

The Relationship of Customer Experience and Satisfaction on Customer Service, Ambiance, and Menu Offerings in Local Cafés in Albueria, Leyte

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction in selected local cafés in Albueria, Leyte, focusing on customer service, ambiance, and menu offerings as a basis for developing strategic interventions. Anchored in the Kano Model and SERVQUAL Model, the study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design involving 90 customers from Valhalla Coffee, Ligña Café, and Lilu Café, with 30 respondents from each establishment. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire, validated through pilot testing, and analyzed using weighted means and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. Results revealed Very High levels of customer experience in customer service (4.74), ambiance (4.70), and menu offerings (4.65). Customer satisfaction was likewise rated Very High in customer service (4.73), ambiance (4.71), and menu offerings (4.63). A strong, statistically significant positive relationship was established between customer experience and customer satisfaction ($r = 0.819$, $p < .001$), although causality was not established. Despite favorable evaluations, service speed and efficiency, noise control and privacy, and menu variety emerged as areas requiring improvement. The study proposed operational training, ambiance enhancements, and menu diversification to address these concerns. Future research was recommended to include larger samples, additional locations, and mixed-methods approaches. The study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, through its relevance to local business development and community spaces. Its potential sustainability contribution lies in supporting responsive café operations, customer satisfaction, local business competitiveness, and community-oriented services.

Keywords: Ambiance; Customer Experience; Customer Satisfaction; Customer Service; Local Cafés; Menu Offerings; Service Quality

1. Introduction

Customer experience and satisfaction are essential to the competitiveness of local cafés. Customers evaluate establishments based on service quality, ambiance, and menu offerings, which influence their overall dining experiences. In Albura, Leyte, understanding these dimensions is important for improving café operations and addressing customer expectations. This study examines the relationship between customer experience and satisfaction in selected local cafés as a basis for proposing strategic interventions.

Local cafés serve as spaces for dining, leisure, studying, and social interaction. Customer experience encompasses interactions with employees, the physical environment, and food and beverages, while satisfaction reflects how well these elements meet customer expectations. Paniterce and Ylagan (2022) reported high customer satisfaction and service quality among local coffee shops in Camarines Sur. Similarly, Baguio and Naelga (2024) emphasized the importance of food and beverage quality, pricing, and service in customer satisfaction. These findings support examining customer service, ambiance, and menu offerings as key dimensions of café experience.

Customer service significantly contributes to café experience and satisfaction. Villanueva et al. (2025) and Orpiano et al. (2025) highlighted reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility as important service dimensions. Sofia et al. (2023) emphasized employee professionalism and positive customer interactions, while Paniterce and Ylagan (2022) associated quality service and atmosphere with customer satisfaction. Ambiance also influences customer perceptions. Awa et al. (2025) identified lighting and music as important environmental preferences, while Coronel et al. (2024) emphasized comfort, interior design, and atmosphere in satisfaction and revisit intention. Guerra et al. (2024) similarly identified ambiance, employee friendliness, product quality, and pricing as important aspects of café satisfaction. Menu offerings contribute through food quality, variety, taste, and value for money. Baguio and Naelga (2024) emphasized product quality and reasonable pricing, while Johns et al. (2013) demonstrated how menu variety influences customer evaluations. Atsnawiyah et al. (2021) and Duman (2020) further identified food quality, service, and ambiance as important satisfaction factors. Meanwhile, Medrano et al. (2022) highlighted customer feedback as a basis for service improvement, and Cuñado et al. (2020) identified a relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Philippine studies conducted in Camarines Sur, Dumaguete City, Davao City, Batangas City, and Tagbilaran City demonstrate the importance of service quality, ambiance, and product offerings in customer satisfaction. International research similarly emphasizes food quality, service delivery, and environmental characteristics in shaping café experiences. In Albura, Leyte, Valhalla Coffee, Ligna Café, and Lilu Café provide food, beverages, and spaces for social interaction. However, limited research specifically examines customer experience and satisfaction in these establishments, particularly regarding customer service, ambiance, and menu offerings.

The study is anchored in the Kano Model and SERVQUAL Model. The Kano Model, developed by Kano et al. (1984), classifies service attributes into must-be, one-dimensional, attractive, indifferent, and reverse qualities, explaining how different attributes relate to customer satisfaction. The SERVQUAL Model, introduced by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985; 1988), evaluates service quality through reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness. Haifa et al. (2022) further emphasized the importance of service quality in customer satisfaction. The conceptual framework examines the relationship between customer experience and satisfaction across customer service, ambiance, and menu offerings. Findings will serve as the basis for developing strategic interventions without establishing a cause-and-effect relationship.

Although previous studies examined service quality, ambiance, menu offerings, and satisfaction, limited research addresses their relationship in local cafés in Albura, Leyte. This study addresses the gap by assessing customers' demographic profiles, levels of experience and satisfaction, and the significant relationship between these variables. Findings will guide proposed strategic interventions to improve café operations and customer satisfaction.

The study aligns with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by providing information that may support improved café operations, service quality, and local business competitiveness. It also relates to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by recognizing local cafés as community spaces that support social interaction and local economic activities.

The study supports socio-economic and community sustainability by identifying areas for improving customer service, ambiance, and menu offerings. Its findings may help café owners strengthen operational practices, improve customer satisfaction, and maintain business competitiveness. The proposed interventions may also benefit employees, customers, and local stakeholders by promoting responsive service and the continued development of local cafés.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to determine the levels of customer experience and satisfaction regarding customer service, ambiance, and menu offerings. A researcher-developed questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data and examine the significant relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction in selected local cafés.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Albueria, Leyte, a developing municipality located in the western part of the province, with road connections to Ormoc and Baybay. Three local establishments, namely Ligna Café, Valhalla Coffee, and Lilo Café, were selected because of their local customer base and suitability for examining customer experience and satisfaction in an emerging café environment.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents comprised 90 customers from the three selected cafés, with 30 respondents representing each establishment. Participants were customers who had visited and purchased products from the cafés and experienced their customer service, ambiance, and menu offerings. Only individuals who were available during data collection and voluntarily agreed to participate were included.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study employed stratified random sampling, dividing respondents into three strata according to their respective cafés. Thirty customers were randomly selected from each establishment, producing a total sample of 90 respondents. Eligible participants were actual customers who had purchased food or beverages, experienced the cafés' services and facilities, and provided informed consent. This procedure ensured equal representation across the three selected establishments.

2.5 Research Instrument

A researcher-developed survey questionnaire was used to assess customer experience and satisfaction. The instrument underwent review, validation, and pilot testing in Ormoc City. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.87, indicating acceptable to good internal consistency. For customer experience, reliability coefficients were 0.78 for customer service, 0.81 for ambiance, and 0.83 for menu offerings. For customer satisfaction, the corresponding coefficients were 0.85, 0.87, and 0.80. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: respondent profile, customer experience, and customer satisfaction. The customer experience section contained 15 items measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The customer satisfaction section also contained 15 items, rated from 1 (Very Dissatisfied) to 5 (Very Satisfied). Both sections assessed customer service, ambiance, and menu offerings, resulting in 30 assessment items.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers obtained authorization from the Dean of the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management and secured permission from the owners or managers of the three selected cafés through formal request letters. Following questionnaire validation and pilot testing, eligible customers were approached and informed about the study's purpose and voluntary participation requirements.

A total of 90 questionnaires were administered, with 30 respondents from each café. The researchers personally distributed and retrieved the questionnaires without providing incentives. Completed responses were organized, recorded, and tabulated for statistical analysis while maintaining participant confidentiality and privacy.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using the weighted mean and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r). The weighted mean determined the levels of customer experience and satisfaction across customer service, ambiance, and menu offerings. For customer experience, the weighted mean interpretation followed five classifications: 4.21–5.00 indicated Strongly Agree (Very High), 3.41–4.20 indicated Agree (High), 2.61–3.40 indicated Neither Agree nor Disagree (Moderate), 1.81–2.60 indicated Disagree (Low), and 1.00–1.80 indicated Strongly Disagree (Very Low). For customer satisfaction, the corresponding classifications were 4.21–5.00 for Very Satisfied (Very High), 3.41–4.20 for Satisfied (High), 2.61–3.40 for Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (Moderate), 1.81–2.60 for Dissatisfied (Low), and 1.00–1.80 for Very Dissatisfied (Very Low). Pearson r was employed to determine the correlation between customer experience and customer satisfaction and assess whether a statistically significant relationship existed between the two variables.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, respect for persons, beneficence, justice, confidentiality, and non-discrimination. Respondents were informed about the study's

objectives, procedures, educational purpose, and their right to refuse or withdraw without consequences. All participants received equal treatment, and their identities and responses were kept confidential. The study involved minimal risk, required no experimental interventions, and provided no financial incentives or compensation. Participants were informed of appropriate contact persons for questions or concerns, and the researchers maintained transparency throughout data collection. Respondent welfare, privacy, and autonomy were prioritized throughout the research process.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Profile of Café Customers

The study involved 90 respondents, equally distributed among Valhalla Coffee, Ligna Café, and Lilu Café, with 30 customers (33.3%) from each establishment. Most respondents were aged 18–25 (50.0%), followed by 26–35 (32.2%), 36–45 (8.9%), below 18 (5.6%), and 46 and above (3.3%). Female respondents comprised 63.3%, while males accounted for 36.7%. Most customers visited occasionally (60.0%), followed by weekly (23.3%), monthly (11.1%), and daily (5.6%). Regarding customer tenure, 48.9% had visited for less than six months, 27.8% for more than one year, and 23.3% for six months to one year. These findings indicate that the selected cafés primarily attracted young adults and female customers, with occasional visits being the most common pattern. The substantial proportion of relatively new customers suggests that many respondents were still developing their relationships with the establishments. These characteristics provide context for understanding customer experience and satisfaction across the selected cafés.

3.2 Level of Customer Experience in Local Cafés

3.2.1 Customer Experience in Terms of Customer Service

Customer service received an overall weighted mean of 4.74, interpreted as Very High. Lilu Café obtained the highest category mean (4.84), followed by Ligna Café (4.76) and Valhalla Coffee (4.63). Staff courtesy and respect received the highest combined mean (4.80), while consistent and reliable service received the lowest (4.69). All indicators were classified as Very High. The findings demonstrate favorable customer experiences regarding employee courtesy, responsiveness, knowledge, and reliability. However, service consistency received comparatively lower evaluations, suggesting an area for continued attention. These results support Villanueva et al. (2025) and Orpiano et al. (2025), who emphasized responsiveness, politeness, and reliability as important components of service quality and customer satisfaction.

3.2.2 Customer Experience in Terms of Ambiance

Ambiance obtained an overall weighted mean of 4.70, interpreted as Very High. Lilu Café recorded the highest mean (4.73), followed by Valhalla Coffee (4.69) and Ligna Café (4.67). Lighting, ventilation, and interior design received the highest combined rating (4.82), while acceptable noise levels for conversation and relaxation received the lowest (4.53). All ambiance indicators remained within the Very High classification. These findings indicate that customers positively evaluated the cafés' cleanliness, comfort, and physical environments. Nevertheless, noise management received relatively lower ratings, highlighting its importance in maintaining comfortable spaces. This supports Coronel et al. (2024) and Awa et al. (2025), who emphasized the contribution of lighting, layout, and environmental characteristics to customer comfort and café experiences.

3.2.3 Customer Experience in Terms of Menu Offerings

Menu offerings recorded an overall weighted mean of 4.65, interpreted as Very High. Lilu Café obtained the highest category mean (4.79), followed by Valhalla Coffee (4.63) and Ligna Café (4.54). Attractive food and beverage presentation received the highest combined mean (4.79), while menu variety received the lowest (4.50). All indicators were classified as Very High. The results indicate favorable customer experiences regarding food presentation, menu clarity, product quality, and pricing. However, the comparatively lower rating for menu variety suggests opportunities to improve available selections. These findings are consistent with Baguio and Naelga (2024) and Johns et al. (2013), who emphasized the importance of product presentation, menu clarity, and variety in dining experiences.

3.3 Level of Customer Satisfaction in Local Cafés

3.3.1 Customer Satisfaction in Terms of Customer Service

Customer satisfaction with customer service obtained an overall weighted mean of 4.73, interpreted as Very High. Lilu Café recorded the highest mean (4.91), followed by Ligna Café (4.75) and Valhalla Coffee (4.53). Staff friendliness received the highest combined satisfaction mean (4.79), while service speed and efficiency received the lowest (4.62). All indicators were classified as Very Satisfied. The findings suggest that customers appreciated the friendliness, courtesy, and assistance provided by café employees. Although satisfaction remained high, service speed and efficiency emerged as comparatively weaker aspects. These findings align with Sofia et al. (2023) and Orpiano et al. (2025), who highlighted the importance of employee interactions, responsiveness, and service quality in customer satisfaction.

3.3.2 Customer Satisfaction in Terms of Ambiance

Customer satisfaction with ambiance obtained an overall weighted mean of 4.71, interpreted as Very High. Lilu Café achieved the highest mean (4.83), followed by Ligña Café (4.68) and Valhalla Coffee (4.61). Lighting, ventilation, and interior design received the highest combined satisfaction rating (4.80), while noise level and privacy received the lowest (4.57). All indicators were classified as Very Satisfied. These results demonstrate positive customer evaluations of café cleanliness, design, and overall atmosphere. However, noise and privacy remained comparatively lower-rated aspects requiring attention. The findings support Coronel et al. (2024) and Duman (2020), who emphasized the importance of physical environments in customer satisfaction. Similarly, Awa et al. (2025) highlighted the relevance of environmental characteristics to customer comfort.

3.3.3 Customer Satisfaction in Terms of Menu Offerings

Menu offerings obtained an overall satisfaction mean of 4.63, interpreted as Very High. Lilu Café recorded the highest category mean (4.85), followed by Valhalla Coffee (4.55) and Ligña Café (4.49). Food presentation and serving size received the highest combined mean (4.70), followed by taste and quality (4.69). Menu variety received the lowest satisfaction mean (4.53). All indicators were classified as Very Satisfied. The findings indicate that customers were particularly satisfied with food presentation, serving portions, taste, and quality. However, menu variety remained the lowest-rated aspect, suggesting opportunities for diversification. These results support Baguio and Naelga (2024) and Duman (2020), who emphasized food quality and presentation in dining satisfaction. Johns et al. (2013) further highlighted the importance of providing appropriate menu choices without overwhelming customers.

3.4 Relationship Between Customer Experience and Customer Satisfaction

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction across the selected cafés. The overall correlation coefficient was $r = 0.819$ ($p < .001$), indicating a strong positive relationship. Individually, Ligña Café recorded $r = 0.956$ ($p < .001$), Valhalla Coffee recorded $r = 0.797$ ($p < .001$), and Lilu Café recorded $r = 0.639$ ($p < .001$). The null hypothesis was rejected for all establishments and the combined sample. These findings indicate that customers reporting more favorable experiences also tended to report higher satisfaction. The strongest relationship was observed at Ligña Café, followed by Valhalla Coffee and Lilu Café. The significant correlations demonstrate an association between the two variables but do not establish causation. The results reinforce the importance of considering customer experience and satisfaction together when evaluating local café operations.

3.5 Proposed Strategic Interventions for Café Operations

3.5.1 Improving Customer Service Efficiency

Service speed and efficiency received the lowest customer service satisfaction mean (4.62), identifying an area for operational improvement. The proposed intervention involves implementing peak-hour standard operating procedures and workflow efficiency training for front-of-house and kitchen personnel. The plan targets a 15–20% reduction in average order fulfillment time and improved customer efficiency ratings. This intervention addresses the comparatively lower satisfaction with service speed by emphasizing organized workflows and employee responsiveness. Café managers, operations personnel, and front-of-house employees are identified as responsible for implementation. The initial phase focuses on operational assessment and staff training during the first month.

3.5.2 Enhancing Café Ambiance and Privacy

Noise level and privacy obtained the lowest ambiance satisfaction mean (4.57). The proposed intervention includes seating partitions, acoustic paneling, layout adjustments, and controlled background music. Intended outcomes include fewer noise-related complaints, increased customer dwell time, and improved privacy satisfaction. These measures aim to create more comfortable environments for studying, working, relaxing, and private conversations. Café owners, interior layout planners, and maintenance personnel are responsible for implementation. Space optimization is scheduled for the second month, focusing on seating arrangements, music volume, and lighting adjustments.

3.5.3 Diversifying Food and Beverage Offerings

Menu variety received the lowest menu satisfaction mean (4.53). The proposed intervention involves menu engineering and diversification through seasonal beverages, healthier selections, and complementary snack pairings based on customer feedback. Expected outcomes include improved menu selection ratings and increased average customer spending. The intervention seeks to address customers' comparatively lower evaluations of menu variety while maintaining existing product quality. Head baristas, kitchen supervisors, and marketing personnel are responsible for implementation. Menu innovation is scheduled for the third month, including the introduction of special offerings and collection of customer feedback to guide adjustments.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study revealed that most customers of selected local cafés in Albuera, Leyte, were females aged 18–25 who visited occasionally and had been customers for less than six months. Customer experience and satisfaction were consistently rated Very High across customer service, ambiance, and menu offerings, reflecting positive evaluations of staff courtesy, café environments, and food and beverage quality. A strong, statistically significant positive relationship was established between customer experience and customer satisfaction, indicating that higher experience ratings were associated with higher satisfaction levels without establishing causality. Despite these favorable findings, service speed and efficiency, noise control and privacy, and menu variety were identified as areas requiring improvement.

Future researchers are encouraged to expand the sample size and include additional cafés in neighboring municipalities and cities, such as Ormoc City and Baybay City, to obtain broader and more representative findings. Employing mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative surveys with interviews or open-ended questions may provide deeper insights into customer experiences and satisfaction. Further studies may also examine additional variables and apply alternative research designs or statistical techniques to strengthen understanding of the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction in local café establishments.

The study was limited to 90 respondents from three selected local cafés in Albuera, Leyte: Valhalla Coffee, Ligna Café, and Lilu Café. Its findings were confined to customer experience and satisfaction concerning customer service, ambiance, and menu offerings, excluding other potential factors influencing customer evaluations. The research employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design using survey questionnaires, which assessed relationships between variables but did not establish causality. Consequently, the findings may not fully represent customers of other cafés or geographic locations, limiting their broader generalizability.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The authors acknowledge the participation of the customers of Valhalla Coffee, Ligna Café, and Lilu Café, as well as the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management and the café owners and managers for their cooperation and authorization to conduct the study. Ethical principles were observed throughout the research process, including voluntary participation, informed consent, respect for participants' rights, and the use of non-invasive survey questionnaires. Confidentiality and privacy were maintained, and no personally identifying information was disclosed.

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