

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION WITH CATERING SERVICES IN LITHUANIA

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ABSTRACT

Customer satisfaction is considered as key factor determining organization's success in today's competitive market place. The growth of popularity of catering services in Lithuania substantiates the necessity of evaluation of their customer loyalty. Accordingly, the research was provided endeavouring to evaluate customer satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania. The obtained results reveal that evaluating either customer satisfaction with overall catering services in Lithuania, or customer satisfaction with particular caterer, Customer Expectations and Image has no direct effect on Customer Satisfaction, in addition Complaints has no direct neither indirect effect on Loyalty. Furthermore, the created model of Customer Satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania can be used for any type of research that evaluates customer satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania: any the place in Lithuania and / or the type of catering facility.

KEYWORDS: *catering services, customer satisfaction, ECSI.*

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Introduction

Customer satisfaction is considered as key factor determining organization's success in today's competitive market place. Knowing the level of customer satisfaction can help an organization to assess the efficiency of its activities, set future goals, and take necessary actions to maintain or increase it. In scientific literature (Cassel, Eklöf, 2001; Yew-Wing, Bellman, 2008 *et al.*), customer satisfaction is often measured and analyzed as an antecedent of customer loyalty; moreover, to measure satisfaction, its determinants (factors influencing customer satisfaction) have to be evaluated. Therefore, I. Ferreira *et al.* (2010) suggest that it is necessary to develop reliable and independent ways of assessing customer satisfaction, allowing the comparison between companies within the same sector and/or that operate in the same country, or at a macroeconomic level. In scientific researches (Ferreira *et al.*, 2010; Leite, Filho, 2007; Lopes *et al.*, 2009; Yew-Wing, Bellman, 2008 *et al.*), one of the mostly applied and analyzed ways for satisfaction assessment is the estimation of Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI). According to H. Lopes *et al.* (2009), the attention to customer satisfaction emerged with the origination of Swedish Customer Satisfaction Index (SCSI) in 1980's; many countries such as Germany, Israel, Taiwan or New Zealand started developing their national customer satisfaction indexes. Nowadays, worldwide mostly known and applied customer satisfaction indexes are American Customer

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Satisfaction Index (ACSI) created in 1994 and European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI) presented in 1999.

Despite the three decades of worldwide scientific discussions about customer satisfaction measurement techniques, Lithuania still lacks its national customer satisfaction index. Several authors (Dovalienė *et al.*, 2007; Kačinskaitė, 2011; Virvilaite, *Dailydiene*, 2012; Žūkaitė, 2011) have published the results of their researches in satisfaction-related fields; however, no attempts of creating Lithuanian Customer Satisfaction Index were introduced. Our previous research (see Grigaliūnaitė, Pilelienė, 2012; Pilelienė, Grigaliūnaitė, 2012) gave a course for further studies. Starting with customer satisfaction with a particular pizzeria, then with pizzerias as a whole, our current research was meant to measure customer satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania. Accordingly, scientific problem solved in this article is: what is customer satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania and what are the factors determining their satisfaction.

The aim of the article is to evaluate customer satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania.

The object of the article is customer satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania.

To meet the aim of the article following tasks were set:

- To reveal models of customer satisfaction.
- To perform the research on customer satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania.
- To design the model of customer satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania.

Research methods. On purpose of developing a research model for satisfaction, theoretical analysis and synthesis was provided. Customers' attitudes and evaluations towards catering services in Lithuania were determined providing the questionnaire research. Structural equation modelling (SEM) using partial least squares (PLS) path modelling methodology was applied for statistical analysis.

1. Scientific substantiation

H. Lopes *et al.* (2009) suggest that interest in customer satisfaction emerged with the origination of Swedish Customer Satisfaction Index (SCSI) in 1980's. According to O. Calleros *et al.* (2012) the first National Satisfaction Index was the Swedish Customer Satisfaction Barometer, developed in 1989; and this index was the basis for the development of national indexes in different countries including the Deutsche Kunden-barometer (DK) in Germany in 1992; the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) in 1994; the European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI) in 1999, Malaysian Customer Satisfaction Index (MCSI) in 1999, and the Hong Kong Consumer Satisfaction Index (HKCSI) in 1998–2000. The SCSI and DK measured the satisfaction of customers of 31 industries. The ACSI measures satisfaction with 200 companies and government agencies in 40 industries and seven sectors of the economy.

Nowadays, worldwide mostly known and applied customer satisfaction indexes are American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) and European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI).

Provided scientific analysis suggests that many national customer satisfaction indexes apply ACSI or ECSI as their background. A. D. Al-Nasser *et al.* (2011) developed the first national CSI in Arabian world – Jordanian Customer Satisfaction Index (JCSI). O. Calleros *et al.* (2012) presented Mexican User Satisfaction Index (IMSU) which is based on ACSI. Other countries currently developing national satisfaction indexes include New Zealand, Austria, Korea, Taiwan and Chile. All these indexes have in common the development of a theoretical model of satisfaction, where they measure not only the level of satisfaction, but its causes (antecedents) and consequences as well.

Scientific analysis reveals that different customer satisfaction antecedents and consequences are evaluated by different CSIs (see Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of Customer Satisfaction Indexes

Satisfaction Index Affecting factors	SCSB	ACSI	ECSI	HKCSI	MCSI	JCSI	IMSU
<i>Antecedent of CS</i>							
Perceived quality		+	+		+	+	+
Perceived value	+	+	+	+	+		
Customer expectations	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Corporate image			+			+	
Customer characteristics				+			
Assessed performance				+			
<i>Consequences of CS</i>							
Customer loyalty	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Trust							+
Complaints	+	+		+		+	
Perceived image					+		

Source: self elaboration based on M. Abdullah *et al.* (2001), M. D. Johnson *et al.* (2001), A. D. Al-Nasser *et al.* (2011), O. Calleros *et al.* (2012).

As it can be seen in Table 1, different CSI estimate different causes (antecedents) and effects (consequences) of customer satisfaction. An assumption can be made that such structural deviances can be determined by cultural differences.

2. Research methodology

2.1. Data collection method

For the research it was decided to apply the adjusted European Customer Satisfaction Index model, which involves latent variables that are excluded by American Customer Satisfaction Index and European Customer Satisfaction Index models (*Customer Complaints* and *Image*) and is expressed by six structural equations representing the adjusted ECSI model (Bayol *et al.*, 2000):

$$(1) \text{ Customer Expectations} = \beta_{20} + \beta_{21}\text{Image} + \zeta_2$$

$$(2) \text{ Perceived Quality} = \beta_{30} + \beta_{32}\text{Customer Expectations} + \zeta_3$$

$$(3) \text{ Perceived Value} = \beta_{40} + \beta_{42}\text{Customer Expectations} + \beta_{43}\text{Perceived Quality} + \zeta_4$$

$$(4) \text{ Customer Satisfaction} = \beta_{50} + \beta_{51}\text{Image} + \beta_{52}\text{Customer Expectations} + \beta_{53}\text{Perceived Quality} + \beta_{54}\text{Perceived Value} + \zeta_5$$

$$(5) \text{ Customer Complaints} = \beta_{60} + \beta_{65}\text{Customer Satisfaction} + \zeta_6$$

$$(6) \text{ Customer Loyalty} = \beta_{70} + \beta_{71}\text{Image} + \beta_{75}\text{Customer Satisfaction} + \beta_{76}\text{Customer Complaints} + \zeta_7$$

7 latent variables are measured by the manifest variables. In the research 21 manifest variables are assigned to corresponding latent variable (see Table 2).

Table 2. Latent and manifest variables

Latent variables	Manifest variables	Indication
Image	Positive public image	IMAG1
	Innovative	IMAG2
	Customer-oriented	IMAG3
	Characterized by good service	IMAG4
	Complete confidence in the catering services	IMAG5
Customer expectations	Overall expectations of product	CUEX1
	Overall expectations of service	CUEX2

Latent variables	Manifest variables	Indication
Perceived quality	Overall perceived quality of products	PERQ1
	Overall perceived quality of service	PERQ2
	Quality of product completely meets customer's requirements	PERQ3
	Quality of service completely meets customer's requirements	PERQ4
	Assortment of the products	PERQ5
	Comparison with competitors	PERQ6
Perceived value	Rating of quality given price	PERV1
	Rating of price given quality	PERV2
Customer satisfaction	The overall satisfaction with the catering services	CUSA1
	Satisfaction compared with expectations	CUSA2
	Comparison to an ideal	CUSA3
Customer complaints	Complaint handling extent (imaginary extent if never complained)	CUSCO1
Customer loyalty	Intention to buy the same services again	CUSL1
	Intention to recommend	CUSL2

Questionnaire is based on the requirements for the ECSI model, opinions of various authors (Kristensen *et al.*, 1999; Bayol *et al.*, 2000; O'Loughlin, Coenders, 2004; Turkyilmaz, Ozkan, 2007; Eklof, Selivanova, 2008; Alireza, 2011) and catering services' specifications.

10-point evaluation scale was applied for respondents' evaluations towards catering services in Lithuania. The choice of 10-point scale is based on the recommendations to use the 10-point scale when applying the ECSI model for the customer satisfaction research (Eklof, Selivanova, 2008).

2.2. The sample

In view of the fact that the research contains Lithuania's level, and Lithuania is divided into 10 counties with different population, the number of respondents was estimated according to the population in each county given that the total sample size is 250.

The survey was conducted on February, 2013. In order to increase the diversity of the respondents, the survey was handled both, in person and via the Internet. 52 percent of male and 48 percent of female participated in the survey. 37 percent of the respondents were at the age group of 18–25 years old, 36 percent – at the age group of 26–35, 16 percent – at the age group of 36–45, 8 percent – at the age group of 46–55 years old, and 2 percent and 1 percent of respondents were respectively more than 55 years old and less than 18 years old.

3. Analysis of the research results

Respondents could select all of their usually chosen caterers. Distribution of usually chosen caterers identified by respondents is shown in Figure 1. According to the results, the most popular caterers are cafes, bars, pizzerias and restaurants. One respondent selected the option "Other" and identified "Maxima's Café".

Most of the respondents (90 percent) stated that their expenditure for the catering services is under 20 percent of their whole expenditure per month. The weighted average of households' expenditure for the catering services per month is 10 percent.

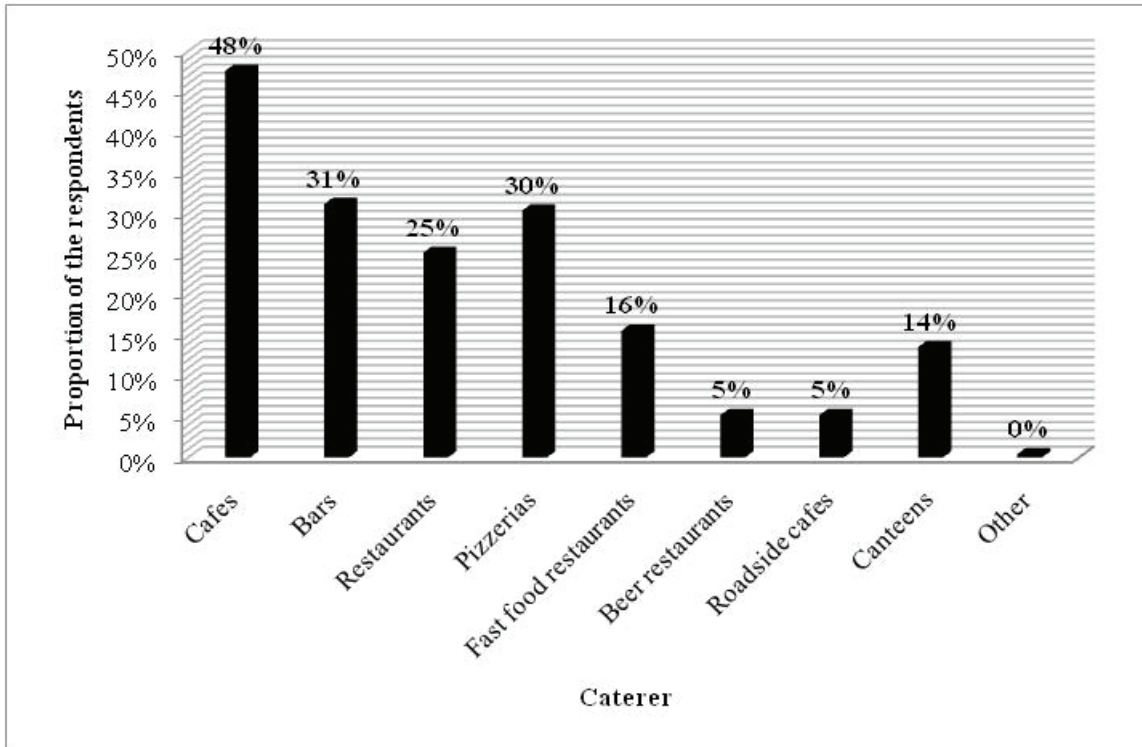


Figure 1. Distribution of usually chosen caterer identified by respondents, $N = 250$

The validity of the used theoretical adjusted European Customer Satisfaction Index model's measurement model with 21 manifest variables was unacceptable to interpret the results. Despite the fact that all AVE values showed the appropriate degree of convergent validity, the discriminant validity was not attained. In order to obtain discriminant validity, the lowest indicators' outer loadings were removed from the model. Removed loadings contained two manifest variables: IMAG1 (positive public image) and IMAG5 (complete confidence in the catering services). The new PLS Path model with 2 eliminated manifest variables is shown in Figure 2.

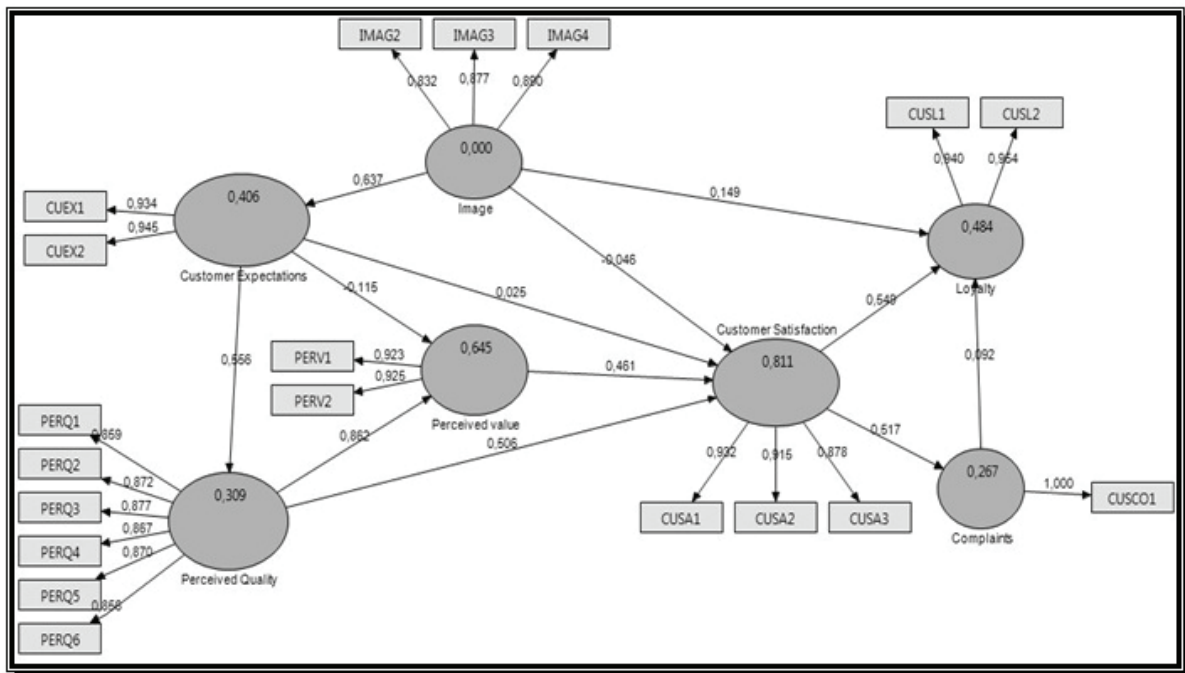


Figure 2. PLS Path model

Assessing the new PLS Path model with two removed outer loadings, it could be stated that AVE values indicated the sufficient degree of convergent validity (all AVE values higher than 0.5). The degree of internal consistency reliability is acceptable too (all composite reliability values are above 0.8). All Cronbach's Alpha and Communality values were above 0.7, so the manifest variables are unidimensional and the quality of the measurement model for each block was accomplished. The highest R Squared value was obtained variable's *Customer Satisfaction* (81 percent) and the lowest – *Complaints* (27 percent); hence the regression lines represent the data properly (see Table 3).

Table 3. AVE, Composite Reliability, R Square, Cronbach's Alpha and Communality values of latent variables

Variable	AVE	Composite Reliability	R Square	Cronbach's Alpha	Communality
Complaints	1	1	0.2673	1	1
Customer Expectations	0.8823	0.9375	0.406	0.8668	0.8823
Customer Satisfaction	0.8253	0.9341	0.8107	0.8941	0.8253
Image	0.7514	0.9006	0	0.8356	0.7514
Loyalty	0.8971	0.9457	0.4839	0.8857	0.8971
Perceived Quality	0.7517	0.9478	0.3091	0.9339	0.7517
Perceived value	0.8532	0.9208	0.6453	0.828	0.8532

Considering that discriminant validity is assessed by two criteria, the new PLS Path model's measurement model obtains discriminant validity at both criteria. In view of the first criterion, the lowest value of \sqrt{AVE} is greater than the latent construct's highest correlation (see Table 4) with any other latent construct.

Table 4. Latent variables' correlations

Variable	Complaints	Customer Expectations	Customer Satisfaction	Image	Loyalty	Perceived Quality	Perceived value
Complaints	1						
Customer Expectations	0.3204	1					
Customer Satisfaction	0.517	0.4443	1				
Image	0.3534	0.6372	0.5538	1			
Loyalty	0.4281	0.3877	0.6787	0.485	1		
Perceived Quality	0.513	0.556	0.8565	0.6736	0.7061	1	
Perceived value	0.4052	0.3637	0.8495	0.5279	0.6209	0.7976	1

In view of the second discriminant validity assessment criterion, all manifest variables' loadings of their corresponding latent variables are higher than its' cross loadings (see Table 5). Accordingly, the elimination of two manifest variables from the measurement model allowed to assess measurement model as reliable and valid pertaining to discriminant validity.

Table 5. Cross loadings

Variables	Complaints	Customer Expectations	Customer Satisfaction	Image	Loyalty	Perceived Quality	Perceived value
CUEX1	0.3112	0.9337	0.3977	0.5778	0.3814	0.5097	0.2959
CUEX2	0.2917	0.9449	0.4355	0.6177	0.3486	0.534	0.3836

Variables	Complaints	Customer Expectations	Customer Satisfaction	Image	Loyalty	Perceived Quality	Perceived value
CUSA1	0.5013	0.4543	0.932	0.5163	0.6331	0.8364	0.828
CUSA2	0.4542	0.4071	0.9147	0.5207	0.647	0.7957	0.7794
CUSA3	0.4522	0.3426	0.8778	0.4702	0.566	0.6941	0.7012
CUSCO1	1	0.3204	0.517	0.3534	0.4281	0.513	0.4052
CUSL1	0.4053	0.3462	0.5972	0.4109	0.9399	0.63	0.534
CUSL2	0.406	0.3859	0.6833	0.5022	0.9543	0.7032	0.6359
IMAG2	0.3349	0.4921	0.4252	0.8324	0.3377	0.5096	0.356
IMAG3	0.3	0.544	0.439	0.8766	0.4023	0.5506	0.4783
IMAG4	0.292	0.6086	0.559	0.8904	0.5011	0.672	0.5203
PERQ1	0.4153	0.5253	0.7304	0.6502	0.6437	0.8595	0.703
PERQ2	0.4175	0.4985	0.72	0.6437	0.5962	0.8724	0.6703
PERQ3	0.4678	0.4752	0.7671	0.5417	0.5806	0.877	0.7003
PERQ4	0.4683	0.4668	0.7149	0.5639	0.6128	0.8673	0.6769
PERQ5	0.4214	0.5121	0.7477	0.5408	0.5745	0.8696	0.6861
PERQ6	0.4786	0.4135	0.7737	0.5647	0.665	0.8561	0.711
PERV1	0.331	0.3608	0.7712	0.4983	0.5976	0.7426	0.9225
PERV2	0.417	0.3115	0.798	0.4771	0.5498	0.7309	0.9248

Outer loadings and their significance are presented in Table 6. All outer loadings are higher than 0.8. Moreover, all outer loadings are significant. Consequently, all manifest variables are identified as reliable. Single item construct does not evaluate outer model. For that reason latent variable *Complaints* is not considerable when assessing outer model.

Table 6. Outer loadings and their significance

Outer Loading	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/STERR)
CUEX1 <- Customer Expectations	0.9337	63.5214
CUEX2 <- Customer Expectations	0.9449	105.2666
CUSA1 <- Customer Satisfaction	0.932	101.1345
CUSA2 <- Customer Satisfaction	0.9147	77.4235
CUSA3 <- Customer Satisfaction	0.8778	49.3186
CUSCO1 <- Complaints	1	0
CUSL1 <- Loyalty	0.9399	85.2168
CUSL2 <- Loyalty	0.9543	139.1526
IMAG2 <- Image	0.8324	23.8585
IMAG3 <- Image	0.8766	35.0133
IMAG4 <- Image	0.8904	61.6633
PERQ1 <- Perceived Quality	0.8595	46.6419
PERQ2 <- Perceived Quality	0.8724	58.6143
PERQ3 <- Perceived Quality	0.877	47.619
PERQ4 <- Perceived Quality	0.8673	46.5118
PERQ5 <- Perceived Quality	0.8696	43.1093
PERQ6 <- Perceived Quality	0.8561	32.6787
PERV1 <- Perceived value	0.9225	65.8807
PERV2 <- Perceived value	0.9248	73.9543

Evaluating cross-validated redundancy measures for the endogenous latent variables, the chosen omission distance was 7. All cross-validated redundancy values (Q^2) for endogenous latent variables are above zero (see Table 7). Consequently, structural model is assessed as displaying predictive relevance.

Table 7. Stone-Geisser's Q^2

Total	SSO	SSE	1-SSE/SSO
Complaints	250	183.6073	0.2656
Customer Expectations	500	322.4104	0.3552
Customer Satisfaction	750	252.0095	0.664
Loyalty	500	287.0593	0.4259
Perceived Quality	1500	1152.7218	0.2315
Perceived value	500	226.7742	0.5465

The value of global criterion of goodness-of-fit ($GoF = \sqrt{\text{communality} \times R^2}$) is 0.5962. Hence, GoF index value is appropriately large. As a result, the global model evaluation is positive. Then again, outer model involves single indicator construct, thus the appropriateness of assessing GoF value is uncertain.

Latent variables' index values are shown in Table 8. The values are in the range of 63 to 73 scores evaluating on a scale from 0 to 100. Judging from the scores, catering services in Lithuania are at the average level, because none of the indexes are under 60 scores (what would indicate the low level) and above 75 scores (what would indicate the high level of catering services). The *Image* of catering services in Lithuania encounters customers' *Perceived Quality*. *Customers Expectations* are much higher than *Perceived Quality* as well as *Perceived Value*, besides *Perceived Quality* is a little higher than *Perceived Value*. *Customer Satisfaction* is lower than *Customers Expectations*, *Perceived Quality*, *Perceived Value*, *Image* and *Loyalty*. *Loyalty* has the highest index value in the model; despite this it still does not achieve the higher level than average.

Table 8. Latent variables' index values

Variables	LV Index Values
Complaints	63
Customer Expectations	71
Customer Satisfaction	66
Image	68
Loyalty	73
Perceived Quality	68
Perceived value	67

Path Coefficients, Total Effects and their significance are shown in Table 9. In connection with the Total Effects and their significance, the only non-significant effect is *Complaints* influence on *Loyalty*. All the other Total Effects are significant (T Statistics > 1.96). The highest Total Effects are: *Perceived Quality* to *Perceived Value*, *Perceived Quality* to *Customer Satisfaction*, *Image* to *Customer Expectations*.

The size of the Path *Complaints* to *Loyalty* is the same size as the Total Effect of *Complaints* to *Loyalty* and it is non-significant. The size of the path *Customer Expectations* to *Customer Satisfaction* is very low and non-significant when assessing the significance level of 95 percent. The size of the path *Customer Expectations* to *Perceived Quality* is large and it is significant. The size of the path *Customer Expectations* to *Perceived Value* is low although significant (T Statistics > 1.96). Path's *Customer Satisfaction* to *Complaints* size is large and significant, as well as *Customer Satisfaction* to *Loyalty*. *Image* has a large direct effect on

Customer Expectations and this effect is significant. The direct effect of *Image* to *Customer Satisfaction* is very low and non-significant. The direct effect of *Image* to *Loyalty* is very low, but significant (T Statistics > 1.96). The path size of *Perceived Quality* to *Customer Satisfaction* is average level and this path is significant. *Perceived Quality* to *Perceived Value* has the largest direct effect which is significant. *Perceived Value* has a large and significant direct effect on *Customer Satisfaction*.

Table 9. Path Coefficients, Total Effects and their significance

Variables	Path Coefficients	T Statistics (O/STERR)	Total Effects	T Statistics (O/STERR)
Complaints -> Loyalty	0.0918	1.1968	0.0918	1.1968
Customer Expectations -> Complaints			0.245	4.6257
Customer Expectations -> Customer Satisfaction	0.0247	0.4938	0.4739	6.5904
Customer Expectations -> Loyalty			0.2826	6.0278
Customer Expectations -> Perceived Quality	0.556	8.3324	0.556	8.3324
Customer Expectations -> Perceived value	-0.1154	2.0583	0.3637	5.0757
Customer Satisfaction -> Complaints	0.517	8.3147	0.517	8.3147
Customer Satisfaction -> Loyalty	0.549	6.778	0.5964	8.6391
Image -> Complaints			0.1321	3.322
Image -> Customer Expectations	0.6372	13.2965	0.6372	13.2965
Image -> Customer Satisfaction	-0.0464	1.0769	0.2555	4.1372
Image -> Loyalty	0.1486	2.2101	0.301	4.5181
Image -> Perceived Quality			0.3543	5.7947
Image -> Perceived value			0.2317	4.1403
Perceived Quality -> Complaints			0.4672	7.5721
Perceived Quality -> Customer Satisfaction	0.506	5.7264	0.9037	18.1398
Perceived Quality -> Loyalty			0.539	7.4294
Perceived Quality -> Perceived value	0.8617	20.7556	0.8617	20.7556
Perceived value -> Complaints			0.2386	5.2626
Perceived value -> Customer Satisfaction	0.4615	6.3907	0.4615	6.3907
Perceived value -> Loyalty			0.2752	5.1347

Figure 3 shows latent variables' indexes and significance of path coefficients of Satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania. Variable *Complaints* has no significant Total Effect on *Loyalty*, so the arrow marked with the asterisk could absolutely be removed from the model. *Customer Expectations* and *Image* has no significant direct effect on *Customer Satisfaction*, so these two dotted arrows could be removed from the model too, because the arrows in the model shows only direct effects.

Designed model of customer satisfaction with pizzerias in Kaunas (Grigaliūnaitė, Pilelienė, 2012) showed the same results about the direct effects; accordingly, it could be stated that evaluating either customer satisfaction with overall catering services in Lithuania, or customer satisfaction with particular caterer, *Customer Expectations* and *Image* has no direct effect on *Customer Satisfaction*, in addition *Complaints* has no direct neither indirect effect on *Loyalty*. Furthermore, this proves the ability to adapt the model that is shown in Figure 3 for any Customer satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania research, despite the town or catering facility that research is about.

Model contains all seven latent variables that were used in the theoretical model, because all latent variables directly or indirectly affect or are affected by other latent variables; although, two manifest variables were removed from the measurement model. In the case of changing removed variables with other

manifest variables, the discriminant validity of the model must be assessed again. Otherwise, the model shows appropriate degree of discriminant validity.

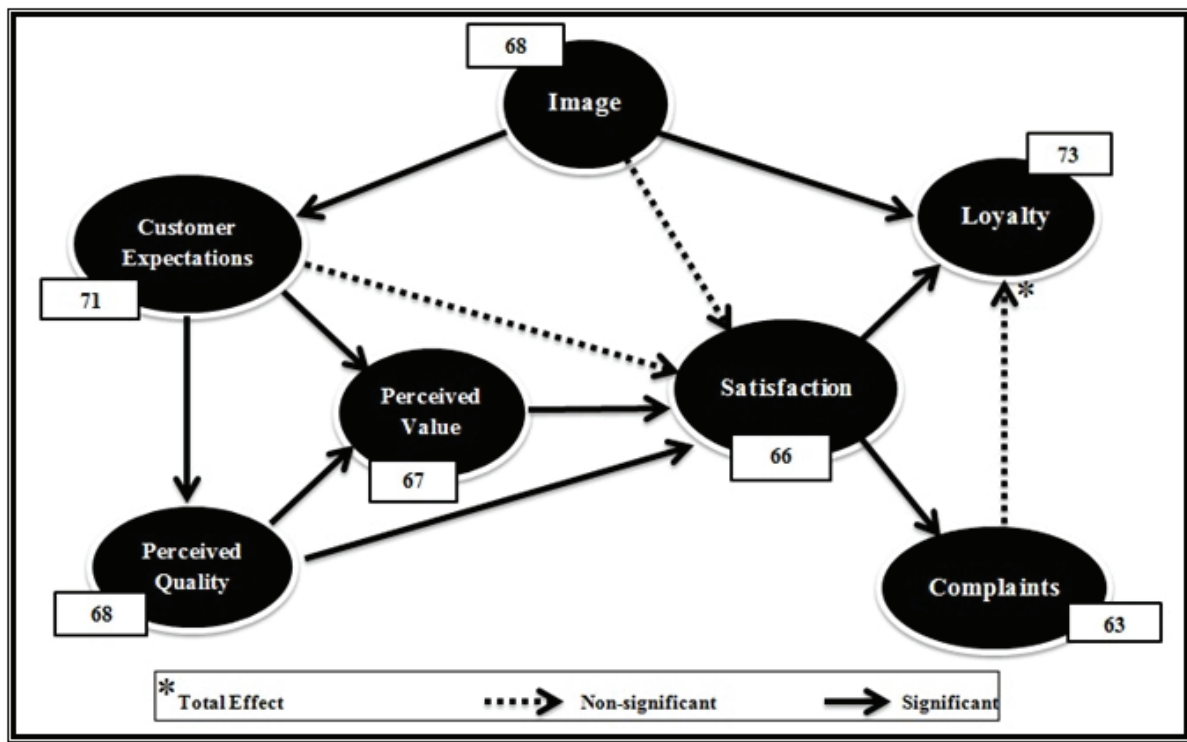


Figure 3. Latent variables' indexes and significance of path coefficients of Satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania

Customer satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania is at the average level. The *Image* of catering services in Lithuania encounters customers *Perceived Quality*. Customers' *Expectations* are much higher than *Perceived Quality* and because of the highest direct effect of *Perceived Quality* to *Perceived Value* as well as deviance among customer *Expectations* and *Perceived Quality*, *Perceived Value* is lower than *Perceived Quality*. These deviances affect *Customer Satisfaction* and because of this the index of *Customer Satisfaction* is the lowest in the whole model after index of *Complaints*.

Conclusions

Different Customer Satisfaction Indexes estimate different causes (antecedents) and effects (consequences) of customer satisfaction. An assumption can be made that such structural deviances can be determined by cultural differences. Nowadays, worldwide mostly known and applied customer satisfaction indexes are American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) and European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI).

In accordance with research results, the most popular caterers in Lithuania are cafes, bars, pizzerias and restaurants. Most of the respondents indicated that their expenditure for the catering services is fewer than 20 percent of the whole expenditure per month. The weighted average of households' expenditure for the catering services per month is 10 percent. Consequently, it could be stated that a part of the households' expenditure that goes for the caterers is quite large, bearing in mind that this is not a basic commodity.

The obtained results reveal that evaluating either customer satisfaction with overall catering services in Lithuania, or customer satisfaction with particular caterer, *Customer Expectations* and *Image* has no direct effect on *Customer Satisfaction*, in addition *Complaints* has no direct neither indirect effect on *Loyalty*. Furthermore, the created model of Customer Satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania can be used for

any type of research that evaluates customer satisfaction with catering services in Lithuania: any the place in Lithuania and / or the type of catering facility.

The obtained results imply the average customer satisfaction level with catering services in Lithuania. Taking under consideration that the deviances among customers' *Expectations*, *Perceived Quality* and *Perceived Value* are too large and the highest direct effect is from *Perceived Quality* to *Perceived Value*, the index of *Customer Satisfaction* is too low.

The average customer satisfaction level with catering services in Lithuania could be increased by three processes: first of all, the image of catering services in Lithuania should be improved. Promotion and communication are possible methods of improving image. Secondly, the quality of catering services also should be improved. Last, but not least is improving of customer perceived value; this could be done by customer cost management or different marketing sales strategy.

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VARTOTOJŲ PASITENKINIMAS MAITINIMO PASLAUGOMIS LIETUVOJE

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Santrauka

Vartotojų pasitenkinimas traktuojamas kaip vienas pagrindinių organizacijos sėkmės veiksnių šiuolaikinėje konkurencijos varžomoje rinkoje. Žinojimas, kiek vartotojai yra patenkinti, gali padėti organizacijai įvertinti veiklos efektyvumą, nustatyti ateities tikslus, taip pat numatyti būtinus veiksmus, kurie padėtų išlaikyti ar padidinti pasitenkinimą. Mokslinėje literatūroje (Cassel, Eklöf, 2001; Yew-Wing, Bellman, 2008 ir kt.) vartotojų pasitenkinimas dažniausiai matuojamas ir analizuojamas kaip vartotojų lojalumo padarinys. Be to, siekiant išmatuoti vartotojų pasitenkinimą, būtina nustatyti ir įvertinti jo determinantus (veiksnius, kurie daro įtaką vartotojų pasitenkinimo lygiui). Analizuodami vartotojų pasitenkinimą, I. Ferreira ir kt. (2010) teigia, kad būtina nustatyti patikimus ir nepriklausomus vartotojų pasitenkinimo vertinimo būdus, kurie leis palyginti organizacijas, veikiančias tame pačiame sektoriuje ir / ar toje pačioje šalyje, ar makroekonominiame lygmenyje. Vienas tokių būdų, bene dažniausiai taikomas vartotojų pasitenkinimo moksliniams tyrimams (Ferreira ir kt., 2010; Leite, Filho, 2007; Lopes ir kt., 2009; Yew-Wing, Bellman, 2008 ir kt.), – išmatuoti vartotojų pasitenkinimo indeksą (VPI). H. Lopes ir kt. (2009) teigimu, vartotojų pasitenkinimo tyrimais susidomėta, kai devintajame praėjusio amžiaus dešimtmetyje pristatytas Švedijos vartotojų pasitenkinimo indeksas (SCSI), kitos valstybės, tokios kaip Vokietija, Izraelis, Taivanas, Naujoji Zelandija, taip pat suskubo kurti nacionalinius vartotojų pasitenkinimo indeksus. Šiuo metu geriausiai pasaulyje žinomi ir plačiausiai taikomi vartotojų pasitenkinimo indeksai yra Amerikos vartotojų pasitenkinimo indeksas (ACSI), sukurtas 1994 metais, ir Europos vartotojų pasitenkinimo indeksas (ECSI), pristatytas 1999 metais.

Nors pasaulyje jau tris dešimtmečius vyksta mokslinės diskusijos dėl vartotojų pasitenkinimo matavimo, Lietuva vis dar neturi nacionalinio vartotojų pasitenkinimo indekso. Keli autoriai (Dovalienė ir kt., 2007; Kačinskaitė, 2011; Virvilaite, Dailiadiene, 2012; Žūkaitė, 2011) publikavo tyrimų, atliktų giminingose vartotojų pasitenkinimui srityse, rezultatus, tačiau siūlymų sukurti Lietuvos vartotojų pasitenkinimo indeksą aptikti nepavyko. Taigi šio tyrimo būtinumą ir reikšmingumą pagrindžia šio straipsnio autorių atlikti tyrimai (plačiau žr. Grigaliūnaitė, Pilelienė, 2012; Pilelienė, Grigaliūnaitė, 2012). Pradėjus vartotojų pasitenkinimo tyrimus nuo vartotojų pasitenkinimo konkrečios picerijos paslaugomis, vėliau picerijų bendrąja prasme matavimo, tampa aktualu nustatyti vartotojų pasitenkinimą maitinimo paslaugomis Lietuvoje. Tyrimu sprendžiama mokslinė problema keliami klausimai: koks yra vartotojų pasitenkinimas maitinimo paslaugomis Lietuvoje ir kokie veiksniai jį lemia?

Straipsnio tikslas – įvertinti vartotojų pasitenkinimą maitinimo paslaugomis Lietuvoje.

Straipsnio objektas – vartotojų pasitenkinimas maitinimo paslaugomis Lietuvoje.

Siekiant straipsnio tikslo keliami šie uždaviniai:

- apžvelgti vartotojų pasitenkinimo modelius;
- atlikti vartotojų pasitenkinimo maitinimo paslaugomis Lietuvoje tyrimą;
- sudaryti vartotojų pasitenkinimo maitinimo paslaugomis Lietuvoje modelį.

Tyrimo metodai. Siekiant sudaryti vartotojų pasitenkinimo tyrimo modelį, atlikta mokslinės literatūros analizė ir sintezė. Vartotojų požiūriai į maitinimo paslaugas Lietuvoje ir jų vertinimas nustatyti atlikus anketinę apklausą. Statistinei apklausos duomenų analizei atlikti pasirinkti struktūrinių lygčių modeliavimas (SEM), mažiausių dalinių kvadratų (PLS) metodas, regresinė, koreliacinė ir loginė analizės.

Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė, kad populiariausios maitinimo įstaigos tarp Lietuvos vartotojų yra kavinės, barai, picerijos ir restoranai. Dauguma respondentų nurodė, kad jų išlaidos viešojo maitinimo įstaigose sudaro mažiau nei dvidešimt procentų visų mėnesio išlaidų. Apskaičiuotas namų ūkio išlaidų maitinimo paslaugoms vidurkis per mėnesį yra dešimt procentų. Apibendrinant galima teigti, kad namų ūkio išlaidų dalis, tenkanti maitinimo paslaugoms, yra gana didelė – viešojo maitinimo paslaugos nėra pirmojo būtinumo produktas.

Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė, kad nei vertinant vartotojų pasitenkinimą maitinimo paslaugomis Lietuvoje, nei pasitenkinimą konkrečios maitinimo įstaigos paslaugomis, *vartotojų lūkesčiai* ir *įvaizdis* vartotojų pasitenkinimo tiesiogiai neveikia. Vartotojų *nusiskundimai* nei tiesiogiai, nei netiesiogiai neveikia jų *lojalumo*. Taip pat nustatyta, kad sudarytas vartotojų pasitenkinimo maitinimo paslaugomis Lietuvoje modelis gali būti taikomas visiems tyrimams, kuriais siekiama nustatyti vartotojų pasitenkinimą maitinimo paslaugomis Lietuvoje: pasitenkinimą maitinimo paslaugomis bet kurioje Lietuvos vietovėje ir / ar vartotojų pasitenkinimą bet kuria maitinimo paslaugų rūšimi.

Tyrimu nustatyta, kad vartotojų pasitenkinimas maitinimo paslaugomis Lietuvoje yra vidutinio lygio. Atsižvelgiant į tai, kad atotrūkiu tarp vartotojų lūkesčių, suvokiamos kokybės ir suvokiamos vertės yra dideli, o didžiausias tiesioginis poveikis nustatytas suvokiamos kokybės suvokiamai vertei, apskaičiuotas vartotojų pasitenkinimas yra per žemas.

Vidutinis vartotojų pasitenkinimo maitinimo paslaugomis lygis Lietuvoje gali būti padidintas trim procesais. Pirmia, turi būti pagerintas maitinimo paslaugų Lietuvoje įvaizdis. Tinkamiausi įvaizdžio gerinimo būdai – tinkamas rėmimo veiksnių taikymas ir suderinta marketingo komunikacija. Antra, būtina gerinti maitinimo paslaugų kokybę. Galiausiai turi būti didinama vartotojų suvokiama vertė. Vertę galima didinti peržiūrint sąnaudų valdymo metodus ir keičiant marketingo bei pardavimų strategijas.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *ECSI, maitinimo paslaugos, vartotojų pasitenkinimas.*

JEL KLASIFIKACIJA: L660, M310