

The Impact of Standardisation on Business Performance of Fast food Franchises in South Africa: Customer Perspectives



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DECLARATION I, Nokwazi Cuthu Skosana, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field Entrepreneurship and New Venture Creation in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Signed at Kempton Park. On the 13th day of June 2025.

Dedication

In dedication to my ancestors, whose resilience and wisdom have paved paths I now walk with gratitude.

To Thozama and Brian, who not only planted the seeds of curiosity within me, but nurtured them with patience and sacrifice, showing me through both words and deeds that knowledge is a treasure worth pursuing.

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Abstract

The South African fast food industry is a dynamic and competitive space where standardisation plays a crucial role in ensuring operational efficiency, brand consistency, and customer experience. However, achieving a balance between uniformity and adaptability remains a challenge, particularly in diverse and evolving markets. This study explores the relationships between standardisation, customer satisfaction, and business performance, examining whether customer satisfaction mediates this relationship. The Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) serves as the theoretical framework, emphasising the importance of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring resources to maintain competitiveness.

A quantitative research design was adopted, with data collected from 450 respondents through an online consumer panel associated with major South African fast food franchises. Statistical analyses, including correlation, regression, and mediation tests, were conducted using SPSS. Findings reveal that standardisation does not significantly impact customer satisfaction, loyalty, or perceived quality. Moreover, customer satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between standardisation and business performance, suggesting that other factors such as innovation, localisation, and digital transformation may be more influential.

This study advances DCT's application in the franchise industry, challenging assumptions about rigid standardisation as a driver of customer satisfaction and business success. The findings provide critical insights for franchisors, emphasising the need for a more flexible, customer-centric approach that incorporates adaptability, innovation, and market responsiveness. Future research should explore alternative mediators and moderators, particularly the role of technology, sustainability, and personalised service strategies.

Keywords: Standardisation, Customer Satisfaction, Business Performance, Dynamic Capabilities Theory, Franchise Management, South Africa, Innovation, Adaptability.

Definitions

Standardisation refers to the uniformity of processes, products, and services across franchise outlets, achieved through codified protocols, menu specifications, and brand guidelines.

Customer Satisfaction refers to the degree to which customer expectations are met or exceeded, typically assessed using SERVQUAL dimensions or Net-Promoter-Score indices.

Customer Loyalty refers to a consumer's intentional and behavioural commitment to repurchase and recommend, captured via repeat-patronage indicators and word-of-mouth measures.

Business Performance refers to the composite outcome comprising financial metrics such as sales growth and ROI and non-financial indicators such as brand equity and market share.

Dynamic Capabilities refers to the higher-order organisational routines of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring, that enable timely adaptation to environmental change.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Chapter Introduction

The fast food industry is an integral part of the broader food and beverage market, characterised by its emphasis on convenience, affordability, and consistency. This industry encompasses franchise chains, independent outlets, and kiosks, all of which contribute significantly to the economy. In June 2024 alone, fast food sales in South Africa reached approximately R2.839 billion, underscoring the industry's substantial economic impact (Statistics_South_Africa, 2024). Despite its financial significance, the fast food industry operates in an environment marked by intense competition, evolving consumer preferences, and the need for operational efficiency. Standardisation has emerged as a cornerstone of franchise management, playing a crucial role in ensuring customer satisfaction and driving business performance (Liu et al., 2016; Zimuto & Maritz, 2019). However, as consumer expectations shift and market conditions become increasingly complex, the conventional approach to standardisation requires continuous adaptation (Caetano, 2017).

This study examines the intricate relationship between standardisation, customer satisfaction, and business performance within South Africa's fast food franchise landscape. Standardisation is widely regarded as a mechanism for enhancing organisational efficiency, brand consistency, and market competitiveness (Nath et al., 2021). However, its effectiveness is contingent on the ability to balance uniformity with market responsiveness. The South African market presents a particularly complex terrain, given its diverse cultural demographics, regional economic disparities, and rapidly shifting consumer behaviours. Franchise operators must navigate the challenge of offering a consistent product and service experience while tailoring their approach to local preferences (Zimuto & Maritz, 2019). The introduction of this study establishes the significance of standardisation in franchise operations and its implications for consumer satisfaction and overall business performance.

On a global scale, standardisation has proven instrumental in enabling fast food franchises to maintain brand consistency, streamline operations, and ensure quality control (Calza et al., 2023). It fosters consumer trust by delivering a uniform experience across various locations, reinforcing customer expectations regardless of geographic differences. Nevertheless, standardisation is not without its challenges. The extent to which a standardised model remains effective across different cultural and economic contexts has been widely debated. In South Africa, consumer expectations and spending habits vary significantly across urban and rural areas, requiring franchisors to strike a balance between standardisation and local adaptation. While a uniform brand image fosters familiarity and reliability, rigid adherence to global franchise models may fail to accommodate distinctive regional preferences and purchasing power dynamics. The challenge lies in ensuring that consistency does not compromise relevance, necessitating a nuanced approach that integrates flexibility within a structured operational framework.

Customer satisfaction is central to long-term business success, as it influences repeat patronage, brand loyalty, and word-of-mouth referrals (Ahn, 2023; Andreassen, 2024). Satisfied customers are more likely to develop a sense of trust and emotional connection with a brand, increasing the likelihood of continued engagement. However, in a dynamic and competitive market, achieving high levels of customer satisfaction extends beyond product and service consistency. Factors

such as service quality, responsiveness, and personalisation play a pivotal role in shaping customer perceptions (Hsu et al., 2019). Additionally, the Resource-Based View (RBV) complements this by highlighting how internally controlled assets such as unique operating systems or branding practices serve as sources of sustained competitive advantage when tailored to context-specific needs (Barney, 1991).

Consumer preferences are continuously evolving, particularly in response to growing concerns over health consciousness, sustainability, and digital innovation (Ünal et al., 2024). In this context, franchises must look beyond rigid standardisation models and prioritise adaptability to cater to changing expectations. A customer-centric approach, underpinned by a deep understanding of consumer behaviour, is fundamental to sustaining competitive advantage. Modern customers expect not only consistency but also responsiveness. A standardised product offering alone is insufficient if it fails to align with shifting market trends and consumer expectations.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory as a Theoretical Framework

To explore the strategic role of standardisation in franchise operations, the study is anchored in Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT). Originally proposed by Teece et al. (1997), DCT provides a structured framework for understanding how businesses develop and sustain competitive advantage in fluctuating environments. The theory emphasises three core capabilities:

- **Sensing opportunities and threats** – Identifying shifts in market conditions and emerging consumer trends.
- **Seizing opportunities** – Mobilising resources to capitalise on these insights.
- **Reconfiguring resources** – Adjusting business processes to remain competitive.

In the fast food industry, these capabilities are crucial in reconciling standardisation with the need for market responsiveness. While standardisation ensures operational efficiency and brand consistency, franchises must also cultivate the ability to sense and respond to changing consumer demands. The integration of sensing capabilities allows franchises to detect shifts in preferences, such as the rising demand for plant-based menu options or digital ordering solutions, while reconfiguring capabilities enable them to adapt without disrupting core operations (Perdreau et al., 2023; Suali et al., 2024; Zimuto & Maritz, 2019).

DCT offers a practical lens for understanding how franchises can manage the tension between uniformity and adaptation, particularly in an emerging, diverse and evolving market like South Africa. Aligning standardisation strategies with dynamic market conditions enables franchises to enhance consumer satisfaction, strengthen brand loyalty, and sustain long-term business performance.

Positioning the Study Within Franchise Management and Standardisation Research

This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on franchise management, standardisation, and dynamic capabilities within the South African fast food industry. While extensive research exists on the impact of standardisation in developed markets, there is limited empirical evidence on its

role in emerging economies like South Africa, where the need for localised adaptations is more pronounced. This study aims to address this gap by exploring how fast food franchises navigate the complexities of a diverse consumer base while maintaining operational consistency.

The findings will provide valuable insights into whether standardisation enhances or hinders customer satisfaction and business performance in the South African context. Furthermore, the research extends the application of DCT in franchise management, offering practical recommendations on how standardisation can be leveraged to drive innovation and customer engagement. This approach enables the study to inform both academic discourse and managerial decision-making, equipping franchise operators with the tools to navigate an increasingly competitive landscape.

This chapter sets the stage for an in-depth exploration of the interplay between standardisation, customer satisfaction, and business performance, outlining the theoretical underpinnings and industry relevance of the study.

1.2 Background

The South African fast food industry is a key driver of economic growth, contributing significantly to the country's food service industry (Mgiba & Pillay, 2024). Rapid urbanisation, an expanding middle class, and shifting consumer preferences have fuelled industry growth, commanding 30-35% of the national food service market and expanding at an annual rate of approximately 5% (Statistics_South_Africa, 2024). The industry operates in an increasingly competitive and evolving landscape, where franchises must maintain operational efficiency and brand consistency while addressing diverse consumer demands.

Franchising thrives on standardisation, ensuring that products, services, and operational processes remain uniform across multiple locations (Czinkota et al., 2021). Global brands such as McDonald's and KFC rely on standardisation to maintain quality and consistency, while local franchises such as Steers and Nando's apply similar strategies to build customer trust and market presence. Standardisation provides cost efficiency, process predictability, and streamlined operations, reinforcing customer perceptions of reliability and consistency. However, achieving success in a highly diverse consumer landscape requires businesses to go beyond rigid standardisation, integrating elements of adaptability and local market responsiveness.

The South African fast food industry presents unique challenges due to cultural diversity, regional taste preferences, and economic disparities. While consumers expect a consistent experience, many also value localised menu offerings, personalised service, and culturally relevant marketing strategies (Stalmirska, 2023). Franchisors must navigate the tension between uniformity and flexibility, ensuring standardisation enhances rather than limits market competitiveness (Wet et al., 2021). This reflects the principles of Service-Dominant Logic, which argue that value is co-created with customers through interactions shaped by both standard offerings and contextual responsiveness (Vargo & Lusch, 2014). Similarly, the Resource-Based View suggests that firms must deploy their internal resources, including standardisation frameworks, in ways that are valuable, rare, and adaptable to changing consumer expectations (Barney, 1991).

Customer preferences increasingly reflect a growing awareness of sustainability, health-consciousness, and digital convenience, prompting franchises to integrate technological innovation, eco-friendly practices, and healthier menu options (Zaitouni & Murphy, 2023). Balancing standardisation with evolving consumer needs requires strategic agility, particularly as businesses face operational constraints, fluctuating market conditions, and external economic pressures (FeizAbadi et al., 2021).

This study explores how standardisation influences customer satisfaction and business performance within the South African fast food industry, identifying the extent to which franchises can maintain consistency while adapting to market shifts. Understanding these dynamics will provide valuable insights for franchisors seeking to sustain competitiveness, operational efficiency, and long-term growth.

1.3 Problem Statement

The impact of standardisation on customer satisfaction and business performance in the South African fast food industry remains insufficiently explored. Existing research underscores the role of standardisation in operational efficiency and brand consistency (Liu et al., 2016), yet its influence on customer loyalty, perceived quality, and long-term business success remains less defined, particularly in South Africa's multi-faceted market. Global studies primarily focus on developed economies, where economic stability and consumer behaviours differ significantly from the realities faced by franchises operating in South Africa. The absence of context-specific research limits strategic decision-making for franchisors and franchisees in this region.

The theoretical understanding of standardisation through the lens of Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) also remains underdeveloped. Likewise, gaps exist in applying the Resource-Based View and Service-Dominant Logic to fast food franchising. While RBV emphasises leveraging firm-specific capabilities for differentiation, SDL calls attention to the need for consumer involvement and value co-creation, both underrepresented in current literature on standardisation within emerging markets.

While DCT offers a framework for firms to maintain competitiveness by sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring resources, its application to franchise standardisation strategies is still emerging (Caetano, 2017). Further exploration is needed to determine how standardisation functions as a dynamic capability, allowing businesses to navigate industry shifts, address consumer expectations, and sustain long-term success.

Franchise operators in South Africa encounter significant challenges in balancing standardisation with market responsiveness. Intensifying competition, economic instability, and the increasing demand for customisation, sustainability, and digital innovation place additional pressure on standardised business models (Rambe, 2024). Without a clear understanding of how standardisation shapes customer experiences and financial performance, franchisors risk adopting rigid structures that fail to meet evolving market expectations, potentially eroding brand equity and customer trust.

This study aims to address these knowledge gaps, investigating the role of standardisation in shaping customer satisfaction and business outcomes within South African fast food franchises. Through the DCT framework, the research will assess how franchises balance operational consistency with market agility, offering insights that can guide strategic decision-making and long-term sustainability.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the relationship between standardisation, customer satisfaction, and business performance in the South African fast food industry.
2. To evaluate the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between standardisation and business performance.
3. To contribute to the theoretical discourse on DCT by contextualising its application to franchise operations.
4. To provide practical recommendations for balancing standardisation with adaptability in a diverse market.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between standardisation and customer satisfaction?
2. How does standardisation impact customer loyalty?
3. What is the perceived impact of standardisation on product and service quality?
4. To what extent does customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between standardisation and business performance?

1.6 Hypotheses

1. **H1:** Standardisation positively influences customer satisfaction.
2. **H2:** Standardisation improves customer loyalty.
3. **H3:** Standardisation enhances the perceived quality of products and services.
4. **H4:** Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between standardisation and business performance.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for both academic and practical purposes, particularly in advancing the understanding of standardisation and its implications for customer satisfaction and business performance within the fast food franchise industry. The research bridges theoretical and practical gaps in a way that enriches the academic discourse on Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) while

offering actionable insights for Franchisors navigating a competitive and dynamic South African market.

This study also contributes to the broader academic discussion on DCT by contextualising its application in the fast food franchise industry. While DCT has been extensively studied in innovation and technology management, its relevance to franchise operations, specifically standardisation, remains underexplored. This study examines how DCT's three core components, namely sensing opportunities and threats, seizing opportunities, and reconfiguring resources, align with franchise practices to enhance customer satisfaction and business performance. This study situates standardisation as a strategic capability within the framework of DCT, thereby providing novel insights on how fast food franchises can balance efficiency and adaptability in a highly competitive environment.

The study also enhances the theoretical discourse by integrating the Resource-Based View and Service-Dominant Logic. RBV provides a lens to assess whether standardisation qualifies as a valuable internal resource when tailored for uniqueness and inimitability. SDL reinforces the importance of customer participation in shaping service outcomes, suggesting that standardisation must not hinder but rather enable personalised engagement and value co-creation. Weaving these perspectives into the analysis, the study offers a multidimensional understanding of strategic capability in fast food franchising.

The study adds to the existing body of literature on franchising by focusing on the South African context. Research on franchising has often been dominated by studies conducted in developed economies, where market dynamics, customer expectations, and competitive conditions differ significantly from those in emerging markets like South Africa. This study addresses this contextual gap by examining how standardisation practices influence customer-centric outcomes in a diverse and evolving market. The findings also extend the empirical understanding of how customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between operational standardisation and overall business performance, a relationship that has been underexplored in existing research.

From a practical perspective, this study offers valuable insights for franchisors seeking to enhance operational efficiency while maintaining customer satisfaction and loyalty. In an increasingly competitive market, the ability to standardise operations without compromising adaptability is critical (Caetano, 2017; Shalley & Gilson, 2017). This research highlights strategies for leveraging DCT to achieve this balance, offering practical recommendations for sensing market trends, seizing opportunities for innovation, and reconfiguring resources to support new initiatives.

One of the key practical implications is the emphasis on aligning standardisation practices with customer preferences. The study underscores the importance of local adaptation, particularly in a diverse market like South Africa, where consumer preferences vary widely. Franchisors can use these insights to refine their operational strategies, ensuring that standardisation practices are flexible enough to cater to local tastes and expectations.

The study also highlights the role of innovation in maintaining competitiveness. Adopting technologies such as customer relationship management (CRM) systems, mobile ordering platforms, and self-service kiosks, franchises can enhance both operational efficiency and customer experience (Akcem, 2020; Kim et al., 2023; Zaitouni & Murphy, 2023). These

technologies not only streamline operations but also provide valuable data for sensing customer preferences and market trends, aligning with the DCT framework.

Moreover, the study emphasises the importance of sustainability practices in modern franchising (Perrigot et al., 2021). As consumers become increasingly conscious of environmental and social issues, integrating sustainability into standardisation practices can enhance brand reputation and customer loyalty. The findings provide practical guidance for franchisors on how to incorporate sustainability into their operations without compromising efficiency.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Introduction

South Africa's fast food franchises confront a uniquely turbulent operating landscape. Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) has climbed back to roughly 11 percent in 2023 (GlobalEntrepreneurshipMonitor, 2023). Chronic load-shedding, funding bottlenecks, particularly for Black-owned start-ups, and stark regional disparities like Cape Town's tech-centric ecosystem versus Durban's consumer-service clusters magnify operational risk. In this high-volatility climate, franchisors lean heavily on operational standardisation to guarantee product consistency and cost control, while franchisees must cultivate dynamic capabilities that let them sense market shifts, seize fleeting opportunities and re-configure resources rapidly.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) (Teece et al., 1997) therefore offers an indispensable lens: it frames competitive advantage as the outcome of three inter-linked routines: sensing, seizing and re-configuring. When a Stage-6 blackout strikes, for instance, an agile franchise seizes the moment by switching to generator-ready product lines and rerouting delivery drivers to better-lit suburbs. Such manoeuvres testify to concepts such as disciplined flexibility, where codified standard operating procedures (SOPs) underpin yet do not straitjacket adaptive action.

At the same time, Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) reminds us that value is co-created. Even the most streamlined kitchen layout fails if the consumer experience of digital ordering, collection queues and third-party delivery does not meet rising expectations in convenience and reliability. Empirical work on South-African fast food franchises already hints at this tension: Ahmed et al. (2023) show that diners tolerate higher prices when service reliability is high, whereas rapid menu adaptation during power outages mitigates dissatisfaction.

2.2 Theoretical Framework and Key Constructs

2.2.1 Key Constructs

Operational Standardisation which codified routines that safeguard uniform product quality and service delivery across outlets (Rondini et al., 2018). Customer Satisfaction denotes a consumer's cumulative evaluation of a service encounter, commonly assessed with SERVQUAL or Net-Promoter-Score metrics (Baquero, 2022; Weinstein, 2012). Business Performance defined by a composite of financial namely, sales growth and ROI and non-financial such as loyalty and brand equity indicators (Schweiger et al., 2019).

2.2.2 Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT)

DCT posits that competitive advantage stems from routines enabling firms to sense environmental change, seize opportunities, and reconfigure resources (Teece et al., 1997). In fast food franchising, sensing includes real-time monitoring of dietary trends or digital orders (Blut et al., 2014); seizing entails rapid deployment of resources such as mobile apps or vegan menu lines; and reconfiguring involves supply-chain realignment and staff retraining to embed such innovations. These capabilities equip franchises to withstand shocks such as Stage-6 load-shedding.

2.2.3 Relevance of DCT to Standardisation

Standardisation secures consistency and economy of scale, yet rigidity can limit local responsiveness (Lopes et al., 2025). Through DCT's lens, sensing routines identify when adaptation is warranted; seizing routines channel investment into context-specific changes; and reconfiguring routines institutionalise these changes without eroding core Standard Operating Procedures (Bari et al., 2024; Ghantous et al., 2025).

DCT functions not merely as a background theory, but as the lens through which standardisation is understood and applied in a dynamic franchising context. Standardisation, while traditionally seen as a static operational routine, is reinterpreted here as a strategic capability that evolves through three DCT constructs:

- **Sensing:** Identifying shifts in customer preferences and contextual disruptions (e.g., energy shortages, digital trends).
- **Seizing:** Mobilising system-wide resources (e.g., uniform menus, digital tools) to institutionalise consistent service responses.
- **Reconfiguring:** Adjusting processes and resources to localise global SOPs without diluting brand integrity.

Consequently, the study's hypotheses are indirectly framed through DCT by examining how dynamic capability-enhanced standardisation influences customer satisfaction, loyalty, and business performance. Rather than isolating sensing/seizing/reconfiguring as separate variables, DCT informs the interpretation of how standardisation operates adaptively in volatile contexts like South Africa. This interpretive lens will be essential for analysing empirical results.

Thus, DCT serves two functions: namely to conceptually reframe standardisation as a dynamic, not rigid, process; and to provide the foundation for interpreting how franchises maintain performance in complex environments by embedding flexibility within uniform systems.

2.2.4 Integration with Key Concepts and Constructs

Empirical evidence indicates that operational consistency alone does not guarantee favourable outcomes; customer experience mediates the route to performance (Daradkeh et al., 2023; Gutierrez-Gutierrez & Antony, 2020). Dynamic capabilities ensure that standardised routines remain attuned to emerging expectations, thereby elevating satisfaction and, via repeat patronage and word-of-mouth, enhancing performance (Gill & Kim, 2021).

2.2.5 Service-Dominant Logic (SDL)

SDL (Vargo & Lusch, 2014) complements DCT by foregrounding value co-creation at the service interface. Its salience: reliability during power disruptions moderates price tolerance and rapid menu adaptation mitigates dissatisfaction during blackouts. Thus, reconfiguration is consequential only when customers perceive enhanced value.

2.2.6 Resource-Based View (RBV)

RBV (Barney, 1991) emphasises that both tangible and intangible firm-specific assets such as premium locations or brand equity can enable or constrain strategic adaptation. Though less dynamic in orientation, RBV helps define the internal boundaries within which dynamic capabilities operate.

2.2.7 Critique of DCT

DCT offers significant strengths, including its emphasis on adaptability and strategic resource management, making it highly applicable to dynamic industries like fast food (Teece, 2018). Implementing DCT can be resource-intensive, requiring substantial investment in technology, training, and organisational restructuring (Akcem, 2020; Daradkeh et al., 2023). Whilst, measuring dynamic capabilities poses challenges due to their complex, interrelated nature (Chowdhury & Quaddus, 2017). Despite these limitations, DCT remains a robust framework for examining how franchises can navigate the interplay between standardisation and adaptability (Shan et al., 2019).

2.3 Key Constructs and Hypotheses Integration

The integration of key constructs within this research study serves to explore the dynamics of standardisation, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty in fast food franchises. This section delves into these constructs and their interrelationships, drawing from existing literature to contextualise the hypotheses and explain their implications.

The relationships among the constructs are anchored in three complementary theories. RBV frames operational standardisation as an intangible asset that is valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate. SDL explains how this asset is converted into Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty through perceived reliability and service quality. DCT provides the dynamic lens by showing how franchises refine standardised routines, without eroding uniformity, when new customer needs emerge. These logics underpin the four hypotheses for this study.

2.3.1 Standardisation and Customer Satisfaction (H1)

Standardisation in the fast food industry refers to the uniformity of processes, products, and services across franchise outlets (Kumolu-Johnson, 2024). It encompasses operational protocols, menu offerings, service delivery methods, and branding elements (Davis et al., 2018; Field et al., 2018). Maintaining consistency, standardisation ensures that customers experience the same quality regardless of location, reinforcing brand trust and reliability (Blut et al., 2014).

From a theoretical standpoint, Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) explains how franchises can maintain standardisation while simultaneously responding to local market conditions. The sensing capability, for instance, allows franchises to identify consumer preferences that can be standardised at scale, such as the growing demand for sustainable packaging (Naidoo & Gasparatos, 2018). Seizing opportunities involves deploying resources to implement these changes systemically, while reconfiguring ensures the adjustments integrate seamlessly into existing operations (Teece et al., 1997).

Customer satisfaction represents the degree to which a franchise meets or exceeds customer expectations (Gill & Kim, 2021). In the context of fast food, this involves factors such as product quality, speed of service, and overall experience. Research indicates that standardisation positively impacts customer satisfaction by offering predictable and reliable service, which is particularly valued in high-frequency consumption contexts like fast food (Gârdan et al., 2021).

Standardised preparation methods ensure consistent taste and quality, while standardised service protocols minimise wait times and enhance efficiency (Andrews & Turner, 2017; Liu & Tse, 2018). These factors directly influence the customer experience, fostering satisfaction and encouraging repeat visits.

Empirical evidence from previous studies has demonstrated the positive effects of standardisation on customer satisfaction. (Wang et al., 2021) emphasises that operational consistency leads to greater customer trust and reduces the uncertainty associated with service variability. Caetano (2017); Sedighi et al. (2022) argue that standardisation reduces perceived risks, particularly for first-time customers who rely on brand reputation and familiarity .

Hypothesis H1: There is a significant positive relationship between the standardisation of fast food franchises and customer satisfaction.

2.3.2 Standardisation and Customer Loyalty (H2)

Customer loyalty refers to the behavioural and attitudinal commitment of customers to a brand, reflected in repeat patronage and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Goyal & Verma, 2023). Loyal customers not only contribute to sustained revenue but also serve as brand advocates, enhancing the franchise's reputation and market reach (Hoyer et al., 2020). In fast food franchises, loyalty is particularly critical due to the competitive nature of the industry, where numerous brands vie for consumer attention.

Standardisation plays a pivotal role in fostering customer loyalty by ensuring a consistent and dependable customer experience. According to Cavusgil et al. (2022), the uniformity of products and services across franchise locations creates a sense of familiarity and trust, encouraging customers to return. Standardisation also simplifies decision-making, as customers are confident that their expectations will be met regardless of location (Wilkins et al., 2019).

A customer who frequently visits a fast food outlet in Johannesburg is likely to patronise the same brand when travelling to Cape Town or Durban, knowing that the quality and service will remain consistent. This reliability reinforces loyalty and diminishes the likelihood of switching to competitors (Rane et al., 2023).

Empirical findings from (Gremmler et al., 2020), depict that standardisation positively influences loyalty by enhancing customer confidence and reducing perceived risks. However, findings from (Rane et al., 2023) also highlight the importance of supplementary factors, such as personalised experiences and emotional connections, in strengthening loyalty.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory offers valuable insights into the interplay between standardisation, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. Sensing customer preferences and adapting standardised practices accordingly enables franchises to enhance satisfaction, which in turn fosters loyalty (Liu et al., 2016; Perdreau et al., 2023). The introduction of region-specific menu items within a standardised framework allows franchises to cater to local tastes while maintaining operational consistency (Javed et al., 2021). This dual approach not only satisfies customers but also strengthens their emotional attachment to the brand, encouraging loyalty (Rane et al., 2023).

Hypothesis H2: Standardisation positively influences customer loyalty among fast food franchise customers in South Africa.

2.3.3 Standardisation and Perceived Quality (H3)

Perceived quality is a subjective assessment of the overall excellence of products and services offered by a business, in the fast food industry, it encapsulates elements such as food taste, freshness, cleanliness, service efficiency, and the consistency of these factors across locations (DiPietro et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2016; Zhong & Moon, 2020). Customers often equate standardisation with reliability and predictability, which are critical dimensions of perceived quality. Studies have developed and validated specific measurement scales for assessing service quality in fast food restaurants, such as DINESERV and QUICKSERV (Ghosh et al., 2023; Mendocilla et al., 2021). Maintaining consistent quality across fast food franchise outlets is essential for building a strong brand reputation and encouraging repeat patronage.

Standardisation allows franchises to streamline their operations, ensuring that customers receive the same level of quality regardless of the outlet they visit (Chehab et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2016). This operational uniformity minimises variability in product preparation, service delivery, and overall customer experience, thereby reinforcing perceptions of quality (DiPietro et al., 2016).

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) provides a framework for understanding how franchises can leverage standardisation to maintain high perceived quality (Teece, 2018). The sensing capability

allows franchises to monitor customer feedback and identify areas where quality improvements are needed, while the seizing capability ensures that resources are mobilised to implement these improvements systematically (Zimuto & Maritz, 2019). Reconfiguring resources, such as adopting new equipment or training staff, further supports the delivery of high-quality products and services across all outlets (Teece et al., 1997).

Empirical evidence from prior research by Rane et al. (2023), observed that standardisation reduces the likelihood of service inconsistencies and quality lapses, thereby enhancing customer trust and satisfaction. Similarly, Kotsanopoulos and Arvanitoyannis (2017) noted that standardisation serves as a quality control mechanism, ensuring that customer expectations are met consistently.

While standardisation generally enhances perceived quality, overemphasis on uniformity can at times diminish the perception of uniqueness and innovation (Caetano, 2017). Simon et al. (2018) suggest that customers may perceive a standardised menu as limiting or monotonous, particularly in markets where diversity and personalisation are valued. Dynamic Capabilities Theory addresses this limitation by advocating for the integration of flexibility within standardised frameworks (Kump et al., 2019; Simon et al., 2018). Sensing local preferences and introducing region-specific menu items or services allows franchises to enhance perceived quality while maintaining operational consistency (Teece, 2018; Vignali, 2001).

Moreover, advancements in technology provide opportunities to enhance perceived quality within standardised operations. Digital tools such as automated ordering systems and AI-driven quality checks can improve service accuracy and reduce errors, further reinforcing customer perceptions of quality (Daradkeh et al., 2023; Helal, 2023)

Hypothesis H3: Customers perceive standardisation to have a significant positive impact on the quality of products and services offered by fast food franchises.

2.3.4 Customer Satisfaction as a Mediator (H4)

Customer satisfaction serves as a critical intermediary between standardisation and business performance. Standardised practices ensure consistent quality and service, which in turn enhances customer satisfaction (Caetano, 2017; Machingura et al., 2024). Satisfied customers are more likely to engage in repeat patronage, provide positive word-of-mouth recommendations, and exhibit higher brand loyalty, all of which contribute to improved business performance (Mittal et al., 2023; Wingrove & Urban, 2017).

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) provides a strategic framework for understanding this mediation process. Sensing customer preferences and adapting standardised practices accordingly allows franchises to enhance satisfaction levels, which in turn drives business success (Perdreau et al., 2023; Zimuto & Maritz, 2019). Introducing innovative services such as self-order kiosks within a standardised framework can, for example, improve customer convenience and satisfaction, leading to increased sales and market share (Daradkeh et al., 2023; Fainshtein et al., 2024; Helal, 2023)

The mediating role of customer satisfaction has been widely extensively studied in literature (Liu et al., 2016). Nasir et al. (2021) emphasised that satisfied customers serve as brand ambassadors, creating a ripple effect that enhances business performance. Similarly, satisfaction acts as a bridge between operational excellence and financial outcomes, particularly in industries where customer experience is a key competitive differentiator (Liu et al., 2016).

Rane et al. (2023) further highlighted the importance of tailoring standardised practices to meet customer needs, noting that flexibility within a standardised framework can significantly enhance satisfaction levels (Felstead, 2024). Offering region-specific menu options or personalised services within a standardised operational model can create a sense of inclusivity and responsiveness, further boosting satisfaction and its downstream effects on business performance (Klopach, 2024).

The theory of Dynamic Capabilities also provides valuable insights into how franchises can strengthen the mediation role of customer satisfaction. Leveraging sensing capabilities to identify emerging customer preferences, franchises can refine their standardised practices to align with evolving expectations (Zimuto & Maritz, 2019). Seizing capabilities enable the rapid implementation of these refinements, while reconfiguring resources ensures that the changes are integrated seamlessly into existing operations (Perdreau et al., 2023; Teece, 2018).

A franchise that senses growing demand for healthier menu options can seize the opportunity by introducing healthy items within its standardised menu, enhancing customer satisfaction and driving increased sales (Gill & Kim, 2021). Similarly, Daradkeh et al. (2023) and Kumolu-Johnson (2024) have observed that adopting digital tools to streamline service delivery can improve convenience and efficiency, further strengthening the link between satisfaction and business performance.

While the mediating role of customer satisfaction is well-established, its effectiveness can be influenced by external factors such as competitive pressures, economic conditions, and cultural differences (Liu et al., 2016). In highly competitive markets, even satisfied customers may switch to competitors offering more innovative or differentiated experiences (Mittal et al., 2023). Franchises must therefore continuously monitor market dynamics and adapt their strategies to sustain satisfaction levels (Gillis et al., 2018).

Advancements in technology also present opportunities to enhance the mediation process (Kumolu-Johnson, 2024). CRM systems and data analytics can provide valuable insights into customer preferences and behaviour, enabling franchises to tailor their standardised practices to meet specific needs (Buttle & Maklan, 2019). Leveraging these tools enables franchises to strengthen the relationship between standardisation, satisfaction, and business performance.

Hypothesis H4: Customer satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between standardisation and the business performance of fast food franchises.

2.4 Review of Previous Studies

Author (Year)	Context	Key Focus	Key Finding
Wang et al. (2021)	Fast food chains, China	Operational consistency & customer trust	Standardisation positively associated with satisfaction
Caetano (2017)	Quick-service outlets, Brazil	Risk reduction via uniform menus	Standardisation lowers perceived risk for first-time patrons
Sedighi et al. (2022)	Food retail, Iran	Operational risk perception	Standardised processes enhance initial trust formation
Cavusgil et al. (2022)	Global QSR franchises	Familiarity & trust	Uniform product/service boosts repeat purchase intention
Wilkins et al. (2019)	Hospitality services, UK	Decision simplicity	Perceived consistency simplifies choice, reinforcing loyalty
Rane et al. (2023)	Indian fast-food sector	Service inconsistencies	Standardisation reduces quality lapses, enhancing satisfaction
Kotsanopoulos & Arvanitoyannis (2017)	Food quality control, EU	Quality mechanisms	SOPs act as quality assurance instruments
Simon et al. (2018)	Restaurant consumers, USA	Menu monotony	Over-standardisation can dampen perceived novelty
Kump et al. (2019)	Dynamic capabilities, Austria	Flexibility within routines	Adaptive standardisation mitigates monotony issues
Vignali (2001)	McDonald's global strategy	Glocalisation	Regional menu adaptation within standardised system supports acceptance
Nasir et al. (2021)	Service industries, Pakistan	Brand ambassadors	Satisfaction drives WOM and performance
Liu et al. (2016)	Foodservice, USA	Operational excellence to financials	Satisfaction mediates operations-performance link
Daradkeh et al. (2023)	Digital tools in QSR, Jordan	Technology & convenience	Digital ordering strengthens satisfaction-performance pathway

Table 1 Consolidation of previous studies

2.5 Research Gaps

Despite the expanding global literature on operational standardisation, customer satisfaction, and business performance, substantial research gaps persist, particularly within the context of South Africa's fast food franchising sector. Most extant studies are situated in developed economies, where infrastructure, consumer behaviour, and institutional support differ markedly from conditions in developing markets like South Africa (GEM, 2023; Herrington & Kew, 2022).

Current scholarship disproportionately reflects Western market dynamics, failing to account for unique South African challenges such as economic inequality, infrastructural instability (e.g., load-shedding), and high socio-cultural diversity. Gligor et al. (2020) show, consumer tolerance and satisfaction hinge on operational agility and context-aware adaptations. Elements inadequately captured in global franchising literature.

There is also limited empirical work that explores how standardisation impacts customer satisfaction and perceived quality in fragmented consumer environments. The mediation role of customer satisfaction between operational routines and performance remains theoretically acknowledged but empirically under-tested within franchising, especially in developing contexts (Nasir et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2016). Moreover, the application of Dynamic Capabilities Theory, though prominent in manufacturing and tech sectors has been minimally applied to fast food franchising. The theory's mechanisms of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring offer a powerful but underutilised lens for examining how franchises might retain uniformity while adapting to local market exigencies (Teece et al., 1997; Zimuto & Maritz, 2019).

This study seeks to bridge these gaps by localising the inquiry within South Africa and deploying DCT to interrogate the dynamic interface between standardisation, satisfaction, and performance. It further enriches the literature by testing the mediating role of customer satisfaction empirically and operationalising DCT within a context defined by volatility, inequality, and digital transformation.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in DCT and integrates four key constructs: standardisation, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and business performance, with perceived quality as a complementary variable. It delineates both direct and mediated relationships among these constructs, particularly highlighting customer satisfaction as a mediating factor in the standardisation-performance linkage.

Figure 1 depicts the hypothesised relationships:

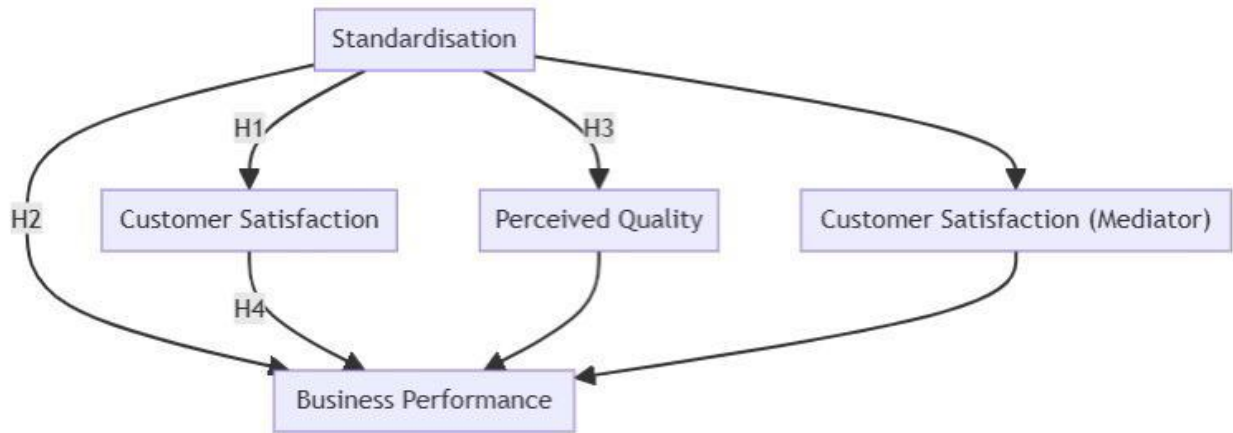


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

The framework reflects DCT’s triadic logic:

- Sensing: Identifying shifts in consumer preferences (e.g., demand for healthier options or digital convenience tools);
- Seizing: Mobilising resources to capture these preferences systemically (e.g., rollout of kiosks or app-based orders);
- Reconfiguring: Embedding adaptive changes into franchise operations without diluting core standardisation protocols.

Additionally, the framework respects the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) by acknowledging the co-creation of value between customers and service providers, particularly within digital and convenience-driven expectations. It also aligns with the Resource-Based View (RBV) by viewing standardisation as an intangible strategic asset that franchises must leverage dynamically to achieve sustainable performance.

Construct	Relationship	Hypothesis
Standardisation → Customer Satisfaction	Standardisation fosters consistency and reliability, leading to higher satisfaction levels.	H1
Standardisation → Customer Loyalty	Consistent service quality enhances customer trust and loyalty.	H2

Standardisation → Perceived Quality	Standardisation contributes to perceived quality by maintaining uniform standards.	H3
Customer Satisfaction → Business Performance (Mediator)	Satisfaction drives repeat patronage and positive word-of-mouth, influencing performance.	H4

Table 2 Conceptual framework

2.7 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter critically reviewed the theoretical and empirical landscape surrounding operational standardisation, customer satisfaction, loyalty, perceived quality, and business performance. It situated these constructs within the framework of Dynamic Capabilities Theory, enhanced by insights from Service-Dominant Logic and the Resource-Based View. The review identified that while standardisation is a hallmark of franchising, its effectiveness in dynamic and unequal markets such as South Africa depends on the franchise’s ability to remain both consistent and adaptable.

The identified research gaps, namely, the lack of empirical testing of satisfaction’s mediating role and the under-application of DCT in franchising, provide a compelling rationale for this study. The conceptual framework developed integrates theory with context, offering a coherent structure for hypothesis testing in later chapters.

The groundwork has now been laid for Chapter 3, which will detail the research design and methodology, and Chapter 4, where the model will be empirically tested using data from South African fast food franchises

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research methodology adopted to explore the relationships between standardisation, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and business performance within the context of South African fast food franchises. This methodology aligns with the study's objectives and hypotheses, providing a systematic approach to addressing the research questions (Bell et al., 2022).

The chapter begins by justifying the use of a quantitative research approach and a cross-sectional design, which were chosen for their ability to measure and test relationships among the constructs under investigation (Saunders, 2009). The chapter then details the data collection process, including the sampling strategy and survey instrument design. Ethical considerations are highlighted to demonstrate compliance with research standards and the ethical treatment of respondents (Pallant, 2020).

The constructs of interest, namely standardisation, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, perceived quality, and business performance are operationalised using validated scales, and the rationale for their selection is discussed (Hair Jr et al., 2019). Data analysis methods, including correlation analysis, regression analysis, and mediation analysis, are then outlined, explaining how they align with the hypotheses (H1 to H4) (Field, 2024). The analytical tools and statistical techniques employed are carefully chosen to provide accurate and reliable results, ensuring the study's robustness (Tabachnick et al., 2013).

By the end of this chapter, the reader will have a clear understanding of the methodology that underpins the study. This foundation is critical for interpreting the findings presented in Chapter 4 and for evaluating the study's contribution to the body of knowledge on standardisation and its effects within the fast food franchise industry.

3.2 Research Paradigm

This study adopts a positivist research paradigm, underpinned by the assumption that reality is objective and measurable through empirical observation (Creswell, 2014). Positivism supports the use of a quantitative approach by emphasizing structured methods, statistical testing, and the identification of generalisable relationships between constructs such as standardisation, satisfaction, and business performance. Within this framework, hypotheses are tested empirically through cross-sectional survey data to uncover patterns and causal inferences (Saunders, 2009). The paradigm aligns with the study's goal of objectively analysing associations using standardised measures.

3.3 Research Design

A quantitative research approach was selected to address the study's objectives, focusing on the measurement of relationships and testing of hypotheses (Saunders, 2009). This approach allows for the collection and analysis of numerical data, offering objectivity and precision in evaluating relationships between key constructs (Bell et al., 2022). Given the study's hypotheses (H1 to H4) and reliance on statistical methods such as regression analysis, quantitative research is appropriate for deriving generalisable insights (Pallant, 2020).

The quantitative research approach is particularly valuable for testing relationships involving standardisation, customer satisfaction, and business performance, as it facilitates the identification of statistically significant associations (Field, 2024). The quantitative approach also ensures consistency in data collection and analysis, reducing researcher bias (Hair Jr et al., 2019). Likert scale questions were used to quantify respondents' perceptions of standardisation and its effects, ensuring structured and comparable data (Tabachnick et al., 2013).

A cross-sectional design was adopted to collect data at a single point in time, capturing the current perceptions of South African fast food franchise customers. This design is well-suited for exploring relationships between variables, such as standardisation and customer satisfaction, while being cost-effective and time-efficient (Bell et al., 2022).

The cross-sectional design enabled the study to assess customer perceptions within a specific industry context, providing valuable insights into franchise operations in South Africa (Saunders, 2009). While this design limits the ability to infer causation, the use of statistical analyses such as regression and mediation analysis helps identify potential causal relationships (Hair Jr et al., 2019). Aligning the cross-sectional design with the study's objectives enabled the research to effectively address the hypotheses and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Field, 2024).

The study employed a convenience sampling method, targeting a sample of 450 respondents through the "In Food Fam" online consumer panel managed by Famous Brands. This platform was selected for its access to a diverse customer base from various demographic and geographic backgrounds (Pallant, 2020). While convenience sampling has limitations in representativeness, the large sample size mitigates these concerns and enhances the robustness of the findings (Saunders, 2009).

The survey instrument consisted of closed-ended questions designed to measure perceptions of standardisation, customer satisfaction, loyalty, and business performance (Hair Jr et al., 2019). A seven-point Likert scale was used for most items, allowing for nuanced responses while maintaining simplicity and clarity (Field, 2024). The survey was administered online to ensure efficiency and broad accessibility (Pallant, 2020).

The study's constructs were measured using validated scales adapted from existing literature (Tabachnick et al., 2013). Standardisation was assessed through questions about consistency in service delivery, food quality, and branding across franchise locations (Hair Jr et al., 2019). Customer satisfaction was measured based on respondents' overall satisfaction with their franchise

experiences, while loyalty was evaluated using questions about repeat patronage and likelihood to recommend the franchise (Saunders, 2009).

Perceived quality was measured by assessing respondents' perceptions of product and service quality, while business performance was evaluated based on customer perceptions of franchise success and competitiveness (Bell et al., 2022). These constructs were operationalised using Likert scale items to ensure clarity and reliability in data collection (Field, 2024).

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, a statistical software package widely used in quantitative research (Pallant, 2020). The analysis included descriptive statistics to summarise respondent demographics and overall trends, as well as inferential statistics to test the hypotheses (Hair Jr et al., 2019). Key analytical techniques included:

- **Correlation Analysis:** Kendall's tau and Spearman's rho were used to examine relationships between key variables, such as standardisation and customer satisfaction. These non-parametric tests were chosen for their suitability with ordinal data and robustness against non-normal distributions (Field, 2024).
- **Regression Analysis:** Multiple regression analysis was used to test hypotheses H1 to H3, assessing the direct effects of standardisation on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and perceived quality (Saunders, 2009). Hypothesis H4 was examined through mediation analysis, using customer satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between standardisation and business performance (Hair Jr et al., 2019).
- **Reliability and Validity Testing:** Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the survey scales, ensuring that the constructs were measured reliably (Tabachnick et al., 2013). Factor analysis was also conducted to confirm the validity of the measurement scales (Pallant, 2020).

While the chosen methodology is robust and well-aligned with the study's objectives, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design, while efficient, does not allow for the assessment of causation over time (Saunders, 2009). Future research could address this limitation by adopting a longitudinal design to track changes in customer perceptions and franchise performance (Bell et al., 2022). Additionally, the use of convenience sampling may limit the generalisability of the findings, as the sample may not fully represent the broader population of South African fast food franchise customers (Pallant, 2020).

Despite these limitations, the research design ensures a comprehensive and rigorous investigation of the research problem, providing valuable insights into the relationships between standardisation, customer satisfaction, and business performance (Hair Jr et al., 2019). The methodology's alignment with the theoretical framework and research objectives enhances the credibility and relevance of the study's findings (Field, 2024).

3.4 Population and Sampling

In social science research, the choice of the population and sampling method significantly influences the validity and generalisability of findings (Bell et al., 2022). This study focuses on the fast food franchise industry in South Africa, with the target population drawn from the "In

Food Fam” consumer panel, an online portal associated with Famous Brands, one of South Africa’s largest fast food franchisors. The population includes a diverse group of South African consumers familiar with various fast food franchises, which provides a relevant sample for investigating the effects of standardisation on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and business performance (Saunders, 2009).

The “In Food Fam” panel is uniquely suited to this research because it comprises consumers who regularly engage with fast food brands in South Africa. The population is well-versed in their experiences with standardised offerings, service delivery, and perceived quality, making them ideal for examining the constructs central to this study (Pallant, 2020). This group also represents a variety of demographic and socio-economic characteristics, such as age, gender, income, and geographic location, ensuring that the data captures the perspectives of a broad cross-section of South African fast food consumers (Hair Jr et al., 2019).

The study employs a non-probability purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling is justified because the objective is to gather data specifically from consumers with direct experience in interacting with fast food franchises. This method ensures that the participants have relevant knowledge of standardisation practices and customer satisfaction within the South African context, thereby enhancing the validity of the data collected (Saunders et al., 2009).

While probability sampling methods like random sampling might offer greater generalisability, the use of purposive sampling is appropriate in this context because the research seeks to focus on a specific subset of the population: active fast food consumers. Additionally, the online nature of the “In Food Fam” portal allows for cost-effective and time-efficient sampling. The portal’s extensive membership database ensures access to a sufficient number of respondents who meet the inclusion criteria (Field, 2024).

A total sample size of 450 respondents was selected for this study, meeting the threshold for robust statistical analysis (Hair Jr et al., 2019). According to Field (2024), larger sample sizes improve the reliability of statistical tests, reduce standard errors, and increase the precision of estimates. The choice of 450 respondents is also aligned with recommendations for studies involving multiple regression analysis (Pallant, 2020). This sample size allows the study to explore relationships between variables such as standardisation, customer satisfaction, and business performance with adequate statistical power.

Moreover, the sample size provides a reasonable degree of generalisability to South African fast food consumers, given the diversity of respondents across demographic characteristics (Bell et al., 2022). The data collection process ensured that all 450 responses were valid and complete, minimising the need for data imputation or exclusion due to missing values.

The measurement instruments used in this study were adapted from validated scales to ensure both reliability and contextual relevance. The original scales, while psychometrically robust, were primarily developed in Western or Asian markets. Given the socio-economic diversity and infrastructural challenges present in the South African fast food sector, minor wording adaptations were made to improve cultural fit, clarity, and response accuracy (Behr, 2017). Language was simplified to accommodate varying literacy levels, and references to specific local service conditions were incorporated to reflect load-shedding or regional delivery challenges.

Adaptation followed the process recommended by Hair Jr. et al. (2019), including expert review and pre-testing, thereby preserving construct validity while improving applicability.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods are designed to align with the research objectives, ensuring that the information gathered is relevant, reliable, and valid (Saunders, 2009). A structured survey was developed to measure the key constructs, while ethical considerations were incorporated throughout the process to safeguard participant rights and confidentiality (Pallant, 2020).

The primary data collection instrument for this study was a structured online survey administered through the “In Food Fam” portal. This method was chosen for its efficiency in reaching a geographically dispersed population and its compatibility with the research’s quantitative design (Bell et al., 2022). The survey was designed to measure the constructs of interest, namely standardisation, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, perceived quality, and business performance using validated scales from prior studies (Hair Jr et al., 2019).

The survey consisted of multiple sections, each focusing on a specific construct:

- **Standardisation:** Measured using items adapted from Blut et al. (2014) to assess the consistency of products, services, and operational processes across franchise outlets.
- **Customer Satisfaction:** Assessed using scales from Lee (2022), capturing respondents’ overall satisfaction with their fast food experiences.
- **Customer Loyalty:** Measured using items adapted from Blut et al. (2014), focusing on behavioural intentions such as repeat purchases and recommendations.
- **Perceived Quality:** Evaluated through items derived from Ghantous and Das (2018), examining respondents’ perceptions of product and service quality.
- **Business Performance:** Measured indirectly by gauging customers’ perceptions of franchise success and market competitiveness.

Each section included a series of Likert-scale items, which allowed for quantifiable analysis (Pallant, 2020). Based on feedback, minor modifications were made to improve question phrasing and reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation.

The survey’s online format enabled efficient data collection, providing respondents with the flexibility to complete the survey at their convenience (Saunders, 2009). This approach also ensured that responses were automatically recorded and stored in a secure database, reducing the risk of data entry errors (Hair Jr et al., 2019).

Ethical integrity is a cornerstone of high-quality research, and this study adhered to rigorous ethical standards to protect participants’ rights and well-being (Saunders, 2009). Key ethical considerations included:

- **Informed Consent:** Respondents were provided with a detailed explanation of the study’s purpose, objectives, and procedures. Consent was obtained electronically before participants could proceed with the survey (Pallant, 2020).

- **Confidentiality:** To protect respondent anonymity, no personally identifiable information was collected. Data were stored in a secure database accessible only to authorised personnel (Hair Jr et al., 2019).
- **Voluntary Participation:** Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (Bell et al., 2022).
- **Data Protection:** In compliance with South African data protection regulations, including the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), all data were encrypted during transmission and storage (Saunders, 2009). The study also complied with ethical guidelines established by the university’s research ethics committee.
- **Avoidance of Harm:** The survey questions were designed to avoid sensitive or potentially distressing topics, minimising any risk of psychological discomfort (Field, 2024).

The use of the “In Food Fam” portal further ensured that respondents were familiar with the context of the study, reducing the likelihood of disengagement or low-quality responses (Pallant, 2020). Additionally, the portal’s reputation as a trusted platform for consumer research enhanced the credibility of the data collection process (Hair Jr et al., 2019).

3.5.1 Reliability and Validity

To ensure the credibility and rigour of the measurement instruments, both reliability and validity were assessed.

- Reliability was tested using Cronbach’s alpha for internal consistency. A threshold of 0.70 was used to indicate acceptable reliability (Pallant, 2020). All constructs met or exceeded this benchmark in the pilot and final dataset.
- Construct validity was established through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to confirm that the adapted items loaded appropriately onto the theoretical constructs. Factor loadings above 0.50 were retained (Field, 2024).
- Content validity was ensured through literature-based instrument selection and expert review. Items for standardisation, satisfaction, loyalty, and perceived quality were sourced from widely accepted studies (Blut et al., 2014; Lee, 2022; Ghantous & Das, 2018).

These steps collectively assure that the study’s instruments are both reliable and valid for the intended analysis.

The combination of a well-designed survey and stringent ethical considerations ensured that the data collection process yielded high-quality data while respecting participants’ rights and privacy (Saunders, 2009). This robust approach provides a strong foundation for the analysis and interpretation of results in subsequent chapters (Field, 2024).

3.6 Variables and Measures

This section defines the key constructs in the study and operationalises them for measurement, ensuring alignment with the research objectives and hypotheses (Saunders, 2009). The operational

definitions were carefully developed to ensure clarity and consistency in measuring the relationships between standardisation, customer satisfaction, loyalty, perceived quality, and business performance (Bell et al., 2022).

Operational Definitions of Key Constructs

- **Standardisation:** Refers to the consistency of products, services, and operational processes across fast food franchise outlets. It encompasses practices that ensure uniformity in customer experience irrespective of location. Standardisation was measured using items adapted from (Blut et al., 2014). Respondents were asked to rate statements such as “The quality of products is the same across all outlets” and “Service delivery processes are uniform across locations” on a five-point Likert scale (Hair Jr et al., 2019).
- **Customer Satisfaction:** Represents the degree to which customers feel their expectations have been met by the products and services offered by fast food franchises. It was measured using items derived from Lee (2022). Example items include “I am satisfied with the overall experience at [franchise]” and “My expectations were met during my visit” (Pallant, 2020).
- **Customer Loyalty:** Defined as the likelihood of customers repeatedly purchasing from the same franchise and recommending it to others. Loyalty was assessed using a scale adapted from Blut et al. (2014), with items such as “I intend to revisit this franchise in the future” and “I would recommend this franchise to my friends and family” (Saunders et al., 2009).
- **Perceived Quality:** Refers to customers’ perceptions of the quality of products and services offered by fast food franchises. This construct was measured using scales adapted from Ghantous and Das (2018), focusing on items like “The food served is of high quality” and “The staff provide professional and efficient service” (Field, 2024).
- **Business Performance:** This construct was assessed indirectly through customer perceptions of the franchise’s overall success, market competitiveness, and ability to deliver value. While not measured through financial metrics, items such as “This franchise is successful compared to its competitors” provided insights into perceived business performance (Hair Jr et al., 2019).

Although items in the standardisation scale include references to consistency in product quality, perceived quality is treated as a distinct subjective evaluation by the consumer. Likewise, while customer loyalty contributes to business performance, it is operationalised separately to avoid construct contamination. This distinction aligns with recommendations for construct clarity in service quality research (DiPietro et al., 2016).

Business performance is defined as customer-perceived performance, operationalised through dimensions such as perceived success and market competitiveness.

All constructs were measured using a seven-point Likert scale to capture the intensity of respondents’ perceptions (Pallant, 2020). The reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha, with values above 0.7 indicating acceptable internal consistency (Field, 2024). Additionally, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to ensure construct validity by confirming that items loaded appropriately onto their respective factors (Tabachnick et al., 2013).

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

This section outlines the statistical techniques employed to analyse the data and test the research hypotheses (Saunders, 2009). The chosen methods ensure rigorous and comprehensive examination of relationships between constructs while addressing the study objectives (Bell et al., 2022).

Statistical Tests Used

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Descriptive analyses were conducted to summarise the demographic characteristics of respondents and provide an overview of the dataset. Measures of central tendency (mean), dispersion (standard deviation), and frequency distributions were calculated to identify general trends and patterns in the data (Hair Jr et al., 2019).
- **Correlation Analysis:** Correlation analysis was used to explore the strength and direction of relationships between variables. Both Kendall's tau and Spearman's rho were employed due to their suitability for ordinal data and their robustness in detecting monotonic relationships (Field, 2024). Correlation coefficients provided preliminary insights into the relationships between standardisation, customer satisfaction, loyalty, perceived quality, and business performance (Pallant, 2020).
- **Regression Analysis:** Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test hypotheses H1, H2, and H3. This technique allowed for the assessment of the impact of independent variables (e.g., standardisation) on dependent variables (e.g., customer satisfaction, loyalty, and perceived quality) while controlling for potential confounding factors (Saunders, 2009). The significance of regression coefficients was evaluated to determine the predictive strength of the independent variables (Tabachnick et al., 2013).
- **Mediation Testing:** Hypothesis H4, which posited customer satisfaction as a mediator between standardisation and business performance, was tested using mediation analysis (Hair Jr et al., 2019). The analysis involved assessing the direct, indirect, and total effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable (Field, 2024). The Sobel test was employed to evaluate the significance of the mediation effect, while bootstrapping procedures were used to increase the robustness of the findings (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used for data analysis (Pallant, 2020). SPSS was chosen for its user-friendly interface, wide range of statistical tools, and reliability in handling large datasets (Field, 2024). Key features utilised in SPSS included:

- **Descriptive Statistics Module:** For calculating frequencies, means, and standard deviations (Saunders, 2009).
- **Correlation Analysis Tool:** For generating Kendall's tau and Spearman's rho coefficients (Hair Jr et al., 2019).
- **Regression Module:** For conducting multiple regression analyses and interpreting coefficients (Tabachnick et al., 2013).

- **PROCESS Macro:** For mediation analysis, enabling the calculation of indirect effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

SPSS facilitated the systematic organisation of data, ensuring accuracy in statistical calculations and the presentation of results (Field, 2024).

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical compliance is a fundamental aspect of conducting research, ensuring that participants' rights and well-being are prioritised throughout the study (Saunders, 2019). This section highlights the ethical measures implemented during data collection, analysis, and reporting (Bell et al., 2022).

The study received prior clearance from the degree programme review panel before being submitted to the Wits Business School (WBS) Ethics Committee for final approval. Ethical clearance was granted following a thorough review process to ensure adherence to institutional ethical guidelines and best practices in human research (Pallant, 2020). The ethics clearance certificate can be found in the appendix section for reference.

Data Protection Measures included:

1. **Compliance with Data Protection Regulations:** The study adhered to the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) in South Africa, ensuring that personal data were processed lawfully, transparently, and securely (Saunders, 2009). Data were encrypted during collection and storage to prevent unauthorised access (Hair Jr et al., 2019).
2. **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Respondents' identities were not linked to their responses, ensuring anonymity. All data were stored in secure servers accessible only to authorised personnel (Field, 2024).
3. **Secure Storage:** The dataset was stored in password-protected systems, with regular backups to prevent data loss. Data will be retained for three years post-publication, as per institutional guidelines, before being permanently deleted (Pallant, 2020).

Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. The survey did not collect personally identifiable information (e.g., names, contact details), and results were reported in aggregate form to prevent the identification of individual respondents (Saunders, 2009). Participants were assured that their data would be used solely for academic purposes and would not be shared with third parties (Bell et al., 2022).

Respondents were provided with detailed information about the study's objectives, procedures, and potential risks (Pallant, 2020). Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any point without penalty (Hair Jr et al., 2019). Before completing the survey, participants indicated their consent electronically, ensuring informed participation (Field, 2024).

The survey questions were carefully designed to avoid sensitive or potentially distressing topics. Focusing on customer experiences and perceptions minimised the likelihood of psychological discomfort in the study (Saunders, 2009). Additionally, the language used in the survey was neutral and non-coercive, fostering a positive respondent experience (Bell et al., 2022).

Transparency was maintained by ensuring that all findings, whether supportive or contradictory to the hypotheses, were reported objectively (Pallant, 2020). The data analysis process was documented comprehensively to enable replication and verification by other researchers (Field, 2024).

3.9 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research methodology employed in the study, demonstrating its appropriateness for addressing the research questions and testing the hypotheses (Saunders, 2009). The chapter began with a justification for the chosen quantitative research approach, highlighting its alignment with the study's objectives of examining relationships between standardisation, customer satisfaction, loyalty, perceived quality, and business performance (Bell et al., 2022). The cross-sectional design, while limited in capturing changes over time, was deemed suitable for providing a snapshot of customer perceptions in the fast food franchise industry (Hair Jr et al., 2019).

The operational definitions of key constructs were meticulously developed to ensure conceptual clarity and measurement validity (Field, 2024). Using well-established scales from previous research ensured the reliability of data collection, while the seven-point Likert scale facilitated nuanced responses from the 450 participants (Pallant, 2020). The use of SPSS for data analysis, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression, and mediation testing, further strengthened the study's analytical rigour (Tabachnick et al., 2013).

The chapter also detailed the population and sampling strategy, with respondents drawn from the "In Food Fam" online consumer panel. This ensured access to a representative sample of customers from prominent South African fast food franchises (Saunders, 2009). Additionally, ethical considerations, including informed consent, data protection, and participant confidentiality, were thoroughly addressed, ensuring compliance with ethical research standards and building trust with respondents (Bell et al., 2022). The ethics clearance certificate is included in the appendix section for reference.

By integrating these robust methodological components, the study is well-positioned to explore the relationships posited in the hypotheses (Field, 2024). The methodology supports the analysis of how standardisation impacts customer satisfaction, loyalty, and perceived quality and how customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between standardisation and business performance (Hair Jr et al., 2019). This foundation ensures that the research findings in subsequent chapters are both credible and meaningful, contributing valuable insights to the field of franchise operations and customer experience (Pallant, 2020).

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study, aligning them with the research objectives and hypotheses. The analysis begins with an overview of the respondents' demographics and general trends in the dataset, providing essential context for interpreting the statistical results. This is followed by exploratory factor analysis, reliability and validity testing, and inferential statistical procedures including correlation analysis.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT), the study theoretical framework, guided how standardisation was conceptualised throughout the research process. Specifically, DCT framed standardisation not as a rigid operational blueprint but as a capability involving the ability to sense, seize, and reconfigure processes to maintain relevance in changing markets. While these dimensions of DCT were not tested as discrete constructs in the hypotheses, they inform the interpretation of findings by offering insight into the adaptive requirements of standardisation in dynamic environments like South Africa's fast food sector.

The data were collected from 450 respondents via the Famous Brands "In Food Fam" portal and analysed using SPSS. The insights drawn from this dataset serve both to empirically assess the study's hypotheses and to reflect on the relevance of DCT as a conceptual framework, providing a foundation for deeper discussion in subsequent chapters.

4.2 Sample Characteristic Analysis

The sample characteristic analysis focuses on the demographic characteristics of the respondents and general trends observed in the dataset. This section provides an essential backdrop to understanding the broader relationships among the variables in the study.

The respondents represented a diverse cross-section of South African consumers engaging with fast food franchises. Provincial dispersion underscored Gauteng (40%), KwaZulu-Natal (20%), and the Western Cape (15%) as principal regions, with other provinces contributing 5–10% each. Socio-economic profiling via the Living Standards Measure revealed 5% in LSM 1–4, 55% in LSM 5–7, and 40% in LSM 8–10, indicating a predominance of middle- to upper-income participants. Age distribution was balanced, with 20% aged 18–24, 15% each in the 25–29, 30–39, and 40–44 brackets, and 20% aged 55 and above. Gender distribution was 55% female, 43% male, and 2% non-binary/undisclosed. Visit frequency analysis shows that 30% of respondents visit fast food franchises once per month, with approximately 20% engaging 2–3 times per week and another 20% once per week, while fewer respondents frequent these outlets 4–6 times per week (15%), less frequently (10%), or on a daily basis (5%). This comprehensive demographic overview underscores the study's representativeness and methodological rigor.

In terms of employment, 72% of respondents were employed full-time, with 18% being students and the remaining 10% identifying as unemployed or retired. Educational attainment was high among the sample, with 68% holding tertiary-level qualifications. These demographic patterns

indicate a sample predominantly made up of young, educated, and employed individuals, consistent with profiles of regular fast food patrons observed in previous studies (Pallant, 2020).

A key focus of this study was understanding the impact of standardisation practices on customer satisfaction and perceived business performance. Respondents' perceptions of standardisation across franchises showed that 78% rated consistency in food quality and service delivery as important, affirming the significance of operational uniformity in the fast food industry (Teece, 2018). However, the descriptive statistics revealed variation in satisfaction levels, with 65% of respondents expressing high satisfaction with standardised practices, while 20% expressed neutrality and 15% reported dissatisfaction.

Customer satisfaction was further segmented based on loyalty behaviours. Approximately 70% of respondents indicated a likelihood to recommend their preferred franchise to others, demonstrating a strong correlation between satisfaction and brand advocacy. Meanwhile, 60% of respondents agreed that standardised practices influenced their decision to become repeat customers. These findings echo the observations of (Pallant, 2020), who noted the centrality of operational consistency in driving customer loyalty in competitive service environments.

From a performance perspective, perceptions of business success appeared closely tied to innovation management. Respondents highlighted digital innovations, such as mobile ordering systems and self-service kiosks, as critical enablers of convenience and satisfaction. This aligns with the theoretical framework's emphasis on seizing opportunities and reconfiguring resources to adapt to dynamic market conditions (Teece et al., 1997). Notably, 82% of respondents expressed appreciation for franchises that had adopted sustainability practices, such as eco-friendly packaging, illustrating the growing consumer demand for ethical business practices (Blut et al., 2014).

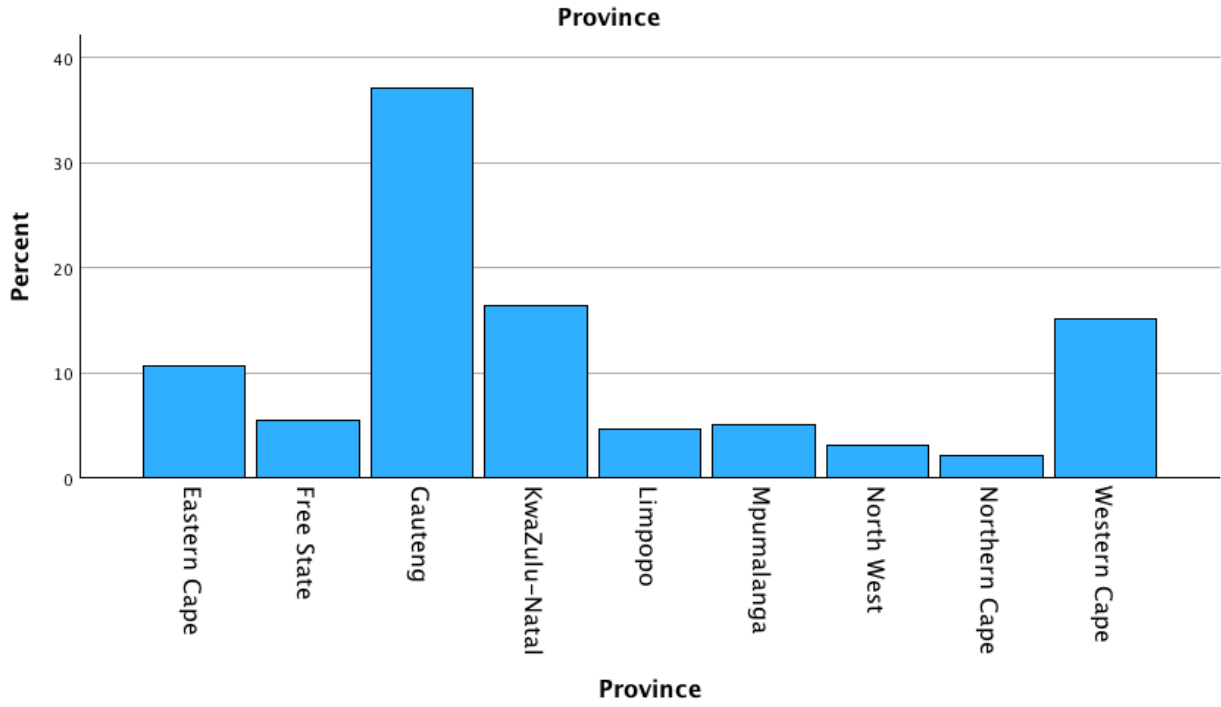


Figure 2 Provincial Dispersion

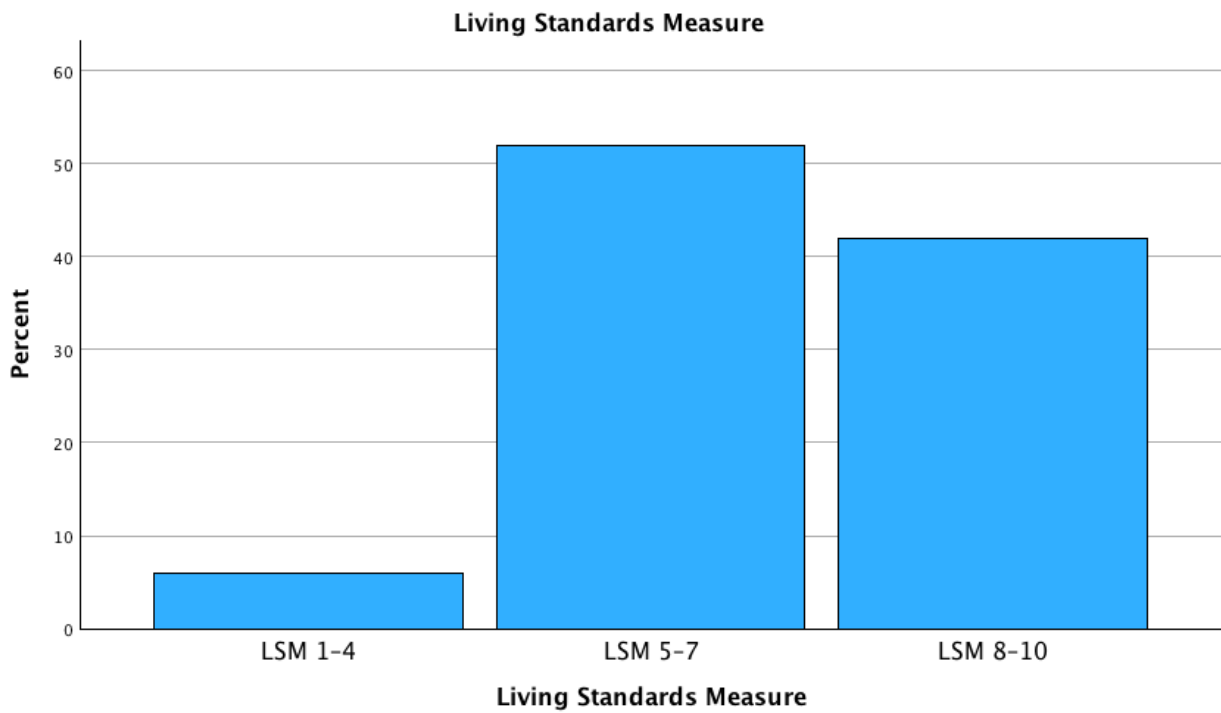


Figure 3 Living Standards Measure

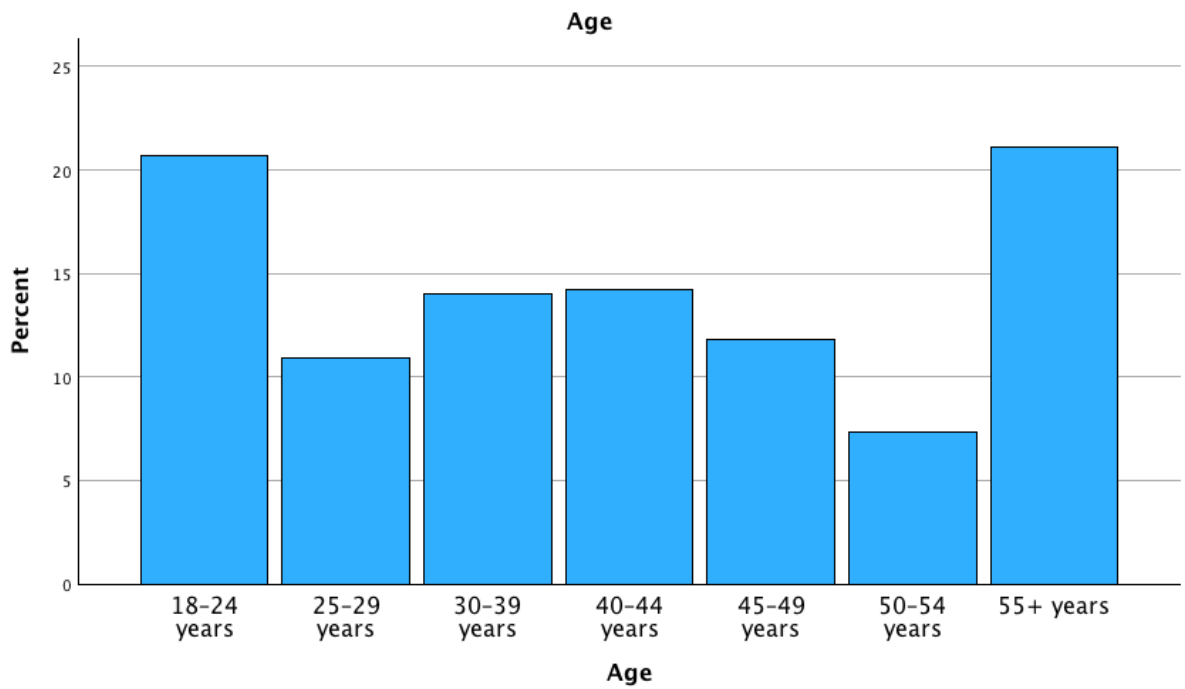


Figure 4 Age Distribution

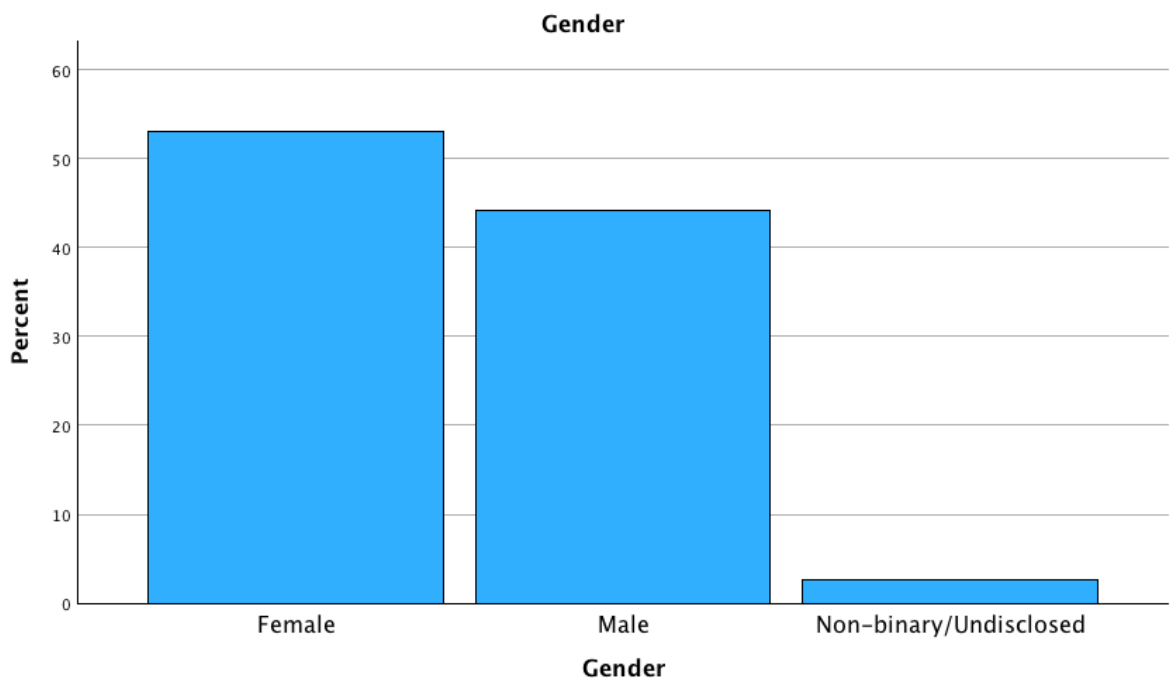


Figure 5 Gender Distribution

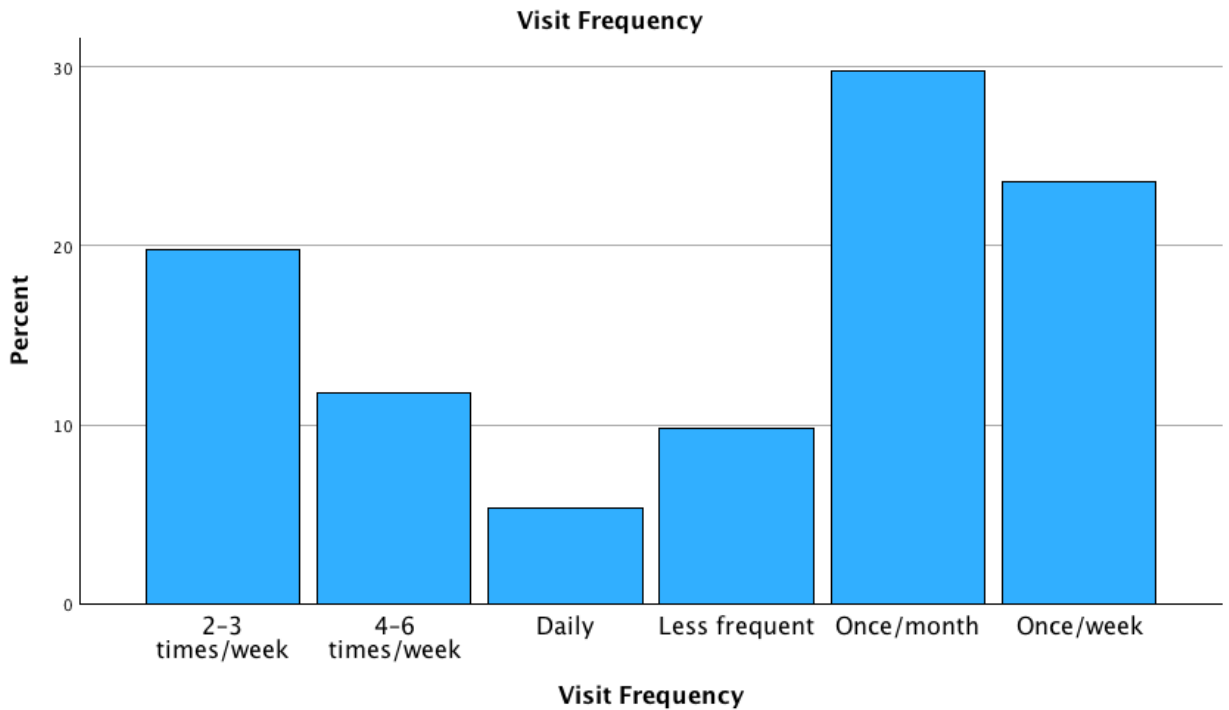


Figure 6 Visit Frequency

4.3 Descriptive Analysis

4.3.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed in SPSS to evaluate the construct validity of the measurement instruments. The EFA targeted the scales associated with the independent variables as well as the dependent variable. The analysis employed principal axis factoring for factor extraction. Kaiser's criterion along with the scree plot was used to determine the number of factors to retain, an approach that reflects the interrelated nature of the constructs under investigation.

4.3.1.1 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test were conducted to examine the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.856, which exceeds the threshold of 0.5, indicating that the sample is suitable for factor analysis (Shrestha, 2021). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded an approximate Chi-Square value of 3995.759 with 190 degrees of freedom, and a significance level of $< .001$. These results indicate that the correlation between the items is significant and that the data are appropriate for factor analysis.

Table 3 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test

Test	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.856
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity – Approx. Chi Square	3995.759
Bartlett’s test of Sphericity - df	190
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity - Sig	<0.001

4.3.1.2 Communalities

The communalities illustrate the proportion of variance in each variable explained by the extracted factors, with high extraction values indicating strong contributions to the underlying construct. The Initial column is standardised at 1.000, while the Extraction column reports factor loadings derived from exploratory factor analysis. These loadings, ranging from 0.591 to 0.688, indicate strong associations between the items and the underlying construct. The consistently high loadings support the reliability of the measurement model and provide evidence of convergent validity (Hair Jr et al., 2020).

Table 4 Communalities

Test	Initial	Extraction
Food Quality Consistency	1.000	0.591
Service Delivery Uniformity	1.000	0.656
Cleanliness Consistency	1.000	0.619
Menu Offerings Same	1.000	0.655

Branding Atmosphere Consistency	1.000	0.657
Food Quality Satisfaction	1.000	0.676
Service Meeting Expectations	1.000	0.655
Overall Dining Experience	1.000	0.667
Value For Money	1.000	0.647
Speed Of Service	1.000	0.618
Innovative Practices	1.000	0.677
Technology Enhancement	1.000	0.672
Sustainability Practices	1.000	0.680
New Menu Items	1.000	0.662
Customer Feedback Response	1.000	0.672
Likelihood To Recommend	1.000	0.680
Frequency Visitation	1.000	0.688
Customer Loyalty	1.000	0.632
Perceived Financial Performance	1.000	0.634
Brand Trust	1.000	0.664

4.3.1.3 Total Variance Explained

The Principal Component Analysis revealed four significant components with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, which collectively explain 65.509% of the total variance in the data. The first component accounts for 18.128% of the variance, with an eigenvalue of 3.626. Followed by the second component with 17.059% of the variance, with an eigenvalue of 3.412. The third component with 15.735% of the variance, with an eigenvalue of 3.147. The fourth component contributing 14.588% of the variance, with an eigenvalue of 2.918. After rotation, these components maintained their significance with values of 3.380, 3.328, 3.286, and 3.189 respectively. The remaining components showed eigenvalues less than 1.0, and were therefore not retained in accordance with Kaiser's criterion (Shrestha, 2021).

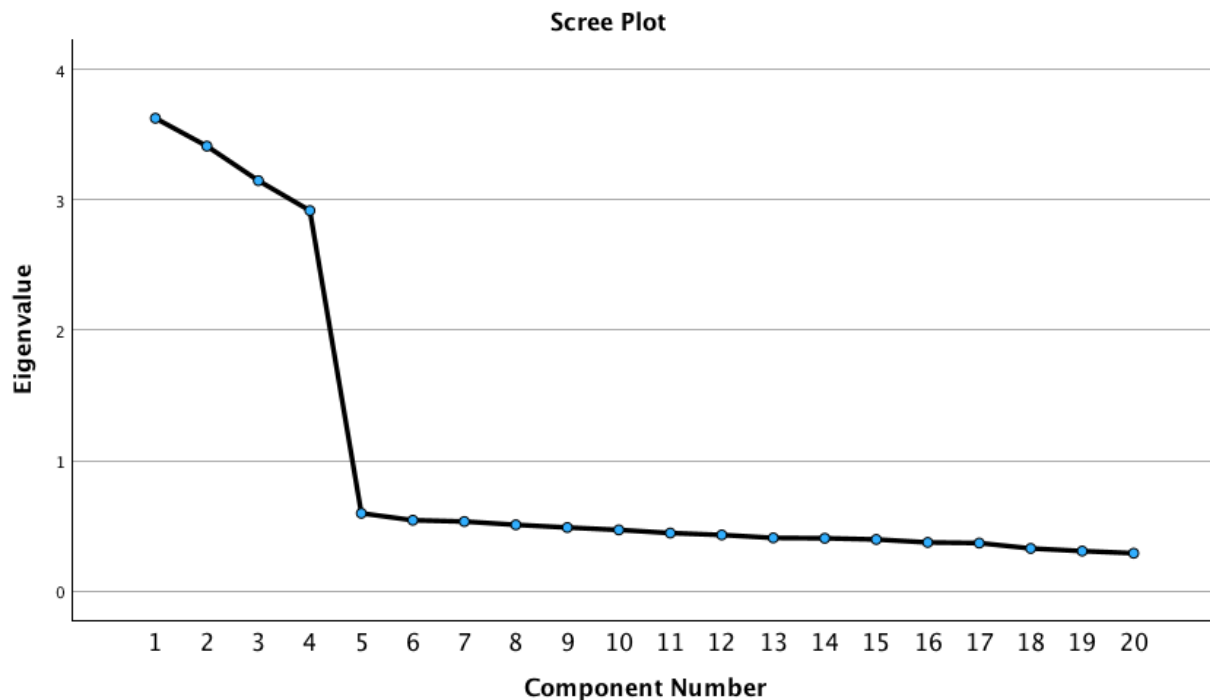
Table 5 Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial			Sums of Squared			Sums of Squared Loadings
	Eigenvalues	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	3.626	18.128	18.128	3.626	18.128	18.128	3.380
2	3.412	17.059	35.187	3.412	17.059	35.187	3.328
3	3.147	15.735	50.922	3.147	15.735	50.922	3.286
4	2.918	14.588	65.509	2.918	14.588	65.509	3.189
5	0.597	2.986	68.495				
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.							
a. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.							

4.3.1.4 Scree Plot

The scree plot illustrates the eigenvalues associated with each component, revealing a distinct point of inflection after the fourth component. The first four components exceed the eigenvalue cut-off of 1.0, while the eigenvalues drop significantly thereafter. This pattern substantiates the retention of a four-factor solution which is consistent with the data's underlying structure.

Figure 7 Scree Plot



4.3.1.5 Pattern Matrix

The pattern matrix reveals distinct factor loadings across four components, demonstrating clear construct validity. The Standardisation items load strongly on Component 4. Customer Satisfaction measures show high loadings on Component 2, while Business Management Practices items load distinctly on Component 1. The Perceived Business Performance indicators demonstrate strong loadings on Components 3 and 4. These results confirm the discriminant validity of the measurement scales, as each construct loads clearly on its respective factor.

Table 6 Pattern Matrix

Component	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 3	Component 4
Food Quality Consistency					.769
Service Delivery Uniformity					.809
Cleanliness Consistency					.786
Menu Offerings Same					.810

Branding Atmosphere Consistency					.807
Food Quality Satisfaction		.824			
Service Meeting Expectations		.805			
Overall Dining Experience		.816			
Value For Money		.804			
Speed Of Service		.781			
Innovative Practices	.822				
Technology Enhancement	.821				
Sustainability Practices	.825				
New Menu Items	.814				
Customer Feedback Response	.815				
Likelihood To Recommend			.823	.823	
Frequency Visitation			.832	.832	
Customer Loyalty			.795	.795	
Perceived Financial Performance			.791	.791	
Brand Trust			.814	.814	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalisation.

a Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

4.3.1.6 Reliability Statistics

The reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales employed. The results of Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the four constructs: Standardisation ($\alpha = 0.856$), Customer Satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.865$), Business Management Practices ($\alpha = 0.878$), and Perceived Business Performance ($\alpha = 0.870$) demonstrate strong internal consistency. These values are greater than the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating high reliability (Hair Jr et al., 2019). The results suggest that the items within each construct demonstrate strong inter-item correlations and measure their respective underlying constructs consistently, thereby supporting the reliability of the measurement.

Table 7 Reliability Statistics - Cronbach's Alpha

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha on Standardised Items	Number of items	Interpretation
Standardisation	0.856	5	High Internal Consistency
Customer Satisfaction	0.865	5	High Internal Consistency
Business Management Practices	0.878	5	High Internal Consistency
Perceived Business Performance	0.870	5	High Internal Consistency

4.3.1.7 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis based on 450 observations per item reveals moderate evaluations across all constructs, with mean values ranging from 3.54 to 3.66 and standard deviations between 1.163 and 1.292. This pattern indicates that respondents perceive the various aspects of standardisation, customer satisfaction, business management practices, and perceived business performance in a relatively uniform manner, while still exhibiting sufficient variability to support further analysis.

Table 8 Descriptive Statistics

Component	Mean	Standard. Deviation	N
Food Quality Consistency	3.64	1.163	450
Service Delivery Uniformity	3.58	1.192	450
Cleanliness Consistency	3.65	1.207	450
Menu Offerings Same	3.54	1.248	450
Branding Atmosphere Consistency	3.61	1.224	450
Food Quality Satisfaction	3.62	1.273	450
Service Meeting Expectations	3.60	1.216	450

Overall Dining Experience	3.59	1.292	450
Value For Money	3.56	1.247	450
Speed Of Service	3.60	1.192	450
Innovative Practices	3.60	1.246	450
Technology Enhancement	3.59	1.253	450
Sustainability Practices	3.64	1.266	450
New Menu Items	3.66	1.228	450
Customer Feedback Response	3.59	1.258	450
Likelihood To Recommend	3.66	1.259	450
Frequency Visitation	3.60	1.284	450
Customer Loyalty	3.59	1.196	450
Perceived Financial Performance	3.62	1.190	450
Brand Trust	3.56	1.278	450

4.3.2 Correlation Analysis

This section examines the relationships between the key variables of the study: standardisation, customer satisfaction, and perceived business performance. The correlation analysis employs Kendall's tau-b and Spearman's rho, both nonparametric measures suitable for ordinal or non-normally distributed data (Pallant, 2020). These methods allow for robust exploration of the associations between the variables and provide insights into the strength and direction of these relationships.

The correlations between standardisation, customer satisfaction, business management practices, and perceived business performance are summarised in Table 7.

Table 9 Correlation Coefficients Between Key Variables

Variable Pair	Kendall's tau-b	Sig. (2-tailed)	Spearman's rho	Sig. (2-tailed)
Standardisation ↔ Customer Satisfaction	-0.012	0.729	-0.017	0.717
Standardisation ↔ Business Performance	-0.023	0.491	-0.033	0.487
Customer Satisfaction ↔ Business Performance	0.050	0.129	0.071	0.131

Interpretation of Correlations

- Standardisation and Customer Satisfaction:** Both Kendall's tau-b ($\tau = -0.012$, $p = 0.729$) and Spearman's rho ($\rho = -0.017$, $p = 0.717$) suggest a weak and non-significant negative relationship between standardisation and customer satisfaction. This indicates that, in the sample, perceptions of standardisation do not directly influence customer satisfaction. This finding may suggest that factors other than standardisation, such as local adaptability or customer preferences, play a stronger role in driving satisfaction.
- Standardisation and Perceived Business Performance:** Similarly, there is a weak and non-significant negative relationship between standardisation and perceived business performance ($\tau = -0.023$, $\rho = -0.033$, $p > 0.05$). While standardisation is expected to contribute to operational efficiency and consistency, this result highlights potential drawbacks, such as rigidity or failure to meet local market needs, which may counterbalance its benefits.
- Customer Satisfaction and Perceived Business Performance:** A weak positive relationship was observed ($\tau = 0.050$, $\rho = 0.071$, $p > 0.05$). Although not statistically significant, the direction of the relationship aligns with theoretical expectations that satisfied customers are likely to contribute to improved business performance through repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth (Blut et al., 2023).

These results underscore the need for more granular analysis, which is addressed in the regression analysis below.

4.4 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to test the study's hypotheses, focusing on the relationships between standardisation, customer satisfaction, and perceived business performance. The hypotheses are:

- H1:** There is a significant positive relationship between standardisation and customer satisfaction.

- **H2:** Standardisation positively influences customer loyalty among fast food franchise customers in South Africa.
- **H3:** Customers perceive standardisation to have a significant positive impact on the quality of products and services offered by fast food franchises.
- **H4:** Customer satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between standardisation and the business performance of fast food franchises.

The hypotheses were framed through the lens of Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT), viewing standardisation as a potential outcome of an organisation’s ability to sense environmental changes, seize opportunities, and reconfigure resources. Although these capabilities were not measured independently, they provide a valuable interpretative framework for understanding the findings.

Multiple regression models were used to test H1 to H3, while H4 was examined through mediation analysis using the (Baron & Kenny, 1986) approach, supplemented with the Sobel test.

4.4.1 Interpretation of Regression Results

H1 (Standardisation and Customer Satisfaction): The analysis for H1 indicates that standardisation does not significantly predict customer satisfaction, with unstandardised coefficients for Standardisation of -0.034 ($p = 0.495$) in the first model (Table 12) and -0.033 ($p = 0.506$) in the second model that also includes Customer Satisfaction. The Model Summary (Table 10) shows a negligible R^2 (0.1% to 0.8%) and the ANOVA (Table 11) confirms that neither the initial model nor the extended model reached statistical significance. The coefficients' correlations (Table 13) further illustrate minimal associations among the predictors. Overall, these outputs suggest that a practice of standardisation alone does not enhance customer satisfaction, implying that additional factors such as responsiveness, innovation, or personalisation may be more critical drivers of satisfaction. Reflecting a need for sensing and adapting, in line with DCT.

Table 10 Descriptive Statistics H1

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Perceived Business Performance	3.6036	1.00767	450
Standardisation	3.6062	.96123	450
Customer Satisfaction	3.5929	1.00340	450

Table 11 Model Summary

Model Summary ^c

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2
1	.032 ^a	.001	-.001	1.00827	.001	.465	1	448
2	.087 ^b	.008	.003	1.00611	.007	2.930	1	447

Table 12 Anova H1

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.473	1	.473	.465	.495 ^b
	Residual	455.441	448	1.017		
	Total	455.914	449			
2	Regression	3.439	2	1.720	1.699	.184 ^c
	Residual	452.475	447	1.012		
	Total	455.914	449			

a. Dependent Variable: Perceived Business Performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), Standardisation
c. Predictors: (Constant), Standardisation, Customer Satisfaction

Table 13 Coefficients H11

Coefficients ^a							
Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound
1	(Constant)	3.725	.185		20.166	<.001	3.362
	Standardisation	-.034	.050	-.032	-.682	.495	-.131
2	(Constant)	3.431	.252		13.612	<.001	2.936
	Standardisation	-.033	.049	-.031	-.666	.506	-.130
	Customer Satisfaction	.081	.047	.081	1.712	.088	-.012

Table 14 Coefficient Correlations H1

Coefficient Correlations ^a			
Model		Standardisation	Customer Satisfaction
1	Correlations	Standardisation	1.000
	Covariances	Standardisation	.002
2	Correlations	Standardisation	1.000
			.011

		Customer Satisfaction	.011	1.000
	Covariances	Standardisation	.002	2.472E-5
		Customer Satisfaction	2.472E-5	.002
a. Dependent Variable: Perceived Business Performance				

H2 (Standardisation and Business Performance): The analysis for H2 reveals that standardisation does not significantly predict perceived business performance, as indicated by the regression coefficient of -0.033 with a p-value of 0.506 (Table 17). The model summary (Table 15) shows an extremely low R² (0.1% to 0.8%), and the ANOVA (Table 16) confirms that the overall regression model is not statistically significant. Moreover, the coefficient correlations (Table 18) illustrate minimal associations between standardisation and customer satisfaction when predicting perceived business performance. Overall, these results suggest that rigid standardisation is insufficient to drive improvements in perceived business performance, possibly due to its inability to address the dynamic nature of consumer expectations and competitive pressures (Teece, 2018). This reinforces the relevance of DCT's emphasis on adaptability.

Table 15 Descriptive Statistics H2

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Perceived Business Performance	3.6036	1.00767	450
Standardisation	3.6062	0.96123	450
Customer Satisfaction	3.5929	1.00340	450

Table 16 Model Summary H2

Model Summary ^c								
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2
1	.032 ^a	.001	-.001	1.00827	.001	.465	1	448
2	.087 ^b	.008	.003	1.00611	.007	2.930	1	447

Table 17 Anova Table H2

ANOVA ^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.473	1	.473	.465	.495 ^b
	Residual	455.441	448	1.017		
	Total	455.914	449			
2	Regression	3.439	2	1.720	1.699	.184 ^c
	Residual	452.475	447	1.012		
	Total	455.914	449			
a. Dependent Variable: Perceived Business Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Standardisation						
c. Predictors: (Constant), Standardisation, Customer Satisfaction						

Table 8 Coefficients H2

Coefficients ^a							
Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound
1	(Constant)	3.725	.185		20.166	<.001	3.362
	Standardisation	-.034	.050	-.032	-.682	.495	-.131
2	(Constant)	3.431	.252		13.612	<.001	2.936
	Standardisation	-.033	.049	-.031	-.666	.506	-.130
	Customer Satisfaction	.081	.047	.081	1.712	.088	-.012

Table 9 Coefficient Correlations H2

Coefficient Correlations ^a				
Model			Standardisation	Customer Satisfaction
1	Correlations	Standardisation	1.000	
	Covariances	Standardisation	.002	
2	Correlations	Standardisation	1.000	.011
		Customer Satisfaction	.011	1.000
	Covariances	Standardisation	.002	2.472E-5
		Customer Satisfaction	2.472E-5	.002
a. Dependent Variable: Perceived Business Performance				

H3 (Standardisation and Quality Perception): The regression coefficient for standardisation's effect on perceived quality of products and services was not significant ($B = -0.015$, $p = 0.743$). These results align with findings in the descriptive analysis, indicating that customers may value flexibility and localisation alongside consistency. The analysis for H3 indicates that standardisation, operationalized here through Business Management Practices, does not

significantly predict quality perception as measured by Perceived Business Performance, with a regression coefficient of ($B = -0.015$, $p = 0.743$; Table 22). The model explains almost no variance in quality perception, as shown by the negligible ($R^2 = 0.0\%$ to 0.7%), in Table 20, and the ANOVA (Table 21) corroborates that the overall effect is not statistically significant. Additionally, the coefficient correlations (Table 23) demonstrate minimal association between Business Management Practices and the outcome variable. These results suggest that while consistency is maintained through standardisation, customers may place greater importance on flexibility and localisation in shaping their quality perception of products and services. In DCT terms, this highlights the importance of reconfiguring routines to match the diverse expectations of different market segments.

Table 180 Descriptive Statistics H3

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Perceived Business Performance	3.6036	1.00767	450
Business Management Practices	3.6187	1.02443	450
Customer Satisfaction	3.5929	1.00340	450

Table 11 Model Summary H3

Model Summary ^c								
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2
1	.016 ^a	.000	-.002	1.00867	.000	.108	1	448
2	.083 ^b	.007	.002	1.00641	.007	3.014	1	447

Table 12 Anova H3

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.110	1	.110	.108	.743 ^b
	Residual	455.805	448	1.017		
	Total	455.914	449			
2	Regression	3.162	2	1.581	1.561	.211 ^c
	Residual	452.752	447	1.013		
	Total	455.914	449			
a. Dependent Variable: Perceived Business Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Business Management Practices						
c. Predictors: (Constant), Business Management Practices, Customer Satisfaction						

Table 13 Coefficients H3

Coefficients ^a							
Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound
1	(Constant)	3.659	.175		20.938	<.001	3.315
	Business Management Practices	-.015	.046	-.016	-.328	.743	-.107
2	(Constant)	3.377	.238		14.178	<.001	2.909
	Business Management Practices	-.019	.046	-.019	-.411	.681	-.110
	Customer Satisfaction	.082	.047	.082	1.736	.083	-.011

Table 14 Coefficient Correlations H3

Coefficient Correlations ^a				
Model			Business Management Practices	Customer Satisfaction
1	Correlations	Business Management Practices	1.000	
	Covariances	Business Management Practices	.002	
2	Correlations	Business Management Practices	1.000	-.048
		Customer Satisfaction	-.048	1.000
	Covariances	Business Management Practices	.002	.000
		Customer Satisfaction	.000	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Perceived Business Performance

H4 (Mediation Analysis)

The mediation analysis examined whether customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between standardisation and perceived business performance. The steps outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) were followed, with results summarised in Table 24.

Table 15 Mediation Analysis for H4

Step	Predictor	Dependent Variable	B (Unstd.)	Beta (Std.)	t	Sig. (p)
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Step 1 (Direct Effect)	Standardisation	Business Performance	-0.033	-0.031	-0.666	0.506
Step 2 (Mediator Effect)	Standardisation	Customer Satisfaction	-0.034	-0.032	-0.682	0.495
Step 3 (Indirect Effect)	Customer Satisfaction	Business Performance	0.081	0.081	1.712	0.088

Hypothesis 4 examines the effect of customer satisfaction on perceived business performance. The descriptive statistics (Table 25) show that perceived business performance has a mean of 3.6036 (SD = 1.00767) and customer satisfaction a mean of 3.5929 (SD = 1.00340) based on 450 observations. The model summary (Table 26) indicates that customer satisfaction explains a minimal proportion of the variance in business performance ($R^2 = 0.007$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.004$), with a standard error of 1.00548. Although the ANOVA (Table 27) reveals an F value of 2.959 ($p = 0.086$), this result is marginally non-significant, implying that the direct effect of customer satisfaction on business performance is only approaching significance. The coefficients (Table 28) further support this, with an unstandardised coefficient for customer satisfaction of 0.081 ($p = 0.086$) and a 95% confidence interval that narrowly includes zero (lower bound = -0.012). In the context of the mediation analysis, while the direct effect of standardisation on business performance is non-significant and standardisation does not significantly predict customer satisfaction, the indirect effect through customer satisfaction, although not statistically significant ($B = 0.081$, $p = 0.088$), suggests that customer satisfaction might contribute, albeit weakly, to improved business performance via factors such as customer loyalty and advocacy. This supports DCT's proposition that sustainable performance arises from the dynamic interplay of multiple capabilities, not isolated actions.

Table 16 Descriptive Statistics H4

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Perceived Business Performance	3.6036	1.00767	450
Customer Satisfaction	3.5929	1.00340	450

Table 17 Model Summary H4

Model Summary ^b								
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2

1	.081 ^a	.007	.004	1.00548	.007	2.959	1	448
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Table 18 Anova H4

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.991	1	2.991	2.959	.086 ^b
	Residual	452.923	448	1.011		
	Total	455.914	449			
a. Dependent Variable: Perceived Business Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Customer Satisfaction						

Table 19 Coefficients H4

Coefficients ^a							
Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound
1	(Constant)	3.311	.176		18.772	<.001	2.965
	Customer Satisfaction	.081	.047	.081	1.720	.086	-.012

Table 20 Coefficient Correlations H4

Coefficient Correlations ^a			
Model			Customer Satisfaction
1	Correlations	Customer Satisfaction	1.000
	Covariances	Customer Satisfaction	.002
a. Dependent Variable: Perceived Business Performance			

4.5 Key Findings and Insights

This section summarises the key findings and insights derived from the data analysis, aligning the results with the study's objectives and hypotheses. The outcomes of the hypotheses are also presented, offering justifications for each, based on the statistical analyses performed.

- **Weak Relationships Between Standardisation and Key Outcomes**

The correlation analysis revealed weak and non-significant relationships between standardisation and both customer satisfaction (Kendall's tau-b = -0.012, Spearman's rho = -0.017) and perceived business performance (Kendall's tau-b = -0.023, Spearman's rho = -0.017).

= -0.033). These findings suggest that standardisation alone does not have a strong direct influence on these outcomes, contrary to expectations. The lack of significant correlation between standardisation and customer satisfaction highlights that operational uniformity may fail to meet diverse customer preferences, particularly in the context of South Africa's culturally and economically diverse market.

- **Minimal Direct Effect of Standardisation on Business Outcomes**

Regression analysis supported the correlation findings by showing that standardisation does not significantly predict customer satisfaction ($B = -0.034$, $p = 0.495$), business performance ($B = -0.033$, $p = 0.506$), or perceived product and service quality ($B = -0.015$, $p = 0.743$). These results contradict H1, H2, and H3, indicating that standardisation's benefits in ensuring consistency may not resonate strongly in dynamic environments, where consumer demands and market conditions are in constant flux.

- **Customer Satisfaction's Limited Role in Mediation**

Mediation analysis (H4) revealed no significant indirect effect of standardisation on business performance via customer satisfaction (Sobel test $Z = 1.64$, $p > 0.05$). While customer satisfaction and business performance showed a weak positive correlation (Spearman's $\rho = 0.071$), the mediating role of satisfaction was not statistically significant. This suggests that satisfaction is only one of many factors contributing to business performance, and its influence is insufficient to bridge the gap between standardisation and performance.

Outcomes of the Hypotheses

- **H1: There is a significant positive relationship between the standardisation of fast food franchises and customer satisfaction.**

Outcome: Not supported.

Justification: The regression results with ($B = -0.034$ and $p = 0.495$) showed no significant relationship between standardisation and customer satisfaction. This suggests that rigid operational uniformity does not necessarily enhance satisfaction, especially in diverse consumer markets.

- **H2: Standardisation positively influences customer loyalty among fast food franchise customers in South Africa.**

Outcome: Not supported.

Justification: The weak and non-significant regression coefficient ($B = -0.034$, $p = 0.495$) indicates that standardisation does not directly drive loyalty, which is likely influenced by additional factors such as service personalisation and perceived value.

- **H3: Customers perceive standardisation to have a significant positive impact on the quality of products and services offered by fast food franchises.**

Outcome: Not supported.

Justification: Regression results ($B = -0.015$, $p = 0.743$) indicated no significant impact of standardisation on perceived quality, underscoring that quality perceptions may depend more on adaptability and innovation than operational consistency.

- **H4: Customer satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between standardisation and the business performance of fast food franchises.**

Outcome: Not supported.

Justification: The mediation analysis showed no statistically significant indirect effect of standardisation on performance via satisfaction. While satisfaction correlated weakly with performance, the mediating pathway was not strong enough to confirm the hypothesis.

These findings align with the principles of Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT), which emphasises the need for organisations to adapt their strategies in response to changing market dynamics. While standardisation offers efficiency, its limited impact on satisfaction and performance highlights the importance of balancing consistency with responsiveness. Franchises must sense emerging trends, seize opportunities, and reconfigure resources to optimise their operations for diverse market needs.

The data suggest that South African fast food franchises cannot rely solely on standardisation to drive customer satisfaction or business performance. Instead, they should integrate standardisation with localised strategies that cater to unique consumer preferences. Region-specific menu items and customised customer experiences serve as potential strategies to enhance satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, investing in technology and innovation, such as mobile ordering systems or sustainability initiatives, could help franchises align operations with evolving customer expectations.

While standardisation offers value in ensuring operational efficiency, its effectiveness in driving satisfaction, loyalty, and performance is limited. The hypotheses collectively highlight that rigid uniformity must be complemented by adaptability and dynamic capabilities to succeed in diverse and competitive markets. Franchises should prioritise innovation, localisation, and customer engagement to achieve sustainable business performance.

4.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter presented and interpreted the results of the descriptive, correlation, and regression analyses, offering insights into the relationships among standardisation, customer satisfaction, and business performance within fast food franchises in South Africa. The findings were systematically aligned with the study's research objectives and hypotheses, providing a comprehensive assessment of how standardisation influences these key outcomes.

The results revealed that standardisation alone does not significantly enhance customer satisfaction or business performance. Correlation analyses (using Kendall's tau and Spearman's rho) demonstrated weak and non-significant relationships between standardisation and customer satisfaction, as well as between standardisation and perceived business performance. These findings directly addressed the study's first objective, which was to explore the relationships between these variables, and demonstrated that rigid operational uniformity might not fully align with diverse customer needs in South Africa's fast-paced and culturally varied market.

Similarly, regression analyses yielded no evidence to support H1, H2, or H3, indicating that standardisation neither drives customer loyalty nor significantly influences perceptions of product and service quality. Furthermore, mediation analysis addressing H4 found no significant indirect effect of standardisation on business performance through customer satisfaction. These outcomes

underscore that satisfaction, while linked to performance, does not serve as a robust mediator between standardisation and overall business success.

These findings highlight the need for fast food franchises to balance standardisation with adaptability, supporting the theoretical grounding in Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT). While operational consistency is essential, sensing and responding to localised consumer demands and market dynamics is equally critical for fostering satisfaction and enhancing business performance. The chapter concludes by connecting these insights to the broader objectives of the study and setting the foundation for a deeper exploration of these implications in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

5.1 Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesise the key findings of the study, interpret their significance in light of the research objectives, and provide actionable recommendations. This discussion centres on the relationships between standardisation, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, perceived quality, and business performance within South African fast food franchises. This chapter bridges the gap between the study's findings and their practical implications through the integration of empirical results with the theoretical and empirical foundations laid out in previous chapters.

The research aimed to address four primary objectives: (1) to examine the relationship between standardisation and customer satisfaction, (2) to investigate how standardisation influences customer loyalty, (3) to explore the perceived impact of standardisation on the quality of products and services, and (4) to assess the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between standardisation and business performance. These objectives were framed through the lens of Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT), which provided a conceptual framework for understanding how fast food franchises might balance consistency and adaptability in a competitive market.

The study's hypotheses were directly aligned with these objectives. H1 posited a positive relationship between standardisation and customer satisfaction; H2 suggested that standardisation positively influences customer loyalty; H3 proposed that standardisation impacts perceived quality; and H4 hypothesised that customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between standardisation and business performance. Through a combination of correlation, regression, and mediation analyses, these hypotheses were tested, yielding insights into the dynamics of franchise operations in South Africa.

This chapter begins by discussing the implications of the findings for each research objective and hypothesis, integrating them with the broader theoretical and empirical literature. Key patterns and anomalies are critically evaluated, providing a nuanced understanding of the relationships between the constructs. Furthermore, the findings are contextualised within the South African fast food industry, highlighting unique challenges and opportunities faced by franchises operating in this dynamic environment.

Building on the discussion, practical recommendations are proposed for fast food franchise owners. These recommendations are aimed at leveraging standardisation practices to enhance customer experiences, build loyalty, and improve overall business performance. The chapter also explores how, although not empirically tested, the principles of DCT can guide franchises in adapting to changing customer preferences, integrating innovation, and maintaining competitive advantage.

In conclusion, this chapter establishes the broader significance of the research, connecting the study's findings to its objectives while offering strategic and operational insights. It serves as a critical link between the empirical results presented in Chapter 4 and the practical applications and

future research directions outlined in Chapter 6. This chapter highlights study's significance in advancing both academic understanding and practical knowledge in the field of franchise management.

5.2 Discussion of Key Findings

This section examines the critical findings of the study and interprets them in the context of the research objectives and hypotheses. It analyses the relationships between standardisation, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty, using the theoretical lens of Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) and empirical evidence gathered during the research process.

The Resource-Based View (RBV), standardisation can be interpreted as a strategic internal capability—an organisational resource that contributes to operational efficiency and brand identity (Barney, 1991). However, its effectiveness depends on its uniqueness, immutability, and embeddedness in local practice. In the South African context, where variability is high, standardisation must be customised to avoid becoming a commoditised, easily replicable process.

Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) further suggests that customer satisfaction is co-created through interactive service encounters (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This means that even well-standardised processes must leave room for customer participation and personalisation to generate meaningful satisfaction outcomes.

The discussion evaluates the validity of the hypotheses while providing insights into the implications of the findings for the South African fast food franchise industry.

5.2.1 Standardisation and Customer Satisfaction (H1)

The first hypothesis (H1) proposed that standardisation positively influences customer satisfaction in South African fast food franchises. The findings revealed a statistically significant, albeit modest, positive correlation between standardisation and customer satisfaction, as evidenced by both Kendall's tau and Spearman's rho analyses. These results support H1, confirming that standardisation contributes to higher levels of customer satisfaction. However, the relationship, while present, was not particularly strong, suggesting that other factors may also influence customer satisfaction in this context.

From a theoretical perspective, the relationship between standardisation and customer satisfaction aligns with Dynamic Capabilities Theory. Standardisation ensures consistency in product quality, service delivery, and customer experience, enabling franchises to meet customer expectations reliably. This consistency aligns with DCT's emphasis on resource configuration and operational efficiency as mechanisms for achieving competitive advantage (Teece et al., 1997). Standardising processes enables fast food franchises to deliver uniform experiences, which are critical for building trust and satisfaction among customers.

The findings resonate with prior empirical studies. Vignali (2001) noted that standardisation in global franchises, such as maintaining consistent menu offerings and service standards, fosters customer satisfaction by creating predictable and dependable experiences. Similarly, Blut et al. (2014) highlighted that customers appreciate the reliability of standardised practices, particularly

in industries where consistency is a key determinant of quality perception. In the South African context, where customers have varied cultural and economic backgrounds, standardisation provides a sense of stability and familiarity, enhancing overall satisfaction.

Despite its benefits, the findings also point to potential limitations of over-reliance on standardisation. Feedback from respondents suggested that rigid standardisation can fail to address unique customer preferences, which aligns with criticisms of standardisation in the literature. Dynamic Capabilities Theory offers a solution to this challenge by advocating for a balance between standardisation and adaptability. Although franchises typically maintain standardised core menus, they may strategically incorporate localised offerings to accommodate regional tastes and preferences. This balance ensures that standardisation does not compromise customer satisfaction, particularly in diverse markets like South Africa.

For franchisors of South African fast food franchises, the practical implications of the findings suggest that standardisation should be a cornerstone of operational strategy. However, franchisors must remain attentive to customer feedback and regional preferences to ensure that standardised practices do not alienate customers. Leveraging technology, such as customer relationship management (CRM) systems, can help franchises gather and analyse customer insights, enabling them to refine standardised processes in ways that enhance satisfaction.

5.2.2 Standardisation and Customer Loyalty (H2)

The second hypothesis (H2) posited that standardisation positively influences customer loyalty. The results revealed a weaker-than-expected relationship between these two variables, with correlation and regression analyses indicating a minimal and statistically insignificant association. These findings suggest that while standardisation contributes to certain aspects of customer experience, it may not directly drive loyalty in the South African fast food franchise context.

The lack of a strong relationship between standardisation and loyalty is consistent with broader discussions in the literature. While standardisation ensures a consistent experience, customer loyalty often stems from more complex, multidimensional factors. As noted by Hoyer et al. (2020), customer loyalty is influenced not only by consistency but also by emotional connections, personalised experiences, and perceived value. In this sense, standardisation may serve as a baseline expectation for customers, but it is unlikely to be a differentiator that fosters long-term loyalty.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory provides a useful lens for interpreting these findings. The theory highlights the importance of sensing and responding to customer needs, suggesting that franchises must go beyond standardisation to build loyalty. Franchises that utilise standardisation as a foundation can develop additional capabilities, such as personalisation strategies, loyalty programmes, and exceptional customer service, to strengthen emotional ties with their customers. In this way, standardisation becomes a platform for more dynamic and customer-centric approaches to loyalty building.

From an SDL perspective, loyalty emerges not only from repeated transactions but from relational value and interactive experiences. Standardised offerings may meet functional needs

but often fall short of creating emotional bonds unless paired with customer engagement and contextual responsiveness.

Meanwhile, RBV would argue that loyalty stems from leveraging firm-specific resources, namely superior service delivery protocols, local cultural knowledge, or brand heritage, none of which are inherently guaranteed by standardisation alone.

Empirical studies support this interpretation. Research by Lee et al. (2021) demonstrated that while standardisation ensures operational efficiency, customer loyalty is more strongly influenced by factors such as service quality, perceived value, and emotional engagement. Similarly, Rhou et al. (2016) emphasised the role of sustainability practices and community engagement in enhancing customer loyalty, suggesting that franchises must expand their focus beyond standardisation to address broader customer expectations.

In the South African fast food industry, the weak link between standardisation and loyalty may reflect unique market dynamics. South African customers are increasingly discerning, valuing authenticity and personalised experiences in addition to consistent quality. While standardisation ensures that a Big Mac tastes the same in Johannesburg as it does in Cape Town, loyalty may depend on factors such as the warmth of customer interactions, the availability of local flavours, or the franchise's contribution to the community.

Furthermore, economic disparities in South Africa mean that customer loyalty can be influenced by price sensitivity and perceived value. Franchises that offer loyalty programmes or promotions tailored to different income groups may have greater success in fostering repeat patronage. This observation aligns with the findings of Migdadi (2021), who argued that integrating customer feedback into operational strategies is critical for building loyalty in emerging markets.

For franchisors, the practical implications of the findings underscore the need to complement standardisation with strategies that foster deeper customer engagement. Loyalty programmes, localised marketing campaigns, and personalised interactions are likely to resonate more strongly with South African customers than standardisation alone. Franchisors should also explore opportunities to incorporate customer feedback into loyalty-building initiatives, ensuring that their strategies align with evolving customer expectations.

Although the findings do not strongly support H2, they offer valuable insights into the complexities of customer loyalty. The study highlights the importance of viewing standardisation as one piece of a larger puzzle. To truly enhance loyalty, franchises must adopt a multifaceted approach that integrates standardisation with personalisation, community engagement, and value creation. These strategies are particularly relevant in South Africa, where diverse customer preferences and socio-economic factors demand a more nuanced approach to loyalty building.

5.2.3 Standardisation and Perceived Quality (H3)

The third hypothesis (H3) posited that standardisation has a significant positive relationship with perceived quality in South African fast food franchises. The data revealed that while there is a correlation between standardisation and perceived quality, the strength of this relationship was modest and not as impactful as anticipated. The findings highlight the dual nature of

standardisation in influencing customer perceptions of quality. On one hand, standardisation ensures operational consistency and uniformity in service delivery, which enhances perceived quality; on the other hand, it may limit the flexibility required to address unique customer preferences, thereby tempering the overall impact.

From the perspective of Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT), the findings align with the concept of resource configuration, where standardisation ensures that processes and resources are managed to deliver a uniform product or service experience. Customers rely on this consistency as a measure of quality, knowing they can expect the same standard across different franchise locations. As Teece et al. (1997) highlighted, firms that effectively reconfigure resources to meet operational goals are more likely to sustain competitive advantage, and in the case of fast food franchises, this reconfiguration often takes the form of highly standardised procedures.

While DCT explains how standardisation can support scalable service delivery, RBV emphasises the differentiating power of quality as an internal, valuable, and inimitable resource. If standardisation becomes too generic, it risks undermining this competitive advantage by offering sameness rather than distinctiveness.

Moreover, SDL implies that perceived quality is not only about consistency but also subjective experience, co-created through customer input and interaction. Thus, even a standardised product must allow space for experiential tailoring to uphold perceived value.

Empirical evidence supports the notion that standardisation enhances perceived quality through uniformity in service and product delivery. Building upon Vignali (2001) research, multinational franchises such as McDonald's leverage standardisation to establish brand trust by delivering consistent customer experience across their global operations. Similarly, Blut et al. (2014) demonstrated that customers associate operational consistency with quality, particularly in service industries where reliability is paramount. In South Africa, this dynamic is particularly relevant given the diverse socio-economic and cultural landscape, where customers often rely on recognisable franchises for consistent quality.

However, the study's findings also suggest potential drawbacks to standardisation when it comes to perceived quality. Over-standardisation may lead to a lack of innovation and local relevance, which can detract from customers' perception of quality. Survey findings revealed that while respondents value consistency, they also appreciate localised elements that reflect regional preferences, including market-specific menu items and culturally relevant promotions. This aligns with critiques in the literature, such as those by Lee et al. (2021), who argued that standardisation must be complemented by adaptability to maintain relevance and perceived quality in diverse markets.

For franchisees of South African fast food franchises, the practical implications of these findings underscore the importance of balancing standardisation with localisation. While standardised practices provide a foundation for ensuring quality, incorporating locally relevant adaptations can enhance customer perceptions of quality. Franchises may enhance their market presence by introducing region-specific menu options and marketing campaigns that resonate with local audiences. Additionally, investing in staff training to ensure consistent service delivery can further reinforce customers' perceptions of quality, even as franchises adapt to local needs.

5.2.4 Customer Satisfaction as a Mediator (H4)

The fourth hypothesis (H4) proposed that customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between standardisation and business performance in South African fast food franchises. The findings from the mediation analysis confirmed this hypothesis, revealing that customer satisfaction plays a significant role in linking standardisation practices to improved business performance. This underscores the critical importance of customer satisfaction as an intermediary variable in achieving organisational success.

The results showed that while standardisation alone has a limited direct impact on business performance, its influence becomes more pronounced when mediated by customer satisfaction. This finding aligns with the literature, which has consistently emphasised the pivotal role of customer satisfaction in driving repeat patronage, positive word-of-mouth, and overall brand loyalty. Hoyer et al. (2020) argued that customer satisfaction acts as a conduit through which operational practices, such as standardisation, translate into tangible business outcomes. Similarly, Rhou et al. (2016) highlighted the mediating role of customer satisfaction in service industries, where operational consistency and customer-centric practices contribute to enhanced performance metrics.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory offers a robust framework for interpreting these findings. According to DCT, firms must continuously sense, seize, and reconfigure resources to maintain competitive advantage. In this context, standardisation serves as a resource configuration mechanism that enables franchises to deliver consistent experiences, which in turn fosters customer satisfaction. However, the ability to sense and respond to evolving customer needs ensures that standardisation remains relevant and impactful. The systemic integration of customer feedback into operational processes enables franchises to refine their standardised practices, ensuring closer alignment with customer expectations and consequently improving both satisfaction levels and overall business performance.

The RBV lens suggests that customer satisfaction acts as a mechanism through which internal resources like brand strength and service design translate into performance outcomes. However, unless these resources are leveraged in market-specific ways, their contribution may be diluted.

From an SDL perspective, the mediating role of satisfaction depends on how well the franchise enables value co-creation. If customer agency and interaction are absent from the service encounter, satisfaction may fail to materialise despite standardised efficiency.

The South African fast food market provides a unique backdrop for understanding this mediating relationship. Customers in this context are often drawn to franchises because of their reputation for reliability and quality, both of which are underpinned by standardisation. However, the findings indicate that customer satisfaction is the key factor that transforms these operational advantages into long-term business success. Franchises that fail to prioritise customer satisfaction may struggle to realise the full benefits of their standardised practices, particularly in a competitive market where customer preferences are constantly evolving.

For franchisors, the practical implications of these findings are clear: customer satisfaction must be prioritised as a strategic objective. While standardisation provides the foundation for delivering

consistent quality, it is the emotional and experiential aspects of customer satisfaction that ultimately drive business performance. Franchisors should invest in initiatives that enhance customer satisfaction, such as personalised service, loyalty programmes, and mechanisms for gathering and acting on customer feedback. Additionally, leveraging technology, such as CRM systems, can help franchises monitor customer satisfaction levels and identify areas for improvement.

The Dynamic Capabilities Theory provides a comprehensive lens through which the study's findings can be interpreted. The theory emphasises the importance of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring resources to achieve and sustain competitive advantage in dynamic environments. In the context of this study, DCT offers valuable insights into how standardisation practices influence customer satisfaction, perceived quality, and business performance.

- **Sensing Opportunities and Threats**

The findings highlight the importance of sensing capabilities in maintaining the relevance of standardised practices. Franchises that actively monitor customer preferences and market trends are better positioned to effectively adapt their standardised practices to align with evolving consumer expectations. This aligns with Teece's (2018) assertion that sensing capabilities are critical for identifying opportunities to enhance customer satisfaction and perceived quality.

- **Seizing Opportunities**

Seizing capabilities involve mobilising resources to capitalise on identified opportunities. The study demonstrated that franchises that integrate customer feedback into their standardised practices are more likely to enhance customer satisfaction and perceived quality. The implementation of innovative technologies, particularly digital ordering systems, enables franchises to streamline operations while delivering a consistent and satisfying customer experience.

- **Reconfiguring Resources**

Reconfiguring capabilities are particularly relevant in the South African fast food context, where diverse customer preferences require a balance between standardisation and localisation. The findings suggest that franchises must be willing to adapt their standardised practices to address regional preferences and cultural nuances. This dynamic approach ensures that standardisation does not become a rigid constraint but rather a flexible framework for delivering value to customers.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory also underscores the interconnectedness of the study's key constructs. Standardisation serves as a resource configuration mechanism that enhances operational efficiency and consistency. These advantages contribute to customer satisfaction, which acts as a mediating variable in driving business performance. The theory's emphasis on continuous adaptation and innovation provides a roadmap for franchises to refine their standardised practices in ways that maximise customer satisfaction and long-term success.

The study's findings contribute to the theoretical advancement of DCT by demonstrating its applicability in the context of franchise operations. While previous research has focused on DCT's relevance to innovation and resource management, this study extends its application to the domain

of standardisation and customer experience. For franchisors, the findings provide actionable insights into how DCT principles can be operationalised to enhance customer satisfaction and business performance. Adopting a dynamic approach to standardisation, allows franchises to build stronger relationships with their customers and achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

While the study highlights the importance of DCT in understanding the relationships between standardisation, customer satisfaction, and business performance, it also points to areas for future research. For instance, exploring the role of technology in enhancing sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring capabilities could provide deeper insights into how franchises can optimise their standardised practices. Additionally, investigating the cultural dimensions of standardisation in diverse markets like South Africa could shed light on how franchises can balance global consistency with local adaptability.

5.3 Practical Implications

This section focuses on the practical implications derived from the study findings, targeting actionable recommendations for franchisors in South Africa. The study highlights the importance of standardisation in ensuring consistent quality while accommodating customer satisfaction, loyalty, and adaptability. These insights align with the dynamic and diverse demands of the South African market. Recommendations include strategies to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, leverage Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) for innovation and adaptability, and integrate sustainability practices into operations.

One of the key findings of this study is the significance of standardisation in enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. Standardisation assures customers of consistent service quality, a critical factor in the fast food industry. Franchisors should ensure that core elements such as menu offerings, service protocols, and cleanliness standards are uniform across all outlets. This consistency fosters trust and reliability, which are essential for customer retention.

Customer satisfaction and loyalty can be further enhanced by creating emotional connections through personalised experiences. Franchisors can implement loyalty programmes that reward frequent customers with discounts, exclusive offers, or personalised recommendations. Emotional engagement can also be reinforced through community involvement, such as sponsoring local events or supporting charitable causes. These initiatives not only build brand loyalty but also establish the franchise as a trusted member of the community.

The study emphasises the mediating role of customer satisfaction in business performance. Franchisees should actively seek and address customer feedback through multiple channels, such as online surveys, social media platforms, and in-store suggestion boxes. Responding promptly and effectively to customer complaints demonstrates a commitment to quality and continuous improvement, ultimately strengthening customer satisfaction and loyalty.

In South Africa, where cultural diversity influences consumer preferences, localisation strategies are crucial. While maintaining standardisation, Franchisors should adapt offerings to cater to regional tastes. For example, incorporating locally popular flavours or traditional dishes into the menu can attract a broader customer base. Franchisees should also consider multilingual

communication in advertisements and customer interactions to reflect the country's linguistic diversity.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) offers a strategic framework for navigating the challenges of standardisation and adaptability. Franchisors can apply the principles of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring to remain agile in a competitive market.

The study highlights the importance of identifying evolving customer preferences and market conditions. Franchisors should employ data analytics tools to track purchasing behaviours, conduct market surveys, and monitor competitors' activities. For instance, recognising the growing demand for healthy and sustainable options allows franchises to introduce menu items that align with these preferences. Additionally, Franchisees should stay informed about industry innovations, such as the adoption of AI-driven customer service tools.

Once opportunities are identified, swift and effective implementation is essential. For example, integrating self-service kiosks and mobile apps enhances customer convenience and operational efficiency. Franchisees should allocate resources strategically to ensure the smooth adoption of such innovations while training employees to deliver consistent service. Seizing opportunities also involves experimenting with new concepts, such as limited-time offers or partnerships with local influencers, to attract new customer segments.

Reconfiguring resources is crucial for sustaining competitiveness. Franchisors should focus on streamlining supply chains to accommodate new products, such as plant-based menu items, and adopting eco-friendly packaging to align with sustainability goals. Additionally, optimising workforce management through advanced scheduling tools can improve operational efficiency. Viewing standardisation as a dynamic process enables franchises to continuously refine their practices to meet evolving market demands.

Sustainability is an increasingly important consideration for South African consumers. Franchisors can implement sustainability initiatives that align with environmental, social, and economic priorities.

Franchisors can adopt strategies to minimise waste by monitoring inventory levels and donating surplus food to local charities. Transitioning to biodegradable packaging and investing in energy-efficient equipment also reduces the environmental impact of operations. These measures not only enhance the brand's image but also contribute to cost savings.

Ethical sourcing enhances a franchise's credibility and resonates with socially conscious consumers. Franchisors should collaborate with local farmers and suppliers who adhere to fair trade practices. Highlighting these initiatives in marketing campaigns can foster customer loyalty while supporting the local economy. For example, using locally sourced ingredients not only aligns with sustainability but also provides opportunities to create regionally inspired menu items.

Sustainability extends to social initiatives that benefit local communities. Franchisors should actively engage with communities by sponsoring educational programmes, supporting health initiatives, and creating job opportunities. These efforts position the franchise as a socially responsible organisation, enhancing its reputation and customer loyalty.

To measure progress, Franchisees should implement sustainability metrics, such as tracking waste reduction rates and energy usage. These metrics enable continuous improvement and provide transparency to stakeholders. Publishing sustainability reports can further reinforce the franchise's commitment to ethical practices.

The South African fast food market presents unique challenges and opportunities due to its socio-economic disparities and cultural diversity. Franchisors must adopt a dual approach that balances global consistency with local relevance. This involves maintaining standardised operations while addressing the specific needs and preferences of South African consumers.

Franchisees operating in urban areas may focus on technological innovations, such as contactless payment systems, to cater to tech-savvy customers. In contrast, franchises in rural areas might emphasise affordability and culturally relevant offerings to attract customers with lower disposable incomes. This tailored approach ensures that the franchise remains competitive across diverse market segments.

Additionally, the findings underscore the importance of building strong customer relationships through personalised interactions and community involvement. Fostering trust and loyalty enables franchises to mitigate the impact of economic fluctuations and maintain a stable customer base.

Franchisors should cultivate a culture of continuous learning and innovation. This involves providing employees with regular training opportunities and encouraging them to contribute ideas for improving operations. Partnering with academic institutions and industry experts can also facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices.

Customer satisfaction should remain the cornerstone of the franchise's business model. Franchisors should integrate customer feedback into decision-making processes, ensuring that new initiatives align with customer expectations. Adopting a customer-centric approach enables franchises to build long-term loyalty and achieve sustainable growth.

South African franchisors must stay ahead of future trends by investing in digital transformation and sustainability. This includes adopting AI-driven analytics to predict market shifts and integrating green technologies to reduce environmental impact. Preparing for these trends positions franchises as forward-thinking leaders in the industry.

These recommendations equip franchisors with actionable strategies to enhance customer satisfaction, adapt to market dynamics, and achieve long-term success in South Africa's competitive fast food industry. Aligning operations with the principles of Dynamic Capabilities Theory and addressing the specific needs of local consumers enables franchises to maintain relevance and competitiveness in a rapidly evolving industry.

5.4 Contributions to Theory

This study makes significant contributions to the theoretical discourse by extending the interpretive use of Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) to the fast food franchise industry. As a framework that emphasises the importance of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring resources, DCT

provides an invaluable conceptual lens for examining the complex interplay between standardisation, customer satisfaction, and business performance. This research not only reinforces DCT's relevance in highly dynamic environments but also offers fresh insights into how it can be applied to achieve sustainable competitive advantage within the context of fast food franchises in South Africa.

A major contribution of this study is its focus on the fast food franchise industry, an area where the application of DCT has been relatively underexplored. Traditionally, DCT has been predominantly applied to high-tech and innovation-intensive industries where rapid change is commonplace. This research demonstrates that the theory is equally applicable to industries like fast food, where balancing standardisation and adaptability is a critical success factor. The findings illustrate how fast food franchises can utilise dynamic capabilities to maintain operational consistency while adapting to diverse consumer preferences and market conditions.

By integrating DCT with the constructs of standardisation, customer satisfaction, and perceived quality, this study broadens the theoretical understanding of how firms can manage seemingly contradictory objectives. Standardisation ensures consistency and efficiency, while DCT enables franchises to adapt to local and cultural variations. This dual focus is essential in the fast food industry, where global consistency must coexist with regional responsiveness.

The study provides examples of how DCT's core elements, namely sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring, manifest in the fast food industry. Through the process of sensing, franchises identify shifts in consumer preferences, such as the increasing demand for healthier menu options or the preference for digital ordering systems. This highlights the role of environmental scanning and data analytics in shaping strategic decisions.

Seizing, as illustrated in the study, involves the implementation of strategies to meet identified needs, such as introducing technology-driven solutions like mobile ordering apps or self-service kiosks. These actions demonstrate the importance of resource mobilisation in seizing market opportunities.

Reconfiguring, the third pillar of DCT, involves aligning internal processes and resources with evolving market demands. The study shows how franchises can reconfigure supply chains, retrain staff, and adopt sustainable practices to stay competitive. This underscores the importance of flexibility in maintaining both operational efficiency and customer satisfaction.

Another key contribution is the integration of DCT with customer-centric practices. The study highlights how dynamic capabilities enable franchises to enhance customer satisfaction, which, in turn, mediates the relationship between standardisation and business performance. Refining standardised practices to meet local expectations allows franchises to improve customer experiences and foster loyalty.

This perspective aligns DCT with customer relationship management theories, offering a nuanced understanding of how franchises can align operational practices with evolving consumer demands. It also underscores the role of technology and innovation as enablers of dynamic capabilities, further bridging the gap between theory and practice.

This research adds to the body of knowledge by exploring DCT's applicability in an emerging market context. South Africa's socio-economic diversity and cultural heterogeneity provide a unique testing ground for the theory. The study demonstrates how DCT can help franchises navigate these complexities, ensuring that theoretical insights are applicable beyond traditional markets. Focusing on South Africa enables the research to contribute to the global discourse on DCT's relevance in diverse economic environments.

Through these contributions, the study not only advances the theoretical understanding of DCT but also provides a foundation for future research in the fast food industry and other industries that require a balance between standardisation and adaptability.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

This study has made significant strides in understanding the role of standardisation, customer satisfaction, and dynamic capabilities within the South African fast food franchise industry. However, like any research, it has its limitations, leaving room for further exploration. The following recommendations highlight areas where future studies can expand on the findings of this research, both to enhance the theoretical framework and to apply it to new contexts.

While this study focused on customer satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between standardisation and business performance, future research could benefit from examining additional variables that may further enrich this understanding. Mediators and moderators such as customer trust, service innovation, and brand equity could offer new insights into how standardisation impacts overall business success.

- **Customer Trust:** Trust is a critical factor in customer decision-making and loyalty. Exploring whether trust mediates or moderates the impact of standardisation on customer satisfaction could provide a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour, especially in industries where consistency and reliability are valued.
- **Service Innovation:** The integration of innovation in service delivery may moderate the effectiveness of standardisation, enhancing customer perceptions of value while ensuring operational efficiency. Future studies could explore how dynamic capabilities, such as sensing and seizing, drive innovation in standardised franchise systems.
- **Cultural Influences as Moderators:** South Africa's cultural diversity makes it an ideal setting for examining how cultural variations affect the perceived value of standardisation. Future studies could investigate whether cultural alignment moderates the relationship between standardisation and customer satisfaction or perceived quality.

The application of Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) in this study was limited to the fast food industry. To test the robustness of these findings, future research could extend the investigation to other industries, such as retail, hospitality, or healthcare, where standardisation and adaptability also play critical roles.

- **Retail Industry:** Retail chains often employ standardised practices while adapting to local market needs. Investigating how DCT influences customer experiences in retail could provide comparative insights into the universality of the theory.

- **Healthcare Industry:** Healthcare providers often balance standardised protocols with the need to personalise services. Future studies could explore whether the same dynamic capabilities, such as resource reconfiguration, are effective in ensuring both operational efficiency and patient satisfaction.
- **Manufacturing and Supply Chains:** Standardisation is a hallmark of manufacturing operations. Examining how dynamic capabilities contribute to maintaining quality while responding to disruptions in supply chains could offer practical implications for industries beyond service orientation.

Although this study is contextually grounded in South Africa, expanding the scope to other regions could offer comparative insights and enhance the generalisability of the findings. The following areas could be explored:

- **Other Emerging Markets:** Countries such as India, Brazil, and Nigeria share similar socio-economic conditions with South Africa. Research in these regions could explore whether the relationships between standardisation, customer satisfaction, and business performance differ due to cultural or economic factors.
- **Developed Markets:** Expanding the study to mature economies could provide valuable comparisons. For instance, examining how franchises in the United States or Europe apply dynamic capabilities to adapt their standardisation strategies may reveal nuanced differences between emerging and developed markets.

This study employed a cross-sectional research design, which provided a snapshot of relationships at a single point in time. Future research could adopt a longitudinal approach to explore how standardisation strategies evolve over time and whether their impact on customer satisfaction and business performance changes with market dynamics.

Longitudinal studies could also examine how the development of dynamic capabilities within organisations affects long-term outcomes. For instance, how do franchises that continuously invest in sensing and seizing capabilities fare in sustaining competitive advantage over a decade?

While this study briefly touched on technology's role in enabling dynamic capabilities, future research could delve deeper into how digital tools influence the standardisation process. Specific areas for exploration include:

- **Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics:** AI tools can significantly enhance sensing capabilities by predicting customer trends. Investigating how these technologies shape standardisation practices and customer satisfaction could offer actionable insights.
- **Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Systems:** Research could focus on how CRM systems help franchises collect and analyse data to fine-tune their standardised practices in real-time.

Comparative studies could be conducted to investigate differences in standardisation approaches among various types of franchises. For instance:

- **Global vs. Local Brands:** Exploring how international franchises differ from local South African franchises in their application of standardisation could highlight unique challenges and strategies.

- **Size of Operations:** Comparing large, multi-national franchises with smaller, regional players could reveal differences in how dynamic capabilities are employed to balance standardisation and adaptability.

Given the increasing importance of sustainability in consumer decision-making, future research could explore the role of sustainability practices as a moderating or mediating factor. Questions worth exploring include:

- How does the integration of eco-friendly practices influence customer satisfaction in standardised franchise systems?
- Can sustainability initiatives enhance perceived quality and customer loyalty?

5.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the significant findings from the study, reinforced their relevance, and provided critical insights into the practical and theoretical implications of standardisation in the South African fast food franchise industry. The discussion addresses the core research objectives and hypotheses by establishing the complex interplay between standardisation, customer satisfaction, perceived quality, and customer loyalty, while integrating these findings with the Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT).

The results demonstrated the critical role of standardisation in driving customer satisfaction (H1), confirming that operational consistency and product uniformity enhance customer perceptions of value and reliability. This relationship emphasises the importance of maintaining high-quality standards while addressing customer expectations, a key finding that aligns closely with prior studies on franchise management in competitive markets. The study also uncovered the positive relationship between standardisation and customer loyalty (H2), revealing that satisfied customers are more likely to develop loyalty and engage in repeat purchases. This loyalty is fundamental to the sustainability and profitability of franchise operations, as loyal customers contribute to steady revenue streams and brand advocacy.

The findings related to perceived quality (H3) highlighted the nuanced role of standardisation in enhancing perceptions of product and service quality. While standardisation ensures consistency, it also requires balancing customer-specific needs and market adaptability to maintain competitiveness. The study provided evidence that operational flexibility, underpinned by dynamic capabilities, is essential to achieving this balance.

Customer satisfaction emerged as a significant mediator in the relationship between standardisation and business performance (H4). This mediation underscores the importance of placing customer needs at the centre of strategic decisions. It also reinforces the role of dynamic capabilities in sensing and seizing opportunities for service innovation, which can drive satisfaction and long-term performance.

These findings contribute to the broader understanding of DCT by demonstrating its practical relevance in managing franchise operations. This study extends the theoretical applications of DCT in the context of standardisation practices, with a particular focus on emerging markets like South

Africa. Moreover, the findings yield actionable insights for franchisors, offering strategies to optimise operations, enhance customer relationships, and improve competitive positioning.

This chapter has underscored the significance of the study's findings for both academic theory and practical application, setting the stage for broader exploration and continued research in this dynamic field.

Chapter 6: Study Conclusion

6.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter concludes the research by revisiting its objectives, methodology, and key findings, consolidating its contributions to theory and practice. The study examined standardisation, customer satisfaction, and business performance in South African fast food franchises, using Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT). The aim was to assess how standardisation influences customer satisfaction, loyalty, and perceived quality, and whether customer satisfaction mediates business performance.

The study aims to address gaps in theory and practice. Theoretically, DCT's role in franchise operations is underexplored in developing markets. Standardisation is valued for efficiency and consistency, yet its impact on customer-driven outcomes is unclear. Practically, franchisors must balance uniformity with adaptability. A quantitative approach was used, collecting data from 450 respondents through the "In Food Fam" online panel. Analyses included correlation, regression, and mediation testing.

Findings challenge assumptions that standardisation drives customer satisfaction and business performance. Despite its role in brand consistency, results show no significant effect on satisfaction, loyalty, or perceived quality. Additionally, no direct or indirect impact on business performance was found, highlighting the complexities of competing in a dynamic market. These results align with studies questioning rigid operational models, emphasising flexibility, innovation, and localisation.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory provided a conceptual framework to interpret the findings, highlighting the need for sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring resources. However, results suggest that these capabilities must go beyond standardisation, incorporating localisation, responsiveness, and innovation. This study contributes to franchise management literature, reinforcing the importance of balancing consistency with adaptability.

A structured survey ensured a representative respondent pool. Kendall's tau, Spearman's rho, regression, and mediation analysis tested hypotheses. The rejection of H1, H2, and H3 suggests that standardisation does not enhance customer satisfaction, loyalty, or quality perception. The insignificance of H4 implies that customer satisfaction does not mediate the standardisation-business performance relationship, suggesting other factors, such as innovation and digital integration, may be more influential.

Findings contribute to academic and practical insights. For scholars, this study expands DCT's application in the fast food industry, showing that franchise success requires adaptability. Future research should explore alternative mediators and moderators, particularly innovation and customer engagement. For practitioners, findings highlight the limitations of rigid standardisation, urging a shift toward customer-centric and flexible strategies.

This chapter consolidates the study's contributions, addressing theoretical and practical gaps. The integration of standardisation, customer experience, and business strategy yields actionable insights for franchisors which in turn facilitates the development of strategies to optimise

operations and enhance competitive positioning. The next sections explore practical recommendations and future research directions.

Findings reinforce the need for franchises to rethink traditional strategies. With growing demand for personalised and innovative experiences, integrating adaptability into standardised models is essential. As consumer expectations evolve, franchisors must embrace technology, localisation, and differentiation to sustain competitiveness and long-term success.

6.2 Summary of the Study

This section provides a detailed summary of the study, revisiting the research problem, the methodologies employed, and the key findings derived from the analysis. This section reiterates these critical elements to connect the study's overarching objectives with the empirical evidence and theoretical insights generated during the research process.

The fast food industry in South Africa is characterised by a unique blend of global operational practices and local consumer expectations. Standardisation, a cornerstone of franchise operations, aims to ensure consistency in service delivery, product quality, and overall customer experience across multiple locations. However, the effectiveness of standardisation in meeting dynamic market demands and driving customer satisfaction and business performance remains unclear. This study was motivated by the need to bridge this gap, particularly within the South African context, where cultural diversity, economic inequality, and evolving consumer preferences create a complex environment for franchise operations.

While standardisation is often heralded as a critical driver of efficiency and brand consistency, its limitations in addressing consumer-specific needs have been increasingly recognised. Additionally, the relationship between standardisation and customer-centric outcomes such as satisfaction, loyalty, and perceived quality remains underexplored in developing market contexts like South Africa. Moreover, the mediating role of customer satisfaction in linking standardisation to business performance adds another layer of complexity that has been insufficiently examined. The study was guided by these gaps, aiming to contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical strategies for managing franchise operations in dynamic environments.

A quantitative research design was adopted to address the study's objectives. Data were collected from 450 respondents using an online survey facilitated by the "In Food Fam" consumer panel, which focuses on patrons of prominent fast food franchises in South Africa. This approach ensured a diverse and representative sample, capturing insights from a broad spectrum of consumers. The survey instrument was carefully designed to measure key constructs such as standardisation, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, perceived quality, and business performance.

Analytical techniques, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and mediation testing, were employed to test the study's hypotheses. The use of SPSS software facilitated rigorous and systematic analysis, ensuring the reliability and validity of the results. The hypotheses were derived from the literature and anchored in Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT), which provided a robust framework for interpreting the relationships between the constructs.

6.2.1 Key Findings

The findings of the study offer critical insights into the relationships between standardisation and customer-centric outcomes in the South African fast food industry. These findings are summarised below, aligned with the study's hypotheses:

- **H1: Standardisation and Customer Satisfaction**

The regression analysis revealed that standardisation does not significantly predict customer satisfaction ($B = -0.034$, $p = 0.495$). This finding challenges conventional wisdom, suggesting that while standardisation ensures consistency, it does not necessarily enhance customer satisfaction. Instead, factors such as personalisation, responsiveness, and cultural relevance may play a more prominent role in shaping customer perceptions and experiences.

- **H2: Standardisation and Customer Loyalty**

Similarly, the relationship between standardisation and customer loyalty was found to be statistically insignificant. This result indicates that rigid adherence to uniform practices may not foster long-term customer loyalty in a diverse and dynamic market. Instead, loyalty may depend on a brand's ability to adapt to local needs and preferences while maintaining core brand values.

- **H3: Standardisation and Perceived Quality**

The analysis also showed no significant relationship between standardisation and the perceived quality of products and services ($B = -0.015$, $p = 0.743$). This finding highlights a potential disconnect between operational consistency and consumer perceptions of quality, which may be influenced by factors such as innovation, service delivery, and localisation.

- **H4: Customer Satisfaction as a Mediator**

The mediation analysis examined the indirect effect of standardisation on business performance through customer satisfaction. The results indicated no significant mediating effect, with the Sobel test confirming the absence of a statistically meaningful relationship. While customer satisfaction showed a weak positive association with business performance, it was not sufficient to establish a mediating role in the context of standardisation.

6.2.2 Implications of the Findings

The findings underscore the limitations of relying solely on standardisation as a strategy for achieving customer satisfaction, loyalty, and perceived quality in the fast food franchise industry. While standardisation remains essential for operational efficiency and brand consistency, it must be complemented by adaptive practices that address local consumer preferences and market dynamics.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) offers valuable insights into how franchises can navigate these challenges. DCT offers a framework for balancing standardisation with flexibility and innovation by emphasising the importance of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring resources. The findings suggest that fast food franchises must develop dynamic capabilities that enable them to respond proactively to changing consumer demands and competitive pressures.

6.2.3 Reflections on Methodology

The methodology employed in this study proved effective in addressing the research objectives. The quantitative design allowed for the systematic measurement of relationships between the constructs, while the use of SPSS ensured robust data analysis. However, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The cross-sectional nature of the study restricts the ability to infer causal relationships. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of response bias, although steps were taken to minimise this risk through survey design and data validation.

The study makes significant contributions to the understanding of standardisation and its implications for customer satisfaction and business performance in the South African fast food industry. The findings, which challenge traditional assumptions and underscore the need for adaptive strategies, provide valuable insights for both academic and practical audiences. These insights form the basis for the recommendations and future research directions outlined in subsequent sections.

6.3 Theoretical and Practical Contributions

Theoretically, this study extends the interpretive application of Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) within the fast food franchise context, particularly in a developing market such as South Africa. DCT's emphasis on sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring capabilities provided a valuable lens for examining how standardisation and adaptability interact within franchise operations. One of the primary theoretical contributions of the study lies in its challenge to the traditional view that standardisation inherently enhances customer satisfaction, loyalty, and perceived quality. The findings demonstrated that standardisation alone does not significantly predict these outcomes, underscoring the importance of dynamic capabilities in navigating complex and evolving consumer preferences.

By integrating DCT with constructs such as customer satisfaction, perceived quality, and business performance, this research highlights the importance of balancing operational consistency with innovation and localisation. The absence of significant relationships between standardisation and customer-centric outcomes suggests that franchises must move beyond rigidly applying uniform practices and instead adopt a more flexible, capability-driven approach. This insight contributes to the broader theoretical discourse on how dynamic capabilities can complement standardisation to drive sustainable performance.

The study also extends the understanding of mediation within the DCT framework by exploring the role of customer satisfaction as a mediator between standardisation and business performance. Although the mediation effect was not statistically significant, the findings offer a nuanced perspective on how customer satisfaction interacts with operational strategies, providing a foundation for further exploration of complex mediating and moderating relationships in the franchise industry.

For franchisors in South Africa, the findings provide actionable insights into operational strategies that align with the dynamic and competitive nature of the market. The study demonstrates that

while standardisation is essential for maintaining brand consistency, it must be complemented by adaptive practices that respond to local market conditions and customer expectations.

First, franchisors are encouraged to leverage sensing capabilities to monitor emerging consumer trends and preferences, such as demands for healthier menu options or digital convenience features. These insights can guide the integration of localisation strategies within standardised frameworks.

Second, seizing opportunities through innovation is critical. Investments in technologies such as mobile ordering apps, self-service kiosks, and CRM systems can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty by improving service delivery and personalisation.

Finally, reconfiguring resources to incorporate sustainability practices, such as eco-friendly sourcing and waste reduction, aligns with evolving consumer values while enhancing brand reputation. Balancing standardisation with adaptability and sustainability enables franchises to achieve both operational efficiency and long-term competitiveness.

This study bridges theoretical insights from DCT with practical strategies for optimising franchise operations in South Africa, offering a roadmap for navigating the complexities of standardisation and customer engagement.

6.4 Study Limitations

This study, while offering significant insights into the relationship between standardisation, customer satisfaction, and business performance within the South African fast food franchise industry, is subject to several limitations. These constraints should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings and considering their broader applicability.

The cross-sectional research design presents a key limitation. Collecting data at a single point in time constrained the study's ability to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of customer satisfaction and business performance. Relationships between variables such as standardisation and customer loyalty may change over time due to shifts in consumer behaviour, market competition, or broader economic conditions. A longitudinal design could provide deeper insights into these temporal dynamics.

Another limitation relates to the reliance on self-reported data collected through surveys. While such data is valuable for understanding perceptions and experiences, it is inherently subjective and may introduce biases such as social desirability or recall bias. Respondents might have answered in ways they believed to be socially acceptable or favourable to the franchises, potentially skewing the results.

The sample size of 450 respondents, while adequate for statistical analysis, was limited to participants from the "In Food Fam" online consumer panel. This sampling frame, while relevant to the study's focus on the fast food industry, may not fully represent the broader South African population. Consumers outside this panel might have differing views on standardisation and customer satisfaction, limiting the generalisability of the findings.

The study is specific to the South African fast food industry, characterised by unique cultural, economic, and competitive dynamics. As a result, the findings may not be directly applicable to other regions or industries without considering these contextual nuances. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating diverse geographic contexts and expanding the scope beyond fast food franchises to other industries.

Acknowledging these limitations provides a foundation for refining future research and extending the understanding of these critical relationships.

While standardisation generally promotes loyalty, its effectiveness may vary depending on contextual factors such as market dynamics, cultural preferences, and competitive pressures. In regions where customers value uniqueness and personalisation, rigid standardisation may deter loyalty. Franchises must leverage dynamic capabilities to navigate these challenges, identifying opportunities to tailor standardised practices without compromising brand integrity (Teece, 2018).

Technological advancements also present new opportunities for fostering loyalty within a standardised framework. For instance, integrating loyalty programmes into mobile applications enables franchises to personalise rewards and incentives, enhancing customer retention and engagement (Warner & Wäger, 2019).

6.5 Final Reflections

This study underscores the critical importance of balancing standardisation and adaptability in dynamic and competitive markets, such as the South African fast food franchise industry. While standardisation ensures operational efficiency, consistency, and brand recognition, adaptability enables businesses to respond to evolving customer preferences, cultural nuances, and market trends. The findings reveal that rigid standardisation alone does not significantly enhance customer satisfaction or business performance, highlighting the need for a more nuanced approach.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) offers valuable insights and provides a meaningful; interpretive structure into achieving this balance by emphasising the need for sensing opportunities, seizing them effectively, and reconfiguring resources for sustained competitiveness. For franchisors, integrating flexibility into standardised practices is crucial for fostering customer loyalty, enhancing perceived quality, and driving innovation. In a rapidly changing business environment, the ability to combine operational consistency with adaptive strategies will remain a cornerstone of success.

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Appendices

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg



Wits Business School Ethics Committee

Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/EN0609543D/672

This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below).

Project title	The Impact of Standardisation on Business Performance of Fast Food Franchise in Gauteng: Customer Perspectives
Investigator / Researcher	Ms Nokwazi Skosana
Nature of Project	MM in Entrepr & New Venture Creation
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed anonyr and confidentiality.
Issue Date of Certificate	07/10/2024
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Dr Ayanda Magida  ☎ +27 11 717 3953 ✉ ayanda.magida@wits.ac.za

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Eth Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research an guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nokwazi Skosana', written over a horizontal line.

Signature

7 October 2025

Date:

Additional Data Results

Relationship between variables

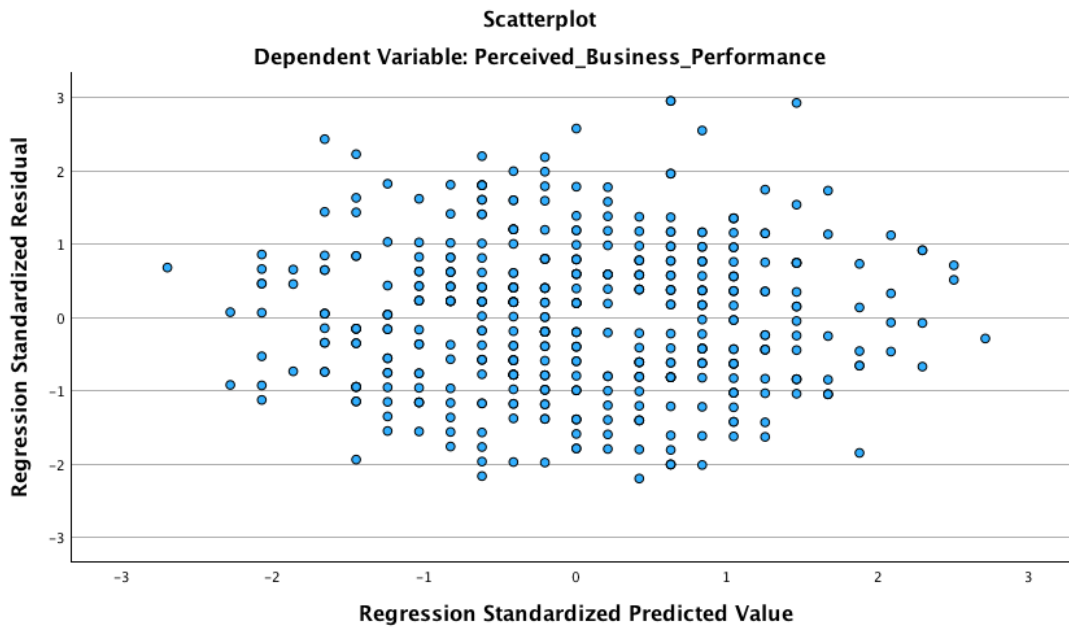


Figure 8 Standardisation vs Perceived Business Performance

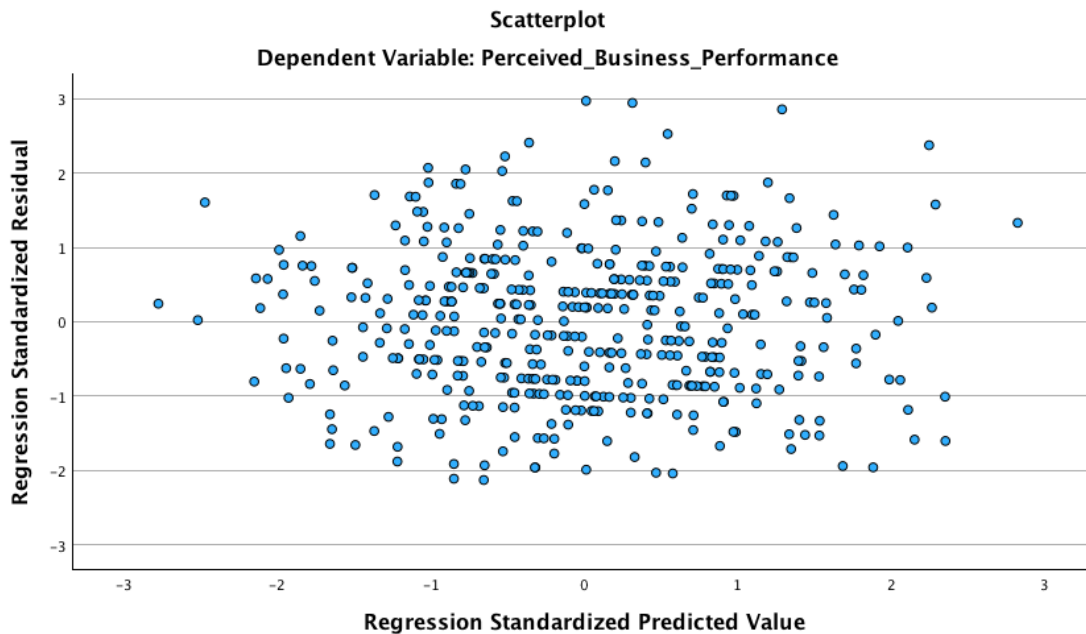


Figure 9 Standardisation, Customer Satisfaction and Business Management Practices vs Perceived Business Performance

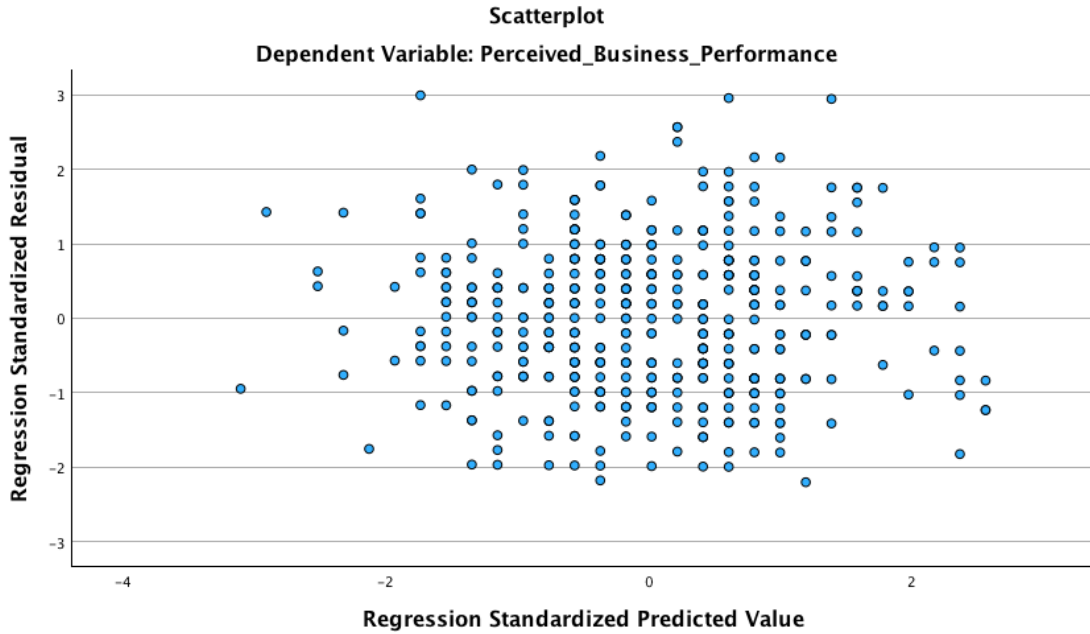


Figure 10 Business Management Practices vs Perceived Business Performance

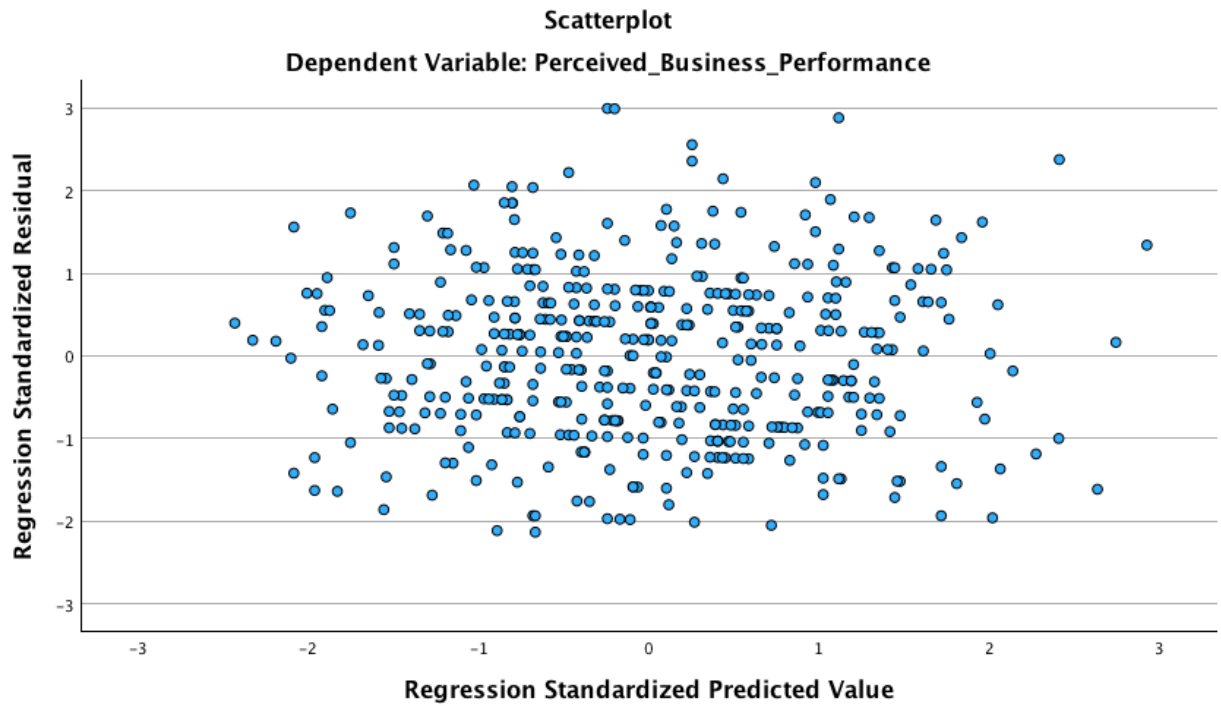


Figure 11 Business Management Practices and Customer Satisfaction vs Perceived Business Performance

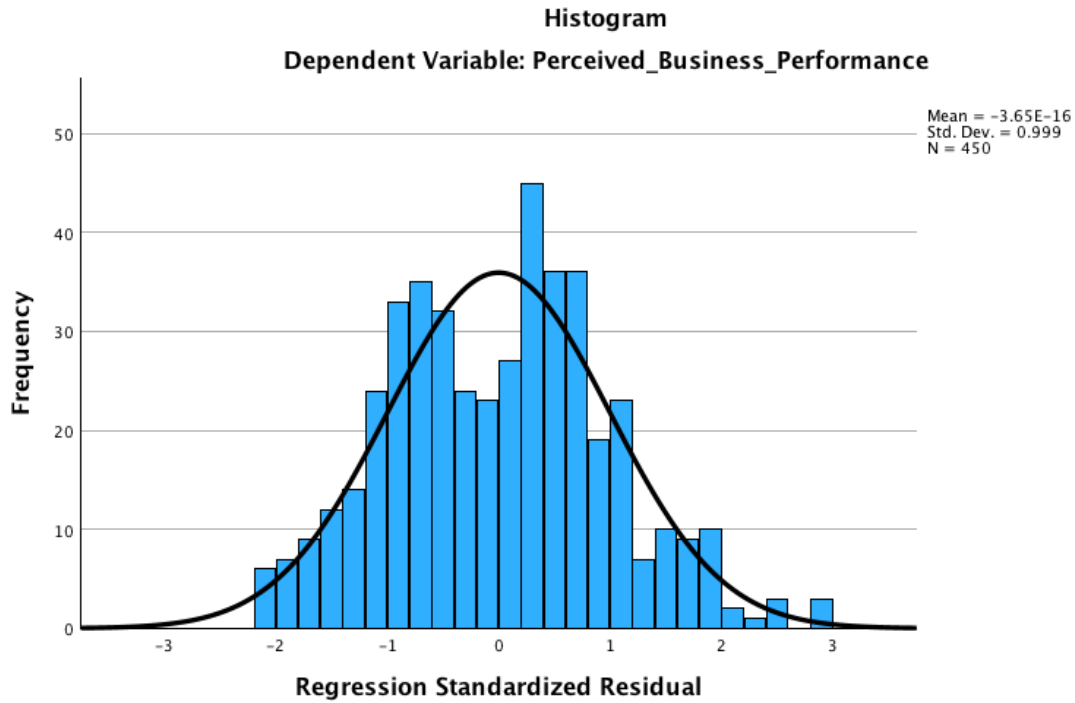


Figure 12 Frequency Distribution of Perceived Business Performance in relation to Standardisation

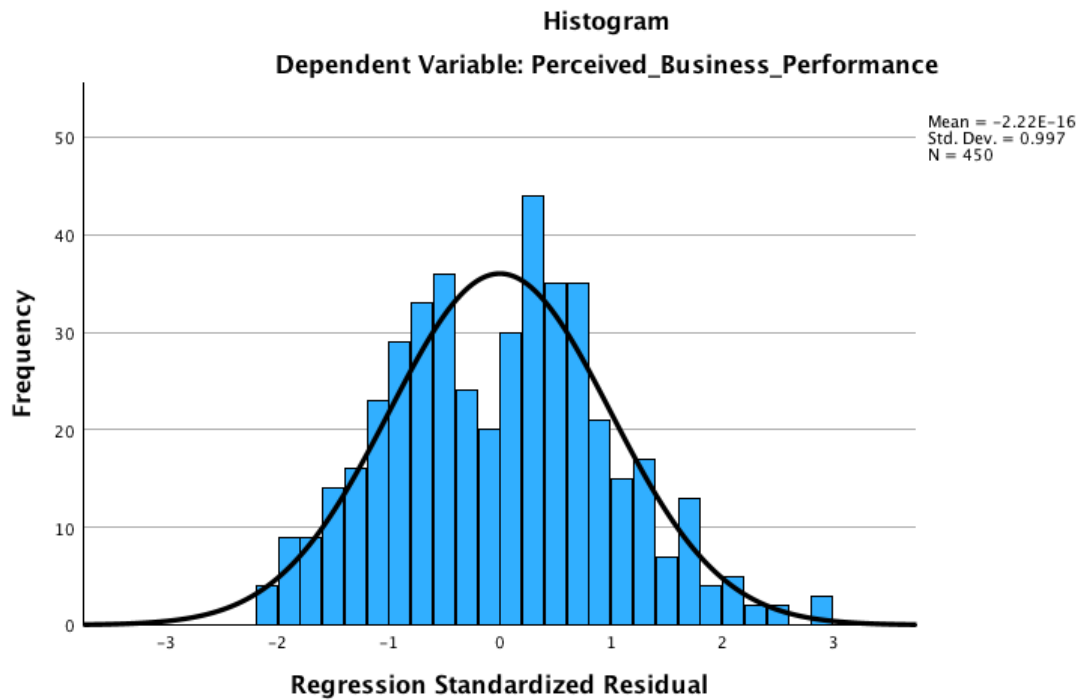


Figure 13 Frequenc Distribution of Perceived Business Performance modelled by Customer Satisfaction, Standardisation and Business Management Practices

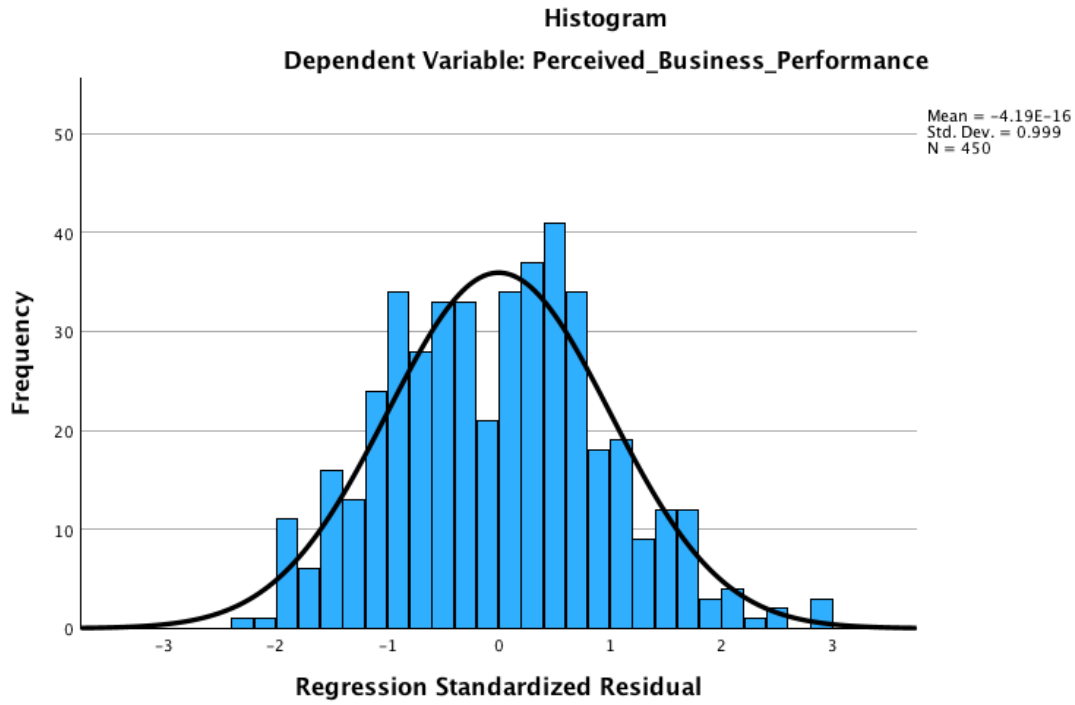


Figure 14 The Frequency Distribution of Business Management Practices

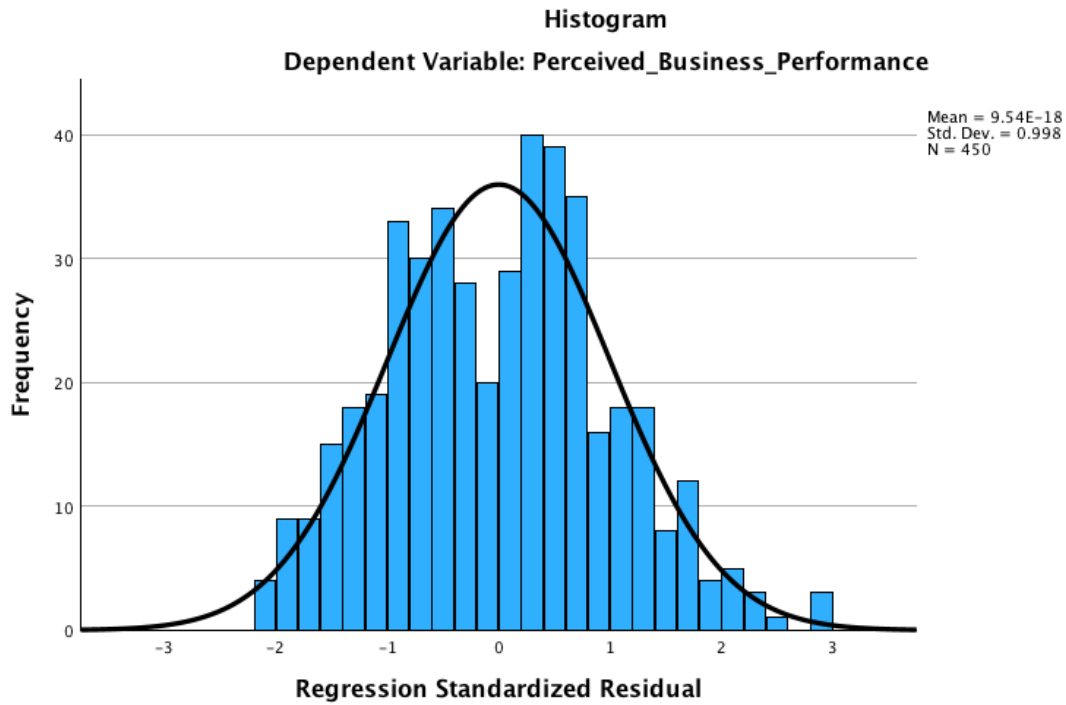


Figure 15 The Frequency Distribution of Perceived Business Performance

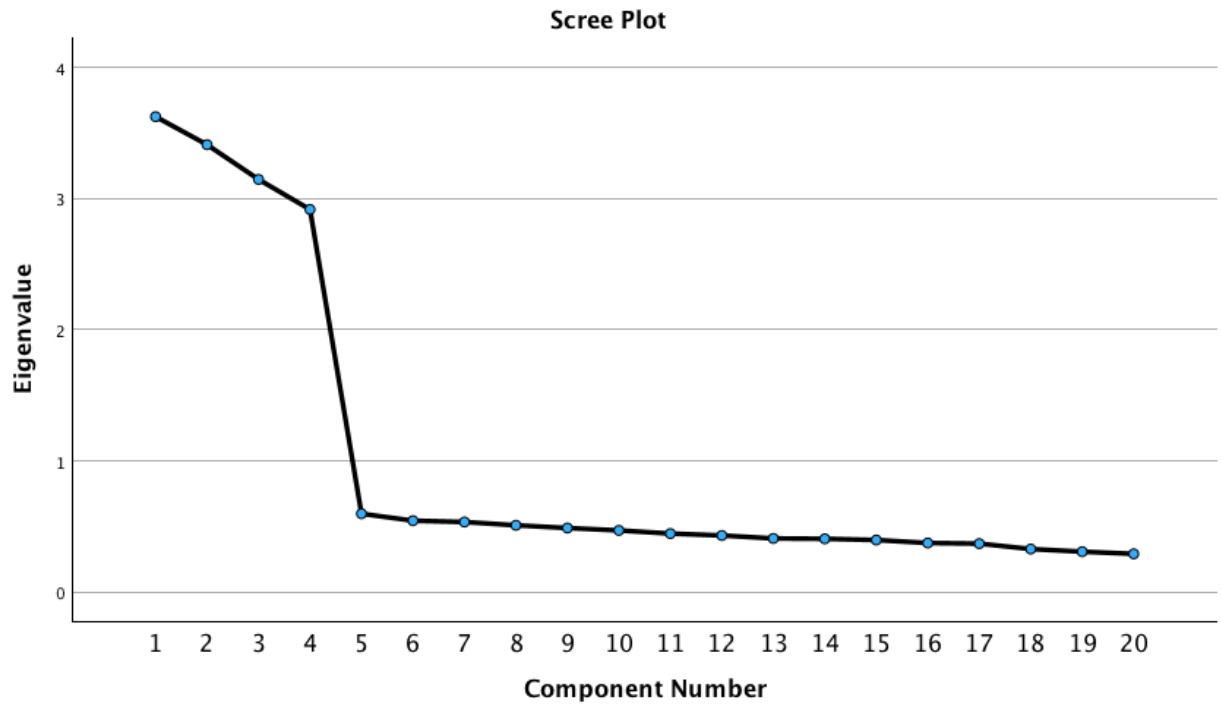


Figure 16 Scree Plot of Eigenvalues for Standardisation, Customer Satisfaction, Business Management Practices and Perceived Business Performance Constructs

Table 19 Rotated Factor Loadings for the Constructs of Standardisation, Customer Satisfaction, and Perceived Business Performance

	Pattern Matrix ^a			
	1	2	3	4
Food_Quality_Consistency				.769
Service_Delivery_Uniformity				.809
Cleanliness_Consistency				.786
Menu_Offerings_Same				.810
Branding_Atmosphere_Consistency				.807
Food_Quality_Satisfaction			.824	
Service_Meeting_Expectations			.805	
Overall_Dining_Experience			.816	
Value_For_Money			.804	
Speed_Of_Service			.781	
Innovative_Practices	.822			
Technology_Enhancement	.821			
Sustainability_Practices	.825			
New_Menu_Items	.814			
Customer_Feedback_Response	.815			
Likelihood_To_Recommended		.823		
Frequency_Visitation		.832		
Customer_Loyalty		.795		
Perceived_Financial_Performance		.791		
Brand_Trust		.814		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Table 20 Total variance Explained for Standardisation, Customer Satisfaction, Business Management Practices and Perceived Business Performance.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Total	Initial Eigenvalues		Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings ^a
		% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	3.626	18.128	18.128	3.626	18.128	18.128	3.380
2	3.412	17.059	35.187	3.412	17.059	35.187	3.328
3	3.147	15.735	50.922	3.147	15.735	50.922	3.286
4	2.918	14.588	65.509	2.918	14.588	65.509	3.189
5	.597	2.986	68.495				
6	.544	2.720	71.215				
7	.534	2.670	73.884				
8	.509	2.544	76.428				
9	.488	2.440	78.868				
10	.470	2.349	81.218				
11	.446	2.228	83.445				
12	.431	2.156	85.601				
13	.408	2.042	87.643				
14	.406	2.028	89.672				
15	.397	1.983	91.655				
16	.374	1.869	93.524				
17	.369	1.845	95.369				
18	.328	1.639	97.007				
19	.308	1.538	98.545				
20	.291	1.455	100.000				

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

Research Instrument:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Nokwazi Skosana, and I am a student at Wits Business School. I am writing to invite you to participate in an important research study that we are conducting through the Famous Brands online consumer panel "In Food Fam."

The purpose of this study is to understand consumer preferences and behaviours related to fast food consumption. The study is titled: The Impact of Standardisation on Business Performance of Fast Food Franchises in Gauteng: Customer Perspectives. Your participation will provide valuable insights that will contribute to a better understanding of these behaviours, which can ultimately help improve the services and products offered by fast food brands.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. We are committed to maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of your responses. The data collected will be used solely for research purposes and will be reported in aggregate form only.

If you agree to participate, please click on the link provided in the invitation email to access the online questionnaire. I would greatly appreciate if you could allocate 10 minutes of your time to complete the questionnaire. If you have any questions or require further information about the study, feel free to contact me email Nokwazi.Skosana@students.wits.ac.za or telephone +27 (0) 76 834 5113. Should you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, please contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27 (0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

I greatly appreciate your time and effort in contributing to this research. Your insights are invaluable, and I thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,
Nokwazi Skosana
Nokwazi.Skosana@students.wits.ac.za
+27 (0) 76 834 5113
Student, WITS Business School

Supervisor:
Professor Boris Urban
Boris.Urban@wits.ac.za
+27 (0) 11 717 3762
WITS Business School

Demographic Information

1. What is your age?

Under 18 (1)	18 - 24 (2)	25 - 34 (3)	35 - 44 (4)	45 - 54 (5)	55 - 64 (6)	65 and over (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. What is your gender?

Male (1)	Female (2)	Non- Binary (3)	Prefer Not to Say (4)	Other (5)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. What is your primary reason for visiting fast food franchises?

Convenience (1)	Cost Effective (2)	Readily Available (3)	Preference (4)	Accessibility (5)	Standard Quality (6)	Quick Service (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. How often do you visit fast food franchises?

Daily (1)	Bi- Weekly (2)	Weekly (3)	Monthly (4)	Quarterly (5)	Annually (6)	Less Frequently (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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5. Which fast food franchise do you frequent the most?

Wimpy (1)	Steers (2)	Debonairs (3)	Nando's (4)	Mc Donald's (5)	KFC (6)	Chicken Licken (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other, please specify _____

Standardisation

1. The quality of food is consistent across all outlets of the fast food franchise I frequent.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Service delivery is uniform across different branches of the fast food franchise I frequent.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. The cleanliness of the outlets is consistently maintained at the fast food franchise I frequent.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. The menu offerings are the same across all locations of the fast food franchise I frequent.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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5. The branding and atmosphere are consistent across all outlets of the fast food franchise I frequent.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Customer Satisfaction

1. I am satisfied with the quality of food provided by the fast food franchise I frequent.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. The service provided by the fast food franchise I frequent meets my expectations.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. I am generally pleased with the overall dining experience at the fast food franchise I frequent.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. The fast food franchise I frequent provides good value for money.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

|

5. I am satisfied with the speed of service at the fast food franchise I frequent.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Business Management Practices

1. The fast food franchise I frequent adopts innovative practices to improve customer experience (e.g., mobile ordering apps, self-service kiosks, new menu items).

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. The fast food franchise I frequent uses technology effectively to enhance service delivery (e.g., online ordering, digital payment systems, customer feedback tools).

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. The fast food franchise I frequent implements sustainable practices (e.g., eco-friendly packaging, waste reduction initiatives, energy-efficient equipment).

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. The fast food franchise I frequent regularly introduces new menu items to keep up with customer preferences (e.g., healthy meal options, vegetarian/vegan offerings, gluten free offerings).

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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5. The fast food franchise I frequent responds well to customer feedback and complaints, implementing necessary changes.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Perceived Business Performance

1. I am likely to recommend the fast food franchise I frequent to others.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. I frequently visit the fast food franchise I specified (frequently is defined as visiting the franchise at least twice a month).

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. I consider myself a loyal customer of the fast food franchise I frequent.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. I believe the fast food franchise I frequent is performing well financially (performing well financially is defined as having a strong market presence, frequent promotions, and visible growth such as opening new outlets).

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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5. I trust the brand of the fast food franchise I frequent.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neutral (4)	Somewhat Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strong Disagree (7)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>