

Customer Loyalty in Casual Dining Restaurants

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Abstract

This study examined the factors influencing customer loyalty in selected casual dining restaurants in Ormoc City, Leyte. Using a quantitative descriptive research design, data were collected from 100 purposively sampled respondents who dined at the target restaurants at least three times a month. Findings revealed that customer loyalty was highly manifested across repeat purchase, positive word of mouth, higher spending, and brand advocacy. Food quality, service quality, hygiene and sanitation, location, price, and ambiance were all identified as highly influential factors, with food and service quality emerging as the strongest drivers of loyalty. Statistical analysis showed that demographic variables such as age, civil status, and educational attainment significantly influenced specific loyalty behaviors, particularly spending and repeat patronage, whereas gender had no significant effect. These results underscore the multidimensional nature of loyalty, encompassing behavioral, attitudinal, and emotional dimensions, while highlighting the importance of socio-demographic moderators. The study concludes that consistent delivery of high-quality food, reliable service, and visible hygiene practices, coupled with targeted promotions for different customer segments, are essential for sustaining loyalty. The findings offer theoretical contributions to loyalty frameworks and practical insights for restaurant managers and policymakers in strengthening the competitiveness of the casual dining sector in regional Philippine cities.

Keywords: Customer Loyalty; Casual Dining Restaurants; Food Quality; Service Quality; Hygiene And Sanitation; Ormoc City; Demographic Factors; Customer Satisfaction

1. Introduction

Customer loyalty has become a central concept in hospitality research, particularly within the restaurant sector, where intense competition necessitates strategies for sustaining long-term customer relationships. Loyalty extends beyond repeat patronage; it encompasses emotional attachment, trust, and advocacy behaviors that directly influence profitability and business sustainability (Suhartanto et al., 2019). In the context of casual dining, customers' decisions to remain loyal are often shaped by multiple factors, including food quality, service delivery, ambiance, hygiene, and price fairness (Ryu & Han, 2010; Bawazir et al., 2023). Understanding how these factors interact is vital for operators aiming to enhance customer experiences and secure competitive advantage.

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In the Philippines, the food service industry has expanded significantly due to urbanization, lifestyle shifts, and the growing culture of dining out as a social activity. Ormoc City, a dynamic urban center in Eastern Visayas, represents an important locale for examining customer behavior in casual dining restaurants. The city's growing economy and cultural emphasis on communal dining provide a relevant environment for analyzing the drivers of loyalty. Dining out in the Philippines is not merely functional; it is tied to social identity, hospitality, and community participation (Tlapana & Sandlana, 2021). Thus, research that captures localized insights can inform both academic discourse and practical management strategies.

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Globally, scholars have emphasized that customer satisfaction is a strong antecedent to loyalty, with positive word-of-mouth and brand advocacy serving as critical mediators between service quality and repeat purchase behavior (East et al., 2007; Reichheld, 2003). Theoretical models such as Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012), Equity Theory (Adams, 1963), and Commitment-Trust Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) offer valuable frameworks for explaining how psychological needs, fairness perceptions, and relational bonds influence loyalty. When customers perceive autonomy, fairness, and trust in their dining experiences, they are more likely to exhibit stronger loyalty and long-term engagement (Srivastava & Rai, 2013; Namkung & Jang, 2010).

Despite extensive literature on customer satisfaction and loyalty, there is limited empirical work focusing on casual dining restaurants in secondary Philippine cities such as Ormoc. Previous studies have often concentrated on large metropolitan areas or global markets, leaving a gap in understanding how local customers develop loyalty in more regional contexts (Andriyani & Hidayat, 2021). This study addresses that gap by investigating the factors influencing loyalty in selected casual dining restaurants in Ormoc City. Through quantitative analysis, it identifies the demographic variables, loyalty indicators, and key factors shaping patronage. Findings will contribute not only to theoretical understanding but also to practical strategies for restaurant managers, policymakers, and stakeholders seeking to strengthen customer relationships and enhance the competitiveness of the local dining industry.

Aim and Research Questions

Aim

The study aimed to assess the level of customer loyalty in selected casual dining restaurants in Ormoc City, Leyte, and to identify the key factors influencing customer patronage.

Research Questions

1. What is the demographic profile of customers in terms of:
 - a. Age
 - b. Gender
 - c. Civil status
 - d. Highest educational attainment
 - e. Frequency of restaurant visits
2. What is the extent of customer loyalty in the selected casual dining restaurants?
3. What are the factors that influence customers' patronage of casual dining restaurants?

4. Is there a significant relationship between customers’ demographic profile and their loyalty to casual dining restaurants?
5. Is there a significant relationship between customers’ demographic profile and the factors influencing their patronage of casual dining restaurants?
6. What strategies can be proposed to strengthen customer loyalty in casual dining restaurants?

Null Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between customers’ demographic profile (age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, and frequency of restaurant visits) and their loyalty to casual dining restaurants.

H₀2: There is no significant relationship between customers’ demographic profile (age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, and frequency of restaurant visits) and the factors influencing their patronage of casual dining restaurants.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

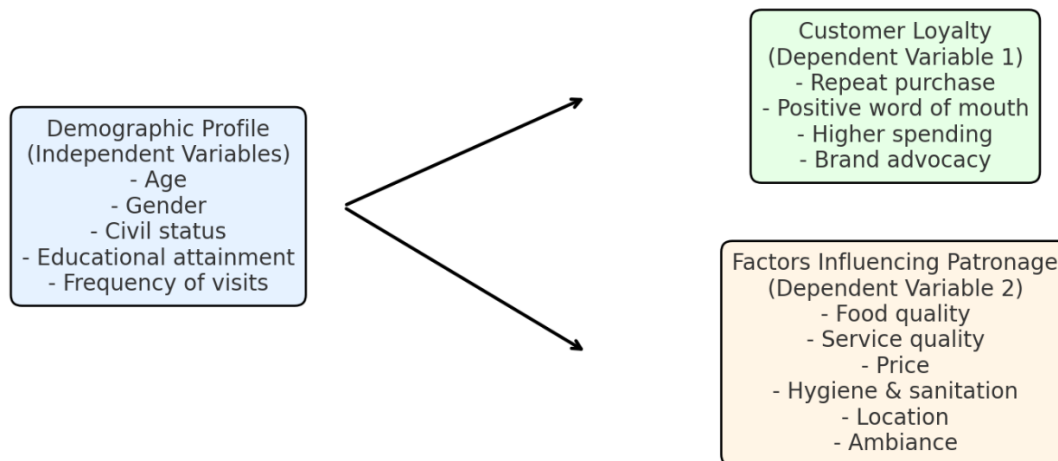


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of Conceptual Framework

This framework in figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized relationships between customers’ demographic profiles and two major outcome variables in casual dining restaurants. The independent variables (age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, and frequency of restaurant visits) are expected to influence two sets of dependent variables: (1) customer loyalty, measured through repeat purchase, positive word of mouth, higher spending, and brand advocacy; and (2) factors influencing patronage, including food quality, service quality, price, hygiene and

sanitation, location, and ambiance. The arrows indicate the direction of influence, consistent with the study's hypotheses that demographic characteristics shape both loyalty behaviors and patronage determinants.

2. Review of Related Literature

Customer loyalty is widely acknowledged as a critical determinant of organizational success in the restaurant industry. It reflects not only repeat patronage but also the willingness of customers to advocate for the brand and maintain long-term relationships (Suhartanto et al., 2019). Scholars have emphasized that loyalty is a multifaceted construct encompassing behavioral, attitudinal, and emotional dimensions (Ameer, 2014). In casual dining restaurants, loyalty is strongly influenced by both tangible factors such as food quality and intangible elements such as service interactions and perceived value (Bawazir et al., 2023). Research consistently demonstrates that customer satisfaction serves as the most important antecedent to loyalty, with satisfied customers exhibiting higher levels of trust, repeat patronage, and positive word-of-mouth (East et al., 2007; Reichheld, 2003).

Service quality has been recognized as a primary driver of customer loyalty in hospitality and restaurant contexts. High service quality not only fulfills customer expectations but also fosters emotional connections that sustain long-term loyalty (Shin & Yu, 2020). Food quality remains another significant determinant, often serving as the core reason for dining decisions (Uslu & Eren, 2020). Moreover, hygiene and sanitation have gained heightened importance, especially in the post-pandemic era, where cleanliness is seen as directly linked to safety and trust (Awasthi & Awasthi, 2021). Together, these factors create a holistic dining experience, reinforcing customer perceptions of value and fairness (Namkung & Jang, 2010).

Demographic variables also play a role in shaping loyalty. Younger adults, often categorized as Generation Y, are more inclined toward frequent dining out and tend to value ambiance and experiential factors in their dining choices (Harrington et al., 2012). In contrast, older age groups are more selective, prioritizing convenience and financial considerations (Okumus et al., 2021). Gender differences have also been observed, with female customers often placing greater emphasis on ambiance and environmental cues compared to male counterparts (Ramanathan et al., 2016). These variations suggest that effective loyalty strategies must be tailored to the demographic profiles of target markets.

In the Philippine context, the culture of communal dining and the high value placed on hospitality make restaurant loyalty particularly significant. Studies have shown that Filipino consumers prioritize food quality, affordability, and a welcoming ambiance in their dining decisions (Tlapana & Sandlana, 2021). While much research has been conducted in metropolitan areas, limited empirical studies have focused on secondary cities such as Ormoc, where dining habits are influenced by local economic and socio-cultural factors. Investigating loyalty in this context can provide fresh insights for restaurant operators, enabling them to address customer needs more effectively and strengthen their competitive position.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to assess the level of customer loyalty and determine the factors influencing patronage in selected casual dining restaurants in Ormoc City, Leyte. The design was chosen to allow statistical analysis of customer demographics, loyalty indicators, and influencing factors.

Research Environment

The research was conducted in Ormoc City, a growing urban center in Eastern Visayas. Five casual dining restaurants were selected to represent varied dining environments and cuisines, including Filipino, Asian, Italian, Middle Eastern, and organic-themed establishments. The city's competitive restaurant landscape and culturally rich dining practices provided an appropriate context for examining customer loyalty.

Respondents and Sampling

The study utilized purposive sampling, targeting regular customers who dined at the selected restaurants at least three times a month. A total of 100 respondents participated, with 20 respondents drawn from each restaurant. This approach ensured inclusion of frequent patrons whose perspectives were most relevant in evaluating loyalty and influencing factors. This study focused exclusively on frequent patrons, which provides insights into loyalty among highly engaged customers but may not capture the perspectives of occasional or dissatisfied diners. As such, the findings should be interpreted as case-specific rather than broadly generalizable across all dining populations in Ormoc City.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-developed survey questionnaire divided into three parts: (a) demographic profile (age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, and frequency of restaurant visits), (b) customer loyalty indicators (repeat purchase, positive word-of-mouth, higher spending, and brand advocacy), and (c) factors influencing patronage (food quality, service quality, price, hygiene and sanitation, location, and ambiance). Responses were measured using a 4-point Likert scale. The instrument underwent pilot testing and yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.714, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Data Gathering Procedure

Formal permission was obtained from restaurant managers prior to data collection. Questionnaires were distributed personally to respondents who met the inclusion criteria. Each survey took approximately 3–5 minutes to complete. Respondents were assured of confidentiality, and participation was voluntary.

Data Analysis

Data were encoded and analyzed using SPSS. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the demographic profile. Weighted mean scores and ranking were applied to assess the level of customer loyalty and the extent of influence of different factors. Chi-square tests of association were performed to determine the significant relationships between demographic variables and loyalty indicators, as well as between demographics and influencing factors.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Customer Demographic Profile (n = 100)

| Respondents' Profile | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Age | | |
| 19 years & below | 8 | 8 |
| 20–29 years | 58 | 58 |
| 30–39 years | 25 | 25 |
| 40–49 years | 7 | 7 |
| 50–60 years | 2 | 2 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 55 | 55 |
| Female | 45 | 45 |
| Civil Status | | |
| Single | 71 | 71 |
| Married | 29 | 29 |
| Educational Attainment | | |
| Junior High School | 12 | 12 |
| Senior High School | 7 | 7 |
| College | 70 | 70 |
| Master's | 11 | 11 |
| Restaurant Visit Frequency | | |
| Thrice a month | 100 | 100 |
| Twice a month | 0 | 0 |
| Once a month | 0 | 0 |

The majority of respondents (58%) in table 1 were aged 20–29 years, followed by those aged 30–39 years (25%). This suggests that emerging adults, often referred to as Generation Y, are the most active dining group in Ormoc City. This result aligns with Harrington et al. (2012), who found that Generation Y consumers are frequent diners and value social and experiential aspects of dining. In terms of gender, male respondents (55%) slightly outnumbered female respondents (45%). This supports findings by Fraikue (2016), which indicated that males tend to dine out more frequently, citing convenience as a key motivator. The majority of respondents were single (71%), which can be explained by the predominance of young adults in the sample. Single individuals are more likely to

engage in social dining experiences as part of their lifestyle, compared to married individuals who may prioritize family or financial obligations (Okumus et al., 2021). Educational attainment showed that most respondents (70%) were college graduates, followed by smaller proportions in high school and master’s levels. This suggests that individuals with higher education, who are likely to be employed and financially capable, are more active in the casual dining segment. Okumus et al. (2007) also highlighted the link between higher educational attainment, income levels, and greater spending on dining out. All respondents reported dining at the selected restaurants at least three times a month. This pattern indicates a consistent habit, reflecting customer loyalty through repeat patronage. According to Dick and Basu (1994), frequency of purchase is a strong measure of loyalty, and the consistency demonstrated in this study underscores the stability of customer behavior in Ormoc’s casual dining restaurants.

Table 2. Level of Customer Loyalty (n = 100)

| Seq. | Loyalty Indicators | Mean | Manifestation Level |
|--------------|------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Repeat purchase | 3.90 | Highly Manifested |
| 2 | Positive word of mouth | 3.95 | Highly Manifested |
| 3 | Higher spending | 3.71 | Highly Manifested |
| 4 | Brand advocacy | 3.91 | Highly Manifested |
| Total | | 3.87 | Highly Manifested |

Table 2 suggests that customer loyalty in casual dining restaurants is highly manifested, with an overall mean of 3.87. Among the indicators, positive word of mouth ranked the highest (M = 3.95). This suggests that loyal customers actively recommend their dining experiences to others, which serves as a powerful and credible form of marketing. East et al. (2007) affirmed that loyal customers are more likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth, amplifying the reputation of a brand. Brand advocacy followed closely (M = 3.91), reflecting customers’ willingness to promote the restaurant beyond personal recommendations. This highlights an emotional connection between customers and the restaurant, where patrons become brand ambassadors. Reichheld (2003) emphasized that advocacy is a deeper form of loyalty, often driving sustainable growth. Repeat purchase also scored high (M = 3.90), indicating consistent patronage. Suhartanto et al. (2019) defined loyalty as a customer’s commitment to repurchase despite external influences, and the results confirm that respondents regularly choose their preferred restaurants over alternatives. Although higher spending was the lowest among the four indicators (M = 3.71), it was still highly manifested. This indicates that loyal customers are willing to spend more compared to occasional patrons. While not as strong as advocacy or word of mouth, increased spending contributes significantly to restaurant revenues, particularly when accumulated across a loyal customer base. Overall, the findings confirm that customer loyalty in Ormoc City’s casual dining sector is strong and multidimensional, encompassing behavioral (repeat purchase, spending), attitudinal (positive evaluations), and emotional (advocacy) elements. These results align with studies by Suhartanto et al. (2019) and Srivastava and Rai (2013), which stressed the importance of customer satisfaction and trust in sustaining long-term loyalty.

Table 3. Factors Influencing Customer Loyalty (n = 100)

| Seq. | Patronage Indicators | Mean | Influence Level |
|------|----------------------|------|-------------------|
| 1 | Food quality | 3.99 | Highly Influenced |
| 2 | Service quality | 3.98 | Highly Influenced |

| Seq. | Patronage Indicators | Mean | Influence Level |
|--------------|------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| 3 | Price | 3.70 | Highly Influenced |
| 4 | Hygiene and sanitation | 3.93 | Highly Influenced |
| 5 | Location | 3.87 | Highly Influenced |
| 6 | Ambiance | 3.87 | Highly Influenced |
| Total | | 3.89 | Highly Influenced |

All six factors in table 3 were rated as highly influential, with an overall mean of 3.89. Among them, food quality (M = 3.99) emerged as the strongest driver of loyalty. This underscores the primacy of food as the core product in restaurants. High-quality meals that consistently meet expectations contribute to satisfaction, trust, and repeat patronage. Ryu and Han (2010) emphasized that food quality is central to shaping customer satisfaction and future loyalty intentions. Closely following was service quality (M = 3.98). This reflects the importance of staff interactions, attentiveness, and reliability in shaping customer experiences. Shin and Yu (2020) found that service quality significantly impacts trust, which in turn drives loyalty behaviors such as repurchase and positive referrals. Hygiene and sanitation (M = 3.93) ranked third, highlighting heightened consumer expectations for cleanliness in dining establishments. This finding is consistent with Awasthi and Awasthi (2021), who noted that post-pandemic customers place greater importance on visible hygiene and sanitation protocols in restaurants. Location and ambience both scored 3.87, showing that accessibility and the dining atmosphere also matter. Ambiance contributes to the emotional experience of dining, particularly for female customers, who tend to weigh environmental cues more heavily (Ramanathan et al., 2016). Although price ranked the lowest (M = 3.70), it was still rated as highly influential. Customers may be willing to pay slightly higher prices if overall value is perceived as fair in relation to food, service, and hygiene standards. Oliver (1999) stressed that fairness perceptions directly shape satisfaction, which then fosters loyalty. These results highlight that loyalty in Ormoc City’s casual dining sector is not determined by a single factor but rather by a multidimensional dining experience. Effective restaurant management must therefore ensure balance across food quality, service, hygiene, ambience, location, and price competitiveness to secure long-term customer commitment.

Table 4. Chi-Square Test of Association for Respondents’ Age Groups (n = 100)

| Loyalty Indicators | χ^2 Value | df | p-Value | Decision | Significance |
|------------------------|----------------|----|---------|---------------|-----------------|
| Repeat purchase | 6.709 | 4 | 0.152 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Positive word of mouth | 2.152 | 4 | 0.708 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Higher spending | 9.594 | 4 | 0.048 | Reject H_0 | Significant |
| Brand advocacy | 5.371 | 8 | 0.717 | Do not reject | Not significant |

Table 4 shows that age is significantly associated only with higher spending (p = 0.048), while no significant relationships were found for repeat purchase, positive word of mouth, or brand advocacy. This suggests that loyalty behaviors such as repeat visits and advocacy are consistent across age groups, but spending patterns vary. Respondents in the 30–49 age group demonstrated higher spending compared to younger or older customers. This aligns with Okumus et al. (2021), who reported that Generation X consumers, typically within this age range, have greater disposable income due to career stability and family responsibilities. Their dining behavior often involves group or family spending, contributing to higher restaurant expenditures. By contrast, younger respondents (20–29 years old) exhibited strong loyalty behaviors such as repeat patronage and word-of-mouth, but their lower financial capacity may explain less spending. Older respondents (50–60 years old) were fewer in number and less

engaged in frequent dining, possibly due to health or financial considerations. These findings indicate that age influences spending intensity rather than the existence of loyalty itself. For restaurant managers, this suggests tailoring marketing strategies: promotions for younger diners may focus on affordability and experience, while strategies targeting the 30–49 group may emphasize premium options and family-oriented packages to maximize spending.

Table 5. Chi-Square Test of Association for Respondents’ Gender (n = 100)

| Loyalty Indicators | χ^2 Value | df | p-Value | Decision | Significance |
|------------------------|----------------|----|---------|---------------|-----------------|
| Repeat purchase | 3.031 | 1 | 0.082 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Positive word of mouth | 0.054 | 1 | 0.817 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Higher spending | 0.825 | 1 | 0.364 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Brand advocacy | 4.739 | 2 | 0.094 | Do not reject | Not significant |

Table 5 indicates that gender has no significant relationship with any of the four loyalty indicators, as all p-values exceed the 0.05 threshold. This suggests that both male and female customers display similar patterns of loyalty in terms of repeat purchases, positive word of mouth, higher spending, and brand advocacy. These findings highlight that loyalty behaviors are largely shaped by factors beyond gender, such as food quality, service quality, and value perceptions, which apply universally to both male and female customers. Fraikue (2016) similarly noted that dining frequency and loyalty are driven more by convenience, satisfaction, and perceived value than by gender differences. Although previous studies suggested that gender may moderate certain restaurant preferences, such as ambiance or dietary considerations (Ramanathan et al., 2016), the present results show no significant differences in overall loyalty outcomes. This indicates that restaurant loyalty strategies in Ormoc City can be applied broadly across genders, without the need for segmentation based solely on male or female customer profiles.

Table 6. Chi-Square Test of Association for Respondents’ Civil Status (n = 100)

| Loyalty Indicators | χ^2 Value | df | p-Value | Decision | Significance |
|------------------------|----------------|----|---------|---------------|-----------------|
| Repeat purchase | 4.538 | 1 | 0.033 | Reject H_0 | Significant |
| Positive word of mouth | 0.222 | 1 | 0.638 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Higher spending | 2.743 | 1 | 0.048 | Reject H_0 | Significant |
| Brand advocacy | 0.691 | 2 | 0.708 | Do not reject | Not significant |

The analysis in table 6 shows that civil status has a significant relationship with repeat purchase ($p = 0.033$) and higher spending ($p = 0.048$). Married respondents were more likely to demonstrate these loyalty behaviors compared to single respondents. This can be attributed to the tendency of married individuals to dine out with family members, leading to more frequent purchases and higher expenditures per visit. Okumus et al. (2021) confirmed that family-oriented dining patterns are characteristic of married customers, particularly in the 30–49 age group, who also have greater financial stability. On the other hand, civil status showed no significant association with positive word of mouth or brand advocacy. This suggests that while marriage may influence frequency and spending behaviors, it does not necessarily enhance customers’ willingness to recommend or promote the restaurant to others. Word-of-mouth and advocacy appear to be more influenced by service experiences and perceived value rather than marital status. The findings highlight that restaurants targeting family segments may benefit from developing loyalty programs, family meal packages, and group-oriented promotions.

These strategies can encourage repeat visits and maximize spending among married patrons, while maintaining consistent quality to attract single diners who remain key contributors to word-of-mouth and advocacy.

Table 7. Chi-Square Test of Association for Respondents' Educational Attainment (n = 100)

| Loyalty Indicators | χ^2 Value | df | p-Value | Decision | Significance |
|------------------------|----------------|----|---------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Repeat purchase | 13.172 | 3 | 0.004 | Reject H ₀ | Significant |
| Positive word of mouth | 4.503 | 3 | 0.212 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Higher spending | 10.827 | 3 | 0.013 | Reject H ₀ | Significant |
| Brand advocacy | 7.255 | 6 | 0.298 | Do not reject | Not significant |

Table 7 reveals that educational attainment significantly influences repeat purchase ($p = 0.004$) and higher spending ($p = 0.013$) but shows no significant relationship with positive word of mouth or brand advocacy. Respondents with college and master's degrees were more likely to demonstrate repeat dining behavior and allocate higher spending in restaurants compared to those with only secondary education. This trend may be explained by the higher financial capacity and employment stability typically associated with advanced education. Okumus et al. (2007) noted a strong correlation between income level, educational attainment, and dining expenditures, as individuals with higher education levels tend to have greater disposable income and a stronger orientation toward dining out. In contrast, educational attainment does not appear to influence word-of-mouth promotion or brand advocacy. These dimensions of loyalty are likely shaped more by experiential factors such as food quality, service interactions, and ambiance rather than educational background. The findings suggest that restaurants can strategically segment customers by education level, offering premium menus and promotions targeted at college-educated professionals, while ensuring that overall service quality appeals broadly to all customer groups. By doing so, establishments can capture both high-spending segments and customers whose loyalty manifests through positive communication and advocacy.

Table 8. Chi-Square Test of Association for Respondents' Age (n = 100)

| Factors | χ^2 Value | df | p-Value | Decision | Significance |
|------------------------|----------------|----|---------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Food quality | 5.459 | 4 | 0.243 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Service quality | 5.639 | 4 | 0.228 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Price | 5.660 | 4 | 0.226 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Hygiene and sanitation | 10.051 | 4 | 0.040 | Reject H ₀ | Significant |
| Location | 1.875 | 4 | 0.759 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Ambiance | 1.067 | 4 | 0.900 | Do not reject | Not significant |

The results in table 8 show that hygiene and sanitation is the only factor significantly associated with age ($p = 0.040$). Respondents under 40 years old placed greater emphasis on cleanliness and health standards compared to older respondents. This is consistent with global post-pandemic dining trends, where younger consumers, shaped by COVID-19 experiences, became more vigilant about sanitation and food safety (Awasthi & Awasthi, 2021). Other factors such as food quality, service quality, price, location, and ambiance were not significantly associated with age. This suggests that these elements are universally valued across all age groups, reinforcing their role as baseline expectations in casual dining. Ryu and Han (2010) emphasized that food and service quality are consistently among the most important determinants of loyalty, regardless of customer demographics. The findings highlight the importance for restaurant managers in Ormoc City to maintain visible hygiene and sanitation

practices, especially to attract and retain younger consumers who are more sensitive to these standards. Regular cleaning protocols, food safety certifications, and visible staff adherence to hygiene practices can help reinforce trust and loyalty among this demographic.

Table 9. Chi-Square Test of Association for Respondents' Gender (n = 100)

| Factors | χ^2 Value | df | p-Value | Decision | Significance |
|------------------------|----------------|----|---------|---------------|-----------------|
| Food quality | 0.016 | 1 | 0.899 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Service quality | 0.299 | 1 | 0.584 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Price | 0.117 | 1 | 0.732 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Hygiene and sanitation | 4.104 | 1 | 0.043 | Reject H_0 | Significant |
| Location | 0.020 | 1 | 0.887 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Ambiance | 3.871 | 1 | 0.049 | Reject H_0 | Significant |

As shown in table 9, hygiene and sanitation ($p = 0.043$) and ambiance ($p = 0.049$) are significantly associated with gender, while the other factors show no significant relationship. Female respondents placed higher importance on cleanliness and ambiance compared to male respondents. This outcome is consistent with Ramanathan et al. (2016), who found that female diners are generally more sensitive to environmental cues, including hygiene and atmosphere, which strongly influence their overall dining experience. In contrast, male respondents tended to be less affected by these factors and were more driven by functional considerations such as food quality and price. The absence of significant associations for food quality, service quality, price, and location across genders implies that these elements are universally important, regardless of gender differences. However, the emphasis placed on ambiance and sanitation by women suggests that restaurants seeking to attract and retain female customers should prioritize aesthetic dining environments, comfortable seating, and visible hygiene practices. Overall, these results reinforce the idea that gender influences perceptions of dining experiences in nuanced ways. Managers must balance both functional (food and service quality) and experiential (ambiance and cleanliness) factors to appeal to a diverse customer base.

Table 10. Chi-Square Test of Association for Respondents' Civil Status (n = 100)

| Factors | χ^2 Value | df | p-Value | Decision | Significance |
|------------------------|----------------|----|---------|---------------|-----------------|
| Food quality | 0.342 | 1 | 0.559 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Service quality | 1.259 | 1 | 0.262 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Price | 0.147 | 1 | 0.701 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Hygiene and sanitation | 0.214 | 1 | 0.644 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Location | 1.367 | 1 | 0.242 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Ambiance | 0.471 | 1 | 0.493 | Do not reject | Not significant |

Table 10 indicates that none of the factors influencing patronage were significantly associated with civil status, as all p-values exceeded the 0.05 level of significance. This suggests that both single and married customers in Ormoc City prioritize the same key aspects when choosing casual dining restaurants, namely food quality, service quality, hygiene, ambiance, location, and price. This outcome contrasts with earlier findings (Table 6), where civil status significantly affected repeat purchase and higher spending. While civil status influences the intensity of loyalty behaviors, it does not alter the criteria customers use when selecting restaurants. Married customers may spend

more and dine more frequently, but they still evaluate restaurants using the same standards as single patrons. These findings reinforce the idea that loyalty is multidimensional: demographic characteristics such as marital status may affect how loyalty is expressed (e.g., spending or frequency), but core influencing factors—food, service, and cleanliness—remain universally important. For restaurant managers, this suggests that customer segmentation based on civil status may be less critical when designing service offerings. Instead, resources should focus on consistently delivering high-quality food and service experiences that satisfy both single and married patrons.

Table 11. Chi-Square Test of Association for Respondents’ Educational Attainment (n = 100)

| Factors | χ^2 Value | df | p-Value | Decision | Significance |
|------------------------|----------------|----|---------|---------------|-----------------|
| Food quality | 2.908 | 3 | 0.406 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Service quality | 2.114 | 3 | 0.549 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Price | 3.364 | 3 | 0.338 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Hygiene and sanitation | 2.556 | 3 | 0.465 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Location | 1.742 | 3 | 0.628 | Do not reject | Not significant |
| Ambiance | 0.984 | 3 | 0.805 | Do not reject | Not significant |

The results in table 11 show that educational attainment has no significant association with any of the factors influencing patronage, as all p-values are greater than 0.05. This indicates that regardless of educational background—whether junior high school, senior high school, college, or master’s level—respondents value the same elements in their dining experiences: food quality, service quality, hygiene, ambience, location, and price. While earlier results (Table 7) revealed that education significantly affects repeat purchase and higher spending, it does not shape the criteria by which customers evaluate restaurants. In other words, higher-educated respondents may exhibit stronger loyalty behaviors due to income stability, but their standards for what makes a restaurant worth patronizing do not differ substantially from those of less-educated respondents. This finding supports the notion that restaurant loyalty is anchored on universal experiential drivers, consistent with global studies where food and service quality remain the top predictors of customer satisfaction across socio-demographic categories (Ryu & Han, 2010; Shin & Yu, 2020). For managers, this implies that investments in quality enhancement strategies will yield broad appeal across all educational levels. Rather than differentiating based on education, restaurants should focus on strengthening the dining experience holistically to ensure loyalty across diverse customer groups.

5. Implications of the Results

The findings of this study provide both theoretical and practical implications for the restaurant industry, particularly in the context of casual dining in secondary Philippine cities such as Ormoc.

Theoretical Implications

The results reinforce the multidimensional nature of customer loyalty, confirming that it encompasses behavioral (repeat purchase, higher spending), attitudinal (positive word of mouth), and emotional (brand advocacy) dimensions. These align with established loyalty frameworks (Dick & Basu, 1994; Morgan & Hunt, 1994), thereby validating their applicability to the Philippine dining context. Moreover, the influence of demographic variables such as age, civil status, and educational attainment on loyalty behaviors (e.g., spending intensity) highlights the

role of socio-economic factors in moderating theoretical models of consumer loyalty. This expands the academic discourse on loyalty by demonstrating its variability in emerging urban markets outside metropolitan centers.

Managerial Implications

From a managerial standpoint, the study underscores the importance of prioritizing food quality, service quality, and hygiene, which emerged as the strongest determinants of loyalty. Restaurants must maintain consistency in these areas to ensure customer satisfaction and repeat patronage. The significant associations between demographics and loyalty outcomes also suggest targeted strategies. For instance, marketing to young adults should emphasize affordability and social ambiance, while offerings for older and married customers should focus on family-oriented packages and premium experiences that encourage higher spending.

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Strategic Implications

The results imply that casual dining restaurants must adopt a balanced strategy that addresses both functional and experiential factors. While food and service quality remain the foundation, attention to ambiance and visible hygiene protocols is crucial, particularly for female and younger customers who are more sensitive to these dimensions. Additionally, customer engagement programs, loyalty cards, and referral incentives could leverage the strong tendency of customers to recommend restaurants to peers, further enhancing advocacy behaviors.

Policy and Community Implications

On a broader scale, the study suggests that strengthening the casual dining sector can contribute to local economic growth in Ormoc City. Municipal tourism and business development offices may use these insights to promote standards for hygiene, service excellence, and customer safety among local establishments. This not only elevates customer loyalty but also enhances the city's reputation as a reliable dining destination, fostering sustainable economic activity and employment opportunities.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusions

The study found that customer loyalty in casual dining restaurants in Ormoc City was strongly expressed through repeat purchase, positive word of mouth, higher spending, and brand advocacy. Food quality, service quality, and hygiene and sanitation were identified as the most influential factors, while price, location, and ambiance were also important but to a lesser degree.

Demographic characteristics shaped loyalty in different ways. Age was related to spending behavior, civil status was linked with repeat patronage and higher expenditures, and educational attainment influenced repeat dining. Gender showed no significant effect on loyalty overall, though it affected perceptions of hygiene and ambiance. These findings confirm that customer loyalty is multidimensional and shaped by both common dining expectations and demographic differences.

Recommendations

Restaurant managers should focus on consistently delivering high-quality food, reliable service, and visible hygiene practices, as these were found to be the strongest drivers of customer loyalty. To respond to demographic differences, managers can design targeted strategies such as offering affordable and socially engaging dining options for younger customers, creating family-oriented packages and premium offerings for married and middle-aged patrons, and enhancing ambiance and sanitation practices to appeal to female customers who place greater value on these aspects. Engagement initiatives like loyalty programs, referral incentives, and personalized marketing are also recommended to capitalize on customers' willingness to promote restaurants through positive word of mouth and brand advocacy. On a broader scale, policymakers and local tourism offices are encouraged to establish and enforce service and hygiene standards across casual dining establishments in order to foster trust and strengthen Ormoc City's reputation as a safe and reliable dining destination. Training programs for restaurant staff on customer service and hygiene visibility should be supported to raise competitiveness and align local practices with industry standards. Finally, future research may consider including occasional and dissatisfied diners to provide a more balanced view of loyalty behaviors and expanding the scope to additional restaurants and cities to enhance the generalizability of findings and contribute to comparative insights on customer loyalty in regional settings.

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