

# Gastronomic Promotional Mix and Service Quality as Determinants of Tourist Satisfaction

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## Article Details:

Received: 27 February 2026

Revised: 28 February 2026

Accepted: 05 March 2026

Published: 11 March 2026

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## Recommended Citation:

Llamo, R. S., Alimajen, M. M. (2026). Gastronomic Promotional Mix and Service Quality as Determinants of Tourist Satisfaction. *The International Review of Multidisciplinary Research*, 1 (3), 138-144.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18951660>

## Index Terms:

gastronomic promotional mix, service quality, tourist satisfaction, tourism advertisement, tourism publicity, tourism public relation, tourism public selling, tourism sale promotion, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy, tangibility, price perception, food quality, physical environment, accessibility, security and safety, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato,

**Abstract.** This study investigated the determinants of tourist satisfaction in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, focusing on the gastronomic promotional mix and service quality. Utilizing data from 390 local tourists across accredited restaurants, the research indicates a high level of overall satisfaction, particularly regarding food quality, the physical environment, and price perception. Conversely, accessibility was identified as a significant area for improvement. The analysis of the gastronomic promotional mix revealed that while tourism advertisement, publicity, and sales promotion are perceived as effective, public relations and personal selling require further refinement to maximize impact. Regarding service quality, respondents provided positive feedback on assurance, responsiveness, and empathy; however, the dimensions of tangibility and reliability received lower relative scores. Correlation analysis confirms a significant positive relationship between both the gastronomic promotional mix and service quality with tourist satisfaction. Notably, regression analysis reveals that service quality serves as the primary driver of the tourist experience. These findings suggest that stakeholders in Lake Sebu should prioritize the enhancement of service delivery—specifically focusing on reliability and tangibility—to foster positive long-term perceptions. While promotional strategies remain essential for attracting visitors, success depends on aligning these marketing efforts with actual service experiences. To exceed guest expectations and cultivate lasting customer loyalty, the local industry must ensure that the "Lake Sebu brand" promised in promotions is consistently delivered through high-quality, reliable service. This holistic approach will strengthen the region's position as a premier culinary and cultural destination.

## Introduction

The literature highlights a common issue in tourism destinations where promotional claims about authentic cuisine and cultural dining experiences are not always supported by consistent service quality. A destination may effectively market its culinary heritage, but problems such as inconsistent food preparation, poor service standards, and insufficient staff training may lead to negative tourist experiences. This issue is particularly evident in developing tourism areas like the Philippines, where rich culinary traditions exist but tourism infrastructure and service delivery remain less developed (Park, 2020; Magalong et al., 2020). In Lake Sebu, known for its unique T'boli culture and local dishes such as tilapia, there is significant gastronomic potential, yet observations suggest the need for a more structured and professional approach in promoting and delivering culinary tourism experiences.

The study is grounded in the growing competition among tourism destinations and the need for Lake Sebu to strengthen its tourism sector to maintain sustainability and competitiveness. When promotional strategies are not aligned with actual service quality, it may lead to tourist dissatisfaction, negative word-of-mouth, and a decline in the destination's competitive advantage (Lee et al., 2019). Thus, the research assumes that an effective gastronomic promotional mix can improve service quality dimensions such as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance, which are directly linked to tourist

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satisfaction. By analyzing the relationship among the promotional mix, service quality, and tourist satisfaction, the study aims to provide a clearer understanding of how these variables interact within the context of Lake Sebu tourism.

Existing literature also indicates a strong positive relationship between authentic gastronomic promotion and tourist satisfaction, particularly when supported by high-quality service delivery. Promotional strategies that emphasize cultural authenticity, such as the T'boli heritage and indigenous tilapia dishes, help shape positive tourist expectations and experiences when combined with knowledgeable staff, clean facilities, and culturally immersive environments (Kim, 2017; Sutiadiningsih, 2024; Park et al., 2022). Consequently, effective gastronomic promotion not only enhances tourist satisfaction but also strengthens the destination image and encourages repeat visits, contributing to the sustainable development of Lake Sebu's tourism industry leading to improved organizational performance and competitiveness.

## Methodology

The study used a quantitative, non-experimental descriptive–correlational research design to examine tourist satisfaction in Lake Sebu. This design allowed the researcher to describe the current level of tourist satisfaction, the effectiveness of the gastronomic promotional mix, and the quality of service provided. It also examined the relationship between these variables without manipulating them, making the approach practical and appropriate for understanding how they naturally interact. The research locale of the study was in Department of Tourism (DOT)–accredited restaurants located in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, a well-known ecotourism destination recognized for its cultural heritage and culinary attractions, particularly its tilapia dishes. The location was selected because it provides a suitable environment to investigate how gastronomic promotion and service quality influence tourist satisfaction.

The research respondents were 390 local tourists in the Philippines who visited Lake Sebu and had recently experienced dining in at least one DOT-accredited restaurant. Participants were required to be 18 years old or above, have visited the destination within the last six months, experienced gastronomic promotions such as brochures or social media advertisements, and consumed local food products or signature dishes. To analyze the collected data, the study used several statistical tools, including descriptive statistics such as the mean and standard deviation to summarize responses, as well as inferential statistics. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine relationships between variables, while regression and multiple regression analyses were applied to identify which factors significantly influence tourist satisfaction.

## Results and Discussion

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Tourism Advertisement	4.32	0.76	Very High
Tourism Publicity	4.20	0.54	Very High
Tourism Public Relation	3.88	0.60	High
Tourism Public Selling	4.16	0.54	High
Tourism Sale Promotion	4.21	0.55	Very High
<b>Over all mean</b>	<b>4.20</b>		<b>Very High</b>

*Table 1 The Level of Gastronomic Promotional Mix in terms of its indicators.*

Table 1 presents the level of Gastronomic Promotional Mix in terms of its indicators. The results show that Tourism Advertisement obtained the highest mean score of 4.32 with a standard deviation of 0.76, interpreted as Very High, indicating that advertising efforts are strongly observed and highly effective in promoting the destination. This is followed by Tourism Sale Promotion, which recorded a mean of 4.21 and a standard deviation of 0.55, also interpreted as Very High, suggesting that promotional activities such as discounts, events, and marketing offers are well implemented. Next is Tourism Publicity with a mean of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.54, likewise interpreted as Very High, reflecting consistent positive exposure of the destination through media and public channels. Tourism Public Selling ranked next with a mean of 4.16 and a standard deviation of 0.54, interpreted as High, indicating that personal selling strategies are often observed but slightly less prominent than other promotional approaches. Lastly, Tourism Public Relation recorded the lowest mean of 3.88 with a standard deviation of 0.60, interpreted as High, suggesting that while public relations activities are present, they may require further strengthening. Overall, the overall mean of 4.20, interpreted as Very High, indicates that the gastronomic promotional mix in Lake Sebu is generally well implemented and positively perceived by tourists.

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Reliability	4.18	0.52	High
Assurance	4.21	0.52	Very high
Responsiveness	4.20	0.51	Very high
Empathy	4.20	0.55	Very high
Tangibility	3.88	0.50	High
<b>Overall mean</b>	4.20		Very high

*Table 2 The Level of Service Quality in terms of its indicators.*

Table 2 presents the level of service quality in terms of its indicators as perceived by the respondents. The results show that Assurance obtained the highest mean score of 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.52, interpreted as Very High, indicating that tourists strongly perceive the staff as knowledgeable, courteous, and capable of providing trustworthy service. This is followed by Responsiveness and Empathy, both with a mean of 4.20; Responsiveness has a standard deviation of 0.51 while Empathy has 0.55, and both are interpreted as Very High, suggesting that employees promptly assist tourists and provide caring, personalized attention. Next is Reliability, which recorded a mean of 4.18 with a standard deviation of 0.52, interpreted as High, implying that services are generally dependable and consistently delivered. Lastly, Tangibility obtained the lowest mean of 3.88 with a standard deviation of 0.50, interpreted as High, indicating that the physical facilities, equipment, and staff appearance are satisfactory but may still have room for improvement. Overall, the overall mean of 4.20, interpreted as Very High, shows that the service quality in Lake Sebu is highly perceived by tourists and contributes positively to their overall experience.

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Price Perception	4.25	0.51	Very high
Food Quality	4.30	0.56	Very high
Physical Environment	4.29	0.56	Very high
Accessibility	4.15	0.53	High
Security and Safety	4.20	0.51	Very high
<b>Overall mean</b>	4.24	0.31	Very high

*Table 3. The Level of Tourist Satisfaction in terms of its indicators.*

Table 3 present the level of tourist satisfaction, as evidenced by an overall mean of 4.24 with a standard deviation of 0.31, which carries a verbal interpretation of Very High. Among the specific indicators, Food Quality emerged with the highest mean score of 4.30 with a standard deviation of 0.56, interpreted as Very High, closely followed by the Physical Environment with a mean of 4.29 and a standard deviation of 0.56, which also carries a Very High interpretation. Price Perception and Security and Safety likewise demonstrated strong performance, posting means of 4.25 with a standard deviation of 0.51 and 4.20 with a standard deviation of 0.51 respectively, both maintaining a Very High level of satisfaction. The indicator with the lowest mean score was Accessibility, which recorded a 4.15 with a standard deviation of 0.53, resulting in a verbal interpretation of High. Overall, the narrow range of standard deviations across all variables suggests a high degree of consensus among respondents, confirming that while all factors contribute significantly to the tourist experience, culinary quality and the aesthetic environment are the primary drivers of satisfaction.

variables paired with	R	p-value	Interpretation
Tourist satisfaction			
gastronomic promotional –mix	0.311	0.002	Significant
service quality	0.604	0.000	Significant

*Table 4. Relationship of Gastronomic Promotional Mix and Service Quality as Determinants of Tourist Satisfaction*

Table 4 present the relationship between gastronomic promotional –mix and customer satisfaction and service quality and customer satisfaction. The correlation analysis establishes a clear hierarchy of factors influencing Tourist satisfaction, with Service Quality (R=0.604) being the strongest and most critical determinant, far surpassing the impact of the Gastronomic Promotional-Mix (R=0.311). This powerful result aligns with academic consensus, such as the SERVQUAL model, which posits that the excellence of the actual on-site experience—encompassing staff professionalism, reliability, and responsiveness—is the primary driver of tourist contentment. While the promotional-mix plays a significant role in attracting tourists and managing their initial expectations, its weaker correlation indicates its influence is more indirect, with the final verdict on satisfaction being overwhelmingly governed by the quality of the immediate, tangible service received during the trip.

Independent Interpretation	Beta Coefficient	T	P value	Significance
promotional –mix	0.094	1.074	0.285	Not significant
service quality	0.568	6.522	.000	Significant

$r^2 = 0.372$   
 $F = 28.71$   
 $p = 0.000$   
 $*p < 0.01$

*Table 5. The Gastronomic Promotional Mix and Service Quality best influences the Tourist Satisfaction*

Table 5 shows the regression analysis of gastronomic promotional –mix and service quality significantly influences tourist satisfaction, The promotional mix, characterized by a Beta coefficient of 0.094, a t-value of 1.074, and a p-value of 0.285, does not demonstrate a statistically significant impact on tourist satisfaction. This suggests that, within the context of this model, variations in the promotional mix do not significantly correlate with changes in tourist satisfaction levels.

In contrast, service quality emerges as a significant determinant of tourist satisfaction. With a Beta coefficient of 0.568, a t-value of 6.522, and a p-value of 0.000, service quality exhibits a strong, positive relationship with tourist satisfaction. The p-value, being less than 0.05, confirms the statistical significance of this relationship, indicating that improvements in service quality are likely to lead to higher levels of tourist satisfaction. The Beta coefficient further quantifies the magnitude of this influence, suggesting that service quality plays a substantial role in shaping tourist perceptions.

The model's overall explanatory power is reflected in the  $r^2$  value of 0.372, indicating that approximately 37.2% of the variance in tourist satisfaction can be attributed to the combined effects of the promotional mix and service quality. The F-statistic of 28.71, coupled with a p-value of 0.000, signifies the statistical significance of the model as a whole. This implies that the model, as a whole, is a valid predictor of tourist satisfaction, even though the promotional mix, as an individual variable, does not exhibit a significant effect.

## Conclusion and Implications

The study of tourist satisfaction in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, demonstrates that while gastronomic promotional efforts are highly visible and effectively create initial awareness, service quality is the fundamental driver of actual guest contentment. Tourists generally perceive promotional activities as "Always Observed" and report being "Extremely Satisfied" with key factors such as food quality, the physical environment, and price perception. Although both the promotional mix and service quality show a significant positive relationship with satisfaction, regression analysis reveals that service quality has a much more substantial impact on the overall tourist experience. Consequently, the findings suggest that the region should prioritize service excellence—specifically in areas like assurance, responsiveness, and empathy—to ensure that the actual visitor experience aligns with marketing expectations and fosters long-term loyalty through repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the colleagues and institutions who provided guidance, feedback, and support throughout the conduct of this research and the preparation of this manuscript. Any remaining errors or omissions are the sole responsibility of the authors.

## Funding

This research received no external funding from any public, commercial, or not-for-profit funding agency, and no organization provided financial support for the conduct of the study, authorship, or publication of this article.

## Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

## Data Availability Statement

Data generated and acquired from this study can be requested by sending a formal request to the authors of the study.

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## Appendices

No attached appendices.