

POPULARITY OF THEMED RESTAURANTS

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the preferences of Hospitality and Tourism Management students toward themed restaurants. Descriptive type of research was used in this study with questionnaire as the main instrument. One hundred thirty-six (136) Third Year and Fourth Year BSHM and BSTM students enrolled in the Second Semester of School Year 2017-2018 participated in the study. Results of the study showed that majority of the respondents were familiar and have already dined with themed restaurants. Budget allotment of most of the respondents in visiting a themed restaurant ranged from P100 to not less than P1000 pesos. Unicorn Café, Dog House Café and Amo Yamie Crib were the preferred type of themed restaurants of the respondents. It was revealed that Food Quality, Restaurant Concept and Service were among the top three important expectations of the respondents in a themed restaurant while Disney characters, Entertainment and Retro were the three features of a themed restaurant that the respondents suggested. Based on the results of the study, it is recommended that social media is a great avenue for the marketing of special types of restaurants. Consider also the latest trends in creating more unique concepts of a themed restaurant and marketing research must be conducted in order to further determine the food preferences of different age groups.

Keywords: popularity, themed restaurants, preferences, features

Restaurants are classified or distinguished in many different ways. The primary factors are usually the food itself (e.g. vegetarian, seafood, steak); the cuisine (e.g. Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, French, Mexican, Thai) or the style of offering (e.g. tapas bar, a sushi train, a tastet restaurant, a buffet restaurant or a yum cha restaurant). Beyond this, restaurants may differentiate themselves on factors including speed, formality, location, cost, service, or novelty themes (Bhagwandin, 2017).

Restaurants range from inexpensive and informal lunching or dining places catering to people working nearby, with modest food served in simple settings at low prices, to expensive establishments serving refined food and fine wines in a formal setting. In the former case, customers usually wear casual clothing. In the latter case, depending on culture and local traditions, customers might wear semi-casual, semi-formal or formal wear. Typically, at mid- to high-priced restaurants, customers sit at tables, their orders are taken by a waiter, who brings the food when it is ready. After eating, the customers then pay the bill. In some restaurants, such as workplace cafeterias, there are no waiters; the customers use trays, on which they place cold items that they select from a refrigerated container and hot items which they request from cooks, and then they pay a cashier before they sit down. Another restaurant approach which uses few waiters is the buffet restaurant. Customers serve food onto their own plates and then pay at the end of the meal. Buffet restaurants typically still have waiters to serve drinks and alcoholic beverages (Haley, 2010).

According to Restohub (2017), the official website of Touch Bistro, there are seven (7) different types of restaurant concepts to choose from when planning to open a new restaurant.

Family Style or Casual Restaurants. Family style restaurants follow a table service/full service model. Patrons are seated at a table with a dedicated server who takes and delivers their order. They often serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Some traditional family style restaurants will serve food on large share platters, whereas exclusively casual restaurants will serve individual plates.

Fast Casual. The latest trend in restaurant concepts which is best described as “upscale fast food”, combining casual dining with take out. You may also consider fast casual restaurants to be “quick service restaurants” (QSRs). They are often focused on delivering healthy, sustainable fast food. According to Morgan Stanley (2018), millennials make up 51% of fast casual customers. Fast casual restaurants target younger professionals who are busy but are also environmentally and socially conscious.

Fast Food. Also known as quick service restaurants (QSRs), fast food restaurants often have meals produced en masse to meet the grab-and-go demand. With limited table service and cafeteria seating, fast food restaurants prepare food to-go and usually follow a franchised business model. Burger, pizza parlors, sandwich shops, chicken restaurants, and burrito places make up the majority of fast food types.

Fine Dining. High style, high class, high cost fine dining is marked by hand-and-foot service, formal dress, and an air of elegance. It might invoke thoughts of delicate linen napkins, a sommelier, and professionally trained chefs. Many fine dining restaurants have a “chef’s table” where patrons receive one-on-one time from the chef. Fine dining restaurants have smaller

menus that change weekly or even daily. Patrons of fine dining restaurants typically enjoy an appetizer, salad, main course, and dessert.

Café. Best known for coffee, espresso, biscotti, and pastries, cafes provide counter service and aim to create a comfortable, leisurely atmosphere. Cafes are conducive for a cake between lovers, two lattes to-go, and a seating area suitable for a business interview or a conversation between good friends. While cafes often have sandwiches, small pastries, and perhaps a soup of the day, their primary purpose is not lunch, it is all about the coffee and dessert.

Food Truck. The food truck has evolved from its status as greasy chip truck to a restaurant on wheels. While the concept was born out of the chip truck, today we are seeing food trucks pull up in busy urban areas with menus that are more robust than the hot dog and fries selections. Food trucks bring their food to hungry patrons, often by strategically positioning themselves outside workplaces, breweries, festivals, and concerts. A new wave of street food boasts the quality of casual dining on-the-fly.

Pub or Bar. Pubs and bars are frequented for their alcohol and boast a social atmosphere, often with the aim of bringing people together. Pubs offer table service and casual fare that is often classified as pub food, comfort food or finger food. Bars, on the other hand, may daylight as a pub or restaurant and turn into a legal drinking age establishment at night with limited seating and bar service, complete with a bouncer and stringent age requirements.

In our modern society, a popular form of escapism occurs frequently with dining out. More and more restaurants are designed or changing their designs to provide another time, space, place, atmosphere or environment for everyday users. Mealey (2018) mentioned that theme and theatrical dining represents one (1) or two (2) percent of restaurants, and will go to around ten (10) percent by early next century. Dining out has either become the easily affordable, quick little escape that releases the tensions of the day or the entertainment desired by those living an unstressful, mundane life.

The popularity of themed restaurants has skyrocketed in recent years because of the parallel growth of the market for items of nostalgia. As fast food restaurants offer cheap food in cookie-cutter buildings, themed restaurants offer diners a good meal, as well as an experience. Themed restaurants such as Ed Debevic's, Chicago's only retro themed restaurant use music, well-trained waiters and themed menus to set the mood for an interesting dining experience (Katers, 2017).

According to Katers (2017), the typical themed restaurant features a period-appropriate menu, waiters who buy into the restaurant's theme and a show. The menu should feature appetizer, entree and dessert names that are appropriate for the theme. The Rainforest Café features a Jungle Safari Soup, Amazon Fajitas and a Sparkling Volcano on its menu. In the case of Medieval Times, Ed Debevic, an Illinois themed restaurant that features 1950's music, jukeboxes, and other artifacts from this decade, the wait staff is instructed on the right accent and dialogue to use when taking orders. While an after-dinner show is not a prerequisite for a themed restaurant, diners experience more than full stomachs and lighter wallets.

Themed Restaurants in the Philippines

Javier (2018) identified ten (10) themed cafes that food lovers and out goers can find in Metro Manila.

Flossom Kitchen + Café. This café will leave your palms itching for your phone because of how instagrammable the place is. From the pastel-colored chairs to the fresh flowers on the wall, everything about Flossom is bright, refreshing, yet homey at the same time. Expect to see all-day breakfast staples on the menu. Flossom Kitchen + Cafe can be found at 18 N. Avecilla Street, Barangay Sta. Lucia, San Juan.

House of Unicorns Café. House of Unicorns Cafe is one of the latest additions to the trend that food lovers can find in Marikina. It is not just a unicorn-lover's paradise, but also a gold mine for anyone looking to snap super cute photos for their social media accounts. House of Unicorns Cafe can be found at 51 Lilac Street, Marikina.

Alice Tea Salon. Wonderland is one of those fictional places that one wished to go to. From the red double doors inspired by the Queen of Hearts to the floors that will easily remind you of a chess board, Alice Tea Salon will make you feel like you walked straight into Wonderland. Its menu even channels the Mad Hatter's eternal love for tea with its selection of drinks that include milkshakes, smoothies, and lattes that have been infused with tea. Alice Tea Salon can be found at The Pearl Place, Pearl Drive, Ortigas Center, Pasig.

UKE Box Café. As its name suggests, ukuleles are a big part of the cafe. There is a whole picture-perfect wall lined with colorful ukuleles. These instruments are not meant to be just

decorations in Uke Box Caffé. In fact, the cafe regularly holds ukulele lessons and events featuring artists who play them. Uke Box Cafe can be found on the G/F of Manhattan Parkview, Araneta Center, Quezon City.

Under The Sea Café. It is the first mermaid-themed cafe in the Philippines, having opened just last August 2017. All it takes is one look at the walls painted with corals and fish, the pillows, stuffed toys, and even the food to feel like you are a mermaid or merman underwater. Under The Sea Cafe can be found at 80 Maginhawa Street, Quezon City.

Shutter Café. From its name down to the vintage cameras on display, you can easily tell that Shutter Cafe takes photography seriously. The cafe is found next to a camera store where you can shop for camera necessities. Shutter Cafe itself also holds regular photography, lighting, and even filmmaking workshops. Shutter Cafe can be found at 118 Scout Dr. Lazcano Street, Sacred Heart, Quezon City.

Coffee Project. Coffee Project easily made its rounds in social media when it opened its first branch. It has garden theme of flowers, including flower chandeliers. Luckily for those who want to get their shots (both of the coffee and photography varieties), there is no need to go too far. Coffee Project now has 15 branches and can even be found outside Metro Manila in places like Antipolo and Laguna.

Zoo Coffee. Stepping inside Zoo Coffee is like walking into a jungle safari in the middle of the city. But instead of wild animals and lush greenery, one will get comfy seats, good food and drinks, stuffed toys, and other animal-inspired decor. This

means that it is entirely possible to find yourself eating with a tiger staring at you or a gorilla seated right next to you. Zoo Coffee has two branches located at the Bel-Air Makati City and SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City.

Cafe Aquatica. It actually serves as both a cafe and a store selling fish and aquariums. The cafe is designed to feature aquariums housing a variety of colorful fish and some of them are placed right next to dining table. Cafe Aquatica can be found on Greenhills Promenade, Annapolis Street corner Missouri Street, Greenhills Shopping Center, San Juan.

Vandarah. Vandarah is actually like a jack of all trades. It is not only a cafe, it is also a spa and a fashion hub. It is the only stop you need for all your beauty needs. And the best part is, you will find the Beauty and the Beast references everywhere. From roses in glass cases to cupcakes decorated with characters from the story. Vandarah will surely appeal to every Disney fans. It is located at Project 6, Quezon City.

All restaurants provide an experience to any diners, however, themed and experiential entertainment restaurants use design concepts, along with marketing strategies, to create an “out of the ordinary” environment.

Themed restaurants are restaurants in which the concept of the restaurant takes priority over everything else, influencing the architecture, food, music, and overall 'feel' of the restaurants. The food usually takes a backseat to the presentation of the theme, and attracts customers solely on the premise of the theme itself.

Given the abovementioned information, this research sought to determine the preferences of Hospitality and Tourism Management Students toward Themed Restaurants. Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub problems:

1. How may the preferences of the respondents in visiting a themed restaurant be described in terms of:
 - 1.1 familiarity;
 - 1.2 dining experience;
 - 1.3. frequency of visit;
 - 1.4. budget allotment;
 - 1.5. preferred type of themed restaurant?
2. How do the respondents describe the following features of a themed restaurant
 - 2.1 food quality;
 - 2.1 restaurant concept;
 - 2.3 service;
 - 2.4 convenience;
 - 2.5 price?
3. What are the respondents' suggested features of a themed restaurant?

This study can help the students, specifically the BSHM and BSTM students of Baliuag University, in understanding the features of themed restaurants and will further enhance their knowledge and skills in the planning of meals and facilities lay-out planning of special types of restaurants.

Model of the Study

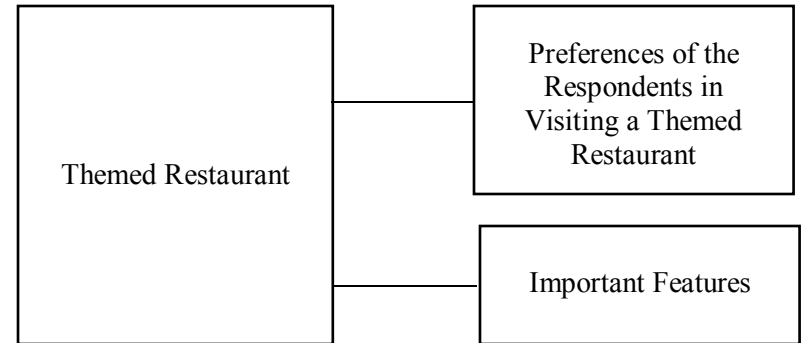


Figure 1. The figure shows the preferences of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Students toward a themed restaurant.

Method

Descriptive type of research was utilized in this study with questionnaire as the main instrument. The survey instrument was designed by the researchers to gather the perceptions, views and other information related to the study. It consisted of nine (9) questions to determine the preferences of the Hospitality and Tourism Management students toward themed restaurants. Survey questionnaires were distributed to 136 selected Third Year and Fourth Year BSHM and BSTM students enrolled in the Second Semester of School Year 2017-2018.

The responses to every item in the questionnaire were tabulated and transmitted into percentages. The percentage of responses to every item was determined by dividing the total number of responses by the total number of respondents.

Frequency counts and weighted means were used to determine the respondents' expectations of a themed restaurant. The weighted mean was obtained by dividing the total weighted product (WP) by the total frequency (f). The weighted product was obtained by multiplying the total number of responses by the degree of response, which was 1 for Very unimportant, 2 for Somewhat Important, 3 for Neither important nor important, 4 for Somewhat important and 5 for Very important. The sum total of the weighted product was divided by the frequency and the result was rounded off to the nearest hundredths. The mean average was interpreted using the following scale:

- 4.21 – 5.00 = Very important
- 3.41 – 4.20 = Somewhat important
- 2.61 – 3.40 = Neither important nor unimportant
- 1.81 – 2.60 = Somewhat unimportant
- 1.00 – 1.80 = Very unimportant

Results

Table 1

Respondents' Frequency of Visiting a Restaurant

Visiting a Restaurant	<i>f</i>	%
Never	10	7
Less than once a week	32	24
Once a week	47	35
2-5 times a week	40	29
6-10 times a week	4	3
Above 10 times a week	3	2
Total	136	100

As shown in Table 1, out of 136 respondents, 35% of them visit a restaurant once a week, 29% every 2-5 times a week while 24% of the respondents visit a restaurant less than once a week.

Table 2

Respondents' Time of Visit

Time of Visit	<i>f</i>	%
Breakfast (9am – 12am)	6	4
Lunch (12pm – 4pm)	82	60
Dinner (7pm – 12mn)	48	35
Total	136	100

Based on the results of the survey, 82 respondents (60%) preferred to visit a restaurant during lunch time while 48 of them (4%) preferred to visit a restaurant during dinner. Very few dine in a restaurant during breakfast.

Table 3

Respondents' Familiarity about Themed Restaurant

Familiarity	<i>f</i>	%
Yes	123	90
No	13	10
Total	136	100

Table 3 shows that 90% of the respondents were familiar with a themed restaurant and 10% of the respondents were not yet familiar in any themed restaurants.

Table 4

Respondents' Dining Experience in a Themed Restaurant

Dining Experience	<i>f</i>	%
Yes	107	79
No	29	21
Total	136	100

Table 4 shows that majority (79%) of the respondents have already dined in a themed restaurant while 21% of them have not yet experienced dining in any themed restaurants.

Table 5

Frequency of Dining in a Themed Restaurant

Dining in a Themed Restaurant	<i>f</i>	%
Always	35	26
Most of the time	42	31
Sometimes	59	43
Total	136	100

Table 5 presents that out of 136 respondents, 59 of them (43%) were sometimes visiting themed restaurants while 42 (31%) of them were always visiting themed restaurants.

Table 6

Food Budget in a Themed Restaurant

Food Budget	<i>f</i>	%
P100 – P200	19	14
P201 – P500	60	44
P501 – P1000	43	32
P1000 and above	14	10
Total	136	100

As shown in Table 6, 44% of the respondents can spend P201 - P500 in dining in a themed restaurant, 32% can spend P501 - P1000 while 14% can only spend P100 – P200. Only few of the respondents can spend more than P1000 in dining in a themed restaurant.

Table 7

Respondents' Preferred Type of Themed Restaurant to Visit

Preferred Type	<i>f</i>	%	Rank
Unicorn Café	62	17	1
Dog House Café	61	16	2
Amo Yamie Crib	40	11	3
GanChan Restaurant	32	8	4
Seoul Train Korean BBQ	28	7	6
Hugot Café	28	7	6
Bick Burger	25	7	6
Bistro Maloleno	24	6	8.5
Caffè Piansa	24	6	8.5

(continued)

Table 7 Continuation

Preferred Type	<i>f</i>	%	Rank
Plane Bistro Café	14	5	10.5
Gerry's Jeepney	17	5	10.5
Café Aquatica	15	3	12
Zoo Coffee	3	1	13

Table 7 shows that Unicorn Café ranked 1 (17%) as the most preferred type of themed restaurant by the respondents followed by Dog House Café that ranked 2 (16%) and Amo Yamie Crib that ranked 3 (11%). The GanChan Restaurant ranked 4 in the preferred type of themed restaurant by the respondents while the Zoo Café is the least preferred.

Table 8

Respondents' Expectations in a Themed Restaurant

Items	Interpretation	Rank
Food Quality	Very Important	1
Restaurant Concept	Very Important	2
Service	Very Important	3
Convenience	Very Important	4
Price	Very Important	5
Dining Facilities	Neither important nor unimportant	6

Based on the results of the study, food quality ranked number 1 as the very important expectation of the respondents in a themed restaurant followed by restaurant concept that ranked number 2 among their expectations. Service is another very important expectation of the respondents that ranked

number 3. Dining facilities are neither important nor unimportant among the respondents.

Table 9

Respondents' Suggested Features of a Themed Restaurant

Restaurant Feature (Theme)	<i>f</i>	%
Disney Characters	6	35
Entertainment	4	23
Retro	3	18
Photobooth	1	6
Romantic	1	6
Hollywood	1	6
Korean	1	6
Total	17	100

Table 9 shows that seventeen (17) out of 136 respondents suggested some features that they would like to see in a themed restaurant. Six (6) of them suggested Disney characters theme, followed by Entertainment theme with four (4) responses and Retro theme with three (3) responses.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, the following were concluded:

1. Majority of the respondents are familiar with themed restaurants.
2. Majority of the respondents have already dined in a themed restaurant.

3. Less than half of the respondents sometimes visit a themed restaurant.
4. Budget allotment of most of the respondents in visiting a themed restaurant ranged from P100 to not less than P1000 pesos.
5. Unicorn Café, Dog House Café and Amo Yamie Crib were the preferred types of themed restaurants of the respondents
6. Based on the results of the study, food quality, restaurant concept and service were among the very important expectations of the respondents in a themed restaurant
7. Disney characters, Entertainment and Retro are the three features of a themed restaurant suggested by the respondents.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions presented, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Social media is a great avenue for the marketing of special types of restaurants.
2. Consider the latest trends in creating more unique concepts of a themed restaurant.
3. Marketing research must be conducted in order to further determine the food preferences of different age groups.

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