

BEYOND THE BUFFET: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF RESERVATION MANAGEMENT AND CLEANLINESS ON DINING EXPERIENCES AT CABALEN SM CITY NORTH EDSA

ABSTRACT

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KEYWORDS

*cabalen sm city north edsa;
reservation management;
dining experience;
cleanliness; customer
satisfaction; hygiene
standards*

ARTICLE ID

AASGBCPJMRA-B78880

This chapter explores the influence of cleanliness and reservation management on the overall dining experience at Cabalen SM City North EDSA. In an increasingly competitive restaurant landscape—intensified by heightened post-pandemic hygiene expectations—customer satisfaction in buffet-style dining now hinges more critically on operational efficiency and sanitation standards. This study addresses a gap in the literature by employing a mixed-methods approach to examine how these two key factors intersect and shape diners' perceptions and satisfaction. It also considers underlying psychological, cultural, and historical influences that inform guests' cleanliness expectations. The goal of this research is to generate actionable insights and strategic recommendations that can enhance customer satisfaction and improve operational practices within buffet restaurant settings. This chapter presents the research methodology employed to ensure a comprehensive and methodologically sound investigation. A mixed-methods approach was utilized, combining both qualitative and quantitative strategies to capture a holistic understanding of the study's objectives. The chapter outlines the research design, target population, study location, scope and delimitation, and the sampling techniques applied. It further details the data collection procedures, including the development, validation, and pre-testing of research instruments to ensure their reliability and credibility. Strategies for establishing the validity and reliability of the data are thoroughly discussed. Moreover, this chapter explains the data analysis procedures, highlighting the statistical tools and techniques used to interpret quantitative data, alongside appropriate methods for qualitative data interpretation. By integrating both data types, this methodology provides a robust framework for generating accurate, meaningful, and actionable insights. The aggregated data from multiple tables highlight several critical factors that significantly influence the overall dining experience at Cabalen SM City North EDSA. These include efficient reservation management, cleanliness, quality of customer service, ambiance, food quality, and perceived value for money. Respondents expressed strong agreement on the importance of prompt resolution of concerns, clear communication from staff, strict adherence to hygiene protocols, and the presence of courteous and knowledgeable personnel. Statistical analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between reservation management and dining experience ($r = 0.865$); however, the result was not statistically significant ($p = 0.135$), indicating that while the relationship appears meaningful, further investigation with a larger sample or alternative methods may be necessary to establish its robustness. In contrast, cleanliness demonstrated a statistically significant but counterintuitive negative correlation with dining experience ($r = 0.985$, $p = 0.015$). This unexpected finding suggests a complex dynamic, potentially influenced by elevated customer expectations in a post-pandemic context, where even minor lapses in cleanliness may disproportionately affect perceptions. Overall, the results emphasize that while various operational factors contribute to customer satisfaction, special attention must be given to maintaining consistent cleanliness standards, enhancing service delivery, and optimizing the dining environment. These elements are crucial in shaping positive guest perceptions and sustaining competitive advantage in the hospitality industry. The findings underscore that customer satisfaction at Cabalen SM City North EDSA is highly contingent upon the effectiveness of reservation management and the consistency of cleanliness standards. Respondents expressed notable dissatisfaction with issues such as overbooking, inefficient reservation processes, and a lack of timely communication, all of which detracted from their overall dining experience. Although cleanliness was generally rated positively, guests emphasized the critical need for strict adherence to hygiene and safety protocols, especially in a post-pandemic context. These insights suggest that enhancing operational efficiency and maintaining rigorous cleanliness standards are essential for sustaining high levels of customer satisfaction and competitive advantage in the buffet dining sector.

RECOMMENDED CITATION

Cortez, M., Cruz, A., Cruz, D. M., Magpantay, E., & Mendina, J. (2025). Beyond the Buffet: Examining the Impact of Reservation Management and Cleanliness on Dining Experiences at Cabalen SM City North EDSA. *Ascendens Asia Singapore – Bestlink College of the Philippines Journal of Multidisciplinary Research Abstracts*, 7(2), 133.