

Original Research Article

Understanding Consumer Preferences and Behavior in Culinary Choices: A Case Study of Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan at G-Town Square Gading Serpong

ABSTRACT

This research examines a culinary product at G-Town Square, Gading Serpong in the city of Tangerang, Indonesia particularly in *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* or Mak Sutan's fried rice in english. The main focus of this research is to understand how factors such as food quality, price, ambiance and service can impact customer preferences. Using a qualitative approach, a purposive sampling and a semi-structured interview was conducted on August 2024. The data is later analyzed using the reduction technique proposed by Miles and Huberman. The result indicates that food quality is the primary factor impacting customer satisfaction though it was perceived to be average and lacking the unique flavors. Pricing was considered high for the quality perceived, suggesting a need for improvement and alignment between the pricing and and value. The ambiance is considered comfortable, but the service requires improvement. These findings underscore the importance of targeted enhancements in food quality, pricing strategies, and service for Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan, offering valuable insights for culinary businesses and local governments aiming to boost culinary tourism at G-Town Square.

Keywords: consumer preference ; consumer behavior ; culinary ; food quality ; gading serpong

1. INTRODUCTION

The city of Tangerang, particularly the Gading Serpong area in Indonesia, has experienced rapid growth in recent years. Along with this growth, there has been a significant development in infrastructure and the community. According to a study by Ischak (2019) discusses the rapid suburban growth in Gading Serpong, particularly the spatial and social segregation that has arisen as a result of planned and unplanned settlements. It highlights how Gading Serpong's development into a new town has been shaped by both real estate expansions and urban planning, which has led to a mix of modern infrastructures, housing, and commercial centers. Over the past decades, Gading Serpong area has been through notable growth with the presence of hotel, malls, commercial areas, colleges, and well known universities (<http://www.detik.com>). One of the aspects that has grown is the food market, which has become an important part of city life by offering a variety of affordable and easily accessible food options. This food market is not only a place to buy and sell food but also a place to gather, interact, and create a sense of community among the city's residents. Markets and food hubs often serve as vital spaces for social interaction and economic activity in growing urban areas. Guzman et al (2021) food markets not only provide a space for economic activity but also play a key role in fostering social interaction and creating a sense of community.

These markets serve as gathering points where both locals and tourists engage, contributing to a balanced and sustainable urban development. Similarly, farmers' markets have been shown to act as social hubs that bring together urban and rural communities, supporting local economies while promoting social interaction and cultural exchange. G-Town Square, located in Gading Serpong, plays an important role in the culinary industry of the area by providing a wide variety of food options. As a culinary center, G-Town Square becomes a favorite place for food lovers to enjoy a variety of dishes in one place. They attract many people, from families and students to tourists who want to enjoy a unique culinary experience. Since its launch at the end of 2022, G-Town Square has consistently been packed with visitors, particularly in the evenings, due to its diverse culinary offerings that range from local delicacies to international cuisine. This culinary hub also contributes significantly to the local economy by attracting diners from nearby areas such as Jakarta, Depok, and Bekasi (<http://www.nesiapost.com>). In comparison to other culinary destinations such as Pasar Modern Paramount, Pasar Salsa, and Sutet. G-Town offers a unique mix of modern ambiance and diverse food offerings, which appeal to a broader audience. G-Town provides a more structured, contemporary environment, making it a family-friendly and student-friendly destination. G-Town Square also offers live music every night where visitors can listen and enjoy while having their delicious meal. Some of the food outlets offered in G-Town Square are even known to the public and have several branches in Jabodetabek, such as Seafood Santa 68, Bubur Ayam Ko Ginhan, Soto Ayam Ambengan Cak Ri and Bang Yon Goat Foot Soup (<http://www.tangerangnews.com>). Based on personal observation in October 2024, there are a total of 106 outlets available now in G-Town Square, Gading Serpong, providing a wide range of culinary experiences for visitors. Of these outlets, 72 are located in the outdoor area, offering an open-air dining experience that allows guests to enjoy the lively atmosphere and nightly live music. The remaining 34 outlets are situated indoors, which provides a more intimate and comfortable setting for those who prefer a quieter dining environment. This diverse layout caters to different customer preferences, ensuring that both casual diners and those desiring a more relaxed ambiance have suitable options. While G-Town Square's ability to offer such variety highlights its adaptability in meeting consumer needs and strengthens its position as a culinary hub, it is worth noting that among the many outlets, there is one that has experienced a decline in sales. The outlet is *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan*.

The decline in sales is a critical issue that many businesses face in highly competitive markets, often influenced by various internal and external factors. In the context of culinary businesses, a decrease in customer traffic, shifting consumer preferences, increased competition, and changes in market trends can significantly impact sales performance. Understanding the underlying causes of declining sales is essential for developing effective strategies to reverse this trend and sustain business growth. Research indicates that factors like poor customer service, inconsistent food quality, ineffective pricing strategies, and a lack of adaptation to market demands are often leading causes of declining sales in the restaurant industry (Ong et al., 2022; Chaturvedi et al., 2024). Understanding the reasons behind this trend could provide valuable insights for improving performance and maintaining the overall appeal of G-Town Square to both local residents and tourists exploring Gading Serpong's vibrant food scene.



Figure 1 : *G-Town Square Outdoor Area*
Source: *Personal Documentary, 2024*

The purpose of this research is to understand consumer preferences and the main considerations that influence their decisions when purchasing food at outlets, especially at G-Town Square Gading Serpong, Tangerang in order to increase their sales by understanding the preferences and main considerations of consumers. In addition, it is also hoped that this research can provide useful information for the local government in the promotion and development of culinary outlets in the area.

While this study uses *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* as a primary example, the broader aim is to analyze consumer behavior across G-Town Square's food premises. G-Town Square, with its wide range of culinary offerings and vibrant ambiance, provides an ideal setting for understanding consumer preferences in a food court-style environment. By examining factors such as food quality, price, ambiance, and service at the premises level, this research aims to derive insights applicable to various outlets, highlighting how these factors collectively shape customer experiences in similar culinary hubs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer Preferences play a crucial role in determining the success of food outlets. Understanding what drives consumers to choose one establishment over another can help businesses tailor their offerings to better meet customer needs and increase sales. Consumer preferences are defined as the subjective elements that drive consumers' buying behaviors, such as personal tastes, perceptions of product quality, brand reputation, and economic motivations. These preferences are critical for businesses as they help determine which products consumers are likely to choose. Importantly, consumer preferences are not static—they evolve over time, influenced by factors such

as sustainability, economic considerations, and the perceived quality of products. Hasanzade (2022) examines how consumer preferences impact purchasing decisions, particularly in areas like local and sustainable products, highlighting that consumers are increasingly willing to pay premiums for products that align with their values.

Culinary arts refers to the art of cooking and preparing food, encompassing a wide range of techniques and styles from different cultures. This field continues to evolve with trends in gastronomy and consumer demands for unique and innovative culinary creations. Culinary arts, as described by Soeroso & Turgarini (2020), are the ways and arts of food preparation that take place in or are associated with kitchens. (Gajdzik, 2024) highlights that consumer behavior significantly shapes the culinary arts industry, as consumers increasingly seek new dining experiences influenced by media like television cooking programs. These programs not only affect what dishes consumers prefer but also influence how often they visit restaurants and explore new cuisines. By understanding consumer preferences and behaviors, culinary professionals can better cater to these evolving tastes, leading to greater success in an increasingly competitive market.

Food outlets play a significant role in tourism experiences by providing access to unique and authentic local foods, which can enhance tourist satisfaction and enrich their experience. According to Orea-Giner and Fusté-Forné (2023), food outlets not only meet basic consumption needs but also serve as cultural attractions, allowing tourists to experience and understand local culture through the flavors of their food. Food outlets, commonly referred to as stalls or restaurants, play an important role in maintaining culinary diversity and preserving the cultural identity of an area. Patarakis and Kaplanidi (2021) food outlets and markets play a key role in preserving culinary traditions and cultural identity by offering a space for the social and historic exchange of food-related practices. These findings emphasize the importance of a balanced approach to managing a restaurant. While food quality remains the key driver of customer satisfaction, businesses can enhance their appeal by optimizing other elements, such as pricing strategies, creating a pleasant dining ambiance, and providing exceptional customer service. Understanding the diverse preferences of different demographic groups allows restaurants to tailor their offerings and create a more personalized dining experience, thereby fostering greater customer loyalty and satisfaction.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design aimed at exploring consumer preferences for the culinary offerings at *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* within G-Town Square, Gading Serpong. The qualitative approach was chosen to provide in-depth insights into consumer behavior and preferences for this specific culinary outlet in a competitive environment. The study used purposive sampling to select participants with relevant experiences at *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan*.

3.2 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that the participants were well-aligned with the research objectives. A total of 30 visitors were selected based on specific criteria, such as frequency of visits to the outlet and their demographic diversity. "Frequent visitors" were defined as individuals who had dined at the outlet at least 3 times a month, allowing them to provide informed feedback on various aspects of the dining experience. This selection aimed to capture perspectives from individuals familiar with the outlet's quality, service, and atmosphere. This sampling method allows for the recruitment of individuals whose experiences and insights are directly relevant to the research focus (Kallio et al., 2016). This targeted approach ensures that the data gathered would be both relevant and rich in detail, making it well-suited for addressing the research questions.

and providing actionable insights for both business owners and policymakers in the culinary industry.

3.3 Data Collection Method

The study collected data through semi-structured interviews, a common method in qualitative research that allows flexibility while maintaining a structured framework. According to Kallio et al. (2016), semi-structured interviews enable researchers to explore participants' preferences and experiences in detail. The interview guide focused on five key factors: food quality, price, ambiance and service. Each interview was conducted in person at G-Town Square, with each session lasting between 15 to 20 minutes. Participants were encouraged to share their motivations for choosing *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan*, their satisfaction with the food, and other influential factors in their dining experience. Observations of non-verbal cues, such as body language, were also recorded to provide deeper insights

3.2 Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using the data reduction technique proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). This technique involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing raw data into a coherent structure. The coding process was conducted using both inductive and deductive methods. Inductive coding allowed new patterns to emerge, while deductive coding focused on predetermined categories like food quality, price, ambiance and service.

3.3 Limitation

This study is limited by its relatively small sample size of 30 participants, which may not fully capture the diverse preferences of all visitors to G-Town Square. While the selected participants provided valuable insights into consumer behavior at *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan*, the findings may not be representative of the broader population that frequents the square. Additionally, the research focuses specifically on *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan*, which limits its generalizability to other culinary outlets within G-Town Square.

4. RESULTS

This study aims to understand consumer preferences for culinary products at G-Town Square Gading Serpong especially for *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* focus on key factors such as food quality, price, ambiance, and service. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings, this research employed the technique of triangulation, which involves using multiple data sources and perspectives to cross-verify the information gathered during the interviews. Triangulation enhances the credibility of the results by reducing biases that might arise from relying on a single data source or method (Patton, 1999).

The interviews conducted with the 30 visitors revealed several key themes that align with previous research on factors influencing dining choices. For instance, food quality, cost, atmosphere, and service emerged as significant considerations that affect consumer decisions. A similar survey conducted by Dipesh and Apil (2018) on Nepalese restaurants in Finland found that food quality was the most influential factor for customer satisfaction, with price, ambiance, and service also playing important roles. These findings are consistent with the results of the present study, further validating the importance of these factors across different contexts and culinary settings.

By employing triangulation and comparing the findings with previous research, this study provides robust insights into the preferences of G-Town Square visitors and offers

valuable recommendations for improving the culinary experience at outlets like Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan.

4.1.1 Food Quality

The findings from the evaluation of *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* revealed that the food quality was perceived as average by respondents. Most customers described the dish as "okay," indicating that it was neither exceptionally good nor particularly bad. This suggests that while the dish meets basic expectations, it lacks the distinctive taste or flavor that would make it stand out among other *nasi goreng* or fried rice options available in the area. The feedback indicates that while there are no significant negative aspects to the dish, there is also no element that makes it exceptionally appealing to the consumers. Food quality was identified as the primary factor influencing consumers' decisions to dine at G-Town Square. Several studies have demonstrated that elements such as taste, texture, and consistency are essential in determining consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Food quality is a major determinant of dining choice, noting that freshness and flavor are particularly influential in shaping consumers' preferences and repeat visits Geuens (2023). Several recent studies have highlighted that food quality remains a crucial factor in influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty in restaurants. Research conducted in fast-food settings showed that food quality significantly contributes to customer satisfaction, leading to higher revisit intentions and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Similarly, Ong et al. (2022) highlighted that food quality is a significant factor in customer satisfaction, especially in fast-food settings. Their research suggests that higher food quality directly contributes to greater customer loyalty and repeat visits. In this context, elements like taste, texture, and freshness were identified as key factors that shape the dining experience and customer retention. Another study by Chaturvedi et al. (2024), indicated that high food quality increases customers' willingness to return to the same restaurant, emphasizing that when food meets or exceeds customer expectations, it leads to a stronger emotional connection with the brand (Chaturvedi et al., 2024). This connection further drives repeat visits, showcasing the powerful role food quality plays in determining dining choices and customer loyalty.

4.1.2 Price

The feedback from respondents indicated that the price of *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* was perceived as slightly too expensive, especially given the dish's average quality and taste. Customers felt that the value they received did not align with the price they paid, suggesting that the pricing strategy might need to be adjusted to better reflect the food's overall quality. This mismatch between price and perceived value could be a contributing factor to customer dissatisfaction and decreased repeat visits. A study from the journal "The Analysis of Marketing Factors Influencing Consumers' Preferences and Acceptance of Organic Food Products" by Melovic (2020) revealed that consumers' perception of the price/quality ratio is a critical factor influencing purchase decisions. These findings indicate that while price is important, consumers are more likely to accept higher prices if they feel the quality of the food is commensurate. It is important to align price with perceived quality in order to maintain consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Offering promotions or discounts can also help mitigate concerns about high prices and attract price-sensitive consumers.

In summary, the findings suggest that aligning price with perceived quality is crucial for consumer satisfaction. By reassessing the pricing strategy and exploring promotional options, *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* could improve customer perceptions of value, ultimately driving higher sales and enhancing customer loyalty.

4.1.3 Ambiance

The ambiance at G-Town Square was considered very important by respondents. The respondents generally appreciated the ambiance at *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* describing it as pleasant and enjoyable. Many customers mentioned that the environment contributed positively to their dining experience, creating a comfortable setting that enhanced their overall satisfaction. This feedback indicates that the ambiance is a significant strength for the outlet, as it aligns with customer expectations for a welcoming and relaxing dining atmosphere. Research indicates that the ambiance of a restaurant can influence consumers' perceptions of the food and services received. A well-designed ambiance can enhance the time customers spend at a restaurant, which in turn can increase their expenditure. Other research emphasizes that a pleasant ambiance can significantly boost overall customer satisfaction and be a primary reason for their return visits. The ambiance at G-Town Square plays a significant role in influencing customer satisfaction and revisit intentions. Research has shown that a well-designed and appealing restaurant ambiance greatly affects consumer perceptions, encouraging them to spend more time at the venue, which can ultimately lead to increased expenditure and higher overall satisfaction. For instance, a study found that 91% of casual dining patrons consider an appealing ambiance as a crucial factor in their decision to visit a restaurant, highlighting the importance of a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere (<https://www.fastcasual.com/news/research-shows-strong-connection-between-restaurant-ambiance-and-consumer-appeal/>). Further evidence supports the idea that a pleasant atmosphere directly correlates with customer satisfaction and return visits. Consumers who rate a restaurant's ambiance as "very good" are significantly more likely to rate their overall dining experience positively compared to those who view the ambiance unfavorably.

4.1.3 Service

The feedback regarding the service at *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* indicated that it was perceived as below average, with respondents leaning more toward the negative side. Respondents noted that while the service was not entirely poor, it lacked key elements that contribute to a positive dining experience. One specific observation was that the servers did not smile or engage warmly with the customers, which affected the overall atmosphere and made the experience less welcoming. Mary (2019) also finds that service quality significantly affects customer satisfaction and return intention in restaurants. Her study suggests that a positive dining experience is heavily influenced by the quality of service, which enhances customer satisfaction and motivates them to revisit the establishment. The challenge for G-Town Square lies in ensuring that their service quality remains consistently high, even during busy periods. Training staff to handle peak-time pressures, implementing efficient order management systems, and maintaining an adequate staff-to-customer ratio are crucial areas for improvement. Moreover, businesses should consider how they can leverage technology, such as self-service kiosks or mobile ordering apps, to streamline operations and reduce wait times, which could alleviate pressure on the staff and improve the overall service experience.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings from this study underscore the importance of food quality, price, ambiance, and service as critical factors influencing consumer preferences at G-Town Square. Each of these elements plays a significant role in shaping the overall dining experience, with food quality emerging as the most decisive factor in determining customer satisfaction. However, a more nuanced analysis reveals that while these factors individually contribute to customer satisfaction, their combined impact can be even more substantial, particularly when they are consistently aligned with consumer expectations.

To provide a clearer overview of these findings, the following table summarizes the feedback received on each of these elements, along with actionable recommendations and supporting research:

Table 1. Summary of Feedback, Recommendations, and Supporting Research for *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan*

Aspect	Feedback	Reccomendation	Supporting Research
Food Quality	The food at <i>Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan</i> is perceived as average, meeting basic expectations but not exceeding them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance taste, texture, and presentation to elevate the dish from "okay" to "exceptional." - Adjust seasoning and ingredient quality. - Innovate the recipe based on customer feedback to align with local market trends. 	- Food quality is a key determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Chaturvedi et al., 2024; Ong et al., 2022).
Price	Customers feel that the price is too high for the current quality of the food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review pricing strategy to better align with the perceived value. - Consider either improving food quality or lowering the price. - Offer promotions or discounts to attract price-sensitive customers and bridge the value-perception gap. 	- Customers are willing to pay higher prices when they perceive that the quality justifies the cost (Ong et al., 2022; Chaturvedi et al., 2024).
Ambiance	The ambiance is positively received, enhancing customer satisfaction and contributing to a pleasant dining experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain and enhance the ambiance to keep customer satisfaction high. - Continue refining elements like lighting, music, and seating comfort based on customer feedback. 	- A well-designed ambiance can increase satisfaction, customer spending, and repeat visits (Technomic, 2014; Nawawi et al., 2018).
Service	Service is	- Train staff to be	- Service quality,

perceived as below average, with staff lacking warmth and engagement.

more approachable, friendly, and attentive.

- Focus on small yet impactful gestures like smiling and positive customer interactions to create a welcoming environment.

including friendliness and attentiveness, is crucial in shaping customer satisfaction and return visits (Dam & Dam, 2021; Ong et al., 2022; Han & Hyun, 2017).

4.3 SUGGESTION

To improve *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* the primary focus should be on enhancing food quality to make it more flavorful and appealing, ensuring that it aligns with the current pricing or considering a price adjustment to better reflect its value. Improving service quality is also essential, with staff training programs emphasizing friendly engagement, such as smiling and being more attentive, to create a welcoming atmosphere. Maintaining and continually enhancing the ambiance, which is already a strength, can further elevate the dining experience. Regularly gathering customer feedback and implementing changes based on their insights will be crucial for sustained improvements. By focusing on these areas such as food quality, price-to-value alignment, service enhancement, and leveraging customer feedback. *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* can strengthen its market position and foster greater customer loyalty in the competitive environment of G-Town Square.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings from this study on *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* at G-Town Square highlights the need for targeted improvements in food quality, pricing, and service to meet consumer expectations and foster greater customer loyalty. While the ambiance has received positive feedback for its welcoming atmosphere, the food quality is currently perceived as average, lacking the distinctive flavors that could set it apart from competitors. Research shows that food quality is one of the most significant factors influencing customer satisfaction and repeat visits in the restaurant industry, with high-quality dishes directly linked to positive dining experiences and customer loyalty (Chaturvedi et al., 2024; Ong et al., 2022).

In terms of pricing, the current perception that *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* is too expensive for its quality suggests a mismatch between the price and the perceived value. Studies indicate that when customers feel that the price does not align with the quality of the food, their overall satisfaction decreases, which can negatively impact their intention to return to the establishment (Dam & Dam, 2021). Addressing this issue by either lowering the price or enhancing the dish's quality could improve value perception and attract more price-sensitive customers.

Service quality also plays a crucial role in shaping the overall customer experience. The feedback that service at *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* was below average, with staff lacking friendliness, is a critical area for improvement. According to research, positive service interactions, characterized by attentiveness and warmth, significantly enhance customer

satisfaction and encourage repeat visits (Han & Hyun, 2017). Investing in staff training to improve engagement and customer interaction could transform the service experience, making it more inviting and enjoyable for guests.

This study on *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* at G-Town Square highlights the importance of targeted improvements in food quality, pricing, and service to meet consumer expectations and foster loyalty. Policymakers and local businesses are encouraged to adapt based on these preferences to enhance culinary tourism in the region. Specifically, businesses could benefit from investing in regular staff training to improve service quality, emphasizing friendliness and attentiveness. Additionally, adjusting pricing strategies to better align with food quality could help capture price-sensitive customers, while introducing unique flavors or enhancing recipe quality could differentiate the outlet in a competitive market. For policymakers, supporting initiatives that promote hygiene, quality, and service standards across G-Town Square could strengthen its reputation as a culinary destination, benefiting both local businesses and the broader tourism economy.

Overall, the success of *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* in the competitive culinary landscape of G-Town Square will depend on its ability to align food quality, service, and pricing with customer expectations. Regularly gathering and responding to customer feedback will be essential in this process, helping to identify areas for ongoing improvement and innovation. By focusing on these critical aspects, *Nasi Goreng Mak Sutan* has the potential to enhance its reputation, increase customer loyalty, and secure a stronger position in the local culinary scene.

COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models, etc. have been used during the writing or editing of manuscripts. This explanation will include the name, version, model, and source of the generative AI technology and as well as all input prompts provided to the generative AI technology

Details of the AI usage are given below:

1. ChatGPT 4o.

- a) AI has been used during the writing of this article. The prompt prompted by author is to help author find journal article that is relevant from the internet. The following prompts could be "Please help me find journal research about consumer behavior and etc"

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