

# If it is Not Safe, it is Not Food: World Health Organization (WHO) Food Safety Compliance and Behavioral Intention in Family-Owned Restaurant in San Jose, Nueva Ecija, Philippines

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to evaluate the food safety compliance and behavioral intention in Marquez Restaurant in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines, and its significant difference and correlation on customers' behavioral intentions when grouped according to the demographic profile. The study employed a quantitative descriptive correlational research design. It involved 216 respondents, all of whom were customers aged 18 and above who had dined at Marquez Restaurant at least once. Researchers personally administered questionnaires using a 4-point Likert scale to gather data. Frequency and percentage distributions were utilized to outline the demographic profiles of the respondents. ANOVA and T-tests were employed to identify significant differences between customers' socio-demographic characteristics and their evaluations of food safety compliance. Pearson R. Correlation was used to examine significant relationships between customers' demographic profiles and their assessments of food safety compliance, as well as to explore the relationship between Marquez Restaurant's food safety compliance and customers' behavioral intentions. The study was conducted from November 2023 to February 2024. Based on the result, there was no significant difference between the respondents' sex and their assessment of Marquez Restaurant's food safety compliance. However, significant differences were observed based on the type of customer and civil status, particularly in keeping food at safe temperature. Additionally, there was a significant relationship between customers' age and their assessment of food safety compliance, specifically in areas such as keeping food at safe temperatures and using safe water and raw materials. The study also identified a significant relationship between Marquez Restaurant's food safety compliance and customers' behavioral intentions. Based on these findings, an action plan to improve food safety compliance at Marquez Restaurant was proposed.

**Keywords:** Food Safety Compliance, Behavioral Intentions, Five Keys to Safer Food, Food Handlers, World Health Organization

## INTRODUCTION

Dining out at restaurants is an excellent way to enjoy meals with friends and family while exploring new dishes and flavors (Ayuyao 2018). The Philippine Statistics Authority (2023), there is a growth of 19.8 percent increase in food establishments in the year 2019 and 2020, with the majority being restaurants and mobile food services. The food service industry in the Philippines is continuously growing and known to be significant contributor to the economy and has been providing employment opportunities (Statista, 2023). According to the United State Department of Agriculture (2023), Philippine food services industry sales expected to grow 20% during post pandemic. This signifies the recovery of the industry due to strong appetite of for dining out and the convenience offered by the food deliver services. Marquez Restaurant, located at Asian Highway in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines, near Walter Mart San Jose, is one such flourishing establishment. Operating since 1950, Marquez Restaurant is renowned for its local Filipino dishes and a casual yet comfortable dining atmosphere.

The World Health Organization (WHO) notes that globalization has led to increased customer demand for a

wider variety of foods. However, a study by Alemayehu et al. (2021) found that a lack of information and training on food safety among food handlers can result in the spread of severe foodborne illnesses like diarrhea. Furthermore, the WHO estimates that 600 million people—almost 1 in 10 globally—fall ill after consuming contaminated food, with 420,000 fatalities each year. In line with the Republic Act of the Philippines No. 10611 or the Food Safety Act of 2013, food businesses and owners are required to ensure their products meet standards to reduce or eliminate food safety risks for customers.

In addition, the Food Safety Act of 2013 Article number IV sec. 22 states that the Food Regulatory Agencies (FSRA) of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the DOH, in coordination with the LGUs, shall be responsible for ensuring food safety at various stages of the food supply chain. Despite the existence of consistent regulatory application of food safety regulations, it remains a challenge, especially for developing nations (Weinroth *et. al.*, 2018). A very alarming situation because food safety is one of the factors that boosts customers' confidence in the services that a food establishment provides (Sook Yee *et. al.*, 2021). Based on previous studies about food safety, researchers notice that there is limited study on the relationship between the food safety compliance of a restaurant on customers' behavioral intentions. This triggered the researchers' curiosity to know that gap that will be used as a basis for an action plan on improving the food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija that will increase its customer's behavioral intention towards the establishment.

The study aimed to evaluate the food safety compliance and behavioral intention in Marquez Restaurant in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines, and its significant difference and correlation on customers' behavioral intentions when grouped according to the demographic profile. To achieve this, the survey questionnaire was modeled after the WHO's Five Keys to Safer Food Manual. Additionally, the dimensions used to assess customers' behavioral intentions were based on the Perceived Performance Theory and indicators from Borbon et al., (2022) study titled "Tourist Behavioral Intention in Visiting Tourist Attractions in Batangas Province".

This study aimed to provide valuable insights to Marquez Restaurant regarding opportunities for enhancing food safety practices. It also seeks to educate the Local Government Unit (LGU) and City Health Office (CHO) on the critical importance of rigorous food safety measures in all restaurants across the city. The University of PHINMA Araullo stands to benefit by integrating these findings into the curriculum of its hospitality and tourism management program, thereby preparing future professionals with essential knowledge. Additionally, this research will inform other restaurant owners and aspiring entrepreneurs about the positive impact of robust food safety protocols on customer satisfaction and behavior. Furthermore, it will serve as a foundational resource for future researchers investigating the correlation between restaurant food safety compliance and customer behavior. Ultimately, the outcomes of this study will guide the development of an action plan aimed at enhancing food safety compliance at Marquez Restaurant in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija.

### **A. Restaurant Hygiene and Food Safety Practices of Food Handlers**

Previous research indicates deficiencies in food safety knowledge and training among handlers. Studies have identified gaps such as insufficient awareness of proper cooking techniques (Fariba et al., 2018), which can contribute to cross-contamination (Dina Al-Kandari et al., 2019) and inadequate understanding of safe food holding temperatures (Tahra Elobeid et al., 2019). These gaps have been linked to the increased risk of transmitting serious illnesses such as diarrhea and cholera (Alemayehu et al., 2021; Odonkor et al., 2020). Foodborne illness outbreaks often stem from inadequate hygiene practices among food handlers and unhygienic conditions in dining establishments, which are significant contributors to foodborne diseases (Julie et al., 2019; Kibret and Abera, 2020). Additionally, Pei Liu and Yee Ming Lee (2018) identified several critical food safety practices in casual dining establishments that require improvement, such as maintaining clean fingernails, wearing clean uniforms or protective gear, and using gloves when handling ready-to-eat food. Mjoka and Selepe's study (2018) emphasizes the importance of thorough hygiene knowledge in reducing food contamination, advocating for identifying gaps and prioritizing food safety initiatives to drive continuous improvement (Sadi Taha et al., 2020). Furthermore, Sook Yee et al. (2021) highlight that food handlers who adhere to personal hygiene practices, including regular handwashing and wearing clean attire, enhance customer confidence in the quality of service they provide.

An essential initial step in ensuring the effectiveness of food safety practices is to provide food handlers with regular and comprehensive training. Studies show that training in food safety and hygiene positively influences the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of food handlers (Insfran-Rivarola et al., 2020; Hamed et al., 2020), leading to improved implementation of food safety measures in restaurants to prevent contamination of food and beverages and ensure water safety (Vivat, 2019). Furthermore, food safety training programs should focus on eliminating improper practices such as coughing or sneezing near food, inadequate thawing and refreezing of food, and inadequate hygiene practices concerning hands, utensils, and work surfaces (Ncube et al., 2020; Kanda et al., 2019).

The study conducted by Kim and Jarrett (2019) highlights that cleanliness significantly influences consumers' perceptions of restaurant quality, fostering satisfaction and trust and increasing the likelihood of return visits and recommendations. Additionally, Mekonnen et al. (2021) found that employed individuals, particularly mothers living in urban areas, prioritize hygienic practices and food safety to prevent foodborne illnesses. Hanna et al. (2018) discovered that mothers base their dining-out decisions for their children on factors such as their preferences, overall nutrition, and food safety. Similarly, Seham et al. (2022) noted that mothers place a high value on food safety, especially for children under five years old. Moreover, Rana et al. (2022) found that married individuals generally possess greater knowledge of food safety compared to their single counterparts. According to Sibel (2020), older consumers, particularly those aged 25 to 50 years, exhibit greater caution regarding food safety and are less likely to have consumed potentially hazardous foods in the past year compared to younger adults (Melissa et al., 2022).

## **B. Customer Behavioral Intention on Restaurants**

During the pandemic, there has been increased awareness of customers' preferences for dining out, emphasizing the importance they place on safety precautions and hygiene when returning to restaurants (Heidi Vandenhoute et al., 2022). Research shows that customers prioritize health considerations when choosing where to dine (Chiciudean et al., 2019). Borbon et al. (2022) categorize behavioral intentions such as revisit intention, recommendation likelihood, willingness to pay more, and loyalty. Lee et al. (2020) demonstrate that customer satisfaction with restaurant offerings influences their decisions to return, recommend the establishment, or develop loyalty. Moreover, customers frequently consult online reviews to form opinions about restaurant service quality, influencing their purchasing decisions positively (Muhammad et al., 2021).

1) *Revisit Intention*: Nik Alif et al. (2023) investigated factors influencing customers' intention to revisit restaurants, highlighting that food quality, service quality, and environment significantly impact this intention. Similarly, Rajput & Raja (2020) found that food quality, service quality, and physical environment in fast food restaurants enhance customer satisfaction and positively correlate with their intention to revisit. Additionally, price is identified as a key determinant affecting customer return intentions (Chun and Nyam-Ochir, 2020). The freshness of food also moderately but significantly influences customers' likelihood to revisit (Peter and Iheanacho, 2019). Bee-Lia et al. (2020) discovered that menu pricing, full-service offerings, convenience, and brand reputation influence customers' restaurant choices and feedback, thereby increasing their intention to dine again. Furthermore, sustainable practices such as food quality, environmental awareness, and food safety contribute significantly to customer satisfaction and their intention to revisit restaurants (Eunhye Park et al., 2020).

2) *Intention to Recommend*: According to Peter and Iheanacho (2019), the freshness of food shows a moderate yet significant correlation with customer loyalty and intention to revisit. Additionally, price is identified as a significant factor influencing customers' intention to recommend, as noted by Chun and Nyam-Ochir (2020). Furthermore, Tacardon et al. (2023) found that consumers' perceptions of food quality significantly impacted their intention to purchase street food, with high-caliber food leading to repeat purchases and recommendations. Ozelik et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of positive social interactions, such as vendor politeness and the presence of other customers, in encouraging customers to suggest the establishment to others. Furthermore, Tacardon (2023) highlighted that if customers believed street food was reasonably priced, they were more likely to recommend it to friends and make more purchases. Chun et al. (2020) also indicated that price played a significant role in customers' intentions to recommend and return to a restaurant. Ivan et al. (2023) added that patrons' recommendations were positively influenced by the quality of food, service, and the ambiance of the

establishment.

3) *Willingness to Pay More*: George (2023) discovered that customers' willingness to pay a premium at restaurants is influenced by their perception of the restaurant's uniqueness and the engagement of its staff, which significantly affects their decision. Conversely, the aesthetics of the restaurant facility, as highlighted by Kement et al. (March 2021), does not significantly impact consumers' willingness to pay more. Furthermore, MinSook et al. (2023) identified customers' monthly household income as a factor influencing their willingness to pay more for safe food. Moreover, according to Park et al. (2016), cleanliness is a crucial factor that patrons consider when choosing a restaurant, as satisfaction with hygiene practices significantly enhances customers' behavioral intentions. The link between loyalty and sanitation, including customers' willingness to pay more for cleanliness, has been demonstrated in previous research. Abubakari (2019) supported this by finding that satisfaction with dining area cleanliness influences consumer loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and repeat business. Additionally, Kim et al. (2018) highlighted that numerous studies have explored consumer views on food safety and their readiness to spend more to ensure it, which aligns with Lee et al. (2019), who discovered that costs must correspond to consumers' pursuit of food safety and their willingness to pay extra for safe food.

4) *Loyalty*: Customer satisfaction and loyalty in restaurants are shaped by factors such as food quality, service level, physical environment, and pricing fairness (Alvarez et al., 2021). Moreover, enhancing food safety enhances customer satisfaction, leading to increased loyalty among restaurant patrons (Rodhiah et al., 2023). Moreover, Research indicates that both food and service quality are pivotal in fostering customer loyalty. Al-Tit (2015) highlights that the quality of meals significantly impacts customer retention, emphasizing that restaurants must prioritize food quality to ensure customer satisfaction and retention. Palit et al. (2019) found that environmental ergonomics greatly enhance customer convenience, leading to increased loyalty as patrons feel more comfortable and valued. Souki et al. (2020) revealed that perceived overall quality directly affects customers' emotions, satisfaction, and perceived value, which in turn positively influence loyalty. Similarly, Mohamad et al. (2023) discovered that initial indicators of revisit intention are strong predictors of loyalty to tourist destinations, with revisit intentions for street food strongly linked to perceived trust and satisfaction. Furthermore, Rodhiah et al. (2023) found that enhanced food safety, which increases customer satisfaction, leads to greater patron loyalty.

## METHODS

This chapter outlines the research approach, methods, and techniques utilized in the study, including research design, locale, respondents, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments, data gathering procedures, statistical treatment, and data management. It details how data were collected, analyzed, interpreted, and presented. The study employed a quantitative descriptive correlational research design to explore food safety compliance and its impact on customers' behavioral intentions at Marquez Restaurant, San Jose City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines. This design was chosen to investigate the relationship between two variables: behavioral intention and food safety compliance. According to Siedlecki (2020), descriptive designs aim to characterize people, things, or situations.

The study's respondents were individuals aged 18 and above who had dined at Marquez Restaurant at least once, totaling 216 participants. Convenience sampling was used to select respondents who experienced the restaurant's food safety practices. Data were collected via face-to-face distribution of printed survey questionnaires, conducted from November 2023 to February 2024. The survey utilized a 4-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was validated and tested for reliability through a try-out phase, resulting in a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.91, indicating high reliability.

The university's ethical committee thoroughly reviewed the study's objectives, methods, research instruments, and potential participant effects. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the owner/manager of Marquez Restaurant. The number of respondents was determined based on the restaurant's average daily customer count. After data collection, responses were checked, analyzed, and interpreted using statistical methods, including ranks, frequency and percentage distribution, weighted mean, T-test, and Pearson R Correlation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the essential data regarding the research entitled “World Health Organization (WHO) Food Safety Compliance and Behavioral Intentions: The Case of Longest Running Family-Owned Restaurant in San Jose, Nueva Ecija”. It also includes the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data gathered by the researchers using structured and approved research instruments. These data were presented in tabular and textual form.

### A. Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Socio Demographic Profile

Profile Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age (year)</b>		
18-20	8	4%
21-30	26	12.04%
31-40	43	19.91%
41-50	58	26.85%
51-60	52	24.07%
60 and above	29	13%
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	115	53.24%
Female	101	46.76%
<b>Type of Customer</b>		
Student	16	7.41%
Self-Employed	83	38.43%
Employed	83	38.43%
Retired	34	15.74%
<b>Civil Status</b>		
Single	47	22%
Married	159	74%
Separated	10	4.63%

Table 1 presents the summarized frequency and percentage results of respondent's socio-demographic profile according to their age, sex, type of customer, and civil status. In terms of age, from a total of 216 respondents, 4% or 8 were 18-20 years old, 12.04% or 26 were 21-30 years old, 19.91% or 43 were 31-40 years old, 26.85% or 58 were 41-50 years old, 24.07% or 52 were 61 and above, and 13% or 29 out of 216 respondents 51- 60 years old.

The majority of respondents fell within the 41-50 years age bracket, a group typically characterized by greater financial capacity for dining out and a history of frequent family dining experiences. According to Khan and Farah (2020), individuals aged 26 to 40-plus tend to allocate more of their monthly budget to dining out, often choosing restaurants as venues to spend quality time with family.

Conversely, the 18-20 years age group tends to frequent alternative dining establishments due to factors like

budget constraints and price sensitivity. Khan and Farah (2020) note that younger customers, particularly those under 25, are typically more budget-conscious and prioritize value-for-money options given their limited income.

In terms of sex distribution among respondents, 53.24% (115 out of 216) were male, while 46.76% (101 out of 216) were female, indicating a higher proportion of male customers at Marquez Restaurant. This trend aligns with findings by Alireza et al. (2022), where more male students frequent fast food restaurants compared to females. Researchers suggest this disparity may be influenced by factors such as greater access to transportation among male customers, facilitating easier visits to Marquez Restaurant, as highlighted in the study by Hung-Chia et al. (2023), which notes higher car ownership among men aged 20 to 50.

Regarding the types of customer, out of 216 respondents, 7.41% (16) were students, 38.43% (83) were self-employed, 38.43% (83) were employed, and 15.74% (34) were retired. The majority of customers were employed and self-employed individuals who favor Marquez Restaurant for its convenience and time-saving benefits. This preference is supported by Zhen-Yi et al. (2018), who observed that busy schedules prompt employed and self-employed individuals to opt for dining out. In contrast, student customers represented the smallest group, preferring nearby food outlets like street food parks and school cafeterias due to affordability and convenience, as noted in Elmer et al. (2021)'s study on student dining habits.

Regarding civil status, out of 216 respondents, 22% (47) were single, 74% (159) were married, and 4.63% (10) were separated. The majority of customers were married individuals who choose Marquez Restaurant for family dining experiences and time savings, influenced by considerations for their children's preferences, as highlighted by Cathleen Jones (2018). In contrast, separated customers constituted the smallest group, likely influenced by their comparatively smaller population, as indicated by recent statistics from the Philippines Statistics Authority, which reports a low percentage of divorced/separated individuals among the population aged 10 years and above as of February 16, 2023.

**B. Customers’ Assessment on the Food Safety Compliance of Marquez Restaurant in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija.**

This section presents the table of results of the customers’ assessment on the food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija in terms of the five keys to safer food manual of World Health Organization 2006 such as keep clean, separate raw and cooked food, cook food thoroughly, keep food at safe temperatures and use safe water and raw materials.

Table 2: Customers’ Assessment on the Food Safety Compliance (Keep Clean)

Indicators		WM	VI	QD	Rank
1	Employees of Marquez Restaurant are wearing apron, hairnet, plastic gloves, and other personal equipment.	4	SA	HC	1
2	Employees of Marquez Restaurant are sanitizing all table surfaces used by other customers.	3.800	SA	HC	5
3	Employees of Marquez Restaurant are maintaining personal cleanliness and good habits (no coughing and sneezing) while serving.	3.806	SA	HC	2
4	Cleaning materials used by the employees in Marquez Restaurant are clean and properly stored.	3.787	SA	HC	6
5	Employees of Marquez Restaurant are using a clean container, packaging, and other utensils in serving the customer.	3.801	SA	HC	3
6	Employees of Marquez Restaurant are maintaining the rubbish area clean and tidy.	3.801	SA	HC	3

7	Marquez Restaurant food has no possible physical contamination like hair and insects.	3.741	SA	HC	8
8	In general, the surroundings of Marquez Restaurant in terms of food display areas are clean and free from insects, pests, and other animals	3.782	SA	HC	7
Total Weighted Mean		3.81	SA	HC	

Legend

Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.25-4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA),

2.50-3.24 = Agree (A), 1.75-2.49= Disagree (D),

1.00-1.74= Strongly Disagree (SA)

Qualitative Description (QD): 3.25-4.00 = Highly Compliant (HC),

2.50-3.24 = Compliant (C), 1.75-2.49= Not Compliant (NC),

1.00-1.74= Not at All Compliant (NAC)

Table 2 presents the customers’ assessment of the food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in terms of keep clean. Determined from the results, statements one to eight got a total weighted mean of 3.81 with a verbal interpretation of “Strongly Agree” and a qualitative description of “Highly compliant”. This result shows that Marquez Restaurants maintains a high level of cleanliness in their overall environment, which can be observed by the customers resulting in their satisfaction. According to Sook Yee et al. (2021), food handlers who maintain personal hygiene, such as regular handwashing and wearing clean attire during food handling, enhance customers' confidence in the service they receive.

Table 3: Customers’ Assessment on the Food Safety Compliance (Separate Raw and Cooked Food)

Indicators		WM	VI	QD	Rank
1	Marquez Restaurant are using separate serving utensils for every cooked food and other raw or ready-to-eat food to avoid contamination.	3.81	SA	HC	2
2	Marquez Restaurant are using separate trays on serving food and basing out used utensils.	3.79	SA	HC	3
3	Marquez Restaurant are dedicating separate container for every cooked and raw or ready-to-eat food.	3.83	SA	HC	1
Total Weighted Mean		3.81	SA	HC	

Legend

Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.25-4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA),

2.50-3.24 = Agree (A), 1.75-2.49= Disagree (D),

1.00-1.74= Strongly Disagree (SA)

Qualitative Description (QD): 3.25-4.00 = Highly Compliant (HC),

2.50-3.24 = Compliant (C), 1.75-2.49= Not Compliant (NC),

1.00-1.74= Not at All Compliant (NAC)

Table 3 presents the customer’s assessment of the food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in terms of separate raw and cooked food. Determined from the results, statements one to three got a total weighted mean

of 3.81 with a verbal interpretation of “Strongly agree” and a qualitative description of “Highly Compliant”. The findings indicate that customers appreciate establishments that implement practices like using separate containers and serving spoons for each dish displayed, which not only enhances the presentation of food but also prevents cross-contamination between cooked and ready-to-eat items. Luong and Jennifer (2022) found that food presentation is a key indicator of food quality, significantly influencing customers' choice of restaurant. Also, Aditya et al. (2020) investigated the impact of food presentation on customer satisfaction, highlighting its significant influence. Furthermore, Selja et al. (2023) suggest that customers' overall restaurant experiences shape their perceptions of food safety, influencing their food choices accordingly.

Table 4: Customers’ Assessment on the Food Safety Compliance (Separate Raw and Cook Food Thoroughly)

Indicators		WM	VI	QD	Rank
1	Marquez Restaurant meat is cooked and served with clear juices and free from blood traces (not pink inside).	3.81	SA	HC	2
2	Marquez Restaurant food is freshly cooked before serving to the customer.	3.80	SA	HC	3
3	Employees of Marquez Restaurant are ensuring that the food is cooked as intended serving.	3.82	SA	HC	1
Total Weighted Mean		3.81	SA	HC	

Legend

Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.25-4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA),

2.50-3.24 = Agree (A), 1.75-2.49= Disagree (D),

1.00-1.74= Strongly Disagree (SA)

Qualitative Description (QD): 3.25-4.00 = Highly Compliant (HC),

2.50-3.24 = Compliant (C), 1.75-2.49= Not Compliant (NC),

1.00-1.74= Not at All Compliant (NAC)

Table 4 presents the customer’s assessment of the food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in terms of cooked food thoroughly. Determined from the results, statements one to three got a total weighted mean of 3.812 with a verbal interpretation of “Strongly agree” and a qualitative description of “Highly Compliant”. The results indicate that the establishment ensures high-quality cooking standards, which contribute to customer satisfaction. This finding is supported by Liu et al. (2020), who highlighted that food quality significantly impacts diner satisfaction. Also, this observation aligns with Ariffin and Rozali (2018) study, which emphasizes that both meal quality and service quality significantly influence customer happiness. Moreover, Luong and Jennifer (2022) underscore that food freshness is a critical factor in customers' restaurant choices.

Table 5: Customers’ Assessment on the Food Safety Compliance (Keep Food at Safe Temperature)

Indicators		WM	VI	QD	Rank
1	Marquez Restaurant hot food is served hot.	3.74	SA	HC	3
2	Marquez Restaurant cold food is served cold.	3.76	SA	HC	2
3	Employees of Marquez Restaurant are ensuring that the food is free from objectionable odor, color, or taste due to temperature abuse.	3.81	SA	HC	1
Total Weighted Mean		3.77	SA	HC	



**Legend**

Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.25-4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA),

2.50-3.24 = Agree (A), 1.75-2.49= Disagree (D),

1.00-1.74= Strongly Disagree (SA)

Qualitative Description (QD): 3.25-4.00 = Highly Compliant (HC),

2.50-3.24 = Compliant (C), 1.75-2.49= Not Compliant (NC),

1.00-1.74= Not at All Compliant (NAC)

Table 5 presents the customer’s assessment of the food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in terms of keep food at safe temperature. Determined from the results, statements from one to three got a total weighted mean of 3.77 with a verbal interpretation of “Strongly agree” and a qualitative description of “Highly compliant”. This suggests that restaurants prioritize serving food at the correct temperature and maintaining a fresh appearance, which customers can readily observe. According to Luong and Jennifer (2022), food temperature is a critical factor influencing customers' restaurant choices based on food quality indicators. Also, the result demonstrates that the restaurant's food aroma enhances customers' appetites. Eugene et al. (2021) found that the smell of a restaurant's food significantly influences customers' intention to dine there.

Table 6: Customers’ Assessment on the Food Safety Compliance (Use Safe Water and Raw Materials)

Indicators		WM	VI	QD	Rank
1	Marquez Restaurant are serving water and drinks which are clean and free from objectionable odor or color.	3.801	SA	HC	3
2	Marquez Restaurant are serving food that is free from objectionable odor, color or taste due to unsafe raw materials.	3.806	SA	HC	2
3	Employees of Marquez Restaurant are ensuring that the food served appears fresh and made of safe raw materials and ingredients.	3.815	SA	HC	1
Total Weighted Mean		3.80	SA	HC	

**Legend**

Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.25-4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA),

2.50-3.24 = Agree (A), 1.75-2.49= Disagree (D),

1.00-1.74= Strongly Disagree (SA)

Qualitative Description (QD): 3.25-4.00 = Highly Compliant (HC),

2.50-3.24 = Compliant (C), 1.75-2.49= Not Compliant (NC),

1.00-1.74= Not at All Compliant (NAC)

Table 6 presents the customers’ assessment of the food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in terms of use safe water and raw materials. Determined from the results, statements from one to three got a total weighted mean of 3.80 with a verbal interpretation of “Strongly agree” and a qualitative description of “Highly compliant”. The result suggests that the establishment ensures the cleanliness, safety, and absence of unpleasant odors or physical hazards in the beverages they serve. This practice parallels Vivat's study (2019), which highlighted that restaurants in Thailand implement food safety measures to guarantee the purity of their food and beverages, including protection from contaminants and unsafe water. Additionally, cleanliness is one of the primary factors that consumers consider when assessing the quality of a restaurant. It also helps build customer satisfaction and trust, which increases the chance that they will return and suggest the establishment to others (Kim and Jarrett

2019).

**C. Customers' Assessment of their Behavioral Intention towards Marquez Restaurant in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija.**

Table 7: Customers' Behavioral Intention (Revisit Intention)

Indicators		WM	VI	QD	Rank
1	I would like to come back to this restaurant in the future.	3.81	SA	HI	1
2	I will make an effort to visit the restaurant.	3.75	SA	HI	2
Total Weighted Mean		3.78	SA	HI	

Legend

Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.25-4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA),

2.50-3.24 = Agree (A), 1.75-2.49= Disagree (D),

1.00-1.74= Strongly Disagree (SA)

Qualitative Description (QD): 3.25-4.00 = Highly Intended (HI),

2.50-3.24 = Intended (I), 1.75-2.49= Not Intended (NI),

1.00-1.74= Not at All Intended (NAI)

Table 7 presents the customer's assessment of their behavioral intention towards Marquez Restaurant in terms of the customer's revisit intention. Determined from the results, statements "I would like to come back to this restaurant in the future." and "I will make an effort to visit the restaurant" got a total weighted mean of 3.78 with a verbal interpretation of "Strongly agree" and a qualitative description of "Highly Intended". The results show that customers have high revisit intention in Marquez Restaurant. According to Nik Alif *et. al.*, (2023), a high presence of customers' revisit intention towards a restaurant is affected by factors such as food quality, service quality, and environment are the factors that trigger customers' revisit intention.

Table 8: Customers' Behavioral Intention (Intention to Recommend)

Indicators		WM	VI	QD	Rank
1	I will encourage my friends and relatives to dine-in in this restaurant.	3.77	SA	HI	2
2	I would recommend this restaurant to my friends or others.	3.76	SA	HI	3
3	I would say positive things about this restaurant to others.	3.80	SA	H1	1
Total Weighted Mean			SA	HI	

Legend

Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.25-4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA),

2.50-3.24 = Agree (A), 1.75-2.49= Disagree (D),

1.00-1.74= Strongly Disagree (SA)

Qualitative Description (QD): 3.25-4.00 = Highly Intended (HI),

2.50-3.24 = Intended (I), 1.75-2.49= Not Intended (NI),

1.00-1.74= Not at All Intended (NAI)

Table 8 presents the customers’ assessment of their behavioral intention towards Marquez Restaurant in terms of the customer’s intention to recommend. Determined from the results, statements “I would say positive things about this restaurant to others”, “I will encourage my friends and relatives to dine-in in this restaurant” and “I would recommend this restaurant to my friends or others” got a total weighted mean of 3.78 with a verbal interpretation of “Strongly agree” and a qualitative description of “Highly Intended”. This shows that customers have high behavioral intention towards Marquez Restaurants in terms of their intention to recommend. The researchers concluded that this outcome could be influenced by factors such as customer satisfaction with the overall experience, which in turn increases their likelihood to recommend the restaurant. Ivan et al. (2023) found that food quality, service quality, and restaurant atmosphere collectively contribute positively to customers' intention to recommend.

Table 9: Customers’ Behavioral Intention (Willingness to Pay More)

Indicators		WM	VI	QD	Rank
1	It is acceptable to pay more to eat at this restaurant.	3.63	SA	HI	2
2	In this restaurant, I am willing to spend extra on my food.	3.61	SA	HI	3
3	I am not bothered to spend more each time I dine-in at this restaurant.	3.69	SA	H1	1
Total Weighted Mean		3.64	SA	HI	

Legend

Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.25-4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA),

2.50-3.24 = Agree (A), 1.75-2.49= Disagree (D),

1.00-1.74= Strongly Disagree (SA)

Qualitative Description (QD): 3.25-4.00 = Highly Intended (HI),

2.50-3.24 = Intended (I), 1.75-2.49= Not Intended (NI),

1.00-1.74= Not at All Intended (NAI)

Table 9 presents the customers’ assessment on their behavioral intention towards Marquez Restaurant in terms of the customer’s willingness to pay more. Determined from the results, statements “I am not bothered to spend more each time I dine-in at this restaurant”, “It is acceptable to pay more to eat at this restaurant”, and “In this restaurant, I am willing to spend extra on my food” got a total weighted mean of 3.64 with a verbal interpretation of “Strongly agree” and a qualitative description of “Highly Intended”. The results reveal that customers are satisfied on their overall experience and consider themselves willing to pay a much higher price for food than they usually do while eating at Marquez Restaurant. According to George (2023), customers' readiness to spend more at a restaurant is influenced by how they perceive the restaurant's distinctiveness and the engagement of its staff, which notably shapes their decision-making.

Table 10: Customers’ Behavioral Intention (Loyalty)

Indicators		WM	VI	QD	Rank
1	I intend to continue choosing this restaurant.	3.72	SA	HI	1
2	I consider this restaurant to be my first choice.	3.65	SA	HI	4
3	I feel better when I go to this restaurant than others.	3.69	SA	H1	2

4	I consider myself loyal to this restaurant.	3.67	SA	HI	3
Total Weighted Mean		3.68	SA	HI	

Legend

Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.25-4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA),

2.50-3.24 = Agree (A), 1.75-2.49= Disagree (D),

1.00-1.74= Strongly Disagree (SA)

Qualitative Description (QD): 3.25-4.00 = Highly Intended (HI),

2.50-3.24 = Intended (I), 1.75-2.49= Not Intended (NI),

1.00-1.74= Not at All Intended (NAI)

Table 10 presents the customers’ assessment of their behavioral intention toward Marquez Restaurant in terms of customer loyalty. Based on the findings, the statements achieved a total weighted mean of 3.80, indicating a "Strongly agree" interpretation and described qualitatively as "Highly Intended." This suggests that customers are highly satisfied with their experience and demonstrate loyalty to the establishment. Customer satisfaction and loyalty are influenced by factors such as food quality, level of service, physical environment, and fairness of pricing at the restaurant, as highlighted by Alvarez et al. (2021).

**D. Test for Significant Differences between the Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents and their Assessment of Food Safety Compliance of Marquez Restaurant.**

This section presents the results for the test of significant differences between the socio-demographic profile of the respondents and their assessment of food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija in terms of sex, type of customer, and civil status.

Table 11: Significant Differences Between the Socio-Demographic Profile (Sex) and Their Assessment of Food Safety Compliance

Variables	T Stat	T-Critical	VI	Decision
Keep Clean	-1.64	1.65	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis
Separate Raw and Cooked Food	-1.17	1.65	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis
Cook Food Thoroughly	-0.93	1.65	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis
Keep Food at Safe Temperature	-1.23	1.65	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis
Use Safe Water and Raw Materials	-1.19	1.65	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis

Legend:

T-stat > T - Critical=Significant/Reject Null Hypothesis

T-stat< T – Critical=Not Significant/Accept Null Hypothesis

Table 11 presents the test for significant difference between the socio-demographic profile of the respondents and their assessment of food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant. In terms of sex, based on the test results the T-Stat of food safety indicators such as keep clean, separate raw and cooked food, cook food thoroughly, keep food at safe temperatures and use safe water and raw materials are less than its T-Critical. As a result, the acceptance of the null hypothesis suggests that there is no significant difference between the respondents' sex

and their evaluation of food safety compliance at Marquez Restaurant. This finding parallels Han and Yihongs (2018) study, which also found no significant gender-based differences in how individuals assess food safety.

Table 12: Significant Differences Between the Socio-Demographic Profile (Type of Customer) and Their Assessment of Food Safety Compliance

Variables	F Stat	F-Critical	VI	Decision
Keep Clean	0.75	2.64	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis
Separate Raw and Cooked Food	1.47	2.64	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis
Cook Food Thoroughly	1.15	2.64	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis
Keep Food at Safe Temperature	4.11	2.64	Significant	Reject Null Hypothesis
Use Safe Water and Raw Materials	2.24	2.64	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis

Legend:

F- stat > F- critical = Significant/ Reject Null Hypothesis

F- stat < F- critical = Not Significant/ Accept Null Hypothesis

Table 12 presents the test for significant difference between the socio-demographic profile of the respondents and their assessment of food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant. In terms of the type of customer, determined by the test results the F- stat of food safety indicators such as keep clean, separate raw and cooked food, cook food thoroughly, and use safe water and raw materials are less than its F-Critical. This led to the acceptance of the null hypothesis and concluded that there is no significant difference between the type of customer and their assessment of food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in terms of keep clean, separate raw and cooked food, cook food thoroughly, and use safe water and raw materials. The researchers concluded that this result occurs because of factors such as customers especially employed ones having less time to spend on food preparation resulting in a lack of knowledge about food safety and not valuing it. In contrast to the study of Mekonnen *et. al.*, (2021), found that employed people especially women who are mothers that live in a city were found to value hygienic practices and food safety to avoid food poisoning.

On the other hand, the F-Stat of food safety indicators such as keep food at safe temperature is greater than its F-Critical. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and concluded that there is a significant difference between the type of customer and their assessment of food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in terms of keep food at safe temperature. The researchers concluded that this result may occur because most of the employed customers who are mothers are considering food safety to protect their families from getting food foodborne diseases. Similar to the study of Mekonnen *et. al.*, (2021), where employed people especially women who are mothers that live in a city were found to value hygienic practices and food safety to avoid food poisoning. In addition, Seham *et. al.*, (2022), found that mothers are proven to value safe food, especially for their children under five years old.

Table 13: Significant Differences Between the Socio-Demographic Profile (Civil Status) and Their Assessment of Food Safety Compliance

Variables	F Stat	F-Critical	VI	Decision
Keep Clean	2.54	3.03	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis
Separate Raw and Cooked Food	2.28	3.03	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis
Cook Food Thoroughly	0.97	3.03	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis

Keep Food at Safe Temperature	5.55	3.03	Significant	Reject Null Hypothesis
Use Safe Water and Raw Materials	2.49	3.03	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis

Legend:

F- stat > F- critical = Significant/ Reject Null Hypothesis

F- stat < F- critical = Not Significant/ Accept Null Hypothesis

Table 13 presents the test for significant difference between the socio-demographic profile of the respondents and their assessment of food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant. In terms of civil status, based on the test results the F-stat of food safety indicators such as keep clean, separate raw and cooked food, cook food thoroughly, and use safe water and raw materials are less than its F-Critical. This led to the acceptance of the null hypothesis and concluded that there is no significant difference between the civil status of the respondents and their assessment of food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in terms of keep clean, separate raw and cooked food, cook food thoroughly, and use safe water and raw materials. The results occur because customers who are of different civil status have the same food safety knowledge resulting in a similar assessment of the food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant. In contrast to the study of Rana *et. al.*, (2022), where married people have higher knowledge in terms of food safety than single ones.

On the other hand, the F-Stat of food safety indicators such as keep food at safe temperature is greater than its F-Critical. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and concluded that there is a significant difference between the civil status of the respondents and their assessment of food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in terms of keep food at safe temperature. The researchers concluded that this result occurs because of factors such as married couples having different assessments of the food safety of a restaurant because the majority of them have child or children and consider their safety, especially mothers. The study of Hanna *et. al.*, (2018), found that when eating out, mothers make decisions on what to feed their kids based on some factors, including the kids' preferences, the food's overall nutritional, and food safety.

**E. Test for Significant Relationship between the Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents on their Assessment of the Food Safety Compliance of Marquez Restaurant.**

This section presents the results for the test of a significant relationship between the customers' age on their assessment of food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija.

Table 14: Significant Relationship Between the Socio-Demographic Profile (Age) and Their Assessment of Food Safety Compliance

Variables	P-Value	Verbal Interpretation	Decision
Keep Clean	0.27	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis
Separate Raw and Cooked Food	0.31	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis
Cook Food Thoroughly	0.90	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis
Keep Food at Safe Temperature	0.02	Significant	Reject Null Hypothesis
Use Safe Water and Raw Materials	0.01	Significant	Reject Null Hypothesis

Legend: P- value < 0.05 = Significant/ Reject Null Hypothesis

P- value > 0.05 = Not Significant/ Accept Null Hypothesis

Table 14 presents the test for a significant relationship between the age of the customers on their assessment of food safety compliance at Marquez Restaurant. According to the test result the P-value of food safety indicators such as keep clean, separate raw and cooked food, and cooked food thoroughly are greater than 0.05. This led to the acceptance of the null hypothesis and concluded that there is no significant relationship between the age of the respondents on their assessment of food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in terms keep clean, separate raw and cooked food, and cooked food thoroughly. The results indicate that younger and older customers have similar observations on food safety compliance. On the contrary, Sibel (2020), older consumers particularly, especially those between the ages of 25 and 50 years are more cautious in terms of how safe the food they are eating.

On the other hand, the P-value of food safety indicators such as keep food at safe temperature, and use safe water and raw materials is less than 0.05. The results led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and concluded that there is a significant relationship between the age of the respondents on their assessment of food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant in terms of keep food at safe temperature, and use safe water and raw materials. The result occurs because of factors such as older people being stricter on assessing how thoroughly cooked the food the restaurant is while serving it hot, and is the restaurant is serving safe water, where they can get harmful bacteria. According to Melissa *et. al.*, (2022), older adults are more likely to be strict when it comes to food safety. They were less likely to have eaten any potentially hazardous foods in the past year, In comparison to younger adults.

**F. Test for Significant Relationship between the Food Safety Compliance of Marquez Restaurant on the Behavioral Intentions of the Customer.**

This section presents the results for the test of a significant relationship between the food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant based on the five keys to safer food.

Table 15: Significant Relationship Between Food Safety Compliance and Behavioral Intention

Variables	P-Value	Verbal Interpretation	Decision
Keep Clean	0.01	Significant	Reject Null Hypothesis
Separate Raw and Cooked Food	0.01	Significant	Reject Null Hypothesis
Cook Food Thoroughly	0.01	Significant	Reject Null Hypothesis
Keep Food at Safe Temperature	0.01	Significant	Reject Null Hypothesis
Use Safe Water and Raw Materials	0.01	Significant	Reject Null Hypothesis

Legend: P- value < 0.05 = Significant/ Reject Null Hypothesis

P- value > 0.05 = Not Significant/ Accept Null Hypothesis

Table 15 presents the test for a significant relationship between the food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant on the behavioral intentions of the customer. Determined by the test result the P-value of the variables such as keep clean, separate raw and cooked food, cook food thoroughly, keep food at safe temperatures and use safe water and raw materials are less than 0.05. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and indicated that there is a significant relationship between the food safety compliance of Marquez Restaurant on the behavioral intention of the customer. This reveals that Marquez restaurant has good compliance in terms of food safety reflected in customers' behavioral intentions such as revisit intention, intention to recommend, willingness to pay more, and loyalty. Upon the investigation of Eunhye Park *et. al.*, (2020), sustainable practices like food quality, food sustainability, environmental awareness, and food safety have a big impact on consumers' happiness and intent to return to a restaurant. Additionally, food safety improves customer satisfaction, which in return increases the loyalty of customers in a restaurant (Rodhiah *et. al.*, 2023).

Table 16: Proposed Action Plan to Improve Food Safety Compliance

Key Result Areas (KRA)	Strategies/ Implementation	Programs/ Desired Outcome
<p><b>Keep Clean</b></p> <p>To prevent customer complaints about hair in their food, thereby enhancing overall customer experience and increasing behavioral intention to revisit.</p>	<p>The owner can introduce a feedback form for customers of the establishment to gather suggestions on other practices that can be improved based on customer feedback.</p>	<p>The customers consistently enjoy a pleasant dining experience free from any complaints about hair in their food, thereby fostering high levels of satisfaction and increasing their intention to revisit Marquez Restaurant.</p>
<p><b>Separate Raw and Cooked Food</b></p> <p>To implement the practice of using separate trays for serving food and promptly clearing used utensils to enhance food hygiene and presentation standards at Marquez Restaurant.</p>	<p>The restaurant owner can review studies to explore additional measures for improving cross-contamination control while maintaining the presentation of their food.</p>	<p>Successfully implement the practice of using separate trays for serving food and promptly clearing used utensils to elevate food hygiene and enhance presentation standards at Marquez Restaurant.</p>
<p><b>Cooked Food Thoroughly</b></p> <p>To ensure that all food served at Marquez Restaurant is freshly cooked before being served to customers, maintaining high standards of food quality and customer satisfaction.</p>	<p>The restaurant owner could introduce the use of white display trays and other tableware to accentuate the colors of the food, enhancing its vibrancy and visual appeal.</p>	<p>Guarantee that all dishes served at Marquez Restaurant are freshly prepared before being presented to customers, thereby upholding superior levels of food quality, and ensuring utmost customer satisfaction.</p>
<p><b>Keep Food at Safe Temperature</b></p> <p>To ensure that all hot food served at Marquez Restaurant is maintained at proper temperature and served hot to customers consistently.</p>	<p>The restaurant owner could use clay pots for displaying food, as they retain heat better than other materials, ensuring that food stays warm for longer periods.</p>	<p>Consistently maintain proper temperatures and serve all hot food at Marquez Restaurant to customers promptly and at the correct temperature, ensuring satisfaction and enhancing dining experiences.</p>
<p><b>Use Safe Water and Raw Materials</b></p> <p>To ensure that Marquez Restaurant serves water and beverages that are clean, free from objectionable odor, and maintain a clear appearance.</p>	<p>The owner can introduce a feedback form for customers to share their experience regarding the cleanliness and absence of unpleasant odors in beverages served at Marquez Restaurant.</p>	<p>Ensure that Marquez Restaurant consistently serves water and beverages that are clean, free from objectionable odor, and maintain a clear appearance, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction and ensuring a pleasant dining experience.</p>

## CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, it was concluded that Marquez Restaurant primarily attracts customers aged 41-50, who are often financially capable and typically male, with many having their own vehicles which facilitate their access to the restaurant. Most patrons are employed (38.4%) and appreciate the restaurant's convenience, while a significant portion are married (74%), valuing the time-saving aspect and the restaurant's family-friendly environment. Customers strongly believe that Marquez Restaurant adheres to high food safety standards, notably in cleanliness, proper food separation, thorough cooking, maintaining safe temperatures, and using safe water and materials. This compliance has led to increased customer satisfaction, as evidenced by their high intentions to revisit, recommend, spend more, and show loyalty. Despite similar overall assessments of food safety between male and female customers, differences arise in views related to food temperature, particularly among employed



and married individuals, with mothers being particularly attentive to food safety. Older customers are stricter about food and beverage safety, reflecting their heightened caution against harmful bacteria. Overall, Marquez Restaurant's adherence to food safety guidelines enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty. The results indicated no significant difference between respondents' sex and their assessment of Marquez Restaurant's food safety compliance. However, there were significant differences based on the type of customer and civil status, especially regarding maintaining safe food temperatures. Additionally, a significant relationship was found between customers' age and their assessment of food safety compliance, particularly in maintaining safe food temperatures and using safe water and raw materials. The study also revealed a significant relationship between Marquez Restaurant's food safety compliance and customers' behavioral intentions. An action plan has been proposed to address identified areas for improvement based on the lowest-rated survey responses, aiming to further enhance the restaurant's food safety practices.

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