# Relationship of food safety, servicescape, and innovation in restaurants in the Ilocos region

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## *Abstract*

This study aimed to measure the relationship of the Food Safety, Servicescape, and Innovation in Restaurants in the Ilocos Region. Using a descriptive correlational quantitative data method design to construct a framework (Naig & Borbon, 2021), the researcher gathered 385 customers from selected DOT accredited casual dining restaurants. The result from statistical calculations from Kruskal Wallis Test, Mann Whitney Test and Wilcon Signed Rank Test reveals that the respondents agree on the assessment of food and safety practices of casual dining restaurants especially in food serving and food handling. The result also shows that respondents have agreed on their assessment in servicescape in direct and indirect external servicescape and that it is important to customers. The respondents also agreed on the innovation of casual restaurants in providing innovative communication platforms, and the respondents cared about restaurant innovation and new ideas in improving general experience. The respondents have also agreed on their assessment that the better food safety practices and servicescape implementation, the better innovation can be introduced to customers leading to customer delightment in casual dining restaurants in Ilocos region since it was found out that there is a moderate correlation. The researcher proposed a business framework by highlighting the importance of food safety, servicescape design and innovation that can result to customer delightment.

*Keywords:* casual dining restaurants, food safety, servicescape, innovation

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## 1. Introduction

Restaurants in Ilocos Region tourist areas frequently invest in creating a visually appealing servicescape that reflects the local culture and ambiance. Food safety, innovative culinary approaches, and the ability to adapt to evolving dining trends are essential for creating an attractive dining environment. Moreover, the quality of the physical surroundings, including customized decor and a welcoming atmosphere, varies significantly across different restaurant types and sizes, impacting diner preferences (Dinero et al.,2021).

A lack of adequate training and education among restaurant staff hinders their ability to effectively identify and address evolving customer needs and expectations (Akan, 2020). These concerns are further underscored by the Philippines' ranking of 72nd out of 109 countries in the Global Food Security Index (GFSI) of the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU). This index highlights the growing importance of food safety as a public health issue, emphasizing its critical role in safeguarding public health and well-being (Hassauer et al.,2020). Furthermore, continuous improvement in restaurant infrastructure and the implementation of innovative ideas are crucial for staying abreast of the latest trends in the culinary, hospitality, and tourism sectors. Recognizing the dynamic nature of the industry, many restaurants actively seek to enhance their revenue streams and exceed customer expectations in terms of service quality, food quality, and overall dining experience (Sanchez et al.,2021). In this context of issues and gaps, many studies focus on a specific aspect of the industry, such as food safety regulations, physical environment, and innovation but fail to consider the broader context in which these factors operate (Elkhwesky et al.,2022). There is a need for a deeper comprehension of how public policies influence consumer decisions and how these decisions impact health, the environment, and food security (Lusk et al.,2018).

This study is underpinned by theoretical frameworks such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and Food Safety Management Systems(FSMS). These frameworks provide restaurants with guidelines and standards for ensuring food safety. HACCP is a proactive system that identifies and mitigates potential hazards throughout the food production and processing chain. Both models emphasize the criticality of identifying and controlling food safety risks by adhering to proper food handling, storage, and cooking procedures.

Consequently, theories of restaurant innovation, such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Fred Davis in 1989 and the Diffusion of Innovation Theory provide valuable insights into the factors that drive the successful adoption and diffusion of innovations within the food service industry. The TAM posits that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are the primary determinants of technology acceptance and success. Furthermore, theories of servicescape, such as the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model and the Servicescape model (Bitner, 1992), provide theoretical frameworks for understanding the relationship between the servicescape and customer behavior and affect. The S-O-R model posits that the servicescape acts as a stimulus that influences customers' emotional and cognitive responses, which subsequently impact their behavioral reactions. The Servicescape model emphasizes the significance of design elements, such as lighting, color, and music, in creating an appealing ambiance that enhances the overall customer experience (Bitner, 1992). In the line of these theories the following variables were used, Food Safety Practices Servicescape from Dinero et al.,(2021), and Innovation from Kim et al. (2018).

Given the above-mentioned circumstances and conditions, this study shall provide casual dining restaurants, tourism agencies and offices, policy makers, local government units and the academe a general and extensive information that can help support restaurant establishments and other tourism related enterprises to thrive and

survive in a highly competitive market. With significant data and suggestions for continuous development specifically in the food industry this study will be helpful as a basis in creating various programs and policies to cater travelers and tourists in support of the ASEAN 2025 Plan to make the region a "quality tourism destination". The significance of focusing on these factors of servicescape, innovation and food safety is aligned to ASEAN Plan of Action on Science, Technology, and Innovation (APASTI) 2016-2025 which is a written plan of action that aims to encourage the use of science, technology, and innovation to achieve sustainable development in the ASEAN region. As mentioned in the preceding statements, one business that can benefit from this plan is the food and hospitality industry, which is very important to the ASEAN economy. A proposed improved framework for food safety, servicescape, and innovation in casual dining restaurants can support the ASEAN Plan of 2025 by using sustainable practices, improving the servicescape, and using new technologies to contribute to the region's goals for sustainable development while improving customer satisfaction.

***Objectives of the Study -*** This paper evaluated the customers' assessment of casual restaurants in Ilocos Region in terms of food safety, servicescape, and innovation. Specifically, this paper (1) evaluated food safety practices of casual dining restaurants in terms of personal hygiene, food serving, and food handling; (2) assessed the servicescape of the casual dining restaurants in terms of the physical environment: external presentation, physical environment: internal presentation, staff and service presentation, and environmental conditions, product/ brochures/ menu/ web page and direct and indirect external servicescape; (3) assessed innovation of casual dining restaurants in terms of menu innovativeness, technology-based service innovativeness, experiential innovativeness, and promotional innovativeness; (4) tested the significant relationship in assessing food safety, servicescape, and innovation in casual dining restaurants leading to customer delight in the Ilocos region; (4) proposed a structure based on the findings that can assist the food service sector, the Department of Tourism, and local government agencies in improving their food safety initiatives, servicescape, and innovation.

## 2. Method

***Research Design -*** The researcher used the descriptive correlational quantitative with data triangulation type of research to analyze the data to construct a framework and see the relations between the variables to measure and understand how many customers or respondents feel, think, or act on the relationship between food safety, servicescape, and innovation in selected DOT accredited restaurants in the Ilocos Region to assess the relationship of determinants on customer delight. The qualitative data gathered through interviews and observations would shed light on the practices and factors contributing to consumer satisfaction in restaurants serving casual fare. The survey data from Google forms and questionnaires were submitted for validation and reliability test undergone statistical test.

***Participants of the Study -*** The respondents of the study were customers of selected DOT-accredited casual restaurants in Ilocos Region (Pangasinan, La Union, Ilocos Sur, and Ilocos Norte) with a total number of 385. Expected respondents qualify with prequalifying questions that they (1) agree, are of legal age, and want to take part in the study, and (2) serve to understand if they have experienced doing business in buying food from a casual restaurant when visiting provinces in the Ilocos Region. The researcher used the Rao soft Sample size calculator with a confidence level of 95% and a 5% margin of error in determining the sample size based on the sample size of 75,800 given by the managers with the daily average count of the guest. The computed sample size is 383, distributed to 4 provinces.

**Table 1**

*Distribution of Participants per Province after Data Gathering*

| PROVINCES | Average Monthly Customer Count | Actual Sample size distribution | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pangasinan | 27,051 | 140 | 26% |
| La Union | 22,170 | 101 | 36% |
| Ilocos Sur | 14,981 | 98 | 25% |
| Ilocos Norte | 11,598 | 98 | 25% |
| Total: | 75,800 | 385 | 100% |

*Data Collection Instrument -* The instrument included four parts with sections as follows: the first section of the questionnaire focuses on the demographics of the respondents, which includes age, gender, marital status, degree of education, employment position, and frequency of dining in casual restaurants. The second section utilized a modified questionnaire to evaluate the food safety practices of casual dining restaurants in terms of personnel hygiene, food serving, and food handling. The third section utilized a modified questionnaire regarding the servicescape of the casual dining restaurants in terms of the physical environment: external presentation, physical environment: internal presentation, staff and service presentation, environmental conditions, product/ brochures/ menus/webpage, direct/indirect external servicescape. In the fourth section, a modified questionnaire was utilized to evaluate the innovation of casual dining restaurants (Kim et al., 2018) in terms of menu innovativeness, technology-based service innovativeness, experiential innovativeness, and promotional innovativeness. The researcher partially modified the instrument, and before sending it to the respondents, the questionnaire was validated by experts and put through a reliability examination. Thirty respondents participated in the Pilot testing of the questionnaire using Cronbach alpha using SPSS tools. The results of the completed reliability test were acceptable, allowing the researcher to proceed with the distribution of questionnaires.

*Data Gathering Procedure -* The researcher first wrote a letter of endorsement from LPU-Batangas Graduate School office of the Program Dean endorsed by the thesis adviser. Second, the researcher wrote a letter to the respondents to answer the survey questionnaire to get their views and opinions about the study. The researcher prepared a modified questionnaire based on the formulated objectives. The draft of the questionnaire was submitted for both external and internal validation. To fully determine the items clarity, relevance and appropriateness, the researcher set the questionnaire for external validation by experts. Then the researcher used some related literature to support the topic using journals and some internet data source. The researcher visited different provinces of Ilocos Region and assisted the respondents to obtain responses from face-to-face distribution of printed questionnaires.

*Data Analysis -* The collected data was tallied and submitted to the assigned statistician adviser to run and test the results. The data gathered was treated using statistical tools. The researcher utilized the triangulation method of survey questionnaire, interview, observation, and focus group discussion. To investigate the research issues in customer delight, an adopted research survey questionnaire was created in Google Forms for food safety, servicescape (Dinero et al., 2021), and innovation (Kim et al.,2021). Data were tallied in a spreadsheet and examined using SPSS. The mean and median were both presented for both continuous and ordinal variables. The chi-square and Kruskal-Wallis tests were applied to the data for educational level and frequency of dining in casual dining restaurants. For the non-parametric correlations' spearman rank correlation coefficient was utilized. Pairwise comparison was also used to compare and rate multiple items or alternatives by taking each item into account in relation to every other item. Each item is compared to every other item in a one-on-one comparison in a pairwise comparison, and a preference or ranking is given based on the result of each comparison.

*Ethical Consideration -* To preserve the questionnaires' strict confidentiality, all respondent identities will be omitted from the final report. Furthermore, the participants will agree to the consent form after being informed of their rights and responsibilities under the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Therefore, the identity of all respondents will remain confidential. In the conclusions, the researcher will adhere to the facts they have discovered throughout the research and will not offer any interpretations or judgments of their own.

## 3. Results and discussion

Table 2 shows the summary table on food safety practices of casual dining restaurant. The table shows a mean score of 4.05, the results show that most of the respondents agree that food safety practices in casual dining places are good in terms of personal hygiene, food serving, and food handling. The food handling and food serving indicators got the highest rank with a weighted mean of 4.06, which has all verbal interpretation of agree, followed by personal hygiene with a weighted mean score of 4.04. Handling and serving food are important parts

of a restaurant that can have a big effect on how people feel about the quality and safety of their food. People want to know that the food they are eating is safe and not contaminated they may avoid places that don't meet their standards because they don't pay enough attention to how the food is handled and how clean it is. Customers may have food allergies or dietary restrictions, which can make it even more important to handle and serve food carefully. They want to be sure that their food is prepared and given in a way that keeps them from getting exposed to allergens and causing cross-contamination. When a restaurant makes people feel like they are important, they are more likely to trust that their food is safe to eat. Also, the way the food looks can affect how people think about its quality and safety. Food that is handled and given correctly is more likely to look fresh and tasty, which can make a meal more enjoyable. On the other hand, food that isn't handled or served properly may look unappealing or even bad, which will make people think less of the place.

**Table 2**

*Summary Table on Food Safety Practices of Casual Dining Restaurant*

| Indicators | Weighted Mean | Verbal Interpretation | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Personal Hygiene | 4.04 | Agree | 3 |
| 2. Food Serving | 4.06 | Agree | 1.5 |
| 3. Food Handling | 4.06 | Agree | 1.5 |
| Composite Mean | 4.05 | Agree | |

*Legend: 4.50–5.00=Strongly Agree; 3.50–4.49=Agree; 2.50–3.49=Moderately Agree; 1.50–2.49=Disagree; 1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree*

This means that restaurants in Ilocos region use safe ways to handle and prepare food to keep it from getting contaminated and make sure it is safe to eat. The Food serving indicator also got a high score, which shows that the places serve food to customers in a good way. This suggests that there may be some room for improvement in the way restaurant workers take care of their own hygiene, such as washing their hands, using gloves properly, and wearing clean clothes, to keep food from getting contaminated. Effective food management practices can aid in preventing food contamination and guaranteeing food safety (Noor et al.,2017). The study shows that casual dining places do enough to keep their food safe. However, there is still a need for constant monitoring and growth to make sure that customers are safe and healthy. In the study, the fact that the participants only said "agree" could be due to several things, such as social desirability bias, lack of knowledge, or limited response choices. Social desirability bias is when people tend to give answers that they think are socially acceptable or desirable instead of what they really think. In the context of this study, the people who answered the questions may have felt pressured to give positive answers about the restaurants' food safety methods, even if they had doubts or concerns. Moreover, food safety regulations across countries lack uniform requirements from one commodity to another. Also, complicating matters is the fact that food safety challenges may differ by region due to differences in income levels, diets, local conditions, and government infrastructures (King et al.,2017).

**Table 3**

*Summary Table on Servicescape of the Casual Dining Restaurants*

| Indicators | Weighted Mean | Verbal Interpretation | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| Physical Environment: External Presentation | 4.10 | Agree | 6 |
| Physical Environment: Internal Presentation | 4.12 | Agree | 5 |
| Staff and Service Presentation | 4.13 | Agree | 4 |
| Environmental Conditions | 4.14 | Agree | 2.5 |
| Product/ Brochures/ Menus/ Webpage | 4.14 | Agree | 2.5 |
| Direct/ Indirect External Servicescape | 4.16 | Agree | 1 |
| Composite Mean | 4.13 | Agree | |

*Legend: 4.50–5.00=Strongly Agree; 3.50–4.49=Agree; 2.50–3.49=Moderately Agree; 1.50–2.49=Disagree; 1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree*

Table 3 presents the summary of the servicescape of casual dining restaurants. The composite mean of 4.13 indicates that the respondents agreed in general. Among the indicators, all items were rated agree, and direct /indirect external servicescape ranked first (4.16), followed by indicators environmental conditions (4.14) and product/brochures/menus/webpage (4.14), while staff and service presentation (4.13) are third on the rank. The Direct/Indirect External Servicescape is well-deservedly ranked first in customer surveys because to its vital

function in creating first impressions, defining brand perception, invoking emotions, drawing clients, supporting the internal atmosphere, and leaving a lasting impression. Its importance in promoting customer happiness cannot be emphasized, and restaurants must realize its importance as a critical component in their attempts to provide their valued customers with a memorable and pleasurable eating experience in the different restaurants in the Ilocos Region.

The servicescape is the physical environment in which a service is delivered, including the space's design, layout, and appearance. Within the context of restaurants, the servicescape can be divided into direct and indirect categories. Direct servicescape refers to the elements of the physical environment that consumers directly experience, such as the dining area's design and decor, lighting, temperature, cleanliness, music, and aroma. Indirect servicescape, on the other hand, refers to the elements that are not directly experienced by customers but have an impact on their overall experience, such as the cuisine quality and the friendliness and competence of the staff. Customer satisfaction is the ultimate objective of any restaurant, and the servicescape is vital to attaining this objective. The servicescape can affect a customer's emotions, attitudes, and behavior, as well as their perception of the service's efficacy (Agnihotri et al.,2018). The servicescape is the primary concern of restaurant patrons. When evaluating their degree of satisfaction, customers tend to prioritize the direct servicescape elements. Customers are more likely to rate a restaurant favorably if it has an attractive design, comfortable seating, and pleasurable lighting, for instance (Han et al.,2017). The servicescape can influence customers' propensity to pay and likelihood to return to a restaurant. To increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, restaurants should pay close attention to their servicescape, specifically the direct servicescape elements. In restaurants, the servicescape is a crucial component of consumer satisfaction ("The Roles of Servicescape in the Retail Business," 2018). Customers place a premium on direct servicescape elements, such as design, decor, lighting, and sanitation.

Meanwhile, item physical environment: external presentation (4.10) rated the least from the indicators, followed by physical environment: internal presentation (4.12). The low rating for the external presentation of the physical environment in the survey could be attributed to several factors, including prioritization of other factors, preconceived expectations, influence of location and surroundings, seasonal or weather-related effects, individual preferences, lack of information, subjectivity, and survey context. Understanding these potential elements can assist restaurants based in the Ilocos Region in identifying areas for improvement and focusing on the things that are most important to their customers in order to improve overall satisfaction.

Although the physical environment of a restaurant is a significant factor in customer satisfaction, there are circumstances in which it may become less essential to patrons. When a consumer is already familiar with a restaurant and has developed a level of loyalty towards it, the restaurant's external appearance becomes less of a priority (Naderi et al.,2018). For instance, a customer who has frequented a particular restaurant for years may be less concerned with the restaurant's exterior appearance than a first-time visitor. This is since the consumer is already familiar with the restaurant's menu and has developed a level of trust and loyalty for it. When the focus shifts to other factors, such as the quality of the food or the degree of customer service, the external appearance of a restaurant becomes less significant (Keller et al.,2020). A restaurant in a bustling shopping district, for instance, may attract customers based on its location and visibility rather than its external appearance. Similarly, a restaurant with a robust online presence and positive evaluations may attract customers who place a higher value on the quality of the food and customer service than on the restaurant's aesthetics (Pacheco, 2018; Park et al.,2020; Van Lohuizen et al.,2020).

Despite the fact that the physical environment of a restaurant is a significant factor in customer satisfaction, there are circumstances in which consumers may place it lower on their list of priorities (Zhong et al.,2020; Serçeoğlu et al.,2020; Suhud et al., 2016; Çetinsöz, 2019; Dinçer et al.,2018; Almanza et al.,2017; Tuzunkan et al., 2016). This can occur when the customer is already familiar with the restaurant, when the focus shifts to other factors such as cuisine or service, or when the restaurant has a strong online presence or advantageous location. The Physical Environment: External Presentation, this aspect requires refinement. It implies that

customers' initial perceptions of a restaurant, such as a facade and exterior design, are less significant than other indicators. To attract more consumers, casual Restaurants should prioritize improving their external and internal physical environments. This involves improving their facilities, interior design, and illumination.

**Table 4**

*Summary Table on Innovation of Casual Dining Restaurants*

| Indicators | Weighted Mean | Verbal Interpretation | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| Menu Innovativeness | 4.16 | Agree | 1.5 |
| Technology -Based Service Innovativeness | 4.16 | Agree | 1.5 |
| Experiential Innovativeness | 4.13 | Agree | 4 |
| Promotional Innovativeness | 4.15 | Agree | 3 |
| Composite Mean | 4.15 | Agree | |

*Legend: 4.50–5.00=Strongly Agree; 3.50–4.49=Agree; 2.50–3.49=Moderately Agree; 1.50–2.49=Disagree; 1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree*

Table 4 summarizes the innovation of casual dining restaurants across four indicators: menu innovativeness, technology-based service innovativeness, experiential innovativeness, and promotional innovativeness with a composite mean of 4.15 indicates that all respondents agreed in general. As the respondents have agreed, indicators menu innovativeness and technology bases service innovativeness both got the highest mean of 4.16, followed by promotional innovativeness with 4.15 weighted mean. The study's findings show that menu innovation and technology-based service improvements are the top concerns of respondents when it comes to gauging customer satisfaction. Customers in restaurants of Ilocos Region expect more than simply great meals when they visit an accredited restaurant. They want an experience that is memorable, interactive, and one-of-a-kind. As a result, restaurants must think outside the box in order to engage their guests while still delivering a secure and comfortable environment. Using technology-based service innovations like digital ordering systems, mobile payment alternatives, and interactive menus can help consumers feel more connected to the restaurant and welcome. These menu innovation indicators, as well as technology-based service improvements, work together to provide a great customer experience. Restaurants may ensure that their customers are satisfied with their visit and return for more by applying these concepts.

It should be noted that in the restaurant business, which is very competitive, new menu items and services that use technology can help businesses stand out from each other (Ahamat et al.,2022; Ko, 2020). Unique dishes and services can help businesses bring in new customers and keep the ones they already have. Due to the rise of social media, customers are more likely to talk about their experiences online (Almohaimmeed, 2021; Ozuem et al.,2016). Menu diversity, the adoption of digital ordering and payment methods, the installation of contactless meal delivery, and better food safety procedures are some of the recent developments used in restaurants in the Ilocos Region. These improvements aim to provide guests in the region with a seamless and safe dining experience. Customers can now savor creative cuisine while remaining confident in the highest food safety standards.

Customers can take pictures of their food and share them on social media thanks to creative menus and services based on technology. This brings in new customers and raises brand recognition. Technology-based services, like online shopping and mobile payments, make it easier and faster for consumers to order and pay for things ("Consumer Purchasing Behavior on Food Delivery Platforms," 2021). Online ordering, digital menus, and mobile payments give people more ways to customize their meals and make the ordering process faster and easier. This makes the whole cooking process better and makes customers happier. Customers are always looking for new and different things to do that they haven't done before (Harba, 2019) (Kuswati et al.,2018). People will be more interested in a menu with unique and creative meals than only traditional or standard dishes.

According to the responses, promotional inventiveness is critical in affecting customer satisfaction in the Ilocos Region's casual eating sector. It comprises adopting unique and creative strategies to advertise and market the commodities of a restaurant. This includes, but is not limited to, using social media platforms for targeted advertisements, providing seasonal or regional specials, and promoting local foods and dishes to increase

gourmet tourism. These creative marketing techniques excite potential customers' interest, arouse their curiosity, and urge them to visit the restaurant. When they arrive, the harmonious combination of great service, food safety, and culinary innovation enhances their dining experience, resulting in higher customer satisfaction.

This means that respondents recognize the significance of innovative promotion strategies in casual dining establishments. Restaurant guests care a lot about how creative the promotions are because it can bring in new customers, keep old ones, improve the customer experience, bring in more money, and raise brand awareness. By running unique and creative promotions, restaurants can set themselves apart from their competition and give customers a unique and memorable meal (Shcherbakova, 2020; Velasco-Vizcaíno et al.,2020). Innovative promotions can help spread the word about the business and make people talk about it. Customers are likelier to talk about experiences on social media if the deals are unique and creative. This help bring in new customers and build brand recognition. Innovative promotions can also help the business make more money. When customers are encouraged to spend more or try new things through promotions, sales increase and income grows. By giving customers more value and excitement, promotions can improve their entire experience. Customers can have a memorable and fun eating experience with special deals like themed nights, holiday events, or limited-time offers. Promotions can also help keep customers coming back by keeping them interested in what the restaurant offers (Setiawan et al., 2022; Nasrah et al.,2020; Kim et al., 2021; Uddin, 2019;). Regular promotions, like loyalty programs or savings for customers who buy from you often, can help you build a base of loyal customers. Promotions that are unique and creative can bring in new customers to the business.

Among the four indicators, experiential innovativeness ranks lowest with a weighted mean score of 4.13. Respondents in the Ilocos Region placed experiential innovativeness as the least important factor in gauging customer happiness in restaurants, possibly due to the region's deep-rooted tradition and desire for authentic, local cuisine over unique eating experiences. Unlike big cityscapes, where dining trends change quickly, the Ilocos Region, noted for its rich cultural legacy, has a strong preference for traditional flavors and dining patterns. Restaurants such as La Preciosa and Herencia Cafe, for example, are known for their classic Ilocano meals such as Pinakbet and Bagnet, and have loyal customer bases who value consistent, homely food quality over new dining experiences. As a result, while experiential innovation can be an excellent tool for standing out in crowded, competitive marketplaces, it may not be the primary driver of customer pleasure in areas where culinary traditions are important. This may indicate that while respondents still recognize the significance of providing unique and innovative dining experiences, it may not be as important as menu and technology-based service innovation. Experiences that are new and different can be a big part of attracting customers (Hill et al., 2022; Rather, 2020; Watkinson, 2019), but customers often don't care much about them when it comes to being happy in places. Customers usually care most about things like food quality, service, safety, and ease of use (Melo et al., 2020; Suchánek et al., 2017). So, restaurants should try to find a good mix of being creative and being practical so that their customers always have a good time eating there.

**Table 5**

*Relationship Between Food Safety Practices and Servicescape of Casual Restaurants*

| Personal Hygeine | rho | p-value | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Physical Environment: External Presentation | 0.074 | 0.148 | Not Significant |
| Physical Environment: Internal Presentation | .136** | 0.008 | Significant |
| Staff and Service Presentation | -0.056 | 0.270 | Not Significant |
| Environmental Conditions | .164* | 0.001 | Significant |
| Product/Brochures/Menus/Webpage | 0.022 | 0.668 | Not Significant |
| Direct/Indirect External Servicescape | 0.033 | 0.524 | Not Significant |
| Food Service | | | |
| Physical Environment: External Presentation | .122* | 0.017 | Significant |
| Physical Environment: Internal Presentation | 0.056 | 0.275 | Not Significant |
| Staff and Service Presentation | .326** | 0.000 | Highly Significant |
| Environmental Conditions | .197** | 0.000 | Highly Significant |
| Product/Brochures/Menus/Webpage | -0.023 | 0.649 | Not Significant |
| Direct/Indirect External Servicescape | .198** | 0.000 | Highly Significant |

| Food Handling | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Physical Environment: External Presentation | 0.038 | 0.453 | Not Significant |
| Physical Environment: Internal Presentation | .129* | 0.012 | Significant |
| Staff and Service Presentation | 0.019 | 0.708 | Not Significant |
| Environmental Conditions | 0.082 | 0.108 | Not Significant |
| Product/Brochures/Menus/Webpage | .257** | 0.000 | Highly Significant |
| Direct/Indirect External Servicescape | 0.098 | 0.056 | Not Significant |

*Legend: Significant at p-value <0.01*

Table 5 displays the relationship between food safety practices and servicescape of casual restaurants. The computed rho values indicate a moderate to weak direct correlation, and the computed p-values were not all less than the alpha level. Based in the result, there was a significant relationship between internal presentation and environmental conditions vs. Personal hygiene; food serving and servicescape except on internal presentation and Product/ Brochures/ Menu/ Webpage; and internal presentation and Product/Product/ Brochures/ Menus/ Webpage vs. food handling. The result shows that the better the food safety practices, the better the servicescape of casual restaurants. The results indicate that the physical environment's internal appearance and environmental conditions have a significant positive correlation with food service and food management practices. This indicates that the quality of food safety practices in a casual restaurant is proportional to the internal appearance of the physical environment and environmental conditions. The way a restaurant looks and feels on the inside and how it is set up outside can have a big effect on how food is served and how it is managed. Researchers are finding more and more evidence that the quality of the physical surroundings is linked to the success of food service operations.

One reason for this is that the way customers feel about the food and service can be affected by how the restaurant looks. Customers are more likely to like a restaurant that is well-lit, clean, and well-kept than one that is dark, dirty, or in bad shape (Baş et al.,2020; Çetinsöz, 2019; Dinçer et al.,2018; Han et al.,2017). This can lead to more satisfied customers, more repeat business, and good word-of-mouth suggestions. A well-designed physical environment can also help improve food management by making it easy for people to do their jobs well. For example, a restaurant with a well-organized kitchen layout, modern equipment, and enough storage space can help cut down on food waste, improve efficiency, and make sure that food is made safely and to a consistent standard (Bharucha, 2018). The safety and quality of food can also be affected by things like weather and humidity in the environment. For example, too much heat or humidity in a restaurant can make it more likely that germs will grow and food will go bad. On the other hand, food can get dry or tough in a place that is too cold. Keeping the right conditions can help make sure that the food is safe and of good quality, which in turn can make customers happier and more faithful. Overall, there is a strong link between how a restaurant looks and how it serves and manages food.

The staff and presentation of service have a significant positive correlation with food-serving practices. This suggests that a well-trained staff that provides excellent customer service can have a positive effect on food service practices in a casual dining establishment (Kim et al.,2018; Arora et al.,2022). This means that when the staff is well-trained and gives great service, it can have a good effect on the food (Hidayat et al.,2020). One reason for this link is that the staff is a very important part of making sure that food safety rules are followed. Food-borne illnesses can be avoided by cooking, storing, and treating food the right way. Staff who have been trained well can make sure that these rules are always followed and that the food provided is safe to eat.

Table 6 illustrates the relationship between food safety practices and innovations in casual restaurants. The computed rho values indicate a moderate to weak direct correlation, and the computed p-values were not all less than the alpha level. From the result, there was a significant relationship between personal hygiene and experiential innovativeness; food serving vs. Technology-based service innovativeness and experiential innovativeness; and food handling and promotional innovativeness. The result shows that the better the food safety practices, the more innovative the casual restaurants.

**Table 6**

*Relationship Between Food Safety Practices and Innovation*

| Personal Hygeine | rho | p-value | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Menu Innovativeness | -0.004 | 0.938 | Not Significant |
| Technology-Based Service Innovativeness | 0.061 | 0.233 | Not Significant |
| Experiential Innovativeness | .144** | 0.005 | Significant |
| Promotional Innovativeness | 0.077 | 0.134 | Not Significant |
| Food Service | | | |
| Menu Innovativeness | 0.037 | 0.465 | Not Significant |
| Technology-Based Service Innovativeness | .118* | 0.021 | Significant |
| Experiential Innovativeness | .224** | 0.000 | Highly Significant |
| Promotional Innovativeness | 0.012 | 0.819 | Not Significant |
| Food Handling | | | |
| Menu Innovativeness | 0.026 | 0.609 | Not Significant |
| Technology-Based Service Innovativeness | -0.091 | 0.074 | Not Significant |
| Experiential Innovativeness | 0.007 | 0.891 | Not Significant |
| Promotional Innovativeness | .199** | 0.000 | Highly Significant |

*Legend: Significant at p-value <0.01*

Restaurants with high standards for food safety are more likely to have a culture of constant improvement and attention to detail. Because the staff is always looking for ways to improve the customer experience, this attitude can make it more important to be creative in all parts of the restaurant. Also, new ideas in casual eating restaurants can lead to better ways of keeping food safe (Stephanie et al.,2022). For example, new technologies and tools can be used to improve how food is stored and handled, making food safer and reducing the number of people who get sick from eating it. Overall, this study shows that in the casual dining restaurant business, food safety practices and new ideas go hand in hand. Restaurants that put both of these things first are more likely to give their customers a good eating experience and make them happy. Technology-based service innovation is significantly associated with food safety practices (Da Cunha, 2021), suggesting that restaurants that implement technology-based service innovations may also prioritize food safety. Although menu innovation is not significantly related to food safety practices, restaurants must maintain high food safety standards regardless of their degree of innovation. In the food service industry, food safety practices significantly impact experiential and promotional innovation. The study discovered a positive correlation between food safety practices in a food serving and handling and experiential innovativeness, which refers to creating unique and memorable dining experiences.

**Table 7**

*Relationship Between Servicescape and Promotional Innovativeness*

| Physical Environment: External Presentation | rho | p-value | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Menu Innovativeness | -0.082 | 0.109 | Not Significant |
| Technology-Based Service Innovativeness | 0.073 | 0.154 | Not Significant |
| Experiential Innovativeness | 0.08 | 0.115 | Not Significant |
| Promotional Innovativeness | -0.034 | 0.510 | Not Significant |
| Physical Environment: Internal Presentation | | | |
| Menu Innovativeness | -0.087 | 0.087 | Not Significant |
| Technology-Based Service Innovativeness | -0.027 | 0.600 | Not Significant |
| Experiential Innovativeness | 0.059 | 0.248 | Not Significant |
| Promotional Innovativeness | 0.054 | 0.293 | Not Significant |
| Staff and Service Presentation | | | |
| Menu Innovativeness | 0.06 | 0.543 | Not Significant |
| Technology-Based Service Innovativeness | .155** | 0.002 | Significant |
| Experiential Innovativeness | 0.062 | 0.222 | Not Significant |
| Promotional Innovativeness | -0.059 | 0.249 | Not Significant |
| Environmental Condition | | | |
| Menu Innovativeness | -.117* | 0.021 | Significant |
| Technology-Based Service Innovativeness | 0.033 | 0.516 | Not Significant |
| Experiential Innovativeness | 0.182** | 0.000 | Highly Significant |
| Promotional Innovativeness | 0.039 | 0.445 | Not Significant |

| Product/Brochures/Menus/Webpage | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Menu Innovativeness | 0.067 | 0.190 | Not Significant |
| Technology-Based Service Innovativeness | 0.097 | 0.058 | Not Significant |
| Experiential Innovativeness | -.115* | 0.024 | Significant |
| Promotional Innovativeness | .169** | 0.001 | Significant |
| Direct/Indirect External Servicescape | | | |
| Menu Innovativeness | 0.077 | 0.129 | Not Significant |
| Technology-Based Service Innovativeness | 0.031 | 0.541 | Not Significant |
| Experiential Innovativeness | 0.089 | 0.079 | Not Significant |
| Promotional Innovativeness | 0.017 | 0.743 | Not Significant |

*Legend: Significant at p-value <0.01*

Table 7 shows the relationship between servicescape and innovations in casual restaurants. The computed rho values indicate a weak to negligible direct correlation, and the computed p-values were not all less than the alpha level. Based on the data, there was a significant relationship between staff and Service presentation vs. Technology-based service innovativeness; environmental conditions vs. menu innovativeness and experiential innovativeness; and Product/ Brochures/ Menus/ Webpage vs. experiential and promotional innovativeness. This implies that the better the servicescape, the more innovative the casual restaurants.
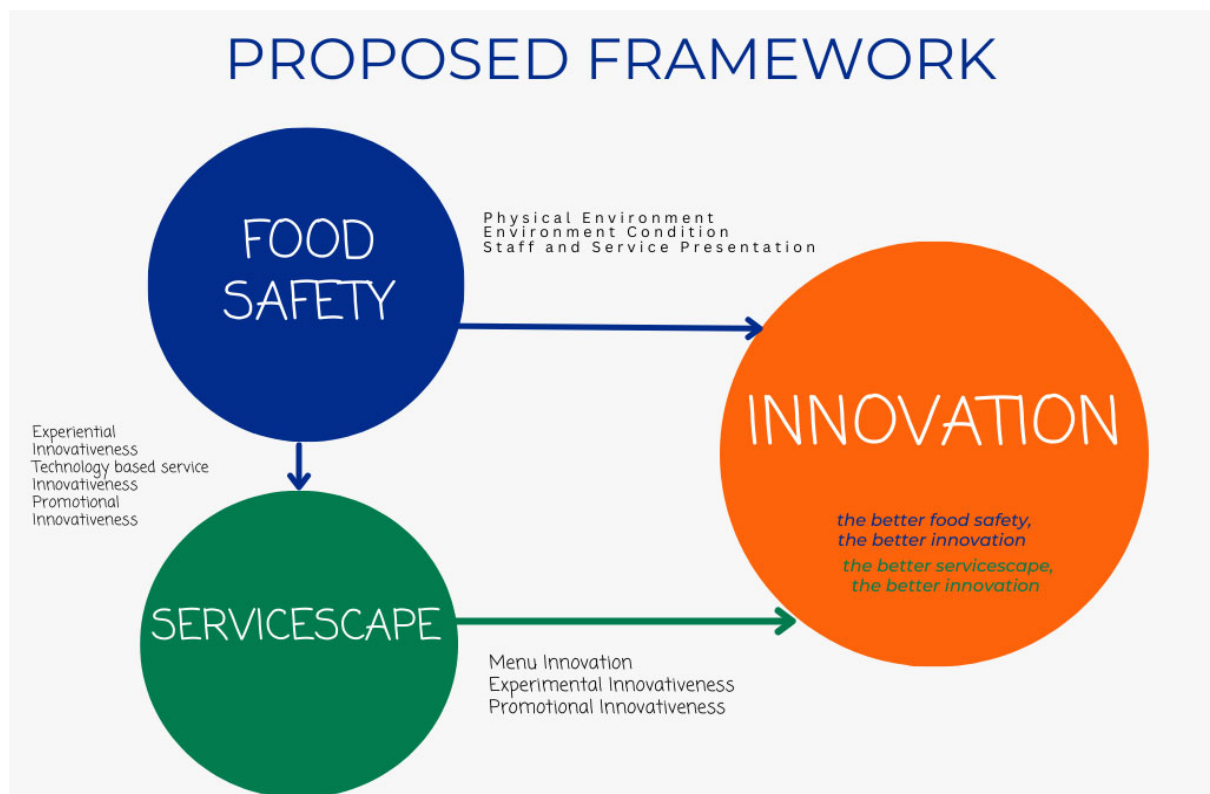


*Figure 1. Fernandez Food Safety, Servicescape, Innovation Framework*

Casual restaurants in Ilocos Region can get an edge in a competitive market if they have a well-designed servicescape. Casual restaurants can stand out from their competitors and get more customers if they offer a unique and new servicescape. A better servicescape can change how customers act in a good way and make them happier as a result (Asghar et al.,2021). Customers are more likely to go back to a place and tell their friends about it if they had a good time there. The servicescape is a big part of how people think of a restaurant's business. A well-designed servicescape can help build a good reputation for a brand and keep customers coming back (Marso et al.,2020) (Meng et al.,2017). Casual businesses in Ilocos Region can make more money by making customers happier and keeping them coming back. Customers are more likely to spend more money and come back more often if they enjoy their meal. Having a better servicescape can also make employees happier. A

well-designed servicescape can make the workplace more pleasant for workers, which can lead to higher job satisfaction and less staff turnover. Casual restaurants that put a lot of thought into the design and care of their servicescape are likely to have happier, more loyal customers and more money coming in. By putting money into their servicescape, casual restaurants can give themselves a competitive edge and improve their brand image in the area.

The researcher developed this framework based on the result of the study which indicates, Food safety, Servicescape and Innovation have a positive relationship. Innovation can be seen as the output of both safety and servicescape. This means that the better food safety, the better innovation; the better servicescape, the better innovation for casual dining restaurants that leads to customer satisfaction in restaurants in Ilocos region. The region's food safety is assured by strict compliance to local regulations that encourage sanitary practices and the use of fresh ingredients. With its visually pleasing presentation and courteous treatment, the servicescape also contributes to the appeal of the meal. Finally, the combination of these variables fosters an environment favorable to innovation. This connection has been proved successfully in the Ilocos Region and should be explored by any business trying to stay competitive in the food industry. Businesses can establish an environment that stimulates inventive thinking by complying to local standards and using appealing presentation tactics. When it comes to food safety, servicescape, and customer satisfaction in the Philippines' Ilocos Region, these three components have an unmistakable synergy. Proper food safety procedures contribute to a safe and sanitary environment for both customers and employees. A well-maintained servicescape offers a comfortable environment for consumers, which helps to promote loyalty and trust. And, as a result of this combination of food safety and servicescape, innovation results in higher customer satisfaction.

The framework is comprised of circular shapes, each of which is colored differently. As for safety, blue is often used in food safety symbols and packaging because it shows trust, reliability, and safety. This also has to do with cleanliness and freshness, both of which are important for food safety. For servicescape, green, which shows that it cares about the earth and is sustainable, may be seen positively by customers. So, it can also create a calm and friendly atmosphere that helps people have a good servicescape experience. Orange is the best color for innovation because it is linked with creativity, energy, and enthusiasm, all of which are important to innovation. It means coming up with new ideas that make you feel excited and enthusiastic about new opportunities. It is also used for developing things. A feeling of warmth is easy to talk to, which could make customers feel welcome if they have suggestions or ideas and are interested in new goods and services.

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

The respondents agreed that food safety is important in casual dining restaurants, especially when it comes to serving and handling food. Results show that customers care a lot about the safety and cleanliness of the food they eat in these places. Notably, the study revealed a strong correlation between customer satisfaction and the perceived prioritization of food safety by the restaurant. These findings underscore the imperative for casual dining restaurants to prioritize and implement robust food safety practices. By adhering to stringent safety protocols, these establishments can not only ensure customer well-being but also cultivate a positive dining experience, fostering trust and loyalty among their clientele. The servicescape of a casual dining restaurant significantly influences customer satisfaction, particularly among millennials. Our study revealed that customers highly value the overall ambiance and feel of the establishment. This encompasses factors such as lighting, decor, and table arrangements. Notably, customer satisfaction was higher in restaurants that prioritized the creation of an appealing servicescape. Consequently, managers of casual dining establishments should prioritize the design and maintenance of an inviting and aesthetically pleasing environment. The study findings suggest that a strong preference for innovation exists among respondents, particularly among millennials with college degrees and professional careers. These individuals value restaurants that consistently introduce new menu items, embrace technological advancements, and implement creative changes that enhance the overall dining experience. The results demonstrate a clear correlation between customer satisfaction and a restaurant's emphasis on innovation. Consequently, it is crucial for managers of casual dining establishments to prioritize innovation in their

operations. By embracing new ideas, adapting to industry trends, and continuously seeking ways to improve the customer experience, restaurants can maintain a competitive edge, attract and retain loyal clientele, and ensure long-term success. The researcher proposed a comprehensive business framework emphasizing the critical roles of food safety, servicescape design, and innovation in achieving customer delight.

For casual dining restaurants, it is important to enhance and continue food safety protocols, at the same time improve servicescape on the physical environment that can significantly improve customer delight thru experimenting with different lighting, music, table setting and décor which provide more pleasant and relaxing environment. The restaurant can also consider implementation of new technologies to improve efficient transaction to customers and likewise to management. For the Department of Tourism and Provincial Tourism, they can organize a training program for the adoption of digital technologies such as digital menu online and contactless ordering and payments, to reduce waiting time and increase convenience. They could also promote the data analytics in the restaurant industry to track food safety metrics, such as temperature and hygiene compliance and to identify areas for improvement and it can also be used in analyzing customer feedback and preferences which can innovate menu and service improvements. For the academe, it can serve as a guide for the development and implementation of food safety practices and policies to ensure safety of food served in academic institutions such as proper handling and storage, procedures, and implementation of regular food safety audits. Also, the framework can be considered in incorporating relevant courses to equip students with knowledge and skills for the industry and establish partnerships with regulatory agencies to ensure framework aligns the latest food safety (Food and Drug Administration - FDA, United States Department of Agriculture-USDA, Food Safety Modernization Act - FSMA, Food Safety and Inspection Service- FSIS) and environmental regulations (Environmental Protection Agency - EPA). Future research could investigate the effectiveness of the proposed framework in real-world scenarios to gain a better comprehension of its practical application and to identify areas for improvement.

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