

The Impact of University Cafeteria to the Employees

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ABSTRACT

The main thrust of the research is to evaluate the overall impact of the university cafeteria on its employees. The study utilized a descriptive research design. There were 62 respondents from a private academic institution. A researcher-made instrument was content and face validated by experts in the fields of research and business. In-person distribution was used for the data collection. Frequency distribution tables were utilized for statistical analysis. Results revealed that food quality is the top choice of the customers in selecting cafeteria in a university. The frequency of visits showed that the majority of the respondents had only visited the university cafeteria once a week. The quality of food was evaluated to be good by the respondents in terms of how safe and hygienic the food was handled and prepared. It was recommended that the cafeteria management must consider the serving portion. It should be enough or generous to satisfy the customers' value for money. It was also suggested that the cafeteria must improve its environment in order to accommodate customers and establish repeat patronage.

Key words: university cafeteria, service quality, food quality, customer satisfaction, employees

INTRODUCTION

Service quality and customer satisfaction are very much related to any kind of service business. These are the two most important determinants that provide the competitive advantages in the long run. The food service sector is highly-fragmented with a large number of small and medium players such as restaurants,

hotels and resorts, and institutional food service (Stanton et al., 2000).

Malhotra (2006) mentioned that “cafeterias and restaurants are important in university campuses”. The largest cafeteria of the university, which is designed for use by staff, students and visitors, is generally one of the most visited areas of an academic institution.

The increased number of students on the university propelled the university management to improve its food service by opening a university cafeteria. This offers a variety of menus in an inviting place where students can have a “feel at home” experience and can also engage in leisurely conversations by being interactive with their peers (Norhati & Nurhafisah, 2013).

In 1998, Rev. Fr. Ricardo T. Serrano, the former University of the Assumption President, initiated and envisioned a hotel inside the university, the Domus Mariae International Center. It was built and designed as a training facility for students of the College of Hotel and Restaurant Management. To bridge the gap between theoretical education and the practice of skills, the Domus Mariae Hotel aimed to apply the knowledge of theories and concepts to real life situations.

The hotel was inaugurated and blessed on September 1, 2000 by the Most Rev. Paciano B. Aniceto, Archbishop of San Fernando. It was named in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Patroness of the University of the Assumption. Domus Mariae was built with the objective of providing warmth for the guests and the feeling of being “home away from home”. The hotel is situated in the serene environment of the University of the Assumption, where the former Nutrition Building was located, in front of the Grade School Department.

The Domus Mariae International Center was opened for guests and attendees in 2001 for conferences, seminars, workshops, meetings, retreats, and other professional, academic, social, civic, and religious functions in collaboration with the College of Hotel and Restaurant Management.

In 2007, Cafe Maria was launched as a mini-restaurant located on the ground floor of the hotel, where budget-friendly, light refreshments and meals are served. The cafe was opened to cater to the students and employees of the university. Unfortunately, the café operated only for a year due to some issues and circumstances. It was also in the same year when the supervision of the Domus Mariae Hotel was transferred to the Office of the Vice President for Administration.

The university cafeteria was again revived in 2018. It is a small restaurant selling a variety of menus such as pasta, sandwiches, frappes, ice blended beverages and rice meals. The customers of the university cafeteria is not only limited to hotel guests, but also caters to the students, employees, and visitors of the university.

The university cafeteria can accommodate seventy (70) diners. A separate function room is also available for thirty (30) guests where they can hold meetings and other personal activities. University cafeteria is open from Monday to Friday with business hours of 9 am until 5 in the afternoon.

The university management is eager to improve the service quality to satisfy existing customers and devote additional resources to capturing new ones (Noel-Levitz, 2010). The university cafeteria also needs to improve its services to maintain and attract new customers. Therefore, this study attempts to identify the impact of the university cafeteria among the employees, different factors in

assessing customers' cafeteria selection and customers' evaluation of the cafeteria.

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of the university cafeteria on the employees in terms of the different factors in assessing customers' cafeteria selection and on customers' evaluation of cafeteria. The research study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents be described in terms of:
 - a. Age
 - b. Sex
 - c. Civil status
 - d. Educational attainment
 - e. Gross monthly income
 - f. Job position?

2. What are the factors to be considered by respondents in selecting a coffee shop?

3. What is the evaluation of the university cafeteria in terms of:
 - a. Frequency of visits
 - b. Food quality
 - c. Menu
 - d. Menu pricing
 - e. Quality of customer service
 - f. Service time
 - g. Portion serving?

METHOD

Descriptive research design is applied in order to profile the respondents, identify the factors in cafeteria selection and evaluate the cafeteria itself. To figure out which variables are associated to this study, quantitative method is used. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), quantitative research is concerned with the measurement and analysis of relationships between variables rather than processes. It expresses the data in the form of numbers and analyzes the results of statistics.

The study was conducted in a Catholic University in Pampanga. It is the first Private Archdiocesan Catholic University in the Philippines and in Asia. The respondents of the study are 62 employees of the said university. Employees from selected offices of the university were given a survey questionnaire.

The instrument consisted of three sections. Section 1 consisted of a series of questions to gather respondents' profile information which include age, sex, academic qualifications, job position and monthly income. Section 2 covers the factors to consider in university cafeteria selection. Section 3 is the customers' evaluation of the university cafeteria. Answered questionnaires were collected, assessed, and analyzed by the researchers.

Data were gathered and encoded using Statistical Software for Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics, a leading statistical software used to solve a variety of business and research problems. The utilization of the software facilitated ease in the processing and retrieval of data encoded.

RESULTS
Table 1. Socio-demographic profile

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Educational Attainment/Degree	Frequency	Percentage (%)
11-20	2	3.7	Bachelor's	40	64.5
21-30	30	55.5	Masteral/Doctoral	22	35.5
31-40	10	18.5	Total	62	100.0
41-50	5	9.3	Job Position		
51-60	5	9.3	Administrators	9	14.5
61-70	2	3.7	Faculty	38	61.3
Total	54	100.0	Non-Teaching	15	24.2
Sex			Total	62	100.0
Male	18	29.0	Monthly Income		
Female	34	71.0	10,001 - 20,000	14	22.6
Total	62	100.0	20,001 - 30,000	31	50.0
Civil Status			30,001 - 40,000	4	6.5
Single	37	59.7	40,001 - 50,000	7	11.3
Married	24	38.7	50,001 and above	6	9.7
Widowed	1	1.6	Total	62	100.0
Total	62	100.0			

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic profile of the participants. Survey shows that more than half of the respondents are between the ages of 21 and 30 years. Since they are within that age group, mostly are still single in civil status. Most of the respondents are female representing 71% of the total sample size with bachelor's degree. A great number of the respondents belong to the academic teaching staff with a monthly income of Php. 20,001-30,000.

Table 2. *Factors considered in the selection of a cafeteria*

Ambience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	12	19.4
2	10	16.1
3	2	3.2
4	13	21.0
5	9	14.5
6	16	25.8
Total	62	100.0
Portion Serving	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	6	9.7
2	11	17.7
3	10	16.1
4	15	24.2
5	12	19.4
6	8	12.9
Total	62	100.0
Service	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	6	9.7
2	13	21.0
3	13	21.0
4	10	16.1
5	11	17.7
6	9	14.5
Total	62	100.0
Food Quality	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	18	29.0
2	17	27.4
3	6	9.7
4	5	8.1
5	11	17.7
6	5	8.1
Total	62	100.0
Price	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	11	17.7
2	10	16.1
3	11	17.7
4	16	25.8
5	9	14.5
6	5	8.1
Total	62	100.0
Variety of food served	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	3	4.8
2	13	21.0
3	13	21.0
4	10	16.1
5	11	17.7
6	9	14.5
Total	62	100.0

Table 2 presents the customers' selection of a cafeteria in a university. These factors are ambience, portion serving, food quality, price and variety of food served. Results showed that the participants look first for the quality of food in any food service establishment. The 2nd and 3rd factors that participants consider are the service quality and variety of foods prepared. Price is the 4th in ranking. Portion serving and ambience are ranked as the 5th and 6th considerations of the participants. Ryu et al. (2012) highlighted the importance of food quality as a measure of customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry. As a result, five aspects of food quality were adopted from Ryu et al. (2012), namely: the food is fresh, the food is delicious, the food is nutritious, there is a variety of menu items and the smell of the food is enticing.

Table 3. *Frequency of visits*

Visit	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Once a week	28	45.2
Everyday	1	1.6
Have not visited	5	8.1
Others	28	45.2
Total	62	100.0

Table 3 results shows that majority of the participants visit the cafe once in a week. Others only take the time to dine in at the cafeteria only on a few occasions. Respondents are likely to manage their eating schedule so that they can unwind and release tension before returning to work invigorated and renewed.

Table 4. *Food quality*

Food Quality	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	14	22.6
Good	41	66.1
Average	6	9.7

Poor	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

Table 4 presents the evaluation of the participants in terms of the food quality of the university cafeteria. The participants rate the food quality of university cafeteria as good. Food quality is considered to be a very important dimension of restaurant quality (Ha and Jang, 2010; Namkung and Jang, 2007; Ryu and Han, 2010). Mattila (2001) reported that food quality was the most important attribute of restaurant quality and a key predictor of customer loyalty. It also has been shown that food quality positively affects a customer's dining experience and is crucial to restaurant success.

Table 5. Menu

Menu	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	6	9.7
Good	45	72.6
Average	10	16.1
Poor	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

Table 5 presents the menu of the university cafeteria as a category to be evaluated. It shows that the respondents evaluate this category as good. Studies argue that menu is the most important feature for enhancing customers' experiences in restaurants (Dubé & Renaghan, 1994; Pettijohn et al., 1997), it could play a critical role in increasing satisfaction (Kim et al., 2020; Sulek & Hensley, 2004), and could make restaurants successful (Sulek & Hensley, 2004).

Table 6. *Menu pricing*

Menu Price	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	7	11.3
Good	31	50.0
Average	18	29.0
Poor	5	8.1
Bad	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

Table 6 presents the menu price as a factor to be considered in the business of a cafeteria. It shows that half of the respondents take into account the menu pricing. Price could be the another feature to determine consumers' evaluation. Food prices generally lead to expectations of the value gained from food, which affects satisfaction, the concept of whether such expectations are met or not. If food price is less than the value obtained through food, people are more satisfied and loyal to the restaurant (Mattila & O'Neill, 2003).

Table 7. *Quality of customer service*

Customer Service	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	24	38.7
Good	31	50.0
Average	7	11.3
Total	62	100.0

Table 7 emphasizes the importance of customer service quality. Results show that the respondents evaluate the cafeteria as having good customer service. Like food quality, quality of service is also a multidimensional concept. Service quality has been defined as customers' judgment of the overall excellence or superiority of the service (Zeithaml, 1988; Zeithaml et al., 1988). Service quality is often measured by five dimensions: empathy,

tangibles, reliability, assurance, and responsiveness (Cronin & Taylor, 1994; Lee & Hing, 1995; Zeithaml et al., 1988). Service quality could affect customer satisfaction (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006; Ladhari, 2008).

Table 8. *Service time*

Service Time	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	7	11.3
Good	31	50.0
Average	22	35.5
Poor	2	3.2
Total	62	100.0

Table 8 presents the service time in cafeteria. Service time is critical component on restaurant management. Service time improves the restaurant's brand image (Ryu et al., 2008) and assists customers in having a positive dining experience.

Table 9. *Serving portion*

Serving Portion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Big	5	8.2
Average	51	83.6
Small	5	8.2
Total	61	100.0

Table 9 shows the evaluation of the serving portion. An overwhelming majority of the respondents assessed the serving portion of the cafeteria to be average. Customers buy and eat larger portion sizes than they actually need. This is the notion of 'value for money'. Larger portions are made attractive by offering more value for money (Swinburn et al., 2004).

DISCUSSION

The respondents of the study ranks the quality of food in a service establishment as first. It suggests that there is a positive impact of food quality demonstrated on customer satisfaction. Food quality is very much related to customer satisfaction in measuring students' satisfaction on cafeteria service level. Food quality include the characteristics of food that are acceptable to the customer (McWilliams, 2000). The appearance of food encompasses several basic sensory attributes such as color, opacity, gloss, visual texture and perceived flavor (Imran, 1999). Therefore, the degree of satisfaction on the university cafeteria depends mostly on the quality of meals, diversity of food, food hygiene and environment (Kim & Kim, 2004).

Service quality and variety of food prepared come in second and third as factors to be considered in a cafeteria. In general, the quality of service provided by the establishment to its customers defines the customer's buying behavior. In addition, choosing a variety of foods and beverages based on nutritional perspective builds a healthy eating styles.

Price ranks fourth in the study. It suggests that if the food served is in good quality, customers feel that they are getting the value for their money. The price to be paid for a service determines the level of quality to be demanded (Soriano, 2003). It means that the price (value) of the meal and service are equally important when compared to other service dimensions. The recent studies by Ng (2005) and Xi and Shuai (2009) did consider price and value in assessing students' service quality in dining hall services. Martin-Consuerga, Molina and Esteban (2007) found that perceived price fairness positively influences customer satisfaction.

Portion serving and ambience were the least of the considerations from the respondents. Portion sizes as a factor in customer satisfaction means that a generous portion serving relates directly also to food quality. Ambiance generally creates the food service environment in general. Bitner (1992) coined a new term “servicescape with physical constituents of service environment”. The servicescape consists of optimum temperature, noise, furnishings and layout combined together to influence the customer satisfaction and repeat patronage level. In addition, the design of the cafeteria environment influences the consumers’ food choices and eating behaviors which call the personal food environments to promote wellness, combat obesity and complement interventions at higher levels (Raman & Chinniah, 2011; Wansink, Painter & Ittersum, 2001). Furthermore, the physical setting influences customers’ perceptions of service quality (Hensley & Sulek, 2007; Norhati & Hafisah, 2013).

Most of the respondents have only visited the cafe once in a week while others only take the time to dine in at the Cafeteria only on a few occasions. This may be based on the study of Tsiotsou (2006) where overall satisfaction and income will satisfy consumers according to their visitation frequency.

The respondents evaluated the food quality of the university cafeteria. Quality of food is a trend that customers prefer on how the food is prepared in terms of safety, hygiene and sanitation. They rated the food quality of the university cafeteria as good. It manifests that food quality is one of the central issues in today’s food economics (Grunert, 2005). The evaluation results also suggest that in terms of this factor, the cafeteria has its strengths, as well as limitations, on how the establishment will be able to improve this category.

The menu was evaluated to be good. On the nutritional point of view, food diversity in products served in food establishments provides a balanced meal for the customers. Selection attributes of cafeteria menu had an effect on customer satisfaction and revisit intention, and the most influential factors were health and menu designs. These days, people are getting more interested in keeping in shape with the well-being trend. Such a modern trend is an important factor when selecting menu items. Therefore, when menu management is considered, health-related factors need to be considered more than anything else. In addition, various and unique menu items need to be designed to draw people's curiosity and make customer revisit (Kang, Park & Jung, 2011). The result implies in this category that the cafeteria has to develop the menu offerings and re-evaluate food served that will provide a balanced meal.

Pricing is an important consideration in terms of improving the university cafeteria. Other food service establishments inside the campus like the university food court are still major threats in order to increase visibility and sales. Although the participants had a good evaluation on the cafeteria's menu prices. It only implies that menu prices at the Café Maria are competitive yet still has to be improved. Food pricing is therefore an essential component of the eating environment. Price reduction strategies promote the choice of targeted foods by lowering their cost relative to alternative food choices. It is an effective strategy to increase food purchase such as in a school setting (Frence, 2003).

Customer service as a factor of assessment is both a definition of how the establishment communicates and provides genuine attention to customers. Results showed that the participants evaluated that the cafeteria has good customer service. It only implies that it was able to manifest a positive interaction and service. Customer satisfaction plays a mediating role in the effect

of service quality on service loyalty. The concept of service loyalty distinguish between service quality and customer satisfaction (Caruana, 2002).

Service time is a critical component on restaurant management. It manifests the tolerance on how customers can patiently wait for service and food distribution. Survey showed that Cafeteria was evaluated having a good waiting time. It implies that there is still a need to improve on the service time process at the cafeteria for an enhanced dining experience. Based on the study of Lee and Lambert (2006), failing to meet customers' expected waiting time and reasonable waiting time could negatively impact their satisfaction and evaluation of service quality. Customers' affective reaction plays a mediating role between discrepancies and satisfaction, and that waiting time is related to the reliability aspect of service quality.

For a restaurant operation to be considered successful, a standard portion control on the menu must be established. Restaurant portion control is important for keeping menu items consistent. Survey results showed that the cafeteria was evaluated with an average serving portions of foods in the menu. It also implies that it has positive impact to its customers. The need for an improvement has yet to be manifested. According to the study of Vermeer, Steenhuis and Seidell (2009), it indicates that value for money is important when purchasing and that large portion sizes offer more value for money than small portion sizes. Large portion sizes have positive attitudes towards pricing strategies.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn: Customers today are considering the food quality in the selection of a cafeteria. They visit the university cafeteria only once a week. Food quality, variety of menu, pricing, the quality of customer service, and the service

time were found to be good at the university cafeteria. The serving portion was evaluated to only be average. Frequency of visits, food quality, menu selection and pricing, quality of customer service, time of service and portion serving are found to be important factors in evaluating a university cafeteria.

Recommendations

In line with the conclusions, the researchers strongly recommended university cafeteria management to develop more appealing and well-thought-out marketing tactics in order to attract a broader range of customers and, hopefully, loyal customers.

Furthermore, in order to improve food quality in the university cafeteria, the researchers proposed that the serving portion of food be sufficient to satisfy the customers' needs and appetites, and also that the university cafeteria management consider a reasonable menu price. Because the majority of the customers are students, their only source of income is their school allowance.

Additionally, the researchers recommended that university cafeteria management and staff must improve its services in order to satisfy customers and encourage repeat patronage.

Lastly, the information from this study will act as a reference and a guide for future researchers who are conducting a study on a similar topic. Using this study from a different perspective would give the study more diversity and a wider range of outcomes.

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