

SERVICE EXCELLENCE AS THE KEY TO IMPROVING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF CULINARY MSMEs IN THE MODERN COMPETITIVE ERA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN RT 001 RW 005 KUNINGAN TIMUR, SOUTH JAKARTA

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ABSTRACT

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a strategic role in supporting Indonesia's economic growth, particularly in the culinary sector, where increasing competition requires businesses to compete not only through product quality but also through service quality. Although service excellence has been widely discussed in various service industries, limited studies have explored its implementation among culinary MSMEs using a qualitative approach. Therefore, this study focuses on culinary MSMEs in RT 001 RW 005 Kuningan Timur, South Jakarta, an area characterized by intense business competition. This study aims to analyze the role of service excellence in improving the competitiveness of culinary MSMEs and to identify practical solutions for its implementation. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed involving 22 culinary MSME owners. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The findings reveal that the implementation of the six dimensions of service excellence strengthens customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, business reputation, and competitive advantage by encouraging repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth. The study concludes that service excellence should become an integral business strategy for culinary MSMEs to strengthen their competitiveness and business sustainability. These findings contribute practical guidance for MSME owners in developing customer-oriented service strategies while enriching the literature on service excellence in the context of Indonesian culinary MSMEs.

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INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are recognized as one of the most significant contributors to Indonesia's economic development. Besides creating employment opportunities, MSMEs

contribute substantially to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and strengthen local economic resilience. The culinary sector is among the fastest-growing MSME sectors due to increasing consumer demand and relatively low barriers to entry. Nevertheless, the rapid expansion of culinary businesses has intensified market competition, requiring business owners to continuously develop competitive advantages beyond product quality alone.

The current business environment indicates that customers no longer evaluate businesses solely based on product quality or price. Instead, purchasing decisions are increasingly influenced by service experiences, including responsiveness, professionalism, cleanliness, effective communication, and the ability to resolve customer complaints. Consequently, service excellence has become an important strategic capability for creating customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and sustainable competitive advantage.

Service excellence refers to the provision of services that consistently meet or exceed customer expectations. It encompasses several important dimensions, including attitude, attention, action, ability, appearance, and accountability. The successful implementation of these dimensions creates positive customer experiences, increases customer satisfaction, strengthens customer trust, and eventually contributes to sustainable competitive advantages. In the era of digital transformation, positive customer experiences are rapidly disseminated through online reviews and social media, making service quality even more influential in shaping business reputation.

Service excellence has evolved from an operational activity into a strategic capability that strengthens organizational competitiveness. (Thomas-Francois Kimberly and Shen, 2021) argue that integrating technological innovation with customer-centric services enhances organizational resilience and supports long-term competitiveness. In addition to direct customer interactions, digital communication has become an essential component of service excellence. The rapid development of social media enables businesses to strengthen customer engagement, improve organizational relationships, and encourage purchasing behavior. (Dias et al., 2022) demonstrated that customer engagement through social media positively influences relationship quality, purchase intention, and recommendation intention. These findings indicate that digital platforms have become an integral part of customer-oriented service strategies, particularly for MSMEs seeking to expand market reach while maintaining close relationships with customers.

Similar evidence from the telecommunications industry also highlights the strategic importance of service excellence. (Aldouri, 2024) found that integrating service quality with marketing mix elements improves organizational performance, customer satisfaction, and competitive advantage in emerging markets. These findings suggest that service excellence should be viewed as a strategic capability that supports long-term business sustainability.

The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction has also been confirmed in public utility services. (Lubuzo & Mapuranga, 2026) found that service quality significantly influences service excellence, which subsequently enhances customer satisfaction in municipal water services. Their findings indicate that service quality dimensions, particularly reliability, assurance, and empathy, play an important role in shaping customers' perceptions of service excellence across different service sectors.

In the hospitality industry, (Hariandja & Santo, 2026) demonstrated that dynamic marketing capability and service innovation capability significantly improve hotel performance through the mediating role of service excellence, while brand identity strengthens these relationships. Their findings suggest that hotels capable of continuously developing marketing and service innovation capabilities are better positioned to deliver superior service excellence and achieve sustainable organizational performance. (Hariandja et al., 2021) found that dynamic marketing capability positively influences service excellence and brand satisfaction from customers' perspectives, highlighting the importance of customer-oriented marketing strategies in strengthening competitive advantage within the hospitality industry. Although these studies were conducted in the hospitality industry, their findings are highly relevant to culinary MSMEs because both sectors rely heavily on customer interactions, service quality, and relationship-building as sources of competitive advantage.

Within the Indonesian context, empirical studies have consistently shown that customer-oriented service improves organizational performance and customer satisfaction. (Hidayatullah, 2024) reported that implementing service excellence in the Public Service Mall of Hulu Sungai Utara enhanced service quality through transparency, accountability, participation, and equality in public service delivery. Similarly,

(Prasetyo & Yani, 2020) found that service excellence, customer relationship management (CRM), and customer satisfaction significantly strengthen customer loyalty. More recently, (Noviono, 2025) demonstrated that service quality and CRM positively influence customer satisfaction by improving responsiveness, reliability, empathy, and value creation in service delivery. Collectively, these findings suggest that organizations implementing customer-oriented service systems are more likely to improve customer satisfaction, organizational performance, and long-term customer relationships.

Research focusing specifically on hospitality and small businesses also supports these conclusions. (Prasetyo & Yani, 2020) revealed that implementing service excellence significantly increased customer satisfaction at Hotel Walan Syariah Sidoarjo. Meanwhile, (Jasmine et al., 2025) reported that service excellence directly contributes to customer satisfaction and sales growth among traditional food vendors (Warteg) in Jakarta. These findings suggest that regardless of organizational scale, service excellence remains one of the primary determinants of business competitiveness.

Previous studies have demonstrated that service excellence improves customer satisfaction, loyalty and organizational performance across various sectors, including public services, hospitality, telecommunications, and healthcare. However, these studies predominantly employ quantitative approaches and focus on large organizations or formal service institutions. Limited attention has been given to understanding how service excellence is implemented by culinary MSMEs at the community level, particularly through an in-depth qualitative perspective that explores business owners' experiences and practical challenges. Consequently, empirical evidence regarding how service excellence contributes to the competitiveness of culinary MSMEs in urban communities remains limited.

Despite extensive studies across tourism, hospitality, telecommunications, public services, healthcare, and retail sectors, relatively few studies have specifically examined how service excellence contributes to strengthening the competitiveness of culinary MSMEs using qualitative approaches. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this research gap by exploring the implementation of service excellence among culinary MSMEs in RT 001 RW 005 Kuningan Timur, South Jakarta, thereby providing practical implications for MSME development in Indonesia.

Field observations conducted in RT 001 RW 005 Kuningan Timur, Setiabudi District, South Jakarta, indicate that although many culinary MSMEs have successfully maintained product quality, several business owners still pay limited attention to standardized customer service practices. Some businesses prioritize production output while overlooking customer interaction, complaint handling, and overall service consistency. As a result, customer dissatisfaction and complaints occasionally occur, reducing opportunities to build long-term customer relationships.

Considering these conditions, improving service quality becomes an essential strategy for strengthening MSME competitiveness. Service excellence not only improves customer satisfaction but also enhances customer loyalty, encourages repeat purchases, promotes positive word-of-mouth marketing, and strengthens business sustainability. Previous studies consistently demonstrate that high-quality service positively influences customer satisfaction and long-term organizational performance. Therefore, implementing service excellence should become a strategic priority for culinary MSMEs operating in highly competitive business environments.

This study offers a different perspective by qualitatively examining the implementation of the six dimensions of service excellence (attitude, attention, action, ability, appearance, and accountability) among culinary MSMEs in an urban community. Rather than merely measuring the relationship between variables, this research explores how service excellence is practiced in daily business activities and identifies practical strategies that can strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of culinary MSMEs.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of service excellence in improving the competitiveness of culinary MSMEs and to identify practical service excellence strategies that can strengthen customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and business sustainability. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on service excellence in the context of Indonesian culinary MSMEs while providing practical recommendations for MSME owners and policymakers.

METHOD



This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the implementation and role of service excellence in improving the competitiveness of culinary Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) located in RT 001 RW 005 Kuningan Timur, Setiabudi District, South Jakarta. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to obtain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors within their natural business environment. This approach emphasizes the interpretation of social phenomena through direct interaction with research participants, allowing comprehensive exploration of service practices implemented by culinary MSMEs.

The research was conducted at culinary MSMEs operating in RT 001 RW 005 Kuningan Timur, South Jakarta. The study involved 22 culinary MSME owners who were selected purposively because they actively manage their businesses and interact directly with customers. These participants were considered capable of providing comprehensive information regarding customer service practices and business management.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on predetermined criteria to ensure that the information obtained was relevant to the research objectives. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) owning or managing a culinary MSME located in RT 001 RW 005 Kuningan Timur; (2) operating the business for at least one year; (3) being directly involved in serving customers and making operational decisions; and (4) being willing to participate voluntarily in the research. The sample size of 22 participants was considered sufficient because data saturation was achieved, indicated by the repetition of similar information and the absence of substantially new themes during the final interviews.

Data collection employed three complementary techniques, namely observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to identify actual service practices, business cleanliness, employee appearance, customer interaction, responsiveness, and other service excellence indicators implemented by culinary MSMEs. In-depth interviews were carried out with business owners to explore their understanding, experiences, challenges, and strategies related to service excellence implementation. Documentation was utilized to support primary findings through business records, government documents, photographs, and other relevant written materials.

The research instrument consisted of observation guidelines and semi-structured interview guides developed based on the A6 Service Excellence Model proposed by Barata in (Tsamara & Nugraha, 2020). The observed indicators included attitude, attention, action, ability, appearance, and accountability, which represent the fundamental dimensions of service excellence. These indicators were used to evaluate the consistency of customer service provided by culinary MSMEs.

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman, consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, interview transcripts and observation results were categorized according to research objectives. Subsequently, the organized data were presented descriptively to identify recurring patterns and relationships among the service excellence dimensions. Finally, conclusions were formulated after comparing information obtained from different data sources to ensure consistency and credibility.

The research was conducted over approximately Six months, from September 2025 to March 2026. Field observations were carried out before the interviews to understand the actual service practices implemented by culinary MSMEs. Each in-depth interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes, depending on the participant's availability and the complexity of the information provided. All interviews were conducted face-to-face at the participants' business locations after obtaining their informed consent.

The interview guide was developed according to the A6 Service Excellence model proposed by Barata. Examples of interview questions included: (1) How do you greet and communicate with customers? (Attitude); (2) How do you identify and respond to customer needs? (Attention); (3) What actions do you take when customers submit complaints? (Action); (4) How do you explain products and provide recommendations? (Ability); (5) How do you maintain personal appearance and business cleanliness? (Appearance); and (6) How do you take responsibility for service failures or customer complaints? (Accountability). These indicators were also used as observation guidelines during field visits.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied source triangulation by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. In addition, member checking was

conducted by presenting summaries of the interview results to several participants to confirm that the researchers' interpretations accurately reflected their experiences and opinions. Any discrepancies identified during this process were clarified through follow-up discussions before the final analysis was completed. Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the study by obtaining participants' voluntary consent, ensuring confidentiality, and using the collected information exclusively for academic purposes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION, RESULT

The Role of Service Excellence in Improving the Competitiveness of Culinary MSMEs

The findings reveal that service excellence has become one of the most influential factors in enhancing the competitiveness of culinary MSMEs in RT 001 RW 005 Kuningan Timur, South Jakarta. Although product quality remains essential, respondents acknowledged that customers increasingly evaluate businesses based on the quality of services they receive. Friendly interactions, prompt responses, business cleanliness, and effective communication significantly influence customers' purchasing decisions and their willingness to revisit the business.

Observations indicate that most culinary business owners have attempted to implement service excellence through polite greetings, maintaining cleanliness, providing accurate product information, and responding quickly to customer requests. Customers perceived these practices as indicators of professionalism and reliability, contributing positively to customer satisfaction. Businesses that consistently demonstrated excellent service tended to receive more repeat customers than those emphasizing product quality alone.

Interview findings indicate that customer service has become an important consideration in maintaining business competitiveness. One participant stated:

"Customers usually come back not only because of the food, but because they feel welcomed. We always greet customers politely, explain the menu, and immediately respond if there is a complaint." (Informant 7)

Another participant explained:

"Nowadays customers often share their experiences through WhatsApp and social media. Good service encourages them to recommend our business to others, while poor service spreads very quickly." (Informant 14)

These statements confirm the observation results that customer-oriented service practices contribute to repeat purchases and strengthen customer trust.

These findings support the concept proposed by Barata (2003), which emphasizes that excellent service consists of six integrated dimensions: attitude, attention, action, ability, appearance, and accountability. The study found that these dimensions complement each other in creating positive customer experiences. For example, courteous attitudes accompanied by effective communication encourage customers to feel respected, while quick and responsible actions increase customer confidence in the business.

From the interviews, business owners also explained that service excellence has become increasingly important because customers frequently share their experiences through social media and online messaging applications. Positive service experiences often lead to recommendations among relatives and friends, whereas poor service may spread rapidly and negatively affect business reputation. Therefore, service quality functions not only as an operational activity but also as an effective marketing strategy in the digital era.

Field observations also revealed differences in service practices among MSMEs. Businesses that consistently maintained cleanliness, greeted customers politely, and responded promptly to customer requests generally attracted more repeat customers than businesses focusing primarily on product quality. These observations strengthen the interview findings that service excellence represents a practical source of competitive advantage for culinary MSMEs.

The findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that service quality significantly influences customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Customers who experience excellent service are more likely to conduct repeat purchases, recommend the business to others, and develop long-term relationships with service providers. Consequently, service excellence contributes directly to strengthening the competitive position of culinary MSMEs within increasingly competitive markets.



Implementation of Service Excellence in Culinary MSMEs

The implementation of service excellence among culinary MSMEs demonstrates varying levels of consistency. Several business owners have successfully integrated customer-oriented service into their daily business activities, while others continue to experience difficulties in maintaining standardized service quality due to limited human resources and business management experience.

One of the strongest dimensions observed during the research was attitude. Most respondents consistently greeted customers politely and attempted to create comfortable interactions. Positive interpersonal communication helped establish emotional connections between business owners and customers, increasing customer satisfaction.

The attention dimension was reflected in business owners' willingness to listen to customer requests, provide product recommendations, and respond to complaints appropriately. Customers appreciated personalized services because they felt valued rather than treated merely as buyers.

Regarding action, respondents generally served customers promptly, prepared orders efficiently, and minimized waiting time. Although several businesses experienced limitations during peak operating hours, they continuously attempted to maintain service quality by prioritizing customer needs.

The appearance dimension was demonstrated through maintaining personal hygiene, clean uniforms, organized food displays, and comfortable dining environments. Customers associated clean business environments with food safety and product quality, increasing their confidence in purchasing food products.

Meanwhile, the ability dimension involved communication skills, product knowledge, and problem-solving capacity. Business owners capable of explaining menu variations and handling customer complaints professionally tended to receive more positive evaluations from customers.

Finally, accountability was reflected in business owners' willingness to correct service errors, replace inappropriate products, and take responsibility for customer complaints without creating conflict. This behavior strengthened customer trust and encouraged repeat business.

Participants emphasized that consistency is more important than occasional excellent service. As one business owner explained:

"Even when we are busy, we try to smile and respond politely because customers remember how they are treated." (Informant 11)

Another participant stated:

"If there is a mistake with an order, we immediately apologize and replace it. Customers appreciate honesty more than excuses." (Informant 18)

Overall, the implementation of these six service excellence dimensions contributed positively to business performance and customer loyalty.

Challenges in Implementing Service Excellence

Despite recognizing the importance of service excellence, respondents identified several challenges limiting its consistent implementation. The most frequently mentioned obstacles included limited financial resources, insufficient employee training, increasing operational costs, and the absence of standardized service procedures.

Many culinary MSMEs remain family-operated businesses with limited workforce capacity. During busy periods, business owners often prioritize production activities over customer interaction, causing slower service responses. Additionally, most respondents had never participated in formal customer service training, resulting in service practices based primarily on personal experience rather than standardized procedures.

During field observations, researchers found that several businesses experienced difficulties maintaining service consistency during peak hours because owners simultaneously handled food preparation, cashier duties, and customer interactions. Consequently, waiting times increased and customer communication became less effective. This finding illustrates that limited human resources remain one of the primary barriers to implementing service excellence among small culinary businesses.

Another challenge concerns digital transformation. Customers increasingly expect businesses to respond quickly through digital communication platforms and online ordering applications. However, several

MSMEs still have limited digital literacy, reducing their ability to provide integrated customer services across online and offline channels.

Service Excellence as a Strategic Solution for Culinary MSMEs

The research indicates that service excellence provides practical solutions for improving the competitiveness of culinary MSMEs. One important strategy involves developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for customer service to ensure consistency regardless of who serves customers. Standardized procedures reduce service variability and improve operational efficiency.

Training programs focusing on communication skills, complaint handling, customer relationship management, and digital customer service should also be conducted regularly. Such programs will improve employee competencies and strengthen customer-oriented organizational culture.

Several participants suggested that simple service guidelines would help employees provide more consistent customer service. They also expressed the need for practical training on complaint handling and digital customer communication, particularly for businesses that actively use online food delivery applications.

Business owners should continuously evaluate customer satisfaction through direct feedback, suggestion forms, and digital reviews. Customer evaluations provide valuable information for identifying service weaknesses and developing continuous improvement strategies.

Furthermore, integrating service excellence with digital technology, including social media, online ordering systems, and electronic payment methods, will improve customer convenience while expanding market reach. These innovations are particularly important in responding to changing consumer behavior in the digital economy.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that service excellence should not be viewed merely as an additional business activity but rather as a strategic investment capable of creating sustainable competitive advantages. Consistent implementation of service excellence strengthens customer loyalty, enhances business reputation, improves operational performance, and supports long-term business sustainability.

DISCUSSION

The findings reinforce the perspective that competitive advantage in the culinary MSME sector is increasingly determined by intangible factors, particularly service quality. While competitors may easily imitate products and pricing strategies, customer experiences created through excellent service are considerably more difficult to replicate. Consequently, service excellence becomes a sustainable source of competitive differentiation.

The present findings strongly support previous empirical evidence suggesting that service excellence constitutes one of the most critical organizational capabilities in achieving sustainable competitive advantage. The observation that customers prioritize courteous communication, responsiveness, accountability, and personalized services aligns with the study conducted by (Lubuzo & Mapuranga, 2026), which demonstrated that improvements in service quality directly increase service excellence and customer satisfaction. This similarity indicates that regardless of industry differences, customer perceptions are primarily influenced by the quality of interactions experienced during service delivery.

While previous studies mainly examined the statistical relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction, and organizational performance, this study provides a more contextual understanding of how service excellence is implemented in everyday business practices within culinary MSMEs. Unlike large organizations with formal service standards, most participating MSMEs rely on the personal commitment of business owners rather than standardized operating procedures. This finding suggests that the effectiveness of service excellence in small businesses depends not only on service quality dimensions but also on the owner's direct involvement in customer interactions.

The findings are also consistent with (Hariandja et al., 2014), who argued that service innovation and dynamic marketing capability enhance organizational performance through service excellence and brand identity. In the present study, culinary MSMEs that consistently applied the dimensions of attitude, attention, action, ability, appearance, and accountability exhibited stronger customer loyalty and more positive business

reputations. These findings reinforce the argument that service excellence functions as an intangible strategic resource capable of differentiating businesses in highly competitive markets.

Furthermore, the role of digital transformation observed in this study is consistent with the findings of (Chikezie Paul-Mikki Ewim et al., 2024), who proposed that customer-centric digital transformation significantly enhances service delivery by improving accessibility, responsiveness, personalization, and customer engagement among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Their study emphasizes that digital technologies should be integrated with customer-oriented service strategies to strengthen customer experience and organizational competitiveness.

The present findings also correspond with the study of (Aldouri, 2024) who found that integrating production service quality with marketing mix elements significantly improves organizational performance and strengthens competitive advantage in emerging markets. Similarly, respondents in this study acknowledged that excellent customer service contributes not only to customer satisfaction but also to repeat purchases, customer retention, and sustainable business growth. These findings suggest that service excellence represents an organizational investment rather than merely an operational cost.

Within the Indonesian context, previous studies consistently demonstrate that customer-oriented service systems improve customer satisfaction, organizational performance, and customer loyalty across various service sectors. (Hidayatullah, 2024) reported that the implementation of service excellence in the Public Service Mall of Hulu Sungai Utara improved service quality through transparency, accountability, equality of rights, and participatory service delivery. Similarly, (Wilson & Goldie, 2022) found that service quality significantly enhances visitor satisfaction, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth in the Indonesian hotel industry. In the healthcare sector, (Sugiharto et al., 2023) demonstrated that service quality positively influences patient satisfaction and loyalty within Indonesia's National Health Insurance (JKN) program. Furthermore, (Riyadi, 2023) concluded that service quality and customer satisfaction significantly strengthen customer loyalty in the Indonesian e-commerce sector. Collectively, these studies indicate that organizations implementing customer-oriented service systems consistently achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction, organizational performance, and customer loyalty across different service industries.

This finding extends previous studies by demonstrating that service excellence among culinary MSMEs is shaped by close interpersonal relationships between business owners and customers. The six dimensions of service excellence identified in this study are implemented in a flexible manner according to customer needs rather than through formal organizational procedures. This context-specific implementation represents a distinctive characteristic of small culinary businesses that has received limited attention in previous quantitative studies

The contribution of this study lies in extending previous empirical findings into the context of small-scale culinary MSMEs. Unlike large organizations possessing substantial financial and technological resources, culinary MSMEs generally operate with limited capital and human resources. Nevertheless, this study demonstrates that consistent implementation of the six dimensions of service excellence remains capable of generating competitive advantages. Therefore, competitive superiority among MSMEs depends not solely on product quality or pricing strategies but also on the organization's capability to create superior customer experiences through service excellence

The study also confirms the relevance of customer satisfaction theory, which explains that satisfaction results from customers' comparisons between expectations and actual service performance. When service performance exceeds expectations, customers tend to develop trust, loyalty, and positive behavioral intentions, including repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth communication.

Moreover, the results align with contemporary marketing concepts emphasizing customer experience as a determinant of business success. Modern consumers expect businesses not only to provide quality products but also to deliver memorable service experiences. Therefore, culinary MSMEs should integrate service excellence into their overall business strategy rather than treating it solely as an operational function.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings reinforce the concept that service excellence should be understood as a dynamic organizational capability rather than merely a service quality indicator. In the context of culinary MSMEs, customer satisfaction emerges not only from technical service performance but also from interpersonal interaction, trust, and emotional relationships established during service encounters.

Based on these findings, service excellence can be considered an effective strategic approach for strengthening the competitiveness of culinary MSMEs, improving customer satisfaction, encouraging customer loyalty, and ensuring long-term business sustainability amid increasingly dynamic market competition.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that service excellence plays a strategic role in strengthening the competitiveness of culinary MSMEs. The implementation of the six dimensions of service excellence: attitude, attention, action, ability, appearance, and accountability-contributes not only to improving customer satisfaction but also to fostering customer loyalty, strengthening business reputation, encouraging repeat purchases, and supporting long-term business sustainability. These findings indicate that service excellence should be viewed as an integrated business strategy rather than merely an operational activity in customer service.

Furthermore, the study identifies that the effective implementation of service excellence requires practical service strategies, including responsive communication, consistent complaint handling, employee competence development, professional appearance, and customer-oriented business practices. These strategies enable culinary MSMEs to create positive customer experiences and maintain competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic business environment.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends the literature on service excellence by demonstrating how the six dimensions of the A6 Service Excellence model are implemented within the context of culinary MSMEs through a qualitative approach. Unlike previous studies that predominantly examined statistical relationships among service quality, customer satisfaction, and organizational performance, this research provides contextual evidence regarding the practical implementation of service excellence by MSME owners operating in local communities.

From a practical perspective, the findings offer guidance for culinary MSME owners, local governments, and business development institutions in designing customer-oriented service strategies. The study highlights the importance of integrating standardized service practices, communication skills, and customer relationship management into daily business operations to improve business competitiveness and sustainability.

This study has several limitations. The research was conducted only among culinary MSMEs located in RT 001

RW 005 Kuningan Timur, South Jakarta, involving a relatively limited number of participants. Consequently, the findings may not fully represent the implementation of service excellence across different types of MSMEs or geographical areas. In addition, this study relied primarily on qualitative data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, without integrating quantitative measurements of customer satisfaction or business performance.

Future research is recommended to involve a broader range of MSMEs across different business sectors and regions to improve the generalizability of the findings. Further studies may also adopt mixed-method or quantitative approaches to examine the relationships among service excellence, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, digital customer engagement, and business performance. Comparative studies between culinary MSMEs and other service industries would also provide a deeper understanding of how service excellence contributes to sustainable competitive advantage in different business contexts.

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this study. It is hoped that the findings of this research will provide meaningful academic contributions and practical recommendations for improving the competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), particularly within Indonesia's culinary sector.

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