

Strategy For Improving Customer Satisfaction Towards Service Quality Perception And Brand Image In The Culinary Industry

*Improving
Customer
Satisfaction*

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ABSTRACT

The results of the analysis show that the perception of service quality has a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction. If the quality of service is improved, then customer satisfaction will also increase. Service quality is measured through various dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, and empathy, all of which contribute to the overall evaluation of the customer experience. The brand image also plays an important role in shaping customer satisfaction. Research found that brand image has a positive influence on customer satisfaction, although its impact is smaller compared to service quality. A positive brand image can enhance customers' perception of the quality of service provided. Research shows that the total impact of service quality on customer satisfaction is around 42.78%, while brand image contributes approximately 15.13%. In other words, service quality has a greater impact compared to the brand image in enhancing customer

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satisfaction. From this analysis, it can be concluded that to improve customer satisfaction in culinary industries, it is important to focus on enhancing service quality. This includes improvements in service responsiveness and reliability, as well as building a positive brand image. This, culinary industry can be more effective in meeting student expectations and increasing their satisfaction levels.

Keywords: Service Quality, Brand Image, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly competitive business era, service quality and brand image have become two key elements in determining a company's success. The quality of service perceived by customers is a subjective assessment of how the service provided by the company is able to meet or even exceed their expectations. This includes aspects such as reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and physical evidence of the service provided. On the other hand, brand image reflects consumers' perceptions and views of a brand, which are formed through direct experiences, marketing communications, and social interactions. A positive brand image can build trust, enhance customer loyalty, and create a sustainable competitive advantage. The relationship between service quality and brand image becomes very important in determining customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction itself is a measure of how well the products or services provided by the company meet the needs and expectations of the customers. Satisfied customers tend to return to use the service, recommend the brand to others, and become part of a loyal customer community.

In the era of globalization and increasingly fierce business competition, companies are required to provide the best for their customers. Customer satisfaction has become a crucial factor for the sustainability and success of a business. Satisfied customers tend to be loyal, make repeat purchases, and recommend products or services to others. Therefore, companies are competing to enhance customer satisfaction through various strategies. Two main factors that greatly influence customer satisfaction are perceived service quality and brand image, among others:

1. Perceived Service Quality

Service quality is not just about providing good service, but also about how customers perceive that service. This perception is subjective and influenced by expectations, previous experiences, and information received by the customer. If the service received meets or exceeds customer expectations, then the customer will feel satisfied. On the contrary, if the service received falls below expectations, the customer will feel disappointed.

Service quality refers to how well the service provided meets customer expectations. Service quality is measured based on the service provider's ability to consistently meet customer expectations. This quality can be assessed through several dimensions, such as:

- Tangible (Physical Evidence): The physical aspects of the service, including facilities and equipment.
- Reliability: The ability to provide services as promised.
- Responsiveness: Speed and accuracy in providing services.
- Assurance: The knowledge and attitude of staff in instilling confidence in customers.
- Empathy (Empati): Attention and understanding of customer needs.

2. Brand Image

Brand image is the perception or view of the public towards a brand. A positive brand image can build trust, loyalty, and customer preference. Customers tend to choose brands with a good image because they are considered more trustworthy and of higher quality. A strong brand image can also influence customer expectations regarding service quality. Aaker (1992) states that brand image encompasses all the information and impressions that consumers have about the brand, which can influence their purchasing decisions.

3. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction occurs when their expectations are met or exceeded by the quality of service and brand image. Research shows that there is a positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction; the better the service quality, the higher the level of customer satisfaction. Additionally, a positive brand image also contributes to satisfaction, as customers tend to feel more satisfied with their experiences if they have a good perception of the brand.

The perceived service quality and brand image are interrelated and together influence customer satisfaction. A positive brand image can enhance customer expectations regarding service quality. If the company is able to provide services that meet or exceed those expectations, customer satisfaction will increase. On the other hand, even if the company provides good service, if its brand image is poor, customers may still feel dissatisfied because their expectations were low from the beginning.

Understanding and managing perceived service quality and brand image is very important because:

- **Increasing Customer Loyalty:** Satisfied customers tend to be loyal and make repeat purchases.
- **Improving Company Reputation:** A good brand image can enhance the company's reputation in the eyes of the public.
- **Improving Competitiveness:** Companies with good service quality and brand image will excel in business competition.
- **Increasing Profitability:** Loyal customers and a good reputation can boost the company's sales and profitability.

The perceived service quality and brand image are important factors that influence customer satisfaction. Companies need to invest in improving service quality and building a positive brand image to achieve optimal customer satisfaction and business success. Overall, perceived service quality and brand image play a crucial role in determining customer satisfaction. Companies need to focus on improving these two aspects to create a positive experience for customers, which in turn will enhance loyalty and word-of-mouth recommendations. Efforts to understand and manage these perceptions are crucial in today's era of business competition.

RESEARCH METHOD

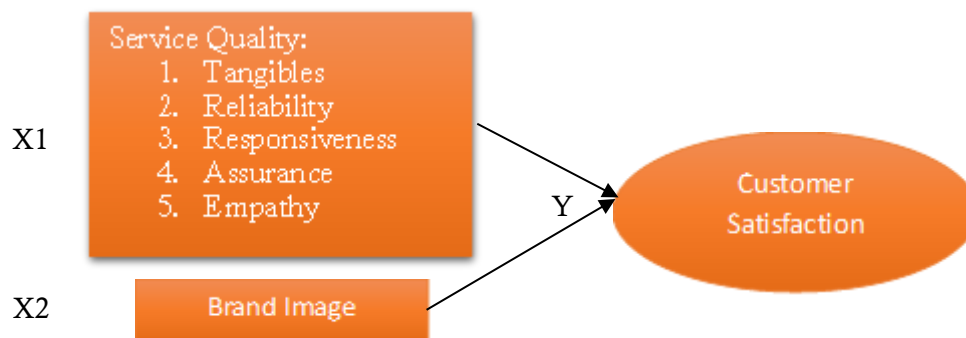
Research on the influence of service quality and brand image on customer satisfaction is an important topic in the field of management and marketing. Service quality refers to how well the provided service meets customer expectations, while brand image reflects consumer perception of a brand. This research aims to analyze how these two factors contribute to customer satisfaction, especially in the context of culinary industries or services.

The results of several studies indicate that:

- Service quality has a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction, with a path coefficient of approximately 0.548.
- Brand image also contributes positively to customer satisfaction, with a path coefficient of 0.349.
- Overall, service quality and brand image can explain about 70% of the variation in customer satisfaction.

Research shows that improving service quality and strengthening brand image can significantly increase customer satisfaction. Therefore, culinary industries and service providers need to focus on improving these two aspects to retain and attract new customers. Further research is recommended to involve a larger sample to make the results more representative of various industry contexts.

RESEARCH VARIABLE



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The culinary business has currently become a focus and is in demand by entrepreneurs because it has promising prospects. Culinary business entrepreneurs must be more creative and innovative in providing services to consumers with the aim of creating satisfaction. According to Kotler (2008), service quality is an action by entrepreneurs to be offered to consumers, which essentially manifests or does not result in any ownership. The five dimensions that influence service quality are physical evidence, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

Component of the service quality dimension physical evidence, which is the ability of a company to demonstrate its existence to external parties, the capability of the restaurant's physical facilities and infrastructure, and the condition of the environment. Next is reliability, which is the ability to provide the promised service promptly, accurately, and satisfactorily; responsiveness, which is being quick (responsive) and precise to customers and conveying clear information; assurance, which involves certainty, knowledge, and courtesy from the restaurant staff to build customer trust; and empathy, which is providing sincere individual attention to understand customer desires.

Besides the quality of service, price perception also affects consumer satisfaction. Price perception is the view regarding price on how consumers perceive price, with the intention that high or low and reasonable prices have a strong influence on purchase intention and purchase satisfaction. Price becomes an important factor for culinary businesses and can be said to have an influence on consumers to purchase the product. Next, taste is predicted to be a factor that influences consumer satisfaction in the culinary business. Taste is an attribute that consists of appearance, flavor, aroma, texture, and temperature, which can form a collaboration of the five human senses. So, with the presence of this taste, if what is offered meets the desires, it can generate a sense of satisfaction for the consumers.

Consumer satisfaction is a key element in the success of the culinary business. Culinary business operators certainly understand that customer satisfaction is paramount. If customers are satisfied with the service and the food served, there is a high possibility that they will make repeat purchases. The increase in the number of loyal customers can be interpreted as the success of the business in building bonds with its customers, which will certainly lead to an increase in sales.

Understanding the relationship between perceived service quality, brand image, and customer satisfaction is key to business success, especially in competitive industries like culinary. Good service quality and a positive brand image can create a satisfying customer experience, which in turn increases customer loyalty and retention. Service quality is the main factor that influences customer satisfaction. Research shows that there is a significant positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. The better the quality of service provided, the higher the level of customer satisfaction. This is in line with the findings that service quality significantly contributes to consumer

satisfaction, with the correlation coefficient value indicating a strong relationship between the two variables.

The brand image also has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. A positive brand image can enhance customer perceptions of products and services, thereby encouraging them to feel more satisfied. Research shows that brand image is positively related to customer satisfaction; the better the brand image, the higher the customer satisfaction. These two variables do not only stand alone but also interact with each other. Good service quality can strengthen brand image, while a strong brand image can enhance the perception of service quality. Understanding the relationship between perceived service quality, brand image, and customer satisfaction is very important for businesses because these three factors are interconnected and influence the long-term success of an enterprise, especially in competitive industries like food and beverage. Ways to understand that relationship include:

1. Service Quality

- a. Definition: This is the subjective assessment of customers regarding the quality of service they receive. Not just the service provided, but how that service is perceived by the customers.
- b. Dimension of Service Quality: Generally measured by SERVQUAL (Service Quality) which includes:
 - Reliability: The ability to deliver promised services accurately and consistently. For example: orders arrive on time and as expected, the taste of the food is always the same.
 - Responsiveness: Willingness and speed in assisting customers and providing the needed services. Example: the waiter is quick to respond when called, quickly resolves complaints.
 - Assurance: The knowledge and politeness of employees as well as their ability to foster customer trust and confidence. Example: friendly and informative employees, maintained cleanliness of the restaurant.
 - Empathy: Attention and care given to customers on an individual basis. Example: remembering customer preferences, and providing personalized solutions.
 - Physical Evidence (Tangibles): The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials. Example: attractive restaurant interior design, cleanliness of dining utensils, neat appearance of employees.
- c. Influence on Satisfaction: Positively perceived service quality will increase customer satisfaction. Conversely, negative perceptions will decrease satisfaction.

2. Brand Image

- a. Definition: The perception, belief, and impression that customers have towards a brand. This includes functional aspects (such as product quality) and emotional aspects (such as prestige, and lifestyle).
- b. Brand Image Formation: Formed through various means, including:
 - Customer firsthand experience: Interaction with products and services.
 - Marketing communication: Advertising, promotions, social media.
 - Word-of-mouth: Recommendations from others.
 - Company reputation: News and information about the company.
- c. Influence on Satisfaction: A strong and positive brand image can enhance customer satisfaction, even if there are minor shortcomings in the service. Customers tend to overlook minor mistakes if they have a good image of the brand.

3. Customer Satisfaction

- a. Definition: Customer evaluation of their experience with a product or service. This is the result of a comparison between customer expectations and the actual performance they experience.

- b. Measurement of Satisfaction: This can be measured through surveys, customer feedback, and sales data analysis.
- c. Impact of Satisfaction: Satisfied customers tend to make repeat purchases, recommend the business to others, and become loyal customers.

Building a positive brand image is very important for business success. A good brand image can increase consumer trust, loyalty, and ultimately, sales. Here are some effective strategies to build a positive brand image:

1. Understanding and Defining Brand Identity
 - Know Your Audience: Understand who your target market is, what their needs and desires are, and the values they hold. This will help you tailor your message and brand strategy.
 - Define Brand Values and Mission: Determine the core values you want to represent through your brand. What makes you unique? What do you stand for? The brand mission must be clear and easy to understand.
 - Create a Strong Visual Identity: Logos, colors, typography, and other visual design elements must be consistent and reflect your brand's message and values. Make sure your visual identity is easy to remember and recognize.
2. Creating and Delivering Quality Content
 - Relevant and Useful Content: Create content that is relevant to your target audience and provides added value to them. Content can include blog articles, video tutorials, infographics, social media content, and more.
 - Consistency in Communication: Ensure that all communication, both online and offline, is consistent with your brand's identity and message. Use language and style that align with your target market.
 - Tell Your Brand Story: Share the origins of your brand, its struggles, and its vision. An interesting story can build an emotional connection with consumers.
3. Building Good Relationships with Consumers
 - Authentic Interaction: Interact with customers authentically and responsively. Respond to their questions and comments quickly and kindly.
 - Excellent Customer Service: Provide the best customer service. Handle complaints professionally and provide satisfactory solutions.
 - Get Involved in the Community: Engage with communities relevant to your business. This can help you build relationships with potential customers and increase brand visibility.
 - Honest and Transparent: In the era of free information, honesty and transparency are key. Don't let your brand be tarnished by dishonesty. Openness builds trust.
4. Utilizing Social Media and Online Platforms
 - Consistency Across Platforms: Ensure your brand identity is consistent across all online platforms, including websites, social media, and other platforms.
 - Two-Way Interaction: Engage in two-way conversations on social media to strengthen relationships with customers.
 - Leverage Online Reviews: Encourage customers to leave positive reviews about your products or services on online platforms.
5. Monitoring and Evaluating
 - Monitor Your Brand Image: Use social media and online monitoring tools to track how your brand is perceived by the public.
 - Evaluate and Improve: Conduct regular evaluations of your brand image strategy and make improvements if necessary.

Addressing customer complaints and maintaining their satisfaction are important aspects of customer relationship management. Here are effective steps that can be taken to handle complaints well:

1. Listening Attentively

Listening to customer complaints attentively is the crucial first step. Make sure not to interrupt the conversation and take note of the important points conveyed. This shows that you value their opinion and are willing to understand the issue in depth.

2. Showing Empathy

Show empathy towards the customer's feelings. Acknowledging the discomfort they experienced and sincerely apologizing can help ease a tense situation. It's not just about acknowledging mistakes, but also about building positive emotional relationships.

3. Understanding the Problem in Detail

After listening, it is important to delve deeper into the issues faced by the customer. Ask clarifying questions to ensure that you understand the core of the problem well. The more detailed information you have, the easier it will be to provide the right solution.

4. Providing the Right Solution

After understanding the problem, offer several solutions that are acceptable to the customer. This could be a product replacement, a discount on the next purchase, or even a refund, depending on the situation at hand. Make sure to explain the solution clearly and confirm whether it meets the customer's expectations.

5. Taking Further Action

After providing a solution, follow up to ensure that the issue has been resolved and the customer is satisfied with the resolution. Communicate the developments to the customers so that they feel attended to and appreciated.

6. Document the Complaint

Recording every complaint and how it is handled is very important for future analysis. In this way, you can identify patterns or recurring issues that need to be addressed systematically.

7. Be Responsive and Flexible

Respond to complaints quickly and be flexible in facing difficult situations. Customers appreciate a quick response and the willingness to adapt to their needs.

The service quality concept developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry is widely used in measuring service quality. The three figures have identified five gaps in the service production process.

GAP 1

The gap that arises between consumer expectations and management perceptions. This gap arises as a result of management's ignorance about the quality of service expected by consumers. As a result, the design and standards of the services delivered become inadequate, causing the company to fail in fulfilling its promises to consumers. So, the gap between consumer expectations and management perceptions is the source of another gap.

GAP 2

The gap between management's perception of consumer expectations and the specifications of service quality. Management here includes all parties responsible and authorized to create or modify policies, procedures, and service standards. This gap arises because managers set service quality specifications based on what they believe consumers want, even though it may not be accurate. As a result, many service organizations have focused on technical quality, whereas in reality, what consumers consider more important is the quality related to the presentation of the service. The emergence of this gap is due to the lack of direct interaction between management and consumers, the reluctance to ask about consumer expectations, and management's unpreparedness to communicate both.

GAP 3

The gap between the specified quality of service and the service delivered. This gap usually arises in services where the delivery system heavily relies on employees. Accurate perceptions of consumer expectations are indeed important, but they are not enough to guarantee the delivery of the best service quality. Managers face difficulties in translating

their understanding of consumer expectations into service quality specifications. Therefore, another requirement that needs to be met is the creation of standard designs that reflect an accurate perception of consumer expectations. This gap indicates the need for consumer-oriented service design and standards built on consumer needs that are easily understood and measured by consumers. The operational standards are set according to consumer expectations and priorities, not based on the company's efficiency and effectiveness perspective.

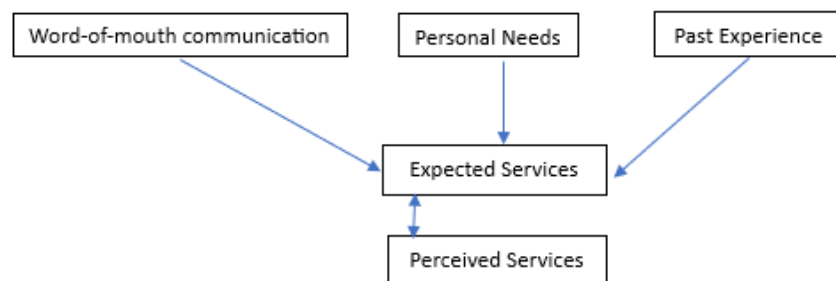
GAP 4

The gap between the actual service delivery and external communication to consumers. The promise conveyed may potentially not only raise expectations that will become the standard of service quality to be received by consumers, but also enhance the perception of the service to be delivered to them.

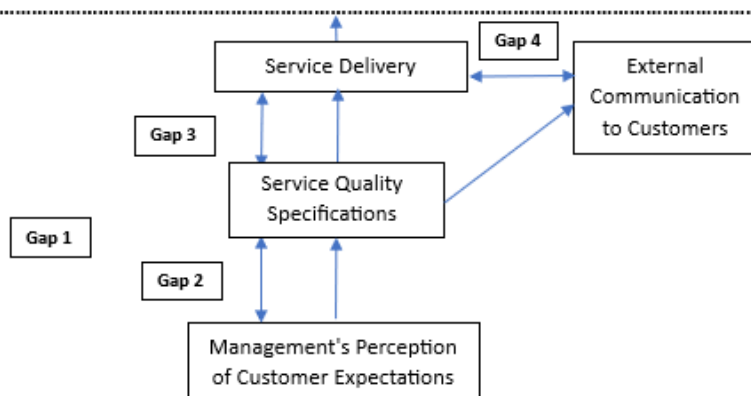
GAP 5

The gap between the expected service and the actual service received by the consumer. This gap shows the difference between the actual service received by the consumer and the expected service.

CONSUMER



MARKETER

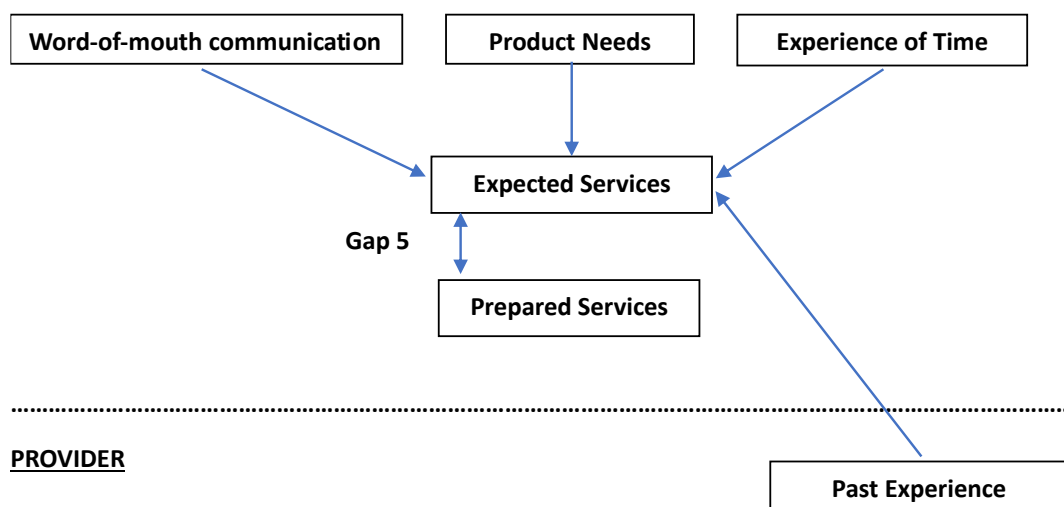


Sumber: Zeithaml dkk (1992, Hal 40)

Concept Service Quality

SERVQUAL focuses on measuring and understanding customer perceptions regarding service quality. Through research conducted by Zeithaml, it was found that there are 4 gaps that cause the failure of service quality received by customers, and the subsequent failure occurs in gap 5. The key to closing gap 5 is by closing gaps 1 to 4. Gap 5 is the gap between the service received and the service expected. This gap occurs when customers measure the company's performance in a different way or incorrectly perceive the quality of the service. The key causes of the quality expected by customers are word-of-mouth communication, personal needs, past experiences, and external communication from the company. This can be seen in the following image:

CONSUMER



GAP 5 Service Quality Concept

A satisfying dining experience is one of the things sought by most restaurant customers. Therefore, restaurant management should always focus on enhancing their customers' experience. Various tips that can be implemented to enhance the customer experience in the culinary business include the following:

1. Focus on Food Quality/ The quality of food can be the main foundation for a good dining experience. Make sure that all the dishes served in the restaurant have high-quality flavors. Use fresh and high-quality ingredients. In addition, make sure that the staff also have adequate skills in preparing the dishes.
2. Create a Pleasant Atmosphere. The atmosphere of a restaurant has a significant impact on the customer experience. Make sure that the interior design can create a comfortable atmosphere. Consider factors such as lighting, decoration, and background music to create a more pleasant atmosphere.
3. Provide Friendly Service. Friendly and professional service can make a big difference in the customer experience. Train the staff to always be friendly, polite, and responsive to customer needs. Make sure that they have sufficient knowledge about the menu and can provide good recommendations.
4. Consider the Speed of Service. Long wait times can diminish the customer experience. Ensure that the service in the restaurant is efficient and responsive. Pay attention to the workflow in the kitchen and on the restaurant floor to ensure that food is served quickly without compromising quality.
5. Provide a Wide Range of Menu Options. Customers have diverse tastes, so it's important to provide a wide menu selection. Include dish options for various tastes. If customers have dietary needs, consider providing vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free menu options.
6. Provide Additional Experience. To make the customer experience more memorable, consider providing additional experiences beyond food. The experience could take the form of live music events, cooking classes, or special menus for specific celebrations such as birthdays or other festivities.
7. Use Technology Wisely. Currently, technology can be a supporting tool to enhance the customer experience. Consider using a digital menu system that can be ordered through a smartphone. With this, the ordering process will become faster.
8. Conduct Evaluation and Improvement. Stay open to customer feedback and always strive to improve. Ask customers to provide reviews about their experiences and use that information to make improvements if necessary.

CONCLUSION

Service quality and brand image have a significant impact on customer satisfaction in the culinary industry. Good service quality contributes positively to customer satisfaction. This is evident from the analysis results which show that the service quality variable has a significant impact on consumer satisfaction, with the coefficient value indicating the greatest influence on responsiveness. Efficient and responsive service not only increases satisfaction but also has the potential to enhance customer loyalty towards a particular culinary brand. A positive brand image significantly enhances customer satisfaction. Research indicates that the better the brand image of a restaurant, the higher the level of customer satisfaction. Brand image also plays a role in influencing purchasing decisions, where consumers tend to choose products from brands they perceive as having a good reputation.

These two factors do not only stand alone but also interact with each other. Good service quality can enhance brand image, while a strong brand image can reinforce positive perceptions of service quality. There is a positive relationship between service quality and brand image towards customer satisfaction, where both support each other in creating a positive experience for consumers. Culinary entrepreneurs are expected to continuously improve service quality and build a strong brand image to achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction. Overall, focusing on improving service quality and managing a good brand image is key to creating high customer satisfaction in the culinary industry.

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