



## **Influence of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction Towards Buffet Restaurant in Davao City**

Annabella L. Macaraya  
Cristine Joy L. Albos  
Vengie R. Fulguerinas  
Laureen B. Necesito  
Maricon A. Sero  
Melvin P. Natad

### **Abstract**

The main aim of this study is to determine the influence of service quality rendered by buffet restaurants in Davao City. The research design used in this study is a non-experimental specifically the descriptive predictor research design. There are five level of service quality namely: Reliability, Assurance, Empathy, Responsiveness. Another level of customer satisfaction repeat purchase and Return to place. The various meaningful response was carefully examined to obtain more findings and recommendation. In general, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents believed that service quality rendered by buffet restaurants in Davao City is evidently manifested. Empathy is the domain that best influences customer satisfaction.

*Keywords:* Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Buffet Restaurant, Davao City

### **INTRODUCTION**

Eat-all-you-can buffet is becoming increasingly popular and related concepts are adopted to operate in either hotel restaurants or buffet restaurants. Since catering experiences are highly affected by surrounding atmosphere, its service facilities have an essential impact on its overall customer satisfaction (Lap-Kwong D, 2017). Service quality evaluation by customers is a vital piece of knowledge for service providers directed at boosting profitability, strengthening organizational capabilities, and promoting themselves further dynamically in the market (Jain and Gupta, 2004; Omar et al., 2016)

Buffet restaurants, a concept that dates back to the 16th century, are regaining popularity. Customers can choose from a range of dishes in this unusual concept, which frequently involves self-service. Buffets remain one of the most popular consumer choices due to their versatility, diverse food options, and limitless servings at a fair price (Hui&Zheng 2010).

In Thailand, customers are capable and willing to shoulder more cost for better service, cleaner environment and nicer décor than those in United States according to Murase and Bojanic (2004). According to Newstex, the recent boost in the economic performance of the Philippines has brought an improved growth in full-service restaurants. Although there are some closures of independent players in the industry, restaurant industry still yielded 4% current value growth in 2013. The increasing purchasing power and rush schedule of busy people in Metro Manila and key vibrant cities has led to more spending on food products and services like restaurants. In the Businessworld by Hernani De Leon, Davao City offers the cheaper and exceptional services usually from restaurants providing eat all you can treats. In some hotels, buffet meals are cheaper which are offered at P500 or less, compared to buffet meals in Manila. The study allows the customers to become part in assessing the level of service quality and find out the relationship between service quality and their loyalty, relationship between service quality and their satisfaction, as well as the mediating effect of their satisfaction on the relationship between service quality and their loyalty in selected restaurants accredited by Department of Tourism and listed in the Restaurant Owners Association of Davao City ( Chan, 2021 ).

Many of us are foodies on the Wanderlog team, so naturally we're always on the hunt to eat at the most popular spots anytime we travel somewhere new. With favourites like five of the most well-known buffet restaurants in Davao City Vikings Luxury Buffet – SM Lanang Premier, Glamour Resto N Caterer Restaurant, and Cafe Marco-Davao and more. A good atmosphere in a buffet restaurant and reasonable pricing contribute to customer satisfaction ( Chahal, 2017). Customer's interpretation of goods, facilities, and atmospherics is closely connected to their feelings and psychological intentions, based on the perception of dining in restaurants (Altamore et al., 2018; Jang et al., 2009). Customer behavior can be significantly influenced by ambient elements (touch, sound, taste, scent), design elements (layout, store decoration), and social elements (interaction with employees). Lim (2010) emphasized that a better standard of product and service, combined with a pleasant environment, is particularly essential for a restaurant since it can lead to a greater level of satisfaction and even affect the actions of customers in the food delivery industry (Zhong and Moon, 2020). According to Hanaysha and Hilman (2015), customer loyalty can be obtained if the product or services that are provided fulfil customer expectations and lead to customer satisfaction. Therefore, the purpose this study is to investigate customer satisfaction towards service quality, food quality and ambiance provided by buffet restaurant in Davao City.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The main aim of this study is to determine the influence of service quality rendered by buffet restaurants in Davao City. Specifically, it seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What is the level of service quality rendered by buffet restaurants in Davao City in terms of:
  - 1.1 Tangibles
  - 1.2 Reliability
  - 1.3 Assurance
  - 1.4 Empathy
  - 1.5 Responsiveness
  
2. What is the level of customer satisfaction towards buffet restaurants in Davao City in terms of:
  - 2.1 Repeat purchase
  - 2.2 Return to place
  - 2.3 Recommend to others
  
3. To what extent does service quality rendered influences customer satisfaction towards buffet restaurant in Davao City?

#### **Hypothesis:**

Ho: Service quality rendered does not influence customer satisfaction towards buffet restaurants in Davao City.

#### **Review of Related Literature**

Literatures and result of studies in significance to the present investigation is presented this part of the study. Reviewed articles are taken from various sources such as books, and unpublished journals and manuals.

#### **Service Quality**

According to Yilmaz (2006), the quality of the service has been nowadays measured with respect to the customers expectations and insights towards the offered services. Service quality is comparatively a contemporary concept. It assesses the excellence of brands in the industry of travel, hotel, airline and in the restaurant (Dabholkar, 2015). Service quality makes first impression on customers in which it can affect the customer's perceptions of quality (Lai, 2015). According to Andaleeb and Conway (2006), service quality is considered as a key element in the restaurant sectors bearing in mind that dining in restaurants is essentially a social event.

A restaurant's quality and image can be inferred from the cleanliness of its surroundings. Based on the issues that KFC received from Laeranduil (2018), service quality is also an important element or factor that attitude is very important during working hours as it is indicative of how management and staff handle problems occurring in buffet restaurants.

**Tangibles.** Tangibles are pertained to be the appearance of the establishments' physical facilities, equipments and personnels (Lee and Johnson, 1997 and Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003). Tangibles are used by restaurants to communicate their image and signal quality to customers.

For some respondents, décor and ambience were the main reasons for visiting a buffet restaurant. This is especially important for respondents whose purpose of dining at the restaurant is to celebrate a special occasion or to entertain their clients. The above concurred with the focus groups' findings. Focus group members also mentioned that good service and high food quality are expected of a fine dining restaurant and are already provided by good family restaurants (Andaleeb, & Conway, 2006).

Service industries that emphasize tangibles in their strategies include services in which the customer visits the establishment to receive the service. (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2009).

**Reliability.** Reliability refers to the ability of an establishment to offer services dependably and accurately. In its broadest sense, it means that an organization delivers on its promises-promises about service provisions, pricing, delivery and problem solving. In addition, reliability in the buffet restaurant setting may be characterized by adherence to customer request with regards to the preparation of the menu items, reservations of tables and accurate billing. (Jordaan & Prinsloo, 2001; Lee & Johnson, 1997; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003)

According to Chen and Myagmasuren (2013), the service must deliver accurate informations that are offer and order by the customers. The service and information that share to customers must be consistent with what the restaurant offers and practice.

Reliability for the food and beverage industry can be demonstrated to mean new and fresh food delivering at the right temperature and accurately the first time (Harr, 2008).

**Assurance.** According to Zeithaml and Bitner (2003), assurance relates to the knowledge and courtesy of the buffet restaurant as well as the employees together with their ability to convey confidence and trust. This dimension becomes important when patrons feel uncertain about service offerings of a particular restaurant.

Assurance is what increases the customer satisfaction of a restaurant's service quality is the employees intelligence about the food that they offer and the service personnel's ability to endorse a significant food from their menu. The reputation of the chef or of the buffet restaurant and the brand name are one of the factors that allows to bring confidence of the customers towards the restaurants. The customers will choose the restaurant and enjoy the experience as they get to know the buffet restaurant's good reputation and feedbacks (Harr, 2008).

As to Mansori, Vaz and Isamil (2014), assurance means that the restaurant give to their customers the statement of " we are sure of what we say and what we do".

This service quality dimension is performed through the people aspect of service quality ( Kaura, et al., 2012).

**Empathy.** Empathy in the setting of fine dining can be demonstrated through showing concern in times of service failure and providing service recovery or going cut of the way to meet a customer's special requirements ( Markovic, Raspor and Segaric, 2010).

Based on Franchuk (2012), empathy is all about how the management cares and gives individual personal attention to their guests and how the management tries to understand the needs and preferences of their customer in order to make them special and extra valued.

In buffet restaurant, empathy may be important to ensure customer loyalty as the server knows how the customer likes his or her food prepared. On the other hand, some customers may just want to be left alone to enjoy their food and may not want someone giving them too much attention ( Markovic, Raspor and Segaric, 2010).

**Responsiveness.** Responsiveness refers to the willingness of service providers to provide prompt service and help customers. This dimension emphasizes attentiveness and promptness in dealing with customers questions, requests, problems and complaints ( Lee & Johnson, 1997; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003).

Responsiveness involves understanding the needs and wants of the consumers, convenient operating hours, individual attention given by the staff, attention to problems and consumer's safety in their transactions ( Aghdaie and Faghani, 2012). According to Chen and Myagmasuren (2013), buffet restaurant is commonly responsible and responsive to the demand of the customer to maintain and sustain customer satisfaction and loyalty.

### Customer Satisfaction

The study of Ayub and Pei (2015) which is about the tourist satisfaction with restaurant services found out that customer satisfaction is a significant topic for both the researchers and the manager, wherein a high level of customer satisfaction will leads to an increase in repeat customers. Customer satisfaction depends on quality of service at the restaurant's personnel and the customer (Wall E.A., and Berry LL.,2007).

Zeithaml and Bitner (2001), defines satisfaction as a judgement of a product or service features that provides pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment. Customer satisfaction is critically significant because it reflects subjective customer evaluations of the attribute performance associated with the consumption experience (Cronin and Taylor, 1992).

According to Mattila (2001), customer loyalty can be measured through positive word-of-mouth, revisit intention and the willingness to recommend to others. , due to the influence of customer satisfaction on repeat purchases and word-of-mouth recommendations, customer satisfaction is deemed to be critical for all businesses (Yuksel and Yuksel, 2002).

**Repeat Purchase.** Wiess (2003) conducted a research in order to find out the relationship between restaurant attribute satisfactions and repeat purchase in U.S. theme restaurants. It concluded that customer satisfaction with restaurants attributes is influential in predicting repeat purchase behaviour.

According to Chien (2017), repurchase intention is at the core of the customer loyalty and commitment. Repurchase intention or the repeat purchase is a significant part of behavioural and attitudinal constructs.

In the study conducted by Umesh (2014), on the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in Sri Lankan hotel industry, it was found that service speed and responsiveness impacted on customer satisfaction and repeat purchase or patronage behaviour of customers.

**Return intention/Revisit place.** Serhan (2019), indicated that receiving the right value for the money paid is among the most important factors that encourage the customers to revisit a food service establishment again like restaurants. A revisit intention is the willingness of the customers to visit or return to the restaurant again due to the satisfactory experiences. (Chien, 2017).

Uslu (2020) states that the high customer satisfaction level of service quality leads to revisit or return to the place. According to Soriano (2002), it is has been determined that the food quality in restaurants is a one of the factors affecting the return of customers to the restaurants.

Therefore, the researchers believes that return or revisit intention is valuable and must be included in the study.

**Word-of-Mouth (Recommend to others).** In the service industry, word-of-mouth is one of the most powerful form of communication because they seek information and during the information-seeking process, customers often see. Word-of-mouth information is more reliable as the third-party's opinion since it is based on their experiences. Previous research by Swan&Oliver (1989), has suggested that word-of-mouth is a consequence of customers' emotional responses to consumption experiences. The more customer value the affective aspects of a dining experience, the more likely they will have the intention to spread positive word-of-mouth.

According to a study by Jang et al. (2007), positive word-of-mouth experience and word-of-mouth search effort influences the customer's restaurant service and products purchase decision.

Customer's online comments or electronic word-of-mouth has affect on the image of the restaurants in online channels with the satisfaction in the products or services given to the customer by the service providers, the probability of the customer's intention to spread positive electronic word-of-mouth increases (Yang, 2013; Tsao and Hsieh, 2012).

### Correlations Between Measure.

Studies have revealed the results of positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in restaurants.

Meta-analysis study found out that the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction significantly stronger when service quality is measured with SERVQUAL ( r equal to 0.63) than with SERVPERF (r equal to 0.45) (Carrillat et al., 2009).

"Customer satisfaction came as a result of service quality. In relating customer satisfaction and service quality, researchers have been more precise about the meaning and measurements of satisfaction and service quality. Satisfaction and service quality have certain things in common, but satisfaction generally is a broader concept, whereas service quality focuses specifically on dimensions of service", (William, 2002).

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In respect of the interaction between the above mentioned perceive service quality and customer satisfaction, which are facilitated through the customer's point of view for the service quality rendered by

the buffet restaurants. We will be investigating our research aimed of how service quality influence customers' satisfaction through our theoretical framework. Our theoretical framework is a work Parasuraman et. Al (1998) this model, service quality has been described with the help of five quality dimensions. According to Parasuraman et al (1998) service quality is defined as a customers' judgement or assessment of an entity's overall excellence of a service. These dimensions include five areas namely, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, reliability and empathy. This five service quality dimensions indicated that these five SERQUAL dimensions has influence on customer's satisfactions.

There is no universally accepted definition of customer satisfaction. An ongoing debate in consumer satisfaction circles is to what extent it is a cognitive process or an emotional state. Howard and Sheth (1969) define satisfaction as "the buyer's perceived state of being adequately or inadequately rewarded for the sacrifice he has made." Engel and Blackwood (1982) consider it "an assessment (perception) that the chosen alternative is consistent with prior beliefs about that alternative". It may be a complex human process involving "widespread cognitive, affective, and other unexplored physiological and psychological dynamics" (Oh & Parks, 1997).

Certified managers had more positive attitudes about offering food safety training and placed more emphasis on those individuals whom they considered to be important in their lives (subjective norms), but also perceived they had less control about offering food safety training to their employees. Most importantly, those managers who were certified had a higher intention to train employees than managers who did not have food safety certification. When comparing behavioral, normative, and control beliefs between chain and independent restaurant managers, only behavioral (specific attitudes) and normative beliefs (specific individuals whom they considered important) differed (Robert 2004).

### Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.

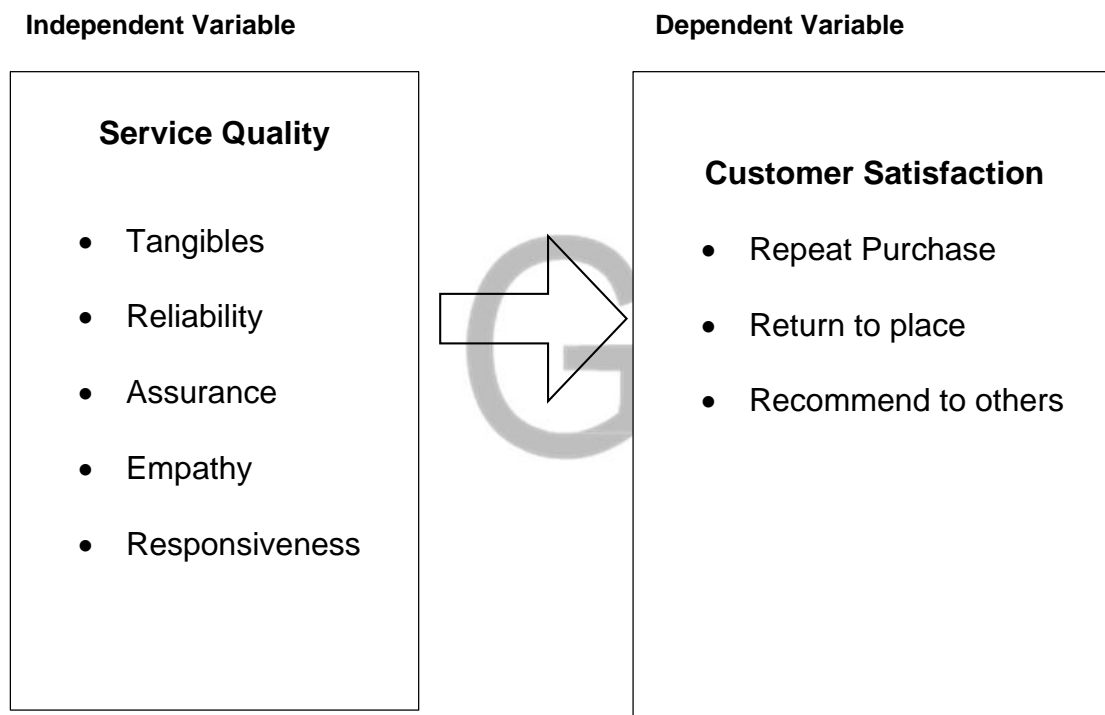


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Shown in figure 1 is the conceptual framework of the study showing the relationship between the level of service quality rendered by buffet restaurants and the level of customer satisfaction. Indicators of service quality includes; tangibles, reliability, assurance, empathy and responsiveness. Indicators of customer satisfaction includes; repeat purchase, return to place and recommend to others.

### Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The general intent of this research is to know the influence of the service quality on customer satisfactions towards buffet in Davao. What is the influence of service quality to the level of customer satisfaction measurements and how it can be improved, including the general atmosphere in the buffets.

The buffet has such a big number of customers that it became an important issue to evaluate the buffet establishments service quality. Therefore, the research question is: how people see the influence of service quality of the buffets in Davao City from the customer's point of view? Since the study is about the influence of service quality to customer satisfactions the respondents or sampling frame is taken as the customers who tried to dine-in in the buffet establishments in Davao City in order to obtain accurate and valuable data about the topic under study.

### Significance of the Study

The writers of this study hopes that this research can give contribution to improve service quality in order meet the customer's satisfaction. This study would bring benefits to the following;

**Business owners.** The result of this research can be used as reference to improve the service quality of business owners which will make them more competitive. They will also be informed about the factors that affect customers' satisfaction and make adjustment on their strategies to become one of the leading buffet restaurant owners in Davao City. They will gain knowledge about the desired effect of improving their services on their business. Through this, they can get along well with their customers or be easily adjusted for the matter.

**Customers.** The result of this study will help the customers to easily identify what restaurant they want to patronized in order to satisfy their needs and wants. Time consuming will be minimized because they know where to go and what buffet restaurant is recognized that provides high service quality.

**Students of Hotel Management.** The result of this research will be used as a reference by the students for them to understand the influence of service quality on customer's satisfaction towards buffet restaurant specifically in Davao City. Through this research, the students can learn the factors affecting customer satisfaction particularly on buffet restaurant business. This study will also provide answers to the basic questions about customers satisfaction and the service(s) being offered by restaurant owners and rate how satisfied the costumers are with those services being offered.

**Future researchers.** The result of this study will give additional information for other researcher who wants to conduct further research on the related field.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Service quality.** In this study, it is define as the level of service quality rendered by the buffet restaurants in terms of tangibility, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy. It will be measured as very high, high, average, low, and very low.

**Customer satisfaction.** In this research, it refers to the level of customer satisfaction towards the buffet restaurants in terms of repeat purchase, return to the place, and recommend to others. It will be measured as very high, high, average, low, and very low.

**Buffet restaurant.** In this study, it refers to the place or area that provides the needs and wants of the customers where service quality and customer satisfaction will occurs.

## METHOD

This chapter discusses the methodology of the study. This includes the research design, research locale, participants, research instrument used, data collection and the statistical tools used.

### Research Design

The research design used in this study is a non- experiemntal specifically the descriptive predictor research design. It is the most appropriate research design to be used in this study since the study aims to determine the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction in buffet restaurants in Davao City.

According to Cooper and Schindler (2007), descriptive predictor design shall be used to explore what factors predict (or have influence on) another variable. Because this design explores causality, the term independent variable is used to describe the predictor variables that are tough to predict the outcome variables (of the called the dependent variable).

### Research Locale

This study was conducted in the City of Davao, located in the southern region of the Philippines. It is the most populous city in Mindanao and the third largest city in the Philippines. Davao City is famous for different varieties of buffet restaurants, but we focused only in 3 star buffet restaurants such as Cabalen Buffet, Limitless Buffet and Green Buffet for our research respondents.

### Respondents and Sample of the Study

The respondents of the study are 150 customers of buffet restaurants in Davao City who have availed and experienced the service quality rendered by the buffet restaurants in the City. They were primarily chosen since they are the one who can prove and answer the questions of being satisfied or not in the service provided by the buffet restaurants in Davao City that can contribute to this study.

A non-probability sampling, specifically quota sampling, was used in this study. The target quota will be 150 buffet restaurant customers in the entire Davao City in which we will not gonna select any particular respondents as long as they are a buffet restaurant customer. According to Rukmana (2014), quota sampling is a method of non-probability sampling when the samples are selected based on the probability proportionate to the distribution of a variable in the population. This sampling method is used so that the proportion of samples for each category (such as female or under 25 years old) will have the same proportion assumed to exist in the population. This technique will help us to reach our quota without finding specific person as long as a buffet restaurant customer.

### Research Instrument

The main instrument used in this study is the five dimensions of SERVQUAL which were adapted from the work of Lee and Ulgado (1997) and from the annual survey of the Development of Residential Life at Oklahoma State University. We made slight changes in wording in order to fit to the buffet restaurant context. It consists of 24 items, three items each indicators of service quality that helps to assess the level of customer satisfaction about the service quality rendered by the buffet restaurants. A 5 point Likert scale format is used, with five choices per item ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" shall be used in this study. Items are written in both directions, so about half must be reverse scored. The five facets are tangible, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy.

The following range of interpretation was used in order to describe the obtained mean scores

Range	Description	Interpretation
4.21 - 5.00	Very high	Service quality and customer satisfaction is very evident.
3.41 – 4.2	High	Service quality and customer satisfaction is evident.
2.61 – 3.40	Average	Service quality and customer satisfaction is moderately evident.
1.81 – 2.60	Low	Service quality and customer satisfaction is less evident.
1.00 – 1.80	Very low	Service quality and customer satisfaction is very less evident.

### Data Gathering Procedures

The following steps of procedure was conducted to gather data: First, the adopted questionnaire underwent content validation and internal reliability test using Cronbach Alpha; Second, if items passes the standard validation, the link of the google form questionnaire will be given to the respondents (the buffet restaurant customers in Davao City); Third, questionnaire were collected for collation of data; Fourth, the collated data underwent statistical testing and results were interpreted; Fifth, presentation of the results of the study.

### Statistical Tool (Data analysis)

Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were used in this study.

Frequency and percentage were used to determine respondent's distribution profile.

Mean was used to determine the level of service quality and customer satisfaction.

Regression analysis was used to determine the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction towards buffet restaurants in Davao City.

### Ethical Considerations

Full consent of the respondents will be obtained prior to the study. Researchers will provide appropriate detail to the respondents about the purpose of the study and will guarantee that the researchers will not apply any manipulation to the respondents.

Respondents of the study will not be harmed in any ways and researchers will ensure that the names of the respondents will be kept as it is confidential.

To designing the questionnaire, the researchers will not use any offensive, discriminatory, or other inappropriate words.

The researchers will also abide with existing intellectual ways and copyrights by citing the names of the authors whose writing will be used in this study.

Regarding that, the researchers can only be assess components that are important to the study.

Finally, the researchers will be honest in findings of the study.

## RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the findings of the study, which includes: the perceived level of service quality rendered, level of customer satisfaction, and the results of the regression analysis.

Table 1  
**The Overall Perceived Level of Service Quality**

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Description Level
Tangibles	4.22	0.71	Very High

Reliability	3.90	0.63	High
Assurance	4.24	0.67	Very High
Responsiveness	4.03	0.58	High
Empathy	4.09	0.70	High
Overall	4.10	0.53	High

Shown in Table 1 is the overall respondent's perceived level of service quality rendered. Overall results revealed that the respondent's level of perception is *high* as reflected by the overall obtained mean score of 4.10 with std dev = 0.53. This overall high level was brought about by the very high and high scores generated by the five indicators of the study namely: tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy with obtained mean scores of 4.22, 3.90, 4.24, .03, and 4.09 respectively

The first indicator of service quality rendered is tangibles which was described to be very high and can be attributed generally to the very high and high mean scores obtained by the three (3) item questionnaire which include: *Their physical facilities are visually appealing; Buffet restaurants have modern-looking equipment, and Their employees have a neat appearance* with obtained mean score ratings of 4.19, 4.17, and 4.31, respectively.

The second indicator of service quality rendered is reliability which was described to be high and this can be attributed generally to the high mean score obtained by the three (3) item questionnaire which includes: *Do they promote error-free records, have they provided services at the time they promised, and is the buffet restaurant perform the services right the first time.* These 3 questions obtained a mean score rating of 3.77, 3.95, and 3.37, respectively.

Moreover, the third indicator of service quality is assurance which was described to be very high and this was due to the very high and high scores generated by the three (3) item statements which are: *Do the costumers feel safe in their place and transactions, is their employees are knowledgeable enough to answer my questions, and is the behaviour of the employees in the buffet restaurant will instill confidence in customers.* These questions obtained a mean score rating of 4.33, 4.21, and 4.17, respectively.

Furthermore, the fourth indicator of service quality rendered is responsiveness which has a description of high which is the result of the high and average scores garnered by the three (3) item statements which includes: *Do their employees tell the customers when will be the exact services be performed, do their employees provide immediate services, and employees are never too busy to respond to customer request.* These questions obtained a mean score rating of 4.08, 4.06, and 3.96, respectively.

Finally, the last indicator of service quality rendered is empathy which was also described to be high and this can be attributed generally also to the high and average mean scores obtained by the three (3) item questionnaire which include: *Do their employees understand my specific needs as their customer, is the buffet restaurants have my best interest at heart, and is the buffet restaurants have operating hours convenient to the customers.* These questions obtained a mean score rating of 4.09, 4.05, and 4.14, respectively.

**Level of Customer Satisfaction**

Table 2  
**The Overall Perceived Level of Customer Satisfaction**

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Description Level
Repeat purchase	4.08	0.71	High
Return to place	4.04	0.71	High
Recommend to others	4.09	0.75	High
Overall	4.07	0.65	High

Shown in Table 2 is the respondent's overall perceived level of satisfaction. Overall results revealed that the respondent's perceived level towards service quality rendered by buffet restaurants is *high* as reflected by the overall obtained mean score of 4.07 with std dev= 0.65. This overall high level was brought about by the high scores generated by the three (3) indicators of the study namely: repeat purchase, return to place, and recommend to others with their respective mean score ratings of 4.08, 4.04, and 4.09.

The first indicator of customer satisfaction is repeat purchase which was described to be high which can be attributed generally to the very high and high mean scores obtained by the three(3) item questionnaire which includes: *Is the foods they are fresh, is their price rate affordable, and is the food they offer are appetizing.* These questions obtained a mean score rating of 4.15, 3.90, and 4.19, respectively.

The second indicator of customer satisfaction is return to place which was also described to be high which can be attributed generally to the high mean scores obtained by the three (3) item questionnaire which include: *Is the location is convenient for everyone, do they have the best quality of services, and do they have comfortable dining place.* These questions obtained a mean score rating of 3.87, 3.96, and 4.29, respectively.

Finally, the last indicator of customer satisfaction is recommend to others and was also described to be high. This description was due to the high scores given to the three statement questionnaire which are: *Do they offer a lot a variety of menu choices, do the food they have are nutritious, and is their foods are flavorful.* These questions obtained a mean score rating of 4.15, 3.95, and 4.18, respectively.

**Significant Influence of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction**

Table 3  
**Significant Influence of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction**

Customer Satisfaction			
Service Quality	B	t-value	p-value
Constant	1.253	5.799	0.000
Empathy	0.688	13.225	0.000
F Value	174.900		
p-value	0.000		
df	1		
R	0.736		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.542		

Presented in table 3 are the statistical results using regression analysis (stepwise). Results revealed a high relationship between the variables (service quality rendered and customer satisfaction) in the study as indicated by the R value of 0.736. The obtained r<sup>2</sup> value from the model summary is 0.542 which signifies that 55.42 percent of the variation in y (customer satisfaction) is explained by the obtained regression model. The r<sup>2</sup> of the regression which is the coefficient of determination is the fraction of the variation in the customer satisfaction (dependent variable) that is accounted for (or predicted by) service quality rendered (independent variable). It is the proportion of variability in a data set that is accounted for by the statistical model. It provides a measure of how well future outcomes are likely to be predicted by the model.

Statistical result for the value of F statistics in the study model is 174.900 with df 1 and is significant at 0.05 level of significance. This means that the derived model is statistically significant. F statistics test the null hypothesis that the regression coefficients are equal to zero.

Shown also in the table is the result that a regression model  $y = 1.253_{\text{constant}} + 0.688_{\text{empathy}}$  was derived to show the relationship of the variables using stepwise regression analysis. The model specifically revealed that this domain-empathy in the study significantly influences customer satisfaction leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The model suggests that a one (1) unit increase in empathy will lead to 0.688 increased in customer satisfaction. It can be noted that the other four domains: tangibles, assurance, responsiveness, and reliability were eliminated after stepwise regression indicative that these domains do not significantly influence customer satisfaction

**DISCUSSION**

**Perceived Level of Service Quality Rendered**

The overall perceived level of service quality rendered was described to be high which implies that majority of the respondent's perceived that service quality being rendered by buffet restaurants in Davao City is evidently manifested. This level therefore has to be improved or be sustained. Studies previously conducted showed that service quality in hospitality management assesses the excellence of brands in the industry of travel, hotel, airline and in the restaurant (Dabholkar, 2015). Service quality makes first impression on customers in which it can affect the customer's perceptions of quality (Lai, 2015). Results of the study conducted by Agyapong (2011) showed that all the service quality items were good predictors of customer satisfaction. Hence, identifying and satisfying customers' needs could improve network services because what is offered can be used to separate the company's services from its competitors. Service quality is considered a key element in the restaurant sectors bearing in mind that dining in restaurants is essentially a social event (Andaleeb and Conway 2006)

The respondent's very high level of perception on indicator tangibles is indicative that majority of the respondents view this indicator to be evidently manifested. Buffer restaurant managers, therefore have to give attention on this indicator since many studies have revealed that tangibles are especially important to service delivery firms as they are crucial variables to developing strong, positive and inspiring customer association and experience, through its proprietary assets (Naidoo, 2014)

The respondent's high level of perception on indicator reliability is indicative that majority of the respondents also view this indicator to be evidently manifested. Restaurant managers, therefore have to give attention on this indicator since many studies have revealed that reliability has an impact on trust and the overall impression left in the mind of a customer after consuming the product or services (Abd-El-Salam, et al., 2013). In addition, reliability is a dimension of service quality that is vital and perceived through the people aspect of service quality (Kaura, et al., 2012).

Moreover, the respondent's high level of perception on indicator assurance is indicative that majority of the respondents also view this indicator to be evidently manifested. Restaurant managers, therefore have to give attention on this indicator since many studies have revealed that assurance gives



customers the confidence that the service delivery representative will perform his/her duty professionally and ethically Khan & Fasih (2014).

Furthermore, the respondent's high level of perception on indicator responsiveness is indicative that majority of the respondents also view this indicator to be evidently manifested. Restaurant managers, therefore have to give attention on this indicator since many studies have revealed that responsiveness is considered as the extent in which service providers have the willingness to accommodate their clients and provide convenient services. It is also characterized as the eagerness to assist clients and offer quick service (Armstrong, 2012). Providing services to the clients in a timely manner is highly appreciated by customers and only good service providers understand the aspect of responsiveness (Aftad et al., 2016).

Finally, the respondent's high level of perception on indicator empathy is indicative that majority of the respondents also view this indicator to be evidently manifested. Restaurant managers, therefore have to give attention on this indicator since many studies have revealed that empathy is the ability for service providers to pay attention to individual customer problems and demands, then address these issues effectively. They also argues that the way the company takes responsibility to address problems faced by their customers on an individual or group level is known as empathy (Khan & Fasih 2014).

### **Level of Customer Satisfaction**

The overall perceived level of customer satisfaction was described to be high which implies that majority of the respondent's or customers were satisfied with services being rendered by buffet restaurants in Davao City (see Table 2). This level therefore has to be improved or be sustained. Studies previously conducted showed that high level of customer satisfaction will lead to an increase in repeat customers. Customer satisfaction is described as "the customer's subjective assessment of the consumption experience, grounded on certain associations between the perceptions of the customers and objective characteristics of the product", (Pizam A., Shapoval V., Ellis T., 2016. Another model of customer satisfaction is defines as it is "a complete evaluation of accumulated purchase and consumption experience, which reflects a comparison between the sacrifice experienced and the perceived rewards" (Iglesias & Guillen, 2004, p.375).

The respondent's high level of perception on indicator repeat purchase is indicative that majority of the respondents also view this indicator to be evidently manifested. Restaurant managers, therefore have to give attention on this indicator since many studies have revealed that repurchase intention is at the core of the customer loyalty and commitment. Repurchase intention or the repeat purchase is a significant part of behavioural and attitudinal constructs (Chien 2017). In addition, customer who repeatedly purchasing product to a specific store or restaurant are very much satisfied with the quality of that product or services rendered by a certain restaurant.

Furthermore, the respondent's high level of perception on indicator return intention/revisit place is indicative that majority of the respondents also view this indicator to be evidently manifested. Restaurant managers, therefore have to give attention on this indicator since many studies have revealed that receiving the right value for the money paid is among the most important factors that encourage the customers to revisit a food service establishment again like restaurants (Ayub and Pei 2015). Moreover, a revisit intention is the willingness of the customers to visit or return to the restaurant again due to the satisfactory experiences. (Chien, 2017).

Lastly, the respondent's high level of perception on indicator word-of-mouth (recommend to others) is indicative that majority of the respondents also view this indicator to be evidently manifested. Restaurant managers, therefore have to give attention on this indicator since many studies have revealed that word-of-mouth relates to both positive and negative evaluation of service experiences, has been shown to influence other people's purchase behaviour. Positive word-of-mouth communication is reported to emerge from satisfying service encounters, while negative communication generally emerges from dissatisfying encounters. In other words, the positive word of mouth is directly influence to the customer satisfaction because it is related to loyalty of existing customers as well as the new arrivals (Hennig et al., 2002.)

### **Significant Influence of Service Quality Rendered on Customer Satisfaction**

Domain empathy was found to be the best domain of service quality rendered that significantly influences customer satisfaction. Khan & Fasih (2014) state that empathy is the ability for service delivery firms to pay attention to individual customer problems and demands, then address these issues effectively. Also, employee and customer interactions are showed through the empathy dimension. It is recommended that service provider organizations must try to understand the situations from customers perspective in order to get a clear picture of what is actually happening (Toosi and Kohonali, 2011).The service quality will show that after sale service. It is important to the service provider to serve their customer in very caring fashion style create good perception to the customer towards their service product and company image (Sakarji, et. al., 2020).

The above results also support the theoretical framework of the study which is the service quality (SERVQUAL) by Parasuraman et al (1998). According to this model, service quality is defined as a customers' judgement or assessment of an entity's overall excellence of a service. These dimensions include five areas namely, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, reliability and empathy and have influence on customer's satisfactions.

### **Conclusions**

In general, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents believed that service quality rendered by buffet restaurants in Davao City is evidently manifested. Empathy is the domain that best influences customer satisfaction.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are highly recommended for consideration:

1. Buffet restaurant managers must develop a sustainability program on service delivery in order to sustain and furthermore improve the high level of service delivery. They should focus more on increasing their employee's empathy dimensions as empathy was found to significantly influence customer satisfaction.
2. Buffet restaurant managers must identify the needs and wants of the customers which includes the ambiance or the physical facilities of the place. They should prioritize their customer so that they will no longer feel dissatisfied.
3. Buffet restaurant managers must determine the customer's preference especially in terms of food. They should focus in preparing the healthy foods as people prefer to eat what they want and the food what the body needs as must contains nutritious and healthy.
4. Other variables not found in this study is highly recommended for future similar research to be conducted.

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