

Dining Preferences of Mall-Goers in Bohol

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ABSTRACT— *The study is to assess the level of preference in dining establishments of mall-goers in Bohol. Specifically, the study sought to answer the respondent's profile in terms of the age, gender, nationality and income. Moreover, the perceived level of preference of mall-goers and problems encountered during their dining experience, the significant relationship and difference between their profiles and level of preference were assessed. In the views thereof, the study would propose a program to retain customer satisfaction and loyalty in the service offered by establishment.*

This study utilized descriptive-correlational method of research using a survey questionnaire to determine the level of preference of customer in dining establishments. The sample size was 50 mall-goers using purposive sampling. The locale of the survey was in Tagbilaran City as a hub of commerce and lone city of the province of Bohol where we can find the Island City Mall. The survey used a researcher made survey questionnaire which was composed of three parts: profile, level of preference of mall-goers in terms of food variation and taste, service personnel, price and ambience based on the Likert rating scale. Treatment of data were done using frequency count and per cent distribution; weighted mean and ranking; regression; and one-way ANOVA.

Results showed that most of the respondents were young adults with ages below 20 years old, mostly were females and Asian with below P10, 000.00 income. Furthermore, it showed that customers have problems with the staffs because of their slow and not good service. This amplified the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the respondent's profiles in terms of age, gender, and nationality with their level of preference, and there is a significant difference between the respondent's profile in terms of income and their level of preference. It was concluded that respondents highly preferred all of the attributes in a dining establishment in terms of food variation and taste, service personnel, price, and ambience. Finally, with the findings of the study, it was recommended that management should conduct seminars and trainings for job enrichment, motivational patterns and goal consciousness for food and drink provision.

Keywords— Dining Preference, Mall-Goers, Bohol

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumer preference refers to a person's preference for one thing over another. Rai & Rawal (2019) investigate that consumer preference is primarily to choose the alternative that is most likely to satisfy the consumer's need or want among the many possibilities available. As a result of their actions, consumers prefer to display when purchasing or searching for a product.

Currently, there are recession that makes a crowded competitive environment even more tasking for food services. To compete customer traffic on what food services to select, most establishment offers a differentiated services for more options to venture that will cater the needs of the customer. Suitable chosen food channels are seen to be effective outlets to counter and attract customer in malls. However, the need for further study on customer preference must be currently assessed to pin point options on preferred preferences by mall-goers.

Henceforth, customer preference is the subjective (individual) tastes, as measured by utility, of various bundles of goods. Every customer has different preferences, different needs and wants. For a business to prosper, satisfying them is an important thing to do. Customer satisfaction has become an important aspect of the restaurant industry. A restaurant business can only satisfy their customer's needs if they get to identify and understand their preferences that they can get to anticipate their needs and deliver beyond their expectations on both products and services. Thus, increases restaurant revenue and customer loyalty and retention.

The growth of Tourism in Bohol brings larger business opportunities especially in the dining establishments in mall

that tap in the province. This growth brings in foreign restaurant brands and the expansion of the home-grown ones. Moreover, this industry has experienced the entrance of many investors who are willing to meet all the needs of their customers.

With the fast-growing competition of establishment, the level of satisfaction among mall-goers comes along. This brought several ways to find better options to attract customers and regain loyalty. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the various reasons among goers to segment assistance based on the preferred choices. With this, the undertaking would augment valuable input to the development of marketing communication strategies to attract more customers and goers.

However, in reality, environmental factors like the facilities and services contribute to the choices of goers. More so, mall owners who are unable to identify reasons why goers became just an ordinary customer explains the level of satisfaction on the services and the regular visits. This implies the nature of loyalty among mall-goers and customers in the establishment.

Considering the abovementioned realities, the fast-growing numbers of mall-goers and the tend to be more selective in their preferences needs a congruent action drawn from the needs and preferences of mall-goers in order secure and achieve return of visits among them. Thus, the assessment of the level of preferences in terms of the prevailing factors; food variations and taste; service personnel; price and ambience must be evaluated.

Therefrom, the evaluation of the enumerated factors would keep track on to what extent of their preferences to bridge the gap that might create loop hole that would hinder customer satisfaction. Subsequently, customer satisfaction is an important aspect of customer loyalty leading to customer retention (Karki & Panthi, 2018). Therefore, the study would give insights to the identified restaurants as respondents of the study to effectively utilize these factors and gain customer loyalty and satisfaction.

1. OBJECTIVES

This study assessed the level of preference in dining establishments of mall-goers in Bohol. The findings of this study served as basis for designing a proposed action plan.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1. age;
 - 1.2. gender;
 - 1.3. nationality; and
 - 1.4. income?
2. What is the level of preference of the respondents on the dining establishments in terms of:
 - 2.1. food variations and taste;
 - 2.2. service personnel;
 - 2.3. price; and
 - 2.4. ambience?
3. What are the problems encountered by the mall-goers for the dining service offered by the dining establishments?
4. Is there a significant relationship between respondent's profiles with their level of preference?
5. Is there a significant difference between the respondent's profile and their level of preference?
6. Based on the findings, what action plan can be proposed as an output of the study?

Null Hypotheses

H₀1: *There is no significant relationship between the respondents' profile and their perceived level of preference.*

H₀2: *There is no significant difference between the respondents' profile and their perceived level of prefer offered by dining establishments in terms of food variation and taste, service personnel, price and ambience.*

2. METHODOLOGY

The researchers assessed the data gathered by means of descriptive approach using a survey questionnaire to determine the level of preference of mall goers in dining establishments. Pilot testing was also conducted to determine its validity and reliability. The locale of the study was situated in Tagbilaran City as a hub commerce and a lone city of Bohol where one of the most prestigious malls is located. There where the five (5) restaurants strategically located in the said mall namely Jollibee, Prawn Farm, Rai Rai Ken, Max's, and The Buzz Café. Furthermore, the identified respondents were the ten (10) mall-goers per restaurant which then totaled to fifty (50) using purposive sampling.

The researchers assured the respondents that their answers would be taken with utmost confidentiality. The gathered data was subject to scrutiny, tabulation, and analysis to answer the questions of the study. The data were treated using Simple Percentage for the profile; weighted mean for the level of preference; Regression analysis for the relationship between respondents' profile and their level of preference; and One-way ANOVA for the difference between two variables.

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent and Survey Questionnaire were distributed to the target respondents of the study. These were collected based on the agreed date set by both the researcher and the respondents. Coercion was avoided because the participation was voluntary and that informed consent was given to respondents. The data gathering process considered voluntary participation, ensured confidentiality and the respondents were informed of their right to refuse whenever there was harassment occurring during the conduct of the study. Respondents were given a letter before the conduct of the study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Initially, the study seeks to determine the demographic profile of the respondents, which then leads to the identification of the level of job satisfaction and the level of coping utilized by the respondents during stress. The study also dwells on the degree of relationship and difference with the profile, perceived level of preference, giving proposed action plan to improve products and services attaining to customer satisfaction.

Table 1. Gender of the Respondents

Variable	Categories	n=50	
		F	%
Age	50-60 years old	7	14
	40-49 years old	5	10
	30-39 years old	11	22
	20-29 years old	11	22
	Below 20 years	16	32
Gender	Male	18	36
	Female	32	64
Nationality	Filipino	45	90
	Canadian	2	4
	Australian	1	2
	American	2	4
Income	50,000 and above	2	4
	40,000-49,000	2	4
	30,000-39,000	5	10
	20,000-29,000	7	14
	10,000-19,000	9	18
	Below 10,000	25	50

Age.

Henceforth, the demographic profile of the respondents, as shown in Table 1, entails the respondent’s age, gender, civil status and monthly income. Additionally, fifty (50) respondents were gathered based on the selection process done during the conduct of the study. As the data shows, most of these individuals were dominated by below 20 years old which got 32%, females 64%, Filipinos 90%, and an income of below 10,000 which got 50%.

The second essential part of this research is the level dining preference. Scholars like (Rai & Rawal, 2019) defined consumer preference as “choosing an alternative that is most likely to satisfy the consumer’s need or want among many possibilities available”.

Table 2.1. Level of Preference in Terms of Food Variation and Taste

N=50

Area	Indicator	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Food Variation and Taste	Smell of food that stimulates appetite	3.54	Highly Preferred
	Crispness of the food that is attracting them towards the restaurant	3.48	Highly Preferred
	Food that is served in appropriate temperature	3.32	Highly Preferred
	Fresh ingredients are used in preparing the foods	3.40	Highly Preferred
	Food presentation that is visually attractive	3.42	Highly Preferred
	Various colors of food that attract their attention	3.22	Preferred
	Varieties of food components within the set of meal	3.24	Preferred
	Food presentation that is relatively organized	3.32	Highly Preferred
	Restaurant that offers variety of food items	3.32	Highly Preferred
	Foods are served according to the picture	3.14	Preferred
		Weighted Mean	3.34

Table 2 narrates the items that define level of preference as included in the tool. Table 2.1 shows the level of preference of mall-goers in terms of food variation and taste. It further shows that the food variations and taste which is considered highly preferred had an overall weighted mean of 3.34%. It is noted that the customers were smell of food that stimulates appetite ranked first with an average mean of 3.54% interpreted as highly preferred, followed by crispness of the food that is attracting them has a weighted mean of 3.48% which is also interpreted as highly preferred. The lowest indicator got the weighted mean of 3.14% where foods are served according to the picture and interpreted as preferred. The result implies that the customers highly preferred in selecting a dining establishment where smell of food that stimulates appetite is presence that makes them feel attracted and motivated.

Food preferences interact with different food choice factors (such as advertising, functional, health, price, sensory and socio-cultural) and sociodemographic features of the consumer (such as age, economic condition, education, gender, region of residence and size of the place of residence), which again interacts with the frequency of food intake (Wadolowska, Babicz-Zielinska & Czarnocinska, 2008).

Table 2.2. Level of Preference in Terms of Service Personnel

N= 50

Area	Indicator	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Service Personnel	Staff shows sincerity in correcting anything wrong	3.50	Highly Preferred
	Staff serving them according to the time promised	3.48	Highly Preferred
	Staff serving them the food exactly as what they ordered	3.42	Highly Preferred
	Staff maintaining speed and quality of service during busy times	3.30	Highly Preferred
	Staff providing prompt and quick service	3.26	Highly Preferred
	Staff putting extra efforts in handling customers' special request	3.54	Highly Preferred
	Staffs are available upon request	3.32	Highly Preferred
	Staffs that are friendly and willing to help	3.28	Highly Preferred
	Staff treating each customers with respect	3.34	Highly Preferred
		Weighted Mean	3.38

The service personnel as seen in Table 2.2 is considered highly preferred by the respondents with an overall weighted mean of 3.38%. The indicator staff putting extra efforts in handling customers' special request got the highest weighted mean of 3.54% which is interpreted as highly preferred, followed by staff shows sincerity in correcting anything wrong, with a weighted mean of 3.50% interpreted as highly preferred; lastly the staff providing prompt and quick service got the lowest rank with a weighted mean of 3.26%, interpreted as highly preferred.

Table 2.3 states the level of preference of mall-goers in terms of price.

Table 2.3 Level of Preference of Mall-Goers in Terms of Price

N=50

Area	Indicator	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Price	Restaurant offers best possible price plan that will meet their needs	3.42	Highly Preferred
	The price of the food that is reasonable	3.30	Highly Preferred
	The costs that is appropriate for what they get	3.24	Preferred
	The price of the food that is affordable	3.34	Highly Preferred
	Weighted Mean	3.34	Highly Preferred

According to one of the most widely accepted explanations of motivation offered by Vroom (1964) in his Expectancy Theory, the cognitive process theory of motivation, the basic notions that people will be motivated to exert a high level of effort when they believe there are relationships between the effort they put forth, the performance they achieve, and the outcomes/ rewards they receive.

Thus, the study implies that service personnel in their sincerity in correcting mistakes and providing the prompt service to the customer indicate personnel responsiveness. Hence, establishment together with its personnel are branded to be responsible in communicating customers problem and providing solutions. Thus, to be successful, establishment should look into responsiveness in the perspective of the customers rather than in the establishment perspective to understand loop holes in service quality especially in the services provided by their personnel.

It is presented the item price has weighted mean of 3.34% which is interpreted as highly preferred. The highest indicator with a weighted mean of 3.42% is restaurant offers best possible price plan that will meet their needs which is interpreted as highly preferred, followed by the indicator that the price of the food is affordable with a weighted mean of 3.34%, interpreted as highly preferred, and lowest rank indicator is the costs that is appropriate for what they get with a weighted mean of 3.24%, interpreted as preferred.

According to price discrimination theory, prices are expected to vary in response to differences in demand in different markets or for different seats in the same venue (Miravete, 2016).

Table 2.4 Level of Preference of Mall-Goers in Terms of Ambience
N=50

Area	Indicator	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Ambience	Dining area that is thoroughly clean	3.68	Highly Preferred
	Rubbish area that is clean and tidy	3.56	Highly Preferred
	Furniture like tables and chair are clean	3.42	Highly Preferred
	If visible, kitchen that looks clean	3.44	Highly Preferred
	Pleasant and enticing smell from the surrounding of the restaurant	3.30	Highly Preferred
	Music and sound that gives pleasant feeling	3.10	Preferred
	Temperature that is comfortable inside the restaurant	3.32	Highly Preferred
	Interior designs and decorations are visually appealing	3.36	Highly Preferred
	Seating arrangements that are comfortable and that gives enough space	3.44	Highly Preferred
		Weighted Mean	3.40

The data pertaining to ambience has a weighted mean of 3.40% which is interpreted as highly preferred. The highest rank indicator is dining area that is thoroughly clean with a weighted mean of 3.68%, is interpreted as highly preferred; followed by rubbish area that is clean and tidy got a weighted mean of 3.56%, interpreted as highly preferred, and the lowest rank indicator is music and sound that gives pleasant feeling with a weighted mean of 3.10% which is interpreted as preferred.

According to hygiene and sanitation theory and practice, the requirement for hygiene and sanitation is core to any hospitality industry world over. Any lapses in the theory and practice will always witness hundreds of thousands of people suffer from food poisoning, water borne infections and other health threats to both staff and guests at the hospitality industries. On the other hand, providing a complete and memorable dining experience is what helps your restaurant achieve an ambience enjoyed by customers. When you appeal to a diner's senses, sight, smell and hearing they enjoy being at your restaurant. So, if you're looking to create or improve your restaurant's ambience, think of these three categories to help you achieve the perfect atmosphere that will be a critical factor in your attempt to be profitable long term (Othman, Shehata, Mahmoud & Mohamed, 2016).

Table 3. Problems Encountered by the Mall-Goers for the Dining Service Offered by the Dining Establishment
N=50

Problems Encountered by the Mall-Goers	<i>f</i>	Rank
Service is not good and is slow	22	1
Staffs are unfriendly and not in mood to smile	9	2
The food is not properly cooked	9	2
Food served was wrong	7	4
Dining area is not clean and unorganized	7	4
The place is crowded	7	4
Dining temperature should be improve	2	7
Staffs are untidy	2	7
Utensils are dirty and plates smell like a dishwashing soap	2	7
Food presentation is not good and appealing	1	10
Prices are too high	1	10
Decorations are not appealing	1	10

It is indicated that the first rank got a frequency of 22 which is service is not good and is low, followed by the second rank with a frequency of 9 which shows that staffs are unfriendly and not in mood to smile and the food is not properly cooked, while the last rank got a frequency of 1 which is food presentation is not good and appealing, prices are too high, and decorations are not appealing.

The importance of customer service is that customers care about whether your business treats them well. You may have fabulous products at great prices, but if your frontline employees are rude or unhelpful, 68% of customers say that's a deal breaker. If your customer service and quality are top notch, you're much more likely to win their return business. Customer satisfaction comes from the experiences of consumers by comparing expected level of service, environment, reasonable price and expected quality products. Customer's loyalty and repurchase intention need overall customer satisfaction, to achieve the realization of company's goals and objectives and determine its impact in the organization and customers such as improving profitability, high market share, customer's loyalty and probability of purchase where the researcher aimed to identify these problems and issues for future improvement (Uddin, 2019).

Table 4. Significant Relationship between Respondents' Profile and their Level of Preference

Model	T	p-value	Significance	Results
(Constant)	3.55	0.001	Significant	Reject H ₀
Age	-3.11	0.003*	Significant	Reject H ₀
Gender	2.26	0.029*	Significant	Reject H ₀
Nationality	3.03	0.004*	Significant	Reject H ₀
Income	4.05	0.0001*	Significant	Reject H ₀

*significant at $p < 0.05$

It also illustrates the result of the regression analysis of mall-goers overall level of dining preference with the profile as predictor comprising age, gender, nationality, and income. The p-values of 0.003, 0.029, 0.004, and 0.0001 for age, gender, nationality, and income reveals that all of the profile mentioned are predictors of dining preference since all the p-values are lesser than the significant level of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and there is a significant relationship between the respondent's profile and their level of preference.

Table 5. Significant Relationship between Respondents' Profile and their Level of Preference

Model		F	p-value	Significance	Results
Age	Between Groups	0.621	0.650	Not significant	Accept H _o
	Within Groups				
Gender	t-value	-1.842	0.072	Not significant	Accept H _o
	Male				
	Female				
Nationality	Between Groups	0.660	0.581	Not significant	Accept H _o
	Within Groups				
Income	Between Groups	4.352	0.003*	Significant	Reject H _o
	Within Groups				

**significant at p<0.05*

The data showed that the p-value in terms of age which is 0.650; gender 0.072; and nationality 0.581 is greater than 0.05 level of significance. It means that the null hypothesis was accepted and that there is no significant difference between the respondent's age, gender, nationality and their nationality and their perceived level of preference. Moreover, the p-value in terms of income which is 0.003 is less than 0.05 level of significance. It means that the null hypothesis was rejected and there is a significant difference between the respondent's income and their perceived level of preference.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The level of preference in dining establishments of mall-goers has been investigated based on the factors mentioned in this study. Furthermore, it reflected a high level of preference among the goers. However, the goers' perceptions are greatly influenced by the performance of the service provider because customers will evaluate the service quality when the service is delivered to them. Hence, the atmosphere of the area was found to be essential in the preferences of respondents. Consumers are more likely to be satisfied with a restaurant's service and return if they believe it is of high quality. Guests were also displeased with the institution and less inclined to return when the restaurant's physical environment was not up to standard. A restaurant's ambiance has a direct impact on how a customer perceives the establishment. The perception of the environment may be positive or negative, influencing consumer satisfaction levels.

The researcher recommends future research studies and the adoption of an action plan for dining establishments in Bohol.

1. For future researchers to pursue related agenda in the hospitality industry, the following topics are endorsed:
 - 1.1. Assessment of Service and Product among Dining Establishments in Bohol;
 - 1.2. Customer Satisfaction Level in Bohol's Dining Establishments; and
 - 1.3. Managerial Practices and Training Protocols in Bohol Restaurant Industry.
2. Adoption of the proposed action plan.

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