GET INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

VISUAL AND SERVICE SATISFACTION OF GEN Z CONSUMERS: THE CASE OF HARLAN + HOLDEN

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Available Online: May 2025
Revised: April 2025
Accepted: April 2025
Received: March 2025

Volume III Issue 2 (2025)
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.15545847
E-ISSN: 2984-7184
P-ISSN: 2984-7176
https://getinternational.org/research/

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between visual aspects and service quality in determining customer satisfaction among Generation Z patrons of Harlan + Holden Coffee, located in Bonifacio Global City, Taguig. Visual aspects included facility aesthetics, lighting, layout, and product presentation, while service quality was assessed through reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance. A total of 255 Gen Z respondents aged 18 to 27, all with firsthand experience at the café, participated in the study. Using a quantitative correlational research design and simple random sampling, data was gathered through an online questionnaire. Responses were evaluated using descriptive statistics, specifically the Mean, and Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient to determine the relationship between the two variables. Findings revealed a high level of satisfaction among Gen Z respondents regarding both visual appeal and service quality. Facility aesthetics and lighting were particularly noted for their excellence, while the café's staff received favorable evaluations for their courteous and reliable service. The analysis indicated a significant positive correlation between satisfaction with visual aspects and service quality, suggesting that both are crucial in enhancing customer experiences. The study underscores the importance of balancing aesthetics and service in the café industry to meet Gen Z's expectations. It recommends that future research delve deeper into related areas not covered in this study, such as pricing or digital engagement. Moreover, given the rise of coffee tourism, aesthetic cafés like Harlan + Holden can serve as significant contributors to local tourism and customer satisfaction benchmarks.

Keywords: *Aesthetic, café, layout, lighting, quality*

Recommended Citation:

Abrigo, J. M., Gonzales, M. C. P., Cultivo, R., & Santiago, R. R. (2025). VISUAL AND SERVICE SATISFACTION OF GEN Z CONSUMERS: THE CASE OF HARLAN + HOLDEN. GUILD OF EDUCATORS IN TESOL INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL, 3(2), 31–45. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15545847

INTRODUCTION

Tourism and hospitality have become major drivers of recreational and personal fulfillment, with cafes emerging as popular spaces for social interaction, work, and relaxation. Cafes today offer not just food and beverages but also serve as aesthetic and experiential destinations, especially for Generation Z—individuals aged 18 to 27 who are highly attuned to design, technology, and service quality.

Generation Z tends to gravitate toward visually appealing environments and is influenced by product presentation, lighting, layout, and overall ambiance. These visual factors, coupled with service quality dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance, play a significant role in their satisfaction and purchasing decisions.

The aesthetic appeal of a café, from its interior design to product packaging, shapes customers' perceptions and expectations. Lighting and layout influence not only the mood but also the overall comfort and usability of the space. At the same time, excellent service fosters trust, emotional connection, and customer loyalty.

Bonifacio Global City (BGC) in Taguig, with its upscale and modern environment, is an ideal location to study these factors. Harlan + Holden Coffee, located in BGC, is recognized for its minimalist aesthetic and service standards—making it a suitable setting for this research.

This study aims to assess the correlation between visual aspects and service quality in influencing Generation Z's satisfaction. The findings may guide café owners in enhancing customer experience and position cafes as key contributors to urban tourism and lifestyle.

Objectives

Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Determine the level of satisfaction of Generation Zs on the visual aspect of Harlan + Holden Coffee, BCG, Taguig City;
2. Determine the level of satisfaction of Generation Zs on the service quality of Harlan + Holden Coffee, BGC, Taguig City;
3. Discover the relationship between the level of satisfaction towards visual aspects and level of satisfaction towards service quality of Generation Z customers of Harlan + Holden Coffee, BCG, Taguig City;
4. Bring to light the approaches necessary to assist the growing cafe businesses by means of balancing visual aspects and service quality to improve customer satisfaction and brand image.

METHODS

This study employed a **quantitative correlational research design** to assess the relationship between the visual aspects and service quality of a café and their influence on customer satisfaction among Generation Z patrons. A correlational approach is appropriate for determining whether a statistically significant association exists between variables without manipulating them (Apuke, 2017).

The study was conducted at **Harlan + Holden Coffee**, located at Bonifacio Global City (BGC), Taguig City. Known for its modern architecture, accessibility, and strong commercial presence, BGC is an ideal location to examine

aesthetic and service-driven customer preferences (Urban Land Institute, 2020). The café, recognized for its minimalist design and strategic location below a 3D LED screen, attracts a high volume of Generation Z patrons. The target population included **Generation Z individuals aged 18 to 27**, selected for their purchasing capacity and alignment with modern aesthetic and service expectations (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). A total of **255 respondents** were chosen through **simple random sampling**, ensuring equal selection probability among qualified participants (Taherdoost, 2016). The sample size was determined using **Cochran's formula**, with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level based on a population of approximately 750 (Israel, 1992).

The primary instrument was a **structured online questionnaire** delivered via QR code. It consisted of two major components:

1. **Visual Aspects** – Facility Aesthetics, Lighting, Layout, Product Presentation
2. **Service Quality** – Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy, Assurance (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988)

The questionnaire utilized a **4-point Likert Scale** (1 = Poor, 4 = Excellent) to measure customer satisfaction levels in each domain (Boone & Boone, 2012).

The instrument underwent **content validation** by professionals in the field of tourism and statistics. Feedback ensured that all questions aligned with the study's objectives and measured the appropriate constructs. Content validation is essential for ensuring internal consistency and construct accuracy (Polit & Beck, 2006). After receiving formal approval from the café management and academic institution, the survey was conducted online to ensure respondent convenience and data integrity. Participants voluntarily accessed the survey through QR codes placed within the café. An **informed consent form** was included, explaining data privacy and the voluntary nature of participation, consistent with ethical research standards (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

- The **Mean** was used to determine the average satisfaction level per indicator.
- The **Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient** measured the strength and direction of association between visual aspects and service quality, as it is suitable for ordinal data derived from Likert scales (Gogtay & Thatte, 2017).
- A significance level of $\mathbf{p < 0.05}$ was set to determine the statistical significance of relationships tested.

Data was analyzed using SPSS to ensure reliability and efficiency in computation.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The data indicates that both visual aesthetics and high service standards substantially affect Gen Z satisfaction in cafés. The emphasis on minimalist design, lighting suitable for social media sharing, and customer-centric service aligns with Gen Z values and preferences. These findings validate the S-O-R model, showing that environmental stimuli (café aesthetics and service) lead to positive emotional states (satisfaction) and approach behavior (patronage).

The study concludes that businesses should balance aesthetic appeal and service quality to maintain customer satisfaction and reinforce brand loyalty, especially among visually-driven and experience-oriented Gen Z consumers.

Overall Satisfaction with Visual Aspects

The results revealed that Generation Z respondents exhibited a **very high level of satisfaction** across all four visual indicators:

- **Facility Aesthetics** received a mean score of **3.74**, indicating strong approval of the café's modern, minimalist design and pleasing interior elements.
- **Lighting** garnered a mean score of **3.67**, reflecting its role in enhancing ambiance, visibility, and overall comfort, consistent with studies suggesting lighting influences mood and aesthetic appreciation (Pane, 2020).
- **Layout** scored **3.40**, showing customer appreciation for the organized and accessible floor plan that promotes ease of movement and social interaction.
- **Product Presentation** achieved a mean of **3.63**, affirming the importance of visually attractive food and beverage styling in creating positive impressions, aligning with findings by De Sousa et al. (2020).

Overall Satisfaction with Service Quality

Similarly, the respondents expressed a **high level of satisfaction** with service quality:

- **Reliability** (Mean = **3.48**) indicates that services were delivered dependably and consistently.
- **Responsiveness** (Mean = **3.46**) suggests staff were prompt and attentive.
- **Empathy** (Mean = **3.38**) reflects that customers felt valued and understood.
- **Assurance** (Mean = **3.42**) shows that the staff were knowledgeable and confident, instilling trust among customers.

These findings confirm that Generation Z values not only aesthetics but also excellent service experiences. This supports previous research using the **SERVQUAL model** (Parasuraman et al., 1988) which emphasizes the role of these dimensions in customer satisfaction.

Correlation Between Visual Aspects and Service Quality

Using the **Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient**, the study found a **significant positive relationship** between visual aspects and service quality ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that as satisfaction with visual elements increases, so does satisfaction with service quality. The result supports the **Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory**, which posits that external stimuli (like environment and service) influence emotional states and consumer behaviors.

This correlation suggests that customers perceive both elements as complementary—meaning, a visually pleasing environment enhances their perception of service and vice versa. A well-designed space elevates mood and expectations, while excellent service reinforces the customer's emotional connection with the space.

These findings are significant for café owners, marketers, and hospitality managers. To effectively cater to Generation Z's preferences, businesses must invest in both **aesthetic enhancements** and **service training**. Visual features such as Instagrammable designs, ambient lighting, and unique product presentation play a vital role in attracting customers, while responsive and empathetic service encourages return visits and positive word-of-mouth.

Moreover, this study positions aesthetic cafés as not just food establishments but as **lifestyle destinations**, contributing to the growing trend of **coffee tourism**. The findings underscore the importance of aligning physical design with emotional service delivery to create a holistic and satisfying customer experience.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that Generation Z customers express high levels of satisfaction with both the visual aspects and service quality of aesthetic cafés like Harlan + Holden Coffee. The significant relationship between these two dimensions underlines the importance of a holistic customer experience that integrates visual appeal with exceptional service. Applying the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, it becomes evident that environmental aesthetics and service delivery directly influence emotional responses and consumer behavior, such as repeated patronage.

1. Café businesses should continue to invest in aesthetic enhancements such as minimalist designs, thematic decorations, strategic lighting, and visually appealing product presentation to maintain visual satisfaction.
2. Staff training should focus on improving reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance to uphold excellent service quality.
3. Management should regularly gather feedback from Gen Z customers to stay aligned with their evolving preferences and expectations.
4. Future researchers could expand the study to include digital and pricing aspects or conduct comparative analyses between different demographic groups and café styles.
5. Policymakers and tourism developers may consider promoting aesthetic cafés as part of urban tourism development strategies.

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