

Restaurant Service Quality in Relation to Customer Satisfaction

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Abstract. Service quality is a critical driver of customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry, yet little research has examined this relationship among independently owned restaurants in smaller, developing-economy markets such as the Philippine provinces. This study determined the level of restaurant service quality and customer satisfaction in Misamis Occidental, Philippines, and tested whether a significant relationship exists between the two constructs. A descriptive-correlational design surveyed 396 customers across 10 independently owned restaurants using convenience sampling, with a researcher-made and validated questionnaire analyzed through weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation. Restaurants demonstrated very good service quality and very high customer satisfaction overall, though technology was rated lower than every other dimension on both measures. All twenty-five correlations between the service quality and customer satisfaction constructs were positive and highly significant, ranging from moderate to strong, with assurance and empathy showing the strongest associations. These results indicate that service quality functions as a significant antecedent of customer satisfaction in the independent restaurant setting and identify technology as the most underdeveloped dimension relative to its peers. The findings carry direct implications for restaurant owners and local tourism stakeholders: sustaining current service standards while investing in technology-enabled touchpoints, such as digital ordering or reservation systems, could meaningfully strengthen customer satisfaction and loyalty. Given the cross-sectional design and the geographic scope limited to one province, these findings should be interpreted as context-specific rather than broadly generalizable across all restaurant markets.

Introduction

Service quality remains one of the most consequential levers available to restaurant operators in an industry where competitive differentiation increasingly depends on the experience surrounding a meal rather than the meal itself. Restaurant owners who deliver attentive, efficient, and personalized service tend to build a stronger reputation and a more favorable dining experience for their customers (Ali et al., 2021), and this relationship has only grown more salient as marketing's center of gravity has shifted from closing individual sales toward sustaining superior value relative to competitors. Within that shift, customer satisfaction has emerged as the principal measure of organizational success, since customers who are not satisfied have little incentive to remain loyal to a brand when alternatives are readily available (Bhuian, 2021).

A substantial body of prior research has worked to unpack what service quality actually consists of in the restaurant setting. Scholars generally assess it across several interrelated dimensions: the responsiveness of staff, the reliability of food and beverage delivery, the assurance customers feel regarding food safety and staff competence, the empathy shown toward individual guest needs, and the tangible cues embedded in the physical environment and presentation of the establishment (Chua et al., 2020). These dimensions rarely operate independently of one another; rather, they combine to shape a customer's overall impression of a dining experience and, by extension, their satisfaction with it. This integrative view is

supported by Choi et al. (2022), who found that service quality significantly predicts both customer satisfaction and the intention to revisit a restaurant—a finding that helps explain why operators continue to invest heavily in service standards despite the costs involved.

Parallel to this work on service quality, researchers have built out a similarly detailed picture of customer satisfaction itself, understood as the psychological state that follows from comparing an actual dining experience against what a customer expected or desired from it. Beyond the core service encounter, scholars have identified additional satisfaction-relevant dimensions in the restaurant setting, including ambience, the broader hospitality extended to guests, the added value offered beyond the basic meal, the role of technology in the service journey, and the trust and commitment customers come to feel toward an establishment over repeated visits (Sim et al., 2006). Several of these dimensions echo across multiple studies, lending the literature a reasonably stable foundation: ambience has repeatedly been shown to influence how customers perceive and ultimately patronize an establishment, since the physical and social setting of a venue shapes mood and comfort well before food is served (Lim et al., 2020), and the broader hospitality extended through staff conduct, together with the trust customers place in a brand's consistency, has likewise been shown to meaningfully shape how satisfied a diner ultimately feels (Chen et al., 2017). Taken together, this convergence across independent studies—spanning service dimensions, ambience, hospitality, and trust—suggests that the service quality–satisfaction relationship is not an artifact of any single study design but a reasonably robust pattern across the hospitality literature.

Technology has emerged as a more recent, and notably less settled, satisfaction driver within this body of work. Self-service kiosks, tabletop ordering systems, and online reservation platforms have been shown to influence customers' overall experience and their willingness to return, even though adoption across small and independent restaurants remains inconsistent (Tan & Netessine, 2020; Xu et al., 2020). Seo (2020) similarly found that the appropriate use of kiosk-based service technology was associated with greater perceived flexibility and trust among quick-service restaurant customers. The unevenness of this adoption, however, points to a methodological and substantive limitation running through much of the existing literature: most of what is known about service quality and satisfaction—particularly where technology is concerned—derives from studies conducted in large hotel chains, multinational fast-food brands, and full-service restaurants operating in urban or developed-economy markets. Comparatively little empirical attention has been directed at independently owned restaurants operating in smaller, developing-economy markets, where resource constraints, ownership structures, and customer expectations may differ considerably from those in the settings the literature has already mapped.

This gap is not merely an academic curiosity; it carries practical and policy-relevant weight. Independent restaurant owners in provincial markets often lack access to the same market research, customer feedback systems, and benchmarking data that larger chains use to calibrate their service standards. Without locally grounded evidence on how service quality translates into customer satisfaction in these settings, owners are left to extrapolate from findings generated in dissimilar contexts, and local economic development bodies are left without an evidence base for supporting service-quality improvement initiatives among small food service businesses. Closing this gap therefore has direct implications for how independent restaurants train staff, allocate limited resources, and decide whether and how to invest in technology adoption.

The timeliness of this inquiry is reinforced by recent on-the-ground developments. Misamis Occidental has experienced a steady increase in independently operated restaurants in recent years, reflecting both rising local demand and a broader provincial shift toward food service entrepreneurship. Yet little is known about how customers in this specific setting evaluate service quality, or how strongly that evaluation translates into measurable satisfaction. As the number of independent restaurants in the province continues to grow, the absence of locally grounded evidence becomes increasingly costly: owners face mounting competitive pressure without the benefit of context-specific research to guide their service strategies. This study addresses that gap directly, examining the relationship between restaurants' service quality and customers' satisfaction among independently owned establishments in Misamis Occidental.

Specifically, this study sought to: (1) determine the level of restaurants' service quality as perceived by customers in terms of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy; (2) determine the level of customers' satisfaction in terms of ambience, hospitality service, added value, technology, and trust and commitment; and (3) determine whether a significant relationship exists between the level of restaurants' service quality and the level of customers' satisfaction.

Literature Review

Service Quality in the Restaurant Industry

Service quality has long been treated as a multidimensional construct rather than a single attribute of a business. The seminal gap-analysis perspective on professional service quality framed quality as the discrepancy between what customers expect from a service encounter and what they perceive they actually receive, a framework that remains foundational to how service quality is measured across industries today (Brown & Swartz, 1989). This expectancy-perception logic was later adapted specifically to the foodservice context, where researchers showed that the size and direction of the gap between expected and perceived service could be used to differentiate meaningfully between foodservice outlets of varying quality (Johns & Tyas, 1996).

Building on this tradition, the DINESERV instrument was developed as a restaurant-specific extension of the SERVQUAL model, refining the generic service-quality dimensions into a tool explicitly suited to capturing how diners evaluate a meal experience (Hansen, 2014). Subsequent studies applying this multidimensional lens have consistently found that tangible cues, such as the appearance of the dining area and the presentation of food, meaningfully shape customers' overall impression of a restaurant, even though customers tend to weigh interpersonal service qualities such as staff competence and attentiveness more heavily than physical décor (Karamustafa & Ülker, 2020). Reliability and responsiveness have similarly been identified as central to how customers judge a restaurant's professionalism, since inconsistent order accuracy or slow staff response undermines trust regardless of how attractive the physical setting may be (Ciasullo et al., 2021). Restaurant choice itself has also been shown to hinge on a combination of these service-quality cues together with the type of restaurant and the occasion for dining, suggesting that service quality operates jointly with situational factors rather than in isolation (Chua et al., 2020).

Customer Satisfaction in the Restaurant Industry

Customer satisfaction in hospitality settings has been conceptualized as the outcome of comparing an actual service experience against prior expectations, and it has repeatedly been linked to a restaurant's ability to retain customers and sustain its reputation. Image congruity and satisfaction have been found to jointly predict customer retention in upscale dining settings, indicating that satisfaction is not merely a transactional reaction to a single visit but part of a broader relationship between a customer and a brand (Han et al., 2018). Within this relationship, atmospheric and sensory cues play a distinct role: ambience has been shown to shape customer patronage decisions through factors such as layout, comfort, and overall sensory appeal, independent of food quality itself (Lim et al., 2020). Comparable findings have emerged regarding the role of natural and sensory elements in dining environments, where pleasant ambience has been associated with positive emotional states and healthier behavioral choices among diners (Vanhatalo et al., 2022).

Beyond ambience, hospitality-specific service has been tied to satisfaction through attribute-level studies showing that the way staff interact with customers, particularly customers with specific needs or preferences, significantly shapes satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Choi et al., 2022). Trust and commitment have also been identified as relational outcomes that emerge from consistent, reliable service delivery, with research on buyer-seller relationships showing that trust mediates the link between perceived value and a customer's willingness to maintain a relationship with a provider over time (Chen et al., 2017). Within the restaurant industry specifically, the brand-related intangible assets that accumulate from these repeated positive encounters, such as goodwill and reputation, have been found to carry measurable value-relevance for restaurant firms, reflecting how satisfaction-driven relationships translate into broader business outcomes (Park & Jang, 2021).

Technology and Customer Satisfaction

Technology has received growing attention as a satisfaction driver that remains unevenly adopted across the restaurant sector. Tabletop technology, such as self-ordering tablets, has been associated with measurable improvements in restaurant performance, suggesting that customer-facing digital tools can enhance the dining experience when properly implemented (Tan & Netessine, 2020). Similarly, onsite interactive self-service technologies have been found to shape customer expectations and intentions in ways that traditional service interactions do not, indicating that customers evaluate technology-enabled service touchpoints by a partly distinct set of criteria (Xu et al., 2020). Kiosk-based service technology has likewise been linked to greater perceived flexibility and trust among quick-service restaurant customers, reinforcing the view that appropriately deployed technology can function as a genuine satisfaction driver rather than a novelty (Seo, 2020). At the same time, the brand attitude and loyalty outcomes associated with different types of service providers suggest that technology's effect on satisfaction is filtered through the broader service experience a restaurant provides, rather than operating as an independent driver on its own (Hwang et al., 2022).

Relationship Between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Across hospitality contexts, service quality has been consistently identified as a significant predictor of customer satisfaction. In the hotel sector, service quality has been shown to directly affect customer satisfaction in a manner that supports broader business development outcomes, with quality functioning as a precursor rather than merely a parallel construct to satisfaction (Bhuian, 2021). This pattern extends to hotel service quality more broadly, where the overall quality of service delivered has been found to exert a measurable, positive impact on guest satisfaction within hospitality establishments (Ali et al., 2021). Comparable evidence from the banking sector indicates that service quality affects both customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, with satisfaction often functioning as a mediating mechanism through which quality translates into longer-term relational outcomes (Fida et al., 2020). Within restaurant-specific research, the association between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in in-house dining settings has further reinforced the view that satisfaction operates as a critical link between service performance and a customer's continued relationship with an establishment (Bisui et al., 2021).

Taken together, the literature supports two consistent conclusions relevant to the present study. First, service quality in restaurants is best understood as multidimensional, encompassing tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy-related cues that customers weigh differently depending on context. Second, customer satisfaction is shaped not only by the core service encounter but by ambience, added value, technology, and the trust that accumulates through consistent service delivery, and it is satisfaction's relationship to service quality, rather than either construct alone, that ultimately explains customer behavior in the restaurant industry. This study builds directly on these findings by empirically testing that relationship among restaurant customers in Misamis Occidental, a setting not yet represented in this literature.

Conceptual Framework

This study adapted the DINESERV framework, originally developed by Stevens, Knutson, and Patton (1995) and refined in subsequent applications as a restaurant-specific extension of the SERVQUAL model, to capture how diners evaluate the quality of a meal experience across five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Hansen, 2014). Each dimension is treated here as a distinct, measurable construct rather than a loose descriptive category, since precision in defining these terms is what allows the framework to generate testable predictions later in the study.

Tangibles refer specifically to the physical evidence of the service encounter, such as the appearance of the dining area, the grooming and uniforms of staff, and the presentation of food and menus. These cues matter independently of food quality itself; tangible cues have been shown to shape customers' overall experience of a restaurant even when they do not directly affect the taste or nutritional content of what is served (Karamustafa & Ülker, 2020). Reliability, by contrast, concerns the restaurant's ability to deliver on its stated promises consistently and without error—an order arriving as specified, a reservation being honored, a bill being accurate—while responsiveness reflects the willingness and speed with which staff address customer requests, special needs, and complaints as they arise (Ciasullo et al., 2021). Assurance captures the competence, courtesy, and credibility that put customers at ease regarding food safety, staff expertise, and the overall trustworthiness of the operation, and empathy reflects the degree to which staff personalize their attention to individual guests rather than treating service as a uniform, impersonal transaction. This last dimension has been linked specifically to customers' purchase interest and overall satisfaction, suggesting that personalization carries weight beyond simple courtesy (Pelau et al., 2021).

Customer satisfaction, the dependent construct in this framework, was conceptualized across five corresponding dimensions: ambience, hospitality service, added value, technology, and trust and commitment. Ambience pertains to the sensory and atmospheric qualities of the restaurant environment—lighting, music, spatial layout, and overall comfort—that shape a diner's mood before, during, and after the meal (Lim et al., 2020). Hospitality service reflects the overall warmth, attentiveness, and personalization customers receive throughout their visit, extending the empathy dimension of service quality into the customer's subjective experience of being cared for. Added value refers to the supplementary benefits that differentiate a restaurant from its competitors, such as promotions, loyalty perks, or distinctive menu offerings that customers perceive as exceeding the base transaction (Fida et al., 2020). Technology captures the customer-facing digital and self-service tools, including kiosks, tabletop ordering, and reservation platforms, that increasingly shape convenience and efficiency in the dining journey (Hwang et al., 2022). Finally, trust and commitment reflect the confidence customers place in a restaurant's consistency and the resulting willingness to maintain a relationship with the brand over repeated visits, rather than treating each visit as an isolated transaction (Chen et al., 2017).

The relationship posited between these two sets of constructs is directional and correlational rather than a single isolated cause-and-effect claim: the framework treats restaurants' service quality as the independent variable and customers' satisfaction as the dependent variable, consistent with prior findings that service quality functions as a direct antecedent of customer satisfaction in hospitality and food-service settings (Ali et al., 2021; Bhuian, 2021; Choi et al., 2022). Figure 1 illustrates this relationship: the five DINESERV dimensions on the left feed into the broader construct of service quality,

which is hypothesized to relate to the five satisfaction dimensions on the right, with the strength and significance of that relationship tested through correlation analysis against the null hypothesis stated below.

This framework maps directly onto the study's three research questions and its corresponding objectives. Research Question 1 and Objective 1 are addressed by the left-hand construct in Figure 1, where the level of perceived service quality is determined across tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Research Question 2 and Objective 2 are addressed by the right-hand construct, where the level of customer satisfaction is determined across ambience, hospitality service, added value, technology, and trust and commitment. Research Question 3 and Objective 3 are addressed by the arrow connecting the two constructs, which represents the hypothesized relationship to be tested statistically. This relationship is formally stated as a null hypothesis:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the level of restaurants' service quality and the level of customers' satisfaction.

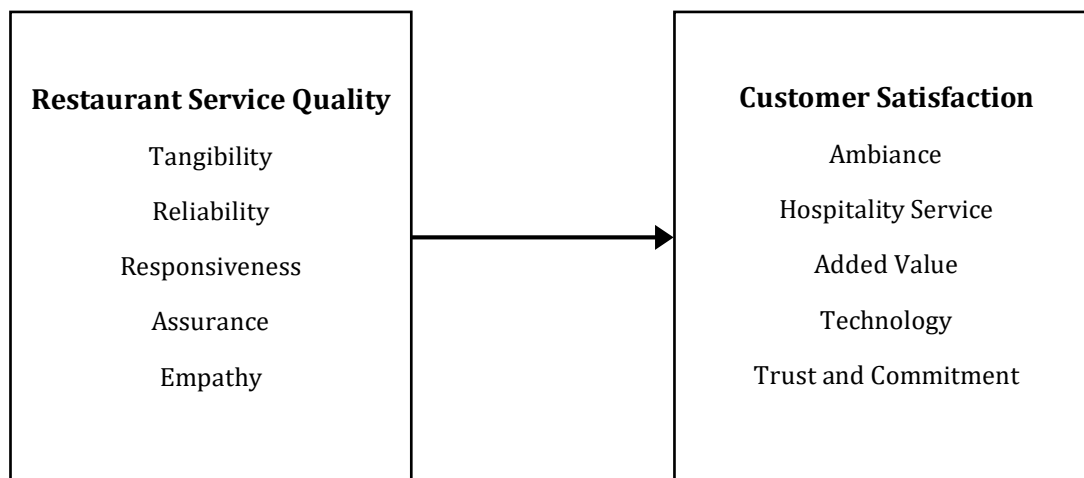


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a descriptive-correlational design, which is appropriate for determining whether a relationship exists between two or more variables without manipulating them or drawing causal conclusions (Jafarpanah & Rezaei, 2020). This design was selected over an experimental approach because the goal was to describe restaurants' service quality and customers' satisfaction as they naturally occur in a real dining context, rather than to test the effect of a deliberately manipulated intervention. The descriptive component allowed the researcher to characterize the prevailing levels of both constructs, while the correlational component allowed the strength and direction of their relationship to be tested statistically.

No random assignment, blinding, or experimental control was applied, as none of the study's variables were manipulated; this is consistent with the non-experimental nature of descriptive-correlational research. The two constructs under study — service quality and customer satisfaction — served as the paired variables of interest, with all five sub-dimensions of each construct (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy; and ambience, hospitality service, added value, technology, trust and commitment, respectively) treated as the units of analysis in the correlational testing described under Data Analysis.

Research Setting

The study was conducted in selected restaurants operating in Misamis Occidental, a province that has experienced steady growth in dining establishments across its major cities and municipalities. To ensure that participating establishments reflected a comparable level of operational maturity and market visibility, restaurants were eligible for inclusion only if they met all of the following criteria: (1) legally registered with the Department of Trade and Industry; (2) in operation for

more than two years; (3) employing more than ten staff members; and (4) located within a city or municipal center, or along a major highway.

These criteria were applied to exclude very small, newly opened, or informally operating establishments whose service infrastructure might not be representative of the broader restaurant sector being studied. A total of 10 restaurants were included in the study.

Respondents

Respondents were customers who had dined at the selected restaurants at least three times, were 18 years of age or older (excluding those 60 years of age or older), and were willing to participate in the survey. Using convenience sampling, 396 customer-respondents were drawn from the 10 participating restaurants, with approximately 40 respondents surveyed per establishment. Convenience sampling was selected for its practicality in accessing willing, repeat customers across a wide geographic spread of independently operated restaurants within the study's time and resource constraints; this trade-off is acknowledged as a limitation on generalizability rather than a design flaw, since random sampling of restaurant patrons across an entire province was not logistically feasible.

Research Instruments

Two researcher-made questionnaires were used. The Service Quality Questionnaire measured five constructs, tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, with five to ten items each. It underwent expert validation and pilot testing, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .8427 (tangibility), .8141 (reliability), .7692 (responsiveness), .7692 (assurance), and .7899 (empathy), indicating acceptable to good internal consistency. The Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire measured five constructs, ambience, hospitality service, added value, technology, and trust and commitment, also with five to ten items each, and similarly underwent expert validation and pilot testing, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .9040 (ambience), .9297 (hospitality service), .8899 (added value), .8841 (technology), and .8847 (trust and commitment), indicating excellent internal consistency. Both instruments used a four-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree), with mean scores of 3.25-4.00 interpreted as Very Good/Very High, 2.50-3.24 as Good/High, 1.75-2.49 as Fair/Low, and 1.00-1.74 as Poor/Very Low.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the 396 customer-respondents across the 10 participating restaurants were processed and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics, which was selected for its established reliability in handling both descriptive and inferential procedures common to survey-based, quantitative research in the social and management sciences. Prior to formal analysis, completed questionnaires were checked for missing responses, encoded into the software, and screened for data-entry errors and outliers to ensure that subsequent statistical computations were performed on a clean and accurate dataset.

To address the first and second research objectives, weighted mean and standard deviation were computed for each of the five service-quality dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) and each of the five customer-satisfaction dimensions (ambience, hospitality service, added value, technology, and trust and commitment). The weighted mean was used rather than a simple arithmetic mean because the questionnaire items within each construct were not assumed to carry identical importance across respondents; weighting each item's response by its corresponding frequency allowed the resulting score to more accurately represent the overall tendency of customer perceptions for that construct. The standard deviation accompanying each weighted mean served as a measure of response variability, indicating the extent to which customer ratings clustered around or dispersed from the central value, with smaller standard deviations suggesting greater consensus among respondents and larger values suggesting more divergent perceptions. Each weighted mean was then interpreted against a predetermined verbal descriptive scale (for example, ranges corresponding to "very high," "high," "moderate," "low," and "very low" levels of agreement), allowing the numerical results to be translated into substantive statements about the level of service quality and satisfaction observed in the sample. Construct-level means were additionally aggregated into an overall composite score for service quality and for customer satisfaction, enabling a single summary judgment about each variable while the disaggregated dimension-level scores allowed for more granular comparison across the five facets of each construct.

To address the third research objective and test the stated null hypothesis, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was computed between every paired combination of the five service-quality constructs and the five customer-satisfaction constructs, yielding a full twenty-five-cell correlation matrix. Pearson r was selected because both sets of variables were measured on interval-level Likert scales and were assumed to approximate a linear relationship, conditions under which this coefficient provides the most efficient and interpretable estimate of association strength and

direction. Before relying on Pearson's coefficient, the underlying assumptions of normality and linearity were considered for the construct-level data, consistent with standard practice for parametric correlation analysis. Each resulting coefficient was interpreted both for its statistical significance and for the practical strength of the relationship it represented, using conventional benchmarks in which coefficients are classified as negligible, weak, moderate, strong, or very strong depending on their absolute magnitude, regardless of sign.

The null hypothesis—that no significant relationship exists between the level of restaurants' service quality and the level of customers' satisfaction—was tested at the .05 level of significance using a two-tailed test, appropriate given that the study did not predict the direction of the relationship in advance for every paired combination. Resulting p-values were reported as significant where $p < .05$, warranting rejection of the null hypothesis for that pairing, and as highly significant where $p < .01$, indicating an even stronger basis for rejecting the null hypothesis. All correlation results, together with their corresponding significance levels and qualitative strength interpretations, were organized into summary tables to facilitate comparison across the twenty-five construct pairings and to support the discussion of which service-quality dimensions most strongly predicted specific facets of customer satisfaction.

Results and Discussion

Level of Restaurants' Service Quality

Table 1 presents the level of restaurants' service quality as perceived by customers across the five DINESERV constructs. The overall weighted mean was 3.43 (SD = 0.0593), interpreted as Very Good. Among the five constructs, reliability obtained the highest rating (WM = 3.51, SD = 0.0237), followed by empathy (WM = 3.46, SD = 0.0269), assurance (WM = 3.43, SD = 0.0273), and responsiveness (WM = 3.41, SD = 0.0280). Tangibility obtained the lowest, though still Very Good, rating (WM = 3.35, SD = 0.0290).

Construct	Weighted Mean	SD	Interpretation
Tangibility	3.35	0.0290	Very Good
Reliability	3.51	0.0237	Very Good
Responsiveness	3.41	0.0280	Very Good
Assurance	3.43	0.0273	Very Good
Empathy	3.46	0.0269	Very Good
Overall Weighted Mean	3.43	0.0593	Very Good

Legend. n = 396. Scale: 3.26-4.00 = Very Good; 2.26-3.25 = Good; 1.26-2.25 = Fair; 1.00-1.26 = Poor.

Table 1: Level of Restaurants' Service Quality

These results suggest that customers in Misamis Occidental generally perceive participating restaurants as meeting or exceeding their service expectations across all five dimensions, with no construct falling below the Very Good threshold. The narrow spread between the highest-rated construct (reliability, 3.51) and the lowest (tangibility, 3.35) indicates a relatively even level of performance across dimensions, rather than one standout strength masking weaker areas elsewhere.

This pattern is consistent with Choi et al. (2022), who found that high perceived service quality is closely tied to customers' satisfaction and their intention to return. That reliability emerged as the strongest construct points to a service environment where customers trust restaurants to deliver food and service consistently and as promised — a form of dependability that Chen et al. (2017) identify as foundational to the trust that later converts into customer loyalty. Tangibility's comparatively lower standing, despite still being rated Very Good, echoes Karamustafa and Ülker (2020), who similarly found that customers weighted food quality, staff hospitality, and service speed more heavily than physical décor. Read together, these findings suggest that in this market, interpersonal and procedural service delivery carries more weight in shaping customer perception than the physical environment — a pattern that appears stable across both Turkish and Philippine restaurant settings, lending it some cross-cultural support.

Level of Customers' Satisfaction

Table 2 presents the level of customers' satisfaction across the five constructs measured. The overall weighted mean was 3.42 (SD = 0.370), interpreted as Very High. Hospitality service obtained the highest rating (WM = 3.97, SD = 0.5514), followed by trust and commitment (WM = 3.45, SD = 0.5207), ambience (WM = 3.39, SD = 0.5512), and added value (WM =

3.36, SD = 0.5414). Technology obtained the lowest rating among the five constructs and was the only construct interpreted as High rather than Very High (WM = 2.93, SD = 0.8818).

Construct	Weighted Mean	SD	Interpretation
Ambience	3.39	0.5512	Very High
Hospitality Service	3.97	0.5514	Very High
Added Value	3.36	0.5414	Very High
Technology	2.93	0.8818	High
Trust and Commitment	3.45	0.5207	Very High
Overall Weighted Mean	3.42	0.370	Very High

Legend. n = 396. Scale: 3.26-4.00 = Very High; 2.26-3.25 = High; 1.26-2.25 = Low; 1.00-1.26 = Very Low.

Table 2: Level of Customers' Satisfaction

Two patterns stand out from this construct-level breakdown. First, hospitality service's lead over the other four constructs is the widest margin observed in either table, suggesting that warmth and attentiveness in staff interactions is the single most distinguishing driver of satisfaction in this sample. This aligns with the well-documented importance of attentive staff interactions in shaping a positive dining experience: when customers feel genuinely cared for, they are more inclined to return and recommend the establishment to others (Chua et al., 2020).

Second, technology is the only construct — across both service quality and satisfaction sets combined — that fails to reach the Very High/Very Good threshold, and it also carries the highest standard deviation (0.8818) of any construct measured in this study. This elevated variability suggests that customer experience with restaurant technology is considerably less uniform than experience with the other four constructs, likely reflecting uneven adoption across the 10 participating establishments rather than a uniformly low ceiling. This is consistent with the broader observation that many independent restaurants have not yet adopted digital reservation systems, self-service kiosks, or other customer-facing technologies, even though such tools have been linked to improved efficiency, convenience, and higher satisfaction where adopted (Tan & Netessine, 2020; Xu et al., 2020). Seo (2020) similarly found that appropriately implemented technology adoption strengthens customers' sense of convenience and trust, which together with the elevated variability observed here suggests that the comparatively low technology score reflects an uneven rollout of digital touchpoints rather than a low customer priority.

Relationship Between Restaurants' Service Quality and Customers' Satisfaction

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients between each construct of restaurants' service quality and each construct of customers' satisfaction. All 25 paired correlations were positive and statistically significant at $p = .00$ ($p < .01$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis in every instance. Correlation strength ranged from moderate ($r = .387$, reliability-technology) to strong ($r = .775$, assurance-hospitality service). Assurance and empathy consistently produced the strongest associations with customer satisfaction constructs, while technology consistently produced the weakest, though still significant, associations across all five service quality constructs.

Service Quality Construct	Ambience	Hospitality Service	Added Value	Technology	Trust & Commitment
Tangibility	$r = .732^{**}$	$r = .654^{**}$	$r = .717^{**}$	$r = .548^{**}$	$r = .583^{**}$
Reliability	$r = .669^{**}$	$r = .619^{**}$	$r = .684^{**}$	$r = .387^{**}$	$r = .618^{**}$
Responsiveness	$r = .734^{**}$	$r = .743^{**}$	$r = .676^{**}$	$r = .560^{**}$	$r = .601^{**}$
Assurance	$r = .759^{**}$	$r = .775^{**}$	$r = .757^{**}$	$r = .556^{**}$	$r = .725^{**}$
Empathy	$r = .696^{**}$	$r = .747^{**}$	$r = .759^{**}$	$r = .550^{**}$	$r = .681^{**}$

*Legend. $^{**}p < .01$ (highly significant). Ho: There is no significant relationship between the level of restaurants' service quality and the level of customers' satisfaction; rejected for all constructs.*

Table 3: Correlation Between Restaurants' Service Quality and Customers' Satisfaction

That every one of the 25 pairings reached significance — with none falling below a moderate effect size — indicates that service quality functions as a broad, structurally consistent antecedent of customer satisfaction in this setting, rather than a relationship driven by one or two standout dimensions. This pattern is in line with prior findings in hotel and food-service contexts (Ali et al., 2021; Bhuian, 2021; Fida et al., 2020), extending the generalizability of that conclusion to independently operated restaurants in a provincial, developing-economy market — a context in which, per the Introduction's stated research gap, this relationship had not previously been empirically tested.

Two cross-construct pairings stand out as the strongest in the matrix. The assurance–hospitality service association ($r = .775$) suggests that when staff demonstrate competence, courtesy, and credibility, customers simultaneously perceive the broader hospitality extended to them as stronger — indicating these two dimensions are experienced jointly rather than as separable moments within a single visit. Similarly, the empathy–added value association ($r = .759$) suggests that when staff personalize their attention to guests, customers become more likely to perceive the broader benefits of the visit, beyond the meal itself, as worthwhile.

By contrast, every weak correlation in the matrix involves the technology construct, most pronounced in the reliability–technology pairing ($r = .387$). This relatively modest association indicates that customers do not equate a reliable dining experience with a technologically advanced one; reliability instead appears to be earned primarily through consistent food and service delivery rather than through digital tools. Critically, however, every technology correlation remained statistically significant — meaning technology still meaningfully contributes to satisfaction even where uptake remains limited, representing an opportunity restaurant owners have not yet fully captured (Hwang et al., 2022).

Taken together, the three result sets converge on a single narrative: the restaurants studied have built a solid service foundation anchored in reliable, responsive, and empathetic staff performance, and this foundation translates directly into high customer satisfaction. The technology dimension is the one consistent exception across all three analyses — lowest mean, highest variability, and weakest (though still significant) correlations — making it the clearest, most evidence-backed target for improvement.

These findings support the conceptual framework's central premise — that DINESERV-based service quality functions as a direct antecedent of satisfaction — and extend it into a previously untested population: independently owned restaurants in a Philippine provincial setting. This addresses the gap identified in the Introduction, where the service quality–satisfaction relationship had been well established in hotels, fast-food chains, and full-service restaurants internationally, but not yet examined among smaller, independently operated establishments in a developing-economy provincial market. Practically, these data support interventions targeting two distinct levers. First, restaurant owners and managers should treat the consistency, responsiveness, and empathetic service culture already demonstrated in this market as an asset worth protecting rather than an area requiring change, since these qualities form the empirical backbone of customer satisfaction identified here. Second, the technology gap identified across both the descriptive and correlational analyses represents a concrete, prioritized investment target — specifically digital reservation systems, point-of-sale upgrades, and online ordering or feedback platforms — that can be pursued without disrupting the interpersonal service qualities already performing well.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study set out to determine the level of restaurants' service quality and customers' satisfaction in Misamis Occidental, and to test whether a significant relationship exists between the two. The findings answer all three research objectives: restaurants deliver a Very Good level of service quality and generate a Very High level of customer satisfaction, and the two constructs are significantly and positively related across all 25 construct pairings tested, with reliability, assurance, and empathy emerging as the strongest drivers of that relationship.

These findings extend the established service quality–satisfaction link from hotel and fast-food contexts into an empirically underrepresented setting — independently owned restaurants in a smaller, developing-economy provincial market. In doing so, the study contributes evidence that the DINESERV-based relationship is not contingent on the scale, branding, or formality of an establishment, but holds in a market characterized by independent ownership and more modest operational infrastructure. This broadens the theoretical reach of DINESERV beyond the hotel and chain-restaurant contexts in which it has most often been validated.

For restaurant owners and managers, the clearest actionable implication is twofold. First, sustain the consistency, responsiveness, and empathetic service culture customers already recognize as strong, since these qualities form the backbone of satisfaction in this market and require protection rather than redesign. Second, invest in customer-facing technology — such as digital reservation systems, point-of-sale upgrades, and online ordering or feedback platforms — to close the one consistent gap identified across this study's descriptive and correlational findings, without compromising the interpersonal service qualities already in place. For local economic development stakeholders, these findings suggest that technology-adoption support programs for independent restaurants (e.g., subsidized point-of-sale systems or digital training) could be a targeted, evidence-based intervention rather than a generic modernization push.

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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 sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study; all data used were obtained from previously published sources as cited in the reference list.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.