



The role of SERVQUAL in customer satisfaction at Café Rencontre: Basis for the improvement of operational plan

Dr. Angelyn C. Dy Tioco*¹, Jhun M. Capinpin²

^{1, 2} La Consolacion University Philippines – College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management

*Corresponding Author email: angelyn.dytioco@email.lcup.edu.ph

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Abstract

Aim: This study examines the role of SERVQUAL dimensions in influencing customer satisfaction at Café Rencontre and uses these insights as a basis for improving the café's operational plan within a hospitality service setting.

Methodology: The study involved 212 customers of Café Rencontre and employed a mixed-method research design. Quantitative data were collected using a structured SERVQUAL-based survey to measure service quality perceptions and customer satisfaction, while qualitative data were obtained through thematic analysis of customer feedback to capture deeper insights into service experiences.

Results: Findings revealed that customers generally reported positive service experiences. Overall Satisfaction and Loyalty recorded the highest weighted mean (4.31), indicating strong intentions to revisit and recommend the café. This was followed by Pricing and Value for Money (4.23) and Staff Attitude and Competence (4.13), reflecting favorable perceptions of affordability and service performance. Qualitative feedback highlighted appreciation for beverage quality, accommodating staff, and the café's warm and conducive atmosphere. Minor concerns such as occasional operational inconsistencies and limited menu variety were also identified but did not substantially affect overall satisfaction.

Conclusion: The study concludes that key SERVQUAL dimensions—particularly tangibles, responsiveness, and reliability—significantly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. The findings provide practical insights for hospitality management by emphasizing the importance of consistent service operations, product standardization, and menu diversification. These improvements can enhance service quality, strengthen customer retention, and support sustainable operational practices in institutional café environments.

Keywords: *SERVQUAL, Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality, Operational Plan, Hospitality Management*

INTRODUCTION

Service quality assessment remains a critical concern in the hospitality and tourism industry as organizations strive to enhance customer satisfaction and sustain competitive advantage in an increasingly experience-driven market. Contemporary developments in hospitality service innovation, experiential dining, and café and restaurant enterprise management underscore the importance of delivering personalized and value-driven service encounters. These trends are further reinforced by the growth of culinary tourism and sustainable hospitality practices, positioning food service establishments as key contributors to customer experience and destination development.

Amid evolving customer expectations shaped by digitalization and service personalization, hospitality organizations are compelled to adopt systematic approaches to evaluate and improve service delivery. The SERVQUAL model remains a widely utilized framework for assessing service quality across dimensions such as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, enabling organizations to identify service gaps and enhance customer experiences (Prentice et al., 2021; Rather, 2021). More recent studies (2022–2025) further affirm the relevance of service quality evaluation in digitally mediated and experience-oriented hospitality environments.

In the Philippine context and similar emerging service economies, maintaining consistent service quality remains a persistent challenge, particularly in café and restaurant operations characterized by service variability and human interaction. Disparities between expected and perceived service quality may negatively affect customer



satisfaction and loyalty, thereby influencing organizational sustainability (Almohaimmed, 2021). Empirical evidence further indicates that customer perceptions of in-school café operations are shaped by both service quality and experiential factors, emphasizing the need for structured evaluation mechanisms in academic-based hospitality settings (Dy Tioco et al., 2023).

Despite the extensive application of SERVQUAL in commercial contexts, limited studies have explored its applicability in student-operated service environments. These hybrid settings, which integrate operational performance with educational objectives, present unique dynamics that may influence service delivery and customer perception.

Anchored on this premise, the present study examines the role of SERVQUAL dimensions in influencing customer satisfaction at Café Rencontre and utilizes these findings as a basis for enhancing its operational plan. The study contributes to both theory and practice by extending the application of SERVQUAL within institutional hospitality settings and by providing actionable insights aligned with service innovation, experiential dining, and sustainable operations.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

This section synthesizes current literature pertinent to the study on the role of service quality in influencing customer satisfaction as a basis for operational plan enhancement in a campus-based café setting.

Service Quality in Hospitality Operations

Service quality is a fundamental component of hospitality management, directly influencing customer perception, satisfaction, and behavioral intention. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) introduced the SERVQUAL model, which evaluates service quality through five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These dimensions collectively shape how customers assess service performance. Subsequent studies confirmed that higher perceived service quality significantly enhances customer satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intention (Khan et al., 2022). In café and foodservice operations, tangible elements such as cleanliness and ambiance create initial impressions, while reliability and responsiveness strengthen trust and perceived value. Thus, service quality functions as a measurable and manageable construct that enables hospitality establishments to evaluate performance and identify service gaps.

Assessment and Evaluation of Service Quality

In contemporary hospitality management, systematic assessment of service quality has become essential for sustaining competitiveness. Service evaluation tools such as SERVQUAL allow organizations to measure the gap between customer expectations and perceived performance. According to Almohaimmed (2021), customer satisfaction is shaped by perceived service efficiency and value, while Radomir, Plaías, and Nistor (2022) emphasized that structured service evaluation enables organizations to implement targeted improvements.

In campus-based hospitality settings, consistent evaluation is particularly important because these establishments serve diverse clientele while functioning within institutional frameworks (García & Herrera, 2021). Continuous feedback and performance monitoring provide empirical evidence for refining operational strategies and enhancing customer experience. Therefore, assessing service quality is not merely diagnostic but strategic, as it informs operational decisions and service enhancement initiatives.

Challenges in Service Delivery within Café Operations

Despite structured service models, hospitality establishments often encounter operational challenges that affect customer satisfaction. Literature identifies common concerns such as inconsistent service delivery, limited menu offerings, variability in product preparation, and inefficiencies during peak service hours (Khan et al., 2022; Ladhari, 2009). In campus-based café environments, operational scheduling, resource constraints, and service variability may further influence customer perception. Moreover, product consistency—particularly in beverage preparation—plays a crucial role in shaping satisfaction and loyalty. Variations in taste, presentation, and preparation methods can negatively impact customer experience, even when ambiance and staff interaction remain positive. These challenges highlight the need for systematic evaluation of service quality to identify gaps and prioritize improvement areas.



Development of Operational and Service Improvement Strategies

Operational enhancement in hospitality settings is often guided by customer-centered evaluation. Esguerra (2025) demonstrated that service quality, ambiance, and product satisfaction significantly influence customer perception and guide business planning decisions. Similarly, in *Uncovering the Potential of Talbak Coffee in DRT, Bulacan: Basis for Development of Marketing Plan*, Dy Tioco emphasized that product authenticity, quality consistency, and strategic positioning are critical in strengthening customer satisfaction and sustainability. These studies highlight that operational and marketing strategies must be grounded in empirical assessment of customer perception and satisfaction. Service improvement initiatives—such as standardization of preparation processes, expansion of menu offerings, enhancement of operating schedules, and staff training—are more effective when informed by structured evaluation data. Thus, customer satisfaction data serve as a foundation for developing responsive and sustainable operational plans.

The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that service quality significantly influences customer satisfaction, which in turn affects loyalty, operational performance, and long-term sustainability. While numerous studies have applied the SERVQUAL model in hospitality and educational service settings, limited research has examined its application within a university-based café operation that simultaneously functions as a learning environment.

Furthermore, prior studies often focus on measuring service quality or customer satisfaction independently, without explicitly linking these findings to operational plan enhancement. The present study addresses this gap by integrating service quality assessment and customer satisfaction analysis as a basis for refining Café Rencontre's operational plan.

By examining how SERVQUAL dimensions influence customer satisfaction within a campus-based café context, this study contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical application. It positions service quality assessment not merely as an evaluative exercise, but as a strategic tool for operational improvement and sustainable hospitality management.

Theoretical Framework

The SERVQUAL Model serves as the theoretical foundation for this study. Developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), SERVQUAL evaluates service quality based on five key dimensions: tangibles (physical facilities and equipment), reliability (consistent and dependable service delivery), responsiveness (promptness and willingness to assist customers), assurance (employee competence and courtesy), and empathy (personalized attention to customers). This model is widely recognized as a diagnostic tool that measures the gap between customer expectations and perceived service quality, providing actionable insights for service improvement.

Several studies have utilized SERVQUAL in similar contexts, reinforcing its applicability to evaluating service quality in hospitality and education-based service industries. Khan et al. (2022) examined SERVQUAL in the hotel sector and concluded that enhancing tangibles and assurance dimensions positively influenced guest satisfaction and repeat patronage. Moreover, García and Herrera (2021) used SERVQUAL in educational service institutions and demonstrated that empathy and assurance were critical in maintaining student satisfaction and institutional reputation.

The use of SERVQUAL in this study is justified by its established effectiveness in service quality evaluation, particularly in hospitality and customer-facing institutions like Café Rencontre. Since customer satisfaction directly influences operational success, SERVQUAL provides a structured approach to identifying service gaps and prioritizing areas for enhancement. By integrating quantitative and qualitative analysis, this study aims to refine operational plans that align with customer expectations, ultimately fostering a service-driven, competitive environment.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is structured around the SERVQUAL model, which evaluates service quality through five key dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These dimensions serve as the independent variables, collectively influencing customer satisfaction, which acts as the mediating variable. Customer satisfaction, in turn, is positioned as the driving force behind the dependent variable—operational plan enhancement. This relationship underscores the significance of understanding and addressing service quality gaps, as these directly impact customer perceptions and experiences. By integrating insights from the SERVQUAL dimensions with customer satisfaction data, the framework facilitates the development of a refined



operational plan tailored to meet customer needs and expectations. The goal of this conceptual framework is to create a service-driven operational plan that fosters improved customer loyalty, satisfaction, and competitiveness for Café Rencontre.

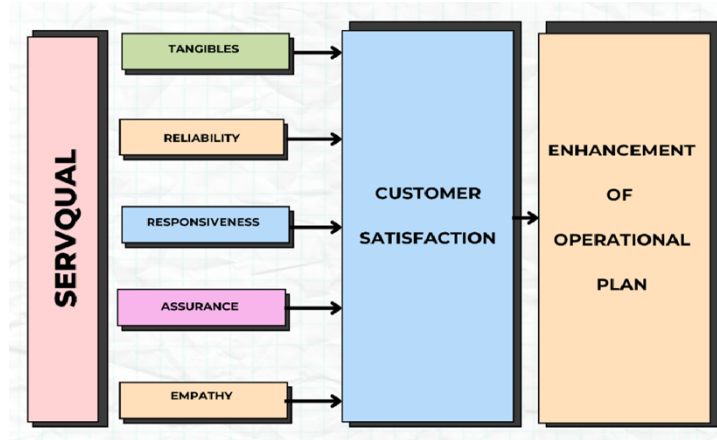


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Statement of the Problem

Service quality has become a critical determinant of customer satisfaction and competitiveness in hospitality and foodservice establishments. In café and restaurant enterprises, maintaining consistent service delivery remains a challenge due to variability in customer expectations, operational procedures, and staff performance. Within educational institutions that operate hospitality training facilities, these challenges may be intensified by the dual role of delivering customer service while simultaneously providing experiential learning opportunities for students. Variations in service delivery, limited operational standardization, and evolving consumer preferences may result in gaps between expected and perceived service quality, thereby affecting customer satisfaction and loyalty.

In university-based hospitality environments such as Café Rencontre, service delivery involves both operational management and instructional objectives. While service quality models such as SERVQUAL have been widely applied in commercial hospitality contexts, limited empirical research has examined their applicability in institutional café operations where students actively participate in service delivery. Understanding how customers perceive service quality in such hybrid environments is essential for improving operational efficiency, enhancing customer experiences, and supporting hospitality training outcomes.

Furthermore, existing studies on service quality in hospitality establishments often focus primarily on measuring customer satisfaction without explicitly linking the results to operational improvement strategies. There remains a need to examine how SERVQUAL dimensions influence customer satisfaction and how these findings can inform the development of improved operational plans within campus-based hospitality enterprises. Thus, this study investigates the role of SERVQUAL dimensions in influencing customer satisfaction at Café Rencontre. Specifically, it seeks to identify service quality gaps and examine customer experiences in order to provide evidence-based inputs for enhancing the café's operational plan and improving service delivery within an institutional hospitality setting.

Research Objectives

General Objective

To examine the influence of SERVQUAL dimensions on customer satisfaction at Café Rencontre as a basis for enhancing the café's operational plan in a hospitality service environment.

Specific Objectives

1. To identify the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, occupation, and frequency of visit.



2. To assess customers' perceptions of service quality at Café Rencontre in terms of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.
3. To evaluate the level of customer satisfaction based on customers' overall service experiences.
4. To determine the relationship between SERVQUAL dimensions and customer satisfaction.
5. To identify specific service quality challenges and operational gaps as perceived by customers.
6. To analyze customers' overall experiences and satisfaction through qualitative feedback.
7. To propose operational plan improvements that can enhance service quality and operational efficiency at Café Rencontre.

Research Question

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, occupation, and frequency of visit?
2. How do customers perceive the service quality of Café Rencontre in terms of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy?
3. What is the level of customer satisfaction based on customers' overall service experiences at Café Rencontre?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the SERVQUAL dimensions and customer satisfaction?
5. What specific service quality challenges and operational gaps are perceived by customers?
6. How do customers describe their overall experiences and satisfaction with the services provided by Café Rencontre?
7. What operational improvements can be proposed to enhance service quality and operational efficiency at Café Rencontre?

Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H₀):

There is no significant relationship between the SERVQUAL dimensions (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) and customer satisfaction at Café Rencontre.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁):

There is a significant relationship between the SERVQUAL dimensions (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) and customer satisfaction at Café Rencontre.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, wherein quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, analyzed separately, and then integrated for comprehensive interpretation. This approach is appropriate in hospitality research as it captures both measurable service quality and customer experiences, which are essential in understanding satisfaction in service-oriented settings.

The quantitative component utilized a structured survey based on the SERVQUAL model to assess customer perceptions across five dimensions - tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy which is analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews to explore customer experiences and service gaps, analyzed through thematic analysis.

The integration of findings provided a holistic understanding of service quality and supported data-driven improvements to the operational plan of Café Rencontre.

Population and Sampling

This study involved two groups of participants: quantitative respondents and qualitative key informants, each selected based on defined inclusion criteria to ensure relevance to the hospitality context. The quantitative sample consisted of 212 respondent-Café Rencontre customers who availed of the café's services within the past six months. Using purposive sampling, participants were required to have visited the café at least once during the specified period, be at least 18 years old, and be willing to complete a structured survey on service quality and customer satisfaction. The qualitative key informants consisted of 14 selected customers and Café Rencontre staff, chosen through criterion-based sampling to provide deeper insights into service experiences and operational challenges. Informants were required to have substantial interaction with the café, possess firsthand knowledge of its service delivery, and be willing to participate in semi-structured interviews. This selection approach ensured that both



customer perspectives and operational insights were captured, supporting a comprehensive assessment of service quality and informing improvements in the café's operational strategies.

Instruments

A structured SERVQUAL-based questionnaire was used to measure service quality across five dimensions—tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—as well as customer satisfaction. The instrument was adapted to the context of a campus-based café and was reviewed by experts to ensure that the items were appropriate and aligned with the objectives of the study. It was also pilot-tested to check clarity and ease of understanding. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha, which showed a high level of consistency ($\alpha = 0.94$). This indicates that the items in the survey are dependable in measuring the intended variables. For the qualitative part, a semi-structured interview guide was used to gather detailed insights from participants. This guide was also reviewed and refined to ensure that it effectively captured relevant information.

Data Collection

Data were collected from January to June 2025 at Café Rencontre which is a hospitality training café. For the quantitative phase, a structured SERVQUAL model-based questionnaire was administered to eligible customers who had availed of the café's services within the past six months. Surveys were distributed both on-site and online to accommodate customer accessibility. Prior to participation, respondents were informed of the study's purpose and provided informed consent.

For the qualitative phase, selected customers and staff were identified as key informants based on their service interactions within the café. Semi-structured interviews were conducted either on-site or through scheduled virtual sessions, depending on participant availability. Interviews focused on service experiences, perceived gaps, and improvement strategies, and were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed for analysis.

Data collected from survey responses were checked for completeness prior to statistical analysis, while interview transcripts were verified for accuracy. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential techniques, whereas qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. The integration of both datasets provided a comprehensive understanding of service quality and customer satisfaction, informing operational improvements for Café Rencontre.

Treatment of Data

To analyze the data obtained from the survey questionnaire, appropriate statistical tools were employed.

Percentage and Frequency. This statistical tool was employed to analyze the distribution and occurrence of respondents' answers, enabling the researcher to determine percentage and frequent responses in relation to the study.

Weighted Mean. This was used to interpret the data concerning the frequency of the responses of their experience in using it, and the problems they encountered upon using it.

The researchers gave equivalent weights of 1 to 5 on the responses gathered, with one as the lowest and five as the highest with corresponding verbal interpretations.

Weight	Range	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.01 – 5.00	Strongly Agree
4	3.01 – 4.00	Agree
3	2.01 – 3.00	Neutral
2	1.01 – 2.00	Disagree
1	0.01 – 1.00	Strongly Disagree

Quantitative data are analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize respondent profiles and satisfaction levels and inferential statistics to identify relationships between SERVQUAL dimensions and customer satisfaction. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis to uncover patterns and insights, complementing the quantitative findings with contextual depth.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to the ethical standards prior to data collection. Permission was secured from the management of Café Rencontre to conduct the study within the establishment.



Participants were provided with an informed consent form outlining the purpose of the study, their role, and their right to voluntarily participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained by anonymizing all data and excluding identifying information from reports.

All collected data were securely stored, with access limited to the researchers. Digital files were password-protected, and physical documents were kept in a secure location. The study upheld the principle of non-maleficence, ensuring that participants were not exposed to any form of harm, coercion, or undue influence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The information gathered during the study is presented, examined, and interpreted in this part. For the sake of simplicity and coherence in the discussion, the data are presented in the following order and sequence:

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 18	0	0.00
18–24	168	79.25
25–34	12	5.66
35–44	21	9.90
45 and above	11	5.19
TOTAL	212	100
Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	98	46.22
Female	109	51.42
Prefer not to say	5	2.36
TOTAL	212	100
Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Student	139	65.57
Teaching Staff	45	21.22
Non-teaching Staff	16	7.55
External Customer	12	5.66
TOTAL	212	100
Frequency of Visit to Café Rencontre	Frequency	Percentage
First Time	12	5.66
Occasionally (1-2x/month)	61	28.77
Frequently (weekly)	127	59.91
Regularly (3-5x/week)	12	5.66
TOTAL	212	100

Table 1 discusses about the Demographic profile of the respondents. In terms of age, the dominant group among the respondents was 18–24 years old, accounting for 79.25% of the total population. This reflects the student-centered environment of Café Rencontre, which is situated within a higher education institution where the majority of patrons are college students and young adults. Conversely, the lowest representation came from individuals below 18 years old, comprising 0% of the respondents. This absence can be attributed to both ethical research protocols requiring adult consent and the nature of the café's location, which primarily serves legal-age individuals enrolled or employed within the university.

In terms of gender, female respondents made up the highest proportion at 51.42%, slightly surpassing male respondents. This may suggest that female students and staff are more engaged in social and dining spaces like Café Rencontre, possibly due to higher participation in campus life or preference for communal gathering places. The lowest category was respondents who preferred not to disclose their gender (2.36%), which may reflect increasing awareness and respect for gender diversity, though it remains a minimal portion of the surveyed population.



In terms of occupation, the largest occupational group was students, making up 65.57% of respondents. This is expected given the café's integration within a university setting, where students form the primary customer base. On the other hand, external customers accounted for the lowest proportion at 5.66%. This limited external engagement may result from the café's campus-based location, which may restrict visibility and accessibility to non-university patrons.

Lastly, on frequency of visit, the highest frequency of visitation was observed among those who visit the café weekly (59.91%), indicating strong customer loyalty and satisfaction, likely due to consistent product quality, convenience, and service experience. The least represented were both first-time and regular (3–5x/week) visitors, each comprising only 5.66%. The low percentage of first-time customers may suggest market saturation within the internal community, while the low number of highly regular customers could reflect limitations in disposable time or budget among students.

Table 2. Perception of Service Quality (SERVQUAL)

Tangibles	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
The café has modern and appealing facilities.	4.26	Strongly Agree
Furniture and equipment are clean and well-maintained.	4.30	Strongly Agree
Employees are well-groomed and appropriately dressed.	4.50	Strongly Agree
Printed materials (e.g., menus) are clear and presentable.	4.12	Agree
The overall physical ambiance is welcoming.	4.8	Strongly Agree
The layout allows easy customer movement.	4.4	Strongly Agree
Interior décor enhances my café experience.	3.95	Agree
Weighted Mean Average Total	4.33	Strongly Agree
Reliability	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Orders are accurate and delivered as requested.	4.60	Strongly Agree
The café provides consistent service.	3.40	Agree
Promises (e.g., promos, service times) are fulfilled.	3.80	Agree
Service is timely and dependable.	3.60	Agree
Staff manage special instructions well.	4.10	Agree
Billing and receipts are accurate.	4.25	Strongly Agree
Weighted Mean Average Total	3.96	Agree
Responsiveness	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Staff respond promptly to requests.	4.00	Agree
Staff are always ready to assist.	4.00	Agree
Long queues or wait times are well-managed.	4.00	Agree
Service problems are resolved quickly.	4.40	Strongly Agree
Updates are provided when service is delayed.	4.20	Agree
Waiting time is reasonable.	3.70	Agree
Weighted Mean Average Total	4.05	Agree
Assurance	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Employees are courteous and respectful.	3.60	Agree
Staff explain items or services clearly.	3.80	Agree
Staff show confidence and professionalism.	3.80	Agree
I feel safe when making transactions.	3.60	Agree
I trust the skills of the café crew.	3.80	Agree
Staff behavior builds customer trust.	3.80	Agree
Weighted Mean Average Total	3.73	Agree
Empathy	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
I feel valued as a customer.	3.60	Agree
Staff give personal attention when needed.	3.60	Agree
The café accommodates dietary preferences.	3.80	Agree
My feedback or concerns are acknowledged.	3.80	Agree
Staff are patient and understanding.	3.60	Agree



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Operating hours are convenient.	3.40	Neutral
Weighted Mean Average Total	3.63	Agree

Table 2 discusses the perception of service quality at Café Rencontre which was evaluated using the SERVQUAL model, which includes five core dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Respondents rated their experiences using a five-point Likert scale, and the resulting weighted means were used to assess customer perception across each service quality indicator.

Among the five dimensions, tangibles received the highest weighted mean, indicating that customers place strong emphasis on the café's physical environment, cleanliness, and ambiance. This finding is consistent with Cano and Hijada II (2024), who found that tangibility and other SERVQUAL dimensions significantly influence customer satisfaction in cafeteria service settings. Similarly, Khan et al. (2022) emphasized that well-maintained facilities enhance overall service perception and customer retention. This suggests that in campus-based café environments, physical attributes remain a key determinant of perceived service quality.

On the other end of the spectrum, empathy emerged as the lowest-rated dimension, with a weighted mean of 3.63, interpreted as "Agree." Although the rating still reflects a generally positive perception, it indicates a relative gap in the ability of the café to provide personalized attention, acknowledge customer feedback, and deliver services that align with individual needs. The slightly lower score on the item related to "convenient operating hours" (3.40 – Neutral) may be a contributing factor, signaling that operational scheduling may not fully meet the expectations of diverse user groups. Given that empathy in service quality is closely tied to emotional connection and individualized care, this suggests a potential area for service improvement to strengthen customer loyalty and satisfaction.

The other three dimensions reliability (3.96), responsiveness (4.05), and assurance (3.73) were all interpreted as "Agree." These findings suggest that while Café Rencontre performs dependably in providing accurate orders and responsive service, there is moderate room to enhance service consistency, staff communication, and the professional confidence projected by employees. This supports the findings of Radomir et al. (2022), who emphasized that service consistency and responsiveness are key drivers of customer satisfaction in service-oriented settings. These results indicate that efficient service operations contribute significantly to positive customer experiences. Notably, the lowest individual score within reliability (3.40 for service consistency) and within assurance (3.60 for both courtesy and transactional security) point to specific sub-areas that may be targeted in future operational improvements.

Overall, the service quality at Café Rencontre is perceived positively by its customers, with particular strength in tangible aspects that enhance physical comfort and visual appeal. However, the data also suggest that interpersonal service dimensions, especially those related to empathy and assurance, warrant focused improvement to further elevate the customer experience. The insights drawn from this analysis highlight the necessity of a balanced service strategy that integrates both operational excellence and relational attentiveness. These findings serve as a foundation for developing an enhanced operational plan that is both data-driven and customer-centered—aligned with the goals of service innovation and quality delivery in educational hospitality settings.

Table 3. Level of Customer Satisfaction Across Various Aspects of Service Delivery at Café Rencontre

Food and Beverage Quality	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
The taste of food and drinks met my expectations.	3.80	Agree
The beverages were served at the right temperature.	3.80	Agree
Food portions were adequate for the price.	3.60	Agree
The menu offers a wide variety of options.	3.80	Agree
Food presentation was visually appealing.	3.60	Agree
The quality of ingredients used was evident.	3.40	Neutral
The consistency of food quality is maintained in every visit.	3.60	Agree
The menu clearly displays ingredients and options.	3.60	Agree
Weighted Mean Average Total	3.65	Agree



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Speed and Efficiency of Service	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
My order was taken promptly.	3.40	Neutral
The time between ordering and serving was reasonable.	3.40	Neutral
Staff worked efficiently even during peak hours.	4.40	Strongly Agree
The café uses a reliable order-taking system (e.g., digital, manual).	3.40	Neutral
There were no unnecessary delays in the service process.	4.20	Agree
Queueing or seating was well-managed.	4.40	Strongly Agree
Payment and checkout processes were smooth and quick.	4.40	Strongly Agree
Staff provided timely updates on order status.	4.20	Agree
Weighted Mean Average Total	3.98	Agree
Staff Attitude and Competence	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Employees were courteous and respectful.	4.40	Strongly Agree
Staff welcomed me warmly upon entering the café.	4.40	Strongly Agree
Employees demonstrated good product knowledge.	3.40	Neutral
The staff handled my inquiries professionally.	3.60	Agree
I was treated with respect and attention.	4.40	Strongly Agree
Staff made genuine efforts to assist me.	4.20	Agree
Service was delivered with a positive attitude.	4.40	Strongly Agree
Staff resolved my concerns or complaints effectively.	4.20	Agree
I observed teamwork and cooperation among the café staff.	4.20	Agree
Weighted Mean Average Total	4.13	Agree
Ambiance and Environment	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
The café is clean and well-maintained.	4.20	Agree
The seating arrangements were comfortable and appropriate.	4.40	Strongly Agree
Lighting and music contributed to a pleasant ambiance.	3.80	Agree
The overall design and layout of the café are inviting.	4.20	Agree
The café has a welcoming and relaxing environment.	4.40	Strongly Agree
Restroom facilities (if used) were clean and functional.	3.80	Agree
The indoor temperature was comfortable during my visit.	3.60	Neutral
Noise levels in the café were acceptable.	3.60	Neutral
Décor and furnishings complemented the café's branding.	4.20	Agree
	4.02	Agree
Pricing and Value for Money	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
The prices are fair given the portion sizes.	4.20	Agree
The pricing reflects the quality of food and service.	4.20	Agree
I believe I received good value for my money.	4.40	Strongly Agree
Discounts, promos, or loyalty programs are clearly explained.	3.80	Agree
The prices are competitive compared to other similar cafés.	4.40	Strongly Agree
I would still choose this café even if prices slightly increase.	4.20	Agree
The receipt and payment process was transparent.	4.20	Agree



There were no hidden charges or misleading prices.	4.40	Agree
Weighted Mean Average Total	4.23	Strongly Agree
Overall Satisfaction and Loyalty	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
I am satisfied with my overall experience at Café Rencontre.	4.40	Strongly Agree
The café met my expectations for a pleasant dining experience.	4.20	Agree
I will likely visit Café Rencontre again in the near future.	4.40	Strongly Agree
I would recommend Café Rencontre to my peers and friends.	4.40	Strongly Agree
My experience at this café makes me want to return	4.40	Strongly Agree
The café stands out positively compared to other nearby cafés.	4.20	Agree
I trust the consistency of service quality at Café Rencontre.	4.20	Agree
I feel a sense of belonging or comfort while visiting the café.	4.40	Strongly Agree
Café Rencontre delivers a memorable and enjoyable experience.	4.20	Agree
Weighted Mean Average Total	4.31	Strongly Agree

Table 3 presents the weighted mean scores that reflect customers' level of satisfaction with various aspects of service delivery at Café Rencontre. The analysis reveals that customer satisfaction is generally high across all measured dimensions, with varying levels of strength that indicate both service excellence and areas for improvement.

The highest-rated dimension was Pricing and Value for Money, which obtained a total weighted mean of 4.23, interpreted as "Strongly Agree." This suggests that customers perceive the café's pricing structure as fair and equitable, particularly in terms of food quality, portion size, and transparency of billing. Notably, the café's competitive pricing compared to other nearby establishments and its ability to provide good value were key contributors to this high score. In a student-dominated setting, perceived value plays a critical role in satisfaction and loyalty, which this result strongly reinforces.

Closely following this dimension was Overall Satisfaction and Loyalty, with a weighted mean of 4.31 (Strongly Agree). This indicates that patrons not only had favorable individual service experiences but also formed strong emotional and behavioral intentions to return and recommend the café. The consistently high scores across items measuring repeat visits, peer recommendations, and overall satisfaction demonstrate that Café Rencontre effectively delivers a memorable customer experience and fosters a sense of brand attachment—key factors in sustaining long-term patronage.

The Staff Attitude and Competence dimension also received a high satisfaction score of 4.13 (Agree), highlighting that employees are generally seen as courteous, professional, and cooperative. However, the relatively lower rating on product knowledge (3.40 – Neutral) indicates a specific gap that may benefit from targeted staff development programs or training interventions to enhance competence and customer service delivery.

Speed and Efficiency of Service yielded a weighted mean of 3.98 (Agree), reflecting customer satisfaction with the overall service flow—from order-taking to payment. However, order-taking and order-waiting time received only neutral ratings, suggesting variability in performance, particularly during high-volume periods. Addressing these aspects through digital queueing systems or order-tracking improvements could further streamline the customer journey.

Similarly, Ambiance and Environment (4.02 – Agree) and Food and Beverage Quality (3.65 – Agree) were rated favorably. Customers appreciated the café's cleanliness, seating, and aesthetic design. Yet, neutral ratings for indoor temperature and noise levels point to opportunities for improving environmental comfort. Meanwhile, perceptions of food quality were generally positive, but modest ratings for ingredient quality and consistency suggest a need for stronger standardization and transparency in culinary offerings.

The lowest-rated dimension, although still within the "Agree" range, was Empathy (3.63), suggesting that while the café performs well on interpersonal service, aspects such as individualized attention, consideration for



dietary preferences, and responsiveness to feedback could be further strengthened. This is particularly important in service contexts where emotional engagement significantly contributes to overall satisfaction.

Table 4. Relationship Between SERVQUAL Dimensions and Customer Satisfaction

SERVQUAL Dimension	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Interpretation
Tangibles	0.72	0.000	Strong Positive, Significant
Reliability	0.65	0.000	Moderate to Strong Positive, Significant
Responsiveness	0.68	0.000	Moderate to Strong Positive, Significant
Assurance	0.59	0.001	Moderate Positive, Significant
Empathy	0.55	0.002	Moderate Positive, Significant

Table 4 presents the inferential analysis using Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between each SERVQUAL dimension and overall customer satisfaction. The results demonstrate that all five dimensions of service quality have a positive and statistically significant relationship with customer satisfaction at Café Rencontre ($p < 0.05$ for all).

Among these, Tangibles showed the strongest correlation ($r = 0.72$), indicating that well-maintained physical facilities, attractive ambiance, and visual appeal play a critical role in enhancing customer satisfaction. This finding underscores the importance of investing in physical design and cleanliness, particularly in a café embedded in a student-driven campus environment.

Responsiveness ($r = 0.68$) and Reliability ($r = 0.65$) also recorded strong correlations, highlighting the significance of prompt service, staff attentiveness, and consistent delivery in fostering positive customer experiences. These results suggest that operational efficiency and the dependability of services are vital determinants of customer satisfaction.

Meanwhile, Assurance ($r = 0.59$) and Empathy ($r = 0.55$) exhibited moderately strong correlations, which confirms that customer trust, confidence in staff, and personalized attention remain essential components of perceived service quality, albeit secondary to the more operational aspects.

Overall, these findings confirm the theoretical underpinning of the SERVQUAL model: that multi-dimensional service quality directly contributes to customer satisfaction. The statistically significant relationships further validate the framework's applicability in hospitality settings like Café Rencontre and provide a sound empirical basis for targeted improvements in both staff training and service delivery systems. This result supports the findings of Radomir et al. (2022), who established that multiple dimensions of service quality significantly influence overall customer satisfaction.

Table 5. Identified Service Gaps and Customer Concerns Based on Open-Ended Responses

Thematic Area	Observed Issues or Gaps
Service Availability & Scheduling	- Irregular café operating hours; unexpected closures disrupt customer expectations.
Product Quality & Consistency	- Coffee quality inconsistency; issues with blending and flavor distribution.
Menu Variety	- Limited options; repeated calls for expansion to include pasta, pastries, tea, and combos.
Operational Responsiveness	- Occasional delays in order preparation; feedback on the need for quicker transactions.
Service Staff Behavior	- Generally positive, with commendation for courteousness and respectful behavior.

The qualitative responses collected from Café Rencontre patrons reveal several recurring themes that point to specific service gaps. A prominent concern among respondents is the inconsistency in operating hours, with



multiple customers reporting instances when the café was unexpectedly closed. This irregularity affects customer trust and disrupts habitual patronage, especially for hotel guests and campus clients seeking dependable service.

Another notable gap lies in product quality, particularly with coffee preparation. Respondents highlighted blending inconsistencies, such as sweetness settling at the bottom and affecting the overall taste. This suggests the need for standardization in beverage preparation procedures to ensure consistent quality across visits.

A third major concern is the limited menu variety. Customers consistently requested the inclusion of pasta, pastries, tea, and combo meals (e.g., coffee and pastry sets). These suggestions indicate a growing expectation for diverse and upgraded offerings, aligning with consumer trends in café culture that emphasize variety and experiential consumption.

From an operational standpoint, some feedback pointed to the need for improved speed and efficiency in service, suggesting occasional delays or inefficiencies during transactions. However, this was not universally cited and may be more reflective of peak-hour performance or training gaps.

Despite these issues, customer sentiments toward the service personnel were overwhelmingly positive, with multiple respondents commending the courtesy, respectful attitude, and accommodating nature of the café staff, particularly student workers. These strengths in interpersonal interaction provide a solid foundation for further service enhancements.

Overall Customer Experience and Satisfaction at Café Rencontre

Customer responses reflect a generally positive and affirming experience with the services provided by Café Rencontre. This conclusion is supported by both quantitative data and qualitative narratives.

Quantitatively, the dimension Overall Satisfaction and Loyalty received a high weighted mean of 4.31, interpreted as "Strongly Agree." This indicates that respondents are not only content with their service experience but also express strong intentions to revisit, recommend the café to peers, and develop brand loyalty. High ratings were also observed across key service aspects such as Pricing and Value for Money (4.23) and Staff Attitude and Competence (4.13), further reinforcing positive customer sentiment.

Qualitatively, customers described their overall experience using phrases such as "I really like their coffee," and "personnel are accommodating." The taste and quality of beverages stood out as a major strength, highlighting Café Rencontre's ability to deliver consistent core product satisfaction. Respondents also expressed appreciation for the café's conducive atmosphere and warm, respectful interactions with service staff—often student-workers—citing good behavior and polite demeanor.

Despite these affirmations, several areas were noted as needing improvement. Customers expressed concern over occasional closures, inconsistencies in product preparation, and the limited diversity of menu options. Nevertheless, these issues were not viewed as detracting significantly from the overall positive experience, suggesting that the café's strengths in service behavior and ambiance substantially offset minor operational shortcomings.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that Café Rencontre delivers a generally satisfactory level of service across key dimensions of service quality. Among the SERVQUAL components, tangibles emerged as the most influential factor shaping customer satisfaction, highlighting the importance of maintaining a well-designed, clean, and aesthetically appealing dining environment. Responsiveness and reliability also demonstrated strong positive relationships with customer satisfaction, indicating that timely service delivery and operational consistency remain critical in hospitality service environments.

Customer satisfaction was rated highly across several service dimensions, particularly in terms of pricing and value for money, staff courtesy, and the café's welcoming ambiance. Respondents also expressed strong intentions to revisit and recommend the establishment, suggesting the presence of positive customer loyalty toward Café Rencontre.

Despite these strengths, the study identified several operational areas requiring improvement, including irregular operating hours, limited menu diversity, and inconsistencies in beverage preparation. Addressing these concerns may enhance service reliability and improve the overall customer experience.

The findings contribute to hospitality management practice by demonstrating how service quality assessment using the SERVQUAL model can provide valuable insights for improving café and restaurant operations, particularly in institutional hospitality settings. By linking service quality evaluation with operational planning, the



study highlights the importance of data-driven decision-making in enhancing customer satisfaction and sustaining service excellence in hospitality enterprises.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance service quality and customer satisfaction at Café Rencontre:

1. Standardization of Beverage Preparation. Café management may implement standardized beverage preparation procedures to ensure consistent taste and quality across all servings. Staff training on mixing techniques and portion control may help address concerns regarding uneven blending and flavor imbalance.
2. Regularization of Operating Hours. The café management may establish consistent and clearly communicated operating hours to ensure service reliability. Posting and maintaining a fixed operating schedule may help manage customer expectations and reduce service disruptions.
3. Expansion of Menu Offerings. Café Rencontre may consider expanding its food and beverage menu by introducing additional options such as pasta, pastries, tea-based drinks, and combo meals. This may enhance customer satisfaction and align the café with evolving café culture trends.
4. Improvement of Service Efficiency During Peak Hours. Operational strategies may be introduced to improve service efficiency during busy periods. These may include reorganizing staff roles during peak hours, streamlining order-taking procedures, or introducing pre-ordering systems.
5. Sustaining Strengths in Staff Courtesy and Café Ambiance. Management may continue reinforcing service culture practices that promote professionalism, courtesy, and customer engagement. Maintaining the café's cleanliness, comfort, and welcoming atmosphere may also contribute to sustained customer satisfaction.
6. Implementation of Continuous Customer Feedback Systems. The café may implement regular customer feedback mechanisms, such as short surveys or feedback forms, to monitor service performance and identify areas for continuous improvement.

Through these initiatives, Café Rencontre may further strengthen its service quality, enhance customer loyalty, and serve as a model for effective hospitality operations in institutional café environments.

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