The Influence of Service Quality on Customer Perception in Restaurant

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive-correlational study investigated the link between service quality and customer preference in restaurants. Researchers recruited 270 customers from restaurants in Barangay Tibal-Og, Santo. Tomas and Davao Del Norte through stratified sampling. Two adapted questionnaires were employed to gather data. The analysis utilized mean, Pearson r, and standard deviation as statistical tools. The findings revealed that customer perception regarding facility aesthetics, ambiance, lighting, table settings, layout, and service staff was very high. Similarly, the results indicated that service quality, encompassing tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, was also very high. These findings suggested a positive correlation between higher service quality corresponded to higher customer perception. Furthermore, the study identified a significant relationship between service quality and customer preference. Based on these results, it was anticipated that this study could motivate restaurant owners to implement more effective strategies. Specifically, areas like lighting and responsiveness, which emerged as the lowest-rated aspects in the study, could be targeted. By focusing on these areas, restaurant owners may further enhance the customer dining experience and ultimately ensure positive customer perception.

Keywords - Service Quality and Customer Perception, Descriptive and Correlation Design, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Customer perception reflected the thoughts and emotions customers hold after interacting with a business (Hotjar, 2021). These experiences could be positive or negative depending on the circumstances. For instance, customers at a particular restaurant complained about a cold and unwelcoming ambiance, which led many people to opt for takeout instead of dining in. Additionally, inconsistencies in lighting and ambiance across various locations further dampened the dining experience (Samareh, 2023). In relation, ineffective facility layouts in some establishments caused individuals to feel restricted, ultimately impacting their enthusiasm and overall perception (Shashikala & Suresh, 2020).

In Norway, research conducted by Valvita et al. (2021) revealed that visitors, both international tourists and local citizens, expressed dissatisfaction with the staff's responsiveness. They complained that staff did not always respond promptly to calls or requests. Finally, Flynn's (2020) study in Manhattan highlighted the importance of proper lighting in restaurants. He found that uneven light distribution, including brightness and wall lighting variations, created a range of atmospheres, categorized as either pleasant or unpleasant, spacious or confined, and clear or hazy.

In the Philippines, traditional restaurants have grappled with several issues. These included slow service due to high customer volume, extended wait times for food, and a lack of staff enthusiasm. Diners on TripAdvisor (2023) reported that staff often appeared unwilling to serve, rarely smiled, and seemed generally unenthusiastic about their work. Furthermore, customers noted a disconnect between the promised quality of service and the reality of inattentive staff who struggled to meet their needs.

Moreover, a substantial body of research has documented the direct link between service quality and customer perception. However, none of these studies delved into how individual dimensions of service quality shape customer perceptions of service. Consequently, a gap exists in our understanding of the direct relationships between each service quality dimension and customer perception. This study aimed to address this gap by examining and establishing these relationships.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated how service quality significantly correlated with customer perception. This specifically sought to address the following questions:

What is the level of Service Quality in terms of:

- tangibles;
- reliability;
- responsiveness;
- assurance; and
- empathy?

What is the level of Customer's Perception in terms of:

- facility aesthetics;
- ambience;
- lighting;
- table settings;
- layout; and
- service staff?

Is there a significant relationship between customer perception and service quality at Barangay Tibal-og, Santo Tomas, Davao del Norte restaurants?

Hypothesis

At 0.05 level of significance, the research tested the null hypothesis that there was no statistically significant association between customer perception and service quality.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Rana's (2022) value perception theory. In this theory, customers have historically held unwavering standards for price, quality, and satisfaction. Whenever organizations contemplated system changes, they also needed to review their standards for compatibility with the new system. This theory focused primarily on the value component a business offered to customers, and while these values could evolve, quality and service remained paramount. Companies had to consistently improve or maintain these aspects to meet customer needs and demands.

Moreover, this study was also based on the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988). These

researchers addressed the issue of quantifying service quality. Consequently, they developed a ten-point scale based on focus group interviews to measure customer perceptions of service quality. However, their initial framework underwent revisions according to Parasuraman et al. (1988). Three of the original ten factors – reliability, responsiveness, and specificity – remained unchanged. The remaining seven factors were subsequently combined into two separate components: Confidence, encompassing competence, courtesy, reliability, and safety; and empathy including communication, approach, and customer understanding.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrated the variables in the study. The independent variable was service quality, whereas the dependent variable captured customer perception. Service quality encompassed five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. In contrast, customer perception encompassed six dimensions: facility aesthetics, ambiance, lighting, table settings, layout, and service staff.
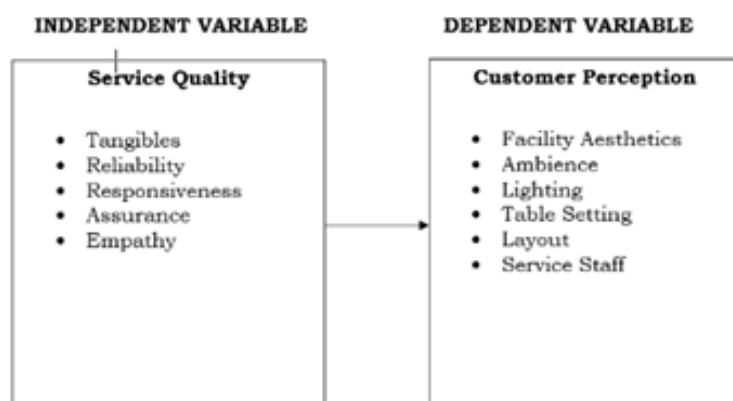

Figure 1. *Conceptual Paradigm of the Study*

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presented the entire research methodology employed for the study. This included the research design, the selection of participants, research tools, data collection procedures, and the statistical analysis techniques applied.

Research Design

The researchers collected data through surveys administered to coaches and participants. The study employed a descriptive correlational design. This analysis allowed them to conclude. Quantitative data was gathered and administered via a survey questionnaire to explore the influence of service quality on customer perception of restaurants in Barangay Tibal-og, Santo Tomas, Davao del Norte.

Research Subject

The researchers investigated the customers of local restaurants in Tibal-Og. This selection process ensured that the respondents (participants who provided information) had the capacity and ability to share their experiences and perceptions based on their restaurant consumption habits.

A random sampling technique was employed to choose the participants. Given the total population of customers across the three restaurants, estimated at 450, a stratified random sampling design was adopted. This approach is commonly used in research to divide the target population into smaller, more manageable subgroups for easier investigation. In essence, stratified random sampling breaks the entire population under study into more manageable subgroups for better assessment.

Research Instrument

Service Quality Questionnaire (SQQ). To measure the level of service quality, the researchers utilized the Service Quality Questionnaire (SQQ). The questionnaire employed the DINESERV Scale by Abanto et al (2019) framework, encompassing five factors: Tangibles (4 items), Reliability (4 items), Responsiveness (4 items), Assurance (4 items), and Empathy (4 items). Each factor was measured using a Likert scale ranging from 5-Strongly Agree, followed by 4 representing Agree, 3 representing Neutral, 2 representing Disagree, and 1 representing Strongly Disagree.

The following range, descriptive equivalent, and description were employed to determine the level of service quality:

Range	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
4.20 - 5.00	Very High	This indicates that the service quality is much manifested.
3.40 - 4.19	High	This indicates that the service quality is manifested.
2.60 - 3.39	Average	This indicates that the service quality is moderately manifested.
1.80 - 2.59	Low	This indicates that the service quality is less manifested.
1.00 - 1.79	Very Low	This indicates that the service quality is least manifested.

Customer Perception Questionnaire (CPQ). Concerning research from several sources, including DINESCAPE: A Scale for Customer Perceived Sensitivity in Dining Environment by Ryu (2008), a study on Relationships Between Restaurant Environment and Behavioral Intention (2021), and Impacts of Lights on the Dining Experience (2017), a self-administered survey questionnaire was developed. This instrument consisted of 24 items and measured customer perceptions across six dimensions: Facility Aesthetics (4 items), Ambiance (4 items), Lighting (4 items), Table Setting (4 items), Layout (4 items), and Service Staff (4 items). The respondents used a 5-point Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement, with 5 being Strongly Agree," 4 being "Agree," 3 being "Neutral," 2 being "Disagree," and 1 being "Strongly Disagree.

 The following range, descriptive equivalent, and description were employed to determine the level of customer perception:

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2.60 - 3.39	Average	This means that the customer perception is moderately observed.
1.80 - 2.59	Low	This means that customer perception is less evident.
1.00 - 1.79	Very Low	This means that the customer perception is least evident.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Mean. Bhandari (2023) stated that it was possible to estimate the central tendencies using different measures of average and that the most commonly used average was the mean which referred to the sum of all the values in the dataset divided by the total number of values in that dataset. This was the most frequently reported measure of central tendency; it was commonly defined as the average. In particular, this would relate to the first and the second statements of the given problem.

Pearson r. According to Turney (2022), it was seen as descriptive since it provided an understanding of the features of a set of figures. It described the extent and orientation of straight association between two quantitative variables. In more detail, it would solve third part of the problem statement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from restaurant customers in Santo Tomas, Davao del Norte, regarding the level of service quality and customer perception. The data is organized according to the statement of the problem.

Level Of Service Quality In Terms Of Tangibles

Table 1 illustrated the degree of service quality in terms of tangibles. Number 3 emerged as the item with the highest mean score (4.86). Following closely behind were items 4 (4.85), 1 (4.83), and 2 (4.82), with item 2 having the lowest average score. Despite this, all items in Tangibles achieved a very high descriptive level, with a narrow range of scores between 4.82 and 4.86. Even though item number two received the lowest rating, it still boasted a high descriptive quality. This suggests that tangibles were undeniably well-represented.

The results found that this dimension is significantly and positively related to customer perception. In this sense, Silva et al. (2021) pointed out in their research that tangible aspects play a strategic role in customer perception levels, because elements related to the appearance of facilities, staff, equipment, are highly valued considerations in the customer evaluation process for their conformity. The key aspects of tangibility include price, ranking relative to competitors, marketing communication and actualization, and word-of-mouth effects (Ismagilova et al., 2019), which enhance the perception of service quality of customers (Santos, 2019).

Table 1 Level of Service Quality in terms of Tangibles

Items	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent
1. The parking area and building exterior of the restaurant is visually attractive.	4.83	0.42	Very High
2. The menu is easily readable.	4.82	0.45	Very High
3. The dining area is well-ventilated.	4.86	0.38	Very High
4. The restrooms are clean.	4.85	0.39	Very High
Average	**4.84**	**0.41**	**Very High**

Level Of Service Quality In Terms Of Reliability

As Table 2 demonstrated, the level of service quality, in terms of reliability, was consistently high. Item number

3 boasted the highest mean score at 4.82, while items 1, 2, and 4 came in with the lowest means. Interestingly, all items within the reliability category received a very high descriptive level, with a narrow range of scores between 4.81 and 4.82. Despite having the lowest means, items 1, 2, and 4 still achieved a high descriptive level. This suggested that overall reliability remained well-represented across the board.

These discoveries are reliable with Barinotto's (2019) thinking about on client discernment of benefit quality, which finds that the last mentioned is steady with benefit quality. All things considered, Barinotto appears about a high degree of fulfillment and unwavering quality, which energizes clients to return to the restaurant. Quality and responsibility are connected to unwavering quality. Various forerunners also bolster crucial strategies in affecting customers' recognition of the quality and constancy of the organization (Korda & Snoj, 2019; Omar et al., 2019)

Table 2 Level of Service Quality in terms of Reliability

Items	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent
1. The employees serve food in the time promised.	4.81	0.46	Very High
2. The employees quickly correct anything that is wrong.	4.81	0.44	Very High
3. The employees provide an accurate bill.	4.82	0.45	Very High
4. The employees served order (food) error-free.	4.81	0.44	Very High
Average	**4.81**	**0.45**	**Very High**

Level Of Service Quality In Terms Of Responsiveness

Table 3 presented the responsiveness level of service quality in Santo Tomas, Davao del Norte restaurants. The table revealed an overall mean of 4.78, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.50 and a very high descriptive quality. This finding demonstrated the high responsiveness generally experienced by customers. Items 1 and 4 boasted the highest means, averaging 4.82. Items 2, 4, and 3 followed in descending order, with means of 4.79, 4.77, and 4.72, respectively. Notably, even item 3, with the lowest mean, achieved a very high descriptive level (4.72). This consistency across all items (range: 4.72-4.82) underscored the well-demonstrated responsiveness in these restaurants.

Supporting this conclusion, Tjiptono and Chandra's (2019) definition of responsiveness aligned perfectly. They characterized it as a benefit quality connected to service providers' enthusiasm for assisting clients and delivering services promptly. This dimension encompasses providing customers with information regarding service delivery times, offering prompt service, demonstrating a willingness to help, and being ready to fulfill customer requests. Furthermore, Nambisan et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of responsiveness in fostering customer perception of service quality. They argued that organizations should respond to customer dissatisfaction with prompt professionalism and propose solutions to meet customer needs (Lee et al., 2019).

Table 3 Level of Service Quality in terms of Responsiveness

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. The employees maintain speed and quality of service during busy times.	4.82	0.45	Very High
2. The employees provide prompt and quick service.	4.79	0.50	Very High

3. The employees make extra effort for handling special requests.	4.72	0.57	Very High
4. The employees are willing to serve guests.	4.77	0.49	Very High
Average	**4.78**	**0.50**	**Very High**

Level Of Service Quality In Terms Of Assurance

Table 4 displayed the degree of service quality in terms of Assurance. The item with the highest mean (4.86) was number 1. Following closely was number 4 with a mean of 4.83. Number 2 secured the third-highest position with a mean of 4.78. Finally, number 3 held the lowest mean (4.74) within the Assurance category. However, all Assurance items boasted very high descriptive levels, with a narrow range of 4.74 to 4.86. Even with the lowest ranking, item number three still achieved a high descriptive level, demonstrating clear communication of assurance.

This finding aligned with Chen's (2019) research, which revealed that perceived service quality impacts customer loyalty. When customers perceive the restaurant's service staff as competent, friendly, knowledgeable, and skilled at building rapport, they are more likely to develop trust in the establishment. Similarly, Wu et al. (2019) suggest that employee skills and abilities contribute to fostering customer trust and confidence. Finally, Elmadağ et al. (2019) identified competence, friendliness, positive attitude, and effective communication as the most crucial elements in reassuring customers. These elements, they argued, cultivated a sense of empathy.

Table 4 Level of Service Quality in terms of Assurance

Items	SD	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. The employees can answer questions completely.	4.86	0.42	Very High
2. I am comfortable and confident when dealing with the employees.	4.78	0.50	Very High
3. The employees provide information about menu items, their ingredients and method of preparation.	4.74	0.56	Very High
4. The employees are well trained, competent and experienced staff.	4.83	0.47	Very High
Average	**4.80**	**0.49**	**Very High**

Level Of Service Quality In Terms Of Empathy

Table 5 illustrated the extent of empathy-based service quality. Items 2 and 4 boasted the highest means at 4.84, followed closely by item 1 at 4.79. Item 3 held the lowest mean (4.77). Interestingly, all items displayed very high descriptive levels, with an empathy range between 4.77 and 4.84. Even item 3, despite its lower ranking, maintained a high descriptive level, signifying a clear demonstration of empathy.

These findings were further supported by the discovery of a significant and positive correlation between this component and customer perception. In other words, empathy translated into a positive evaluation of service quality, as evidenced by Cadena et al. (2019) in their study. When staff provided personalized attention, the service was perceived as more valuable, ultimately fulfilling customer needs. Throughout the experience, service providers went the extra mile to make customers feel valued and unique (Bahadur et al., 2019). As Murray et al. (2019) suggested, empathy involves putting oneself in the customer's shoes to understand their needs.

Table 5 Level of Service Quality in terms of Empathy

Items	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent
1. The employees provide individual attention.	4.79	0.49	Very High
2. The employees make me feel special.	4.84	0.40	Very High
3. The employees anticipate the customers individuals needs and wants.	4.77	0.53	Very High
4. The employees are sympathetic and reassuring.	4.84	0.42	Very High
Average	4.81	0.46	Very High

Summary On The Level Of Service Quality

Table 6 presented an overview of service quality. Tangibles emerged with the highest mean score (4.84%), indicating a very high descriptive level. This suggests that Santo Tomas Davao del Norte restaurants displayed highly visible, tangible aspects of service quality. In contrast, responsiveness items exhibited the lowest mean (4.78), which still translated to a very high descriptive level.

Table 6 Summary of the Level of Service Quality

Indicators	Mean	Standard deviation	Descriptive Equivalent
1. Tangibles	4.84	0.41	Very High
2. Reliability	4.81	0.45	Very High
3. Responsiveness	4.78	0.50	Very High
4. Assurance	4.80	0.49	Very High
5. Empathy	4.81	0.46	Very High
Overall	**4.81**	**0.46**	**Very High**

Level Of Customer Perception In Terms Of Facility Aesthetics

Table 7 displayed the degree to which customer impressions were affected by facility aesthetics. Item number 4 boasted the highest mean score (4.81), while items 1, 2, and 3 had the lowest (4.77). Interestingly, all items within the Facility Aesthetics category achieved very high descriptive levels, ranging from 4.77 to 4.81. This finding suggests a close focus on aesthetics, even for items ranked slightly lower.

Studies by Lam et al. (2019) supported this notion, highlighting the contribution of auxiliary and interior design, along with décor, to the overall service area's attractiveness. Shashikala and Suresh (2020) further emphasized the importance of these aesthetic factors, as they directly influence a service organization's perceived atmosphere.

Furthermore, Ryu and Jang (2019) concurred, suggesting that stylish elements in an office, such as artwork, plants, and color schemes, can influence customer feelings of energy and delight. Shashikala and Suresh (2020) expanded on this idea, proposing that additional stylish components can even impact dwell time, the facility's perceived value, and the overall surrounding environment. They concluded by emphasizing the importance of

aesthetically pleasing spaces for restaurants to stand out from competitors, citing a strong link between tasteful design and customer loyalty.

Table 7 Level of Customer Perception in terms of Facility Aesthetics

Items	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent
1. The restaurant's wall décor is visually appealing.	4.77	0.56	Very High
2. The restaurant's plants/flowers make me feel happy.	4.77	0.49	Very High
3. The restaurant's colors used create a warm atmosphere.	4.77	0.51	Very High
4. The restaurant's furniture (e.g., dining tables, chair) is of high quality.	4.81	0.51	Very High
Average	**4.78**	**0.52**	**Very High**

Level Of Customer Perception In Terms Of Ambience

Table 8 presented the client's assessment of the ambience. In terms of mean values, item number 4 scored the highest (4.81), followed by items 2 and 3 (4.75), with item number 1 having the lowest score (4.72). Significantly, every item fell within the "Ambience" range (4.72-4.82), indicating an extremely high descriptive level. Even though it received the lowest ranking, item number one still achieved a high rating, suggesting that ambiance was a highly valued aspect.

The concept of ambiance encompasses foundational elements that directly impact the five senses, including color, music, fragrance, temperature, lighting, and noise (Jang and Namkung, 2019; Kwabena et al., 2021; Cheah et al., 2020). Furthermore, studies by Heung and Gu (2019), demonstrated that the atmosphere of eateries positively impacts customer behavior and engagement.

Table 8 Level of Customer Perception in terms of Ambience

Items	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent
1. The restaurant's overall interior design is attractive.	4.72	0.59	Very High
2. The restaurant's background music is pleasing.	4.75	0.53	Very High
3. The restaurant's temperature is comfortable.	4.75	0.55	Very High
4. The restaurant's aroma is enticing.	4.82	0.45	Very High
Average	**4.76**	**0.53**	**Very High**

Level Of Customer Perception In Terms Of Lighting

The degree of client impression about lighting is displayed in Table 9. Items 2 and 4 have the highest and second-highest means, respectively, at 4.77 and 4.75. Items 3 and 4 have the third-highest means, at 4.72 and 4.70, respectively, and item 1 has the lowest mean. Every item in the Ambience range has a very high descriptive level, ranging from 4.70 to 4.77. Even though item number one was scored lowest, it still has a high descriptive level, indicating that lighting is closely monitored.

Research underscored the importance of integrating lighting with other design elements and furniture within

workspaces. It is crucial for restaurant owners to carefully consider the lighting plan proposed by the designer or architect. Incorporating interesting lighting installations and systems can significantly enhance an establishment's overall design strategy (Ciani, 2021).

Table 9 Level of Customer Perception in terms of Lighting

Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Descriptive Equivalent
1. The restaurant's lighting creates a warm atmosphere.	4.70	0.59	Very High
2. The restaurant's lighting makes me feel welcome.	4.77	0.51	Very High
3. The restaurant's lighting creates a comfortable atmosphere.	4.72	0.56	Very High
4. The restaurant's lighting is sufficient to read the menu.	4.75	0.55	Very High
Average	**4.74**	**0.55**	**Very High**

Level Of Customer Perception In Terms Of Table Settings

Table 10 illustrated the extent to which customers perceived table settings. Item number 4 boasted the highest mean score at 4.77, followed closely by items 1 and 2 with means of 4.76 and 4.74, respectively. Item number 3 received the lowest mean, but even that score remained very high at 4.74. This suggested that all aspects of table settings were perceived very favorably by customers. Notably, even the lowest-ranked item displayed a strong descriptive level, indicating a high level of attention paid to table settings overall.

In essence, restaurant patrons first notice the way tables are set. This presentation communicates to diners that they are valued and worth the extra effort (Ryu & Han, 2019). Studies have shown that restaurants can influence customer perception of service quality by using high-quality china, crystal, and table linens (Ryu & Jang, 2019; Liua et al., 2019). Additionally, incorporating elements like candles or flowers can elevate the mood and create a more relaxing atmosphere for customers. Furthermore, a well-set table with a fresh tablecloth, neatly folded napkins, and refilled condiments conveys a sense of modernity and attention to detail (Ryu & Han, 2019).

Table 10 Level of Customer Perception in terms of Table Settings

Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Descriptive Equivalent
1. The restaurant's tableware (e.g., glass, chinaware, silverware) is of high quality.	4.76	0.54	Very High
2. The restaurant's linens (e.g., table cloths, napkin) are attractive.	4.76	0.54	Very High
3. The restaurant's table setting is visually attractive.	4.74	0.56	Very High
4. The restaurant's overall interior design is attractive.	4.77	0.53	Very High
Average	**4.76**	**0.55**	**Very High**

Level Of Customer Perception In Terms Of Layout

Table 11 displayed the degree to which customers perceived the layout. The first item had the highest mean

(4.84), followed by the second (4.79), third (4.77), and lastly, the fourth item with the lowest mean (4.75). Interestingly, all items within the 4.75–4.79 layout range received very high marks for descriptiveness. Even though item number two ranked lowest, it still achieved a high descriptive level, suggesting close monitoring of the layout.

The study confirmed the significance of layout availability for customers' perceptions of DINESCAPE. This finding aligned with previous research (Ryu & Han, 2019; Mohi, 2020) which demonstrated a strong influence of restaurant layout on customer perceptions. Furthermore, Zijlstra and Mobach's (2021) findings that a facility's format impacts consumers' cognition, emotions, and behavior are supported by this research. To optimize the positive and crucial impact on the customer, they recommended an engaging layout and design. In line with this, research suggested that better spatial planning can lead to increased customer spending (Wakefield & Blodgett, 2020).

Table 11 Level of Customer Perception in terms of Layout

Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Descriptive Equivalent
1. The restaurant's seating arrangement gives me enough space.	4.84	0.39	Very High
2. The restaurant's seating arrangement makes me feel crowded.	4.75	0.57	Very High
3. The restaurant's layout make it easy for me to move around.	4.77	0.56	Very High
4. The restaurant's layout creates adequate dining privacy.	4.79	0.50	Very High
Average	**4.79**	**0.50**	**Very High**

Level Of Customer Perception In Terms Of Service Staff

Table 12 presented the customer perception of service staff. The first item received the highest mean score of 4.82, followed by the second (4.79), third (2.78), and lastly, the fourth item (4.75). Interestingly, all items within the Service Staff category achieved very high descriptive levels, ranging from 4.75 to 4.82. Even the item with the lowest score (fourth) remained in the high range, suggesting close monitoring of service staff performance.

Research has shown that customers view employees as a critical factor influencing their overall experience. Ryu and Jang (2019) specifically highlighted the importance of staff work style in shaping customer sentiment. Similarly, Tiapana (2021) emphasized the need to consider how employees feel, think, and interact with customers. Building on this, Nadia and Zekeriya (2020) encouraged businesses to develop customized customer engagement programs and foster positive customer-employee relationships, acknowledging the significant impact these social interactions have on customer perceptions.

Table 12 Level of Customer Perception in terms of Service Staff

Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Descriptive Equivalent
1. The employees are attractive.	4.82	0.50	Very High
2. The employees makes me feel cared for.	4.78	0.52	Very High
3. The employees are neat and well-dressed.	4.79	0.51	Very High

4. The employee number is adequate.	4.75	0.54	Very High
Average	**4.78**	**0.52**	**Very High**

Summary On The Level Of Customer Perception

Table 13 summarizes customer perceptions. Layout emerged as the most highly rated factor, with a mean score of 4.79, indicating a very positive customer perception. This suggests that restaurants in Santo Tomas, Davao del Norte prioritize creating a layout that resonates well with their customers. In contrast, lighting received the lowest average score (4.74), which still falls within the very high descriptive category.

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Table 13 Summary of the level of Customer Perception

Indicators	Mean	Standard deviation	Descriptive Equivalent
1.Facility Aesthetics.	4.78	0.52	Very High
2. Ambience	4.76	0.53	Very High
3. Lighting	4.74	0.55	Very High
4. Table Settings	4.76	0.55	Very High
5. Layout	4.78	0.52	Very High
6. Service Staff	4.77	0.53	Very High
Overall	4.79	0.50	Very High

Relationship Between Service Quality And Customer Satisfaction

As displayed in Table 14, a strong correlation emerged between customer perception and service quality. This finding was evident in the combined mean range (4.78–4.84) of the service quality indicators (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy), which fell within the extremely high category. Conversely, customer perception factors (facility aesthetics, ambiance, lighting, table settings, layout, and service staff) also achieved a very high mean range (4.74–4.79). This suggested a strong positive link between these previously understudied variables. The results further demonstrated that customer perceptions were significantly influenced by service quality in the areas of tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy. The table also indicated that the null hypothesis was rejected, as evidenced by the overall r-value of 0.810 and a p-value of 0.001, suggesting a positive strong correlation ($p < 0.05$).

Table 14 Significance of the Relationship Between Service Quality and Customer Perception

Variables Correlated	r	p-value	Decision on H_0	Decision on Relationship
Service Quality and Customer Perception	0.810	0.001	Rejected	Significant

The study's correlation results confirmed the hypothesis that a significant association exists between customer perception and service quality. This finding aligned with previous research by Ryu and Han (2019), who identified that customer perception is a crucial factor influencing customer behavior in quick-casual restaurants. Similarly, Ryu et al. (2019) demonstrated that key components of restaurant image, particularly the quality of the physical environment alongside essentials like food quality and service, ultimately impact customer perception.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

- With an overall mean of 4.81, and a descriptive equivalent of extremely high, the degree of service quality in the restaurant located in Santo Tomas, Davao del Norte, was quite evident.

- With a descriptive equivalent of very high, the overall mean of the customer perception level was 4.77. With a descriptive level of customer perception that was highly noticed in the restaurants in Santo Tomas, Davao del Norte, it obtained an overall standard deviation of 0.53.

- A positive association was found between customer perception and service quality, with a p-value of 0.001, below the significant 0.05 level. The result showed that the null hypothesis was rejected.

Conclusions

- The level of service quality was very high. The findings demonstrated that customers' perceptions were significantly influenced by the quality of the services they received.

- In customers' perception, a very high level was emphasized. This study demonstrated that one of the elements affecting a customer's decision to visit was their perception. Consumers went to restaurants that guaranteed quality and safety. Given that there were so many food options available, it was found important to take into account variables that stimulate the improvement of customer perception since customers can quickly switch restaurants if the quality does not meet their expectations.

- There was a significant relationship between the level of service quality and customers' perceptions. This implied that customers' perceptions would appear higher the better the quality of the services provided. The findings indicated that there was a considerable correlation between customer perceptions of restaurants and the quality of the services provided. It was intended that this study may encourage restaurant owners to implement more successful food service quality methods by enhancing the positive impact on customers' perceptions through high-quality service.

Recommendations

- Restaurant owners in Santo Tomas, Davao del Norte should make sure that the standard of food service quality and the opinion of the customers are upheld and improved. Restaurant managers may place a high priority on providing excellent service, holding staff training symposiums, and making sure that employees are timely and attentive. To enhance the restaurant's atmosphere, warm, dimmable lighting, layered lighting, and accent lighting should be installed and maintained regularly.

- By providing feedback to the restaurant management to improve quality services, customers were encouraged to broaden their understanding of the significance of service quality and customer perception. Customers were recommended to choose restaurants that have a high rating and favorable evaluations from other customers.

- It was recommended that future researchers look closely at the relationship between customer perception and service quality in restaurants, particularly lighting, to make customers feel at ease and calm while dining. Researchers were also urged to look into how responsive service personnel are to keep up service quality and quickness during peak dining hours.

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