sector. *Evaluation and Findings:* The evaluation criteria included first impressions, general atmosphere, staff communication, service speed, cleanliness, food presentation and taste, inventory condition, accessibility, and compliance with hygiene measures. The research highlights that service quality in gastronomy is a multifaceted process influenced by product quality, personnel professionalism, physical environment, pricing strategies, digitalization, and sustainability trends. Models such as SERVQUAL, DINESERV, and Kano were utilized to measure service effectiveness. The findings indicate that while some establishments excelled in providing high-quality services, others exhibited weaknesses in hygiene, customer interaction, and atmosphere. Businesses that consistently delivered superior service achieved higher customer satisfaction and loyalty. The study provides recommendations for improving service quality, including staff training, customer feedback mechanisms, investment in technology, and adaptation to emerging trends such as environmental sustainability and experiential dining. The research underscores the importance of continuous quality management in the gastronomic sector. To maintain competitiveness, businesses must actively monitor market trends, adapt to customer preferences, and ensure a holistic approach to service excellence. Implementing these strategies can enhance customer satisfaction, strengthen market positioning, and contribute to the overall development of the industry.

**Analysis of Recent Research and Publications.** This section examines recent research and publications focusing on the assessment of service quality in the gastronomy sector. *Assessing Food and Service Quality in Hospitality.* A study by Idowu and Ogunlade (October 2024) investigated the relationship between food quality, service quality, guest satisfaction, and customers' intention to revisit in the hospitality industry. The research highlighted that both food and service quality are pivotal in achieving guest satisfaction, which, in turn, influences customers' likelihood of returning. The study utilized questionnaires distributed among hotel guests to gather data, emphasizing the importance of maintaining high standards in both food and service to ensure customer loyalty (Idowu & Ogunlade, 2024, ResearchGate.net).

*Mystery Shopping as a Tool for Evaluating Catering Services.* Recent research has explored the use of mystery shopping as a method for assessing the quality of catering services. This approach involves evaluators posing as regular customers to objectively assess various aspects of service delivery. The findings suggest that mystery shopping can effectively identify areas needing improvement, thereby enhancing overall service quality in the catering industry (Lončarič, Perišič-Prodan, & Župan, 2024, ResearchGate.net). *Service Quality Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction in Restaurants.* A study conducted six months ago investigated the impact of different service quality factors on customer satisfaction in restaurants. The research identified key elements such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy as significant contributors to customer satisfaction. The study employed factor analysis, correlation, and regression techniques to analyze data collected from 630 randomly selected customers, providing valuable insights into the determinants of customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry (Vasani, Thakarar, & Abdulkareem, 2024, ResearchGate.net). *Service Quality Assessment in Gastronomic Festivals.* An article published in the journal *Sustainability* proposed a service quality evaluation model specifically designed for gastronomic festivals. The study emphasized the lack of standardized methods for assessing service quality at such events and introduced a tailored model to fill this gap. The research, conducted at the Raíces Gastronomic Festival in Guayaquil, Ecuador, aimed to provide a framework for evaluating and improving service quality in gastronomic festivals (Campoverde-Aguirre et al., 2022, MDPI.com). *Mystery Shopper Technique in Hotel Gastronomy Services.* A study by Wszendybył-Skulska (April 2015) explored the application of the mystery shopper technique as a means of improving hotel gastronomy services. The research highlighted that this technique allows for an evaluation of services from a customer's perspective, identifying both strengths and areas for improvement. The findings suggest that implementing mystery shopper assessments can lead to significant enhancements in service quality (Wszendybył-Skulska, 2015, ResearchGate.net).

These studies collectively underscore the critical importance of assessing and improving service quality in the gastronomy sector. They highlight various methodologies, including customer satisfaction surveys and mystery shopping, as effective tools for identifying areas of improvement and enhancing overall service delivery. By utilizing these methods, businesses can optimize customer experience, maintain competitive advantage, and ensure higher levels of service excellence.

**Contribution, Methodology, and Methodological Procedures.** *Study Overview.* The study assessed restaurants and fast-food establishments in the Eastern Slovak region (Prešov, Bardejov, and Košice). The primary aim was to objectively evaluate the quality of services provided, identify strengths and weaknesses, and offer recommendations for improvement. Cities and establishments were randomly selected for the study, and the assessment was conducted based on established criteria. The goal was to gain insights into service quality and the overall customer experience.

#### *Assessment Criteria*

The evaluation focused on various aspects of service quality, including:

**First Impression** – The customer's initial perception of the establishment.

**General Atmosphere** – The overall mood and ambiance.

**Guest Reception** – The manner and quality of welcoming guests.

**Service** – Staff communication, customer care, and appearance (e.g., uniforms).

**Speed of Service** – The time elapsed between ordering and delivery.

**Cleanliness of the Establishment** – The overall hygiene, including tables, restrooms, and other areas.

**Food Preparation and Taste** – Presentation aesthetics and taste quality.

**Inventory** – The condition and quality of glasses, plates, cutlery, and other equipment.

**Parking Availability** – Convenience and accessibility of parking near the establishment.

**Food and Beverage Offerings** – Variety and appeal of menu options.

**Price Level** – The value for money based on the services provided.

**Payment Options** – Availability of different payment methods (cash, cards, meal tickets).

**Occupancy and Popularity** – Customer traffic and overall reputation.

**Accessibility for People with Limited Mobility** – Suitability for individuals with special needs.

**Compliance with Hygiene Measures** – Adherence to hygiene and safety regulations.

Each criterion was assessed on a five-point scale (1 to 5), where:

**1** = Very dissatisfied (lowest score)

**5** = Excellent (highest score)

Mystery shopping is a research technique that evaluates both technical aspects (e.g., speed of service) and functional aspects (e.g., staff attitude and behavior). These factors are key to defining overall service quality.

According to Wilson (1998), "*Mystery shopping provides objective data on how services are actually delivered, helping managers identify service deficiencies and improve quality.*" Similarly, Smick (2020) states that the review process involves a simulated purchase, where the evaluator already has a basic understanding of the offerings and services before the transaction begins. This approach allows them to focus on specific processes and aspects requiring evaluation.

**Basic Material.** In the rapidly evolving service sector, gastronomy plays a crucial role, not only in terms of economic impact but also as an integral part of cultural and social life. Today, dining out is no longer solely about satisfying basic needs; it has become an experience that customers seek for pleasure, social interaction, and culinary exploration. As a result, service quality in gastronomy is a key factor influencing customer satisfaction, loyalty, and overall business success in a competitive market. To remain competitive, restaurants and catering businesses must continuously improve service quality, adapt to changing customer preferences, and follow the latest industry trends. Gastronomic services are often referred to as hybrid services, as they combine tangible goods (e.g., food) with intangible elements (e.g., service and ambiance) at the same level (Kotler & Keller, 2007). Additionally, proper food handling, storage, and waste minimization are critical to maintaining high service standards. Businesses must adhere to strict hygiene regulations regarding food storage and refrigeration (TASR, 2019).

Modern gastronomic management increasingly emphasizes:

- Sustainable products – Using eco-friendly ingredients and reducing waste.
- Digitalization of ordering systems – Enhancing efficiency with mobile devices and automated systems.

- Data-driven decision-making – Leveraging customer data to tailor services and improve personalization.

By incorporating these innovations, businesses can enhance customer satisfaction, streamline operations, and maintain competitiveness in the evolving gastronomy sector.

### **Integrated Quality Management in Gastronomy: Methods, Factors, and Trends**

The management of gastronomic activities is a complex process that requires both theoretical knowledge and practical experience. Without this knowledge, ensuring the efficiency and functionality of the entire system becomes challenging. Therefore, continuous training and retraining of employees involved in various stages of the process are essential. Equally important is careful quality control at every stage, from the procurement of raw materials to the delivery of finished food products. *Understanding Service Quality in Gastronomy*. Service quality in gastronomy is a multidimensional concept that encompasses various aspects. According to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), quality is defined as "the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfills requirements." In the gastronomic sector, this definition applies to the extent to which services and products meet or exceed customer expectations. Service quality directly impacts customer satisfaction, loyalty, and the overall reputation of a business. According to the Podnikajte.sk portal, customer satisfaction results from comparing their expectations with their actual experience. High-quality service leads to positive reviews, increased sales, and customer retention, while poor service can result in customer loss and reputational damage.

#### **Service Quality Measurement Methods**

Several models are used to measure service quality in gastronomy:

1. SERVQUAL Model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988)

One of the most widely used tools for measuring service quality, SERVQUAL identifies the gap between customer expectations and their perceptions of the service provided. It evaluates quality based on five key dimensions:

- Tangibility – The physical environment, equipment, and staff appearance.
- Reliability – The ability to deliver services accurately and consistently.
- Responsiveness – The willingness of staff to promptly respond to customer needs.
- Assurance (Confidence) – Staff knowledge, courtesy, and their ability to inspire trust.
- Empathy – The level of personalized attention given to customers.

2. DINESERV Model

An adaptation of the SERVQUAL model, DINESERV is specifically designed for the restaurant industry. It assesses service quality by focusing on:

- Food quality
- Ambience
- Service efficiency
- Value proposition

3. Grönroos Service Quality Model

- This model differentiates between two aspects of service quality:
- Technical quality – The actual taste, preparation, and presentation of food.
- Functional quality – The way in which the customer is served and treated.

4. Kano Model

The Kano model categorizes factors influencing customer emotional responses into three groups:

- Basic factors – Expected aspects, such as cleanliness and prompt service.
- Performance factors – Features that enhance satisfaction, like friendly staff and fresh ingredients.

- Excitement factors – Unexpected features that delight customers, such as an innovative menu or special services.

By implementing comprehensive quality management strategies and leveraging well-established measurement models, businesses in the gastronomy sector can enhance service quality, customer satisfaction, and long-term success. Continuous adaptation to market trends, investment in staff training, and a focus on innovation will be key to maintaining a competitive edge in an ever-evolving industry.

#### **Factors Influencing Service Quality in Gastronomy**

Service quality in gastronomy is multifaceted, encompassing both technical and functional aspects of service delivery. Each factor significantly contributes to overall customer satisfaction, shaping their experience and directly influencing the success and reputation of a business. To fully understand their impact, it is essential to analyze individual key factors:

Product Quality – The foundation of customer satisfaction, which depends on:

- The freshness of raw materials
- Proper technological preparation
- Aesthetic presentation of dishes
- Personnel – Employees play a crucial role in service quality. Important attributes include:
- Experience and expertise
- Communication skills and politeness
- Problem-solving abilities to address customer concerns
- Physical Environment – The interior design, ambiance, and cleanliness of a restaurant significantly influence customer perception.

- Pricing – According to Burda and Dluhošvá (2011), customers expect prices to reflect the quality and quantity of services offered.

- Digitalization of Services – Online reservations, digital menus, and the use of social media enhance efficiency and customer engagement.

- Sustainability and Hygiene Standards – Modern trends emphasize environmental sustainability, the use of local ingredients, and adherence to strict hygiene regulations.

According to Wilson (1998), environmental cleanliness is one of the most critical indicators of service quality, as it influences perceptions of safety and hygiene. The concept of quality management dates back to 1880, with W. A. Shewhart recognized as the pioneer of quality control methods in telecommunications. Quality assurance tools such as HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) help maintain high standards in gastronomy (Socha & Koblen, 2020). This analysis confirms that service quality in gastronomy is a dynamic and multifactorial process, crucial for business success and customer satisfaction. For long-term sustainability, businesses must:

- Adopt emerging trends
- Invest in employee training and technology
- Prioritize customer satisfaction by actively seeking feedback and improving services

### **Trends in Gastronomy**

The gastronomy sector is constantly evolving, adapting to customer preferences and lifestyle changes. Some of the most prominent trends include:

#### 1. Evolution of Fast Food

Modern fast-food restaurants are moving towards higher-quality offerings, incorporating national and international dishes. Unlike traditional fast food, these establishments are replacing plastic cutlery and disposable plates with more sustainable alternatives.

In response to the dominance of fast food, the Slow Food Movement emerged in Paris. This international initiative aims to preserve culinary diversity and support local, traditional gastronomy (Kompasová, 2009).

#### 2. Experiential Gastronomy

This concept focuses on enhancing the dining experience beyond food itself. Employees take on the role of hosts and experience curators, rather than just service providers. Key experiential gastronomy trends include: Front Cooking / Open Kitchen – Customers can observe the preparation of their meals, ensuring transparency and engagement. Interactive Cooking Concepts – Some restaurants allow guests to participate in the cooking process, following models like: "Barbecue restaurants" where meals are grilled at the table; DIY dining experiences, where customers customize their dishes

#### 3. Technological Innovations in Gastronomy

The industry is shifting towards:

- Automated ordering systems to streamline service
- AI-driven personalization for enhanced customer recommendations
- Sustainable food sourcing to align with eco-conscious consumer preferences

#### 4. Healthy Lifestyle and Bio Nutrition

The growing focus on wellness and healthy eating is driving trends such as:

- Organic (BIO) nutrition
- The incorporation of fresh herbs in meals
- The use of edible flowers to enhance both taste and aesthetic appeal

According to the Regional Public Health Authority of Bratislava (2021), edible flowers are not just decorative; they provide health benefits, such as:

- Strengthening the immune system
- Supporting digestion and appetite
- Helping alleviate various health conditions

The gastronomy industry is shaped by multiple quality factors and continuously evolving trends. Businesses that embrace innovation, prioritize customer experience, and maintain high quality standards will gain a competitive advantage. Adapting to changing consumer expectations, digitalization, and sustainability practices will be key to long-term success in the industry.

**Results of the Evaluation of Individual Gastronomic Establishments**

Table 1

Presents the Mystery Shopping results of gastronomic establishments in Bardejov, Prešov, and Košice.

<i>Bardejov</i>
<p>Bardejov, an important tourist center and UNESCO World Heritage Site, offers a wide range of gastronomic options. Six establishments—three restaurants and three cafés—were evaluated as part of the mystery shopping assessment.</p> <p><b>Restaurants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eL cafe received the highest score, excelling in service quality, food, atmosphere, and hygiene. Despite limited parking, the establishment provides top-tier services, making it an ideal choice for demanding customers.</li> <li>• Stodola and Familia Ristorante achieved similar results: Stodola was praised for its stylish ambiance and ample parking availability.</li> <li>• Familia Ristorante impressed with its friendly staff and affordable prices.</li> <li>• Kurti Bardejov received the lowest score, with weaker results in atmosphere, service, and hygiene. The establishment has room for improvement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cafés</b></p> <p>Café Tvoy Den was rated best, excelling in service quality, beverage selection, and overall atmosphere. Professional staff and exceptional coffee taste contributed to its top ranking. Chianti and Caffe de France lagged behind, primarily due to lower service quality and beverage standards. Improving these aspects could enhance their appeal.</p>
<i>Prešov</i>
<p>In Prešov, six establishments were assessed, divided into two categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fast food establishments</li> <li>• Restaurants catering to families with children</li> </ul> <p><b>Fast Food</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FEST Prešov achieved the best results, particularly excelling in service speed and food taste.</li> <li>• Redbox and Paté showed similar performance, especially in food preparation and taste. However, FEST Prešov had a slight advantage due to its superior environment and service quality.</li> </ul> <p><b>Restaurants for Families with Children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bowling on the Lane was evaluated as the most family-friendly option, offering: A pleasant atmosphere;; Entertainment for children High-quality food</li> <li>• Gardenka and TRC "Koral" received balanced ratings, excelling in certain aspects, such as parking availability and additional amenities.</li> </ul>
<i>Košice</i>
<p>In Košice, three cafés were assessed:</p> <p>Clemantis Coffee and Tea Shop and Café de Paris received the highest ratings, excelling in: Service quality; Atmosphere; Professionalism of staff</p> <p>These cafés are recommended for both domestic and international visitors.</p> <p>Kávy sveta (Coffee of the World) ranked third, primarily due to its less personal atmosphere. However, the café performed well in service speed and cleanliness, contributing to a respectable overall rating.</p> <p>The mystery shopping assessment highlights that gastronomic service quality varies significantly across establishments. Key takeaways include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-quality service, ambiance, and hygiene are critical factors for customer satisfaction and business success.</li> <li>• Establishments with personalized service, friendly staff, and excellent food quality tend to receive higher ratings.</li> <li>• Areas for improvement include hygiene, service consistency, and digitalization (e.g., online reservations and digital menus).</li> <li>• By addressing service gaps and embracing modern trends, gastronomic establishments can enhance customer experiences and increase competitiveness in the market.</li> </ul>

*Survey Findings and Recommendations for Practice*

Based on the assessment of selected gastronomic establishments in Bardejov, Prešov, and Košice, it can be concluded that service quality varies depending on the type of establishment and its specialization. The mystery shopping survey identified both strengths and weaknesses across individual establishments, with each city yielding unique insights.

**Findings by City Bardejov.** As a prominent tourist destination and UNESCO World Heritage Site, Bardejov offers a diverse selection of gastronomic establishments. The quality of services is generally rated as above average.

*Restaurants:*

eL Cafe earned the highest ranking, excelling in food quality, atmosphere, and hygiene. Despite parking limitations, it offers top-tier service. Stodola and Familia Ristorante achieved balanced results, each with unique strengths: Stodola was praised for ample parking and stylish design. Familia Ristorante stood out for its friendly service and accessibility. Kurti Bardejov received the lowest ranking, with hygiene and atmosphere identified as areas for improvement.

*Cafés:*

Kaviareň Tvoj Deň was the highest-rated café, excelling in professional service and beverage quality. Chianti and Caffè de France lagged behind due to lower service standards and drink quality, highlighting a need for improved professionalism and product quality.

**Prešov.** In Prešov, the assessment focused on two categories:

- Fast food establishments
- Family-friendly restaurants
- Fast Food:

FEST Prešov performed best, particularly in taste, food preparation, and overall service quality. Redbox and Paté demonstrated similar results, but minor differences in service quality and atmosphere affected their final rankings. Family-Friendly Restaurants: Bowling pri Trati was recognized as the most suitable for families, receiving the highest scores in service quality and child-friendly environment. Gardenka and Koral provided an acceptable level of quality but require improvements in customer service.

**Košice**

The evaluation of Košice cafés showed that all assessed establishments maintain a high level of service quality. Clemantis Coffee and Tea Shop and Café de Paris were rated the most suitable for both domestic and international visitors, excelling in:

- Professional service
- Pleasant atmosphere
- High-quality beverages

Coffee of the World ranked slightly lower due to its less inviting atmosphere, but fast service and cleanliness were recognized as strengths, indicating potential for improvement.

**Recommendations for Practice.** Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made to enhance service quality and customer satisfaction in the gastronomy sector:

1. **Improve Service Quality and Customer Experience.** Train staff to enhance communication skills and professionalism. Ensure consistent service standards across all shifts. Implement customer feedback systems to monitor satisfaction levels and identify areas for improvement.
2. **Enhance Hygiene and Cleanliness.** Establish strict hygiene protocols to comply with health regulations. Regularly assess and improve restaurant ambiance and cleanliness.
3. **Address Weaknesses in Specific Establishments.** Kurti Bardejov: Focus on improving hygiene and atmosphere. Chianti and Caffè de France: Prioritize service training and beverage quality. Coffee of the World: Enhance interior ambiance to create a more inviting environment.
4. **Invest in Digitalization and Customer Convenience.** Introduce online reservations and digital menus for better customer engagement. Utilize social media and online reviews to attract and retain customers.
5. **Embrace Modern Gastronomic Trends.** Incorporate local and sustainable ingredients to appeal to eco-conscious customers. Offer interactive dining experiences to enhance customer engagement and satisfaction.

The mystery shopping survey provided valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of gastronomic establishments in Bardejov, Prešov, and Košice. While many establishments demonstrated excellence in service quality and food preparation, others require improvements in hygiene, customer service, and overall atmosphere.

By implementing strategic improvements and embracing modern trends, businesses can enhance customer satisfaction, competitiveness, and long-term success in the gastronomy industry.

Table 2

## Presents Recommendations from the Survey

<i>Businesses in Bardejov</i>
Establishments such as eL Cafe Restaurant and Kaviareň Tvoj Deň should maintain their high level of service. Other establishments should invest in improving service quality, atmosphere, and hygiene to enhance customer satisfaction.
<i>Businesses in Prešov</i>
Fast food establishments, such as FEST, should continue implementing best practices that contribute to their success. Family-oriented establishments should expand offerings for children and focus on creating unique experiences for the whole family.
<i>Košice Coffee Shops</i>
All cafés evaluated received above-average ratings in terms of quality. Establishments with lower ratings for atmosphere, such as Kávy sveta, should invest in environmental improvements to create a more personal and inviting experience.

**Conclusion.** The research confirms that customer satisfaction is influenced by more than just food quality—factors such as service speed, staff attitude, and the overall atmosphere also play crucial roles. According to Grönroos (2000), customer satisfaction is the result of a holistic experience, which includes:

- The product itself
- The service process
- The emotional value of the visit

For this reason, gastronomic establishments must focus on all aspects of service provision that shape customer perception. Management at all levels should stay updated on modern approaches and theories in gastronomy and customer service. Relying solely on traditional methods or practices observed elsewhere is insufficient. Continuous staff training and retraining are essential to achieving and maintaining high-quality service standards. Only by adapting to new trends and prioritizing customer experience can establishments be seen as more than just providers of basic necessities—they must become destinations where customers create memorable and positive moments. Essential Factors for Service Quality. According to the Slovak Association for Quality Management, service quality is determined by a combination of objective and subjective factors that influence customer perception. These include:

- Quality of food and beverages – The foundation of every successful establishment.
- Professionalism and approach of staff – Essential for creating personal connections with customers.
- Atmosphere and ambiance – Includes interior design, cleanliness, and the overall sense of well-being.
- Efficiency of processes – Factors such as service speed and smooth order flow significantly impact customer satisfaction.

To remain competitive and ensure long-term success, businesses should:

- Implement regular customer feedback to identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Invest in staff training to develop skills in customer service, communication, and conflict resolution.
- Adopt innovative trends, including: Sustainable and eco-friendly approaches; Modern ordering technologies (e.g., digital menus and automated systems); Enhanced customer service strategies

By effectively balancing these aspects, catering establishments will not only boost customer satisfaction but also strengthen their market position and contribute to the overall development of the gastronomy industry. The customer experience in a gastronomic establishment is always the sum of multiple factors. Businesses that actively monitor trends, adapt to customer demands, and enhance service quality will ultimately gain customer loyalty and long-term success.

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