

FACTORS INFLUENCE CONSUMER SATISFACTION IN SAFE FOOD STORES: THE CASE OF THANH HOA CITY, VIETNAM

Dr. Ngo Chi Thanh

ngochithanh@hdu.edu.vn

*Lecturer, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
Head, Department of Technology and Science Management
Hong Duc University, Thanh Hoa, Vietnam*

Abstract

In recent years, a system of safe food stores has been formed and developed to meet the increasing demands of consumers. We observe that, safe food stores develop in competition for customers with other food retail systems such as traditional markets, supermarkets and trade centers. Based on such observation, the article studies the factors affecting customer satisfaction towards safe food stores. In more precisely, we propose the research model with five influencing factors, including: Food quality; Price; Promotion; Product display; and Staff. The study was conducted based on a survey of 265 consumers at safe food stores in Thanh Hoa city. The result shows that, Food quality; Price has the most influence on customer satisfaction. Besides, Promotion; Product display; and Staff also influence customers' choice to go to a safe food store. Based on those results, the article proposes recommendations for safe food stores to improve customer satisfaction.

Keywords: *Safe food stores, retail system, consumer satisfaction, Thanh Hoa city*

1. Introduction

The food system has been transformation in Vietnam toward modern distribution channels and high quality (Thanh, 2020). Besides the development of supermarkets and trading centres, the appearance of safe food store system also offer to the consumers more choice to buy food with high quality products. In recent years, Safe food distribution system in general and safe food stores in particular has been strongly developed. The number and quality of safe food stores in the country has increased significantly, meeting the increasing demand for safe food of consumers. Food safety criteria have been included in the socio-economic development plans of the localities. Safe food stores have provided consumers with new options for safe food. In other words, customers are free to choose to consume products between safe food stores, traditional market systems, as well as supermarkets and trade centres. From that observation, there is strong competition for customers between safe food stores and other distribution systems.

Thanh Hoa is a province with a developed retail distribution system, according to the Thanh Hoa Provincial Statistical Yearbook (2019), as of 2019, Thanh Hoa province has 391

markets, 20 supermarkets and 02 commercial centres) and chain of convenience stores, safe food stores. The safe food distribution system of Thanh Hoa province in general and of Thanh Hoa city in particular is developing very diversely and abundantly. Statistics show that, currently, in Thanh Hoa province, there are 558 safe food stores built, of which 86 stores have been granted food safety certificates, 377 stores were inspected to meet food safety requirements.

Thanh Hoa province has issued many mechanisms, policies and guiding documents related to food safety. A number of guidelines, mechanisms and policies have been promulgated such as: Resolution No. 04-NQ/TU dated August 18, 2016 of the Provincial Party Committee on strengthening the Party's leadership in the work of ensuring security and food safety in the province until 2020; Directive: No. 25/CT-UBND dated September 6, 2016 of the Chairman of the Provincial People's Committee on strengthening the responsibility of state management of food safety in the province; Directive No. 19/CT-UBND dated October 5, 2018 on strengthening leadership and direction in building food safety communes, wards and townships, No. 09/CT-UBND dated June 17, 2019 on strengthening transportation management. Transporting, slaughtering, processing and consuming meat and poultry, No. 18/CT-UBND dated June 11, 2020 on strengthening the state management of food safety in the province in the new situation.

Although there have been significant developments, the safe food distribution system in the province still has limitations in terms of the size of the distribution system, the quantity and type of safe food, the chain supply chain, link chain. Based on such observation, the article studies the factors affecting customer satisfaction with the safe food store system in Thanh Hoa city, thereby proposing solutions to promote the development of food safety system of safe food stores in the direction of meeting the increasing demands of consumers.

The issue of the food distribution system in Vietnam in general and the safe food distribution system in particular has been approached by researchers in many different aspects. Thanh et al. (2019) analyzes the factors affecting the formation of modern food distribution channels while Thanh (2021a) studies the Nash equilibrium of the food market in Vietnam. Related to research on customer satisfaction and loyalty to the retail system, Vo Minh Sang (2015) address the factor influencing on customer's satisfaction with supermarket services; Dang Thi Kim Hoa, Bui Hong Quy (2017) has analysed factors affecting customers' loyalty to Vinamilk's Fresh Milk; and Thanh (2021b) has studied the factors influence customer loyalty towards typical-local agricultural products of mountainous regions for the case of Thanh Hoa province, Vietnam.

The strategy of this paper is to borrow several arguments from series of well-known literatures of Cronin and Taylor (1992), Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman (1988), and Zeithaml & Bitner (2000) for factors influencing the satisfaction of consumers. The paper

presents the model with five factors included: Food quality, Product display, price, Promotion, and Staff. Based on the results of the model, the paper proposes policy implication for the development of safe food stores in Thanh Hoa city, Vietnam.

2. Method

2.1. Research model

The research model based on the theory of from series of well-known literatures of Cronin and Taylor (1992), Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman (1988), and Zeithaml & Bitner (2000), which indicate factors influencing the satisfaction of consumers. Concerning to measurement scales, this paper also borrow from the model of Vo Minh Sang (2015) for factor influencing on customer's satisfaction with supermarket services for the case of Bic Can Tho; Dang Thi Kim Hoa, Bui Hong Quy (2017) which analysing factors affecting customers' loyalty to Vinamilk's Fresh Milk in Gia Lam, Ha Noi; and Ngo Chi Thanh (2021), which analyse the factors influence customer loyalty towards typical-local agricultural products of mountainous regions for the case of Thanh Hoa province, Vietnam. Our proposed model also closely linked to the context of Thanh Hoa province since the system of safe food stores have develop quickly in recent years. The research model is presented in the figure 1.

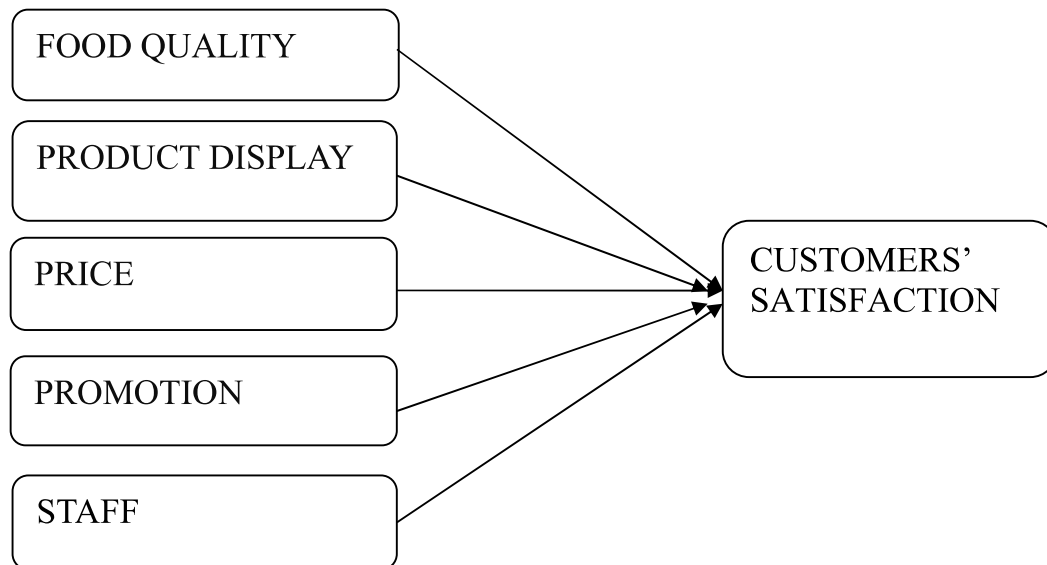


Figure 1: Research model

Hypothesis:

H1: Food quality positively affects customers 'satisfaction towards safe food stores;

H2: Product display positively affects customers 'satisfaction towards safe food stores;

H3: Price positively affects customers 'satisfaction towards safe food stores;

H4: Promotion positively affects customers 'satisfaction towards safe food stores;

H5: Staffs positively affects customers 'satisfaction towards safe food stores;

Table 1: Measurement scale

STT	Factors	Denote
FOOD QUALITY		
1	Safe food stores have variety kinds of foods for consumers to choose	FQ1
2	Safe food stores sell foods with stable quality	FQ2
3	Safe food stores sell foods with a high nutritional content	FQ3
4	Safe food stores sell foods with a clear origin	FQ4
PRODUCT DISPLAY		
5	Foods in safe food stores is conveniently displayed for the purchaser	PRD1
6	Food displayed is easy to find in safe food stores	PRD2
7	Safe food store have modern payment equipment	PRD3
PRICE		
8	Safe food stores sell foods with reasonable price	PRI1
9	Safe food stores sell foods with more affordable prices in comparison with other retail stores	PRI2
10	Payment methods are simple and convenient when buying foods at safe food stores	PRI3
PROMOTION		
11	Safe food stores have always offered promotions	PRO1
12	Safe food stores have provided completely and clearly information on foods	PRO2
13	Safe food stores have regularly advertised for for foods	PRO3
STAFF		
14	Staffs at safe food stores are friendly	ST1
15	Staffs at safe food stores have answered every question concerning to foods of consumer	ST2
16	Staffs at safe food stores are professional in selling foods	ST3
CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION		
17	I always choose to buy foods at safe food stores	SA1
16	I will recommend to others to buy foods at safe food stores	SA2
19	I will buy foods safe food at stores without buying at other places	SA3
20	I will continue to buy foods at safe food stores	SA4
21	I am satisfy to buy foods at safe food stores	SA5

2.2. Data and method

The research use the sample size followed by the framework of Hair, Black, Babin, Anerson & Tatham (1998), that emphasize for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the minimum sample size is $N \geq 5 * x$ (x: total number of observed variables). Under such consideration, the authors chose a sample size large enough to satisfy both conditions as suggested by the EFA method and the multiple regression method. In more precisely, $N \geq \max$ (sample size as required by EFA; sample size as required by multiple regression), applying to the theoretical scale of 21 observed variables, the author applies the formula of Hair et al. (1998): the minimum required number of subjects is $N > \max (5*21) = 105$ subjects to be surveyed. From that point of view, the research has been conducted by questionnaires with 265 consumers who buying typical-special local foods different distribution channels in Thanh Hoa province, included: traditional market, convenient stores and supermarkets. The research has used the tool of software SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 22.0 to analyse the data.

The descriptive statistics of sample is analysed in three aspects: gender, ages, education, income and jobs of consumers. The data shows that, most of consumers buying at safe food stores are: female (74,1%), from 26-40 year olds (38,8%), the income from 5-10 million per month (49,8%). This data reflects the behaviour of consumers buying at safe food stores since most of these products normally get high quality of the foods.

Table 2: Sample descriptive statistics

Contents		Frequency (person)	Percent (%)	Cumulative (%)
Gender	Male	74	25,9	25,9
	Female	191	74,1	100
Age of consumers	From 18-25	71	26,7	26,7
	From 26-40	103	38,8	65,5
	From 41-50	63	23,7	89,2
	Over 50	28	10,8	100
Education	Intermediate	45	16,9	16,9
	College, University	135	50,9	67,8
	Post graduated	26	9,8	77,6
	other	59	22,4	100
Income per month	Lower 3 million VND	5	1,8	1,8
	From 3- 5 million VND	89	33,5	35,3
	From 5-10 million VND	132	49,8	85,1
	Over 10 million VND	39	14,9	100
	Students	9	3,3	3,3

Contends		Frequency (person)	Percent (%)	Cumulative (%)
Job	Officials	91	34,3	37,6
	Business, Enterprises	79	29,8	67,4
	Unskilled labor	45	16,9	84,3
	Retired, housewife	41	15,7	100

Source: Data collected by author

3. Results

3.1. Chronbach's Alpha Reliability Analysis

The results of Chronbach's Alpha Reliability Analysis show that, the total number of valid survey questionnaires collected for processing is 265 votes. The tool of SPSS.20 software is used to process 21 observed variables (including 16 independent observed variables and 05 dependent observed variables); based on this result, one variable (SA3) is eliminated since there is a total variable correlation coefficient < 0.3 . The results of processing the remaining variables (16 independent observed variables and 4 dependently observed variables) are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: The result of Chronbach's Alpha Reliability Analysis

Variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
FOOD QUALITY	Alpha = 0.910			
FQ1	11.16	6.323	.774	.893
FQ2	11.17	5.735	.825	.874
FQ3	11.23	5.782	.837	.869
FQ4	11.22	6.056	.755	.899
PRODUCT DISPLAY	Alpha = 0.845			
PRD1	7.09	3.063	.763	.750
PRD2	7.11	2.898	.723	.775
PRD3	7.35	2.584	.675	.837
PRICE	Alpha = 0.840			
PRI1	7.46	2.931	.673	.808
PRI2	7.52	2.251	.732	.759
PRI3	7.45	2.733	.725	.759
PROMOTION	Alpha = 0.851			
PRO1	7.49	2.592	.693	.819
PRO2	7.49	2.486	.742	.772

Variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PRO3	7.58	2.571	.728	.785
STAFF	Alpha = 0.907			
ST1	6.82	4.010	.827	.856
ST2	6.63	3.960	.796	.881
ST3	6.82	3.912	.819	.862
CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION	Alpha = 0.940			
SA1	11.27	7.297	.823	.932
SA2	11.23	6.354	.893	.909
SA4	11.20	6.719	.874	.915
SA5	11.23	7.034	.841	.926

Source: Data collected by author

We observe that, the remaining observed variables all have Cronbach's Alpha coefficients greater than 0.7. The test results show that the scale used is suitable, the correlation coefficients of the total variables are all from 0.3 or more (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Therefore, these measurement variables have reliability and are used in EFA analysis

3.2. The result of exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

3.2.1. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for independent variables

Through the analysis results of Table 2, KMO reached 0.788. Therefore, the KMO index of the research model is greater than 0.5, showing that the application of exploratory factor analysis here is completely appropriate. The total variance extracted was 79.286%, showing that these factors explain 79.286% of the data variation. Under such consideration, the exploratory factor analysis method in this case is completely statistically significant.

Table 4. Rotated Component Matrixa

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
FQ3	.904				
FQ2	.885				
FQ4	.857				
FQ1	.847				
ST3		.918			
ST1		.914			

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
ST2		.904			
PRO2			.874		
PRO3			.872		
PRO1			.859		
PRI3				.856	
PRI2				.844	
PRI1				.818	
PRD2					.845
PRD3					.828
PRD1					.823
Initial Eigenvalues	4.744	2.696	2.161	1.867	1.219
% of Variance	29.648	16.851	13.504	11.666	7.617
Cumulative %	29.648	46.499	60.003	71.669	79.286
KMO	.788				
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square		2525.350		
	df		120		
	Sig.		.000		

Source: Data collected by author

The results of the analysis of the rotation matrix of 16 independent variables are divided into 5 groups of factors; all variables have Factor loading coefficient > 0.5 , ensuring the difference between the loading coefficients greater than 0.3 and the variables. is kept exactly as the original model, no new factor groups are created.

3.2.2. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for dependent variables

The result of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for dependent variables is presented as in table 5.

Table 5. The result of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for dependent variables

Variables	Loading factor	Results	value
SA1	.900	KMO	.650
SA2	.941	Sig.	.000
SA4	.929	Cumulative of Variance	84.753%
SA5	.911		

Source: Data collected by author

The KMO coefficient in the analysis is $0.650 > 0.5$, showing that the factor analysis results are reliable. Bartlett's Test has the coefficient Sig. = $0.00 < 0.05$, showing that the

results of factor analysis ensure statistical significance. The extracted variance is 84.753%, showing that the variation of the analysed factors can explain 84.753%, the variation of the original survey data; this is a fairly high level of significance. The factor loading coefficient of each observed variable showing all the factors is greater than 0.5, showing that the observed variables all show the influence with the factors that these variables represent.

3.3. Regression

3.3.1. Pearson Correlation coefficient

The analysis results of Pearson correlation coefficient on SPSS.20 software are presented as follows.

Table 6. Pearson Correlation coefficient analysis

		Correlations					
		SA	FQ	PRD	PRI	PRO	ST
SA	Pearson Correlation	1	.577**	.575**	.581**	.464**	.431**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	265	265	265	265	265	265
FQ	Pearson Correlation	.577**	1	.408**	.332**	.223**	.105
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.300	.080	.000	.089
	N	265	265	265	265	265	265
PRD	Pearson Correlation	.575**	.408**	1	.472**	.320**	.329**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.210	.070	.100
	N	265	265	265	265	265	265
PRI	Pearson Correlation	.581**	.332**	.472**	1	.353**	.279**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.080	.210		.130	.000
	N	265	265	265	265	265	265
PRO	Pearson Correlation	.464**	.223**	.320**	.353**	1	.182**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.070	.130		.003
	N	265	265	265	265	265	265
ST	Pearson Correlation	.431**	.105	.329**	.279**	.182**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.089	.100	.000	.003	
	N	265	265	265	265	265	265

Source: Data collected by author

The result show that, Sig values between dependent variable and independent variables are = 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, the variables are all correlated with the dependent variable and are statistically significant. The strongest correlation with the dependent variable is PRI (correlation is: 0.581, with p<0.05) and the weakest correlation is the factor ST (correlation is 0.431, with p<0.05).

3.3.2. Regression analysis

To evaluate the influence of each factor on customer satisfaction, the author uses a multivariate regression model. We obtain the results as follows:

Table 8. Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.801 ^a	.641	.634	.52250	1.186

The results show that, the model has $R^2 = 0.641$ and adjusted $R^2 = 0.634$. This result shows that the model's relevance is 63.4%, or in other words 63.4% variation of factor Customer satisfaction is explained by 5 independent factors, on the other hand, Durbin coefficient. -Watson = 1,186 (>1) indicates that there is no linear autocorrelation between variables.

Table 9. ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	126.284	5	25.257	92.515	.000 ^b
	Residual	70.707	259	.273		
	Total	196.992	264			

Using the F test to test the fit of the regression model, the results of Table 6 show that: F value = 92,515 with significance level sig = 0.000 $<$ 0.05, which shows multiple linear regression model is fit the data set and are usable.

The graph of the normal distribution of the residuals shows the residuals of the model has an almost bell-shaped shape, which is consistent with the graph form of the normal distribution. The mean Mean = -4.21E-16 is close to 0, the standard deviation of 0.99 is close to 1, so the residual distribution is approximately standard (Figure 2). It can be concluded that: the assumption of the normal distribution of the residuals is not violated. So the model that the study estimates can be used and does not violate the assumptions initially set.

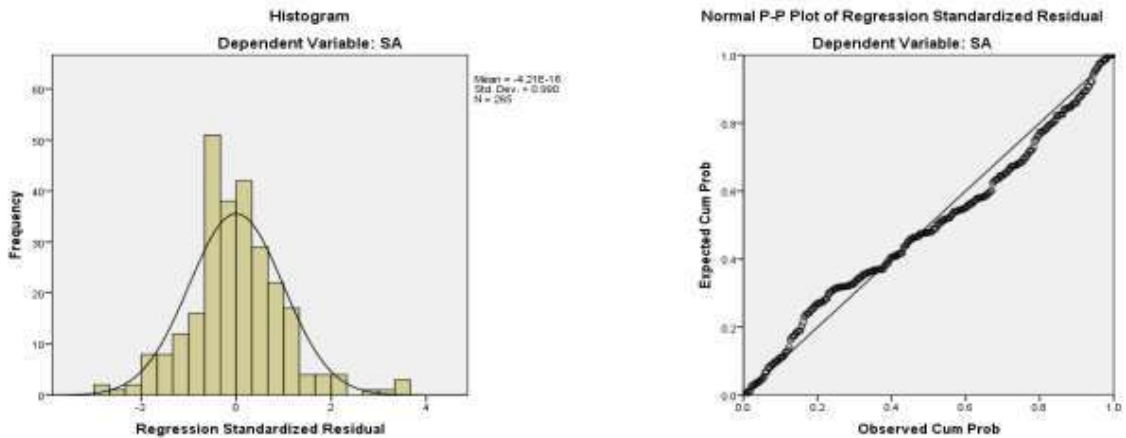


Figure 2. Distribution of the residuals

On the other hand, the Normal P-P Plot plot shows the percentiles in the distribution of residuals centered on a diagonal, thus, the assumption of the normal distribution of the residuals is not violated.

The results of multiple regression analysis are as follows:

Table 10. The results of multiple regression analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-.964	.226		-4.268	.000		
FQ	.387	.045	.356	8.553	.000	.801	1.248
PRD	.186	.049	.174	3.780	.000	.652	1.533
PRI	.267	.049	.245	5.507	.000	.700	1.428
PRO	.212	.037	.232	5.797	.000	.866	1.155
ST	.232	.047	.201	4.939	.000	.839	1.192

We obtain that, all independent variables have Sig. is less than 0.05, which imply that all independent factors have an effect on the dependent variable. The degree of influence of each factor depends on the standardized Beta coefficient, or which factor has a large standardized Beta coefficient, which has a strong impact on the highly dependent variable. Based on the results of Table 7, we obtain the following regression equation:

$$SA = -0.964 + 0.356FQ + 0.174PRD + 0.245PRI + 0.232PRO + 0.201ST + ui$$

In which: FQ: Food quality; PRD: Product display; PRI: Price; PRO: Promotion; ST: Staff; SA: Customer's Satisfaction.

The model shows that, the variable Food quality has the strongest influence on Customer's Satisfaction (standardized β coefficient = 0.356). Similarly, the second strongest factor affecting Customer's Satisfaction is Price (normalized β coefficient = 0.245), followed by the following factors: Promotion (standardized β coefficient = 0.232); Staff (normalized β coefficient = 0.201); and finally Product display (normalized β coefficient = 0.174), these factors all have a positive impact on the dependent variable. Therefore, the research hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 are accepted.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The study has proposed a model of factors affecting customer satisfaction for safe food stores. The results show that, there are 5 influencing factors, including: Food quality; Price; Promotion; Product display; and Staff. The model results reflect the reality in Thanh Hoa, which shows the trend of consumers consuming products at safe food stores. The results of the model emphasize that when consuming at safe food stores, customers are most concerned with quality. More specifically, when consuming at safe food stores, customers expect to consume products of original origin, preserved in accordance with the process, and tested for safe quality. Besides, the research results also show that price is an important factor affecting customer satisfaction. Despite consuming quality products and ensuring food safety, customers still want more reasonable prices in the context of safe food stores that compete with other food distribution channels. Research results are related to Thanh's study (2021a) on the influence of quality on customers' choice; As well as logic with research results Vo Minh Sang (2015); Dang Thi Kim Hoa, Bui Hong Quy (2017), on factors affecting customer satisfaction in the retail system.

Based on the result of the model, some recommendations are presented as followed:

Diversify products with reasonable prices to meet the needs of consumers: According to the result, Food quality and Price are two important factors affect to customer satisfaction on safe food stores. From that point of view, improving the quality of the supplied foods is the key solution in order to satisfy the consumers. Safe food stores should expand the category of the safe foods for the choice of the consumers in the relationship with the price. For instance, for each item, it is necessary to have many different product codes with low to high price brackets to serve the needs of a large number of consumers with average incomes and above. Safe food stores need to develop and implement the most reasonable price policy in relation to the quality of goods, ensuring good competition with other business types.

Having more promotion programs for consumers: Currently, supermarkets and trade centres have regular promotions, while safe food stores, with a smaller scale, do not

have many promotional programs for customers. This directly affects customer satisfaction and loyalty towards safe food stores. The result of the model also indicates that, promotion programs influence to customer satisfaction. Safe food stores need to strengthen links with localities, businesses and farms that provide safe food to build promotions. Regularly participate in food market connection programs to introduce products to customers.

Policy for staffs and product display: Research results show that employees are also an important factor affecting customer satisfaction. Safe food stores need to develop team development policies. In which, it is necessary to focus on the following directions: strengthening training for employees, training in management knowledge and sales skills; Have a policy to attract qualified employees; formulating salary and bonus policies for staffs. Besides, safe food stores also need to improve infrastructure related to stores, paying attention to product display in which, food stores need to pay attention to expanding their area, ensuring to serve customers' needs well. Display products in a professional and nice way for convenience and to attract customers.

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