

FACTORS INFLUENCING CUSTOMERS' TIPPING BEHAVIOUR IN THE RESTAURANT DEPARTMENT AT CARAVELLE SAIGON HOTEL

Tran Thi Le¹, Pham Minh Luan^{2*}

¹*Ho Chi Minh City College of Technology*

²*Ho Chi Minh City University of Industry and Trade*

*Email: luanpm@huit.edu.vn

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to identify the factors influencing customers' "tip" behaviour at the Restaurant Department of Caravelle Saigon Hotel. The quantitative research method involved collecting data from 307 valid customer surveys completed by customers who had experienced the restaurant's service. The data were screened and analysed using SPSS 27.0 and SmartPLS-SEM. The results show that service quality, social compliance, responsiveness, and personalisation directly affect customer satisfaction, which, in turn, influences tipping decisions. Based on these findings, the study proposes managerial implications and directions for future research.

Keywords: Service quality, responsiveness, personalisation, social compliance, Caravelle Saigon Hotel.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tips are considered an informal form of reward, usually not mandatory, expressed through positive customer feelings about the service experience. Leaving a tip is influenced not only by the quality of service but also by the social, cultural, and behavioural norms of each country or region. A tip is a small amount of money given as a reward for a service performed or expected to be performed [1]. According to the definition, the term "tips" originates from Latin and is heavily influenced by cultural context, in which practices and attitudes toward tipping vary significantly between countries [2].

Tipping in the hotel and restaurant service industry is considered an expression of satisfaction and recognition of the staff's attitude towards customers. In Vietnam, tipping is not mandatory and is usually not specified on the bill, with amounts depending mainly on consumer habits and customer satisfaction. However, in restaurants within 4 to 5-star hotels, especially in Ho Chi Minh City, tips are regarded as a relatively stable source of income for service staff [3].

Previous studies have applied various theories to investigate tipping behaviour, such as Equity Theory, Game Theory, Theory of Reciprocity, Economic Exchange Theory, and Social Norms Theory. This research further contributes to understanding the application of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model to explore customers' tipping behaviour in restaurants at the Caravelle Saigon Hotel [3].

Therefore, the author's research aims to clarify the factors (Stimulus) that influence customer satisfaction (Organism), which in turn affects customers' decisions to send a 'tip' (Response). The research results will contribute academically and provide practical value by

proposing solutions to improve service efficiency, support management efforts, and guide customers' tipping behaviour towards positive social compliance in the service industry.

2. GROUNDED THEORY, HYPOTHESES, AND RESEARCH MODELS

2.1. Grounded theory

2.1.1. Stimulus-Organism-Response model

The SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model, based on environmental psychology, consists of three factors: Stimulus, Organism, and Response [4]. External factors (Stimulus - S) trigger a specific cognitive or emotional response in the affected object (Organism - O), which then leads to changes in consumer behaviour (Response - R) [5]. The SOR model has been used in many studies, including those examining how satisfaction influences customer behaviour [6], promoting consumer purchasing behaviour [7], and examining factors affecting customer loyalty behaviour when using restaurant services at 5-star hotels [3]. This research uses the SOR model to explore customers' tipping behaviour when using restaurant services at the Caravelle Saigon Hotel, with service quality, responsiveness, personalisation, and social compliance as the factors that stimulate tipping (S), customer satisfaction is the affected object (O), and the tipping behaviour is the customer's feedback (R).

2.1.2. Concepts

The concept of tipping

Tipping, or gratuity, originates from Latin and is voluntary, but the practice and cultural attitudes towards tipping vary greatly across the world [8]. Tipping is considered an informal reward, usually not mandatory, expressed through positive customer feelings about the service experience. Leaving a tip depends not only on the quality of service but also on the social, cultural, and behavioural norms of each country or region [1]. Tipping is seen as both a reward and an encouragement for better-than-expected service, and as a social compliance behaviour.

Many studies have demonstrated tipping in developed countries and have considered tipping practices customary, including in the United States and European countries [3]. Previous research has examined customer tipping behaviour in regular restaurants [9]. However, there is little research on the factors influencing tipping behaviour in 5-star restaurants and hotels [3]. Additionally, the study by Bang and Dai (2024) also shows that customer satisfaction is an important factor in the relationship with tipping behaviour [3]. Therefore, this research will contribute to both theoretical and practical understanding by exploring the impact relationship between factors (Stimulus) and tipping behaviour as a response, with satisfaction considered the Organism factor.

The concept of the culinary department in a hotel

The culinary department is responsible for the entire process of food and beverage preparation and service. It is considered a key part of the hotel's operations, especially for accommodations rated 3 stars or higher [10]. This concept emphasises two fundamental functions of the culinary department: preparation (cooking food and beverages) and service (delivering products to customers), clearly reflecting its central role in the hospitality service supply chain [11].

The culinary department not only meets the basic needs of eating and drinking but also creates a culinary experience that showcases the hotel's style, class, and cultural identity [12]. This demonstrates that the function of this department extends beyond providing material services to encompass spiritual and emotional values. Through the restaurant space, service style, dish presentation, and menu, the culinary department helps convey the brand's prestige,

establish a unique style, and express the cultural identity that the hotel aims to communicate to customers [10].

Especially in mid-range and high-end hotels, the culinary experience is often a decisive factor in helping guests remember the brand, compare it, and evaluate overall service quality [13]. Unique features in dishes, service style, or the integration of local cultural values into the menu all become highlights that create a competitive advantage [14]. Therefore, it can be affirmed that the culinary department not only plays a supporting role but is also a core element of the strategy to build the hotel's image and enhance the guest experience [15].

2.2. Hypothesis and model

2.2.1. Hypothesis

Service Quality

"Service quality relates to the ability of the service to meet the needs or expectations of customers" [16]. "Service quality is the customer's judgment based on experience with the product or service, measured according to customer requirements, which may be explicitly stated or not, conscious or merely perceived, subjective or professional, and always representing the dynamic goal in a competitive market" [17]. Service quality is a fundamental variable that reflects customers' overall assessment of professionalism, reliability, and service standards. In the context of fine-dining restaurants, this is a core factor shaping perceptions of value and an important prerequisite for post-consumption reactions, including tipping behaviour.

When customers highly evaluate the quality of service, they tend to develop a positive attitude towards the restaurant and the staff, thereby increasing their intention to tip as a way to acknowledge and reciprocate the positive service experience. Service quality is seen as a key factor influencing customer satisfaction and behaviour in the service industry. When customers perceive good service quality, they tend to tip more for the staff [18]. When customers highly evaluate the quality of service, they will exhibit positive behaviours such as recommending, returning, and tipping [19]. Recently, research has emphasised that service quality is a fundamental factor shaping the overall customer experience, creating positive emotional responses and increasing perceived value, thereby encouraging tipping behaviour [3]. In the context of the author's research, where high-end services are delivered to professional standards, service quality is a decisive factor in the overall customer experience. From there, the author proposes the following hypotheses for the study:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Service quality positively impacts customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Service quality positively impacts tipping behaviour.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness is an important component of service quality and a key factor influencing customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. According to the SERVQUAL model, responsiveness is defined as "the willingness and readiness of employees to assist customers and provide services promptly and timely," emphasising two core aspects: speed and proactiveness in service [20]. From the SOR's perspective, responsiveness directly affects customers' tipping behaviour, as quick, proactive service often leads to greater satisfaction and positive evaluations of staff. Therefore, meeting responsiveness expectations will increase customers' intention to tip in the context of high-end restaurant services.

This is a core factor of the SERVQUAL service quality measurement scale, which many studies, both domestically and internationally, have confirmed has a significant impact on customer satisfaction and behaviour in the restaurant and hotel service industries. Customers tend to evaluate highly and respond positively if they perceive that staff are always ready to support promptly and effectively [20]. The service environment requires direct interaction, and

the staff's ability to respond quickly is a key factor influencing customers' positive emotions [21]. In the context of the Caravelle Saigon Hotel and Restaurant Department, employees' responsiveness is demonstrated by their willingness to assist customers, the speed of service, and their ability to handle requests promptly and flexibly. When customers perceive that staff serve quickly and proactively, they tend to be more satisfied with the service experience. At the same time, this satisfaction can encourage customers to express positive evaluations through tipping the staff. Based on this, the author proposes a hypothesis for the research study:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Responsiveness positively impacts customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Responsiveness positively impacts tipping behaviour.

Personalisation

Personalisation is the process of adjusting, designing, or providing services based on each customer's needs, preferences, characteristics, or behaviours to enhance satisfaction and create a unique experience. Personalisation is a business's ability to customise products or services to suit individual customers based on data collected from them [22]. From the SOR perspective, personalised services help stimulate positive customer attitudes and social emotions, thereby promoting the intention to tip. When customers perceive personalised attention and differentiated treatment, they tend to appreciate the staff's efforts and are more likely to tip.

Personalisation of services has attracted the attention of many researchers both domestically and internationally. Personalisation is not merely about adjusting products or services to meet individual customer needs, but also a key factor in helping businesses build loyalty [23]. When customers feel that the service aligns with their preferences and desires, they tend to develop a longer-term attachment to the brand. In Jordan's hotel service market, research indicates that personalisation positively impacts customer satisfaction. Factors such as remembering names, preferences, or prioritising customer service contribute to creating a positive experience, thereby enhancing the perceived quality of the service [24].

Applying this to the context of personalised service research is demonstrated through employees recognising customer preferences and consumption habits and flexibly adjusting their service style to suit each customer. When customers feel a sense of personalised care and experience a service that meets their individual expectations, they tend to be more satisfied with the restaurant. At the same time, this satisfaction can encourage customers to express appreciation to staff through tipping. In the context of luxury services, customers not only expect high standards but also expect the service to be understood and tailored to their individual needs. Therefore, personalisation is considered a key factor in creating perceived value and satisfaction, and in driving customers' purchasing behaviour. Based on this, the author proposes a hypothesis for the research:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Personalising services positively impacts customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Personalising services positively impacts tipping behaviour.

Social compliance

Social compliance variables are integrated to represent the influence of the social environment on individual behaviour. Social compliance is a concept in social psychology that refers to an individual's behaviour in which they adjust their attitudes, actions, or decisions in response to the norms, expectations, and influences of the surrounding social group. Human behaviour is affected by three main factors: the strength of the influencing source, the number of people influencing, and the social-psychological distance; the stronger these factors are, the higher the level of social compliance [24]. In the SOR, social compliance reflects the individual's perception of social pressure to perform the tipping behaviour. When customers believe that tipping aligns with social expectations or reference groups, their intention to tip increases, especially in high-end restaurants and hotels [25].

Social compliance factors play an important role in explaining differences in customer behaviour, especially in the restaurant-hotel service environment [18]. This suggests that cultural compliance, social values, and each culture's risk acceptance levels influence how customers express satisfaction through tipping behaviour. In Vietnam, cultural differences significantly impact customer satisfaction, as shown in research comparing Vietnamese and Western European customers' evaluations of high-end restaurant service quality. While Vietnamese customers prioritise speed and timeliness, Western European customers value space, emotions, and overall experience. These cultural differences directly affect the satisfaction levels of each customer group. This indicates that understanding cultural characteristics is crucial to helping restaurants meet the expectations of different groups and improve service quality [26].

In the context of the Caravelle Saigon restaurant and hotel department, where customers from various cultural backgrounds are frequently served, social conformity is evident as customers adjust their behaviour to the standards and practices of the high-end service environment. When customers perceive that tipping is an accepted behaviour in society or among their reference groups, they tend to evaluate their service experience more positively and feel more satisfied. At the same time, this awareness encourages customers to tip as a way to demonstrate conformity to social compliance in restaurant and hotel settings. Based on this, the author proposes a hypothesis for the research study:

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Social compliance positively impacts customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 8 (H8): Social compliance positively impacts tipping behaviour.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction plays a strong mediating role between perceived quality and tipping behaviour in high-end restaurants [3]. At the international level, research in Malaysia also draws similar conclusions, suggesting that satisfaction not only increases the likelihood of returning but also encourages tipping as a form of recognition of service quality. These findings reinforce the hypothesis that customer satisfaction is a core motivator of voluntary financial behaviour, thereby contributing to improved employee income and enhancing the overall service experience [21].

In the context of the study, customer satisfaction is formed from the overall experience of food quality, ambience, and staff attitude. When customers perceive that the service meets or exceeds expectations, they tend to evaluate positively and maintain a good impression of the restaurant. This can encourage customers to show appreciation for staff by tipping. From then on, the author proposed a hypothesis for the research paper:

Hypothesis 9 (H9): Customer satisfaction influences customers' "tip" behaviour.

2.2.2. Hypothesis Model

Within the scope of the topic "factors affecting tipping behaviour" among customers in the Restaurant Department of Caravelle Saigon Hotel, the SOR model serves as a theoretical foundation for exploring the relationship between service factors and customer behaviour. Specifically, service quality, responsiveness, personalisation, and social compliance directly influence customers' behavioural attitudes. This, in turn, affects customers' satisfaction perceptions and their decision to tip ("tip") [19].

Recognising that the SOR model is suitable for application to this topic, the author proposes the following research model:

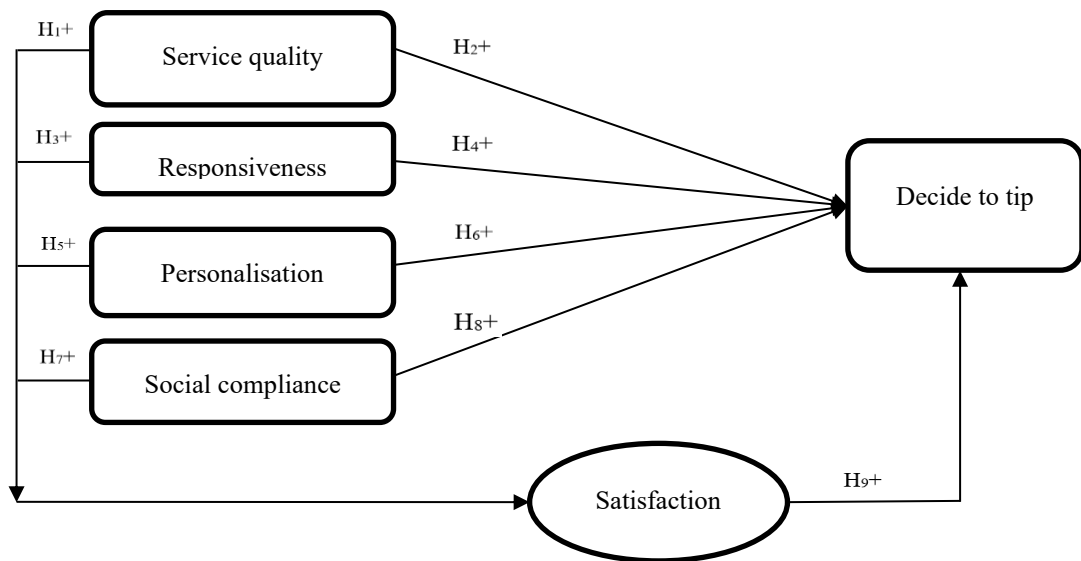


Figure 1. Hypothesis model.

Source: Suggested by the authors

3. METHODS

3.1. Qualitative method

The qualitative research method involved a literature review, discussions with experts, and surveys of customers who have used the services at Caravelle Saigon Hotel – Restaurant. Based on the theoretical framework summarised in the initial step, the author developed the research model. The author created several questions to conduct in-depth interviews with field experts, including 8 guiding lecturers and other relevant specialists. The information obtained from the in-depth interviews was compiled and analysed by the author to identify key factors in the research model. The questionnaire is structured into three main parts. Part I: Introduction, providing an overview of the research purpose, survey subjects, and instructions for respondents to ensure transparency and voluntary participation. Part II: Assessment of measurements at the restaurant, including 31 questions measuring 31 observed variables in the research model, constructed using a Likert scale. Part III: Personal information, collecting demographic characteristics of the survey participants for classification and subsequent data analysis.

Through group discussions and consultations with experts in the hotel service industry, the author identified the factors that affect customer satisfaction, which, in turn, influence tipping behaviour. Based on the experts' feedback, the initial scale was adjusted and refined to develop the official survey questionnaire.

Results of the qualitative research phase: Among the initial five proposed factors—service quality, food quality, responsiveness, personalisation, and social compliance—some factors overlap in content and need to be adjusted to better fit the research context. Based on this, the author combined the two factors, service quality and food quality, into a single factor called "service quality" and replaced the regional culture factor with a social compliance factor. Through qualitative research, the main research model was established, identifying four factors influencing customers' tipping decisions: service quality, responsiveness, personalisation, and social compliance. Building on this model, the research was further conducted in a preliminary quantitative phase using a measurement system comprising 31 observed variables. Among them, 22 observed variables measure the independent variables, 4

observed variables measure the mediating variable "satisfaction," and 5 observed variables measure the dependent variable, the decision to send a tip.

3.2. Measurement

The "service quality" scale comprises 5 observable variables derived from the original scale by Bang and Dai [3]. Additionally, the author revised the wording to suit the research context at the Caravelle Saigon hotel restaurant department. The "responsiveness" scale includes 6 observable variables inherited from the original scale by Vo [27] and Rukuni et al [28]; The "personalisation" scale comprises 7 observable variables, inherited from the original scale in the study by Michael Lynn [18]; The "social compliance" scale includes 4 observable variables inherited from the original scale by Whaley, Douglas, and O'Neill [29]; The "satisfaction" scale consists of 4 observable variables inherited from the scale by Bang and Dai [3]; The "tip decision" scale includes 5 observable variables inherited from the scale by Bang and Dai [3], Whaley, Douglas, and O'Neill [29]. The detailed scales are presented in the Appendix. The survey questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). Data were collected through direct surveys conducted from September to November 2025 among customers who had previously used the restaurant services at Caravelle Saigon Hotel. A total of 310 customers responded, of whom 307 were valid (99%).

3.3. Quantitative method

The quantitative study was conducted to test the research model and the proposed hypotheses. Data were collected through direct surveys of customers who used the restaurant department's services at Caravelle Saigon Hotel, using a convenience sampling method. A total of 310 questionnaires were distributed, and 307 valid responses were received, meeting the sample size requirements for structural model analysis. The collected data were processed and analysed using SPSS and PLS-SEM software, including descriptive statistics to assess sample characteristics, reliability testing of the scales using Cronbach's Alpha, evaluation of the measurement model, and testing of the linear structural model with SEM.

The analysis results enable the determination of the extent and direction of the impact of service quality, responsiveness, personalisation, and social compliance on customer satisfaction and tipping decisions, thereby providing a scientific basis for testing the research hypotheses and proposing managerial implications.

3.4. Common method variance

This study was conducted at the same time, with a relatively small sample size, the same survey subjects, and using the same measurement scale. Therefore, responses based on individuals' perceptions may lead to common method variance bias [30]. Consequently, it is necessary to control for common method variance before analysing the structural model.

To control for common method variance, we employed two methods, including Harman's single-factor test and correlation coefficients. The Harman's test results showed that the total variance explained by a single factor was 34.796 (<50%). The correlation coefficients of the variables were all less than 0.9 (see Tables 3 and 4) [31]. Thus, common method variance is not a concern in the data processing of this study.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Sample characteristics

The survey sample characteristics are presented in Table 1, reflecting basic information about the surveyed subjects, such as gender, age, nationality, frequency of service use, and experience dining at the restaurant at the Caravelle Saigon Hotel. These characteristics indicate

that the survey sample is suitable for the research objectives and ensures the necessary representativeness for analysing and evaluating customers' tipping behaviour in the context of high-end hotel services (see Table 1).

Table 1. Description of survey sample

No	Classification criteria		Frenquency	Percentage rate (%)
1	Gender	Male	112	36.5%
		Female	195	63.5%
2	Nationality	Vietnam	105	34.2%
		China	44	14.3%
		Japan	25	8.1%
		India	19	6.2%
		United States	56	18.2%
		Russia	30	9.8%
		South Korea	28	9.1%
3	Age group	From 25 to 35 years old	95	30.9%
		From 35 to 45 years old	155	50.5%
		From 45 to 55 years old	32	10.4%
		Older than 55 years old	25	8.1%
4	Occupation	Officer	148	48.2%
		Civil servant, public employee	52	16.9%
		Performer	11	3.6%
		Business owner/company owner	96	31.3%
5	Income	From 20 to less than 40 million	134	43.6%
		From 40 to less than 60 million	56	18.2%
		From 60 million to less than 80 million	12	3.9%
		From 100 million and above	105	34.2%

Source: Collected by the authors

4.2. Measurement model

The measurement model was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR), as well as convergent and discriminant validity [32]. According to the results described in Table 2, firstly, CA was greater than 0.7, and internal consistency reliability was achieved as composite reliability (CR) values exceeded 0.7. Secondly, the structures meet the requirements for convergent validity because the average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.5. Thirdly, all the scales demonstrated discriminant validity, meeting the criteria of Fornell and Larcker, and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratios were all below 0.85 (Table 3) [33]. Additionally, there were no multicollinearity issues among the variables, as their respective variance inflation factor (VIF) values were all below 3 [34].

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha, Composite reliability, and Average variance extracted

Code	Items	Outer loading	VIF
Service quality (SERQ), CA = 0.819, CR = 0.873, AVE = 0.579			
SerQ1	Employees deliver services consistently.	0.773	1.559
SerQ2	Employees are willing and able to provide services in a timely manner.	0.752	1.561
SerQ3	Employees are competent and possess adequate knowledge.	0.741	1.586
SerQ4	Employees are easy to contact.	0.791	1.582
SerQ5	Employees are courteous, polite, and respectful toward customers.	0.746	1.700
Responsiveness (RES), CA = 0.84, CR = 0.882, AVE = 0.555			
Res1	Employees maintain speed and quality of service even during busy periods.	0.760	1.704
Res2	Employees always provide prompt service.	0.764	1.69
Res3	Employees always strive to handle special customer requests.	0.738	1.66
Res4	The restaurant always notified customers about service times	0.761	1.728
Res5	Restaurant staff are always ready to assist customers	0.727	1.544
Res6	Restaurant staff always have time to respond to customer requests	0.718	1.627
Personalisation (PER), CA = 0.867, CR = 0.897, AVE = 0.554			
Per1	The staff introduced themselves by name	0.701	1.641
Per2	The staff repeated the order to the customer	0.746	1.789
Per3	The staff touch customers lightly on the arm, hand, or shoulder	0.822	1.998
Per4	The staff welcome guests with friendly smiles	0.722	1.712
Per5	The staff sit down next to customers during information support	0.714	1.591
Per6	The staff includes a "Thank you" note or other messages along with the payment bill	0.762	1.828
Per7	The staff calls the guest by name when returning the payment receipt or credit card	0.739	1.678
Social compliance (SOC), CA = 0.833, CR = 0.889, AVE = 0.667			
SoC1	I would feel regret if I did not leave a tip	0.775	1.624
SoC2	I still tip the staff even if there are mistakes in the service	0.773	1.732
SoC3	I feel embarrassed when other people in my group do not tip	0.872	2.31
SoC4	I leave a larger tip when others in my group do not tip	0.841	2.146
Satisfaction (SAT), CA = 0.808, CR = 0.874, AVE = 0.634			
Sat1	Overall, I am satisfied with the services provided by the restaurant I patronised.	0.823	1.771
Sat2	I am satisfied with my decision to visit the restaurant I patronised in the future.	0.798	1.697
Sat3	My choice of restaurant was a wise one.	0.797	1.622
Sat4	I am willing to speak positively about the restaurant I patronised.	0.767	1.574
Decision to tip (DEC), CA = 0.817, CR = 0.872, AVE = 0.578			
Dec1	I always consider returning to use the service when I leave a tip	0.775	1.716
Dec2	I leave a tip with the expectation of receiving better service in the future	0.779	1.66

Code	Items	Outer loading	VIF
Dec3	I tip to reward good service.	0.747	1.551
Dec4	I tip to express gratitude for a positive service experience.	0.737	1.545
Dec5	I tip as a way of thanking the service staff.	0.761	1.591

Note: AVE: Average variance extracted; CA: Cronbach's Alpha; CR: Composite reliability (ρ_c); VIF: Variance Inflation Factor

Source: Collected by the authors

Table 3. HTMT Index and Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Dec	Per	Res	Sat	SerQ	SoC
Dec	0.76					
Per	0.612	0.745				
Res	0.646	0.536	0.745			
Sat	0.824	0.647	0.704	0.797		
SerQ	0.657	0.399	0.443	0.750	0.761	
SoC	0.698	0.466	0.471	0.723	0.634	0.816

Note: The bold values on the diagonal are the square roots of AVE, and the remaining indices are HTMT.

Source: Collected by the authors

4.3. Structural model

Hypothesis testing: The analysis results show that SerQ, Per, SoC, Res, and Sat all affect Dec. Additionally, SerQ, Per, SoC, and Res affect Sat (see Table 4). Therefore, all the research hypotheses are accepted. To evaluate the mediating role, we conducted a bootstrapping analysis with $N = 5,000$. The results indicate that Sat continues to play a mediating role in the relationship among SerQ, Per, SoC, Res, and Dec (see Table 5). The direct and indirect influence relationships mentioned above demonstrate that Sat partially mediates the effect of SerQ, Per, SoC, and Res on Dec. Thus, the total factors influencing Dec amount to 1.229 (see Table 4).

Table 4. Direct, indirect, and total effect

	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect	f-square
Per → Dec	0.166***	0.062***	0.228***	0.039
Per → Sat	0.229***		0.229***	0.092
Res → Dec	0.155***	0.070***	0.225***	0.033
Res → Sat	0.257***		0.257***	0.116
Sat → Dec	0.272***		0.272***	0.065
SerQ → Dec	0.144***	0.086***	0.230***	0.027
SerQ → Sat	0.316***		0.316***	0.172
SoC → Dec	0.211***	0.063***	0.274***	0.059
SoC → Sat	0.230***		0.230***	0.087

Note: *** $p < 0.001$

Source: Collected by the authors

The effect coefficients (f-squared) of the variables on Sat and Dec are small ($0.02 \leq f\text{-squared} < 0.15$); only SerQ affects Sat at a moderate level (see Table 4) [35]. Additionally, all Q2 values are significantly higher than zero (Sat's Q2 is 0.598, Dec's Q2 is 0.508). This indicates that the predictor variables have high accuracy ($Q2 \geq 0.35$) [36].

Table 5. Evaluation of the influence level between variables according to each model structure

Relationship	f^2	β	VIF	P values
Per -> Dec	0.039	0.166	1.598	0.000
Per -> Sat	0.092	0.229	1.463	0.000
Res -> Dec	0.033	0.155	1.631	0.001
Res -> Sat	0.116	0.257	1.461	0.000
Sat -> Dec	0.065	0.272	2.580	0.000
SerQ -> Dec	0.027	0.144	1.748	0.007
SerQ -> Sat	0.172	0.316	1.491	0.000
SoC -> Dec	0.059	0.211	1.710	0.000
SoC -> Sat	0.087	0.230	1.573	0.000

Source: Collected by the authors

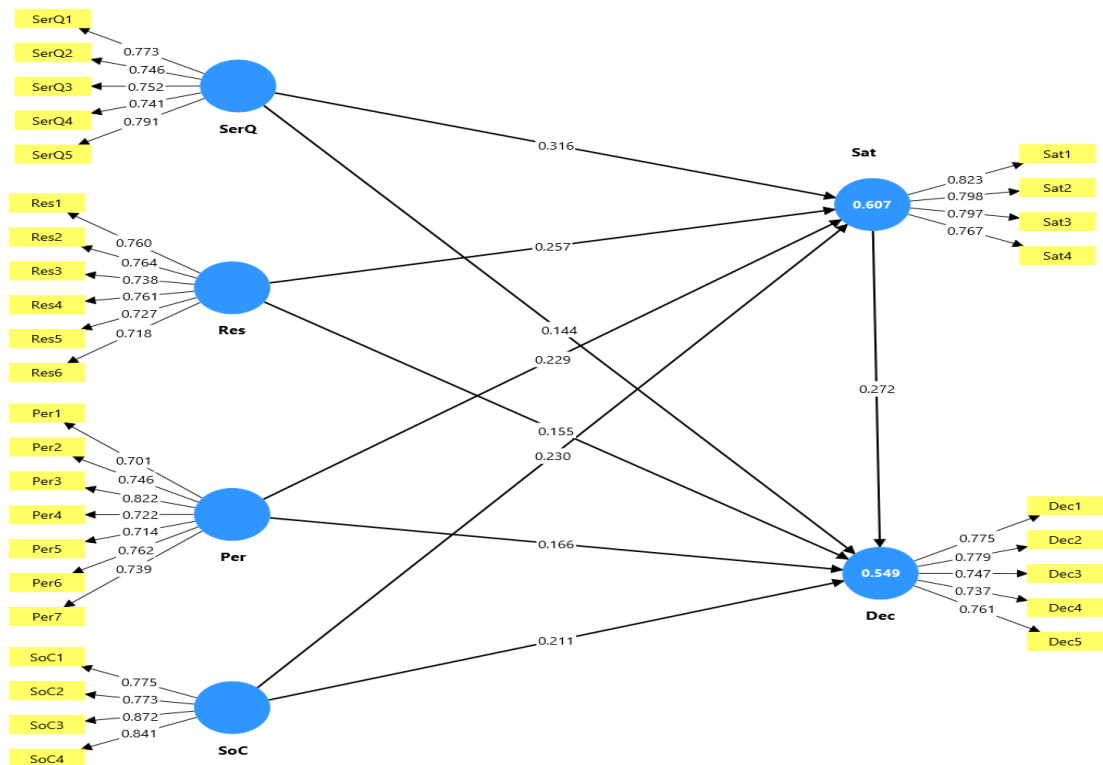


Figure 2. The relationship between the factors.

Source: From the results of SmartPLS software

The results of the PLS-SEM model (Figure 2) show that the relationships among the research factors are all positive and significant in forming customer satisfaction and the decision to tip in the Food & Beverage Department – Caravelle Saigon Hotel. Four factors, including service quality, responsiveness, social compliance, and personalisation, all impact

the mediating variable of satisfaction and directly influence the tipping decision, with noticeable differences in the level of influence among the factor groups.

The first factor, service quality, has the strongest impact on customer satisfaction, with a total coefficient $\beta = 0.272$, indicating that it partially influences tipping behaviour. This confirms that core service attributes such as attitude, professional conduct, accuracy, and consistency in the delivery process play a decisive role in creating a positive customer experience.

The second, social compliance factors directly influence the decision to send tips. Specifically, social compliance factors have a strong impact, ranking second with a total coefficient $\beta = 0.274$ and partially affecting tipping behaviour. This indicates that customers tend to tip more when they feel pressure or expectations from those around them, as well as social pressure within the service environment.

The third is responsiveness, with a "total coefficient $\beta = 0.225$," a partial factor influencing tipping behaviour, indicating quick responsiveness to requests; the readiness level of staff also plays an important role in determining customers' tipping decisions.

The fourth, personalisation, has the lowest impact, with a partial effect of "total coefficient $\beta = 0.228$ " on tipping behaviour, indicating that although personal care behaviour is positively evaluated, customers still prioritise core service values when deciding whether to tip.

For the dependent variable, satisfaction acts as a mediating variable in the decision to tip, with a coefficient of $\beta = 0.281$. This is a fairly strong level of influence, indicating that when customers are satisfied with the service, they tend to tip more. This aligns with consumer behaviour theory, in which positive emotions lead to acts of gratitude or reciprocation in the context of upscale dining services.

4.4. Discussion

4.4.1. Consistency with previous research

Service quality: This is the factor that has the strongest influence on the decision to tip, indicating that when customers highly evaluate professionalism, accuracy, and service completion, they tend to tip more. This aligns with studies confirming that service quality is the foundation for promoting positive behaviours following the experience [36], [3], [19], [21]. Additionally, service quality impacts customer satisfaction. Moreover, satisfaction also partially mediates the relationship between service quality and tipping decisions. This result confirms that high service quality contributes to customer satisfaction and leads customers to tip staff. This finding is also consistent with previous research that emphasises the importance of service quality [3], [21].

Social compliance: This factor has the second-highest level of influence, reflecting the role of social norms, mutual observation among customers, and peer pressure in the "tip" behaviour. The results align with studies emphasising that tipping behaviour is social in nature and is often shaped by the surrounding context and expectations [18]. Therefore, in the culinary context, the restaurant's surroundings and culture influence customer satisfaction [18]. This study found that social compliance also directly affects customers' tipping decisions. Additionally, the research results revealed that customer satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between social compliance and staff tipping decisions.

Responsiveness: This factor ranks third in the impact model, reflecting employees' agility, timeliness, and proactivity in the service process, which significantly contribute to the decision to give a "tip." This aligns with research that considers responsiveness an important factor in creating a positive service experience and encouraging "tip" behaviour [21], [27], [36], [19]. Additionally, responsiveness also affects customer satisfaction and the decision to tip employees. This result aligns with the studies by Rus et al. (2017) and Vinh (2023). Furthermore, customer satisfaction partially mediated the influence of responsiveness on the

tipping decision. This demonstrates that timely service responsiveness helps satisfy customers and encourages them to tip.

Personalisation: Although it has the lowest impact among the four factors, personalisation still plays an important role in enhancing customers' perception of being cared for. Studies also show that customising services to individual needs increases satisfaction, thereby indirectly influencing tipping behaviour [21]. Thus, the more personal experiences increase, the more they contribute to stimulating customer satisfaction and employees' purchasing decisions. Additionally, customer satisfaction is an important factor influencing customers' tipping decisions [3], [21], [36].

4.4.2. Key highlights of the author's research

The research results show that the structure and the impact levels of various factors on the tipping decision differ significantly from those in previous studies. Specifically, in addition to the leading role of service quality, the "social compliance" factor is identified as one of the most influential factors directly affecting tipping behaviour. This finding extends the traditional approach, which mainly emphasises "social compliance" in behavioural models, by indicating that, in the context of high-end restaurants in Vietnam, tipping behaviour is also significantly influenced by social pressure and the tendency to conform to reference groups' behaviour within this specific consumption context.

Additionally, "personalising services" has emerged as an important, high-impact factor, going beyond previous common conclusions that focused on overall service quality or satisfaction. This result indicates that customers not only evaluate services against general standards but also place particular importance on personalised experiences, thereby encouraging tipping behaviour as a form of recognition of perceived superior value.

Notably, the study not only confirms the well-established relationship between service quality and satisfaction but also clarifies the multidimensional mechanisms by which psychological and social factors, as well as service experiences, influence tipping behaviour. Integrating variables such as social compliance and personalised service into a single research model has expanded the theoretical framework, demonstrating that tipping behaviour is not only the result of service quality assessment but also the product of interactions between social context and customers' personal experiences. Thus, the new contribution of the research lies not only in testing existing relationships but also in identifying and clarifying the prominent roles of less attention-grabbing factors in the Vietnamese context, thereby providing a more comprehensive explanation of tipping behaviour in high-end restaurants and hotels.

This research shows that the order of influence of factors on the decision to tip differs from that in many previous studies. Specifically, "social compliance" is the second most influential factor, even having a significant direct impact on tipping behaviour – an aspect that some earlier studies, which often focused on social compliance or social expectations, did not emphasise enough. Additionally, "personalisation of service" emerges as an important factor with a much greater impact than previous results in the restaurant service sector, which typically prioritise service quality or customer satisfaction as the main drivers. The fact that service quality ranks first in the research model reflects the specific environment of high-end restaurants at the Caravelle Saigon Hotel, where customers highly value professionalism, consistency, and service standards, thereby increasing their motivation to tip.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

This study identified service quality, social compliance, personalisation, and responsiveness as factors influencing customer satisfaction and tipping behaviour. The research

findings highlight the importance of service quality, social compliance, personalisation, and responsiveness as factors that increase customer satisfaction and tipping behaviour toward staff. Additionally, customer satisfaction serves as a mediating variable in the relationship among service quality, social compliance, personalisation, responsiveness, and customers' tipping behaviour.

5.2. Implication

5.2.1. Management implication

The service quality factor, with a mean score of 3.47–4.00, indicates that the hotel's overall service quality is considered quite good. Among these, the highest-rated measure is "Staff providing consistent service," with an average score of 4.00, reflecting high customer satisfaction with the consistency of staff service across visits and demonstrating a professional recruitment and training process. However, the measure for "Friendly and approachable staff" received the lowest score of 3.47, suggesting that staff may not be evenly distributed across different areas and time periods. Therefore, to optimise staff deployment and allocation, the hotel needs to review operational data by time slot to allocate staff more effectively and increase staffing during peak hours, thereby improving staff accessibility. Enhance regular training on professional skills and service standards. Implement a monitoring and internal feedback mechanism. Create a supportive work environment that boosts employee motivation by using recognition, rewards, or incentives to foster a positive work spirit.

The social compliance factor has the lowest average value, ranging from 2.78 to 3.51, and is the weakest factor affecting customer satisfaction. Among them, the measure "I leave a larger tip when others in my group do not tip" has the highest mean of 3.51, suggesting that some customers adjust their tipping behaviour based on social context or observations of those around them. This reflects a common psychological trait in service environments—where others' behaviour can influence customers' decision-making in socially normative situations. However, the measure "I still tip the staff even if there are mistakes during service" has the lowest means of only 2.78. This suggests that customers are quite sensitive to service quality and are likely to reconsider tipping if they feel the service did not meet their expectations. In other words, when customers experience difficulties or staff make mistakes, they tend to reduce or omit their tips, indicating that the "social compliance" factor is insufficient to offset dissatisfaction with the service. This also reflects the high expectations customers have for the quality of service in the hotel's restaurant department and confirms that tipping behaviour is primarily influenced by actual satisfaction rather than social compliance. Therefore, the hotel should train staff in communication skills to reassure guests and compensate them promptly (for example, by offering bottled water, prioritising faster service, or adjusting dishes as needed). Establish a customer-oriented service culture: encourage staff to demonstrate a friendly attitude, show care, and be willing to assist. Sincerity in communication helps reduce customer discomfort when mistakes occur and enhances the perception of service quality.

Responsiveness, with a mean score ranging from 3.27 to 3.72, is evaluated as relatively good among the staff at Caravelle Saigon. Among these, the measure "Staff always inform guests about the service time" received the highest average score of 3.72. However, the measures "Staff always provide quick service" and "Staff always strive to handle special requests from guests" have average scores of 3.45 and 3.35, respectively. The results indicate there are still delays in the service process, especially during peak hours or when guests have personal requests. Therefore, the hotel needs to focus on improving staff responsiveness by implementing specialised training courses on handling situations, service mindset, and quick, accurate communication. Using technological tools, such as real-time task coordination systems, can help staff receive and handle guest requests more efficiently.

The personalised factors group shows a fairly wide range, with a mean of 3.06–4.16, indicating inconsistent customer awareness. The measure "Staff sending a 'Thank you' message or other messages along with the payment receipt" received the highest score (Mean = 4.16), reflecting customers' appreciation for and recognition of staff's polite and considerate actions. Conversely, the measure related to staff lightly touching the customer's arm, hand, or shoulder has the lowest average value, only 3.06, demonstrating that some customers are uncomfortable with close contact with hotel staff. They do not prefer staff to be overly familiar, especially in a 5-star environment like the Caravelle Hotel. Staff should maintain the minimum necessary distance. Therefore, the hotel needs to focus on adjusting behaviours related to close customer contact. Touching the customer's hand, shoulder, or arm should be limited or done very subtly to respect their privacy and personal space, especially in a 5-star hotel environment. Training staff on appropriate levels of friendliness, polite, delicate behaviour, and recognising customer response signals will help balance personalised service with respect for privacy, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction and creating a positive impression of the hotel's service.

5.2.2. Theoretical implications

The study contributes to supplementing and refining the research model on tipping behaviour in the context of high-end restaurant services in Vietnam by applying the SOR combined with the inclusion of the "social compliance" factor, an element not previously addressed in earlier studies, thereby enriching the theoretical basis of consumer behaviour in the service sector. Additionally, the study contributes to affirming that service quality factors, responsiveness, personalisation, and social appropriateness act as stimuli; satisfaction functions as the Organism factor, and customer loyalty is the Response factor. This research result helps confirm that the SOR model is suitable for studying factors in the restaurant service industry that influence customer loyalty behaviour. These findings also support consistency with the research results of Bang and Dai (2024). The research findings provide a scientific foundation to help managers of high-end restaurants and hotels better understand the factors influencing customers' tipping behaviour, thereby informing appropriate management actions to improve service quality, enhance customer satisfaction, and create sustainable competitive advantages.

5.3. Limitations and future research

Although the research has achieved its objectives, some limitations remain.

Firstly, the survey sample's national scope is limited, focusing only on 7 popular countries at the Caravelle Saigon Hotel, and it does not fully cover other international markets. Therefore, the representativeness of the research results is somewhat limited. Consequently, it is necessary to diversify the nationalities in the survey sample to better reflect the cultural differences and consumer behaviours of international tourists, especially from European, Australian, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian markets, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the research findings.

Secondly, the age structure of the survey sample is not truly diverse, as it excludes the under-25 age group – a growing segment in the high-end dining sector with distinct consumption behaviours. Therefore, the age range should be expanded, particularly to include those under 25, to increase coverage and enable comparisons of tipping behaviours across different generations.

Third, the study's sample size remains relatively small (307 samples) due to time and resource constraints, which may limit the accuracy and depth of analysis. Future studies should consider expanding the sample size to improve reliability and the generalizability of the results.

Fourth, the survey was conducted across the entire restaurant department. In contrast, many customers experienced only a single outlet, potentially introducing bias in the evaluation and in generalising results to the entire system. In the future, the survey questionnaire should be designed for each outlet to ensure that customers evaluate only the service space they experienced, thereby reducing data bias.

Additionally, although many studies on the factor of "empathy" have been compiled, it has not been included in the analytical model. This is a limitation and also an important direction for future research. Therefore, future studies could incorporate the "empathy" factor and other factors beyond those mentioned in this study to better clarify the mechanisms underlying tipping behaviour in the restaurant and hotel industries.

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