Journal of Management Studies and Development
Vol. 4, No. 01, pp. 75-90
journal.iistr.org/index.php/JMSD
DOI: 10.56741/jmsd.v4i01.881

Servicescape of Casual Dining Restaurants in Rinconada, Philippines

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received 2 March 2025
Revised 4 April 2025
Accepted 6 April 2025

Keywords
Casual Dining Restaurant
Customer Expectation
Customer Perception
Servicescape

ABSTRACT

Despite the escalating popularity, one of the most common reasons for casual dining restaurant failure is the inability to fulfill the servicescape expectations and experiences of its customers. This study determined the servicescape of casual dining restaurants in Rinconada. More specifically, the study presents the demographic profile of respondents in terms of age, gender, marital status, highest educational attainment, monthly income and frequency of visits. Assess the casual dining restaurant servicescape expectations and perceptions of customers along with ambient conditions, spatial layout, décor, signs, symbols and artifacts. Quantitative correlational research design and descriptive methods with an adopted questionnaire were used in the study. Stratified Random Sampling was used with 395 respondents that are customers of registered and DOT Accredited restaurants. That there is a highly significant relationship exists between servicescape expectations and perceptions of customers where the greater the expectation the better the perception. The proposed recommendations are deemed necessary as they serve as a tool for casual dining restaurants to create consistent, high-quality, and customer-centric environments that contribute to overall business success and competitiveness.

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Introduction

The food industry faces competition from today's increasingly affluent diners. Since the servicescape of a restaurant has a big impact on making customers feel satisfied and at ease, more and more people are visiting restaurants for the experience of the servicescape rather than merely for the food [1]-[3]. Restaurants need to be aware of what customers are expecting from them and how they perceive their restaurant servicescape, as these factors will influence their future purchasing decisions, which bring stability, security, and joy to the business in addition to earning income.

Furthermore, a restaurant has to have a well-thought-out business strategy and plans, just like any other type of business. The restaurant industry uses many different concepts. It covers every facet of the business, including the ambient condition, layout, and decor. To attain a positive customer image that corresponds with customer expectations, restaurants must furnish a cozy, orderly, and peaceful eating area [4]. It therefore had a significant impact on consumer experiences across its servicescape.

According to Du [5], there are several types of restaurant concepts; nonetheless, the underlying idea of a restaurant must be formed and understood since it serves as the foundation for the rest of the business strategy. A casual dining establishment offers full service. The environment is laid-back and cozy. The casual dining menu is quite affordable, making it suitable for all budgets. Families are drawn in by the atmosphere, setting, and design of the restaurant. It provides service at the table, reasonable prices, classic cuisine with emphasized dishes and some customized sauces and decorations, and a more relaxing, friendlier décor and environment [6].

Considering the infrastructural modifications, the restaurant ought to prioritize innovation as well. They should be innovative and know what's going on, including customer expectations and perceptions in terms of design and trends, to increase their profit margin. Restaurant innovations include innovations in restaurant décor, ambient conditions, and spatial layout [7]. Innovation supports both business concept upgrading and market survival.

The servicescape concept aims to describe how individuals behave in service contexts so that environments may be designed in terms of behavioral responses. The restaurant's services should be consistent with its ambiance, décor, and cuisine [8]. The face of the restaurant goes hand in hand with its amenities, setting, style, and menu. Since many customers expect and want to have a positive dining experience, including the calm and appealing atmosphere that elevates their dining experience. Thus, restaurants need to plan, implement, evaluate, and improve on many aspects of their physical environment and appearance on a regular and continuous basis in order to achieve the highest levels of customer satisfaction [9].

Likewise, the researchers' expectations concerning the servicescape of casual dining restaurants in Rinconada were not fulfilled, particularly with regard to ambient conditions, spatial arrangement, décor, signs, symbols, and artifacts. In addition, the researchers had an unfavorable perception during the dining experience as the casual dining restaurant servicescape had to be improved. Given the high expense involved in upgrading their service landscape, restaurateurs focus primarily on the distinctive qualities of their products. Hence, customers today anticipate an amazing dining experience with superb service that positively influences their well-being, rather than only being focused on the food and beverages. As a result, they have been in business for a short time.

Nevertheless, the success of the food service industry will be impacted by restaurateurs' enhanced understanding of customer expectations and perceptions of the physical attributes and ambiance of casual dining restaurants, as well as how to enhance their business to guarantee a first-rate dining experience. Additionally, the output of these studies may act as a reference basis for restaurateurs as they work to continuously improve their servicescape to satisfy patrons and meet their expectations while dining in Rinonada's casual dining establishments, which can have a significant impact on the long-term success of the business.

Material and Methods

A. Research Design

The current study employs a quantitative correlational research design. To investigate correlations between two variables in a particular population, quantitative correlational research has been utilized. Meanwhile, quantitative designs had been utilized in conjunction with descriptive methods. A fact-finding study that correctly analyzes an investigation's results is known as a descriptive research method. This methodology seeks to explore a range of statistical calculations, including averages, frequencies, and other analogous techniques that are helpful strategies to employ while studying attributes [10].

B. Respondents

The participants in the study consisted of 395 customers and tourists of Rinconada's casual dining restaurants, which are both DOT-accredited and registered. The researchers thus made in-person visits to 15 casual dining restaurants in Rinconada that are registered and accredited by the DOT. These restaurants provide full-service dining, table service, and affordable eating options in an interesting atmosphere. Hence, to find out the estimated number of customers in a month, the researchers personally visited 15 casual dining restaurants in Rinconada and spoke with the owner, manager, supervisor, and staff. Subsequently, the researchers

aggregated data on estimated customers for a given month and consulted a researcher's statistician to ascertain the exact sample size or number of respondents using Slovin's formula.

Furthermore, customers and tourists of legal age who have dined at Rinconada's registered restaurants and DOT-accredited restaurants more than twice, those casual dining restaurants that have not engaged in franchising, have been in business for at least two years, and stay in business until 2024 are eligible to participate in the study.

C. Research Instrument

The survey questionnaire used is a modified adapted questionnaire from the study of Htut [10]. The research instrument consists of two parts based on the study's objective. The first part consists of the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, marital status, highest educational attainment, monthly income, and frequency of visiting casual dining restaurants; the second part pertains to the casual dining restaurant servicescape expectation and perception of customers along with ambient conditions, spatial layout, décor, signs, symbols, and artifacts.

A face-to-face validation was conducted to see whether the questionnaire corresponded with the study's objectives. Thus, as part of the tool development process, the researchers solicited feedback and suggestions from the panel of examiners, statisticians, two industry experts with a bachelor's degree in hotel and restaurant management (HRM) and three years of experience working in casual dining restaurants, and one from academic settings, an instructor with a doctorate in International Hospitality and Tourism Management (PhD-ITHM) and been in the academia for seven years.

Before commencing data collection, the researchers conducted a reliability test by distributing it to ten customers of casual dining restaurants outside Rinconada, more specifically in Naga City, Camarines Sur. Cronbach's Alpha reliability testing results for the casual dining restaurant servicescape expectation of customers in terms of ambient condition, spatial layout, décor, signs, symbols, and artifacts have cronbach's in which it denotes that the questionnaire is reliable and the researchers can proceed to data collection while also ensuring that the respondents included in the reliability testing are not included during data gathering.

D. Statistical Treatment of Data

Various statistical methods were used to organize and examine the gathered data. Based on the numerous factors considered in the study, responses were methodically categorized and collated.

- **Cronbach's Alpha -** Is a measure of internal consistency, or how closely connected a set of elements are as a whole. It is regarded as a measure of scale reliability. It is used in the present study to test the reliability or consistency of a survey questionnaire to

ensure it is reliable and efficient for respondents to answer based on their expectations and perceptions of the servicescape of a casual dining restaurant in Rinconada.

- **Slovin's Formula -** Used to compute the sample size required to attain a particular interval of confidence while sampling a population. To calculate the minimum sample size of customers at a casual dining restaurant in Rinconada based on an acceptable margin of error and ascertain the precise number of respondents, the study utilized Slovin's formula
- **Percentage -** Is used to find the amount or share of something in terms of 100. The percentage is used to evaluate extensive data and hence presents an accurate value. In this study, it was used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, marital status, highest educational attainment, monthly income, and frequency of visiting casual dining restaurants.
- **Weighted Mean -** Is an average determined by assigning various weights to certain individual variables. It indicates the average values of a set of data. The casual dining restaurant servicescape expectations and perceptions of customers were determined using a weighted mean.
- **Pearson r correlation -** The most frequent method for assessing a linear correlation. It is used to determine if two quantitative variables have a linear relationship between them. In the current study, it was utilized to determine the degree of relationship between servicescape expectations and customer perceptions of customers.

Results and Discussion

A. Demographic Profile: Age and Gender

Fig. 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondent in terms of age and gender.

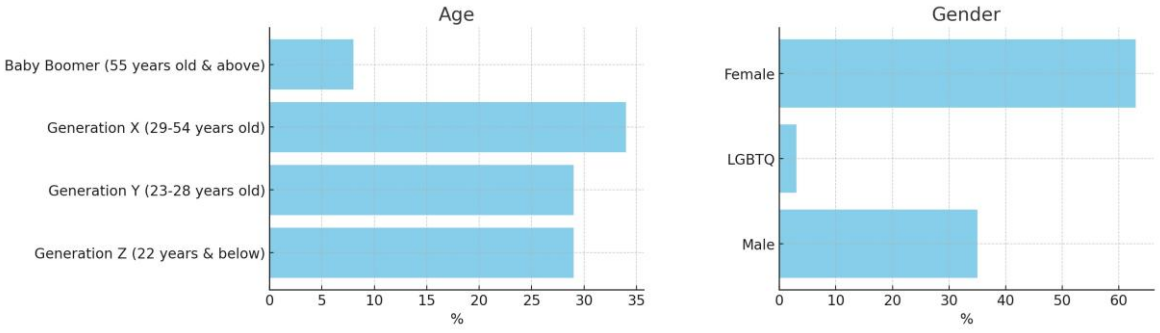


Fig. 1. Age and Gender Characteristics

1. Age

In terms of age, out of 395 respondents, ranked 1st is Generation X (29–54 years old) with 134 (34%), ranked 2nd are Generation Y (23–28 years old) and Generation Z (22

years and below) with 114 (29%), and ranked 3rd is the Baby Boomer (55 years old and above) with 33 (8%).

This implies that customers between the ages of 29 and 54 prefer casual dining restaurants over those belonging to other age groups, given that they tend to have hectic lives with demanding jobs and obligations to their families. A laid-back ambiance and prompt service are hallmarks of casual dining restaurants, which make them ideal for individuals with busy schedules. People in this age bracket value the chance to meet with friends, family, or coworkers in a relaxed atmosphere without the formality of fine dining, and casual dining establishments offer a pleasant setting for networking and socializing. Nevertheless, since casual dining restaurants are family-friendly and serve both adults and children, they are appealing to people in their 30s and 40s who have small children and are looking for a dining alternative that can suit a variety of age groups.

On the other hand, 55 years of age and above was the least preferred age group to dine in casual dining restaurants. These people belong to the retirement age group. They have distinct spending habits and don't frequently eat at casual dining establishments since they think cooking at home is more economical. Furthermore, the aforementioned age groups exhibit a greater awareness of health issues and have a preference for better eating alternatives or home-cooked meals that are not usually found in casual dining restaurants. Because of their upbringing, they now favor more conventional dining experiences than informal ones, such as formal or fine dining restaurants.

Quintal [11] said that casual dining restaurants usually feature a more laid-back, reasonably priced, and informal atmosphere. People in their 30s and 40s who prefer to dine in casual dining restaurants where they can have enjoyable meals in a cozy environment and interact with friends, family, relatives, and coworkers would find this intriguing. Avraham et al. [12] mentioned that older individuals prefer to cook at home rather than go to casual restaurants because they have developed routines and eating habits that are more in line with their tastes and lifestyles. In addition, Rianmora [13] stated that 55 years of age and older prefer calmer, more private dining situations, which leads people to seek out different kinds of venues than casual dining restaurants due to the social ambiance of particular dining establishments.

2. Gender

In terms of gender, ranked 1st is the female with 247 (63%) of the respondents, 2nd is the male with 137 (35%) of the respondents, and 3rd is the LGBTQ with 11 (3%) of the respondents.

This implies that when eating out, women typically value conversation with others and a laid-back ambiance. Females are more fun when socializing. Thus, socialization is

encouraged in casual dining restaurants owing to their relaxed atmosphere. The fact that casual dining restaurants offer a mix of affordability and a pleasurable dining experience appeals to women, who are thus more value- or price-conscious when dining out while making better dietary decisions and paying more attention to health. People who are looking for wholesome selections appreciate casual dining restaurants as they provide a range of menu options, including healthier ones. Men are less drawn to this casual restaurant that fulfills women's needs and desires.

LGBTQ, on the other hand, rated lowest in terms of gender for the reason that they frequently opt for accepting and inclusive settings that include dining and dancing. These areas can offer LGBTQ people a setting where they feel free to express themselves. For this reason, socializing is a big part of LGBTQ culture, and places that combine dining and dancing may help individuals meet, celebrate, and form communities. LGBTQ people decide to indulge in other restaurants rather than casual dining venues because of their demands and desires. Pratama et al. [14] mentioned that females wanted a variety of options where they could unwind. Their preference for casual dining restaurants stems from the fact that these restaurants provide a wide range of cuisines at affordable prices, as well as a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere where they can socialize, which appeals to women. On the contrary, Čvirik et al. [15] stated that females are more health-conscious than males, so when they select a restaurant, they look for one that offers healthier options in addition to a wide menu. Due to this, women are drawn to and prefer to dine at casual dining restaurants as they provide healthier meals.

Hence, Thepsourinthone [16] mentioned that LGBTQ people quest for a venue that can accommodate a variety of social activity preferences by offering dining and dancing in addition to other services that provide a comprehensive experience. LGBTQ people are drawn to welcoming environments with dance floors because they provide them with a platform to celebrate their identities and experience the delight of being who they are.

B. Demographic Profile: Marital Status and Educational Attainment

Fig. 2 presents the demographic profile of the respondent in terms of marital status and highest educational attainment.

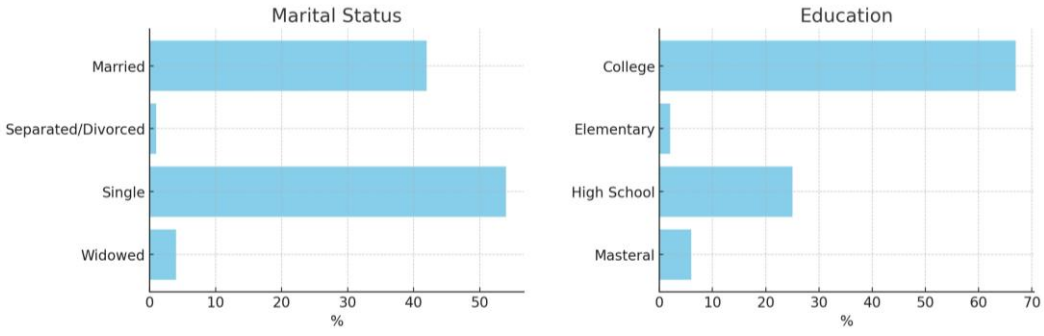


Fig. 2. Marital Status and Education Characteristics

1. Marital Status

In terms of marital status, data shows that out of 395 respondents ranked 1st are single with a 212 (54%), ranked 2nd is married with 164 (42%) and 3rd is the widowed with 15 (4%) and lastly the 4th ranked is the separated/divorced with 4 (1%) of the respondents. Dining in casual dining establishments can be more pleasant for lone or solo diners due to their laid-back and informal ambiance. Less formality is usually observed, enabling people to enjoy their meals without feeling uncomfortable. Additionally, diners who are single or alone prefer to eat at casual dining establishments over other restaurants because they feel more comfortable striking up a conversation with other customers or the staff in a relaxed setting. Further, shared tables and smaller tables are common seating options at casual dining restaurants. Due to this freedom of choice, customers who are dining alone or solo are drawn to select a seating arrangement that best fits their tastes and degree of comfort.

However, casual dining environments bring up memories of past experiences with past partners for those who are divorced or separated. When people dine at casual dining establishments, this brings up feelings and memories that they could find upsetting or unpleasant, as casual dining restaurants attract members of the family. To dwell on their ideas or recollections without the possible distractions of a casual and more convivial eating atmosphere, separated or bereaved people choose more secluded or personal settings.

According Turley [17], casual dining restaurants are more enticing to single people looking for a fun dining experience because of their laid-back environment, social chances with others, and adaptable seating. While Kremmer et al. [18] stated that eating alone can be difficult for those who are divorced or separated, particularly if they are accustomed to dining with loved ones, Casual dining restaurants intensify sensations of isolation or loneliness, which could affect their mood and bring up certain memories.

2. Highest Education Attained

In terms of the highest education attainment, the majority of the respondents are college graduates (67 percent) that are ranked 1st, high school graduates (25 percent) that are ranked 2nd, master's graduates (6 percent) that are ranked 3rd, and elementary school graduates (2 percent) that are ranked 4th.

College graduates value casual dining places' affordability, especially if they are just starting their professions. These restaurants make themselves more accessible to those on a budget by providing fairly priced meals. Since they encourage interaction, casual dining restaurants are well-liked for get-togethers and informal meetings. Hence, these environments are favorable for networking and social interactions, which helps college

graduates—who are frequently just beginning to establish their professional and social networks—choose and are more inclined to eat at casual dining restaurants.

Elementary school graduates, on the other hand, were rated the lowest since casual dining restaurants are typically thought of as being more costly than fast food or less expensive dining alternatives. When it comes to sticking to a budget, those with less education tend to favor less expensive options. It results in their decreased exposure to and experience with casual eating venues. An inclination toward more comfortable dining environments may result from ignorance of the menu options, manners, or atmosphere of casual dining establishments.

Ponnam & Balaji [19] stated that a quiet, affordable-priced menu and casual environments are what casual dining establishments usually provide. Graduates from colleges like this environment since it fits with their lifestyle and provides a relaxed, communal area without the formalities of fine dining.

Furthermore, Phillips et al. [20] stated that individuals are more at ease in familiar surroundings. Those with lower educational attainment tend to view casual dining restaurants as less familiar or intimidating due to their distinct decor, menus, and service styles. This is especially true because they perceive casual dining restaurants as offering more luxurious products, which makes them less likely to frequent or enjoy dining in casual dining restaurants.

C. Demographic Profile: Monthly Income and Frequency of Visits

Fig. 3 presents the demographic profile of the respondent in terms of monthly income and frequency of visits.

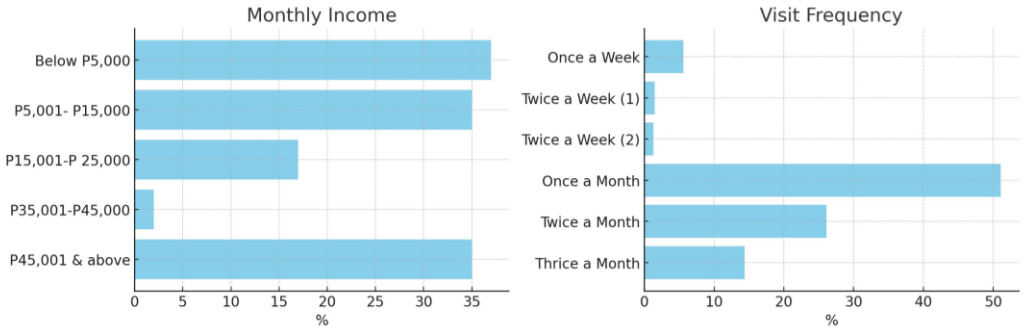


Fig. 3. Monthly Income and Visit Frequency Charactersitcs

1. Monthly Income

In terms of monthly income, data shows that out of 395 respondents, 37 percent (114) have a below-P5,0001 monthly income; second, P5,0001–15,000 with 35 percent (144); third, P 15,001–25,000 with 17 percent (65); fourth, P 45,001 and above with 35 percent (14); and lastly, P 35,001-45,000 with 2 percent (6).

The menu items at casual dining restaurants are reasonably priced, particularly at specific periods of the day or week. People with lower earnings may prefer to dine at casual dining restaurants since they are more affordable than fine or expensive dining establishments. Additionally, those with lesser means decide to treat themselves or their loved ones to a meal out. It could be viewed as a tiny luxury or a method to stray from their routine without having a big financial impact.

Higher earners, on the other hand, have more sophisticated culinary habits and want a more elegant dining experience. Gourmet food, elaborate presentation, and distinctive taste profiles are given top priority at fine dining places because they meet the higher standards of affluent people, who prefer and frequent fine dining facilities over casual dining ones. Fine dining establishments are known for their painstaking attention to detail in everything from presentation to service. Affluent individuals appreciate the level of sophistication and attention to detail that comes with fine dining experiences, which are sometimes lacking in casual settings, making them not frequently dine in casual dining restaurants.

Ponnam & Balaji [19] said that since casual restaurants serve affordable cuisine in a friendly setting, those with low income are among their customers. Even in casual settings, those with lower incomes like dining out for social reasons, such as visiting friends, relatives, or coworkers, where they may unwind and mingle in a setting that coincides with their budget. On the other hand, Parsa [21] has mentioned that since fine dining facilities provide a more personalized and customized experience, high-income individuals prefer to eat at more formal eating locations. Their expectations are often not met by casual dining restaurants when it comes to personalized service, wine pairings, and specialty menus. As a result, they tend to choose fine dining establishments for their dining experiences.

2. Frequency of Visit

In terms of frequency of visit, 202 (51.10%) visit the casual dining restaurants once a month, 123 (31.5%) twice a month, 57 (14.40%) thrice a month, 22 (5.60 percent) visit the restaurant once a week, 6 (1.50 percent) twice a week, and lastly, 5 (1.30%) visit the casual dining restaurants thrice a week.

Even at modest establishments, eating out may add up in cost. To better manage their money, some decide to attend casual dining venues once a month and set aside a specific amount for dining out. Moreover, people value home-cooked meals because of their health benefits. To maintain a better diet, they limit their dining out to rare events or treats, and they only go to casual restaurants once a month. Meanwhile, many values lead to healthy lives, and going out for dining frequently cannot support their nutritional or wellness objectives. To have greater control over the contents and nutritional value of their meals,

they decide to cook more frequently at home. Furthermore, those who value other pursuits or goals more than going out to eat. For some people, going out to casual dining restaurants three times a week is less common due to hobbies, travel schedules, or other obligations.

Nonetheless, other individuals just like the feeling of cooking in their own homes. They consider eating out to be a rare treat, and to combine the ease of cooking meals at home with the pleasure of dining out, they choose casual dining restaurants once a month [22].

Furthermore, clients value investing or saving more than going out to eat frequently. They will be able to put more money toward other discretionary expenses or financial objectives by cutting back on the number of restaurant trips. Additionally, patrons who have hectic work schedules or family obligations may find it difficult to set aside time for twice-weekly restaurant visits and instead favor speedier, more accessible dining alternatives [23].

D. Summary of Casual Dining Restaurant Servicescape Expectation and Perception of Customers.

Table 2 presents a casual dining restaurant servicescape expectations and perceptions of customers. A gap score shows that there is a gap between customers' expectations and perceptions. Thus, based on the composite mean for customer perception and expectation, there is a gap between customer perception and expectation. Ranked 1st is the spatial layout with a gap score of -0.16, followed by the ambient condition with a gap score of -0.15, Ranked 3rd is the signs, symbols, and artifacts (-0.14), and lastly, décor ranked 4th with a gap score of -0.11.

Table 1. Casual Dining Restaurant Servicescape Expectations and Perception of Customers

Servicescape	Perception Composite Mean	Expectation Composite Mean	Gap Score (P-E)	Rank
1. Ambient condition	3.18	3.33	-0.15	2
2. Spatial Layout	3.16	3.32	-0.16	1
3. Décor	3.26	3.37	-0.11	4
4. Signs, Symbols, and Artifacts	3.24	3.38	-0.14	3

This implies that there is a gap between what patrons expect and perceive from casual dining restaurants. The disparity is indicated by the spatial layout, ambient conditions, signage, symbols, artifacts, and décor, in particular. This gap must be fixed to maintain customer satisfaction, loyalty, and a positive reputation. When clients don't receive the experiences they expected, they are likely to be disappointed. It's important to understand, though, that a discrepancy between expectations and perceptions offers room for development as well. Restaurants may improve overall customer satisfaction by identifying areas where customers' experiences fall short of their expectations and making necessary adjustments. However,

restaurants may encourage long-term success and growth by actively striving to close this gap in the restaurant's ambient condition, spatial layout, décor, signs, symbols, and artifacts and meet or exceed client expectations. The recommendations, the study's research output, may therefore provide a basis for winding down these gaps and enabling restaurateurs to improve their servicescape and surpass their competitors, a factor that will have a major impact on the long-term viability of their business.

According to Ponnam & Balaji [19], casual dining restaurants should concentrate on consistent and regular assessment, improvement, and innovation in their servicescape that can help create a positive experience and align customer expectations to deal with servicescape issues and mitigate the gap between customer expectation and perception in casual dining restaurants. Furthermore, Ryu & Han [24] pointed out that a mismatch in perception might arise in casual dining establishments when the actual physical setting fails to match the desired expectation. To guarantee client happiness, these gaps must be examined and filled.

E. Significant relationship between servicescape expectations and perceptions of customers

Table 3 illustrates the relationship between servicescape expectations and the perceptions of customers. It was observed that the computed rho-values and p-values are highly significant since the p-values are all less than the alpha level.

Table 2. The significant relationship between expectations and perceptions

Expectation			**Ambient Condition (Perception)**	
	R-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Ambient Condition (Expectation)	.587**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Spatial Layout (Expectation)	.473**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Décor (Expectation)	.470**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Signs, Symbols, and Artifacts (Expectation)	.434**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Expectation				Spatial Layout (Perception)
	R-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Ambient Condition (Expectation)	.456**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Spatial Layout (Expectation)	.570**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Décor (Expectation)	.500**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Signs, Symbols, and Artifacts (Expectation)	.478**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Expectation				Décor (Perception)
	R-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Ambient Condition (Expectation)	.513**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Spatial Layout (Expectation)	.478**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Décor (Expectation)	.658**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Signs, Symbols, and Artifacts (Expectation)	.454**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Expectation				Signs, Symbols, and Artifacts (Perception)
	R-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Ambient Condition (Expectation)	.382**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Spatial Layout (Expectation)	.420**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Décor (Expectation)	.431**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant
Signs, Symbols, and Artifacts (Expectation)	.651**	0.000	Reject the Ho	Highly Significant

Significant Level at 0.05

This means that a highly significant relationship exists, where the greater the expectation, the better the perception. When customers have high expectations for a restaurant's ambience and overall experience, they may be more responsive to favorable feedback. They will recognize and appreciate the features that meet their expectations, resulting in a more positive overall perception. Customers inevitably interpret situations in light of their preconceived notions and expectations. They tend to minimize or rationalize any unpleasant aspects of their experience while focusing on the positive when expectations are high, which creates a more positive overall impression. Thus, customers naturally gravitate toward information that supports their own opinions and expectations and ignore or minimize information that contradicts them.

According to Hanks et al. [25], the important link between expectation and perception in the casual dining restaurant servicescape is that when customers have high expectations, they actively look for information to support them, which creates and improves their perception of their experience. In addition, it emphasizes the need to achieve or surpass client expectations in order to foster favorable views of the dining experience. This, in turn, promotes customer satisfaction, loyalty, and a strong brand image. In addition, Lin & Mattila [26] mentioned that casual dining restaurants must fulfill customer expectations and foster superb customer perception. When a restaurant repeatedly fails to meet these high expectations, it can lead to unhappiness and a negative reputation. Striking the right balance between setting reasonable expectations and achieving them is crucial to maintaining a great reputation in the competitive casual dining industry.

On the other hand, Lap-Kwong [8] stated that customers with high expectations may go into the dining experience with a positive mindset, hoping to enjoy the meal and have a nice time. This optimistic mentality could influence their view, causing consumers to focus on the restaurant's good elements.

The servicescape, or the physical and ambient environment of a restaurant, plays a crucial role in shaping customer expectations and satisfaction, especially in casual dining establishments such as those found in Rinconada, Philippines. According to Kim [27], elements like layout, cleanliness, lighting, and overall aesthetic contribute significantly to perceived service quality and satisfaction. This aligns with the findings of Khouw [28], who emphasized how atmospheric cues in hospitality spaces shape customer impressions and expectations. The tangible components of a restaurant, including décor, seating comfort, and spatial arrangement, directly impact how customers evaluate the service, making servicescape a vital consideration for restaurant managers aiming to enhance overall dining experience.

Customer satisfaction in casual dining is a multifaceted outcome influenced by expectations, perceived performance, and the ambiance of the service environment. Johnson [29] and Al-Msalam [30] both highlight the significance of expectation-performance congruence in determining satisfaction levels. When a restaurant's servicescape aligns with or exceeds customer expectations, it contributes positively to their overall experience and increases the likelihood of return visits. Moreover, the physical setting not only serves as a functional space but also as a communication tool that reflects the restaurant's identity, as noted by Baker et al. [31]. In this way, the servicescape acts as a silent yet powerful driver of customer loyalty and behavioral intentions.

Food quality, service interaction, and the environment must work synergistically to meet customer expectations in casual dining. As Ryu & Han [32] and Dube & Chebat [33] assert, these factors collectively influence customer satisfaction and future behavior, particularly when moderated by perceived price fairness. The importance of a well-managed servicescape is further supported by Wakefield [34], who identified a strong correlation between servicescape quality and customers' behavioral intentions. In the context of Rinconada, where local culture and customer preferences may vary, casual dining restaurants must pay attention not only to what is served but also to how the environment makes customers feel—comforted, welcomed, and valued.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the majority of the respondents belong to the age ranges of young and middle-aged adults, female, single, college graduates with monthly income below the minimum wage, and frequently visited casual dining restaurants once a month. In addition, The majority of the respondents to casual dining restaurants expect excellent ambient conditions, spatial layout, décor, and signs, symbols, and artifacts. Meanwhile, the majority of the respondents have a positive customer perception while dining in the casual dining restaurants in Rinconada. Lastly, there is a highly significant relationship between servicescape expectations and the perceptions of customers.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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