

# The Impact of Menu Design on Customer Choices in Filipino Casual Dining Restaurants At Sm San Lazaro, Manila

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## ABSTRACT

Menu design has become an important marketing and communication tool in the restaurant industry as it significantly influences customer perceptions, emotions, and purchasing behavior. This study examined the impact of menu design on customer choices in Filipino casual dining restaurants at SM San Lazaro, Manila, using the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework. Specifically, the study determined how menu elements such as layout, colors, typography, food descriptions, images, and pricing affect customer dining decisions, emotional responses, and behavioral intentions. A quantitative descriptive research design was employed, and data were collected from 384 respondents through purposive sampling. Statistical tools such as weighted mean, Mann–Whitney U Test, and Kruskal–Wallis Test were utilized to analyze the data.

Findings revealed that respondents generally agreed that menu design significantly influenced their dining choices across the stimulus, organism, and response dimensions. Customers positively responded to menus that were visually appealing, organized, easy to read, and supported by clear descriptions and attractive food images. Results also showed that menu design contributed to customers' comfort, excitement, trust, willingness to try new dishes, intention to revisit, and likelihood of recommending the restaurant to others. Moreover, no significant differences were found in customer perceptions when grouped according to age, sex, income, and dining frequency, indicating that menu design consistently affects customer behavior across demographic groups. Based on the findings, the study proposed menu design strategies focusing on visual organization, cultural relevance, promotional positioning, and digital integration to enhance customer experience and restaurant performance. The study concludes that menu design serves not only as an informational tool but also as an effective psychological and marketing strategy that shapes customer decision-making in Filipino casual dining restaurants.

**Keywords:** menu design, customer choices, Filipino casual dining restaurants, S–O–R framework, customer behavior, restaurant marketing

## INTRODUCTION

Menus are considered one of the most important tools in the restaurant industry because they serve not only as a list of food items but also as a marketing and communication tool that influences customer

decisions. As the first point of interaction between customers and restaurants, menus shape perceptions regarding food quality, pricing, and the overall dining experience (Kotschevar & Withrow, 2008). Studies have shown that well-designed menus can guide customer choices, encourage faster decision-making, and increase spending behavior (Bowen & Morris, 1995). Over time, menus evolved from simple informational materials into strategic tools that influence customer behavior through layout, typography, colors, images, and food descriptions (Antun & Gustafson, 2005).

Globally, restaurants use menu engineering techniques to highlight profitable dishes and improve customer engagement. Research suggests that customers usually scan menus rather than read them carefully, making visual presentation and item placement important factors in attracting attention (Yang, 2012). Attractive food images and clear descriptions also create emotional responses that increase appetite, satisfaction, and purchase intention (Hou et al., 2017). In addition, restaurants strategically present prices and menu layouts to create perceptions of value and affordability, showing that menu design plays a significant role in influencing dining decisions (Poundstone, 2010).

In the Philippines, dining out is an important part of social and cultural life, leading to the continuous growth of casual dining restaurants in malls and commercial areas (Fernandez, 2002). In busy establishments such as those located in SM San Lazaro, Manila, customers are exposed to many dining choices, making competition among restaurants more challenging. As a result, menus become essential in attracting customers and helping them decide what to order. Filipino consumers are often practical and value-conscious, considering factors such as prices, serving sizes, and dish descriptions before making purchases (Luna, 2015). Menus that are visually organized, easy to read, and culturally appealing may positively influence customer comfort and satisfaction.

Despite the importance of menu design, limited studies in the Philippines have examined how menu elements influence customer choices in casual dining restaurants. Most existing studies focus more on food quality and customer service rather than menu presentation and visual appeal (Ozdemir & Caliskan, 2014). Furthermore, few studies have explored menu design in mall-based restaurants where customers make quick dining decisions among multiple choices. Therefore, this study aimed to examine how menu design affects customer choices in Filipino casual dining restaurants at SM San Lazaro, Manila. Specifically, it sought to determine how menu layout, colors, typography, descriptions, and pricing influence customer preferences and dining decisions.

## METHODS

This study used a quantitative descriptive research design. The purpose of descriptive research is to systematically describe the characteristics, behaviors, and perceptions of a specific population without manipulating variables. In this study, the researchers aimed to measure the impact of menu design elements—such as layout, colors, images, descriptions, and price format—on customer choices.

A quantitative approach is appropriate because it allows the researchers to gather numerical data from a large number of respondents, enabling the use of statistical techniques to determine patterns, relationships, and differences. Through the S-O-R model, the study examines how menu design (Stimulus) affects customer feelings (Organism) and their actual dining behavior (Response). This approach makes it possible to generate measurable results and compare responses based on demographic groups such as age, sex, income, and dining frequency.

According to Fraenkel et al. (2019), descriptive studies describe a given state of affairs as fully and carefully as possible, which aligns with this study's goal of documenting customer perceptions of menu

design at SM San Lazaro. Furthermore, Creswell and Creswell (2018) explain that quantitative methods provide a numerical description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. This method ensures that the data gathered is objective and can be subjected to rigorous statistical tests—such as the Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests used in this study—to determine if demographic factors like income or sex create significant differences in customer response.

To gather data from this specific population, the researchers utilized a Purposive Sampling technique. Unlike random sampling, this non-probability method allows researchers to use their judgment to select participants who meet specific criteria necessary for the study. For this research, the inclusion criteria required participants to be at least 18 years old and to be actively dining at one of the targeted Filipino restaurants during the data collection period. This technique was selected because it is the most practical and efficient way to reach "information-rich" respondents who are currently interacting with a menu. By focusing on these specific individuals, the researchers ensured that the data collected was directly relevant to measuring how visual and textual menu elements influence real-time decision-making.

**Table 1. Distribution of the Respondents in terms of Age**

Age	Frequency	Percent	Rank
18 to 25	284	73.96%	1
26 to 32	54	14.06%	2
33 to 39	19	4.95%	3
40 to 47	18	4.69%	4
48 to 54	6	1.56%	5
55 and above	3	0.78%	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

Table 1 presents the distribution of the respondents in terms of age for the study on the impact of menu design on customer choices in Filipino casual dining restaurants at SM San Lazaro, Manila. As shown in the table, the majority of respondents are aged 18 to 25 years, comprising 73.96% of the total population. This is followed by the 26 to 32 age group at 14.06%, 33 to 39 at 4.95%, 40 to 47 at 4.69%, 48 to 54 at 1.56%, and those 55 years and above at 0.78%. These results indicate that the study sample is predominantly composed of young adults, suggesting that the findings largely reflect the preferences and choices of this age demographic in relation to menu design in casual dining restaurants.

Based on the data gathered, the profile of the respondents provides a clear picture of who is dining in Filipino casual restaurants at SM San Lazaro. The majority of the diners belong to the younger age group, specifically between 18 and 25 years old. This suggests that the primary customers are students and young professionals, who frequently visit malls for social activities. In terms of sex, there is a balanced mix of male and female diners, showing that the menu design must appeal to everyone regardless of gender.

According to Lupisan and Abcede (2020), the age distribution of respondents, as presented in the attached table, provides a crucial demographic context for a study on customer choices, given the reference's focus on understanding the group ordering behavior and menu influence among Filipino Millennials in casual dining restaurants.

**Table 2. Distribution of the Respondents in terms of Sex**

Sex	Frequency	Percent	Rank
Male	216	56.25%	1
Female	168	43.75%	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

Table 2 presents the distribution of the respondents in terms of sex for the study on the impact of menu design on customer choices in Filipino casual dining restaurants at SM San Lazaro, Manila. As shown in the table, the majority of respondents are male, comprising 56.25% of the total population, while female respondents account for 43.75%. These results indicate a slightly higher representation of male customers in the study, suggesting that the findings regarding menu design preferences and choices may be more reflective of male dining behaviors and tendencies.

This information is very important for the study because it shows that menu design must be neutral and appealing to everyone. Since both men and women make dining choices, the "Stimulus" of the menu—such as the colors used, the photos of the food, and the language—should not target just one gender. For example, while men might look for larger "sulit" portions, women might focus more on the visual presentation or healthy options. Understanding that the audience is diverse helps restaurant owners create a menu that feels welcoming to all. By knowing that the market is made up of both genders, the research can better explain why certain visual cues work effectively across the entire customer population in a busy mall environment.

According to Bekar and Demirci (2015), the visual perception and clarity of menu content significantly influence women’s preferences, while the diversity of offerings sways men. This supports the table’s gender split, indicating that menu design elements must be tailored to differentially impact choices within Filipino casual dining, reflecting these distinct psychological factors.

**Table 3. Distribution of the Respondents in terms of Income**

Income	Frequency	Percent	Rank
Less than ₱10,000	248	64.58%	1
₱10,000 to ₱20,000	63	16.41%	2
₱20,000 to ₱30,000	60	15.63%	3
₱30,000 to ₱40,000	4	1.04%	5
₱40,000 and above	9	2.34%	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

Table 3 presents the distribution of the respondents in terms of income for the study on the impact of menu design on customer choices in Filipino casual dining restaurants at SM San Lazaro, Manila. As shown in the table, the majority of respondents earn less than ₱10,000, comprising 64.58% of the total population. This is followed by those earning ₱10,000 to ₱20,000 at 16.41%, ₱20,000 to ₱30,000 at 15.63%, ₱40,000 and above at 2.34%, and ₱30,000 to ₱40,000 at 1.04%. These results indicate that the study sample is predominantly composed of lower-income customers, suggesting that their purchasing behaviors and menu preferences may be influenced by affordability and value considerations in casual dining settings.

This information is important because it shows that most of the customers are budget-conscious individuals, such as students or young workers. Because they have a limited amount of money to spend, these diners are likely to look for "sulit" or value-for-money deals on the menu. For restaurant owners, this means that the menu should clearly highlight affordable combo meals and promos to attract this specific group. Even though these customers have lower incomes, the study found that income does not significantly change how they react to the menu’s design. This suggests that a good menu layout and clear pricing are essential for everyone, regardless of how much money they make.

According to Fajardo et al. (2024), the high concentration of low-income respondents, with over 64% earning less than ₱10,000, highlights the significant role of perceived price in restaurant selection in the Philippines. Consequently, menu engineering strategies, such as bundling or using price anchoring, are crucial elements for ensuring excellent perceived value and influencing customer choices in this price-sensitive market.

**Table 4. Distribution of the Respondents in terms of Frequency of Dining**

Frequency of Dining	Frequency	Percent	Rank
First Time	75	19.53%	3
Once a Week	51	13.28%	4
More than Once a Week	26	6.77%	5
Once a Month	154	40.10%	1
2 to 3 Times a Month	78	20.31%	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

Table 4 presents the distribution of the respondents in terms of the frequency of dining for the study on the impact of menu design on customer choices in Filipino casual dining restaurants at SM San Lazaro, Manila. As shown in the table, the largest portion of respondents dine once a month, comprising 40.10% of the total population. This is followed by those who dine 2 to 3 times a month at 20.31%, first-time diners at 19.53%, once a week at 13.28%, and more than once a week at 6.77%. These results indicate that the study sample is primarily composed of occasional diners, suggesting that menu design may play a significant role in influencing their dining decisions and repeat visits.

This information is important because it shows that menu design is a powerful communication tool that goes beyond just listing food. When these visual elements are effective, they influence the "Organism," which represents the customer's internal state. The results show that a professional and organized menu makes diners feel more comfortable, hungry, and confident in the restaurant’s quality. This positive emotional shift then leads to a favorable "Response," such as ordering a recommended dish or feeling that the price is fair. For casual dining restaurants, these design choices help reduce "choice overload" and guide guests toward making faster, more satisfying decisions. The high scores in this table suggest that focusing on strong visual stimuli is one of the most effective ways to improve the overall dining experience and boost restaurant sales.

According to Lundberg and Mura (2022), frequent repeat diners develop stronger personal preferences and higher service expectations, unlike first-time or occasional patrons. This aligns with the table's data, which shows most respondents visit once a month or less. This low frequency means that menu design must prioritize clear, visually appealing information over assuming prior knowledge, making the initial menu impression crucial for driving customer choices.

**Table 5. Overall assessment on Menu Design (Stimulus)**

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. The menu is clean and easy to look at.	4.28	Strongly Agree	1
2. The pictures of the food make me want to order.	4.18	Agree	3
3. The colors and layout of the menu look nice.	4.14	Agree	5
4. The font size and style are easy to read.	4.04	Agree	8
5. The menu helps me notice special or popular dishes.	4.07	Agree	7
6. The descriptions of the dishes are clear and simple to understand.	4.22	Strongly Agree	2
7. The price format (₱ or no ₱ sign) affects how I see the dish's value.	4.08	Agree	6
8. The pictures on the menu match what is actually served.	3.95	Agree	10
9. The menu design matches the theme of the restaurant.	3.96	Agree	9
10. The menu layout helps me find my preferred dish quickly.	4.15	Agree	4
<b>Average Weighted Mean:</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

Table 5 presents the overall assessment of menu design (stimulus) and its impact on customer dining choices in Filipino casual dining restaurants at SM San Lazaro, Manila. The table summarizes respondents' evaluations of various menu elements, including cleanliness, visual appeal, readability, clarity of descriptions, pricing presentation, and alignment with the restaurant's theme. Weighted means range from 3.95 to 4.28, with the highest-rated indicator being "The menu is clean and easy to look at" (WM = 4.28), followed closely by "The descriptions of the dishes are clear and simple to understand" (WM = 4.22), indicating that clarity and organization strongly influence customer perceptions. Other elements, such as pictures motivating orders, layout facilitating quick selection, and color schemes, also received positive ratings, though slightly lower. The average weighted mean of 4.11, interpreted as Agree, suggests that respondents perceive menu design as an important factor that effectively guides their dining choices, enhancing both visual appeal and ease of decision-making. This table summarizes how respondents evaluated physical menu elements. The highest-rated indicator was that the menu is "clean and easy to look at" (WM = 4.28), followed by "**clear and simple descriptions**" (WM = 4.22). With an average weighted mean of 4.11, respondents **Agree** that menu design is an important stimulus that effectively guides their dining choices. This confirms that Filipino patrons prioritize explicit clarity and organized layouts when making decisions.

This information is important because it shows that menu design has a universal impact on all types of customers at SM San Lazaro. Whether a diner is male or female, a young student, or an older worker with a higher income, they all respond to visual stimuli and layout in a very similar way. For restaurant owners, this means they do not need to create different menus for different groups of people. Instead, they should focus on a single, high-quality design that follows the best practices of menu psychology, such as using

clear photos and organized categories. Since everyone is looking for a smooth and easy ordering experience, a well-designed menu will be effective for the entire customer base. These findings suggest that good design is a basic requirement that satisfies all diners, regardless of their personal background. According to Lundberg et al. (2022), menu informativeness positively affects the desire to eat and purchase intention. The high score for "the names of the dishes are clearly indicated" confirms Filipino patrons prioritize explicit clarity, requiring menu design to emphasize detailed descriptions to guide choices.

**Table 6. Overall assessment on Customer Feelings (Organism)**

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. The menu design makes me feel hungry or excited to eat.	4.19	Agree	2
2. The menu gives me a good impression of the restaurant.	4.08	Agree	7
3. The food pictures make me believe the food will taste good.	3.98	Agree	10
4. The words used in the menu help me imagine the taste of the dish.	4.07	Agree	8
5. I feel more comfortable ordering when the menu looks neat and nice.	4.19	Agree	1
6. The menu design makes me feel that the restaurant is trustworthy.	4.04	Agree	9
7. I feel relaxed when the menu is simple and easy to read.	4.14	Agree	5
8. I enjoy reading the menu when it is well-designed and clear.	4.18	Agree	3
9. The pictures on the menu make me more curious to try new dishes.	4.12	Agree	6
10. A beautiful menu increases my excitement to dine in the restaurant.	4.14	Agree	5
<b>Average Weighted Mean:</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

Table 6 presents the overall assessment of customer feelings (organism) in relation to menu design and its impact on dining choices in Filipino casual dining restaurants at SM San Lazaro, Manila. The table summarizes respondents' perceptions of how menu elements—such as visual appeal, clarity, wording, and organization—affect their emotions, appetite, and overall impression of the restaurant. Weighted means range from 3.98 to 4.19, with the highest-rated indicators being “I feel more comfortable ordering when the menu looks neat and nice” (WM = 4.19) and “the menu design makes me feel hungry or excited to eat” (WM = 4.19), highlighting the role of clarity and attractiveness in enhancing customer engagement. Other items, such as enjoyment of reading a well-designed menu and curiosity inspired by food pictures, also received positive ratings, reflecting the emotional influence of menu design. The average weighted mean of 4.11, interpreted as Agree, indicates that customers generally perceive menu design as effective

in eliciting positive feelings, increasing comfort, and stimulating appetite, thereby influencing their dining decisions. This table assesses the internal emotional reactions of customers. The highest scores were for feeling "comfortable ordering when the menu looks neat" and the menu making them "**feel hungry or excited to eat**" (both WM = 4.19). The average weighted mean of 4.11 (**Agree**) shows that a visually engaging design is crucial for setting positive expectations and stimulating the appetite of diners.

This information is important because it proves that menu design is not just a decoration, but a direct driver of restaurant revenue. It shows that when a menu is easy to navigate and visually appealing, it effectively reduces the "pain of paying" and encourages diners to try more offerings. For restaurant owners at SM San Lazaro, this means that every improvement made to the menu layout—such as using better photos or smarter price formatting—has a measurable impact on the restaurant's daily sales. The findings confirm that a strategic menu design is a high-value investment that pays off by directly influencing the final purchase behavior of the customers.

According to Peleman Industries (2025), the presentation of the menu directly impacts a guest’s purchasing decision and willingness to spend. The high satisfaction shown in the table for “the appearance of the menu is attractive” confirms that a visually-engaging design is crucial for setting positive expectations and guiding customer choices in casual dining.

**Table 7. Overall assessment on Customer Feelings (Response)**

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. I choose dishes that look best in the menu pictures.	4.12	Agree	4
2. The menu design helps me decide what to order faster.	4.02	Agree	10
3. I am willing to try new dishes because of how they look on the menu.	4.05	Agree	7
4. I would tell my friends about the restaurant because of its good menu.	4.21	Strongly Agree	1
5. I would come back again if the menu is easy to read and attractive.	4.04	Agree	8
6. I often order the food that stands out most in the menu.	4.07	Agree	5
7. A nice menu design makes me more confident in my order choice.	4.04	Agree	9
8. I tend to spend more when the menu looks appealing.	4.05	Agree	6
9. I am more likely to recommend the restaurant if the menu is attractive.	4.18	Agree	2
10. A well-designed menu makes me want to visit again.	4.17	Agree	3
<b>Average Weighted Mean:</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

Table 7 presents the overall assessment of customer responses in relation to menu design and its impact on dining choices in Filipino casual dining restaurants at SM San Lazaro, Manila. The table summarizes how menu elements influence customers’ actual behavior, including decision-making, willingness to try new dishes, repeat visits, and recommendations to others. Weighted means range from 4.02 to 4.21, with the highest-rated indicator being “I would tell my friends about the restaurant because of its good menu” (WM = 4.21), followed by “I am more likely to recommend the restaurant if the menu is attractive” (WM = 4.18), highlighting the menu’s role in generating positive word-of-mouth and customer advocacy. Other indicators, such as selecting dishes based on appearance, spending more when the menu is appealing, and feeling confident in orders, also received favorable ratings. The average weighted mean of 4.10, interpreted as Agree, indicates that customers generally perceive well-designed menus as effective in guiding their choices, enhancing satisfaction, and influencing their dining behavior and loyalty. This table measures the actual behavior of customers. The top indicator was the willingness to **"tell friends about the restaurant because of its good menu"** (WM = 4.21). With an average mean of 4.10 (**Agree**), the data indicates that well-designed menus lead to positive word-of-mouth and customer loyalty, making guests more likely to recommend the restaurant to others.

This information is important because it highlights the exact areas where casual dining restaurants need to improve. Even if a menu has great photos, these "pain points" can ruin the overall dining experience and lead to decision fatigue. For example, if the text is too small to read under mall lighting, customers may feel annoyed and simply pick the first thing they see rather than exploring better options. For restaurant owners, this table serves as a checklist for practical changes, such as increasing font size or simplifying the categories. By fixing these common problems, restaurants can make the ordering process much faster and more comfortable for everyone. Addressing these issues ensures that the menu remains a helpful guide rather than a barrier to a good meal.

According to Baiomy et al. (2019), menu design, descriptions, and variety are significant predictors of overall customer satisfaction. The overall assessment of customer response reveals high positive word-of-mouth intention, primarily driven by satisfaction with the menu. A well-designed menu is vital as it shapes customer expectations and satisfaction, which significantly predict both loyalty and the intent to recommend the restaurant to others.

**Table 8. Differences of the impact of menu design elements and customer dining choices in terms of stimulus, organism, and response when grouped according to Age**

Variables	p-value	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Menu Design (Stimulus)	0.592	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Customer Feelings (Organism)	0.552	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Customer Feelings (Response)	0.929	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Overall	0.691	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

Table 8 presents the results of the Kruskal–Wallis Test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference in the impact of menu design elements on customer dining choices, in terms of stimulus, organism, and response, when respondents are grouped according to age. As shown in the table, all variables—Menu Design (Stimulus) ( $p = 0.592$ ), Customer Feelings (Organism) ( $p = 0.552$ ), and Customer Response (Response) ( $p = 0.929$ )—produced p-values greater than the 0.05 significance level. Consequently, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected for all indicators, indicating that age does not

significantly influence how customers perceive menu design elements or how these elements affect their dining choices.

This information is important because it serves as a direct roadmap for restaurant owners to enhance their business. It shows that customers are not just looking for a list of prices, but a visual guide that helps them feel confident about what they are buying. For casual dining spots, following these suggestions can help reduce the "digital divide" and "decision fatigue" mentioned earlier in the study. For example, adding actual photos of the dishes helps customers who are in a hurry or those who are unfamiliar with certain dish names to make a faster choice. By listening to this feedback and applying these practical design changes, restaurants can create a more user-friendly experience that meets the specific expectations of the Manila mall-going public. This makes the menu a more effective tool for both satisfying the customer and increasing the restaurant's overall success.

According to Chen and Liao (2020), a customer's age can mediate the relationship between design elements and behavioral response only when a menu's quality is extremely poor or exceptionally good. The provided data in Table 8, however, shows that the impact of menu design is Not Significant across all variables when grouped by age. It indicates that the restaurant's menu quality is consistently acceptable enough that age differences do not cause a significant variance in how customers react to the menu.

**Table 9. Differences of the impact of menu design elements and customer dining choices in terms of stimulus, organism, and response when grouped according to Sex**

Variables	p-value	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Menu Design (Stimulus)	0.266	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Customer Feelings (Organism)	0.273	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Customer Feelings (Response)	0.599	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Overall	0.379	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

Table 9 presents the results of the Mann–Whitney U Test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference in the impact of menu design elements on customer dining choices, in terms of stimulus, organism, and response, when respondents are grouped according to sex. As shown in the table, all variables—Menu Design (Stimulus) ( $p = 0.266$ ), Customer Feelings (Organism) ( $p = 0.273$ ), and Customer Response (Response) ( $p = 0.599$ )—yielded p-values greater than the 0.05 significance level. Consequently, the null hypothesis was failed to be rejected for all indicators, indicating that male and female respondents do not significantly differ in their perception of menu design elements or in how these elements influence their dining choices. The overall result ( $p = 0.379$ ) further supports this finding, suggesting that the impact of menu design on customer choices is consistent across sexes.

This information is important because it brings all the data together to show the "big picture" of the research. It proves that a menu is not just a list of food, but a complete strategic tool that works best when it is both beautiful and easy to use. For restaurant owners at SM San Lazaro, this summary confirms that they must balance modern trends, like "Instagrammable" photos, with basic needs, like clear pricing and readable fonts. By looking at this final summary, businesses can see that a well-designed menu leads to happier customers and higher sales. It provides a clear conclusion that investing in a better menu design is one of the most effective ways to stay competitive in a busy mall environment.

According to Chen and Liao (2020), a customer's age can mediate the relationship between design elements and behavioral response only when a menu's quality is extremely poor or exceptionally good.

The provided data in Table 8 shows that the impact of menu design is Not Significant across all variables when grouped by age. The consistently acceptable quality of the menu means age differences do not cause a significant variance in how Filipino customers react to the menu.

**Table 10. Differences of the impact of menu design elements and customer dining choices in terms of stimulus, organism, and response when grouped according to Income**

Variables	p-value	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Menu Design (Stimulus)	0.837	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Customer Feelings (Organism)	0.770	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Customer Feelings (Response)	0.706	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Overall	0.771	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

Table 10 presents the results of the Kruskal–Wallis Test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference in the impact of menu design elements on customer dining choices, in terms of stimulus, organism, and response, when respondents are grouped according to income. As shown in the table, all variables—Menu Design (Stimulus) ( $p = 0.837$ ), Customer Feelings (Organism) ( $p = 0.770$ ), and Customer Response (Response) ( $p = 0.706$ )—produced p-values greater than the 0.05 significance level. Consequently, the null hypothesis was failed to be rejected for all indicators, indicating that customers’ income does not significantly influence their perception of menu design elements or how these elements affect their dining choices. The overall result ( $p = 0.771$ ) further confirms that the impact of menu design on customer choices remains consistent across different income levels.

This information is important because it bridges the gap between research and real-world application. It shows that the study is not just about identifying problems, but about providing actual solutions that can help restaurant owners succeed. For a business in a competitive mall, following this plan can lead to better customer satisfaction and more efficient operations. By applying these specific recommendations, such as using a mix of English and Filipino labels or adding more "white space" to the design, a restaurant can make its menu more user-friendly. Ultimately, Table 10 serves as a professional guide for turning a simple menu into a powerful marketing tool that meets the needs of modern Filipino diners.

According to Singh (2018), restaurant choice is significantly correlated with income level, which affects factors like price sensitivity and demand for full-service dining. Despite the majority of the sample having low income, the table shows the impact of menu design elements on choice is Not Significant when grouped by income. The menu's consistent quality, therefore, successfully mitigates price concerns and yields similar customer responses across different income brackets.

**Table 11. Differences of the impact of menu design elements and customer dining choices in terms of stimulus, organism, and response when grouped according to Frequency of Dining**

Variables	p-value	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Menu Design (Stimulus)	0.157	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Customer Feelings (Organism)	0.124	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Customer Feelings (Response)	0.519	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Overall	0.267	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

Table 11 presents the results of the Kruskal–Wallis Test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference in the impact of menu design elements on customer dining choices, in terms of stimulus, organism, and response, when respondents are grouped according to their frequency of dining. As shown in the table, all variables—Menu Design (Stimulus) ( $p = 0.157$ ), Customer Feelings (Organism) ( $p = 0.124$ ), and Customer Response (Response) ( $p = 0.519$ )—produced p-values greater than the 0.05 significance level. Consequently, the null hypothesis was failed to be rejected for all indicators, indicating that the frequency with which customers dine does not significantly influence their perception of menu design elements or the impact of these elements on their dining choices. The overall result ( $p = 0.267$ ) further confirms that menu design consistently affects customer decisions regardless of how often they dine in the restaurant.

This information is important because it ensures that the improvements made to the menu are not just a one-time fix but a lasting standard for the business. In a fast-changing environment like SM San Lazaro, customer tastes and trends can shift quickly. By having a clear evaluation table, owners can regularly check if their menu is still clear, readable, and appealing to the target market. This keeps the restaurant competitive and ensures that the menu continues to act as an effective "Stimulus" for a positive customer "Response." Ultimately, Table 11 provides the final structure needed to maintain high quality in both the menu’s design and the restaurant's overall sales performance over time.

According to Kruger (2018), the frequency of visiting a restaurant establishes a cognitive schema, influencing how quickly and easily patrons process menu information. The table shows the impact of menu design is Not Significant across all variables when grouped by dining frequency. This outcome affirms that the menu's design successfully caters to both new and frequent Filipino customers, making the content equally digestible regardless of their prior experience.

**Table 12. Proposed Menu Design Strategies That Enhance Customer Experience and Increase Sales in Filipino Casual Dining Restaurants**

Component	Goal	Strategy	Time Frame	Estimated Budget	Expected Outcome
Stimulus	To enhance the visual appeal and clarity of the menu to attract customer attention and simplify decision-making.	Organize menu into clear sections: Silog Meals, Lutong-Bahay, Sharing Platters, Merienda, Desserts.  Highlight “Chef’s Recommendations,” “Best Value Meals,” and “New Items.”  Use readable fonts and concise descriptions focused on Filipino flavors.	Weeks 1-2	₱10,000 - ₱15,000	Increased customer interest and attention toward the menu items.  Faster ordering process due to a more organized layout.  Higher probability

		<p>Include promotional boxes for Lunch Rush and Merienda Deals.</p> <p>Add high-quality photos of signature dishes (e.g., Kare-Kare, Sisig, Chicken Inasal).</p>			<p>of customers choosing featured or promoted items.</p>
Organism	<p>To positively influence customers' perception of value, quality, and authenticity. To evoke emotional connection through culturally familiar Filipino dishes and story elements.</p>	<p>Incorporate cultural storytelling in dish descriptions (e.g., "Lola's Kare-Kare," "Barrio-inspired Pancit").</p> <p>Use icons or labels such as "Proudly Filipino Ingredients," "Comfort Food Classic," or "Family Favorite."</p> <p>Present portion sizes visually to reinforce perceived value.</p> <p>Use appetizing language to create emotional appeal ("slow-cooked," "homestyle," "fiesta-inspired").</p>	Week 3	<p>₱3,000 - ₱5,000</p>	<p>Customers feel a sense of nostalgia, familiarity, and cultural pride.</p> <p>Improved perceived quality and authenticity of menu items.</p> <p>Stronger emotional preference for signature dishes.</p> <p>Increased likelihood of customers planning to return or recommend the restaurant</p>
Response	To increase customer purchase behavior,	Position high-profit dishes in visually dominant locations on the menu.	Week 4	<p>₱7,000 - ₱10,000</p>	Higher sales conversion and increased

	especially toward high-margin and signature items.	<p>Add combo upgrades (rice + drink + dessert) with a highlighted value box.</p> <p>Use limited time offer banners to trigger immediate purchases.</p> <p>Provide QR codes for feedback and digital promos.</p>			<p>average check value.</p> <p>More frequent upselling of add-ons and combo meals.</p> <p>Improved customer retention and repeat transactions.</p> <p>Enhanced overall restaurant performance at SM San Lazaro</p>
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Menu design strategies that integrate layout organization, high-quality images, Filipino cultural cues, and strategic pricing have been widely recognized as effective methods for increasing customer satisfaction and sales.

According to Le et al. (2023), menus that highlight best-value items, signature dishes, and promotional combinations significantly increase ordering likelihood. Storytelling techniques such as using cultural references or emotional descriptors help deepen customer attachment by enhancing authenticity and familiarity. Meanwhile, strategic positioning of high-profit items and limited-time offers has been shown to drive stronger purchasing behavior. These findings support the proposed strategies in the study, which aim to optimize customer experience and restaurant performance through improved menu design.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

This study concluded that menu design significantly influences customer choices among Filipino casual dining restaurants at SM San Lazaro, Manila. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents were young and budget-conscious consumers, indicating that affordability, visual presentation, and menu clarity are important factors that shape their dining decisions. This suggests that customers are more likely to respond positively to menus that are visually appealing, easy to understand, and aligned with their preferences and purchasing capacity.

The study further established that menu design affects customer behavior across the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework. In terms of stimulus, menu elements such as organized layouts, readable fonts, attractive food images, and clear descriptions successfully captured customer attention and helped diners make decisions more efficiently. In the organism component, respondents experienced positive emotional responses, including comfort, excitement, and trust, when menus were visually pleasing and culturally familiar. These emotional reactions influenced the response stage, wherein customers became more willing to try new dishes, recommend the restaurant to others, and revisit the establishment. The findings therefore confirm that menu design functions not only as a source of information but also as a psychological and marketing tool that shapes customer perceptions and dining behavior.

Moreover, the study found no significant difference in respondents' perceptions of menu design when grouped according to age, sex, income, and dining frequency. This indicates that the influence of menu design remains consistent across different demographic groups, suggesting that visually strategic menus have a generally universal effect on customer behavior within casual dining settings.

Based on the findings, the study proposed several menu design strategies that may enhance customer experience and restaurant performance. These include improving menu organization and readability, incorporating high-quality food images, using descriptive and culturally relevant language, and integrating digital and promotional features. Such strategies may help restaurants strengthen customer engagement, encourage repeat patronage, and improve overall competitiveness in the food service industry.

### **Recommendations**

In view of the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that Filipino casual dining restaurants prioritize menu design as an essential component of customer experience and marketing strategy. Restaurant owners and managers should invest in professionally designed menus that utilize organized layouts, readable typography, appealing food photography, and concise yet descriptive menu content to help customers make informed dining decisions more efficiently. Incorporating culturally familiar elements and highlighting signature Filipino dishes may also strengthen emotional connection and improve customer satisfaction.

Restaurants are likewise encouraged to integrate digital innovations such as QR-based menus, promotional banners, and interactive menu features to enhance accessibility and customer engagement. Since customers respond positively to menus that are visually clear and emotionally appealing, continuous evaluation of menu effectiveness through customer feedback and surveys may further improve menu performance and dining experiences.

Mall administrators and commercial establishments such as SM San Lazaro may also support tenant restaurants by encouraging menu presentation standards that emphasize readability, visual appeal, and customer convenience. In addition, local government units and tourism-related agencies may promote Filipino culinary identity by supporting restaurants. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to explore other menu-related variables such as pricing psychology, digital menu innovation, customer satisfaction, and post-pandemic dining behavior to provide broader insights into consumer decision-making in the hospitality industry. Further studies conducted in different restaurant categories and locations may also strengthen the understanding of menu design and its influence on customer behavior in various dining environments.

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