

Innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factor among casual dining restaurant business in CALABARZON region

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Abstract

This study aimed to measure the innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factor among casual dining restaurant business in CALABARZON region. More specifically, the study presented the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, civil status, frequency of visit to a casual dining restaurant, companion when visiting a casual dining restaurant and purpose of visit; determined the innovation practices of casual dining restaurants relevant to products, services, process and marketing innovations; evaluated the brand equity dimensions of the casual dining restaurants in terms of brand image, brand loyalty, brand preference, brand leadership; assessed the critical success factor of the casual dining restaurant in terms of atmosphere, employee competence, product mix, price, convenience; tested the significant difference on the responses when grouped according to the profile variables; tested the significant relationship between innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factor; lastly, proposed a framework of critical success factor for innovation and brand equity management of casual dining restaurants in CALABARZON region. The researcher used descriptive correlation research method in gathering data, describing the essential relevant evidence. Based on the result of the study in terms of innovation practices, the respondents appreciate the process that had been innovated by the casual dining restaurants followed by marketing, service, and product innovation. In terms of brand equity, based on the result; brand image was the most assessed by the respondents, next was loyalty, then leadership and preference. Therefore, customers showed positive thoughts of inviting others to dine in the restaurant because of its affordable price and good service. For critical success of the casual dining restaurants, based on the assessment of the respondent's employee competence was given the highest agreement, followed by atmosphere, product mix, convenience, and price. Lastly, the researcher was able to propose a framework for innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factor among casual dining restaurants in CALABARZON.

Keywords: innovation practices, brand equity, critical success factor, casual dining

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1. Introduction

The future of casual dining restaurant is about combining innovative experiences with strong brand values to establish brand equity and adapt to changing market dynamics. Restaurants that embrace creativity, focus on technology integration, interactive dining experiences, and health-conscious options are poised for success in the global landscape. The innovations and branding among casual dining restaurants are driven by intellectual capital which can significantly impact brand equity, boosting customer loyalty, building a strong reputation, and ultimately increasing profitability and may be concluded as the critical success factor of many casual dining business.

According to a study by Baluyot and Caluza (2022), casual dining establishments in the CALABARZON region of the Philippines are adopting a variety of cutting-edge strategies to improve the way they operate and customer engagement. With the use of features like online ordering, mobile payments, and self-service kiosks by businesses to expedite services, technological improvements play a key role. These restaurants are incorporating eco-friendly strategies including sourcing sustainable ingredients and reducing food waste in response to the rising demand for sustainability. These trends highlight the industry's commitment to cutting-edge methods for patron attraction and retention in the area as the casual dining market continues to change.

From the study of Rasa (2019), the restaurant may use different technological equipment while providing customer service such as wireless and electronic handheld devices to increase the communication between the staff and the customers. While, from other studies, it was expounded that restaurant innovations provide a different atmosphere which gives customers an exciting experience within a unique environment which will bring up fond memories while dining in the casual dining restaurant. From the viewpoint of Lee, et al., (2018) customer experiences raise curiosity and awareness on the specific style of the restaurant which creates an impact value in the brand equity, product, and services to the minds of consumers.

On the other hand, the critical success factor was identified from the experience of casual dining restaurants as such the relaxed environment or atmosphere of the place including the employees therein, good selection of music in the lobby or dining area, attractive décor and fixtures, facilities, and the marketing and all go to that may customers look for are contributory factors for the success of the business. As confirmed by Gikonyo (2016), adequate space, tables and comfortable chairs, facilities, and the cleanliness as part of the good atmosphere are being valued by customers. Another, positive findings from the study of Lee, et al., (2016) summed up the success factor of the restaurant by sustaining the business for longer existence in the industry; explored the characteristics of high-performing, independent restaurants.

In CALABARZON, there is intense competition among casual dining restaurants; the saturated market with numerous local and international chains, often offering similar menus and experiences. Investing in innovation may achieve strong brand identity (Rasa, 2019). Another, changing in customer preferences is also another challenge; the customer shift towards healthier, personalized and convenient dining options which include the growing popularity of delivery and online ordering platforms. As it was emphasized that there is a demand for implementing innovative practices. By addressing these challenges and implementing effective strategies, casual dining restaurants in CALABARZON can achieve success in innovation and brand equity management, carving out a niche in the competitive market.

Therefore, creating a positive dining atmosphere is crucial for casual dining restaurant success, as multiple studies highlight. It was emphasized that among restaurants, it is important to have adequate dining space,

comfortable seating, and cleanliness for customer satisfaction (Gikonyo, 2016). Similarly, with having a high-performing casual dining restaurants often prioritize ambiance, with elements like warm lighting, pleasant music, and well-maintained facilities significantly contributing to repeat business and overall financial success (Lee, et al., 2016). Thus, this study will recommend strategies for casual dining restaurants to embrace new technologies and trends while simultaneously strengthening, building strong brand identity and responding to increasing demand for unique experiences and changing market trends.

At to some extent, when casual dining restaurants create new ways to deliver value it enhances the customer experiences and satisfaction, leading to brand positioning. Moreso, the brand equity, builds a strong reputation for innovation, quality, and community engagement, mark with differentiation from competitors, making the restaurant stand out and attract new customers. Casual dining restaurants can build loyal customers, foster deeper brand connections, and drive sustainable success. Casual dining restaurants is pulsating with innovation. The industry's rapid embrace of new technology in recent years has significantly changed the manner that both giving and receiving services (Roy, 2023). Beyond the plates, restaurants are building bridges with local farms (Huang et al., 2022).

CALABARZON's casual dining scene is buzzing with innovation. Gone are the days of waiting in line. Now, interactive QR code menus let you browse through local specialties like Batangas bulalo and Lucban longganisa, while AI-powered systems estimate your order's carbon footprint. Restaurants are also embracing sustainability, sourcing fresh produce from nearby farms and using smart methods to reduce food waste. This tech-savvy and eco-conscious approach is attracting millennials and families alike, proving that CALABARZON's dining scene is one to watch (Baluyot and Caluza, 2022).

The researcher as educator can impart the result to the academic content and even in practical application pertaining to the student activities and exposure. This may also be shared with the relevant industries to further examine their innovation practices, identify the success factor, and brand equity to obtain the expected outcomes of the casual dining restaurant businesses. Further, the community will benefit from the business output for they will have meaningful experiences while dining-in in the restaurant. The research's findings will help casual dining establishments understand how to enhance their innovation strategies and accomplish their corporate objectives. The results of this study will give educators fresh information about the value of innovation in the casual dining sector. Casual dining restaurants can develop strategic innovation practices to attract and retain customers, and achieve success in culinary landscape; moreover, restaurant innovations provide a different atmosphere (DiPietro, et al., 2020) which gives customers an exciting customer experience (Lee, et al., 2018) in the casual dining restaurant.

Objectives of the Study - This study aimed to measure the innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factor among casual dining restaurant business in the CALABARZON region. More specifically, the study presented the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, civil status, frequency of visit to a casual dining restaurant, companion when visiting a casual dining restaurant and purpose of visit; determined the innovation practices of casual dining restaurants relevant to products, services, process and marketing innovations; evaluated the brand equity dimensions of the casual dining restaurants in terms of brand image, brand loyalty, brand preference, brand leadership; assessed the critical success factor of the casual dining restaurant in terms of atmosphere, employee competence, product mix, price, convenience; tested the significant difference on the responses when grouped according to the profile variables; tested the significant relationship between innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factor; lastly, proposed a framework of critical success factor for innovation and brand equity management of casual dining restaurants in CALABARZON region.

2. Methods

Research Design - A descriptive research design focuses on providing a comprehensive overview of a

phenomenon or population, without establishing causal relationships. It aims to describe characteristics and attributes accurately. Within this approach, a descriptive correlational analysis is used to examine associations between variables, helping to uncover patterns and trends without implying causation. In a hypothetical study about customer behavior in casual dining restaurants, this design would involve collecting data from customers and then using descriptive correlational analysis to understand relationships between variables like product mix, spending habits, satisfaction, and likelihood of returning. The insights gained can guide restaurant owners in enhancing customer experiences and making informed decisions to improve their establishments' success. This study used a descriptive correlation research method in gathering data, describing the essential components or variables in order to establish the relevant evidence and to validate the innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factor of identified DTI casual dining restaurant business in CALABARZON region.

Participants of the Study - Through extensive interviews with restaurant managers across the CALABARZON Region, it was determined that an estimated total of 30,560 customers visit these establishments monthly, as of 2022, the year in which this research was conducted. This figure represents an aggregate estimate derived from five provinces: Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon. Utilizing the Raosoft sample size calculator software, with a consideration of a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level, it was determined that an appropriate sample size is 380 respondents. The geographical distribution of these respondents within the five provinces in the CALABARZON Region. This methodology is based on robust considerations that encompass both statistical and regional factors, ensuring a representative and meaningful dataset for the study.

Data Gathering Instrument - The questionnaire that was used in this study was modified from a number of sources to thoroughly analyze numerous factors. The instrument is divided into four sections. Part I is intended to present the customers as to identify the age, gender, civil status, frequency of visit to a casual dining restaurant, companion when visiting a casual dining restaurant and the purpose of visit; Part II will determine the innovation practices of casual dining restaurants relevant to products, services, process and marketing innovations; Part III will evaluate the brand equity dimensions of the casual dining restaurants in terms of brand image, brand loyalty, brand preference, brand leadership and Part IV will assess the critical success factor of the casual dining restaurant in terms of atmosphere, employee competence, product mix, price, convenience.

In addition, the researcher requested permission from each author to use their questionnaire. The section on innovation practices was taken from Rasa, L.'s (2019) study, "Innovation and Dining Service Among Themed Restaurants in CALABARZON Region, Philippines," while the variables for Brand Equity Dimensions were taken from Hanaysha's (2016) study, "Physical Environment as a Key Success Factor for Building Strong Brand Equity: A Study on the Restaurant Industry." Whereas critical success factor variables were obtained from Gikonyo (2016) entitled Critical success factors for a restaurant franchise system entering the kenyan market.

The questionnaire underwent face validation by 3 industry experts, 2 restaurant owners and 1 former restaurant manager and currently a faculty of leading university in CALABARZON. They have been in the industry for almost 20 years and have extensive experience in the hospitality industry. After validation, pilot testing followed to test the validity and reliability of the instrument. Considering the Pearson product moment correlation using SPSS, the significant value presented in the table in Appendix B. It can be concluded that all items were valid denoting the r value of 0.05. The result of reliability statistics showed that the computed Cronbach's alpha value for Innovation Practices (0.939), Critical Success Factor (0.979) and Brand Equity Dimension (0.968) signifies that the instrument has strong or excellent internal consistency in the rule of thumb. Thus, this set of questionnaires are considered valid and reliable for use.

Data Gathering Procedure - It's noteworthy that the engagement rate among the respondents was 100%. The researcher diligently followed a methodical process to gather the relevant data required for this investigation. Before being distributed, the questionnaire underwent detailed evaluations of its validity and reliability, followed by a strict ethical review. The researcher additionally used Google Forms to administer online surveys. The

procedure of gathering the data involved two different approaches: in-person conversations and online questionnaires made possible by Google Forms. The simplicity and scalability of the online survey technique allowed a wide range of participants to contribute their post-consent comments. Face-to-face interviews, in contrast, provide a forum for in-depth conversations, encouraging a profound understanding of participants' ideas through open communication. The researcher hopes to create a diverse and comprehensive dataset by combining two complementary techniques, balancing the ease of online platforms with the interpersonal depth of face-to-face interactions. The goal of this harmonious synthesis is to produce a more reliable study result that is strengthened by a comprehensive approach to data collection.

Ethical Considerations - All information was gathered with the strictest confidentiality, and its use was only permitted for academic purposes. Respondents were asked to fill out a form in order to create a trusting environment and allow them to freely complete the survey questionnaire. Importantly, no one's personal opinions were sought out at any point in the procedure. Additionally, all findings were thoroughly analyzed and reviewed in accordance with the strict requirements of the Data Privacy Act of 2012, preserving strict compliance with its requirements.

Data Analysis - This study used different statistical tools such as frequency distribution, percentage, ranking and weighted mean, ANOVA and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Frequency distribution and percentage was used to present the profile of the respondents in terms age, gender, civil status, frequency of visit, companion, and purpose of visit in a casual dining restaurant. Weighted mean and ranking were used to assess the innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factor of the casual dining. Mann-Whitney Test was used to determine the significant difference in the response to the innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factor when grouped according to profile. Kruskal-Wallis H test was used if the data is not normal, a type of non-parametric test. And to test the significant relationship among innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factor Spearman rho was used.

3. Results and discussion

With the use of the tabulated data, one may gain a thorough knowledge of the study's participants' demographic profile and dining preferences. In terms of the distribution of respondents by age, 189 respondents, or 49.7% of the total, are in the 18–25 age bracket. There were 144 responses in the age range of 26 to 41, making up 37.9% of the sample. In addition, respondents aged 58-67 account for just 5 respondents (1.3%), while respondents aged 42-57 make up a smaller but notable segment with 42 respondents (11.1%). With 208 female respondents making up 54.7% of the total and 154 male respondents making up 40.5%, the gender distribution indicates a wide mix. In addition, 18 people (or 4.7%) identify as LGBTQ++ members. Civil status insights give a clear picture of the marital diversity within the sample: 63.9% of participants are single, whilst 36.1% are married. Numerous studies have examined the complex demographic profiles of customers in the casual dining restaurant, providing insightful information on the make-up of this customer base. Notably, Smith et al. (2018) conducted a thorough analysis of consumer demographics and found an intriguing tendency. A significant majority of responders, or about 65% of the sample, were found to be between the ages of 25-40, according to their analysis. The attraction of casual dining restaurant among people in the prime of adulthood is highlighted by this research. The gender distribution within this age range was of special interest because Smith et al. discovered a nearly equal number of male and female respondents, underscoring the inclusiveness of the casual dining experience.

When it comes to dining habits, the frequency of trips to casual dining restaurant reveals a variety of trends. Approximately 35.3% of respondents visit these businesses at least once each month, while 23.9% choose to go twice per month. 4.7% of the population, a smaller subset, eats out three to four times each month, while an intriguing 36.1% do so at random, indicating a less regular eating schedule. Family relationships are common, as seen by the predominance of companionship during restaurant visits, where 229 respondents (or 60.3%) preferred to eat with relatives. In addition, 27.9% prefer the companionship of acquaintances or coworkers,

whereas only 8.4% prefer to eat with family. Only 3.4% of participants dine with guests, highlighting the variety in dining companions. In the context of the casual dining sector, social interactions and preferences are crucial in shaping dining experiences. Family relationships are very important to restaurant guests' dining decisions, as seen by the popularity of companionship whilst dining out.

Table 1*Profile Distribution of the Respondents*

Profile	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-25 years old	189	49.7
26-41 years old	144	37.9
42-57 years old	42	11.1
58-67 years old	5	1.3
Sex		
Male	154	40.5
Female	208	54.7
LGBTQ++	18	4.7
Civil Status		
Single	243	63.9
Married	137	36.1
Frequency of Visit to a Casual Dining Restaurant		
At least Once a Month	134	35.3
Twice a Month	91	23.9
3-4 Times a Month	18	4.7
No Specific Interval	137	36.1
Companion when visiting a Casual Dining Restaurant		
Family	229	60.3
Relatives	32	8.4
Friends/Colleagues	106	27.9
Guest	13	3.4
Purpose of Visit in a Casual Dining Restaurant		
Special Occasion	254	66.8
Relaxation	106	27.9
Social Media	3	0.8
Discovery	16	4.2
Business Meeting	1	0.3

In terms of reasons for dining out, 66.8% of respondents say they go to casual dining restaurant on special occasions, highlighting the importance of these places for celebrations. Additionally, 27.9% say that dining out is how they unwind, while only 0.8% say that social media is what motivates them. Casual dining businesses fulfill a variety of responsibilities, as seen by the additional 4.2% who go on culinary adventures and the 0.3% who use these locations for business meetings. The data on the purpose of visits to casual dining restaurants reveals a clear trend, with a resounding 66.8% of patrons citing special occasions as their primary motivation. This dominant category highlights the significance of casual dining establishments as preferred venues for celebrations and events. Restaurants can capitalize on this insight by tailoring marketing efforts to emphasize special occasion offerings and cultivating an ambiance conducive to group gatherings.

In stark contrast, business meetings represent the least frequent purpose, accounting for a mere 0.3% of responses. While a negligible percentage, this finding suggests a potential area for improvement or diversification for casual dining restaurants. Exploring strategies such as offering private meeting spaces, providing business-friendly services, or implementing targeted promotions for professionals seeking meeting venues could enhance the appeal of casual dining settings for business-related activities. Understanding these highest and lowest categories provides valuable insights for strategic planning, allowing restaurants to leverage their strengths while addressing areas for potential growth and improvement. In conclusion, this thorough examination of the characteristics of respondents and their dining preferences provides a comprehensive understanding of respondents' actions and reasons for doing so in the context of casual dining.

Table 3

Innovation Practices

Innovation Practices	Weighted Mean	Rank	Interpretation
Product Innovation	3.9658	4	Agree
Service Innovation	4.0886	3	Agree
Process Innovation	4.2518	1	Agree
Marketing Innovation	4.1053	2	Agree
OVERALL	4.1029		Agree

Table 3 reveals the summary result of innovation practices with an overall mean of 4.10 as verbally interpreted as agree. Based on the result among the innovation practices of the casual dining restaurants, the process of maintaining cleanliness, the use of technology in customer service and on the cooking and food preparation are the most appreciated by the respondents (4.25); followed by the marketing innovation (4.10) verbally interpreted as agree. The adoption of a brand-new or significantly improved production or delivery method is referred to as a process innovation. This covers material adjustments to methods, tools, and/or software. Innovation is a crucial element that restaurateurs may use to their advantage in the restaurant industry. There are no restrictions on what your restaurant invention can become because there are so many sources of restaurant ideas available to get inspiration. Since it will have a significant impact on the total dining experience of the consumer, product innovation in casual dining, such as changing the dining ambience, is an essential component of restaurant innovation. As a result of such encounter, people will feel at ease. Customer satisfaction is positively impacted by the restaurant's atmosphere, which also aids restaurant managers in understanding the preferences and attitudes of their customers.

Moreover, the service (4.08) and the product innovation (3.96) adapted by the casual dining restaurants are also observed by the respondents. The process of developing a new product—or refining an existing one—to creatively satisfy customers this has been a problem for the majority of restaurants because, as respondents stated in their interviews, they are concerned that if they make changes and lose the flavor that keeps their customers coming back, they might lose business while also being unable to maintain those adjustments. Gen Z customers can find new content to post and share by creating dining experiences with themes or promotions that are pertinent to a range of events, movements, and trending issues. Others are emphasizing the diversity of this generation and adding more global and ethnic food options. According to Sinaga, et al., (2021), the introduction and development of new types of products or services is associated with product innovation. The innovation significantly improves the effectiveness of marketing. Product innovation cannot generate sufficient or lasting firm growth or a competitive advantage. Additionally, innovation occurs in two ways in business organizations: product innovation, which creates new products or services or upgrades to already-existing ones, and process innovation, which creates new methods of carrying out processes. Product innovation created will be able to improve the company's capacity to generate high-quality goods (Erlangga, 2022). Companies that consistently innovate can raise the barriers to imitation, keeping their portfolios ahead of the competition and, as a result, developing a sustainable competitive advantage (Lee et al., 2018).

Table 4

Brand Equity Dimensions

Brand Equity Dimensions	Weighted Mean	Rank	Interpretation
Brand Image	4.2980	1	Agree
Brand Loyalty	4.2645	2	Agree
Brand Preference	4.0954	4	Agree
Brand Leadership	4.1763	3	Agree
OVERALL	4.2086		Agree

Table 4 presents the summary result of brand equity dimensions with overall mean of 4.21 as verbally interpreted as agree. To sum up the result, it revealed that among the brand equity dimensions brand image is the topmost (4.29); followed by brand loyalty (4.26) both indicators were agreed by the respondents. The majority of CALABARZON restaurants have designs that complement the cuisine they serve. Casual dining restaurants

serving Japanese cuisine may feature specialized furnishings or décor. Most of them are stylish and modern, which greatly appeals to millennials. The restaurant is more than just the food it offers. Improving the customer's experience is crucial for boosting revenue. Zahari et. al (2020) found that brand image applies to how the businesses and its customers have come to value the products. The brand's image is made up of all of those favorable, negative, and neutral connotations.

Least dimensions but still positively favored by the respondents are brand leadership (4.17) and the last, brand preference (4.09) as agreed by the respondents. Consumers are more inclined to choose a product from a brand they are familiar with, and they are frequently willing to stay loyal to one if they feel confident in the quality, value, and reliability of its offerings. But a well-known brand with a positive reputation is more likely to be trusted and inspires confidence in their clients. In the study of Ibrahim & Gomez (2018) noted that brand preference is the degree to which consumers favor a particular brand's features above those of other brands that are part of their consideration set. It depicts the prejudice, propensity, and behavioral patterns of customers to choose one brand over another. Gaining customer preference is essential for brands because it influences brand loyalty and repeat business in addition to motivating brand choice. In the very globalized marketplace of today, it is crucial for businesses to comprehend how customers choose between strong and local brands and to pinpoint the factors that influence brand preference. When a customer chooses one brand over another when presented with similar options, it is thought that brand preference is a result of the company's successful marketing strategy and techniques (Wiyogo & Setiawan, 2022). The ability of a restaurant business to create a consumer preference for its brand will determine how long it can remain viable in a competitive market.

Table 5

Critical Success Factor

Critical Success Factor	Weighted Mean	Rank	Interpretation
Atmosphere	4.3811	2	Agree
Employee Competence	4.4000	1	Agree
Product Mix	4.3329	3	Agree
Price	4.2075	5	Agree
Convenience	4.2443	4	Agree
OVERALL	4.3132		Agree

Table 5 presents the summary result of critical success factor with overall mean of 4.31 as verbally interpreted as agree. Based on the result, employee competence (4.40) is the topmost well assessed by the respondents; followed by atmosphere (4.38), and the product mix (4.33) verbally interpreted as agree. As observed and based on the interview with the managers and owners their staff are being trained relevant to their job especially those assigned in the kitchen. It is very crucial when letting the people with less knowledge specifically on the product and services offered. Well-trained personnel boost a restaurant's profitability while also saving time and money. Employees who grasp the competencies expected for their jobs, the important behaviors they should exhibit, and the activities required to improve their proficiency levels are better able to perform their jobs. According to the article of (Neha, 2022), a person's personality cannot be forced; it develops naturally through time as a result of their upbringing and experiences. Customer interactions are the foundation of restaurant service.

In addition, employee competencies are regarded as the primary factors influencing business performance in theory, primarily because of their diversity. As a result, a wide range of impact that different employee competencies, such as technological, marketing, and integrative competencies, play in enhancing business effectiveness. By overcoming obstacles at work, being innovative and creative, and having specialized abilities, competent people would attain high performance levels (Elbaz, et al., 2018). Other critical success factors less favored by the respondents are convenience (4.24) and price (4.20) as agreed by the respondents. The next component of the customer experience is the price which influences the decision making if to avail or not the products and the service as well in the restaurant. Convenience motivates customers to stay (or depart if the experience is not convenient). Convenience becomes a competitive differentiation as a result.

On the other hand, the customer satisfaction will result from reasonable price. The value of the service may also be used to gauge client satisfaction. The target consumers receive value and satisfaction from the effective offer. Customer satisfaction is a reaction either emotional or cognitive that has a specific focus in expectations, products, consumption experiences, etc. and happens at a specific moment after consumption, after deciding about a product or service, based on accumulated experience, etc. (Bernarto & Purwanto, 2022).

Table 6

Difference on the respondent's assessment of the innovation practices, critical success factor and brand equity

	t/F	p-value	Interpretation
Age			
Innovation Practices	17.438	0.001	Significant
Brand Equity	5.740	0.125	Not Significant
Critical Success Factor	2.491	0.477	Not Significant
Gender			
Innovation Practices	0.840	0.657	Not Significant
Brand Equity	1.238	0.538	Not Significant
Critical Success Factor	0.802	0.670	Not Significant
Civil Status			
Innovation Practices	13183.000	0.001	Significant
Brand Equity	16001.500	0.529	Not Significant
Critical Success Factor	15882.000	0.457	Not Significant
Frequency of Visit			
Innovation Practices	11.661	0.009	Significant
Brand Equity	5.395	0.145	Not Significant
Critical Success Factor	8.705	0.033	Significant
Travel Companion			
Innovation Practices	1.260	0.739	Not Significant
Brand Equity	6.343	0.096	Not Significant
Critical Success Factor	6.845	0.077	Not Significant
Purpose of Visit			
Innovation Practices	2.307	0.680	Not Significant
Brand Equity	1.428	0.839	Not Significant
Critical Success Factor	6.814	0.146	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01

Table 6 highlights the result on the difference of respondent's assessment on the innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factor when grouped according to age. It was found out that there was a significant difference on responses to the innovation practices when grouped according to age since the obtained p-values were less than 0.05 alpha level. Based on the post hoc test conducted, it was found out that those who are in the age bracket of 26 to 41 years old, and older groups of ages 42 to 47 years old assessed the innovation practices higher than those who are from the younger age group of 18 to 25 years old. On the other hand, respondent's assessment on the brand equity and critical success factor has no significant difference when grouped according to age. This reveals that age is not a factor influencing the assessment to brand equity and critical success factor it appears that there is a similar assessment between any ages.

The respondents, who ranged in age from 26 to 47, expressed appreciation for the concepts of the restaurants they visited in CALABARZON. Some of these establishments have core services that are in line with the concept of the restaurant, and the majority of them have themed dining atmosphere with elements of the Filipino, Japanese, Taiwanese, and Spanish cultures. They enjoy food regardless of whether it is Filipino or not as long as it meets their taste preferences. Those who dine out in CALABARZON are open to trying different flavors and cuisines. Customers valued restaurants that offered distinctive and innovative menu selections which underlines the significance of restaurant concepts and themes in the place. Moreover, in line with the overall concepts, several of the restaurants also offered certain basic services.

It was found out that there was a significant difference in responses to the innovation practices when grouped according to civil status since the obtained p-values were less than 0.05 alpha level. Based on the post hoc test conducted, it was found out that those who are single assessed the innovation practices higher than those

married. Single respondents give the casual dining restaurant's innovative practices a higher rating, focusing on the ordering and serving of meals during transactions. They are very meticulous on the aspect of innovation practices being adopted by the casual dining restaurant because they are very particular to specific innovations in the cleanliness, cleaning protocols, or program of the restaurant as well as with the marketing materials that are being used by the restaurant. The customers were meticulous in their assessment of the restaurant's cleanliness, cleaning procedures and the special promotions employed by the business (Kim, et al., 2019).

It was found out that there was a significant difference in responses to the innovation practices factor when grouped according to frequency of visit since the obtained p-values were less than 0.009 alpha level. Based on the post hoc test conducted, it was found out that those who have no specific interval assessed the innovation practices and critical success factor higher than as compared to at least once a month. Based on the post hoc test conducted, it was found out that those visiting without a specific interval have higher scores than at least once a month. A study by Hwang et al., (2019) found that respondents who visit restaurants on an irregular basis are often repeat customers who are already confident in the services and innovations the restaurant offers and are inclined to return. In addition, fostering client loyalty in the restaurant sector depends heavily on trust (Chen, et al., 2023).

There was a significant difference on responses to the critical success factor when grouped according to frequency of visit since the obtained p-values were less than 0.033 alpha level. Frequency of visit has an influence on the critical success factor. Based on the post hoc test conducted, it was found out that those who visit without a specific interval have higher scores than at least once a month. The responders that went to the restaurant at random are highly particular about the safety and security of their meals. Customers' sense of food safety is a key consideration in their choice to eat at a restaurant, according to a study by Kim and Lee (2021).

Meanwhile, the result on the difference of respondent's assessment on the innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factor when grouped according to gender, travel companion and purpose of visit reveals that there is no significant difference. This means that gender, travel companion and purpose of visit is not a factor influencing their assessment on the innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factor. Customers of various age groups perceive restaurant innovation methods and their effect on customer satisfaction similarly, according to a study by Kim et al. (2017). The variety of customers may be attracted to innovation approaches. In the restaurant business, brand equity is also crucial in influencing customer loyalty and satisfaction. Oh and Kim's (2018) research found that brand equity had a favorable impact on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and willingness to spend more for a restaurant.

In the restaurant industry, crucial success factors influencing customer happiness and loyalty are the quality of the cuisine, the level of service, and the price. These elements have a considerable impact on customer happiness and propensity to return to a restaurant, according to a study by Yen and Lu (2018). The fact that vital success elements were consistently rated favorably by various groups of respondents emphasizes how crucial it is to fulfill these requirements in order to preserve client loyalty and happiness.

Brand equity and innovations is crucial to success in the future, in fact restaurants who are in the process of developing their brands will find that they are more successful in the long run. In fact, restaurants that are in this stage of development already have a competitive advantage over those that are not. Another point of discussion in relation to innovation practices will always ensure that the unique concept of the restaurant will be appreciated by their target market specifically who are always looking for something new and different from their competitors. In a broader sense, innovation practices primarily affect production effectiveness and product quality for long-term competitive advantages that are embedded in brand equity (Yao, Huang & Li, 2019). In the study of Kelly-Payne (2020) revealed that innovation is one of the primary ways to enhance brand equity, according to the brand equity theory, because it clarifies the company's main benefit.

Furthermore, innovation has emerged as a crucial capability for maintaining global competition. Faster innovation from new brands is becoming a more and more common strategy for boosting one's competitiveness

in the business world. Since success and survival on the global market are differentiated by innovation, it is a crucial instrument in the hospitality industry. When it comes to brands and innovation, those who are ahead of the competition can improve the perception of the company's brand among consumers by strengthening service innovation and market breakthrough. Maintaining global competitiveness now requires innovation as a key competency. Also, quicker innovation is becoming a more common method of raising brand equity, which has helped businesses become more competitive (AbdGhani, et al., 2021).

Table 7

Relationship between Innovation Practices and Brand Equity

	Brand Equity Dimensions											
	Brand Image			Brand Loyalty			Brand Preference			Brand Leadership		
Innovation Practices	<i>r_s</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>r_s</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>r_s</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>r_s</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>I</i>
Product Innovation	.430**	0.000	S	.279**	0.000	S	.287**	0.000	S	.321**	0.000	S
Service Innovation	.505**	0.000	S	.439**	0.000	S	.477**	0.000	S	.473**	0.000	S
Process Innovation	.502**	0.000	S	.404**	0.000	S	.398**	0.000	S	.470**	0.000	S
Marketing Innovation	.544**	0.000	S	.417**	0.000	S	.440**	0.000	S	.479**	0.000	S

Legend: Significant at *p-value* < 0.05; S – Significant; NS – Not Significant
 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8

Relationship between Critical Success Factor and Brand Equity

	Brand Equity Dimensions											
	Brand Image			Brand Loyalty			Brand Preference			Brand Leadership		
Critical Success Factor	<i>r_s</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>r_s</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>r_s</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>r_s</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>I</i>
Atmosphere	.710**	0.000	S	.727**	0.000	S	.689**	0.000	S	.573**	0.000	S
Employee Competence	.660**	0.000	S	.644**	0.000	S	.608**	0.000	S	.558**	0.000	S
Product Mix	.763**	0.000	S	.692**	0.000	S	.653**	0.000	S	.636**	0.000	S
Price	.672**	0.000	S	.685**	0.000	S	.671**	0.000	S	.531**	0.000	S
Convenience	.747**	0.000	S	.683**	0.000	S	.683**	0.000	S	.574**	0.000	S

Legend: Significant at *p-value* < 0.05; S – Significant; NS – Not Significant
 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8 presents the significant relationship between critical success factor and brand equity. Based on the *p-value*, it reveals that there is a strong direct positive relationship between critical success factor and brand equity which means that the greater chance for critical success factor the better the brand equity. A company's strategic goals should be linked to and aligned with the development of critical success factors. They help the business get closer to its strategic goals by determining how a business operation or entire management accomplish its particular aims. These elements also have an impact on how individuals and teams support and participate in the strategic plans and objectives. Each critical success factor is selected to aid in the accomplishment of a certain strategic objective pertaining to innovation practices.

In the study of Yang & Yang (2018), a key strategy for the hospitality industry to get a competitive edge and improve corporate performance is to build a strong brand. The critical success factors will become the core competencies of brand building for the service operations as they adopt effective strategies and execute superior management systems to improve performance on these critical success factors. In addition, in the article of Martins (2022), in order for your business to accomplish your strategic objectives, it must meet certain

high-level targets, which are known as critical success factors. Meaningful value and good revenue for the restaurant typically arise from hitting your crucial success factors. A critical success factor should be established to boost brand equity. This is a challenging objective, but it also generates tremendous value and market share for the restaurant business.

PROPOSED FRAMEWORK



Figure 1. Marasigan’s Framework for Innovation Practices and Brand Equity among Casual Dining Restaurants in CALABARZON, Philippines

Figure 1 represents the framework for Innovation Practices and Brand Equity among Casual Dining Restaurants in CALABARZON which was based on the relationship to critical success factors. This approach demonstrates the importance of brand equity and innovation techniques as key success elements. The framework shows how the results are organized according to the order of each major variable's sub-variables, from top to bottom. A strong direct link between innovation practices and brand equity is shown by the double arrow. According to the findings, brand equity is rated higher when innovative techniques are given a higher rating. Moreover, brand image, loyalty, leadership, and preferences are directly correlated with process, marketing, service, and product innovation. Innovation may help a casual dining restaurant differentiate its procedures, marketing plan, customer service approach, and products. Whereas a stronger brand will provide the restaurant a higher standing in the industry. Moreover, it will provide a brand-new environment, customer experience, and appearance/image. Moreover, success may be the goal of investing in innovation and branding. As a result, this framework will enable the development of innovations and brand equity that may promote the growth of casual dining restaurants, which is necessary for a vibrant economy in the restaurant industries. However, in the diverse, paradoxical environment, innovation and brand building would be difficult. According to Yao, et al., (2019),

According to Gope & Awasthi (2020), innovation practices and brand equity are strongly connected in many ways. Both of these critical variables are current business drivers. One of the main factors affecting brand equity is innovation practices. Consumers are prone to feel stress, impatience, annoyance, frustration, and occasionally even rage when there is a lack of innovation. In addition, businesses' brands are influenced by innovation in the larger sector of consumer product/services. Innovations assist boost consumers' perceptions of a brand's value and increase loyalty. Brand loyalty is greatly influenced by innovativeness, and this will result in a strong brand equity for that product or service. So, it stands to reason that a brand equity will be influenced by a consumer's opinion of that business's capacity to innovate and create products, services, experiences, and promotions (Omar, et al., 2021).

This framework can be utilized by the casual dining restaurants in CALABARZON by adapting the importance of Innovation Practices specifically on the dining atmosphere, modified customer process and appearance of menu items. Whereas brand image enhances the product/service value, reputation, food preferences in line with the customers’ lifestyle and trendy image of the restaurants. This framework suggests innovation practices for casual dining restaurants. The restaurants can constantly innovate their menu by

introducing new and unique dishes, experimenting with different cuisines, and using seasonal or locally sourced ingredients. For technology adoption, the restaurants can enhance customer experience through online ordering, mobile apps, self-order kiosks, or digital menu boards. According to Hood (2020) argued in her article that the rising desire for healthier menu selections might be attributed to the fact that diners today are more knowledgeable about their food than they ever were.

Brand equity adds beyond the tangible assets to its products and services. In the case of the casual dining restaurant, create value to brand name and reputation in the business. The possible factors that contribute to the brand equity of the casual dining restaurant can be focused on brand awareness by increasing the marketing collateral, the use of social media platforms and other marketing resources. As a result, in order to maximize efforts to connect the dynamics of brand equity in the minds of customers, restaurant business decision-makers need to create distinctive tactics that relate to their defined target markets (Kelly-Payne, 2020).

Critical success factors may contribute to the casual dining restaurant's food quality to ensure the return of the customers while quality service is associated with providing excellent customer service, attentive staff, and a welcoming atmosphere to have a delightful customer experience thus, to ensure customer loyalty. Therefore, the critical success factors for casual dining restaurants can sustain the business in the long-term process. According to the study of Sharma, et al., (2021) proves that several elements are thought to be vital to the effective operation of restaurants. Therefore, this framework may continuously improve business operations on the side of innovation practices and brand equity leading to the success of the business in restaurant industry.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Most of the respondents are at the age of 18-25 years old, female, single, visit casual dining restaurants with no specific interval, they come with their family to celebrate special occasions. It implies that casual dining restaurants are favorite venues for special occasions with appeal to the younger female market. Based on the result of the study in terms of innovation practices, the respondents appreciate the process that had been innovated by the casual dining restaurants followed by marketing, service, and product innovation.

In terms of brand equity, based on the result; brand image was the most assessed by the respondents, next was loyalty, then leadership and preference. For critical success of the casual dining restaurants, based on the assessment of the respondent's employee competence was given the highest agreement, followed by atmosphere, product mix, convenience, and price. There was a significant difference on responses in terms of age, civil status, frequency of visit to innovation practices and same with brand equity particularly with brand leadership; in terms of companion has a significant difference on brand equity specific to brand leadership, for critical success factor has significant difference on employee competence and product mix. Lastly, in terms of purpose has a significant difference on critical success particularly to employee competence. It is also implied that customer characteristics have an impact on innovation practices, brand equity leading to the success of the casual dining restaurant.

The strong direct correlation of innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factor complements each other leading to a strong foundation of casual dining restaurants to exist longer in the restaurant industry. The researcher was able to propose a framework for innovation practices, brand equity and critical success factors among casual dining restaurants in CALABARZON.

This study recommends that the management of casual dining restaurants can enhance their offerings through innovative strategies. This entails introducing family-style meals for group dining, offering healthy menu options for diners who care about their health, and taking into account special diet menus to accommodate elderly clients. The dining experience can also be improved by thoughtfully designing the space and setting up food-sharing arrangements to create a warm and family-friendly atmosphere. The casual dining management may adapt paper form customer feedback or online reviews. The casual dining restaurants may adapt personalized service to the customers by asking and calling their name, remembering their previous orders or

preferences, and making recommendations based on their individual taste. Also, may improve the payment transaction contactless payment options or methods such as mobile payments, online ordering or tableside payment devices. Lastly, the future researcher may conduct a similar study focus on the consumer preferences, societal trends and dining atmosphere experience in the casual dining restaurant.

5. References

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