Research Article

Customer Responses for Menu-Less Restaurants under Information Asymmetry

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Abstract
Menu-less (or tasting menu, Omakase) restaurants deliberately attempt to create an atmosphere of information asymmetry. This study explores this concept, identifying what factors make customers willing to forgo product information, whether hiding information can create curiosity about food, and what alternative signals can be used to gain customers’ trust. We found that information asymmetry can positively affect food curiosity, which in turn positively affects service quality. That is, food curiosity mediates the relationship between information asymmetry and service quality. Therefore, freshness, customization, and innovation appeared to be essential determinants for menu-less restaurants to operate well. In our analysis of online reviews, we synthesized quantitative and qualitative approaches, and the results serve as a reference for the management of menu-less restaurants.

1. Introduction
Consumer behavior is governed by motives and constraints and is an internal drive and stagnation force that guides the need for and satisfaction gained from consumption activities. Customers go to restaurants to satisfy both physical and psychological needs; therefore, they choose the type of restaurant that meets their specific motives. Many researchers have attempted to elucidate these motives to help restaurants gain a competitive edge. Important factors include the quality of food, service, and overall environment (Berry et al. [1]; Sulek and Henseley [2]) as well as the menu, which serves as a bridge between a restaurant and a customer [3].

The menu is a presentation of a restaurant’s product offerings. Customers use the menu to learn about the restaurant’s offerings and choose their meals, while the kitchen prepares ingredients and the wait staff provides explanations and recommends dishes to customers according to the menu. The artistic design of the menu sets the image of the restaurant and gives visual and taste stimulation, which can not only convince the customer to increase the consumption cost but also convey the establishment’s philosophy [3, 4]. However, menus do have their disadvantages. First, efforts to make products appeal to customers may result in over-embellishment, which is likely to result in customer dissatisfaction [5]. Second, they restrict the creativity of chefs, many of whom prize creative freedom [6, 7]. Third, it lacks flexibility in the face of fluctuating prices, and it becomes difficult to effectively present daily characteristics or replace meals that have changed, due to price increases for example [8]. Fourth, customers may become bored with eating the same dishes [9, 10]. Last, it limits the possibility of customization and the chance to show off a chef’s range [9].

In modern society, restaurants serve as an important place for emotional exchange. As well as increasing sophistication in terms of what food is served, higher and higher demands are made on the quality of service and overall experience, including both material and spiritual satisfaction. Menu-less cuisine offers a novel experience. With the deliberate creation of information asymmetry, customers can be stimulated by the food on offer and feel specially catered for. This creates more room for
imagination. Surrendering to the whims and expertise of a chef can invoke feelings of pleasure associated with eating within the context [11]. Menu-less restaurants are therefore an opportunity to showcase a chef’s abilities. Customization to the customer’s tastes, as well as to local and daily characteristics, becomes possible. Restaurants are also less likely to buy in bulk, thereby reducing waste [6].

Worldwide, fair trade policies require manufacturers to provide complete and sufficient information to enable consumers to make informed decisions [12]. However, in menu-less restaurants, customers give up the right to be informed, leading to an atmosphere of uncertainty that invokes curiosity and creates additional experiential value. This study proposes a theoretical model to explore service quality in menu-less restaurants, which is based on postconsumer behavior. With the rise of the Internet and information technology, consumers frequently share information about products or services after consumption to help others, support online platforms, gain recognition, or make social connections. Therefore, online reviews represent a form of two-way marketing communication that enables companies to obtain customer opinions in real time. We collected both quantitative and qualitative data to reduce the researcher’s subjective bias while obtaining a richer portrait of customer demand and satisfaction in menu-less restaurants.

2. Theoretical Description and Hypothesis Derivation

2.1. Information Asymmetry. Information asymmetry within the business context is created when there exists a disparity between the information known to the buyer and seller. A restaurant menu serves as a communication tool influencing a customer’s perceptions. Because services are intangible, restaurants send tangible messages to their consumers through the design elements of the menu [13]. However, menu-less restaurants deliberately hide information about the dishes of the day. This kind of information asymmetry can raise ethical concerns or result in customer dissatisfaction [14]. Skaggs and Snow [15] argued that in cases of highly asymmetric information, customers require strong signals from relevant alternatives to generate feelings of trust. Shen et al. [16] pointed out that in online auctions, in addition to the seller’s reputation, buyers tend to rely on signals such as the quality of the seller’s arguments. Dixit and Nalebuff [17] suggested that in situations of information asymmetry, it is possible to construct information about the dominant person (such as abilities, preferences, and intentions) from their traits. Sung and Wang [18] studied the relationship between information asymmetry and trust in a sharing economy platform. In this context, buyers expect that the platform has screened the sellers, which allows them to build trust based on little to no information regarding the sellers. In menu-less restaurants, consumers cannot access information about the dishes or ingredients. This increases the importance of the role played by the wait staff. Indeed, according to Dixit and Nalebuff [17], high levels of service quality can induce trust in the restaurant establishment and increase the connection between it and the customer, as the customer is encouraged to rely on the wait staff and the image they present of the restaurant. In this scenario, information asymmetry would have a positive effect on service quality or customer satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

\[ H_1: \text{Menu-less cuisine exerts a positive effect on service quality under information asymmetry.} \]

2.2. Food Curiosity. Curiosity can be defined as the desire to discover the unknown. Loewenstein [19] purported that curiosity results from gaps in one’s knowledge. He also argued that the more we know, the more curious we are about what we do not know. Information gap theory thus assigns a central role to the knowledge that people have. Therefore, by informing potential buyers about some, but not all, aspects of content, a merchant increases the knowledge and thus the curiosity of the potential buyers. van Dijk and Zeelenberg [20] investigated how curiosity and regret aversion affect decision-making under uncertainty. They demonstrated that curiosity may overcome regret aversion. Wang and Huang [21] further proposed that the curiosity effect can spill over to prompt consumers to prefer indulgent options in other, unrelated domains (e.g., food and money). This situation is likely to occur because curiosity motivates individuals to seek the missing information as a form of reward in the current domain. Wang [22] demonstrated that incidental curiosity could have motivational impacts in noninformational domains such as food choices. Gaignaire et al. [23] operationally defined food curiosity as the capacity to learn about food, including production, processing, and consumption. Ueda [24] took theoretical perspectives on curiosity in educational psychology into account in his development of the food curiosity scale. This study, therefore, proposes the following hypothesis:

\[ H_2: \text{Menu-less cuisine exerts a positive effect on food curiosity under information asymmetry.} \]

2.3. Service Quality and Satisfaction. Hawkins and Mothersbaugh [25] argued that hiding part of the message in an advertisement stimulates curiosity. For example, a secret, a surprising ending, or a message that is not revealed until the end may increase consumers’ interest in an advertisement. The main purpose of consumption is to eliminate tension or to enjoy the tension, and hiding information draws on the latter [12]. Ruan et al. [26] found that people are in a better mood immediately following the resolution of curiosity. Daume and Hüttl-Maack [27] indicated that curiosity exerts a positive effect on evaluative processes. The same product or service is evaluated more favorably when a consumer is made curious before forming their evaluation. In the Kano model [28], attractive qualities are considered those which create high satisfaction, especially when customers are not expecting it. This element of surprise is not often explicitly demanded by customers; however, it can exert positive effects nonetheless and contribute significantly to creating a competitive edge. Many studies have shown that improvements in corporate charm contribute to waiter/waitress
service quality and customer satisfaction (Löfgren and Witell [29]; Kim et al. [30]). Parasuraman et al. [31] argued that service quality is determined by customers’ perceptions and evaluations of the services provided by a firm, which are derived from a comparison between customers’ expectations and their experiences. Kolter [32] defined satisfaction as the degree of pleasure that a person feels, derived from their perception of a product’s performance outcome and the individual’s expectations of the product. In the relevant literature, quality and satisfaction are considered similar but not equal concepts, and the related measures are not equal [33]. Therefore, restaurants can move toward the psychological level of quality creation through technical innovation and provide novel products or service features that add the element of surprise or invoke feelings of curiosity to enhance customer expectations. This study thus proposes the following hypothesis:

\[ H_2: \text{Food curiosity has a positive effect on service quality.} \]
\[ H_3: \text{Service quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.} \]

2.4. Crowd Wisdom. Because the transactions of a menu-less restaurant create information asymmetry, consumers may try to gather information from as many different sources as possible before making a purchase. Crowd wisdom can be defined as the aggregation of the independent opinions of a large group of individuals [34]. Researchers have developed various approaches to enable both industry and academia to mine crowd wisdom or network evaluation. Sigurbjörnsson and Zwol [35] used Flickr photo-sharing sites to summarize the appropriate textual content and the number of tags for stock photos to serve as a reference for photographers in creating relevant captions. Hage and Aimeur [36] sought to assist learners in adapting the frequency of browsing, evaluating, subscribing, and sharing actions as a basis for determining the importance of individual learning resources. This enabled learners to access learning resources that are generally considered important and valuable by the group. Varga et al. [37] proposed a set of matched reviews to assist disaster victims in obtaining reviews relevant to the assistance needed. Zhao et al. [38] developed a capture method to detect key events in sports games promptly, based on the comments posted by fans on various online forums. The current study used online reviews of menu-less restaurants to collect questionnaire data. Customers who are interested in a particular product/service often browse reviews online, and because of the large number of reviews and their complexity, information needs are based on personal preferences. In particular, in the process of browsing, information seekers often first evaluate the reference value of a review using external information. This includes gathering the opinions of multiple reviewers to form a constructive conclusion [39].

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling. Considering factors such as cost and time, we selected convenience sampling to collect data. We invited respondents who had eaten at menu-less restaurants to fill out a questionnaire on Facebook and LINE group discussion forums. We implemented electronic questionnaire administration and data collection employing a Google Form link to overcome the time and space constraints of traditional mailings. Although convenience sampling is often cited as a limitation in terms of representativeness, Calder et al. [40] suggested that a homogenous sample is more appropriate when the purpose of the study is theoretical testing. The homogeneity of the sample could be ensured by using customers who had experienced the restaurants in question. In addition, Calder et al. [40] also pointed out that high levels of homogeneity can reduce the chance of incorrect inferences.

3.2. Operational Definitions. This questionnaire was administered on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Each section contained five items. For information asymmetry, we referred to Kyj and Parker [41], and Skaggs and Snow [15]. For example, general restaurants offer more price information than menu-less restaurants. For food curiosity, we drew from the work of Ueda [24]. For example, I often buy food with new tastes, flavors, or characteristics. In terms of service quality, we referred to the restaurant service quality scale developed by Hung et al. [33]. For example, I am very satisfied with the initiative taken by the service staff to customize the dishes to my tastes. We also implemented the customer satisfaction scale developed by Hung et al. [33]. For example, “I am very satisfied with the freshness of the ingredients.”

3.3. Sample Structure. We conducted our survey from August 5, 2021, to September 15, 2021. We collected 352 valid questionnaires, the descriptive statistics of which are shown in Table 1. Because this study includes both LINE and Facebook questionnaire types, we used different links and t-tests to examine whether there was a significant difference between the means of the two questionnaire types for each construct. As no differences were detected, we combined the data into a single sample for statistical analysis. The majority of the respondents were female (56%). Respondents aged between 41 and 50 years made up the largest group (46%), followed by the age group of 61 to 60 years (27.6%). The amount of money spent per person per visit was mainly related to the area in which the restaurant was located, with 42.6% spending between NTD 1,000 and NTD 2,000 and 40.6% spending less than NTD 1,000. Most of the consumers (66.2%) visited the same restaurant two times or more. A third (33.8%) had only visited once, while 24.1% had visited five times or more.

4. Discussion

4.1. Methodology. This study adopted an empirical approach using structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze the cause-effect relationship patterns among the constructs and to investigate the relationship between the exogenous latent constructs (information asymmetry and service quality) and endogenous latent constructs (food curiosity and customer
satisfaction) to verify the goodness of fit and structural quality of the research model. We sought to determine the relationships among information asymmetry, food curiosity, service quality, and customer satisfaction. We also sought to determine the mediating effect of food curiosity on the relationship between information asymmetry and service quality. Based on the theory of causality, we derived the research model shown in Figure 1.

We empirically analyzed the cause-effect relationships between the constructs using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), incorporating both a measurement model and a structural equation model [42] with statistical analysis tools such as Amos 23.0 and PASW Statistics 18.0.

4.2. Estimation Method. Normality must be confirmed before the statistical analysis of data, and the scale data in this study are multiple continuous variables; therefore, multivariate normality must be examined [43]. The estimation method of the structural equation model is strongly influenced by the distribution of the data assignment. If the data assignment is multivariate normal distribution, the estimation method of the structural equation model is based on the maximum likelihood estimation method; if the data assignment is non-multivariate normal distribution, the estimation method of the structural equation model should be based on asymptotic distribution [44]. Mardia [45] suggested that when the absolute values of the skewness and kurtosis states of the observed variables are between −2 and 2, then the observed variables are considered to have a multivariate normal distribution. If \( p \) is the number of observed variables and the Mardia coefficient is smaller than \( p(p + 2) \), then the data on the observed variables have multivariate normality [46].

The results of the normality test for information asymmetry are shown in Table 2. The mean values range from 3.42 to 3.99, the standard deviations range from 0.768 to 2.08, a few outliers do not influence the normality of our data analysis, and the absolute values of the kurtosis are also between −2 and 2. The Mardia coefficient is 4.320, which is less than \( p(p + 2) \) of 24. Therefore, the observed variables had multivariate normality. The results of the normality test for food curiosity are shown in Table 3. The mean values range from 3.87 to 4.14, the standard deviations range from 0.702 to 0.865, the absolute values of skewness range from −2 to 2, and the absolute values of kurtosis also range from −2 to 2. The Mardia coefficient is 9.222, which is smaller than \( p(p + 2) \) of 24. Thus, the observed variables of food curiosity had multivariate normality. The results of the normality test for service quality are shown in Table 4. The mean values range from 4.33 to 4.42, the standard deviations range from 0.632 to 0.700, the absolute values of the skewed states are between −2 and 2, and the absolute values of the kurtosis are mostly between −2 and 2. The Mardia coefficient is 14.217, which is less than \( p(p + 2) \) of 24. Therefore, the observed variables of service quality had multivariate normality. The results of the normality test for customer satisfaction are shown in Table 5. The mean values range from 4.15 to 4.57, the standard deviations range from 0.591 to 0.738, the absolute values of skewness are between −2 and 2, and the absolute values of kurtosis are mostly between −2 and 2. The Mardia coefficient is 22.935, which is less than \( p(p + 2) \) of 24. Therefore, the observed variables of customer satisfaction had multivariate normality. Owing to the maximum likelihood estimation method being statistically robust, [46, 47] suggested applying the maximum likelihood estimation method for those experiments which have slightly violated the normality criterion. We, therefore, accepted the Mardia coefficient estimation.

4.2.1. Analysis of Measurement Model. CFA was used to evaluate the measurement models to generate the best goodness of fit of models for each construct [48]. The better the goodness of fit of the model is, the higher its usability is. We selected a single-factor model, for which the goodness of fit is confirmed, as shown in Table 6.

PASW Statistics 18.0 statistical software was used to test internal consistency and stability. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was used as a measure of reliability analysis. According
to [49], Cronbach’s $\alpha \geq 0.70$ indicates high reliability, $0.35 \leq$ Cronbach’s $\alpha < 0.70$ indicates fair reliability, and Cronbach’s $\alpha < 0.35$ indicates low reliability. The Cronbach’s $\alpha$ of all the constructs in this study was greater than 0.7, indicating that all the latent constructs were highly reliable. These results are shown in Table 7. Construct validity comprises convergent validity and discriminant validity, measured using CFA. According to [50], convergent validity is determined by the factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) of each latent variable. The factor loadings for each latent variable represent the confidence indicators for each item. The factor loadings of all latent variables in this study were greater than the 0.5 thresholds [50], indicating good reliability. The composite reliability of each latent construct is composed of the confidence of all the measurement variables of that construct. The parameter estimates of the composite reliability of each variable of the measurement model in this study were all greater than the composite reliability threshold of 0.7 [50]. The calculation of the average variance extracted from the potential surface mainly measures the ability of each measurement variable to explain the average

**Table 2: Normality of information asymmetry.**

| Structure          | Measurement variables | Average | Standard deviation | Bias  | Kurtosis |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------|--------------------|-------|----------|
| Information asymmetry | IA01                  | 3.99    | 0.768              | −0.322| −0.430   |
|                    | IA02                  | 3.70    | 0.954              | −0.363| −0.684   |
|                    | IA03                  | 3.78    | 0.951              | −0.557| −0.380   |
|                    | IA04                  | 3.42    | 0.983              | −0.120| −0.704   |
|                    | Mardia coefficient    | 4.320   |                    |       |          |
|                    | $p(p + 2)^1$          | 24      |                    |       |          |

**Table 3: Normality of food curiosity.**

| Structure          | Measurement variables | Average | Standard deviation | Bias  | Kurtosis |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------|--------------------|-------|----------|
| Food curiosity     | FC01                  | 4.05    | 0.744              | −0.658| 0.756    |
|                    | FC02                  | 3.87    | 0.848              | −0.739| 0.833    |
|                    | FC03                  | 3.95    | 0.865              | −0.593| 0.031    |
|                    | FC05                  | 4.14    | 0.702              | −0.549| 0.587    |
|                    | Mardia coefficient    | 9.222   |                    |       |          |
|                    | $p(p + 2)^1$          | 24      |                    |       |          |

**Table 4: Normality of service quality.**

| Structure          | Measurement variables | Average | Standard deviation | Bias  | Kurtosis |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------|--------------------|-------|----------|
| Service quality    | SQ01                  | 4.33    | 0.663              | −0.774| 1.097    |
|                    | SQ02                  | 4.30    | 0.700              | −0.733| 0.549    |
|                    | SQ03                  | 4.42    | 0.632              | −0.970| 1.854    |
|                    | SQ04                  | 4.33    | 0.676              | −1.015| 2.357    |
|                    | Mardia coefficient    | 14.217  |                    |       |          |
|                    | $p(p + 2)^1$          | 24      |                    |       |          |

**Table 5: Normality of customer satisfaction.**

| Structure          | Measurement variables | Average | Standard deviation | Bias  | Kurtosis |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------|--------------------|-------|----------|
| Customer satisfaction | CS01                 | 4.57    | 0.591              | −1.435| 3.617    |
|                     | CS02                 | 4.22    | 0.653              | −0.384| −0.179   |
|                     | CS03                 | 4.33    | 0.619              | −0.722| 1.762    |
|                     | CS05                 | 4.15    | 0.738              | −0.584| 0.30     |
|                     | Mardia coefficient   | 22.935  |                    |       |          |
|                     | $p(p + 2)^1$         | 24      |                    |       |          |

**Table 6: CFA of a single-factor model with goodness-of-fit assessment indicators.**

| Measurement model   | $\chi^2$ | p    | $\chi^2$/d.f. | RMSEA | GFI   | AGFI  | NFI   | CFI   |
|---------------------|----------|------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Information asymmetry| 5.925    | 0.052| 2.962         | 0.075 | 0.991 | 0.956 | 0.985 | 0.990 |
| Food curiosity      | 2.816    | 0.245| 1.408         | 0.034 | 0.996 | 0.981 | 0.990 | 0.997 |
| Service quality     | 0.703    | 0.402| 0.703         | 0.000 | 0.999 | 0.990 | 1.000 | 1.000 |
| Customer satisfaction| 5.819    | 0.055| 2.909         | 0.074 | 0.992 | 0.961 | 0.985 | 0.990 |
variation of the latent construct. While a value of 0.5 or higher is recommended for reliability and convergent validity [51], an average variance extracted above 0.36 is acceptable considering the practical aspects of the data. In this study, the average variance extracted for each latent construct measured by CFA was greater than 0.36. This suggests that the proposed measurement model has good convergent validity.

We examine discriminant validity between the constructs by comparing the correlation between constructs with that within constructs. Therefore, the square root value of the average variance extracted in the correlation matrix must be larger than the correlation coefficient under different constructs [50]. The results shown in Table 8 confirm the discriminant validity of this study.

Several indicators were selected for the overall model fit test [52], as follows: $\chi^2 = 177.186, p = 0.000, \chi^2/d.f. = 1.827, GFI = 0.940, AGFI = 0.916, NFI = 0.916, NNFI = 0.950, IFI = 0.960, CFI = 0.960$, and RMSEA = 0.049. The null hypothesis of the chi-square test is that the covariance matrix of the study model is equal to the covariance matrix of the observed data. In other words, if there is a good fit between the model and the data, the $p$ value of the test statistic should be greater than 0.05. In the present study, the $p$ value of the chi-square test was less than 0.05, indicating that the fit between the study model and the observed data was not good, as the chi-square test is related to sample size. However, Bagozzi and Yi [52] suggested that the sample size should be taken into account and that the value of the chi-square test to the ratio of degrees of freedom can be used to determine the fitness of the model, with a strict recommendation of no greater than 3 [53]. As shown in Table 9, the ratio of 1.827 in this study was less than the standard value of 3, indicating that the study model is acceptable.

### Table 7: Parameter estimation for the measurement model.

| Construct                  | Measured variable | Factor loading | Cronbach’s $\alpha$ | CR  | AVE  |
|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------------|-----|------|
| Information asymmetry     | IA01              | 0.599          |                     |     |      |
|                           | IA02              | 0.777          |                     | 0.785| 0.788| 0.484|
|                           | IA03              | 0.712          |                     |     |      |
|                           | IA04              | 0.682          |                     |     |      |
| Food curiosity            | FC01              | 0.605          |                     | 0.729| 0.731| 0.407|
|                           | FC02              | 0.732          |                     |     |      |
|                           | FC03              | 0.635          |                     |     |      |
|                           | FC05              | 0.569          |                     |     |      |
| Service quality           | SQ01              | 0.801          |                     |     |      |
|                           | SQ02              | 0.847          |                     |     |      |
|                           | SQ03              | 0.784          |                     | 0.854| 0.848| 0.586|
|                           | SQ04              | 0.607          |                     |     |      |
| Customer satisfaction     | CS01              | 0.713          |                     |     |      |
|                           | CS02              | 0.600          |                     |     |      |
|                           | CS03              | 0.885          |                     | 0.764| 0.780| 0.480|
|                           | CS05              | 0.518          |                     |     |      |

### Table 8: Correlation coefficient matrix of latent variables.

| Construct                  | Information asymmetry | Food curiosity | Service quality | Customer satisfaction |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Information asymmetry     | (0.695)               | (0.638)        | (0.766)        | (0.693)              |
| Food curiosity            | 0.149**               | 0.398          | 0.364**        | 0.622**              |
| Service quality           | 0.099                 | 0.398          | (0.766)        |                      |
| Customer satisfaction     | 0.192**               | 0.364**        | 0.622**        | (0.693)              |

**:Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). (….) denotes the square root of AVE.

### Table 9: Measurement model evaluation results

| Model fit measures | Ideal value | Result |
|--------------------|-------------|--------|
| $\chi^2/d.f.$      | <3          | 1.827  |
| GFI                | >0.9        | 0.940  |
| AGFI               | >0.8        | 0.916  |
| NFI                | >0.9        | 0.916  |
| NNFI               | >0.9        | 0.950  |
| IFI                | >0.9        | 0.960  |
| CFI                | >0.9        | 0.960  |
| RMSEA              | <0.08       | 0.049  |

4.2.2. Structural Model Analysis. Analysis of the linear structural equation model not only illustrates the cause-effect relationship between the latent constructs but also shows the magnitude of the effect and degree of influence between the latent constructs. The cause-effect relationship between the latent constructs is explained by the estimation of $\gamma$ and $\beta$ values, where the $\gamma$ value estimates the relationship between exogenous potential variables and endogenous latent variables and the $\beta$ value estimates the relationship between endogenous latent variables. Table 10 mainly shows a summary of the cause-effect relationships for latent variables, and the path parameter estimates are tested for significance. The results show that information asymmetry has a significant level of 0.01 for food curiosity, food
curiosity has a significant level of 0.001 for service quality, and service quality has a significant level of 0.001 for customer satisfaction. The overall model fit values are as follows: \( \chi^2 \) of 177.186, \( p \) value of 0.000, \( \chi^2/d.f. \) of 1.827, GFI of 0.940, AGFI of 0.916, NFI of 0.916, NNFI of 0.950, IFI of 0.960, CFI of 0.960, and RMSEA of 0.049. These indicate that the overall fit of the model is good.

We provide \( p \) value estimation of structural equation model parameters to explain their relationships in Figure 2.

In addition to direct effects, there may also be indirect effects on latent dependent constructs through other constructs, and the effects of both can be measured by path coefficients. A summary of the effects of the latent constructs is shown in Table 11.

In terms of direct effects, information asymmetry significantly affected food curiosity with a coefficient of 0.201. The direct effects of information asymmetry on service quality and customer satisfaction were 0.013 and 0.088, respectively, which are not significant. That is, information asymmetry does not significantly impact service quality and customer satisfaction. Food curiosity significantly affects service quality with a coefficient of 0.578. While the direct effect of food curiosity on customer satisfaction was 0.051, it was not significant. That is, food curiosity does not significantly affect customer satisfaction. Service quality is an important influencing factor that significantly affects customer satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.669.

Baron and Kenny [54] suggested that if the path coefficients between the independent and dependent variables are still correlated after adding the mediating variable, then the mediation represents a partial effect; otherwise, it represents a full effect [55]. In this study, we used Sobel’s test of indirect effects [56] to find the \( z \) value and brought it into the constant distribution table to obtain the approximate \( p \) value to determine whether there is a significant indirect effect.

In Table 10, information asymmetry had a significant effect on food curiosity (\( t \) value 2.732**), and food curiosity had a significant effect on service quality (\( t \) value 7.029***). As the Sobel formula test returned \( Z = 2.602 \) and \( p = 0.00927 \), which is less than 0.05, we know information asymmetry had a significant indirect effect of 0.116 on service quality. However, information asymmetry had no direct effect on service quality. Therefore, food curiosity mediates the relationship between information asymmetry and service quality.

In terms of the total effect, information asymmetry had a significant direct effect of 0.201 on food curiosity, with no positive indirect effects; therefore, its total effect on food curiosity was 0.201. The direct effect of information asymmetry on service quality was 0.013, and the positive indirect effect is 0.116; therefore, the total effect on service quality was 0.129. Information asymmetry had no significant effect on service quality (\( t \) value = 0.216). The direct effect of information asymmetry on customer satisfaction was 0.088, and the positive indirect effect was 0.097; therefore, its total effect on customer satisfaction was 0.185. However, information asymmetry had no significant effect on customer satisfaction (\( t \) value 1.585). Food curiosity only had a positive direct effect of 0.578 on service quality. The direct effect of food curiosity on customer satisfaction was not significant (0.051), and there was a significant positive indirect effect of 0.387; therefore, its total effect on customer satisfaction was 0.438. Service quality only had a positive direct effect of 0.669 on customer satisfaction.

In terms of squared multiple correlations (SMC), Chin [57] considered that SMC is very weak if it is less than 0.19, weak if 0.19 \( \leq \) SMC \(< 0.33 \), moderate if 0.33 \( \leq \) SMC \(< 0.67 \), and substantial if SMC \( \geq \) 0.67. In this study, the explanatory power of information asymmetry for food curiosity was 0.04. The explanatory power of information asymmetry and food curiosity on service quality was 0.337. Information asymmetry, food curiosity, and service quality explained 0.515 of customer satisfaction, indicating that the model explained the latent constructs to a good extent.

The bootstrap method is used to test for significant mediating effects. Cheung and Lau [58] and Lau and Cheung [59] proposed a specific judgment formula for mediating effects. In the case of indirect effects, if the 95% confidence interval for the bias-corrected percentile does not include zero and the \( p \) values are less than 0.05, then there is a significant mediating effect. If the 95% confidence interval for both bias-corrected and percentile includes zero and if the \( p \) values are greater than 0.05 for direct effects, it indicates a full mediation effect [58, 59]. The results are shown in Table 12, therefore indicating the full mediating effect of food curiosity on information asymmetry and service quality.

**Table 10: Summary of estimates of cause-effect relationships for latent variables.**

| Potential variables     | Information asymmetry | Food curiosity | Service quality |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Food curiosity          | 0.201 (0.006)         | 0.057 (0.000)  | 0.669 (0.000)   |
|                         | 2.732**               | 7.029***       | 8.002***        |
| Service quality         | 0.013 (0.829)         | 0.051 (0.505)  | 0.666           |
|                         | 0.216                 | 1.585          |                 |
| Customer satisfaction   | 0.088 (0.113)         | 0.666          |                 |
|                         | 1.585                 |                 |                 |

\( ^* p < 0.05; ~^{**} p < 0.01; ~^{***} p < 0.001. \)
4.2.3. Research Findings and Discussion. This study is the first to focus on menu-less restaurants. We examined the effects of information asymmetry and food curiosity on service quality and customer satisfaction, with three important findings. First, information asymmetry has a significant effect on food curiosity, illustrating that the information gap created in menu-less restaurants can invoke curiosity in customers. Many of today’s teaser ads deliberately conceal information in an attempt to arouse consumers’ curiosity before the launch of a new product or a formal ad, in the hope that the power of curiosity will spark a discussion and even drive consumers to collect relevant information. Therefore, the lack of a menu can serve as a marketing tool, as long as a chef’s expertise can satisfy the information gap created by curiosity and allow professional signals to be effectively communicated to customers. The results of the research hypothesis testing of this study can be summarized in Table 13.

Second, food curiosity has a significant positive impact on service quality, indicating that it is instinctive to satisfy curiosity and seek excitement and that serving these needs positively impacts the relationship between customers and the restaurant staff. That is, high levels of food curiosity make it easier to please customers, leading to increased service quality.

Finally, food curiosity mediates the effect between information asymmetry and service quality, indicating that the primary purpose of menu-less cuisine is to trigger curiosity to effectively improve service quality. In the market, the buyer and seller usually benefit from communicating with each other; however, because the interests of both buyers and sellers are potentially in conflict, it can be difficult to gain customers’ trust. If the menu information is expressed directly by the wait staff only under the premise of increasing customers’ curiosity, it could generate a reverse selection situation, in which the wait staff fails to capture the attention of the customers. According to Loewenstein [19], appropriate information gaps are necessary to arouse customers’ curiosity; gaps that are too large or too small are not conducive to generating curiosity. To create signals that build confidence in the face of information asymmetry, it is important to showcase the professionalism of the chef.

5. Online Reviews and Inspections

When there is an information asymmetry about a menu-less restaurant, people tend to look up online restaurant reviews. This paper verified our findings in different ways, in different contexts, and at different times to understand the context from different aspects and validated our conclusions [60]. Specifically, we applied the crowd wisdom method, which is also known as network evaluation. The validity of the quantitative questionnaire and the qualitative network evaluation are verified against each other in terms of service quality and customer satisfaction. We collected representative online ratings through different methods to reduce the subjective bias of the researcher and obtain concrete recommendations for the operation of menu-less restaurants.

5.1. Selection of Representative Reviews. Many reviews are repetitive or unhelpful, and sifting through large volumes of this kind of information can easily cause cognitive overload. Identifying representative reviewers is important because not only will they help companies improve their marketing campaigns, but they will also enable members of the idea-sharing community to determine who is a reputable reviewer and whose reviews should be trusted [61, 62]. This study uses the model proposed in [39] to find representative reviewers by characteristic attributes from Google and Tripadvisor reviews. Finally, the reviews were compiled and analyzed to collect a different evidence and to fully construct the conclusions of their interpretations. The following three characteristics are considered important for representative message content.

- (i) Reviewer level: the level of reviewers is determined by each platform’s internal rating system.
- (ii) Involvement level: the number of words or photos uploaded to a product or service must be above a certain threshold to indicate that a reviewer has engaged sufficiently with the product or service [63, 64].
- (iii) Restaurant rating: reviewers rate products or services using each platform’s rating system (e.g., stars or points) [62].

| Table 11: Summary of effects between latent constructs. |
|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Latent constructs |
| Information asymmetry | Food curiosity | Service quality | Customer satisfaction |
| Direct | Indirect | Total effect | Direct | Indirect | Total effect | Direct | Indirect | Total effect |
| Information asymmetry | 0.21 | 0.21 | 0.013 | 0.116 | 0.129 | 0.088 | 0.097 | 0.185 |
| Food curiosity | 0.578 | 0.578 | 0.051 | 0.387 | 0.438 |
| Service quality | 0.669 | 0.669 |
| Explanatory power | 0.04 | 0.337 | 0.515 |

| Table 12: Summary of intermediary effects. |
|---------------------------------------------|
| Intermediary effect |
| Valuation |
| 95% confidence interval |
| BC/PC p value |
| BC |
| PC |
| Indirect effect: Information asymmetry | food curiosity | Service quality |
| 0.116 | 0.006/0.016 | 0.006/0.016 | 0.021–0.203 |
| Direct effect: Information asymmetry | service quality |
| 0.013 | 0.937/0.772 | 0.937/0.772 | −0.104–0.145 |
| Total effect: Information asymmetry | service quality |
| 0.129 | 0.095/0.083 | 0.095/0.083 | −0.018–0.272 |
Due to a large number of menu-less restaurants, we divided them by region and cuisine and only considered restaurants with high numbers of ratings, comments, and likes. The latter criterion was based on the idea that better-run restaurants will be more popular and offer unique and notable insights. The collected representative messages are presented in Tables 14-16.

### 5.1.1. Integrated Recommendations

(i) Support the creativity and commitment of the chef: the chef or operator must have the determination to constantly innovate and have confidence in their cooking skills to avoid producing assembly-line dishes. The professionalism of the chef is an essential element of information asymmetry. The chef also needs to participate in the purchase of ingredients on-site, using the freshness of local seasonal ingredients as a call to action, to increase the aliterations and uniqueness of the dishes while preserving their original taste.

(ii) Customize the dining experience: most menu-less restaurants are based on fine dining and mostly operate in the form of reservations and small restaurants to control the number of consumers and construct the scarcity needed to create a better quality of service. As well as the customization of food to a customer’s tastes, a restaurant should exhibit unique décor and good service quality. This includes maintaining good hygiene and the safety of ingredients in both the front and back of the house.

(iii) Reduce information uncertainty: when customers come to a store, they must first be informed of the price information and serving method. The introduction of the ingredient selection process through film offers customers information to reduce uncertainty. Other methods for this include information boards of daily ingredients or open kitchens to increase the interaction between chefs and customers. In addition, to invoke customer curiosity, the service staff or even the chef should offer an appropriate and in-depth explanation of meal characteristics to reduce the negative effects of information asymmetry. This can also heighten the pleasure gained from surprises in the food, to increase the psychological satisfaction of the customer.

Such online reviews echo the content of the questionnaire in the previous quantitative model, and it will be essential to keep customers curious about every dish. In addition, the menu-less restaurants demonstrate the chef's innovation and freshness of ingredients, giving customers a
sense of customization, which are undoubtedly important signs of gaining customer trust and are essential factors in the success of menu-less restaurants.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Managerial Implications. Information asymmetry occurs when not all participants in a transaction have equal access to information. This asymmetry usually hinders trading behavior in high-quality markets because buyers are unable to distinguish quality levels and offer corresponding prices. However, menu-less cooking transmits alternative signals to inspire the confidence of customers. A certain level of professionalism and enthusiasm in the staff helps customers to experience the asymmetry positively. In addition, the curiosity invoked by the information gap can increase

| Table 15: Network evaluation of Old New Taiwanese Cuisine. |
|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Restaurant: Old New Taiwanese Cuisine                     |
| Location: Kaohsiung                                       |
| 1. Introduction: Taiwanese food brands are almost invisible in the market due to the marginalization of Taiwanese cuisine. With his 20 years of experience as a chef, the defiant head chef, Hsueh Yong-bo started with a small six-table restaurant next to the Love River and has become a favorite for fashionable gatherings, creating a new brand of retro, romantic, and innovative Taiwanese cuisine. |
| 2. YouTube links: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQK6fPUUxEmg |
| Number of views: 4077, number of likes: 30               |
| Number of Google reviews: 4,697, level: 4.3             |
| Number of TripAdvisor reviews: 72, level: 4.5           |
|Reviewer|Reviewer level|Involvement level|Restaurant rating|
|Chen, Xin-Zhi|7|208 words|5|
|WYC88|6|129 words|5|

The interior is well decorated, and the use of automatic doors in the toilets is a clever space-saving design. The meal was a reinterpretation of Taiwanese dishes, such as the mushroom rusk bun and the doughnut-shaped saltfish balls. The style, freshness, quality, and taste of every dish stay consistent. The appetizer was based on the concept of British afternoon tea, which was innovative, although a bit hard to consume. The attitude and responsiveness of the wait staff were excellent, and the pretable adjustment and packing of the dishes showed that they had received a certain degree of training.

| Table 16: Network evaluation of Raw. |
|--------------------------------------|
| Restaurant: Raw                      |
| Location: Taipei                     |
| 1. Introduction: Chef Jiang Zhen Cheng made a name for himself with André in Singapore and later returned to his birthplace to open the restaurant. The interior is pierced by two large, streamlined wooden carvings. The food showcases a range of creative dishes, with sophisticated and modern presentations, presenting a wealth of flavors and textures. Some of the dishes are also infused with Taiwanese snack elements. The servers are all very professional. With delicate explanations and intimate care, this place is known for more than its cuisine. |
| 2. YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_yiognMjWJs |
| Number of views: 466,396; number of likes: 5,998 |
| Number of Google reviews: 2,137, level: 4.3 |
| Number of TripAdvisor reviews: 194, level: 4 |
|Reviewer|Reviewer level|Involvement level|Restaurant rating|
|NiouBao Xian|7|72 words|5|
|Yiheng Chen|5|116 words|4|

Although some have said that this restaurant is a recreation of many of chef André’s past works, it is a roadside food treasure, all about eating and enjoying. The dessert was super impressive, and the large, sliced grapes were constructed like a work of art. Every dish is delicious. The classics, such as black truffle duck liver jelly, tasted rich and solid, the corn trio was gorgeous, and the Wagyu beef kettle rice and black abalone spring bamboo stew were also delicious. The set menu spanned more than three hours, but time flew by. I was really full by the time it finished. Besides the food, the décor is even more beautiful than it looks in photos, and the giant wood sculpture is spectacular, especially the grain. At the end of the meal, the chef went around each table to greet his guests and take group photos. The servers were professional, smooth, and attentive. They and the chef signed the menu for us to take home as a souvenir.

As a Michelin-starred restaurant, the ingredients are very special, all using Taiwan’s local specialties. The dining environment and service are excellent, and someone introduced the characteristics and creative meaning of each dish; overall, the cooking was an art form! Also, the extra bread was very good! Of course, the price is slightly expensive, but overall I would recommend trying it!
the motivation of customers to consume. Menu-less dishes also create a scarcity of goods to stimulate customers’ desire to buy. This scarcity is associated not only with the quantity of food but also with information. As customers seek more, their expectations increase, along with the value of what they consume. Creating a service that is unexpected or exceeds customers’ expectations, invariably bringing them a sense of surprise and pleasure, is likely to achieve a high level of satisfaction with the brand’s value. Consumers enjoy the process of choosing among different brands and styles when selecting a product or service. Therefore, diversity in the selection available to the customer can increase the pleasure of consumption. In menu-less restaurants, it is the performance of the experience economy, and this pleasure of customers is maximized. Therefore, the marketing method of menu-less cuisine can meet the diversified needs of customers to gain a larger market share, especially on special celebratory days when customers are likely to be looking for novel experiences and feelings.

6.2. Research Contributions. In this paper, we explored the constructive relationships among information asymmetry, food curiosity, service quality, and customer satisfaction. Our findings show that menu-less restaurants succeed through efforts and practical actions to invoke curiosity in their customers while gaining their trust, which can bring their customers diverse sensory experiences and emotional values, invariably increasing service quality and customer satisfaction. Creative plating in menu-less restaurants adds an artistic element, and themed décor creates an atmosphere that plays a vital role in today’s digital marketing. These findings were gleaned from our concrete analysis of online evaluations. We selected representative content based on characteristic attributes. Analysis of these opinions has provided a valuable reference for the operation of menu-less restaurants. Our combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches lays the foundation for richer analysis and the construction of more reliable and useful models for menu-less cuisine.

Data Availability

The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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