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SERVICES OF FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS IN BISLIG, SURIGAO DEL SUR

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Abstract

The study assessed the service quality of selected food establishments in Bislig City, Surigao del Sur, with the aim of developing an action plan to enhance customer satisfaction. Specifically, it examined the respondents' demographic profile and their ratings of service quality across the dining area, kitchen/production area, beverage area, cashiering, security, and reception services. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the study surveyed 100 customers from four selected establishments during the school year 2024-2025. Data were collected using a validated, adapted questionnaire anchored on the SERVQUAL dimensions. The results showed that the overall quality of service was high, with the kitchen, drinks, cashiering, and reception areas doing well. However, the dining area was assessed as moderate, while the security area received a low rating, indicating a need for improvement. Chi-square analysis indicated that age had a slight but significant relationship with perceptions of security services, civil status was significantly associated with perceptions of cashiering, and educational attainment demonstrated moderate relationships with both beverage and cashiering services. Most demographic variables, however, did not significantly influence customer perceptions of service quality. Based on these findings, the study recommends improving security measures, enhancing dining ambiance, expanding menu and beverage options, and strengthening continuous staff training to better meet customer expectations. The results offer vital details for food establishments seeking to elevate service performance and sustain customer satisfaction in Bislig City.

Keywords: service quality, customer satisfaction, food establishments, demographic profile, Bislig City, Surigao del Sur, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Service in the food service industry extends beyond the provision of meals; it involves creating meaningful interactions and memorable experiences that influence customer satisfaction and loyalty (Sheikh, 2025). A well-executed service encounter—whether through a warm greeting, efficient assistance, or thoughtful presentation—can transform an ordinary dining experience into one that customers value and remember. The service quality encompasses multiple dimensions, including ambiance, attentiveness, responsiveness, and the ability of personnel to anticipate and meet customer needs, thereby shaping the overall dining experience (Zhu, 2020).

Food establishments, such as restaurants, cafés, and local eateries, form key parts of community social and cultural life. These places go beyond serving food and drinks; they act as main spots for people to interact, celebrate events, and build relationships (Walker, 2021). With changing customer needs, the link between service quality, like staff attention, quick response, and good atmosphere, and customer satisfaction has drawn much research focus, as people now want both good food and strong service experiences. Studies show that high service quality leads to more customer loyalty, repeat visits, and better reputations for food businesses. This link stands out in busy markets where food quality alone does not set businesses apart (Singh, 2023).

In a highly competitive market, it is widely recognized that delivering superior service quality is fundamental to achieving customer satisfaction and gaining a competitive edge. The complexity of service quality lies in its multidimensional and subjective nature, which can differ from one customer to another. When gaps arise between the service intended by providers and the experience perceived by customers, dissatisfaction and service failure may occur (Nugroho & Wang, 2024). Therefore, comprehending the nuances of service quality is vital for enhancing both customer experience and business performance.

This study draws on the established dimensions of service quality—tangibility, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy—which have been widely associated with customer satisfaction in the food service industry (Chun & Nyam-Ochir, 2020). Tangibility involves physical elements such as cleanliness and ambiance that create a welcoming setting (Fang, 2019). Reliability pertains to accurate and consistent service delivery, while responsiveness reflects the staff's willingness to assist customers promptly. Assurance refers to staff competence and courtesy, and empathy involves providing personalized service and addressing customer concerns with understanding (Rane, 2023). When these dimensions are effectively integrated, food establishments can align their services with customer expectations, thereby enhancing satisfaction, encouraging repeat patronage, and strengthening their market reputation.

The relevance of this study is further supported by the researcher's background as a hospitality management instructor and certified food safety compliance officer at De La Salle John Bosco College. With over a decade of experience in the food industry and ongoing graduate studies in Hotel and Restaurant Management at the University of Cebu, the researcher integrates academic insight with practical industry knowledge. This dual perspective contributes to the study's depth and emphasizes the need for improved service quality practices within local food establishments. Therefore, examining the relationship between service quality dimensions and

customer satisfaction, this research aims to provide empirical evidence that can guide food establishments in Bislig City toward enhancing their service performance, meeting customer expectations, and elevating overall dining experiences.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study was anchored on Oliver's (1980) Service Quality Theory, which explained how customers evaluated service based on the gap between expectations and actual performance. Rooted in this concept, the SERVQUAL model identified five dimensions—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—that shaped customers' perceptions of service quality (Alomari, 2021). In food establishments, these dimensions provided a lens for assessing cleanliness, ambiance, order accuracy, staff efficiency, and the overall dining experience, all of which influenced customer satisfaction and loyalty (Mendocilla, 2021). Understanding how these elements aligned with customer expectations was essential in determining service strengths and areas needing improvement.

SERVQUAL is widely recognized as a comprehensive multi-item measurement tool celebrated for its strong reliability and validity. It enables organizations to gain deeper insight into customers' service expectations and perceptions, ultimately guiding them toward improving the overall quality of their services. Parasuraman et al. (1988) emphasized that SERVQUAL provides a foundational framework grounded in the comparison of expectations and perceptions across five core dimensions of service quality. This framework serves as a versatile and adaptable structure, allowing researchers and organizations to refine, modify, or expand it based on the unique characteristics of their context or the specific requirements of their study.

The SERVQUAL model was suitable for this study because it focused on the gap between customer expectations and their actual experience of service, which was a key aspect of the food service industry. The model measured service quality through five important dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, each of which played a significant role in the overall customer experience in establishments such as restaurants and cafés. This framework helped identify areas of strength and weakness in service delivery, enabling food establishments to improve and better meet customer needs. Additionally, the SERVQUAL model recognized that service quality was subjective and varied according to individual perceptions and past experiences. This made it a comprehensive and flexible tool for understanding how service quality influenced customer satisfaction and loyalty in diverse food service contexts.

Research objectives

This study aimed to assess the quality of services offered by selected food establishments in Bislig City and to determine how the respondents' demographic profile related to their perception of service quality. The findings served as the basis for proposing an action plan to enhance customer satisfaction.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What was the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, civil status, and highest educational attainment?
2. What was the quality of services of food establishments in terms of the dining area, kitchen/production area, beverage/production area, cashiering, security, and reception?

- There is a significant relationship between the respondents' profile and their perceived?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive–correlational research design to assess the service quality of selected food establishments in Bislig City, Surigao del Sur. The design was found to be appropriate for determining the respondents' demographic profile, their level of satisfaction across different service areas, and the possible relationship between these variables. This approach allowed the researcher to gather quantifiable information without manipulating variables, ensuring that the natural conditions of the service environment were preserved (Mohajan, 2020). It also provided a clearer understanding of how customer characteristics related to their perceptions of service quality. The descriptive component enabled the researcher to present an accurate picture of the existing service practices, while the correlational aspect facilitated the examination of potential associations among the study variables (Remler & Van, 2021).

The descriptive–correlational research design was deemed optimal for assessing service quality in selected food establishments in Bislig City, Surigao del Sur, as it enabled the researcher to describe service conditions and examine relationships between variables such as service dimensions and customer satisfaction without manipulating real-world operations (Field, 2021). This non-experimental approach captured authentic data from natural settings, such as customer surveys on tangibles, reliability, and responsiveness in local restaurants and cafés, thus providing a realistic snapshot of service quality in this specific regional context (Ismael, 2024). Additionally, purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants had firsthand dining experience in the selected establishments. This sampling method also ensured that the respondents provided relevant and accurate assessments of the service quality they had experienced.

Research Environment

The study was conducted in Bislig City, Surigao del Sur, a coastal city in the CARAGA Region of Mindanao. The researchers selected four of the city's top food establishments, chosen for their popularity among tourists. These establishments consistently attracted a high number of visitors and stood out from other local eateries due to their strong reputation for quality meals and their significant role in the city's dining scene. They also provided a representative mix of Bislig's food service landscape, showcasing diverse operational practices and varying levels of customer patronage.

Research Respondents

A total of 100 customers participated in the study, with 25 respondents selected from each food establishment.

Research Instrument

The researcher adapted a survey questionnaire from Gono (2020), which was validated by experts and pilot-tested for internal consistency. The instrument consisted of two parts: the respondents' demographic profile and their assessment of service quality using a four-point rating scale. It was structured to capture essential service indicators aligned with the SERVQUAL dimensions, ensuring that the key elements of service quality were measured comprehensively.

Expert validators assessed the clarity, relevance, and alignment of each item with the study objectives, which led to further refinement of the tool. The pilot testing phase confirmed that the instrument functioned reliably under actual response conditions, strengthening its suitability for full deployment.

Research Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the owners of the selected food establishments. The researcher then distributed the validated questionnaires to customers who had recently dined in the establishments. Respondents were informed of the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and guided in answering the questionnaire. Completed surveys were collected, checked, and organized for analysis, with careful attention to ethical data-gathering procedures and the anonymity of all participants.

Once data collection was completed, the researcher thoroughly reviewed and organized the survey responses to ensure accuracy and consistency. The responses were categorized according to relevant themes, such as customer satisfaction, service quality, and establishment ambiance, allowing for a more structured and meaningful analysis.

The data were then analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. The researcher focused on identifying patterns, trends, and relationships within the responses, particularly in relation to customer perceptions of service quality. The findings were compiled into tables to ensure a clear and systematic presentation, facilitating easier interpretation and comparison.

This systematic and thorough approach to data collection and analysis ensured that the data obtained were reliable and valid, providing meaningful insights for the study.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using frequency and percentage for the respondents' profile, and weighted mean for the assessment of service quality. Chi-Square and Pearson's Coefficient C were employed to test the relationship between demographic variables and perceived service quality. All statistical procedures were carried out using standard statistical software. These analytical tools enabled the researcher to determine patterns and associations relevant to the study objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the data relating to the level of services of food establishment.

Profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, civil status, and highest educational attainment

Table 1 Profile of the Respondents (N=100)			
Variables		Frequency	Percent (%)
Age	51 – 64	3	3.00
	41 – 50	13	13.00
	31 – 40	28	28.00
	21 – 30	46	46.00
	17 – 20	10	10.00
Gender	Male	36	36.00

	Female	64	64.00
Civil Status	Single	63	63.00
	Married	32	32.00
	Widow	3	3.00
	Others	2	2.00
Educational Attainment	High School Level	1	1.00
	High School Graduate	2	2.00
	College Level	28	28.00
	College Graduate	45	45.00
	Masteral Level	17	17.00
	Masteral Degree Graduate	6	6.00

Table 1 shows that the demographic characteristics of the 100 respondents, drawn from four food establishments in Bislig, Surigao del Sur, present a predominantly young sample. The largest age group, individuals aged 21–30 years (46%), is noted for having greater financial independence and an active social lifestyle, making them more inclined to dine out and explore new food experiences. Olson (2021) suggests that young adults typically engage more with emerging dining trends and value the social dimension of dining outside the home. In contrast, the 51–64 age group comprises only 3% of the respondents, a trend attributed to lifestyle preferences, health concerns, dietary restrictions, and a general inclination toward home-cooked meals. Avgerinou (2019) highlight that older adults tend to prefer quieter, health-conscious dining environments, pointing to an opportunity for establishments to create more accommodating spaces and menu options tailored to this demographic.

Gender and civil status also shape dining behavior among the respondents. Females make up 64% of the sample, indicating their stronger preference for dining out, often motivated by interest in local cuisine and cultural experiences, a trend recognized in the industry for promoting inclusive and welcoming spaces for female diners (Lin, 2020). Males, comprising 36%, demonstrate distinct dining preferences, frequently prioritizing food quality over other considerations, which may affect their infrequent patronage (Cha & Borchgrevink, 2019; Delfin, 2019). Civil status data show that single individuals dominate the sample (63%), highlighting food establishments as important social spaces where they can connect with peers or engage in leisure activities (Aelbrecht, 2019) emphasize the role of dining venues as social interaction hubs, underscoring the need for establishments to design services appealing to single customers. Meanwhile, single mothers (2%) represent the lowest share of diners, a group whose preferences often center on child-friendly options such as play areas and accommodating staff, as noted by Caso (2024).

Educational attainment further reveals customer tendencies, with college graduates forming the largest portion at 45%. This demographic is typically informed and deliberate in food choices but also values convenience and accessibility, making them

responsive to restaurants offering both quality and ease of service, including mobile app ordering (Serhan & Serhan, 2019). On the other hand, high school graduates represent only 1% of the clientele, a group described by as highly price-conscious, prompting restaurants to consider budget-friendly menu offerings, promotions, and value meals (Kien & Tran, 2023). Overall, the demographic analysis provides a strategic roadmap for food establishments in Bislig City. By understanding the most and least represented groups across age, gender, civil status, and educational attainment, businesses can refine their services, enhance customer satisfaction, and tailor dining experiences to meet the distinct needs of their diverse clientele.

Quality of services of food establishments in terms of Dining Area, Kitchen/Production Area, Beverage Area, Cashiering, Security, and Reception?

Table 2
Quality Service

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
Dining Area	3.21	Moderate Quality
Kitchen Area	4.41	Highly Moderate
Beverage Area,	3.8	High Quality
Cashiering	3.40	High Quality
Security	2.23	Low Quality
Reception	3.39	High Quality
Total	3.41	High Quality

The Table above presents the quality of services offered by various areas of the food establishment, based on customer assessments. The areas evaluated include the dining, kitchen, beverage, cashiering, security, and reception sections which has an overall mean of 3.41 (High Quality). These results help identify both the strengths and areas for improvement in the establishment's service quality.

The Security Area, with a mean score of 2.23 (Low Quality), shows a need for improvement in ensuring customer safety and security. This area should be addressed to build trust and satisfaction. The Dining Area scored 3.21 (Moderate Quality), indicating the need for enhancements in ambiance, cleanliness, and overall dining experience to improve customer satisfaction. The Reception Area received a score of 3.39 (High Quality), reflecting a welcoming and organized service, which positively impacts customer perception. The Cashiering Area, with a score of 3.40 (High Quality), also demonstrates efficiency and reliability in handling transactions, ensuring smooth service for customers. The Kitchen Area scored 3.41 (High Quality), reflecting strong operational standards and food preparation, ensuring customer satisfaction in food quality and safety. Finally, the Beverage Area, with a score of 3.80 (High Quality), shows exceptional service in beverage preparation and presentation, which should be maintained for continued customer satisfaction. While most areas show high service quality, the Security Area and Dining Area need attention and improvement to ensure the establishment offers an excellent and comprehensive customer experience.

Table 3
Relationship of the Respondents' Profile and the Quality of Services
Offered By The Food Establishments
(N/100)

Variables	Df	Computed Value of Chi-Square	Critical Value of Chi-Square	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Age in relation to:					
• Dining Area	8	7.385	15.507	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Kitchen Area	8	5.525	15.507	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Beverage Area	8	7.075	15.507	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Cashiering Area	8	5.141	15.507	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Security Area	12	22.408	21.026	Reject Ho	Significant (C=0.28; slight)
• Reception Area	8	5.450	15.507	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Gender in relation to:					
• Dining Area	2	4.309	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Kitchen Area	2	1.232	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Beverage Area	2	0.228	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Cashiering Area	2	0.025	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Security Area	3	1.538	7.815	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Reception Area	2	0.238	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Civil Status in relation to:					
• Dining Area	6	6.908	12.592	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Kitchen Area	6	1.933	12.592	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Beverage Area	6	6.542	12.592	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Cashiering Area	6	13.633	12.592	Reject Ho	Significant (C=0.35; slight)
• Security Area	9	6.844	16.919	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Reception Area	6	6.114	12.592	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Educational Attainment in relation to:					
• Dining Area	10	6.489	18.307	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Kitchen Area	10	8.241	18.307	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Beverage Area	10	20.628	18.307	Reject Ho	Significant (C=0.41; moderate)
• Cashiering Area	10	40.518	18.307	Reject Ho	Significant (C=0.54; moderate)
• Security Area	15	22.871	24.996	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
• Reception Area	10	14.704	18.307	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant

Table 3 explores how respondents' profiles such as age, gender, civil status, and educational attainment relate to their ratings of various service areas in the food establishments. The findings show that most associations are not significant, except for civil status and

educational attainment, which are significant in relation to the cashiering and beverage areas. Additionally, age has a slight but notable impact on perceptions of the security area.

The relationship between respondents' profiles and the quality of services offered by food establishments was scrutinized using Chi-Square analysis. The findings suggest that for most variables, such as age, gender, civil status, and educational attainment, there isn't a significant relationship with the quality of services across various areas like dining, kitchen, beverage, cashiering, security, and reception. The computed values of Chi-Square fell below the critical values, indicating a failure to reject the null hypothesis (Ho) for these variables. However, there were exceptions to this trend. Notably, the security area showed a significant relationship, indicating a slight association.

Similarly, civil status displayed a slight relationship with the quality of services in the cashiering area. At the same time, educational attainment exhibited moderate relationships with the quality of services in the beverage and cashiering areas. These exceptions imply that while most aspects of respondents' profiles may not heavily influence service quality, certain factors like security, civil status, and educational attainment should be considered for targeted improvements in service provision to better cater to customer needs and preferences.

The findings are supported by Adriatico (2022) contribute to this discussion by demonstrating a strong link between service quality and customer satisfaction in dining establishments. Their research pinpoints specific factors like food quality, fair pricing, and the physical environment as crucial for building customer satisfaction. This aligns with the idea that targeted service improvements based on various aspects, including potential security, civil status, and educational background can better cater to diverse customer needs and preferences. They also emphasize that restaurants should prioritize these dimensions of service quality. This could involve measures like ensuring consistent food preparation and presentation, maintaining fair pricing structures, and cultivating a clean and inviting atmosphere. By focusing on these areas, restaurants can cater more effectively to their clientele, leading to higher customer satisfaction and ultimately business success.

CONCLUSION

A clear demographic trend among respondents highlighted the need for tailored customer satisfaction strategies for young, college-educated females. Positive feedback on cleanliness and staff professionalism underscores the importance of these factors in enhancing customer loyalty. Nonetheless, issues like high noise levels in dining areas and poor security measures need urgent attention. Importantly, demographic factors do not significantly impact satisfaction, underscoring the need for consistent service quality across all customer segments. These insights offer valuable guidance for improving service delivery and overall customer satisfaction.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that food establishments adopt the proposed action plan to enhance their overall service performance. Improving security measures should be treated as an immediate priority to ensure customer safety and strengthen trust in the establishment. Enhancements to the dining ambiance, including noise control and accessibility improvements, will help create a more comfortable and welcoming environment. Expanding beverage selections may also attract a wider range of customers and elevate the overall dining experience. Food establishments are encouraged to continue investing in staff training to maintain high-quality service and improve areas with

moderate performance. In addition, further research may be conducted to analyze customer satisfaction more deeply and explore specific factors affecting consumer behavior. Future-oriented studies may also help businesses develop long-term strategies to adapt to evolving customer expectations and operational challenges.

Informed Consent

All participants voluntarily agreed to take part in the study after being informed of its purpose and procedures. Each respondent was assured that their personal information would remain confidential and that their responses would only be used for academic purposes. Participants were also informed of their right to refuse or withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. No identifying information was collected, ensuring that all data remained anonymous. The researcher ensured that participants clearly understood the nature of their participation before completing the survey.

Ethical Approval

The study followed standard ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Approval to conduct the research was obtained from the owners and managers of the participating food establishments in Bislig City. All data collection procedures were carried out with transparency, respect, and full regard for participant privacy. The researcher strictly adhered to confidentiality protocols to ensure that no respondent would be harmed or identified. Ethical principles concerning voluntary participation, informed consent, and responsible data handling were fully observed throughout the research process. The study-maintained integrity at all stages to uphold academic and ethical standards.

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