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THE EFFECT OF SERVICE QUALITY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN CATERING INDUSTRY

This study aims to discuss the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction in catering. The research objectives include: 1) understanding the present situation of service quality and customer satisfaction in catering; 2) discussing the effects of different demographic variables on service quality and customer satisfaction; and 3) exploring the correlations between service quality and customer satisfaction in catering. The questionnaire was applied as the research tool; and Taiwan Tea Cuisine was the research object. Total 500 questionnaires were distributed, 357 copies were retrieved. Deducting 39 invalid ones, 318 questionnaires were valid with the retrieval rate 63.6%. The research findings show that service quality presents significantly positive correlations with product price, service efficiency, and perceived value; correlations between service quality and customer satisfaction have differences in some demographic variables. The research is expected to be the reference for catering industry and further research.

Keywords: service quality; customer satisfaction; catering industry; perceived value.

Фанг-Пеї Ніє

ВПЛИВ ЯКОСТІ СЕРВІСУ НА СТУПІНЬ ЗАДОВОЛЕНОСТІ КЛІЄНТІВ У КЕЙТЕРИНГУ

У статті досліджено вплив якості сервісу на ступінь задоволеності клієнтів у кейтерингу. Для цього: 1) проаналізовано ситуацію щодо якості сервісу та задоволеності клієнтів у кейтерингу; 2) визначено вплив різних демографічних змінних на рівень сервісу та ступінь задоволеності клієнтів; 3) відстежено кореляції між якістю сервісу та задоволеністю клієнтів у кейтерингу. Інструментом дослідження стало опитування; об'єктом – фірма "Taiwan Tea Cuisine". Загальна кількість анкет – 500, повернено 357. З них 39 є недійсними, 318 – дійсними, процент відгуку – 63,6%. Результати дослідження показали, що якість сервісу позитивно корелюється з такими параметрами, як ціна продукту, ефективність сервісу та сприйняття цінності товару. Кореляції між якістю сервісу та загальною задоволеністю клієнтів різняться за кількома демографічними параметрами. Внесено пропозиції щодо розвитку індустрії кейтерингу та подальших досліджень.

Ключові слова: якість сервісу; задоволеність клієнтів; індустрія кейтерингу; сприйняття цінності.

Рис. 1. Табл. 9. Літ. 25.

Фанг-Пеї Ніє

ВЛИЯНИЕ КАЧЕСТВА СЕРВИСА НА СТЕПЕНЬ УДОВЛЕТВОРЕННОСТИ КЛИЕНТОВ В КЕЙТЕРИНГЕ

В статье исследовано влияние качества сервиса на степень удовлетворенности клиентов в кейтеринге. Для этого: 1) проанализирована ситуация касательно качества сервиса и удовлетворенности клиентов в кейтеринге; 2) определено влияние различных демографических переменных на уровень сервиса и степень удовлетворенности клиентов; 3) отслежены корреляции между качеством сервиса и удовлетворенностью клиентов в кейтеринге. Как инструмент исследования использована опросная методика; объект исследования – фирма "Taiwan Tea Cuisine". Общее количество анкет – 500,

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возвращено 357. Из них 39 недействительных, 318 – действительных, процент отклика – 63,6%. Результаты исследования показали, что качество сервиса позитивно коррелируется с такими параметрами, как цена продукта, эффективность сервиса и восприятие ценности товара. Корреляции между качеством сервиса и общей удовлетворенностью клиентов различаются по нескольким демографическим параметрам. Внесены предложения по развитию индустрии кейтеринга и по дальнейшим исследованиям.

Ключевые слова: качество сервиса; удовлетворенность клиентов; индустрия кейтеринга; воспринимаемая ценность.

Introduction. With the change of time and environment and national economic development, catering has become the mainstream in the industrial structure, and service quality is the key for this service industry to make profit. Catering market is getting saturated, and this means sharper competition. Leadership in catering used to be held by owners, but it has intangibly turned to customers, and it is now the time when customers are selecting services and products. With the change of competitive environment, customers have become the primary strategic resource. To increase the number of customers in such a competitive environment is a crucial indicator for business management and profit making. It is considered as the one and only way to make profits in catering. Catering industry could directly satisfy consumers with food as a daily necessity, and this is regarded as the basic demand of human beings. Catering services therefore can be continuously operated. With the progress of the world, the increase of national income, sophisticated social division of labor, female employment rate up to 49.38%, and implementation of two-day weekend, there are more chances for people in Taiwan to eat out. Investors therefore consider catering industry as an emerging market with a development potential. To date, catering industry in Taiwan has entered the golden and competitive era. For several reasons, catering, which used to provide food only, has become involved in social events; it has developed the functions of meetings and various recreational activities. With the change of the operational environment, small-scale independent businesses have gradually become large-scale restaurants or even commercialized chain-store operations. In addition to the quality of food and meals, to enhance the service, emphasize its quality, and establish good relationship with customers would affect the reputation of a restaurant. This study aims to discuss effective two-way communication between catering industry and customers to maintain excellent interactions. Moreover, customer-based trust is measured to promote customer satisfaction.

Literature review

I. Service quality. Service quality, as a primary concept in catering, plays a key role in sustainable management. It aims to provide satisfactory service quality for customers in order not to be eliminated from a competitive market (Wu & Lin, 2002). Higgins (1995) considers service quality as a subjectively perceived quality. In other words, service quality is subjectively believed by customers, not objectively evaluated. Parsons (1992) regards service quality as the overall attitude or behavioral intention to repurchase a service after its consumption. Shen & Chen (2006) consider service quality as the key to competition in catering, so, when catering could not effectively remedy the dissatisfaction of customers or service mistakes, it is likely to result in customer defections. Originated from SERVQUAL scale with 5 dimensions and 31 ques-

tions, designed by Parasuraman et al. (1985), Knutson, Stevens, Patton, & Thompson (1992) propose LODGSERV scale for service quality in catering. Aiming at the characteristics of catering, it is revised by adding 5 questions to become the LODGSERV scale with 5 dimensions and 36 questions. With confirmatory factor analysis, it is further revised into 5 dimensions and 26 questions to measure the service quality in catering industry. 5 dimensions in the LODGSERV scale are Tangibility, Reliability, Reactivity, Guarantee, and Empathy. These measurements of service quality are therefore applied in this study with further revision of the dimensions and questions proposed by Knutson, Stevens, Patton, & Thompson (1992).

II. Customer satisfaction. Russell, McColl & Coote (2007) regard customer satisfaction as the predecessor of brand opinion, brand intention, and brand loyalty of consumers towards customer service. Joewono & Kubota (2007) indicate that customer satisfaction is the measurement of products and labor basing on past experiences of customers as well as the overall evaluation of the consumption experience. Lin (2007) mentions that, with excellent service quality, catering industry indeed could satisfy the diverse demands of customers. Chih (2007) believes that customer satisfaction results from customers purchasing and using the service, then the better satisfaction by a service is presented, the better satisfaction is experienced by a customer. Ostrom & Iacobucci (1995) regard customer satisfaction as multiple items, including (1) product price, (2) service efficiency, (3) attitude of service personnel, (4) overall performance of a company, and (5) closeness toward the ideal company. Huang (2000) points 4 dimensions of customer satisfaction: (1) customer expectation would reflect the predicted product performance of customers. The previous consuming experiences would become the prediction of product performance. (2) Product performance is considered as a comparison standard that customers are likely to compare an actual product performance with the expectation before a purchase. (3) Disconfirmation is regarded as the major intervening variable. The expectation would be confirmed once the product performance corresponds to the expectation. (4) Perceived value is regarded as an outcome after purchase. When an actual product performance is larger than or equaled to the expectation, customers are likely to be satisfied. However, when an actual product performance is less than the expectation, customers would be dissatisfied.

Zeithaml & Bitner (2000) indicate that customer satisfaction is an overall evaluation of products and intangible services, and service quality is a single-dimension measurement. However, customer satisfaction is multi-dimensional measurement, containing service quality, product quality, situational factor, individual factor, and price factor. Chen (2001) considers the dimensions of customer satisfaction as 1. Product price, 2. Service efficiency, and 3. Perceived value, which are the research dimensions in this study.

III. Correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction. Garvin (1987) considers service quality as a subjectively perceived quality: service quality is subjectively believed by customers, not objectively evaluated. When customers are satisfied, they believe the service quality is better. In this case, service quality presents positive correlation with customer satisfaction. Parasuraman et al. (1985) indicate that the concept of service quality is similar to attitude which is, cumulative and permanent evaluation resulted from a difference between service expectation and perceived serv-

ice performance. They further define service quality as "the degree conforming to or exceeding customer expectation" (1988). Service quality therefore shows remarkable correlation with customer satisfaction. Juran (1989) simply defines service quality as satisfying the requirements of customers to make them satisfied. Apparently, service quality displays notable correlation with customer satisfaction. Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) also propose the causal relations between service quality and customer satisfaction and regard service quality as the cause of customer satisfaction that providing good service would achieve customer satisfaction. As a result, service quality has remarkably positive effect on customer satisfaction. The overall satisfaction of customers depends on service quality; service quality therefore presents significant effect on customer satisfaction (Fornell, Johnson, Anderson & Bryant, 1996; Brady & Cronin, 2001). Chang (2007) finds the notable effect of service quality on customer satisfaction; and Pan (2008) presents the positive correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction. In Pan's research (2008), occupation and monthly income show remarkable differences on tangibility in service quality, while gender, age, educational background, occupation, and monthly income show significant differences on environmental facilities and professional capability in customer satisfaction.

According to the domestic and international opinions, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study.

H1: Service quality shows significantly positive correlation with product price in customer satisfaction.

H2: Service quality has remarkably positive correlation with service efficiency in customer satisfaction.

H3: Service quality displays notably positive correlation with perceived value in customer satisfaction.

IV. Demographic variables. The research on service quality in catering indicates that younger people and the ones with higher education and higher income tend to show higher customer satisfaction (Day & Landon, 1977; Zaichowsky & Liefeld, 1977; Bearden & Mason, 1984). Besides, Singh (1990) finds that, in addition to age, most demographic variables do not present explanations. The following hypotheses therefore are proposed.

H4: The correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction would show remarkable difference in gender.

H5: The correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction would have significant difference in age.

H6: The correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction would present notable difference in occupation.

H7: The correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction would display outstanding difference in educational background.

H8: The correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction would show significant difference in monthly income.

Research method

I. Research framework. Based on the literature on service quality and customer satisfaction, the research framework is further proposed. 3 customer satisfactions, including product price, service efficiency, and perceived value, are the dependent variables; and, 5 service qualities, as tangibility, reliability, reactivity, guarantee, and

empathy, are the independent variables. The correlations between service quality and customer satisfaction were discussed.

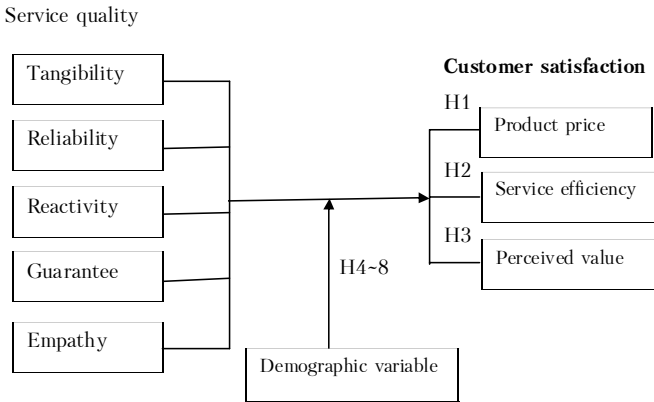


Figure 1. Research framework

II. Research subject and sampling. Taiwan Tea Cuisine is the combination of tea culture and creative cuisine. In the featured dining space, it provides natural, healthy, and fresh tea cuisine so that people could enjoy Taiwanese tea culture and healthy tea drink while taking a relaxing rest. The unique tea cuisine in Taiwan Tea Cuisine provides people with an excellent place for family dinner party and business meetings. It is also an optimal choice to host foreign visitors who can enjoy delicious food and experience Taiwanese tea culture. People, who enjoy making tea and chatting, do not need to prepare tea leaves as it offers fresh tea leaves for customers to enjoy their leisure time in Taiwan Tea Cuisine.

With random sampling, on-site distribution and collection of questionnaires took place. Total 500 copies were distributed to supervisors, chefs, and consumers in Taiwan Tea Cuisine. From 359 retrieved questionnaires, 39 invalid ones were deducted. 318 valid questionnaires showed the retrieval rate 63.6%.

Analyses and discussions

I. Factor analysis of service quality

The service quality scale is based on the dimensions and questionnaires proposed by Knutson, Stevens, Patton, and Thompson (1992). With factor analysis, the Cronbach α of 5 dimensions presented 0.85 (Tangibility), 0.83 (Reliability), 0.87 (Reactivity), 0.86 (Guarantee), and 0.88 (Empathy). Having principle factor analysis and oblique rotation, the explained variance shows 86.098%.

Table 1. Factor analysis of service quality

Factor	Variable	Eigenvalue	Factor loading	Explained variance (integrated value)	Reliability coefficient
Tangibility	SQ 01	3.516	0.903	27.683 (27.683)	0.85
	SQ 02		0.877		
	SQ 04		0.861		
	SQ 03		0.849		
	SQ 05		0.838		
	SQ 06		0.825		

The End of Table 1.

Factor	Variable	Eigen value	Factor loading	Explained variance (integrated value)	Reliability coefficient
Reliability	SQ 07	2.824	0.864	20.385 (48.068)	0.83
	SQ 09		0.843		
	SQ 08		0.816		
	SQ 11		0.804		
	SQ 10		0.765		
	SQ 12		0.742		
Reactivity	SQ 13	2.336	0.883	16.895 (64.963)	0.87
	SQ 14		0.867		
	SQ 16		0.843		
	SQ 18		0.822		
	SQ 15		0.781		
	SQ 17		0.776		
Guarantee	SQ 19	1.912	0.873	11.752 (76.715)	0.86
	SQ 21		0.855		
	SQ 20		0.839		
	SQ 24		0.812		
	SQ 23		0.742		
	SQ 22		0.736		
Empathy	SQ 25	1.438	0.886	9.383 (86.098)	0.88
	SQ 26		0.844		
	SQ 29		0.817		
	SQ 27		0.793		
	SQ 28		0.755		
	SQ 30		0.743		

II. Correlation analysis of service quality and customer satisfaction

With Pearson correlation analysis, 5 dimensions in service quality achieve significant positive correlation with customer satisfaction ($p < 0.05$), where reliability presents the highest correlation with customer satisfaction.

1. Correlation analysis of service quality and product price in customer satisfaction

With multiple regression analysis to examine H1, the findings show remarkable effects of tangibility ($t = 3.414$, $p < 0.01$), reliability ($t = 2.332$, $p < 0.01$), guarantee ($t = 1.846$, $p < 0.05$), and empathy ($t = 1.372$, $p < 0.05$) on product price; H1 is partially agreed.

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis of service quality and product price

Predicted variable	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t
	β estimated value	Standard error	β distribution	
Intercept	3.696	0.358	--	9.821
Tangibility	2.871	0.303	0.517	3.414**
Reliability	2.536	0.252	0.449	2.332**
Reactivity	0.751	0.061	0.168	0.069
Guarantee	1.587	0.149	0.306	1.846*
Empathy	1.089	0.098	0.232	1.372*

* stands for $p < 0.05$, ** for $p < 0.01$

2. Correlation analysis of service quality and service efficiency in customer satisfaction

With multiple regression analysis to examine H2, the findings display notable effects of tangibility ($t = 2.391$, $p < 0.01$), reliability ($t = 3.162$, $p < 0.01$), reactivity

($t=2.533$, $p<0.01$), guarantee ($t=1.583$, $p<0.05$), and empathy ($t=1.776$, $p<0.05$) on product price; H2 is agreed.

Table 3. Multiple regression analysis of service quality and Service efficiency

Predicted variable	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t
	β estimated value	Standard error	β distribution	
Intercept	3.234	0.416	---	7.945
Tangibility	2.161	0.279	0.334	2.391**
Reliability	2.738	0.305	0.427	3.162**
Reactivity	2.223	0.283	0.359	2.533**
Guarantee	1.073	0.136	0.211	1.583*
Empathy	1.162	0.159	0.237	1.776*

* stands for $p<0.05$, ** for $p<0.01$

3. Correlation analysis of service quality and perceived value in customer satisfaction

With multiple regression analysis to examine H3, the findings demonstrate significant effects of reliability ($t=2.935$, $p<0.01$), reactivity ($t=2.426$, $p<0.01$), guarantee ($t=1.322$, $p<0.05$), and empathy ($t=1.775$, $p<0.05$) on perceived value; H3 is partially agreed.

Table 4. Multiple regression analysis of service quality and Perceived value

Predicted variable	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t
	β estimated value	Standard error	β distribution	
Intercept	4.783	0.434	---	8.694
Tangibility	1.259	0.142	0.197	0.824
Reliability	3.442	0.366	0.416	2.935**
Reactivity	2.538	0.256	0.379	2.426**
Guarantee	1.569	0.183	0.261	1.322*
Empathy	1.955	0.237	0.282	1.775*

* stands for $p<0.05$, ** for $p<0.01$

III. Interference of demographic variables

1. Effect of gender on the relation between service quality and customer satisfaction

With analysis of variance, gender presents notable differences between tangibility ($p<0.01$), reliability ($p<0.01$), reactivity ($p<0.05$), guarantee ($p<0.01$), empathy ($p<0.01$) and product price; between tangibility ($p<0.01$), reactivity ($p<0.05$), guarantee ($p<0.01$), empathy ($p<0.05$) and service efficiency; and between tangibility ($p<0.05$), reliability ($p<0.01$), reactivity ($p<0.01$), guarantee ($p<0.01$), empathy ($p<0.01$) and perceived value; H4 is partially agreed.

Table 5. Effect of gender on the relation between service quality and customer satisfaction

Service quality	Product price	Service efficiency	Perceived value
Tangibility	$p<0.01$	$p<0.01$	$p<0.05$
Reliability	$p<0.01$	$p>0.05$	$p<0.01$
Reactivity	$p<0.05$	$p<0.05$	$p<0.01$
Guarantee	$p<0.01$	$p<0.01$	$p<0.01$
Empathy	$p<0.01$	$p<0.05$	$p<0.01$
Hypothesis test		H4 partially agreed	

2. Effect of age on the relation between service quality and customer satisfaction

With analysis of variance, age presents significant differences between tangibility ($p < 0.01$), reliability ($p < 0.05$), guarantee ($p < 0.01$), empathy ($p < 0.05$) and product price; between tangibility ($p < 0.01$), reactivity ($p < 0.01$), guarantee ($p < 0.01$), empathy ($p < 0.05$) and service efficiency; and between tangibility ($p < 0.05$), reliability ($p < 0.01$), reactivity ($p < 0.01$), guarantee ($p < 0.05$), empathy ($p < 0.05$) and perceived value; H5 is partially agreed.

Table 6. Effect of age on the relation between service quality and customer satisfaction

Service quality	Product price	Service efficiency	Perceived value
Tangibility	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.05$
Reliability	$p < 0.05$	$p > 0.05$	$p < 0.01$
Reactivity	$p > 0.05$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$
Guarantee	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.05$
Empathy	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.05$
Hypothesis test		H5 partially agreed	

3. Effect of occupation on the relation between service quality and customer satisfaction

With analysis of variance, occupation shows outstanding differences between tangibility ($p < 0.05$), reliability ($p < 0.01$), reactivity ($p < 0.01$), empathy ($p < 0.05$) and product price; between tangibility ($p < 0.01$), reactivity ($p < 0.05$), guarantee ($p < 0.01$), empathy ($p < 0.01$) and service efficiency; and between tangibility ($p < 0.05$), reliability ($p < 0.01$), reactivity ($p < 0.01$), guarantee ($p < 0.05$) and perceived value; H6 is partially agreed.

Table 7. Effect of occupation on the relation between service quality and customer satisfaction

Service quality	Product price	Service efficiency	Perceived value
Tangibility	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.05$
Reliability	$p < 0.01$	$p > 0.05$	$p < 0.01$
Reactivity	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.01$
Guarantee	$p > 0.05$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$
Empathy	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$	$p > 0.05$
Hypothesis test		H6 partially agreed	

4. Effect of educational background on the relation between service quality and customer satisfaction

With analysis of variance, educational background shows notable differences between guarantee ($p < 0.01$), empathy ($p < 0.05$) and product price; between tangibility ($p < 0.01$), reliability ($p < 0.05$), reactivity ($p < 0.01$), empathy ($p < 0.05$) and service efficiency; and between tangibility ($p < 0.01$), reactivity ($p < 0.01$), guarantee ($p < 0.05$), empathy ($p < 0.05$) and perceived value; H7 is partially agreed.

Table 8. Effect of educational background on the relation between service quality and customer satisfaction

Service quality	Product price	Service efficiency	Perceived value
Tangibility	$p > 0.05$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$
Reliability	$p > 0.05$	$p < 0.05$	$p > 0.05$
Reactivity	$p > 0.05$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$
Guarantee	$p < 0.01$	$p > 0.05$	$p < 0.05$
Empathy	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.05$
Hypothesis test		H7 partially agreed	

5. *Effect of monthly income on the relation between service quality and customer satisfaction*

With analysis of variance, educational background displays remarkable differences between tangibility ($p < 0.01$), reliability ($p < 0.05$), reactivity ($p < 0.05$), empathy ($p < 0.01$) and product price; between tangibility ($p < 0.05$), reactivity ($p < 0.01$), guarantee ($p < 0.01$), empathy ($p < 0.01$) and service efficiency; and between reliability ($p < 0.05$), reactivity ($p < 0.01$), guarantee ($p < 0.01$), empathy ($p < 0.01$) and perceived value; H8 is partially agreed.

Table 8. Effect of monthly income on the relation between service quality and customer satisfaction

Service quality	Product price	Service efficiency	Perceived value
Tangibility	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.05$	$p > 0.05$
Reliability	$p < 0.05$	$p > 0.05$	$p < 0.05$
Reactivity	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$
Guarantee	$p > 0.05$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$
Empathy	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$
Hypothesis test		H8 partially agreed	

Conclusions and suggestions

Summing up the research findings, suggestions are proposed for practical applications to service quality and customer satisfaction as well as for further research.

1. The dimensions of service quality present significant positive effects on product price in customer satisfaction, showing that the promotion of service quality is the major strategy to increase customer satisfaction. Present market competition is not about product quality and product price, but about service; one with excellent service would appeal and retain customers. For this reason, the system of service quality responsibility could be established, in which the service standard, including hosting customers and interviewing customers, should be formulated. To guarantee the service quality, departments and individuals in catering industry therefore would integrate the work and the initiative of employees to take on the task, the responsibility, and the rights. The strict quality system could therefore be formed to enhance the service quality.

2. The dimensions in service quality show significant positive effect on service efficiency in customer satisfaction, because competition in catering becomes more violent and service efficiency then would become the critical strategy to expand sales, capture market, and enhance efficacy. In the management process, queuing is common for catering. To effectively solve this problem, reducing waiting time, and increasing service efficiency and customer satisfaction require prompt solutions.

3. The dimensions in service quality show notable effects on perceived value in customer satisfaction, presenting the importance to satisfy the expectations of customers. A complete information management system therefore can be established. Aiming at collecting customer information and feedback, it should be able to rapidly and expertly precede technical service for customers, to seriously listen to and collect customer opinions and requirements for product quality, and to present instant feedback. It will not merely enhance service quality, but will also benefit the development of new products.

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