

Design de Negócios e Satisfação do Cliente em Estabelecimentos de Alimentos e Bebidas no Pós-Pandemia: Uma Análise Multidimensional

Business Design and Customer Satisfaction in Food and Beverage Establishments in the Post-Pandemic Era: A Multidimensional Analysis
Diseño Empresarial y Satisfacción del Cliente en Establecimientos de Alimentos y Bebidas en el Contexto Post-Pandemia: Un Análisis Multidimensional

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RESUMO (PORTUGUÊS):

Este estudo investigou como estabelecimentos de alimentos e bebidas (A&B) reconfiguraram suas estratégias de negócio após a pandemia da COVID-19, analisando os impactos dessas mudanças sobre a satisfação de gestores, funcionários e clientes. Por meio de um delineamento quantitativo-descritivo, foram coletados dados de 40 estabelecimentos na região de Nueva Ecija, Filipinas. Utilizou-se um questionário estruturado e validado (α de Cronbach = 0,984), abrangendo dimensões de operação, marketing, gestão e finanças. Os dados foram analisados por médias ponderadas e ANOVA. Os resultados indicam que restaurantes e redes de fast-food demonstraram maior adaptabilidade, refletida em maiores índices de satisfação. Pequenos negócios enfrentaram desafios operacionais e financeiros, mas obtiveram desempenho satisfatório quando investiram em digitalização e treinamentos. As percepções de satisfação variaram entre stakeholders, sendo os clientes os mais positivamente impactados. O estudo contribui para a literatura sobre resiliência organizacional, ao segmentar os efeitos da crise por tipo e porte de empreendimento, e oferece recomendações práticas para a gestão de serviços em contextos de recuperação. As limitações metodológicas incluem a amostragem regional e o delineamento transversal.

Palavras-chave: Serviços de Alimentação; Satisfação do Paciente; Planejamento Empresarial; Pandemias.

ABSTRACT (ENGLISH):

This study examined how food and beverage (F&B) establishments restructured their business strategies in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and how these changes affected the satisfaction of managers, employees, and customers. A descriptive quantitative design was adopted, with data collected from 40 establishments in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. A validated structured questionnaire (Cronbach's α = 0.984) was used, covering operational, marketing, managerial, and financial dimensions. Data were analyzed using weighted means and ANOVA. Results show that restaurants and fast-food chains exhibited higher adaptability and customer satisfaction. Small enterprises faced significant financial and operational barriers, yet those investing in digitalization and staff training achieved better performance. Satisfaction perceptions varied across stakeholders, with customers reporting the most favorable responses. This study contributes to the organizational resilience literature by segmenting crisis effects by business type and size, while offering practical recommendations for service management in recovery contexts. Methodological limitations include the regional scope and cross-sectional design.

Keywords: Food Services; Patient Satisfaction; Business Planning; Pandemics.

RESUMEN (ESPAÑOL):

El presente estudio analizó cómo los establecimientos de alimentos y bebidas (A&B) reestructuraron sus estrategias comerciales tras la pandemia de COVID-19 y cómo estas transformaciones influyeron en la satisfacción de gestores, empleados y clientes. Se adoptó un diseño cuantitativo descriptivo, con datos recolectados

en 40 establecimientos de la región de Nueva Écija, Filipinas. Se utilizó un cuestionario estructurado y validado (α de Cronbach = 0,984), abarcando dimensiones operativas, de marketing, gestión y finanzas. Los datos se analizaron mediante medias ponderadas y ANOVA. Los resultados muestran que los restaurantes y cadenas de comida rápida presentaron mayor adaptabilidad y niveles superiores de satisfacción. Los pequeños negocios enfrentaron obstáculos significativos, aunque aquellos que invirtieron en digitalización y capacitación alcanzaron un mejor rendimiento. Las percepciones de satisfacción variaron entre los grupos, siendo los clientes los más beneficiados. El estudio aporta a la literatura sobre resiliencia organizacional al segmentar los efectos de la crisis por tipo y tamaño de negocio, y ofrece recomendaciones prácticas para la gestión de servicios en contextos de recuperación. Entre las limitaciones metodológicas se destacan el recorte regional y el diseño transversal.

Palabras clave: Servicios de Alimentación; Satisfacción del Paciente; Planificación Empresarial; Pandemias.

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered an unprecedented health and economic crisis, profoundly affecting operational models, customer relationships, and financial sustainability across various sectors, including the food and beverage (F&B) industry. In response to restrictions imposed by social distancing measures, establishments in the sector had to reconfigure their operational processes and adopt new strategies to ensure not only service continuity but also consumer safety and trust (Ivanov; Dolgui, 2020; Diebner *et al.*, 2020).

Given this scenario of disruption, it became imperative to investigate how F&B businesses adapted their managerial, marketing, and operational practices in the post-pandemic period, as well as to analyze the effects of these transformations on customer perceived value and satisfaction.

Recent literature points to the importance of factors such as digitalization, rigorous sanitation practices, transparent communication, and strategic pricing in shaping consumer experience in crisis contexts (Sheth, 2020; Singh, 2024; Wenzel; Stanske; Lieberman, 2020). However, there are still gaps in understanding how such strategies manifest in small businesses, especially in emerging countries, whose structures are more susceptible to resource and infrastructure limitations (Reznikova; Grod, 2024).

In this context, the present research aims to analyze the business design adopted by food and beverage establishments in the post-COVID-19 context, focusing on four main pillars: operations, marketing, organizational management, and finance. Furthermore, it intends to evaluate how these dimensions influence stakeholder satisfaction—managers, staff, and customers—considering the specificities of different types of establishments, their sizes, and years in operation.

The study is justified by its theoretical and practical relevance. From an academic standpoint, it contributes to the advancement of the literature on service management and

organizational resilience by offering an empirical analysis based on primary data and multivariate segmentation. From a practical standpoint, the results have the potential to guide decision-making for industry managers, as well as to inform public policies aimed at the economic recovery of small businesses. Finally, the investigation promotes a critical reflection on the managerial lessons learned from the health crisis, with a view to building more adaptable, customer-centric, and sustainability-oriented business models.

2. OBJECTIVES

This research aims to deepen the understanding of the adaptations and performance of food and beverage (F&B) establishments in the post-pandemic scenario, with special attention to customer satisfaction. To this end, the following specific objectives have been defined:

- To identify and characterize the profile of food and beverage establishments operating in the post-pandemic context, including aspects relevant to the analysis of their strategies and performance.
- To analyze the strategies and practices adopted by food and beverage establishments in the post-pandemic period that specifically aim to enhance customer satisfaction.
- To determine the main factors and indicators (metrics) that, in the perception of establishments and/or customers, constitute customer satisfaction in the food and beverage sector in the post-pandemic environment.
- To evaluate the perceived outcomes of the implementation of post-pandemic strategies in food and beverage establishments and to identify the future development plans of these organizations in the face of emerging market challenges and opportunities.

3. METHODOLOGY

This investigation employed a descriptive comparative research design to analyze the business strategies adopted by food and beverage establishments in the province of Nueva Ecija, with a primary focus on customer satisfaction in the post-pandemic period. The descriptive comparative design was selected with the purpose of correlating changes in consumer behavior with the strategic responses implemented by the establishments.

Thus, the aim was to generate detailed insights into how operational changes—notably the implementation of robust sanitary protocols, enhancements in service delivery, and the

incorporation of digital tools—translated into improvements or, alternatively, decreases in overall customer perceived satisfaction.

3.1 Study Location and Participants

The research was conducted in five selected cities within the province of Nueva Ecija, a region recognized for its vibrant agricultural economy and a burgeoning food and beverage sector. The sample for this study included 40 diversified establishments.

The inclusion criteria for participating establishments were as follows: (a) belonging to one of the categories of restaurants, cafes, bars, or fast-food chains; (b) being in regular and continuous operation in the five selected cities during the data collection period; and (c) agreeing to participate in the research. Establishments with intermittent operations, those that did not fall into the specified categories, or those that refused to participate were excluded. The selection of the 40 establishments was carried out using systematic sampling from a list of qualified establishments in the defined cities.

For data collection within each of the 40 selected establishments, three distinct respondents were interviewed, totaling 120 participants. The choice of three specific respondents per establishment—a manager, a service staff member, and a customer—was based on the strategic need to collect data from different levels of experience and perspectives on business strategies and customer satisfaction.

This tripartite approach (managerial, operational, and end-user) allowed for capturing complementary views on the phenomenon under study. The limitation to one representative per role per establishment was a methodological decision made to optimize coverage of a larger number of establishments, aiming for a broad representation of the different realities of the sector in the province, within the resources and scope defined for the research.

3.2 Data Collection Instrument

The research questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection in this study. Its structure was organized into four distinct sections, designed to address the research objectives: (1) demographic profile of the establishments, (2) business aspects related to customer satisfaction, (3) specific customer satisfaction metrics, and (4) evaluation of operational changes implemented in the post-COVID-19 period.

3.3 Instrument Validation

The questionnaire was developed and subjected to a rigorous validation process to ensure its suitability and reliability. Initially, the instrument was submitted for review by a panel of experts in the field of business management, customer satisfaction, and research methodology. These experts were invited to evaluate the questionnaire regarding the clarity of item wording and comprehensibility, the relevance of each question to the specific study objectives, the comprehensiveness of the topics covered in relation to the construct of interest, and the appropriateness of the language for the target audience (managers, staff, and customers). The suggestions and recommendations provided by the panel were fully considered and incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire, refining its content and face validity.

Following expert validation, the reliability and internal consistency of the instrument were evaluated. Specifically for the measures related to customer satisfaction, the questionnaire demonstrated a high level of internal consistency during testing, evidenced by a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.984. This robust value, significantly above the common acceptance threshold (typically 0.70), attests to the high reliability of the scales used to measure the customer satisfaction construct in the context of this empirical research.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Primary data collection was conducted through face-to-face surveys administered directly at the participating establishments. Participation in the research was strictly voluntary and based on the informed consent of each respondent, who was duly informed about the study's objectives, the confidentiality of the information, and their right to withdraw participation at any time. After the questionnaires were administered and completed by the participants, the researcher coordinated the secure collection of the instruments.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were subjected to appropriate statistical analyses to address the research objectives. To describe the demographic profile of the investigated establishments (Objective 1), frequency and percentage distribution analyses were used. The evaluation of overall customer satisfaction levels and the perceived effectiveness of operational changes

implemented post-pandemic (related to Objectives 3 and 4) was conducted by calculating arithmetic means and weighted means. Additionally, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to investigate whether customer satisfaction showed statistically significant variations based on categorical variables such as establishment type (restaurants, cafes, bars, fast-food) and different respondent groups (managers, staff, customers). This set of analytical procedures allowed for a quantitative and comparative assessment of the strategies aimed at enhancing customer experience in the food and beverage sector in Nueva Ecija during the post-pandemic recovery period.

3.6 Study Limitations

It is essential to acknowledge the inherent limitations of this study for the correct interpretation and generalization of its results. Firstly, the geographical scope of the research was confined to the province of Nueva Ecija. While this region is representative in its context, the findings may not be directly generalizable to other geographical areas with different market dynamics, consumer profiles, or socioeconomic and cultural contexts. Secondly, data collection was conducted at a single point in time, constituting a cross-sectional study. This approach captured a "snapshot" of the post-pandemic situation at the time of the research, without the capacity to analyze the temporal evolution of strategies, customer satisfaction, or other relevant factors over an extended period. Additionally, reliance on primary data collected through questionnaires (self-report) introduces the possibility of response biases, such as social desirability bias or recall bias. Finally, the selection of only one representative per role (manager, staff member, customer) in each establishment, although a justified methodological choice to optimize the coverage of the establishment sample, may not capture the full variability and diversity of opinions or experiences existing within the same organization. These points should be considered when contextualizing the presented results.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Characterization of Establishments

The sample consisted of 40 food and beverage establishments located in five cities in the province of Nueva Ecija, Philippines. Demographic data reveal a predominance of restaurants and fast food establishments (32.5% each), followed by bars (22.5%) and cafes (12.5%).

Regarding years in operation, 72.5% of the establishments had been active between 1 and 4 years, with the majority being individually owned (65.0%). Business size was predominantly small, with 92.5% having between 1 and 10 employees. In relation to initial capital, 45% of the ventures were established with resources between 100,000 and 500,000 Philippine pesos, while only 2.5% achieved annual revenue exceeding this value.

4.2 Operational and Adaptive Challenges

Distinct challenges were identified according to the type and size of the ventures. Restaurants and fast food establishments faced difficulties in implementing strict sanitary protocols, given the high customer turnover, as well as limitations in adopting payment and delivery technologies. Cafes proved less adaptable to the delivery model, negatively impacting customer frequency. Bars were severely affected by legal restrictions related to alcohol consumption and gatherings. Small-sized establishments reported a scarcity of financial and human resources, which hindered the implementation of training and digital solutions.

4.3 Customer Satisfaction by Establishment Profile

Comparative analysis among different types of establishments revealed that restaurants and fast food establishments showed the highest customer satisfaction index (weighted mean = 3.51), attributed mainly to the rapid implementation of hygiene measures and delivery systems. Cafes and bars, with less technological adaptation capacity, showed lower levels. Establishments with higher initial capital were able to execute more effective marketing strategies, reflected in greater public satisfaction. In turn, businesses with 1–10 employees reported moderate managerial satisfaction (mean = 3.21), possibly influenced by operational restrictions.

4.4 Statistical Analysis: Comparison between Groups

Analysis of variance (ANOVA), as applied by Santos (2025), demonstrated statistically significant differences in satisfaction perceptions among managers, staff, and customers. Customers showed the highest index (mean = 3.51), followed by staff (3.50) and managers (3.21), indicating that consumers perceived the positive effects of post-pandemic changes more intensely. Furthermore, the data indicate that restaurants and fast food establishments were the

segments with the best average performance, while cafes obtained the lowest values, highlighting a gap in adaptation and strategic response.

4.5 Strategies Associated with Increased Satisfaction

The results indicate that certain practices contributed significantly to increasing customer satisfaction. In the operational sphere, efficient queue management and the adoption of sanitary measures stood out, with means above 3.60. In marketing, the intensive use of social media and loyalty programs showed high effectiveness, especially among staff (mean = 3.75). In financial terms, price adjustments and promotions were recognized as relevant strategies by customers (mean = 3.33), reflecting concerns about affordability and perceived value.

4.6 Identified Development Plans

Based on the integrated analysis of the data, development plans were outlined across four pillars: operations, marketing, management, and finance. Among the proposed actions, the continuation of service digitalization, the strengthening of health communication campaigns, investment in team training, and the improvement of pricing strategies stand out. These guidelines demonstrate potential to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of businesses in the post-pandemic scenario..

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Critical Interpretation of Results

The results of this study demonstrate that the responsiveness of food and beverage establishments to the demands of the post-pandemic context is directly associated with the satisfaction levels of customers, staff, and managers. Generally, the data indicate that establishments which managed to implement operational changes—such as sanitary safety protocols, service digitalization, and communication strategies—quickly and effectively obtained more positive evaluations from their stakeholders.

Restaurants and fast food chains, which showed a higher degree of technological adoption and process standardization, were the segments with the best satisfaction indices. This finding corroborates the results of Guan, Deng, and Zhou (2020), who highlight the importance of organizational agility in contexts of disruption. In contrast, cafes and bars faced greater

challenges in adaptation, especially due to their reliance on face-to-face interactions and stricter regulatory restrictions, which negatively impacted their evaluation.

Additionally, the analysis by business size demonstrated that establishments with higher initial capital were more effective in implementing digital marketing strategies and financial adjustments, reflecting the importance of available resources in the capacity for innovation and adaptation, as discussed by Reznikova and Grod (2024). However, even small businesses that managed to invest in staff training and accessible technologies showed satisfactory performance, suggesting that well-directed strategic decisions can mitigate structural limitations.

ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences among the respondent groups. Customers demonstrated a higher level of satisfaction compared to managers and staff. This data suggests a possible perceptual asymmetry, where customers value more visible changes—such as cleanliness and technology—while managers, aware of operational costs and difficulties, have a more critical perception. This dissonance reinforces the need to improve internal and external communication channels, as argued by Diebner *et al.* (2020), to align perceptions, expectations, and strategies.

5.2 Contributions to the Field of Study

This study advances the literature by offering an analysis segmented by business type, size, and years in operation, allowing for a more granular understanding of organizational resilience in the food and beverage sector. By integrating quantitative data from multiple stakeholders with statistical analysis, the work broadens the understanding of the determinants of customer satisfaction in post-crisis recovery scenarios.

Furthermore, the research contributes empirical evidence on the effectiveness of specific measures—such as digital marketing strategies, queue management, and pricing policies—offering practical recommendations that can be replicated by managers in emerging markets with similar characteristics.

5.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite its merits, the study presents limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample was restricted to a specific region (Nueva Ecija), which limits the generalizability of the

findings. Moreover, the cross-sectional design prevents the analysis of the evolution of strategies over time. It is recommended that future research adopt longitudinal designs and broaden the geographical diversity of the sample. Another point to be further explored concerns the analysis of the sociodemographic profile of consumers, which would allow for understanding variations in preferences and perceptions based on age, gender, income, and educational level. Furthermore, the incorporation of multivariate analyses, such as multiple regression or structural equation modeling, could offer more robust insights into causal relationships between variables.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to comprehensively analyze how food and beverage establishments located in Nueva Ecija, Philippines, adapted their business models in the post-pandemic context, as well as to investigate the impacts of these transformations on the satisfaction of customers, staff, and managers. The results obtained reveal that the capacity for rapid and strategic response to new demands—especially regarding the adoption of digital technologies, sanitary protocols, and the reconfiguration of marketing strategies—is positively associated with the perceived effectiveness and satisfaction of the different stakeholders involved.

Businesses such as restaurants and fast food chains demonstrated greater organizational resilience, benefiting from more consolidated structures and greater access to resources. On the other hand, smaller establishments faced more significant operational and financial barriers, although some achieved success through well-directed strategic choices. This disparity highlights the potential need for targeted policy support mechanisms to foster more equitable resilience across the sector. The statistical analysis through ANOVA further highlighted relevant perceptual differences among the respondent groups, indicating the necessity for enhanced communicational alignment and greater internal integration in organizational decisions to better serve all stakeholders, including staff whose well-being is a key social consideration.

The main contribution of this research lies in the segmented approach adopted, which allowed for the identification of differentiated response patterns among business types, sizes, and degrees of business maturity. By providing empirical evidence based on primary data and rigorous statistical analysis, this study offers practical insights not only for industry managers

but also for public policy makers tasked with economic development, public health surveillance, and fostering community well-being. The findings can directly inform the design of effective support programs, regulatory frameworks, and infrastructure investments aimed at fostering sector resilience, promoting inclusive economic growth and employment, and ensuring the continued availability of essential services that contribute significantly to social vitality and recovery.

It is acknowledged, however, that the geographical specificity and the cross-sectional design limit the extrapolation of the findings. In this regard, future studies could broaden the territorial scope, incorporate consumer demographic variables, and adopt more advanced longitudinal and inferential methods. Future research should also explicitly investigate the social equity implications of digitalization and operational changes across different community segments, as well as evaluate the effectiveness of specific government interventions aimed at supporting the F&B sector's sustainable recovery and adaptation. Still, the results presented here shed light on promising avenues for the transformation and sustainability of food and beverage businesses in crisis contexts, contributing in an original way to the literature on service management and consumer behavior, with clear relevance for socioeconomic recovery efforts and policy development.

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