

Willingness to Pay Price Premium

Saya bersedia membayar harga yang lebih tinggi untuk produk Awor Coffee dibandingkan produk dari kafe lain. *

- ☐ Sangat tidak setuju
- ☒ Tidak setuju
- ☐ Netral
- ☐ Setuju
- ☐ Sangat setuju

Saya bersedia membayar lebih untuk menikmati produk dan pengalaman di Awor Coffee dibandingkan pilihan minuman atau kafe lain. *

- ☐ Sangat tidak setuju
- ☐ Tidak setuju
- ☐ Netral
- ☐ Setuju
- ☒ Sangat setuju

Saya bersedia membayar harga yang lebih tinggi untuk produk Awor Coffee dibandingkan produk minuman sejenis di tempat lain. *

- ☐ Sangat tidak setuju
- ☒ Tidak setuju
- ☐ Netral
- ☐ Setuju
- ☐ Sangat setuju

Jika harga produk Awor Coffee sedikit lebih tinggi daripada kafe lain, saya tetap bersedia membelinya. *

- ☐ Sangat tidak setuju
- ☐ Tidak setuju
- ☐ Netral
- ☒ Setuju
- ☐ Sangat setuju

Kuesioner Penelitian : Pengaruh Servicescape dan Social Interaction terhadap Customer Experience pada Konsumen Awor Coffee

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Tidak dibagikan

Terima kasih atas kesediaan Anda untuk mengisi kuesioner ini.

Jangan lupa untuk mengklik tombol terakhir dibawah. Terimakasih

Kembali

Kirim

Kosongkan formulir

Lampiran 2. Data Responden dan Jawabannya

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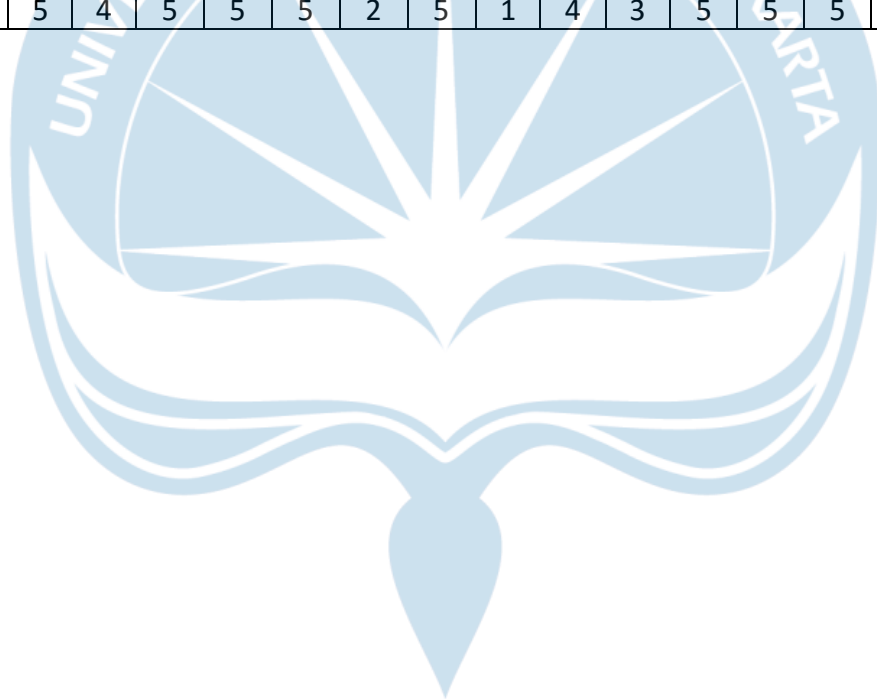
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Cap waktu	Jenis kelamin	Usia	Pekerjaan utama	Seberapa sering Anda mengunjungi Awor Coffee dalam 3 bulan terakhir?
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2026/05/05 4:26:20 PM GMT+7	Laki-laki	23-27 tahun	Lainnya	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/05 4:30:34 PM GMT+7	Perempuan	18-22 tahun	Mahasiswa	1 kali
2026/05/05 4:39:56 PM GMT+7	Laki-laki	23-27 tahun	Lainnya	2-3 kali
2026/05/05 6:14:01 PM GMT+7	Laki-laki	23-27 tahun	Mahasiswa	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/05 6:15:38 PM GMT+7				
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2026/05/05 8:06:47 PM GMT+7	Laki-laki	23-27 tahun	Wirasaha	2-3 kali
2026/05/05 8:09:30 PM GMT+7	Perempuan	23-27 tahun	Karyawan swasta	2-3 kali
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2026/05/13 8:58:57 AM GMT+7	Laki-laki	23-27 tahun	Wirasaha	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/13 9:00:41 AM GMT+7	Perempuan	18-22 tahun	Mahasiswa	2-3 kali
2026/05/13 9:02:27 AM GMT+7	Perempuan	18-22 tahun	Karyawan swasta	2-3 kali
2026/05/13 9:04:13 AM GMT+7	Perempuan	28-34 tahun	Karyawan swasta	4-6 kali
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2026/05/13 9:15:03 AM GMT+7	Laki- laki	35- 44 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	Lebih dari 6 kali
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2026/05/13 9:20:26 AM GMT+7	Perem puan	18- 22 tahun	Mahasi swa	2-3 kali
2026/05/13 9:22:05 AM GMT+7	Laki- laki	28- 34 tahun	Wirus aha	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/13 9:23:49 AM GMT+7	Perem puan	18- 22 tahun	Mahasi swa	Lebih dari 6 kali
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2026/05/13 9:30:29 AM GMT+7	Perem puan	23- 27 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	4-6 kali
2026/05/13 9:32:21 AM GMT+7	Perem puan	35- 44 tahun	Ibu rumah tangga	Lebih dari 6 kali
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2026/05/13 11:02:59 AM GMT+7	Perem puan	23- 27 tahun	Mahasi swa	4-6 kali
2026/05/13 5:02:28 PM GMT+7	Laki- laki	23- 27 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	Lebih dari 6 kali
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2026/05/16 7:51:42 AM GMT+7	Perem puan	18- 22 tahun	Mahasi swa	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 7:53:33 AM GMT+7	Laki- laki	18- 22 tahun	Mahasi swa	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/16 7:55:20 AM GMT+7	Perem puan	28- 34 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 8:42:57 AM GMT+7	Perem puan	28- 34 tahun	Ibu rumah tangga	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 8:44:39 AM GMT+7	Laki- laki	28- 34 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 8:46:19 AM GMT+7	Laki- laki	23- 27 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	2-3 kali
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2026/05/16 8:51:24 AM GMT+7	Perem puan	28- 34 tahun	Wirus aha	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 8:53:08 AM GMT+7	Laki- laki	23- 27 tahun	Mahasi swa	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 8:24:35 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	18- 22 tahun	Mahasi swa	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/16 8:26:19 PM GMT+7	Laki- laki	18- 22 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 8:28:02 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	18- 22 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 8:31:01 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	28- 34 tahun	PNS atau ASN	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 8:32:35 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	18- 22 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 8:47:01 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	28- 34 tahun	Wirus aha	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 8:48:38 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	18- 22 tahun	Mahasi swa	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 8:50:17 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	23- 27 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 8:51:55 PM GMT+7	Laki- laki	35- 44 tahun	Wirus aha	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/16 8:53:33 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	35- 44 tahun	Ibu rumah tangga	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/16 9:43:03 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	18- 22 tahun	Mahasi swa	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 9:44:42 PM GMT+7	Laki- laki	28- 34 tahun	Wirus aha	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/16 9:46:19 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	23- 27 tahun	Mahasi swa	4-6 kali

2026/05/16 9:47:54 PM GMT+7	Perempuan	18-22 tahun	Pelajar	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 9:49:25 PM GMT+7	Laki-laki	18-22 tahun	Mahasiswa	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 9:52:03 PM GMT+7	Perempuan	23-27 tahun	Karyawan swasta	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 9:53:44 PM GMT+7	Laki-laki	18-22 tahun	Karyawan swasta	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 9:55:31 PM GMT+7	Laki-laki	23-27 tahun	Karyawan swasta	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 9:57:26 PM GMT+7	Perempuan	28-34 tahun	Freelancer	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 9:59:03 PM GMT+7	Perempuan	23-27 tahun	Karyawan swasta	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 10:23:20 PM GMT+7	Perempuan	18-22 tahun	Karyawan swasta	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 10:24:58 PM GMT+7	Perempuan	18-22 tahun	Wirusaha	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 10:26:34 PM GMT+7	Perempuan	18-22 tahun	Wirusaha	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 10:28:10 PM GMT+7	Laki-laki	28-34 tahun	Karyawan swasta	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/16 10:29:46 PM GMT+7	Perempuan	23-27 tahun	Karyawan swasta	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 10:31:28 PM GMT+7	Laki-laki	23-27 tahun	Mahasiswa	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 10:33:12 PM GMT+7	Laki-laki	23-27 tahun	Karyawan swasta	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/16 10:34:43 PM GMT+7	Perempuan	23-27 tahun	PNS atau ASN	4-6 kali

2026/05/16 10:36:22 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	28- 34 tahun	Wirus aha	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 10:38:07 PM GMT+7	Laki- laki	28- 34 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 11:01:32 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	23- 27 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 11:03:17 PM GMT+7	Laki- laki	28- 34 tahun	Wirus aha	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/16 11:04:50 PM GMT+7	Laki- laki	18- 22 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 11:06:19 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	18- 22 tahun	Mahasi swa	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/16 11:07:49 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	23- 27 tahun	Wirus aha	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 11:09:23 PM GMT+7	Laki- laki	28- 34 tahun	PNS atau ASN	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 11:11:03 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	18- 22 tahun	Wirus aha	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 11:12:39 PM GMT+7	Laki- laki	23- 27 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/16 11:14:18 PM GMT+7	Laki- laki	23- 27 tahun	Karyaw an swasta	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/16 11:15:55 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	18- 22 tahun	Mahasi swa	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/16 11:47:54 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	28- 34 tahun	Ibu rumah tangga	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 11:49:26 PM GMT+7	Perem puan	23- 27 tahun	Wirus aha	4-6 kali
2026/05/16 11:50:59 PM GMT+7	Laki- laki	28- 34 tahun	Freelan cer	Lebih dari 6 kali

2026/05/16 11:52:32 PM GMT+7	Perempuan	18-22 tahun	Freelancer	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/16 11:54:29 PM GMT+7	Laki-laki	18-22 tahun	Mahasiswa	2-3 kali
2026/05/16 11:56:10 PM GMT+7	Laki-laki	23-27 tahun	Karyawan swasta	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/16 11:58:00 PM GMT+7	Laki-laki	35-44 tahun	Karyawan swasta	2-3 kali
2026/05/17 12:00:21 AM GMT+7	Perempuan	28-34 tahun	PNS atau ASN	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/17 12:02:09 AM GMT+7	Perempuan	18-22 tahun	Mahasiswa	Lebih dari 6 kali
2026/05/17 12:04:26 AM GMT+7	Laki-laki	18-22 tahun	Mahasiswa	Lebih dari 6 kali

Lampiran 3. Screenshot Hasil SmartPLS

Outer loadings - Matrix											
	AES	CLEAN	CTC	EINT	EWOM	EXP	PAYPREM	REVISIT	SEAT	SIGN	SLAY
AES2	0.887										
AES3	0.869										
AES4	0.890										
CLEAN1		0.884									
CLEAN2		0.914									
CLEAN3		0.824									
CTC1			0.822								
CTC2			0.891								
CTC4			0.842								
EINT1				0.836							
EINT2				0.881							
EINT3				0.873							
EWOM1					0.788						
EWOM2					0.775						
EWOM3					0.873						
EXP1						0.860					
EXP2						0.904					
EXP5						0.847					
PAYPREM1							0.878				
PAYPREM2							0.880				
PAYPREM3							0.865				
PAYPREM4							0.879				
REVISIT1								0.773			
REVISIT2								0.809			
REVISIT3								0.848			
REVISIT5								0.750			
SEAT1									0.864		
SEAT2									0.903		
SEAT4									0.838		
SIGN1										0.814	
SIGN2										0.861	
SIGN3										0.843	
SLAY1											0.865
SLAY2											0.882
SLAY3											0.826

Construct reliability and validity - Overview					C
	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	
AES	0.857	0.858	0.913	0.778	
CLEAN	0.847	0.862	0.907	0.765	
CTC	0.813	0.825	0.888	0.726	
EINT	0.830	0.838	0.898	0.746	
EWOM	0.744	0.756	0.854	0.661	
EXP	0.840	0.842	0.904	0.758	
PAYPREM	0.899	0.901	0.929	0.767	
REVISIT	0.808	0.828	0.873	0.633	
SEAT	0.837	0.845	0.902	0.755	
SIGN	0.793	0.808	0.877	0.705	
SLAY	0.820	0.821	0.893	0.736	

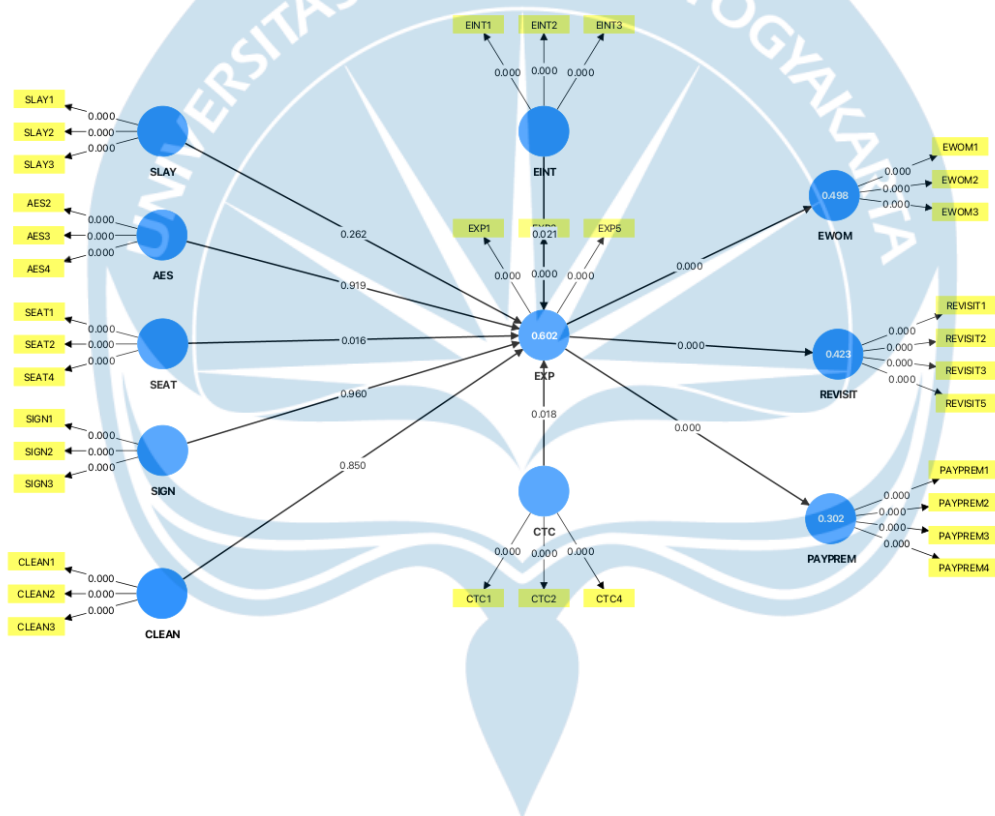
Path coefficients - Mean, STDEV, T values, p values						Copy to Excel/Word	Copy to R
	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values		
AES -> EXP	0.012	0.010	0.122	0.101	0.919		
CLEAN -> EXP	0.017	0.013	0.092	0.189	0.850		
CTC -> EXP	0.225	0.220	0.095	2.370	0.018		
EINT -> EXP	0.208	0.208	0.091	2.301	0.021		
EXP -> EWOM	0.706	0.706	0.047	14.937	0.000		
EXP -> PAYPREM	0.550	0.551	0.055	9.994	0.000		
EXP -> REVISIT	0.650	0.653	0.056	11.594	0.000		
SEAT -> EXP	0.291	0.296	0.121	2.411	0.016		
SIGN -> EXP	0.005	0.012	0.093	0.050	0.960		
SLAY -> EXP	0.107	0.109	0.096	1.122	0.262		

Collinearity statistics (VIF)		Collinearity statistics (VIF) - Inner model - List	
	VIF		VIF
AES2	2.169	AES -> EXP	4.563
AES3	2.024	CLEAN -> EXP	3.405
AES4	2.294	CTC -> EXP	2.942
CLEAN1	2.201	EINT -> EXP	2.694
CLEAN2	2.493	EXP -> EWOM	1.000
CLEAN3	1.783	EXP -> PAYPREM	1.000
CTC1	1.893	EXP -> REVISIT	1.000
CTC2	2.196	SEAT -> EXP	4.640
CTC4	1.596	SIGN -> EXP	3.134
EINT1	1.813	SLAY -> EXP	4.261
EINT2	1.951		
EINT3	1.960		
EWOM1	1.345		
EWOM2	1.603		
EWOM3	1.846		
EXP1	2.068		
EXP2	2.433		
EXP3	1.776		

R-square - Overview		
	R-square	R-square adjusted
EWOM	0.498	0.495
EXP	0.602	0.586
PAYPREM	0.302	0.298
REVISIT	0.423	0.419

f-square - Matrix									
	AES	CLEAN	CTC	EINT	EWOM	EXP	PAYPREM	REVISIT	
AES						0.000			
CLEAN						0.000			
CTC						0.043			
EINT						0.041			
EWOM									
EXP					0.992		0.433	0.732	
PAYPREM									
REVISIT									
SEAT						0.046			
SIGN						0.000			
SLAY						0.007			

Discriminant validity - Fornell-Larcker criterion												Copy to Excel/Word
	AES	CLEAN	CTC	EINT	EWOM	EXP	PAYPREM	REVISIT	SEAT	SIGN	SLAY	
AES	0.882											
CLEAN	0.760	0.875										
CTC	0.759	0.706	0.852									
EINT	0.748	0.700	0.663	0.864								
EWOM	0.748	0.697	0.677	0.713	0.813							
EXP	0.680	0.648	0.687	0.670	0.706	0.871						
PAYPREM	0.508	0.519	0.546	0.501	0.567	0.550	0.876					
REVISIT	0.675	0.646	0.602	0.645	0.667	0.650	0.578	0.796				
SEAT	0.811	0.795	0.758	0.743	0.755	0.730	0.583	0.702	0.869			
SIGN	0.748	0.723	0.707	0.651	0.698	0.625	0.549	0.624	0.755	0.839		
SLAY	0.817	0.765	0.729	0.668	0.721	0.672	0.497	0.650	0.804	0.778	0.858	



Lampiran 4. Jurnal Acuan Koay et al. (2025)

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The bubble tea phenomenon: understanding the role of servicescape in consumers' responses

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Abstract – The consumption of bubble tea is a huge phenomenon in Southeast Asia, and many bubble tea stores have been decorated simply in an attempt to attract more customers. Hence, the purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of servicescape on experiential value and its influence on consumers' responses (i.e. eWOM, revisit intentions and willingness to pay a price premium) based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework.

Design/methodology/approach – This research project gathered survey data from 289 consumers of bubble tea. The collected data underwent analysis employing a statistical technique known as partial least square structural equation modelling to examine and understand the relationships between different variables within the dataset, offering insights into consumer behaviour and preferences regarding bubble tea consumption.

Findings – The results show that factors such as facility aesthetics, seating comfort and cleanliness positively affect experiential value. However, layout accessibility and signs and symbols do not affect experiential value. In addition, experiential value positively affects eWOM, revisit intentions and willingness to pay a price premium.

Originality/value – The importance of servicescape in physical stores within the restaurant setting has been extensively documented in existing literature. However, there is a notable lack of research addressing the influence of servicescape on consumer responses, particularly within the bubble tea context. This study stands out as one of the few endeavours to examine the impacts of servicescape on consumer responses within the bubble tea industry.

Keywords Bubble tea, Bubble tea, Servicescape, Experiential value, H5-SOM, SOR

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Bubble tea, commonly referred to as boba tea, first emerged in Taichung, Taiwan, during the 1980s (Md Shukri *et al.*, 2023). According to De Donas *et al.* (2023), bubble tea is defined as "a frothy East Asian beverage consisting of sweetened tea with milk or flavourings, usually served over black pellets, or pearls, or tapioca". While bubble tea began to gain popularity in Asia during the 1990s, its limited variety has deterred some potential customers from purchasing it (Koay *et al.*, 2023). Until recent years, the options for bubble tea have

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expanded, providing consumers with a wider range of flavours to cater to their individual tastes. For instance, bubble tea producers have introduced innovative offerings by incorporating a wide range of ingredients such as taro, grass jelly, aago, and diverse milk options, available in both hot and cold temperatures (Gajisto and Haddad, 2022). In 2019, the worldwide market for bubble tea achieved a value close to \$2.02bn, and it is anticipated to reach approximately \$3.29bn by 2027 (Fortune Business Insights, 2020). As for Starbucks stores, bubble tea stores have evolved into spaces where people not only enjoy the drink but also use them as venues for work, relaxation, and social gatherings (Koay and Leong, 2024). Drinking bubble tea has become more than just a beverage choice; it has transformed into a lifestyle trend (Koay *et al.*, 2023).

The bubble tea trend in Malaysia gained significant popularity with the introduction of the Chatime franchise in 2010. Since then, numerous competitors like Tealive, the Alley, Tiger Sugar, Xing Fu Tang, Daboba, Black Whale, and Gong Cha (see Figure 1) have entered the market, intensifying the competition in the industry. As per Straits Research, the bubble tea market in Malaysia had a worth of \$49.8m in 2018 and is projected to experience a 6.5% growth from 2019 to 2026 (Ha, 2022). The demand for these beverages has become so intense that people are willing to wait in queues for up to an hour to satisfy their cravings. Social media plays a significant role in promoting bubble tea, contributing to its immense popularity in Malaysia (Kamali Ariffin *et al.*, 2022). Recognising that consumers enjoy sharing their daily experiences on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, bubble tea stores are usually well-decorated and bubble tea is often presented in visually appealing cups in hopes that consumers will share their positive experience in the store on social media, thereby creating the effect of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM).

Despite being a lucrative business, the bubble tea industry has surprisingly received limited attention in academic studies concerning factors that influence consumers' responses, such as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), revisit intentions, and the willingness to pay a price premium. A literature search showed that there are limited studies conducted to

Figure 1. Bubble tea stores

Source(s): Authors' own illustration

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understand consumers' responses in the context of the bubble tea industry (see Table 1). Most studies focus on understanding consumers' purchase intentions using the functional theory of attitudes (Kamali Ariffin *et al.*, 2022), the information acceptance model (Leong *et al.*, 2022), and the theory of planned behaviour (Chia *et al.*, 2022). Whereas, only one study by Koay *et al.* (2023) examined consumers' revisit intentions based on the theory of planned behaviour. All these studies are limited to understanding consumers' purchase intentions only but did not consider other types of consumers' responses such as eWOM, revisit intentions, and willingness to pay a price premium. Moreover, despite an significant impact on consumers' decision-making process (Purser *et al.*, 2021; Taggar *et al.*, 2023), the link between servicescape and positive consumer responses remains largely unexplored in empirical studies in the context of the bubble tea industry.

Previous research on the impact of servicescape within the food service industry has predominantly focused on restaurants, overlooking bubble tea stores (Chia *et al.*, 2022; Kamali Ariffin *et al.*, 2022; Leong *et al.*, 2022). While both offer beverages, they differ notably in atmosphere, pricing, and service style. Unlike restaurants with formal dining setups, bubble tea stores specialise in providing drinks and sweet treats in a cosy, trendy environment conducive to socialising. Moreover, these stores typically cater to a niche market seeking bubble tea. Existing studies often concentrate excessively on servicescape's effects in restaurants (e.g. Isa and Seo, 2024; Sultan *et al.*, 2023), leaving a research gap in understanding its dynamics in bubble tea stores. Hence, this study employs the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model to propose that servicescape impacts consumers' experiential value, subsequently affecting eWOM, revisit intentions, and willingness to pay a premium. These responses are crucial for predicting future consumer behaviour, contributing to revenue growth and business sustainability (Hafini *et al.*, 2022).

Particularly, this research places specific emphasis on examining how the servicescape of a bubble store (i.e. layout accessibility, facility aesthetics, seating comfort, signs and symbols, and cleanliness) influences customers' experiential value, thereby affecting eWOM, revisit intentions, and willingness to pay a price premium drawing on the SOR model. A total of 289 data collected from consumers of bubble tea were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling. Hence, this study aims to achieve the following research objectives:

RO1: To examine the influence of servicescape (including aspects such as layout accessibility, facility aesthetics, seating comfort, signs and symbols, and cleanliness) on experiential value.

RO2: To examine the influence of experiential value on eWOM, revisit intentions, and willingness to pay a price premium.

The paper is divided into several sections. Firstly, the literature review covers the SOR model and hypothesis formulation. Next, the methodology section outlines the selected research methods, explains data collection procedures, and describes the measures used. The data analysis section aims to address common method bias, clarify the measurement model, and examine the structural model. Lastly, the discussion section explores theoretical and managerial implications, recognises limitations, and suggests future recommendations.

2. Literature review

2.1 SOR theory

The framework we employed is based on Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, which asserts that external stimuli significantly influence individuals' perceptions, attitudes, intentions, and behaviours (e.g. Ho *et al.*, 2000; Hui *et al.*, 2021; Chen *et al.*, 2020). The SOR model comprises three fundamental components: Stimulus,

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Key findings

Guided by the servicescape literature theory, the authors formulated eight hypotheses that explore the relationship between bubble tea store servicescape and consumer responses. The study found that utilitarian, hedonic, and social servicescape positively influence experiential value. Moreover, experiential value positively influences eWOM, revisit intentions, and willingness to pay a price premium. The study found that utilitarian, hedonic, and social servicescape positively influence experiential value. Moreover, experiential value positively influences eWOM, revisit intentions, and willingness to pay a price premium.

Table 1. Past studies on consumers' bubble tea consumption

Authors	Theory	Research design	Variables involved	Focus variable	Sample	Key findings
Kamali Ariffin <i>et al.</i> (2022)	The functional attitude theory	Quantitative (survey)	• NA	• Purchase behaviour	222 Gen Z consumers who frequented bubble tea stores in Malaysia	Utilitarian servicescape positively influences purchase intentions. Hedonic servicescape positively influences purchase intentions. Social servicescape positively influences purchase intentions.
Kuo and Chen (2023)	The theory of planned behaviour	Quantitative (survey)	• Attitudes towards service quality • Perceived service quality • Perceived service atmosphere • Perceived service environment • Perceived service staff	• Revisit intentions	180 bubble tea consumers who frequented bubble tea stores in Malaysia	Perceived service quality positively influences revisit intentions. Perceived service atmosphere positively influences revisit intentions. Perceived service environment positively influences revisit intentions. Perceived service staff positively influences revisit intentions.

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Authors	Theory	Research design	Variables involved	Focus variables	Sample	Key findings
Long et al. (2022)	Information processing model	Quantitative (survey method)	- Information quality - Information credibility - Information task-fit - Norm of information - Attitude towards information - Information usefulness - Information privacy - Perceived risk	- Perishable information - Information credibility - Information task-fit - Norm of information - Attitude towards information - Information usefulness - Information privacy - Perceived risk	222 data were collected from consumers of bubble tea in Malaysia	The study reported that information quality, information credibility, information task-fit, norm of information, attitude towards information, information usefulness, information privacy, and perceived risk have a significant positive influence on information adoption. Information privacy and perceived risk have a negative influence on information adoption.
Qin et al. (2022)	Theory of planned behaviour	Quantitative (survey method)	- Attitude towards information - Information usefulness - Information privacy - Perceived risk	- Perishable information - Information credibility - Information task-fit - Norm of information - Attitude towards information - Information usefulness - Information privacy - Perceived risk	384 data were collected from consumers of bubble tea in Malaysia	Perceived behavioural control and subjective norms have a significant positive influence on information adoption, whereas attitude towards information, information usefulness, information privacy, and perceived risk have a negative influence on information adoption.
Wang and Jin (2023)	Self-determination theory	Quantitative (survey method)	- Information quality - Information credibility - Information task-fit - Norm of information - Attitude towards information - Information usefulness - Information privacy - Perceived risk	- Perishable information - Information credibility - Information task-fit - Norm of information - Attitude towards information - Information usefulness - Information privacy - Perceived risk	384 data were collected from consumers of bubble tea in Malaysia	Information quality, information credibility, information task-fit, norm of information, attitude towards information, information usefulness, information privacy, and perceived risk have a significant positive influence on information adoption.

Table 1.

blocks achievement of customer goals or purpose" (MacInnis et al., 2002, p. 53). It represents the organism within the framework of the SOR model in this research because consumers obtain values from an experience either through directly using or indirectly observing goods or services during interactions (Wongkittirung et al., 2023; Supawan, 2022; Wu et al., 2014). Customers place high importance on value when making purchasing choices, and the value obtained from experiences is known as experiential value (Norris et al., 2023). Experiential value can be derived from various types of experiences that customers engage in. According to Jeong et al. (2009), the perception of experiential value in a restaurant can differ based on factors such as the restaurant's decor, the quality of service provided, and the attitudes of the service staff. In the realm of hospitality, it has been demonstrated that perceived experiential value plays a crucial role in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty (Apulkin et al., 2020). Furthermore, it serves as a bridge influencing how atmospheric factors impact these outcomes. Despite its importance, experiential value resulting from servicecape and its effect on consumers' responses such as eWOM, revisit intentions, and willingness to pay a price premium, is rarely addressed in the bubble tea industry.

2.4 The development of hypotheses

2.4.1 Layout accessibility and experiential value. Layout accessibility refers to "the way in which furnishings and equipment, service areas, and passageways are arranged, and the spatial relationships among these elements" (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996, p. 47). A good layout not only ensures easy access and direct but also enhances service areas like concessions, bathrooms, and gift stands. Facility layout is crucial for customer comfort. Conversely, a poor layout makes people feel cramped, affecting their perception, excitement, return desire, and loyalty. The ease of access to a layout significantly influences how customers perceive and enjoy their experience (Akkas-Tamam et al., 2014). When a layout is designed with accessibility in mind, it can enhance customers' overall satisfaction and positively impact their perception of the environment. Ma et al. (2022) found that layout accessibility is positively related to customer satisfaction. Hence, it is very important for bubble stores to have a good layout which could enhance consumers' overall experiential value. Accordingly, we put forward the following hypothesis:

H1. Layout accessibility positively affects experiential value.

2.4.2 Facility aesthetics and experiential value. Facility aesthetics refer to "architectural design, as well as interior design and decor, both of which contribute to the attractiveness of the servicecape" (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996, p. 48). Facility aesthetics are crucial because when consumers enter a restaurant or cafe, they naturally assess the attractiveness of the space by observing its architectural design (Kubacki et al., 2022). Consumers usually evaluate a building consciously and subconsciously. A positive evaluation towards a restaurant's architectural design can positively increase consumers' attitudes towards the restaurant. Facility aesthetics encompass various elements such as colour schemes, furniture, artwork, plants, and wall decorations in the dining area. These elements contribute to the perceived quality of the dining environment, evoking emotions in customers and influencing their behaviour (Ryu and Han, 2011). Tan et al. (2022) reported that facility aesthetics positively impact customers' positive emotions towards ethnic restaurants. Hence, we posit that when a bubble tea store's facility aesthetics are evaluated positively, consumers are more likely to develop positive experiential value. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2. Facility aesthetics positively affects experiential value.

2.4.3 Seating comfort and experiential value. Seating comfort refers to "the level of physical comfort derived from the seating quality" (Lam et al., 2011, p. 561). When seats are excessively

Organism, and Response. Stimulus is the external environment individuals are exposed to, Organism is the encompassing psychological and physiological processes within individuals, and Response is the individual's reaction to the stimulus (Lajante and Ladouri, 2019). Retail stores are an excellent example of how the SOR model is applied to consumer behavior. The store's layout, music, lighting, and product displays create stimuli for customers when they enter a store, evoking emotional and cognitive responses. These responses, in turn, can lead to changes in behaviour, such as increased browsing time (Lai et al., 2014), impulse buying (Mohan et al., 2013), or potential abandonment without making a purchase (Tan and Stratton, 2020). By combining different elements of the SOR model, retailers can successfully influence consumers' behaviour and enhance their shopping experience.

Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) model primarily addresses emotional responses, but Bitner (1992) takes it a step further by integrating cognition and physiology into the SOR theory. This expansion offers a more comprehensive grasp of how these factors influence individuals' reactions, especially in service environments. Numerous studies have expanded upon Bitner (1992) research on servicecape, revealing its impact on customer decisions, social interactions, and emotional connections. For example, Rosenbaum and Maslach (2011) highlight the role of controllable and uncontrollable stimuli in shaping these factors. Lockwood and Pyun (2019) showed that the hotel servicecape significantly affects emotional and behavioural responses, with dimensions like spaciousness, atmosphere, aesthetic quality, and physiological conditions contributing to pleasure and arousal. Similarly, Chao et al. (2021) found that servicecape stimuli impact consumers' experiential value and emotions, while the interaction between substantive and communicative staging weakens the overall influence of servicecape on experiential value. While the SOR framework has been widely adopted in numerous studies to examine the impact of stimuli on final outcomes (Lacort et al., 2022; Schill and Godefrat-Winkel, 2022; Vazquez et al., 2023), there is a need for additional research to explore the interaction effect of context-specific stimulus factors. As Bitner (1992) pointed out, the importance of environmental dimensions may vary depending on the type of service organisation. Therefore, our study aims to investigate the gap between context-specific stimulus and organism factors within the SOR framework. Additionally, we will explore multiple responses to understand the impact of servicecape in the bubble tea industry.

2.2 Servicecape (S)
Kotler (1973) introduced the concept of "atmospherics" as the initial notion related to the physical environment. Later, the term "servicecape" was initially introduced by Bitner (1992) to describe the deliberate design of environmental cues by businesses. Servicecape primarily referred to the physical environment in which products and services were provided. The servicecape model posits that attributes of the physical environment influence the perceptions of both customers and employees, consequently evoking emotional, cognitive, and physiological responses towards the store environment (Bitner, 1992; Koss and Tej, 2024; Suresh et al., 2016). The servicecape has the potential to influence customers' experiences of service functions and quality, as well as their interpretations of symbolic meanings derived from situational elements within service-oriented enterprises (Li, 2022). A servicecape consists of five dimensions including layout accessibility, facility aesthetics, seating comfort, signs and symbols, and cleanliness (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996). However, the conceptualisation of servicecape is constantly changing and evolving depending on the contexts (e.g. Vaisanen et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2023).

2.3 Experiential value (E)
Experiential value is defined as "a perceived, relative preference for product attributes or service performances arising from interaction within a consumption setting that facilitates or

packed, consumers are prone to discomfort. Additionally, when consumers are compelled to sit in close proximity to each other, they may also feel a reduced sense of control over their surroundings because of overcrowding (Pills et al., 2019). Seating comfort is very important, especially for consumers who intend to stay a significant amount of time in a particular place (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996). They feel happy and satisfied when their experience has high levels of comfort with their seating. The comfort of seating is connected to the arrangement and practicality of the physical environment, and it holds major significance in settings where services are provided (Lam et al., 2011). Bubble tea stores often serve as social gathering spots, where customers spend extended periods of time relaxing with friends. Therefore, the comfort of seating becomes a crucial factor that significantly influences customers' perception of the value they derive from the overall experience. Accordingly, this study posits the following hypothesis:

H3. Seating comfort positively affects experiential value.

2.4.4 Signs and symbols and experiential value. Signs and symbols refer to "physical signs that may serve a symbolic role as well as provide cues for direction and information about appropriate behaviour" within a bubble tea store (Koss et al., 2015, p. 55). It encompasses various elements such as insignias, labels, directional indicators (e.g. exit, entrance), and signs indicating permitted or non-permitted behaviour (e.g. no entry, silence, and keep distance). Artwork, certificates, photos, and carpets are part of symbols and signs which can evoke aesthetic impressions. Koss et al. (2015) reported that karaoke establishments with good signs and symbols are more likely to result in positive customer satisfaction. In this research, we argue that signs and symbols are also important for bubble tea stores to create positive experiential value for consumers because interesting or well-designed signs or symbols could be a spot for consumers to take pictures and post them online. Thus, the following hypothesis is postulated:

H4. Signs and symbols positively affect experiential value.

2.4.5 Cleanliness and experiential value. Cleanliness refers to the hygiene related to a bubble tea store. A place can be considered clean when it is free from dirt (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996). It is important to acknowledge the importance of a continuous cleaning up process in maintaining high levels of hygiene (Yu et al., 2018). The premises should be cleaned and maintained regularly prior to customer arrival and throughout business hours. Consumers are more likely to feel comfortable in a clean place, thereby leading to customer satisfaction (Yu et al., 2018). The visual aspect of a clean and organised establishment conveys professionalism and excellent service, leading to positive customer behaviours like a willingness to spend more and a desire to return (Lee and Kim, 2014). Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5. Cleanliness positively affects experiential value.

2.4.6 Experiential value (E) and consumers' response (R). This study proposes that eWOM, revisit intentions, and willingness to pay a price premium as responses within the SOR framework. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) refers to "the dynamic and ongoing information exchange process between potential, actual, or former consumers regarding a product, service, brand, or company, which is available to a multitude of individuals and institutions via the Internet" (Ismagilova et al., 2023). Revisit intentions refer to a consumer's inclination or readiness to return to the same destination (Abbas et al., 2021; Chaturvedi et al., 2024). A consumer's higher amount on a specific product compared to similar alternatives is often referred to as willingness to pay a price premium (Yu et al., 2022). When consumers experience positive values as a result of positive experiences with a service provider, they are more likely to develop positive satisfaction and loyalty towards the provider

(Cheung et al., 2021; Noor et al., 2024; Rashid et al., 2021; Sung and Lee, 2015). Quach et al. (2023) also reported when consumers perceive a higher level of experiential value associated with a product or service, they are more likely to engage in purchasing it. Drawing on previous research, we hypothesise that consumers who perceive a high degree of experiential value from a bubble tea store are inclined to engage in positive eWOM about the store, exhibit higher intentions to revisit, and demonstrate a greater willingness to pay a price premium.

H6: Experiential value positively affects eWOM.

H7: Experiential value positively affects revisit intentions.

H8: Experiential value positively affects willingness to pay a price premium.

The full research model is presented in Figure 2.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sampling procedure

To examine the proposed hypotheses, this study used a survey method to collect data using a purposive sampling method. Specifically, respondents must be bubble tea drinkers and must have visited a bubble tea store in the past. Next, we required the respondents to list down the name of the bubble tea store that they last visited. This is because the given store name will be used as a reference for the respondents to complete the questions in the questionnaire. This data collection approach is similar to past studies (e.g., Kony and Chesh, 2020). We created the online survey using Google Forms and then circulated the online link to university students.

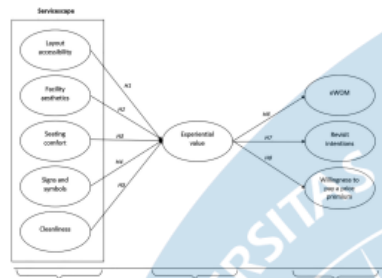


Figure 2. Research model

Source(s): Authors' own illustration.

Construct	Item	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Cleanliness	CL1	0.860	0.997	0.926	0.839
	CL2	0.923			
	CL3	0.923			
	CL4	0.923			
	CL5	0.923			
Experiential value	EV1	0.902	0.951	0.902	0.836
	EV2	0.942			
	EV3	0.912			
	EV4	0.925			
	EV5	0.915			
eWOM	EWOM1	0.947	0.941	0.902	0.855
	EWOM2	0.958			
	EWOM3	0.923			
	EWOM4	0.906			
	EWOM5	0.925			
Facility aesthetics	FA1	0.895	0.951	0.903	0.838
	FA2	0.925			
	FA3	0.917			
	FA4	0.922			
	FA5	0.942			
Layout accessibility	LA1	0.805	0.854	0.902	0.897
	LA2	0.824			
	LA3	0.785			
	LA4	0.902			
	LA5	0.859			
Revisit intentions	RI1	0.959	0.925	0.928	0.885
	RI2	0.901			
	RI3	0.902			
	RI4	0.906			
	RI5	0.919			
Seating comfort	SC1	0.948	0.922	0.951	0.839
	SC2	0.919			
	SC3	0.941			
	SC4	0.887			
	SC5	0.907			
Signs and symbols	SI1	0.907	0.953	0.950	0.921
	SI2	0.905			
	SI3	0.900			
	SI4	0.919			
	SI5	0.900			
Willingness to pay a price premium	WTP1	0.960	0.929	0.974	0.925
	WTP2	0.976			
	WTP3	0.948			
	WTP4	0.948			
	WTP5	0.948			

Table 2. Measurement model

Source(s): Authors' own illustration.

and average variance extracted values were greater than 0.7 and 0.5, respectively (see Table 2). Lastly, discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monomethod ratio of correlations (HTMT) criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). As shown in Table 3, the square root of AVE was greater than correlation values in rows and columns, passing the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Additionally, Table 4 shows that all the HTMT values were less than the recommended value of 0.85, showing no major issues of discriminant validity.

4.3 Structural model

To verify the proposed hypotheses, we conducted a non-parametric bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The full structural model results are presented in Table 5. The results show that three dimensions of service aspects including facility aesthetics ($\beta = 0.229, p < 0.001$), seating comfort ($\beta = 0.232, p < 0.001$), and cleanliness ($\beta = 0.449, p < 0.001$) have a significant positive influence on experiential value, supporting H2, H3, and H5. However, no support was found for H1 and H4 as layout accessibility ($\beta = 0.109, p > 0.05$) and signs and symbols ($\beta = 0.008, p > 0.05$) have no significant influence on experiential value. Next, it was found

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University students were chosen as the focus demographic due to their prevalent consumption of bubble tea (M. Shakeri et al., 2021). Moreover, we also encouraged the students to distribute the link to their family members and friends. Only those who passed the screening questions will be eligible as our respondents. We managed to collect a total of 289 usable data.

Frequency analysis was conducted to gain insights into the demographic composition of the participants. The respondents' average age was found to be 22.7 years. In terms of gender, 178 (61.6%) were females and 111 (38.4%) were males. In terms of ethnicity, 30 (10.4%) were Malays, 212 (73.4%) were Chinese, 16 (5.5%) were Indians, and 31 (10.7%) were others. The age income groups were as follows: RM0 – RM2000 (70.6%), RM2001 – RM3000 (18.0%), RM3001 – RM4000 (5.5%), and above RM4000 (5.9%).

4.2 Measures

Service aspects comprised five dimensions including layout accessibility (four items), facility aesthetics (five items), seating comfort (four items), signs and symbols (two items), and cleanliness (four items). The scales to measure layout accessibility, facility aesthetics, seating comfort, and cleanliness were adapted from Winerfield and Hodge (1999) whereas the scale to measure signs and symbols was adapted from Kony et al. (2020). Experiential value was measured using a five-item scale adapted from Chao et al. (2021). eWOM was assessed by three items developed by Hsiao and Lin (2018). Consisting of three items, the scale to measure revisit intentions was adapted from Kony et al. (2020). Lastly, willingness to pay a price premium was measured by a three-item scale which consisted of three items developed by Notoyoyo et al. (2010). All items were measured according to the seven-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The full measurement items are presented in Appendix.

4. Data analysis

The study employed partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) as the main analytical tool to verify the proposed hypotheses. Specifically, the Smart PLS software (version 4.0.9.9) was used. The analytical strategy follows a two-stage approach, first assessing the measurement model followed by the structural model (Lim and Kony, 2024; Kony et al., 2023).

4.1 Common method bias

Common method bias (CMB) can be detrimental to the validity of a study's findings if it is not properly examined (Huang et al., 2021). Hence, we performed Harman's single-factor test using factor analysis. The results revealed that the initial factor explained 46.62% of the total variance, falling below the suggested threshold of 50%, indicating the absence of CMB. Furthermore, a full collinearity test was also performed (Kony, 2019). Initially, we created a dummy variable comprising artificial numbers using Excel. Subsequently, we conducted a regression analysis by regressing the dummy variable against all the constructs being investigated. The results indicated that all the variance inflation factor values were less than 3.3, suggesting no CMB issues.

4.2 Measurement model

The assessment of the measurement model was based on three criteria: reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2013; Tobi et al., 2020). Reliability was examined by looking at Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. As shown in Table 2, all Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were greater than 0.7, implying satisfactory internal consistency. Next, we evaluated convergent validity by ensuring all factor loadings

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Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Cleanliness	0.992								
2. eWOM	0.384	0.946							
3. Experiential value	0.715	0.652	0.914						
4. Facility aesthetics	0.364	0.363	0.619	0.913					
5. Layout accessibility	0.330	0.424	0.561	0.467	0.833				
6. Revisit intentions	0.400	0.704	0.580	0.475	0.548	0.947			
7. Seating comfort	0.485	0.462	0.502	0.425	0.548	0.363	0.971		
8. Signs and symbols	0.306	0.425	0.521	0.498	0.623	0.329	0.570	0.960	
9. Willingness to pay a price premium	0.280	0.325	0.363	0.221	0.245	0.401	0.549	0.232	0.962

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker criterion

Note(s): Values on the diagonal (boldface) represent the square root of the average variance extracted while the off-diagonals are correlations.

Source(s): Authors' own illustration.

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Cleanliness	0.946								
2. eWOM	0.646	0.946							
3. Experiential value	0.773	0.658	0.914						
4. Facility aesthetics	0.611	0.505	0.650	0.913					
5. Layout accessibility	0.604	0.495	0.608	0.510	0.830				
6. Revisit intentions	0.527	0.709	0.615	0.504	0.548	0.947			
7. Seating comfort	0.532	0.427	0.462	0.440	0.460	0.367	0.971		
8. Signs and symbols	0.358	0.457	0.530	0.453	0.508	0.266	0.584	0.960	
9. Willingness to pay a price premium	0.277	0.372	0.378	0.229	0.274	0.427	0.367	0.246	0.962

Table 4. HTMT criterion

Source(s): Authors' own illustration.

Relationship	Path coefficient	STD error	t-value	p-value	5.0%	95.0%	f^2	Remark
H1: Layout accessibility → experiential value	0.109	0.075	1.371	0.085	-0.008	0.223	0.014	Not supported
H2: Facility aesthetics → experiential value	0.229	0.063	3.638	0.000	0.138	0.327	0.086	Supported
H3: Seating comfort → experiential value	0.232	0.052	4.362	0.000	0.144	0.320	0.086	Supported
H4: Signs and symbols → experiential value	0.008	0.061	0.134	0.447	-0.005	0.105	0.000	Not supported
H5: Cleanliness → experiential value	0.449	0.058	7.709	0.000	0.312	0.535	0.257	Supported
H6: Experiential value → eWOM	0.652	0.061	11.028	0.000	0.368	0.777	0.728	Supported
H7: Experiential value → revisit intentions	0.580	0.047	12.313	0.000	0.407	0.652	0.508	Supported
H8: Experiential value → willingness to pay a price premium	0.363	0.048	7.523	0.000	0.278	0.439	0.152	Supported

Table 5. Structural model results

Source(s): Authors' own illustration.

that experiential value positively influences eWOM ($\beta = 0.652, p < 0.001$), revisit intentions ($\beta = 0.580, p < 0.001$), and WTP ($\beta = 0.363, p < 0.001$), supporting H6, H7, and H8. Furthermore, this study also conducted a post-hoc mediation analysis to understand the mediating role of experiential value. The full results can be seen in Table 6.

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5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical contributions

While the SOR theory acknowledges the role of internal cognitive processes between stimuli and responses, there is still room for exploring and identifying the specific cognitive and affective processes that mediate the relationship. Previous studies have investigated how hotel servicescape stimuli (i.e. aesthetic quality, spaciousness, physiological dimensions, atmosphere, functionality, cleanliness, etc.) affect emotional states (cognition) such as pleasure, arousal, novelty value, perceived superiority (Dedeoglu et al., 2018; Lockwood and Pynn, 2019; Xu and Gursay, 2021). In our study, we expand upon the SOR concept by introducing an integrated conceptual framework to explain how the servicescape influences the consumption experience of bubble tea. To measure the stimuli, including layout accessibility, facility aesthetics, seating comfort, and cleanliness, we draw upon the

Relationship	Indirect effect	STD error	β value	β value	2.5% CI	97.5% CI	Remark
Layout accessibility → experiential value → eWOM	0.085	0.048	1.402	0.361	-0.017	0.561	Not significant
Layout accessibility → experiential value → revisit intentions	0.058	0.041	1.405	0.350	-0.015	0.144	Not significant
Layout accessibility → experiential value → WTP	0.036	0.036	1.406	0.350	-0.009	0.081	Not significant
Facility aesthetics → experiential value → eWOM	0.136	0.043	3.641	0.600	0.072	0.240	Significant
Facility aesthetics → experiential value → revisit intentions	0.139	0.039	3.530	0.600	0.087	0.278	Significant
Facility aesthetics → experiential value → WTP	0.087	0.025	3.420	0.601	0.042	0.141	Significant
Seating comfort → experiential value → eWOM	0.151	0.007	4.088	0.600	0.081	0.225	Significant
Seating comfort → experiential value → revisit intentions	0.125	0.004	3.995	0.600	0.072	0.204	Significant
Seating comfort → experiential value → WTP	0.084	0.024	3.445	0.601	0.042	0.138	Significant
Signs and symbols → experiential value → eWOM	0.085	0.040	0.134	0.003	-0.074	0.062	Not significant
Signs and symbols → experiential value → revisit intentions	0.065	0.036	0.134	0.004	-0.090	0.075	Not significant
Signs and symbols → experiential value → WTP	0.002	0.023	0.123	0.005	-0.042	0.047	Not significant
Cleanliness → experiential value → eWOM	0.208	0.044	4.693	0.501	0.102	0.303	Significant
Cleanliness → experiential value → revisit intentions	0.227	0.039	4.624	0.500	0.164	0.325	Significant
Cleanliness → experiential value → WTP	0.148	0.020	4.953	0.503	0.094	0.220	Significant

Source(s): Authors' own illustration

Table 6.
Mediating effects

adequately spaced out, as some customers may feel discomfort if the tables are positioned too closely together. Cleanliness is another very important aspect to which all bubble tea store owners must pay attention. Consumers will not visit a store that is not clean as it will result in dissatisfaction (Voss et al., 2018; Wakefield and Enderton, 1994). Therefore, it is imperative for bubble tea store owners to prioritise cleanliness as a primary key performance indicator for their employees. At the very minimum, stores must be thoroughly cleaned before and after opening hours. Cleanliness is part of the consumption experience which shapes consumers' experience. All in all, facility aspects, seating comfort, and cleanliness are crucial in shaping positive experiential value, which subsequently leads to eWOM, revisit intentions, and willingness to pay a price premium. Put simply, when consumers experience high levels of experiential value at a bubble tea store, they are inclined to share positive feedback about the brand through various online platforms, such as social media and mobile communication. Additionally, they are more likely to become loyal customers and are willing to pay premium prices for the same bubble tea brand, surpassing the appeal of its competitors.

All in all, existing literature extensively discusses the significance of servicescape in physical stores within the restaurant setting. However, there is an apparent gap in research regarding the impact of servicescape on consumer responses, particularly within the context of bubble tea. This study contributes to the literature by examining which specific aspects of a bubble tea store's servicescape evoke experiential value among consumers. When consumers perceive greater overall experiential value from their bubble tea experience, they are more inclined to exhibit positive consumer behaviours, such as sharing eWOM about the store, returning to the store, and being willing to pay a higher price.

6. Conclusion

This study has successfully demonstrated the applicability of the SOR model to understanding the impact of servicescape on experiential value, which then results in eWOM, revisit intentions, and willingness to pay a price premium. The bubble tea phenomenon is huge in many countries, especially in Asia. However, very few studies have been conducted to examine why consumers are attracted to bubble tea consumption. The findings of this study reveal the importance of servicescape in affecting consumers' positive responses. Despite the merits of this study, it is not without any shortcomings. First, this research utilised cross-sectional data to make causal inferences. Cross-sectional data may not be suitable to be used to establish cause-and-effect relationships (Liang and Kony, 2023). Future studies should collect longitudinal data. Second, the data were collected from consumers in Malaysia only. Therefore, the findings may not be generalisable to the entire population. It would be intriguing to replicate the identical model using data from diverse countries, such as the United States and China, given their status as major global economic powers. Third, this study focused on the role of servicescape in consumer behaviour in the bubble tea context. Future studies may consider examining other factors influencing consumers' responses such as eWOM, revisit intentions, and willingness to pay a price premium.

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questionnaire items from Wakefield and Blodgett's (1996) research. However, their study primarily focuses on the effects of servicescape stimuli on perceived quality and customer satisfaction. Our study, on the other hand, specifically aims to explore the impact of servicescape stimuli on experiential quality (cognition).

While previous studies highlight the importance of layout accessibility on customer emotions and satisfaction (Alonso-Tomás et al., 2014; Ma et al., 2022), our study does not find a significant relationship between layout accessibility and experiential value. Similarly, the impact of signs and symbols on experiential value is also not significant, despite prior research suggesting a positive effect of route signs on customer satisfaction (Kony et al., 2019). This could be because most consumers may have different perceptions or interpretations of what constitutes a "good" or "accessible" layout. While some consumers may value a clear and easily navigable layout, others may prioritise aspects such as ambience. In addition, each bubble tea store may have its unique layout design, which can vary in terms of accessibility features and route signs (e.g. toilet, exit). This variation in layout designs and route signs thus, may lead to inconsistent or mixed findings when examining the relationship between environment stimuli (especially layout accessibility and signs and symbols) and experiential value.

In a highly competitive market like the bubble tea industry, creating a unique and memorable experience can differentiate a brand from its competitors. By offering a servicescape that delivers high experiential value, such as a clean and vibrant store ambience, pleasant aromas, soothing music, and comfortable seating areas, bubble tea businesses can attract and retain customers who seek an enjoyable and immersive experience. This differentiation can help a brand stand out and gain a competitive advantage. In this study, we, therefore, further explore the impact of experiential value on electronic word of mouth (eWOM), revisit intentions, and willingness to pay a price premium. Although previous scholars have examined the influence of experiential value on consumer emotions, eWOM, and revisit intentions (Song and Qiu, 2017; Dedeoglu et al., 2018; Chao et al., 2021), yet they did not find a significant relationship with willingness to pay a price premium. When customers perceive a higher level of experiential value in the bubble tea experience, they are more likely to attribute greater worth to the product, resulting in an increased willingness to pay a price premium. This present study confirms a significant relationship between experiential value and willingness to pay a price premium.

5.2 Managerial implications

Bubble tea consumption is a thriving industry in Asian countries, but the market itself is highly competitive due to the presence of numerous brands offering bubble tea products. This study aims to provide valuable insights to store owners in the bubble tea industry, enabling them to enhance their business performance. Our findings show that facility aesthetics, seating comfort, and cleanliness are significant predictors of experiential value. Therefore, bubble tea store owners have to focus on these three aspects. Nowadays, consumers not only visit bubble tea stores for a refreshing cup of their favourite bubble tea but also to capture captivating pictures to share on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Therefore, the aesthetics of bubble tea stores have become of paramount importance. It is crucial for these establishments to exhibit an appealing, intriguing, distinctive, and upscale ambience. A store with a distinctive and well-curated aesthetic that reflects a strong brand identity is essential to attract consumers who are seeking a visually appealing space for capturing photographs (Gao and Liang, 2024).

Moreover, bubble tea stores often serve as social gathering spots for consumers to engage in conversations with friends. Therefore, creating a comfortable seating arrangement that enables consumers to stay for a long time in the store is of utmost importance. To achieve this, it is important to ensure that the seating is comfortable and the distance between tables is

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Signs and symbols

- (1) This bubble tea store provides sufficient signs/route signs (eg. Toilet and exit signs)
- (2) Signs/route signs of this bubble tea store can be easily understood

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489**Seating comfort**

- (1) There is plenty of knee room in the seats.
- (2) There is plenty of elbow room in the seats.
- (3) The seat arrangements provide plenty of space.
- (4) This bubble tea store provides comfortable seats.

Cleanliness

- (1) This bubble tea store maintains clean restrooms.
- (2) This bubble tea store maintains clean food service areas.
- (3) This bubble tea store maintains clean walkways and exits.
- (4) Overall, this bubble tea store is kept clean.

Experiential value

- (1) I am deeply impressed by this bubble tea store's environment.
- (2) This bubble tea store's atmosphere meets my expectations.
- (3) This bubble tea store has a warm atmosphere.
- (4) I feel comfortable in this bubble tea store.
- (5) This bubble tea store's facilities are convenient.

eWOM

- (1) I will rate this bubble tea store positively on an online review site.
- (2) I will say positive things about this bubble tea store on an online review site.
- (3) I will recommend this bubble tea store to other friends/users.

Revisit intentions

- (1) I am planning to revisit this bubble tea store.
- (2) I intend to revisit this bubble tea store.
- (3) I will expend effort on revisiting this bubble tea store.

Willingness to pay a price premium

- (1) I am willing to pay a higher price for this bubble tea store's bubble tea than for other bubble tea stores.

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- (2) I am willing to pay a lot more for this bubble tea in this bubble tea store than for other kinds of beverages.

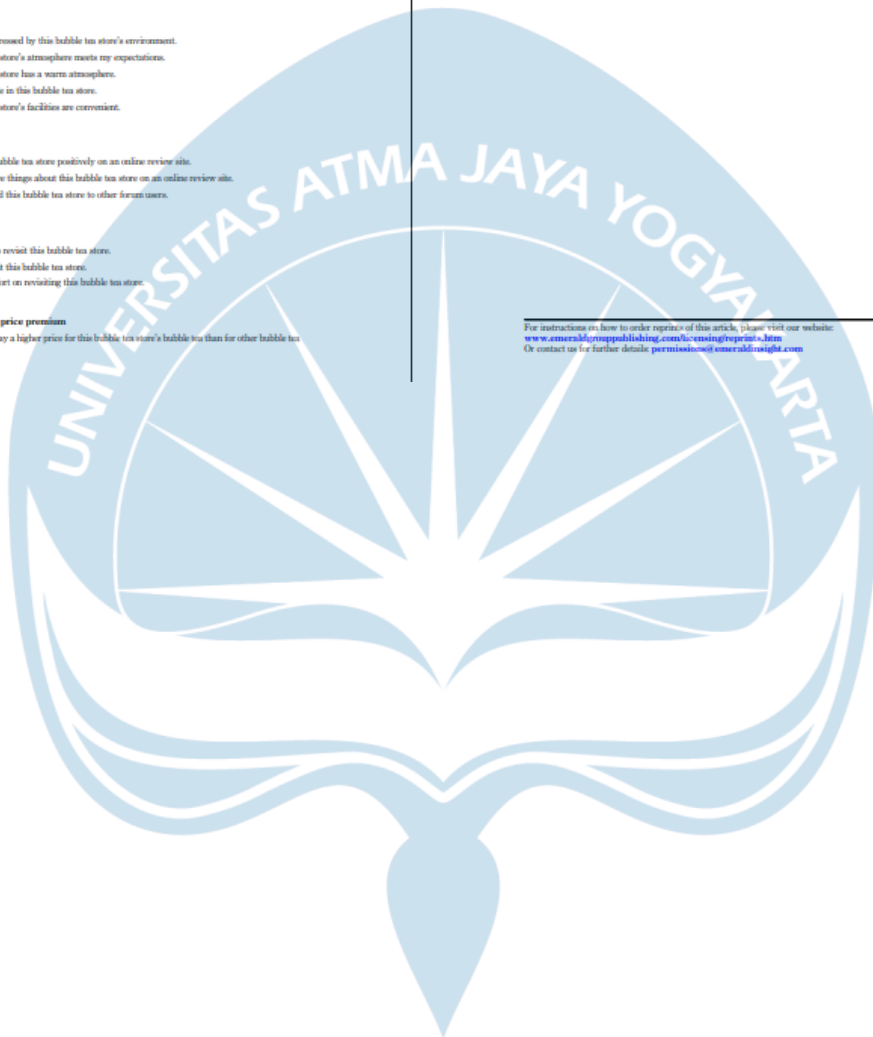
- (3) I am willing to pay a higher price for bubble tea than for other beverages (coffee, juice, and so on).

Source(s): Authors' own illustration

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Original Research

Impact of Service Encounter Elements on Experiential Value and Customer Loyalty: An Empirical Investigation in the Coffee Shop Context

Nadia Rashid¹, Fayaz A. Nika¹, and George Thomas²

Abstract

The unprecedented dynamism in marketing has led to the transition of economy from service economy to experience economy. Modern age consumers give more emphasis to the hedonic attributes of offerings than to functional attributes. Consequently, the present study aims to provide a deeper understanding of experiential value, its antecedents, and consequences in the context of coffee shops. More specifically, this study examines the effect of service encounter elements on experiential value and the consequent effect of experiential value on customer loyalty. Using purposive sampling, data were collected from 387 customers of coffee shops using a questionnaire survey which was later analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling. The results reveal positive linkages between service encounter, experiential value, and customer loyalty. Positive cognition of service encounters have positive effects on experiential value and customer loyalty. Besides, experiential value also has a positive effect on customer loyalty. Lastly, experiential value partially mediates the relationship between service encounters and customer loyalty.

Keywords

experiential value, service encounter, physical environment, employee interaction, customer loyalty

Introduction

In the modern times, the economic offerings of organizations worldwide have turned out to be all the more deliberately experiential, a key move in the very fabric of the worldwide economy (Ratner, 2020). Experiences (i.e., business contributions that connect with customers in memorable ways) are a particular type of economic offerings that hold the way to flourish future economic advancements (Le et al., 2019; Pine & Gilmore, 2016). Today's consumers do not feel contented with mere functional benefits of goods and services but they demand offerings which are accompanied by experiences in the increasingly commoditized and competitive environment (Bhat, 2019; Khan et al., 2020). Customers seek some hedonic features in services which would entertain them, raise their perception of service quality, and give them the return to their physical, monetary, psychological, and/or moral investments (Ahn et al., 2019). The changing financial condition has changed the way consumers spend their money. Consumers are progressively shelled with adequate choice of goods and services. Accessibility of different goods puts customers in challenging situations to make differentiation amongst varied offerings of market (Khan et al., 2016). Therefore, many organizations discerned that conventional approach of marketing of purveying basic utilities

attributes are suboptimal. According to Warde and Martin (2000), primarily people were motivated to eat outside their homes due to reasons of ease and convenience. But lately, the features of this instance has taken altogether a different meaning as people now are motivated to eat outside their home for reasons of entertainment and no more for fulfilling the desire to eat (Jin et al., 2013). Thus, visiting to eat is more for feeling distracted from the daily demands of life and for the sake of feeling contented (Wu & Liang, 2009). Moreover, dining out has become one of the most widespread activities of leisure (Kim & Jang, 2019; Walls et al., 2011). These days, eating out for entertainment/pleasure is no more the reservation for only elite class but, it has progressively become common to a wide section of the population (Rezende & Silva, 2014).

Scholars have hypothesized that good consumer impressions are instilled by customer service encounters (Chen

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provider's demeanor at the point of delivery may impact expectations of consumer about the service offering. King et al. (2007) observed that "personal interaction encounters and physical environmental interaction encounters positively impact customer experiential value." In hospitality settings, the consumption of service usually happens when both consumer as well as service provider is available in the service environment which makes it possible to impact a customer's experience of service.

Experiential Value

Mathwick et al. (2001) define experiential value as "customers' perceptions of products or services through direct use or indirect observation." Whereas experiential value fluctuates from instrumental (utilitarian) value, which alludes to shopping proficiency and settling on incredible product choices by objectively assessing information with respect to product's performance and usefulness (Fripp & Kim, 2007). Experiential value perceptions rely upon interactions including either use or valuation for goods and services.

As indicated by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), experiential value can be partitioned into two sections, one of which is the experience point of view, which alludes to the real personal understanding of an individual, while the other is the rational viewpoint, which is the recognition/framed dependent on an information pursuit of a specific product. In view of this perspective, Mathwick et al. (2002) characterized experiential value as "a perceived, relativistic preference for product attributes or service performance arising from interaction within a consumption setting that facilitates or blocks achievement of consumer goals or purpose."

Mathwick et al. (2001) built up a typology of experiential qualities that includes the estimations of aesthetics, playfulness, service excellence, and customer return on investment (CROI). Aesthetics refers to the visual intrigue of the retail environment. Playfulness from exchanges mirrors the natural sentiments of a consumer when effectively occupied with an activity, alongside the capacity to distract people from routine life. Service excellence value is communicated in terms of gratitude of a consumer toward service staff who has built up abilities and offer a dependable service performance, and CROI involves the dynamic venture of budgetary, temporal, social and mental assets that possibly yield a return. CROI value mirrors the effective part of exercises commitment, and clarifies dynamic interest in monetary, mental, assets, conduct, and feelings that yield rewards (Ahn et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2015; Wu & Liang, 2009; Wu et al., 2018).

Customer Loyalty

Oliver (1999) defines loyalty as "a deep commitment on part of a customer to re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in future, thereby causing repetitive same brand-sat

purchasing, despite of the strenuous efforts of marketers which often cause switching behavior." The positive advantages of customer loyalty for organizations are very much recognized (Islam & Rahman, 2016; Islam et al., 2018). Loyal customers are basic to any firm (Islam et al., 2020; Tse, 2014), in that they are less expensive to serve than procuring new ones, are ready to purchase and pay more, and take part in great word-of-mouth of mouth (Islam et al., 2020; Tse, 2014). Actually, loyalty of customers is quite possibly the most referred to ideas in marketing literature, and the scope of advantages it offers to the marketing individuals is acknowledged by both the academicians and practitioners (Islam & Rahman, 2017; Khan et al., 2019). Holding existing customers as opposed to fetching new ones is essentially seen as a financially savvy approach (Anderson & Mittal, 2000; Rather et al., 2019).

Organizations relyably look for and start different actions to construct loyal customer base (Alan & Nowe, 2020). An immediate advantage is that loyal consumers should go about as brand advocates, welcoming family members, companions and other (potential) clients to the brand/firm (Kandampully et al., 2015; Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999; Watson et al., 2015). Also, a reliably certain relationship has been recorded between customer loyalty and performance of organizations (Pillai, 2014); vis-a-vis customer loyalty programs are viewed as vital sources of competitive advantage for businesses in the competitive environment (Islam & Rahman, 2016; Winters & Ha, 2012).

Customer loyalty has gotten checked consideration in the service marketing literature, because of its commitment in making sustainable competitive preferred position for service organizations (Islam et al., 2019; Lee & Cunningham, 2004). Numerous examinations bring up that conveying prominent worth got from the total involvement in the service is perhaps the main methods for producing loyalty among customers (Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Kozzi & Altinay, 2016; Yang & Peterson, 2004). Customers consistently look for "a bundle of advantages" to satisfy their needs in a variety of capacities. Numerous entries offer an item bundle that incorporates food and refreshment. At the point when clients look for different issues like food, refreshment and administrations, they will think about all the issues to pick an entry (Shamsh et al., 2018). Consequently, it is required to perceive the parts that fulfill customer's needs, so they return to that entry for another meal (Uddin, 2019).

Hypotheses Development

Service Encounter and Experiential Value

Studies have mentioned importance of service encounters in the form of sensory cues (tangible, atmospheric) in the consumption environment and suggest sensory data as an important criterion in creation of experiential value (Schmitt, 1999). Studies further mention that "esthetic elements,

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et al., 2020; Islam et al., 2019; Robinson et al., 2020). Customer service encounters are defined as "the enduring personal impressions that customers receive upon encountering a product, service and/or company primarily, which they hopefully take with them and convey it to others" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Poulsson & Kale, 2004). Shostack (1985) defined the service encounter as time duration during which a customer gets to answeringly interact with service dimensions offered by an organization which prove useful to businesses as it provides them with basic details about consumers' preference which improves their service. Scholarly efforts toward this direction have been made by prior studies in the sectors like retailing, theme parks, online shopping sites, virtual gaming, smartphone industry, and leisure tourism (See e.g., Aziz et al., 2016; Christians et al., 2020; Gallarza et al., 2015; Maghathi et al., 2012; Shobeiri et al., 2015). However, most of these studies suggest a further investigation with regard to the interaction between service encounter elements, experiential value of customers, and their loyalty across industry contexts. As experiential value focuses on the value which has been retained by the customers from their interactions and experiences with a service encounter; to retain old customers and attract new ones, offering memorable experiences has become imperative for marketers to survive and sustain (Islam et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2020; Rather et al., 2019). In this direction, scholars suggest further empirical investigation of how such memorable experiences can be offered and what factors primarily drive such experiences (see e.g., Ahn et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2018). Additionally, prior studies have reportedly emphasized on personal interactions and their role on making service encounters extra pleasurable, which consequently could reduce the perceived risk associated with getting a service vis-a-vis enhance the overall buying experience (Ahn et al., 2019; Robinson et al., 2020). Lastly, most of studies related to service encounters and experiential value have been conducted in developed economies, context thereby leaving a gap of generalizing such studies in a developing emerging economy like India.

Responding to the above specified gap, this study considers service encounter factors in the context of coffee shops and their relationship with customers' experiential value and loyalty. By examining the associations between service encounter elements, experiential value, and customer loyalty, this study suggests various sustainable measures for enhancing experiential value and customer loyalty. By empirically validating the relationships between the chosen constructs in a novel industrial and geographic setting, this study makes significant theoretical contribution. This study also offers value by providing insights for marketing practitioners interested in designing coffee shops in ways that efficaciously attract customers and end up making them loyal and converting them into evangelists rather than merely satisfying them.

ambiance, design, colors, odor, aroma, decoration, signage, etc. works and the music playing are all critical advantages of the customer experience in service settings (Cetin et al., 2014). Wakefield and Blodgett (1999) suggested that tangibles play a significant role in creating a significant part in dining fervor in relaxation settings; excitement, thus, assumes a huge part in deciding customer loyalty intentions and readiness to recommend (Islam et al., 2019; Raza et al., 2020). In order to create a great customer experience in hospitality industry, service providers 'show high dependence on the physical environment (Mosberg, 2007). Besides, Walls et al. (2011) hypothesized that purveyors of service in the commodity business should focus on their human interface environments, notwithstanding environment measurements, to build up the entire experience of consumer. Due to the essential role of service staff's interaction, most scholars have postulated that customer's perception about performance of experiential value of service is mostly based on employee attitude, demeanor, affability, and timeliness (Ali et al., 2016; Ryu et al., 2012). Therefore, this study hypothesizes as:

H1: Favorable cognition of service encounter has a positive effect on experiential value.

Experiential Value and Customer Loyalty

In the service industry, delivery of quality service is a key vital asset that can be utilized to make (and support) a competitive advantage. Current era consumers, in any case, want something beyond the delivery of offerings (Jin et al., 2013). Progressively, entry regulars likewise want special and cherishable service encounters (Kim & Stepanchikova, 2018; Walls et al., 2011). Now-a-days consumers want more value for their money in terms of both offerings as well as providers of service should discover approaches to satisfy these needs and support their preferences (Line & Ruyter, 2012; Oh et al., 2019). Therefore, making consumers experience a unique and differentiated experience can help the food industry to create an edge against competitors in today's cut throat competition. From the brand executive's viewpoint, the essential objective of cafe/restaurant advertising is to create brand unwaveringness among consumers to deter them from changing to other entry marks regardless of whether the other competing organizations give better offers (Kim & Stepanchikova, 2018). Scholars have, therefore, employed the concept of experiential value to explain such dedicated behavior among customers (El-Auliy, 2019; Jin et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2018). They argue that in a service setting, an effective experience oriented branding strategy can promote customers' attachment to specific brands which helps customers show dedication and love toward their preferred brands (Kim & Stepanchikova, 2018; Thomson et al., 2005). Therefore, experiential value serves as an important driver for the success of such service brands (coffee shops in our case). Therefore, we also hypothesize as:

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. First, a brief review of literature and theoretical background is presented followed by hypotheses development. Then next section discusses the research methodology adopted by this study. Lastly, the findings as well as key theoretical and managerial implications are presented.

Literature Review

Service Encounters

Service encounter is defined as "the dyadic interaction between a customer and a service provider" (Surprenant & Solomon, 1987, p. 87). In other words, the service encounter was essentially viewed as a "game of people" driven by explicit learned practices suitable for the circumstance (i.e., jobs) (Surprenant & Solomon, 1987). In any case, more extensive translations of the idea immediately turned out to be more widespread. Following Shostack's work (1985), the service encounter currently alludes to particular moments where consumers connect with a solid service interface. The last can be considered as an assimilation of individuals (i.e., representatives, different consumers), the physical environment, service processes and technology (Patriocio et al., 2011). All things considered, service encounters likewise envelop customer interaction with organization components other than human actors, for example, the servicescape and self-service advancements (Lariviere et al., 2017). The influence of the service encounters can be fragmented into two main components (Keng et al., 2007). The first is the encounter of customers with physical environment elements and the second component comprises of interactions with service employees. Physical environment encounters are defined as a time duration during which a consumer gets to interact with physical amenities and other tangible elements (e.g., lighting, music and internal and external environmental design). Over the years, authors have described the term physical environment differently: Parasuraman et al. (1985) described it as "something that defines the tangible attributes of an intangible service or the service encounter." Bitner (1992) has coined the term "servicescape" as "the tangible aspects of the service encounter," identified three dimensions including ambience, space or function, and signs/symbols/artifacts, each of which can have influence on the perception and behavior of both customers and service staff". According to Bitner (1992), the ambience dimension includes those aspects "which sense organs observe directly: temperature, aroma, sound, lighting and tactile impressions that direct and modify the behavior of the customers in the service environment."

Personal interaction encounters are regarded as a time duration during which customers get to interact with staff (Gaur et al., 2017). The testing of personal interaction encounters can be evaluated based on staff's attention paying skills, competence, and the level of disposition (Loper & McMillan-Capehart, 2002). Coyne (2004) observed that a service

H2: Favorable cognition of experiential value has a positive effect on customer loyalty.

Service Encounter and Customer Loyalty

Prior studies have hypothesized that good consumer impressions are instilled by customer service encounters (Grove et al., 1998; Islam et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2020). The encounters are the enduring personal impressions that are being perceived by customers for the first time encountering offerings of an organization, which they carry with them optimistically and talk about it with others (Lariviere et al., 2017; Poulsson & Kale, 2004; Wu & Liang, 2009). Shostack (1985) opines about the service encounters as a time duration during which a customer gets to answeringly interact with service dimensions offered by an organization. Such encounters prove useful to businesses as it provides them with basic details about consumers' preference to improve their services. Studies have repeatedly emphasized on personal interaction as such interactions make service encounters extra pleasurable and assist in reducing the perceived risk associated with getting a service vis-a-vis enhance the overall customer buying experience (Islam & Ramasenthiran, 1994; Keng et al., 2007; Wu & Liang, 2009). These favorable perceptions of such elements of service encounters are thus the pre factors of customer loyalty (Chen, 2015; Sigala, 2019). Accordingly, we hypothesize as:

H3: Favorable cognition of service encounter has a positive effect on customer loyalty.

Experiential Value as a Mediator Between Service Encounter and Customer Loyalty

Researchers consider service encounters as basic drivers of customer faithfulness in service settings (Ali et al., 2016; Islam et al., 2019). Purveyors of service in the hospitality industry have relied upon the actual climate and environment to make an extraordinary customer experience; which, therefore, is recommended to drive customer patronage (Ali et al., 2016; Mosberg, 2007). Inside the physical setting, researcher (see, Ryu et al., 2012) underlined the significance of the service encounters and expressed that because of the distinguished attributes of services, tangible cues serve in giving consumers a thought of the nature of the offering conveyed as a feature of experience of service. Past study takes note of that service encounters help employees place themselves in the personalities of buyers and assist them with making their initial linking, which impacts the experience of buyers (Ali et al., 2016; Walls et al., 2011).

Organizations across the world perceive that they need to interface better with their customers to develop their trust and dependability (Islam & Rahman, 2016; Kaur et al., 2020). Studies advocate that single direction to improve customer patronage is to have positive interaction and offer

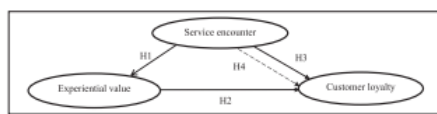


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model.

experiential benefits to customers (Kang et al., 2007). Studies further outline that the experience managed by brands through fulfilling and drawing in collaboration and other physical environment inputs of into assemble customer's emotional connection and faithfulness with the central brand (Islam & Rahman, 2017; Jin et al., 2013; Parasur & Kumar, 2017). Such capturing encounters, hence, make it simple for the customers to share data, make buys, and act additionally dependent on the information sources shared (Kim & Shephardson, 2018; Nadeem et al., 2020). Subsequently, when customers use actual natural signs and associations profitably pertinent and fulfilling, it offers customers improved experiential value that readily supports their certainty against the company's capacity to convey guaranteed services. This upgrades customer devotion with the specific brand (Ha & Park, 2005; Islam & Rahman, 2017). Every one of these discrete factors the interesting/mediating part of experiential value such that it goes about as a result of service encounter, and, ultimately, impacts customer patronage (Figure 1). In view of these affirmations, this study hypothesizes:

H1: Experiential value mediates the effect of service encounter on customer loyalty.

Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

To empirically examine and validate the proposed research model, this study used a self-administered questionnaire survey among 387 customers of coffee shops in the Kadane region of Jammu and Kashmir, India. Information about coffee shops was collected from the owners of different coffee shops and from customers across Kashmir region on the basis of popularity of coffee outlets. The researcher approached people entering and leaving the selected coffee shops and requested them to take part in the survey. Those who agreed were briefed about the survey purpose and were also assured of maintaining the confidentiality of their responses.

Coffee shops were chosen as the study context because India represents one of the world's fastest growing economies which is expected to reach USD \$35 trillion by the

year 2025 (Grand View Research Report, 2018). Growing global exposure, change in urban lifestyle, and dispersion of established coffee brands such as Starbucks are the key trends driving the growth of coffee chain market in India. Considering the staggering growth, it is important to identify avenues that facilitate customer experience across coffee shops and make them loyal.

Out of 387 respondents, 213 (55%) were male and 174 (45%) female. A total of 133 (35%) respondents were in the age group of 18 to 25 years, while 116 (30%), 97 (25%), and 59 (15%) respondents were in the age groups of 26 to 35 years, 36 to 45 years, and 46 years or above respectively. Likewise, the sample represented respondents with annual income ranging from INR 250,000 (approx. \$2,742) to INR 15,00,000 (approx. \$26,565). 70 (18%) respondents visit their preferred coffee shop at least once a week, 135 (35%) respondents visit 2 to 3 times, and 182 (47%) respondents visit more than four times to their favorite coffee shops.

Measures

The questionnaire for this study was developed by incorporating items from various established scales already used in some previous studies. The questionnaire was framed in consultation with two subject experts. Customers' perception about service encounter was measured using 2 items from Wakefield and Huber (1998). Wu and Liang (2009), with a sample item as "This coffee shop has an appealing furnishing." Experiential value was measured by adopting items from Mathwick et al. (2001) and Ryu et al. (2012), with a sample item as "Drinking coffee in this coffee shop makes me forget all my worries." To measure customer loyalty, seven items were adopted from Tong and Hawley (2009), with a sample item as "I speak positively about this specific coffee shop." All the items used in the survey instrument of this study have been measured using a "7-point Likert scale" ranging from 1 (the "strongly disagree") to 7 (the "strongly agree").

Data Analysis

To test our proposed hypotheses empirically, a multi-step data analysis procedure, including "confirmatory factor analysis" (CFA) and "structural equation modeling" (SEM) was

adopted using SPSS 20.0 and AMOS 20.0. Initially, data screening was done to check for missing data, unusual observations and non-normal items (potential outliers). Descriptive statistics were employed by calculating mean and standard deviations in order to get an overview of the sample (Nasir & Islam, 2020; Nasir et al., 2021).

Next, an examination of the reliability and validity of the construct scales was undertaken (Hair et al., 2010). The overall goodness of fit of the CFA model indicated a good model fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 1,431.45$, $df = 499$, $p < .001$; CMIN/DF = 2.86, RMSEA = .07, CFI = .903, GFI = .900, and AGFI = .894, NFI = .896, TLI = .911). The Cronbach alpha values were used to assess construct reliability. The Cronbach alpha values for the factors ranged between .844 to .901 (i.e., greater than the minimum acceptable value of .70 which indicates good internal consistency among all the items, thereby confirming the reliability of all the constructs (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). After examining the reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of constructs was evaluated. Convergent validity was assessed by analyzing factor loadings and the "average variance extracted" (AVE). All the factor loadings were above the suggested minimum value of 0.5, thereby confirming the convergent validity criteria (Hair et al., 2010). An acceptable level of convergent validity was also demonstrated by the AVE values, which was above 0.50 for each of the variables. Composite reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.813 to 0.923, thus signifying the acceptable values (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results related to the reliability and validity of the constructs are presented in Table 1.

Besides, discriminant validity was confirmed by comparing each construct's squared AVE with the inter-construct correlation values (Hair et al., 2010). As shown in Table 2, the squared AVE values were above the corresponding inter-construct correlations, reflecting an acceptable discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Results of Structural Model

After confirming the measurement model, the structural model was estimated to test the proposed hypotheses. To check the model's goodness of fit, this study used χ^2 and key fit indices viz., CFI, GFI, NFI, TLI, and RMSEA (Nasir & Islam, 2020). The use of fit indices for structural model fall within the acceptable limits ($\chi^2 = 1,029.127$, $df = 396$, $p < .001$; CMIN/DF = 2.66, RMSEA = .07, CFI = .914, GFI = .896, and AGFI = .896, NFI = .892, TLI = .893), affirming that the structural model fits well (Hair et al., 2010). As evident from Table 3, the study findings suggest that service encounter positively affects experiential value ($\beta = .44$, $p < .001$), supporting H1; experiential value positively affects customer loyalty ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$), supporting H2. Service encounter was also found to positively affect customer loyalty ($\beta = .24$, $p < .001$), which supports H3.

Mediation Analysis

To test the mediating effect of experiential value in the relationship between service encounter and customer loyalty, we used "Baron and Kenny's (1986)" approach. Successfully bootstrapping was used. As suggested by recent studies (see, e.g., Kaur et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2019; Rasool et al., 2021), in full mediation, the predictor (service encounter) affects the outcome variable (customer loyalty) only through its effect on the mediating variable (experiential value). Conversely, in partial mediation, the predictor (service encounter) affects the criterion variable (customer loyalty) directly, as well as indirectly through its effect on the mediating variable (experiential value; Baron & Kenny, 1986). As depicted in Table 4, service encounter has a direct positive effect on customer loyalty ($\beta = .24$, $p < .001$) and also an indirect effect via experiential value ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$). These results demonstrate that the effect of service encounter on customer loyalty is partially mediated by experiential value, thereby supporting H4.

Discussion

This study was motivated by the need for deeper insights regarding the drivers and outcomes of experiential value (MSI, 2016). The study was also motivated to respond to the recent calls for further investigation of interaction between service encounter elements and experiential value across industrial and geographic contexts. Correspondingly, this study identifies service encounter elements as antecedents to experiential value and proposes customer loyalty as an outcome of both service encounter elements and experiential value. Conducting an empirical study in the context of coffee shops, this study hypothesizes three conceptual relationships and one mediating relationship. All of the four hypotheses were accepted. H1 proposed a positive impact of service encounter elements on experiential value and was supported by our results. This finding is in conformity with past studies carried out in different sectors which postulated that the staff and service environment like ambience, style, lighting, temperature, aroma, and attitude of personnel and their friendly approach, promptness, appearance etc., significantly influence customer service encounters (e.g., Andriah & Conway, 2006; King et al., 2007).

Second hypothesis of this study proposed a positive impact of experiential value on customer loyalty. Our results revealed the strong relationship between these two variables and, therefore, support H2. Our finding related to this relationship is in conformity with previous studies carried out across industrial contexts (e.g., Bhattacharya et al., 2013; Reastie & Friedman, 2007). Thus, when coffee shop employees satisfy experiential desires of customers through atmosphere, speed, giving due return for customers' efforts, time, money, and risk, making them feel fully entertained, they

Table 1. Reliability and Validity of the Constructs.

Construct	Items	Factor loadings	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Service encounter (SE)	SE1	0.813	.844	0.923	0.687
	SE2	0.778			
	SE3	0.771			
	SE4	0.800			
	SE5	0.840			
	SE6	0.818			
	SE7	0.798			
	SE8	0.757			
	SE9	0.813			
	SE10	0.732			
	SE11	0.834			
	SE12	0.826			
Experiential value (EV)	EV1	0.778	.901	0.897	0.594
	EV2	0.679			
	EV3	0.746			
	EV4	0.702			
	EV5	0.681			
	EV6	0.649			
	EV7	0.708			
	EV8	0.694			
	EV9	0.806			
	EV10	0.792			
	EV11	0.699			
	EV12	0.772			
Customer loyalty (CL)	CL1	0.717	.877	0.935	0.612
	CL2	0.814			
	CL3	0.786			
	CL4	0.807			
	CL5	0.819			
	CL6	0.712			
	CL7	0.811			

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation Values.

Item-IDs	Mean	SD	SE	EV	CL
Service encounter (SE)	3.723	0.977	0.028		
Experiential value (EV)	3.211	1.012	0.012	0.770	
Customer loyalty (CL)	3.341	1.173	0.021	0.303	0.782

Note. SD depicts standard deviation. The bold numbers in the diagonal line are the square root of AVEs. All values are significant at $p < .001$.

leave coffee shops with remarkable landmarks on their minds leading to the development of deep emotional connection with customers. Such customers may collaborate with business to prepare a customized cup of coffee leading to the co-creation of value.

Third hypothesis proposed a positive effect of service encounter on customer loyalty. Our results also supported

the proposed relationship. Our results provide an empirical support in a different contextual setting to the studies that propose if environment elements are beautifully manifested to customers' senses to create a tranquil, then it can lead to their contemporary response from the corner of the fast-paced world (Chen, 2015; King et al., 2007; Mariani et al., 2019). The interaction with service employees makes customers

feel delighted, by offering customized services, by dealing with them patiently, by converting mundane activity into memorable encounter. This whole package makes customers loyal to such coffee shops.

This study also investigated the mediating effect of experiential value between service encounter and customer loyalty. Our results also support this hypothesis (H4) and reveal experiential value as a partial mediator between the proposed relationships. Therefore, capturing service encounter elements such as physical environment cues and employee interactions are perceived by customers as providing positive experiential value thereby making them fall in love with such service providers and become loyal for a long time. Overall, the results of this study offer some valuable implications for both academicians and industry, as discussed in the next section.

Implications of the Study

The key contribution of this study is the development of a model predicting the impact service encounter on experiential value and customer loyalty via the mediating effect of experiential value on the proposed relationships as a fast growing but almost neglected industrial context (the coffee shops). The study further contributes by underlining the sample of an emerging economy into account, thereby broadening the generalizability of the studied constructs to a different geography which is culturally and economically different from the developed economies.

The major implication stemming from this study for management, particularly in coffee shops, is significance of developing customer patronage to gain competitive advantage and eventually lasting success. Managers should provide consumers with hedonic benefits by orchestrating all the sub dimensions of the experiential value to give the total experience to consumers. It guides managers that customers' senses should be stimulated by creating unique ambience, air-conditioned spaces, funky modernized café, architecturally intriguing building, appealing fittings, furnishings, patterned carpets, coffee aroma, ambient music, lighting, soothing temperature etc., which is comfortable and welcoming.

Table 3. Results of the Structural Model.

Path	Hypotheses	Path coefficient (β)	t-statistic	Test results
H1	Service encounter $\rightarrow$ experiential value	0.44	.000	Supported
H2	Experiential value $\rightarrow$ customer loyalty	0.35	.000	Supported
H3	Service encounter $\rightarrow$ customer loyalty	0.24	.000	Supported

Table 4. Results of Mediation Hypothesis.

Hypotheses	Relationship	Direct effect	Indirect effect	p-value
H4a: The effect of SE on CL loyalty is mediated by EV	SE $\rightarrow$ EV $\rightarrow$ CL	0.24	0.21	<.001

As the study reveals that if consumers' assessment of service encounter elements happens to be positive then their experiential value gets enhanced. Therefore, managers should keep availability of supporting services viz. hygienic washrooms, parking facilities etc., to put the consumers in comfortable situation. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, service encounter elements have gained even more significance. It has now become crucial for coffee shops and restaurants to keep hand sanitizers and facemasks readily available for customers alongside facilitating social distancing through proper signage. This will make customers enjoy the total flow of experience without any interruption. Also, all nuances of experience should be worth covering. Mundane experiences should be replaced with the extraordinary ones to make memories of customers memorable. Each of the customer touch points should be made pleasurable and each moment of visit should be made unforgettable. Training should be imparted on coffee personnel to make them more observant, receptive and welcoming. Customers should find themselves being pampered and handled with utmost care and subtlety. Coffee purveyors should find themselves as the providers of memories and experiences rather than providers of just services.

Furthermore, coffee shop managers should make consumers' holistic experience engaging by making coffee shops focus on reunions, business meetings, book club discussions, hosting some cultural/artistic events. Copy books for bibliophiles should be crafted; beautiful book shelves should be curated and stacked with wide novel collection, magazines etc., to make it appealing to the coffee-loving bookworms of all ages. Also, a place for gaming zone should be reserved to keep toddlers engaged. Also, backyard patio within a coffee-house will give an open environment to the cluttered minds of consumers.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study acknowledges certain limitations. First, the present study investigated the relationship between service encounter, experiential value, and customer loyalty while as

a number of other related constructs exist (e.g., co-creation, agility, service innovation etc.) that may be used in future research to check for their potential mediating/moderating effects. Additionally, the role of various moderators like age, gender, income, mood, sensitivity, perceived risk etc. can be explored. The study was restricted to Kashmir valley which has its own peculiarities and may not be generalizable in different cultural/social, political, and economic settings. Therefore, future studies can test the proposed model in some other geographic and contextual sources (viz. health care, airlines etc.). The study can be extended to the transformation economy as more customization of experience will lead to creation of transformational value.

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Indirect customer-to-customer interactions and experiential value: examining solo and social diners

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine whether indirect customer-to-customer interactions (CCI) affect customers' behavioral intentions and how that effect is generated. It also explores the effect of dining experience on customer behavioral intentions and how that effect varies by party type.

Design/methodology/approach – The research consists of an experimental survey-based study of $n = 481$ real-world consumers from a marketing research panel. Structural equation models are analyzed to examine hypothesized relationships.

Findings – Indirect CCIs significantly affect all five dimensions of experiential value: Food and beverage (F&B) excellence, aesthetics and service excellence positively affect customer revisit intentions and word-of-mouth intentions via restaurant image. Furthermore, party type moderates the effect of aesthetics on behavioral intentions so that the effect is significant for the social diner group only. Customer return on investment and playfulness show non-significant impacts on behavioral intentions.

Practical implications – Managers should be aware that indirect CCIs influence all aspects of the restaurant experience. Since F&B excellence, aesthetics and service excellence affect restaurant image and behavioral intentions, management can operationalize those elements of service. The impact of aesthetics differs by consumers' party type, enabling management to create unique servicescapes based on their target customer segment.

Originality/value – The study pioneers an investigation of how indirect CCI is associated with behavioral intentions through the mediating effects of experiential value and restaurant image. It contributes to the literature by examining how the impact of diners' experiences differs by party type.

Keywords Solo diners, Customer-to-customer interaction, Experiential value, Restaurant image, Revisit intentions, Word-of-mouth intentions

Paper type Research paper



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1. Introduction

Varying across service settings, customer experience is often affected by customers' relations to other customers sharing time and space during service encounters (Leah, 2020). A pleasant customer-to-customer interaction (CCI) renders a service experience more enjoyable while an unpleasant interaction could damage it (Zhang et al., 2010). Indirect CCI, defined as customers' observations of other customers and nonverbal interactions with others, as a common and critical element of a restaurant service experience (Nicholls, 2003; Sit and Armstrong, 2017). As onsite self-service technologies (e.g. tabletop tablets and kiosks) proliferate, restaurant customers may experience more CCI than employee-customer interaction (Nicholls, 2003; Xu et al., 2020). Despite the restaurant literature acknowledging the importance of other customers when dining (Jiang et al., 2018; Wu and Liang, 2008), only a handful of research has examined the impact of CCI on diners' experiences (Altay et al., 2003; Erkinen and Hancor, 2019; Lin et al., 2020a, 2020b; Song et al., 2018; Wu and Liang, 2008; Altay et al., 2019) and Song et al. (2018) studied social interactions among senior care customers and found that CCI affected diners' experiences and social wellbeing. Wu and Liang (2008) indicated that descriptive behaviors from other customers (e.g. loud, rude or hitting tables) ruined customer experiences at luxury restaurants. Erkinen and Hancor (2019) and Lin et al. (2020a, 2020b) discovered that indirect CCI affects diners' emotions, perceived CCI quality and perceived brand image. While existing restaurant research has studied the impacts of direct CCI (Altay et al., 2019; Song et al., 2018) and negative CCI (Wu and Liang, 2008) on dining experiences, the influence of indirect CCI on diners' experiences remains understudied. In addition, limited research has investigated the relationship between indirect CCI and diners' behavioral intentions. To bridge this gap, this current study examines the effect of indirect CCI, a prevalent form of restaurant CCI, on customers' dining experiences and behavioral intentions, including revisit and word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions.

Consumers' perceived consumption experiences vary across customer traits and service settings (Lin et al., 2020a). As contemporary lifestyles evolve, dining alone represents an emerging trend (Her and Seo, 2018). Considering the significant purchasing power of solo diners, it is critical to better understand their dining experiences and how these experiences affect their behavioral intentions. While prior research extensively studied solo diners' attitudes, emotions and perceptions (Brown et al., 2020; Choi et al., 2020; Hwang et al., 2020), their dining experience and behavioral intentions have not been thoroughly investigated. In addition, research exploring the differences between solo diners and social diners (customers eating in groups) is lacking. This current study fills this gap by exploring whether the impact of indirect CCI on behavioral intentions varies by party type (solo vs. social).

The current study addresses two central research questions: Does indirect CCI affect restaurant diners' behavioral intentions, and if it does, do diners' experiential value and restaurant image serve as mediators in these relationships? Will the CCI-affected dining experiences exhibit varied effects on guests' behavioral intentions across party types? This study bridges a gap in the literature by examining the associations among indirect CCI, dining experience and diners' behavioral intentions. It also investigates the differences between solo diners' and social diners' dining experiences.

2. Literature review

2.1 Indirect customer-to-customer interaction

CCI refers to the interpersonal exchange between fellow customers in service encounters (Wu, 2003). The interactive experience among customers is a critical element affecting customer engagement, which determines whether customers will participate in value cocreations (Rao, 2020). The service-dominant logic theory argues that customers are value cocreators and that their engagement behaviors are developed not only with the brand but also with other

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solo and social
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stakeholders, such as service personnel and fellow customers (Boodie *et al.*, 2011). As customer engagement draws increased attention in the hospitality tourism domain, scholars should go beyond the service organization and investigate the interactions among peer customers (So *et al.*, 2021). Existing research studied CCI based on different typologies, including positive CCI and negative CCI (Wu and Liang, 2009; Zhang *et al.*, 2010). Comparing 15 service settings, Zhang *et al.* (2010) suggested that CCI is acute in restaurants because of the high occurrence of both positive CCI and negative CCI, which result in delightful or undelightful dining experiences, respectively. Lin *et al.* (2020a) found that two types of nonverbal CCI proxemics (distance between customers) and the physical appearance of other customers, directly influence restaurant diners' negative emotions. However, functional CCI, which refers to verbal information exchanged between customers regarding a product or service, was found to have a non-significant impact on diners' perceived CCI quality (Lin *et al.*, 2020b). Kim and Choi (2016) classified CCI into friend interaction, neighboring customer interaction and audience interaction. Friend interaction results from interactions with others in their party, and audience interaction refers to the delightfulness of being around other customers. Kim and Choi (2016) suggested that these two types of CCI positively affect customers' experiences in retail stores and movie theaters. However, no significant correlation was found between neighboring customer interaction and service experience (Kim and Choi, 2016). These findings support the notion that conversational interactions with customers who are strangers are not desired in certain service scenarios (Si and Amorim, 2017). For services that require customers to gather at a public place (e.g. restaurants, retail stores, movie theaters), engaging in conversations with strangers in close spatial proximity might not be necessary. In such service establishments, the impact of other customers may be primarily attributed to nonverbal cues, such as eye contact and courtesy nods (Lin *et al.*, 2020a).

Onsite CCI can also be categorized into direct and indirect forms (Nicholls, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2010). Direct CCI covers direct conversations or confrontations with other customers (Zhang *et al.*, 2010). Indirect CCI consists of nonverbal elements of interaction with audience customers, such as perceived conflict level around other customers, observing other customers' behaviors and kinesics – customer interactions via body language, such as courtesy nods and greeting gestures (Nicholls, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2010). Zhang *et al.* (2010) found that indirect CCI is more common than direct CCI and that negative diners' emotions are more likely caused by indirect CCI than by direct CCI. Since negative emotions exert a stronger influence on diners' loyalty than positive emotions (Chen *et al.*, 2015), it is necessary to understand the mechanism by which indirect CCI affects restaurant customers' behaviors. Restaurant customers have explicit expectations of other customers' characteristics and behaviors but generally do not anticipate intense interactions with strangers (Si and Amorim, 2017). Within a catering context, Kim and Lee (2012) found that other customers' appearance, attire, and behavior serve as informative cues for customers' perceived riskiness. Yi *et al.* (2018) suggested that indirect CCI contributes to consumer escape experience in full-service restaurants and positively affects consumers' attachment to the food, which leads to higher dining frequency. Prior research examined the impact of indirect CCI on diners' emotions, feelings about the restaurant and the food, and sense of escape. However, past studies did not identify whether other aspects of a dining experience, such as perceived service quality and value, are affected by indirect CCI. In addition, limited research has quantitatively examined whether the effect of indirect CCI can be extended to customer behavioral intentions. Therefore, the current research examines the effect of indirect CCI on various dimensions of diners' experiences and behavioral intentions.

other hand, restaurant image is a key antecedent of customer loyalty and behavioral intentions, such as revisit intention and WOM intention (Ryu *et al.*, 2012). This study hypothesizes that customers' experiential value is positively related to restaurant image, which positively affects customers' revisit intention and WOM intention. As past research found that familiarity may be related to diners' behavioral intentions, the current study controls respondents' familiarity with restaurant dining (Ha and Jung, 2010).

- H2. Diners' experiential values, i.e. food and beverage excellence (H2a), customer return on investment (H2b), playfulness (H2c), aesthetics (H2d), service excellence (H2e), positively affect restaurant image.

- H3. Restaurant image positively affects customer behavioral intentions, i.e. revisit intention (H3a) and WOM intention (H3b).

2.4 The moderating role of party type

Active experiential values (CROI and playfulness) and passive experiential values (aesthetics and service excellence) are distinct in that active values rely on customers as value coproducers, while passive values are derived from the distanced appreciation of a business' offerings (Mathwick *et al.*, 2001). CROI depends on diners' price acceptance level, and playfulness incorporates diners' emotional status (Aronson and Michaelidou, 2014). In contrast, aesthetics and service excellence rely on contextual factors, such as surroundings and servers' performance. The positive impacts of active values on diners' satisfaction and behavioral intentions are well documented (Use *et al.*, 2018; Chua *et al.*, 2014; Jullivand *et al.*, 2017). However, ambiguous results were found regarding the effect of passive value dimensions on diners' behavioral intentions. Roe *et al.* (2018) examined the effect of dining experiences on solo diners' restaurant repatronage intention and found no direct influence of service quality or physical environment. Similarly, Chua *et al.* (2014) observed no evidence of direct linkages among physical environment, service interaction and behavioral intentions in full-service restaurants. They suggested that the results might be attributed to nearly half of the respondents reported their dining purposes as "yet a quick meal". In a lodging context, research studying hotel guests' behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that solo travelers tend to give lower ratings on their hotel stay than other types of travelers (Sun *et al.*, 2021). These findings suggest that experiential values relying heavily on contextual factors may be perceived differently by certain customer groups.

Extant literature documents the importance of aesthetics and service excellence in determining restaurant diners' behavioral intentions (Erkmen and Hancer, 2019; Ha and Jung, 2012; Ryu *et al.*, 2012). However, prior research has not distinguished customers by party type. Compared to those who visit restaurants with family or friends, people who eat alone may place less value on a restaurant's physical environment (Chua *et al.*, 2014). For example, solo customers prefer to locate themselves at the corner of a restaurant and avoid sitting at eye-catching seats (Goodwin and Lockshin, 1992). As a result, solo diners may perceive surroundings differently than social diners and may have different preferences regarding the frequency and the form of service interactions; therefore, a uniform service standard may not yield the best outcomes for restaurants (Goodwin and Lockshin, 1992). Existing literature implies that the effect of aesthetics and service excellence may be significant for social diners but may not be significant for solo diners. Therefore, the current study examines the moderating role of party type (solo vs. social) in the relationships between the two dimensions of passive experiential values and diners' behavioral intentions. Since restaurant image is the mediator between these relationships in the conceptual model,

2.2 Experiential value

Mathwick *et al.* (2001) developed the experiential value scale (EVS) to capture the multifaceted service experience. EVS divides experiential value into four dimensions classified as either active value or passive value. Consumer return on investment (CROI) and playfulness are dimensions of active values resulting from a collaboration between consumer and business. Aesthetics and service excellence are dimensions of passive values derived from consumers' comprehension of the consumption experience (Mathwick *et al.*, 2001). Notably, because the original EVS was developed in the retail setting and did not include elements critical to the foodservice industry, researchers added food and beverage excellence (F&B excellence) as an additional dimension of experiential value in restaurant studies (Jullivand *et al.*, 2017; Taylor *et al.*, 2018). F&B excellence captures customers' evaluations of food and beverage consumed in restaurants (Taylor *et al.*, 2018). In the restaurant literature, CROI represents the perceived value of price – the benefits that customers receive compared to the resources they invest in the consumption process (Kung *et al.*, 2007; Taylor *et al.*, 2018). Playfulness signifies the emotional enjoyment of restaurant dining (Galarza-Gonzalez *et al.*, 2020; Mathwick *et al.*, 2001). Aesthetics refers to the physical environment, describing the restaurant's ambience, design, music and atmosphere (Chen *et al.*, 2014; Jin *et al.*, 2019; Wu and Liang, 2009). Service excellence reflects diners' appreciation of the service providers' expertise (Mathwick *et al.*, 2001). Research has found evidence that CCI positively influences dining experience when experiential value is examined as a single construct (Ji *et al.*, 2018; Song *et al.*, 2018; Wu and Liang, 2009). However, studies investigating how CCI affects each dimension of the dining experience are limited. Taylor *et al.* (2018) examined the sub-dimensions of experiential value separately and found that playfulness, service excellence and CROI significantly influenced a customer's relationship with a restaurant, while aesthetics and F&B excellence showed non-significant impacts. However, their research studied the five experiential value dimensions as exogenous variables. Unlike prior research that treats experiential value as a single construct or an exogenous variable, this current study models experiential value as endogenous and further investigates how CCI affects each dimension of experiential value. As indirect CCI affects diners' emotions and subsequently their evaluation of the product and service (Chen *et al.*, 2015; Lin *et al.*, 2020a), it is plausible that indirect CCI affects each experiential value dimension.

- H1. Indirect CCI has a positive influence on diners' experiential values, i.e. food and beverage excellence (H1a), customer return on investment (H1b), playfulness (H1c), aesthetics (H1d), service excellence (H1e).

2.3 Image and behavioral intentions

The influence of dining experience on restaurant customers' behavioral intentions has been empirically tested (Chen *et al.*, 2014; Ho and Jung, 2012; Jullivand *et al.*, 2017; Jin *et al.*, 2019; Taylor *et al.*, 2018). Restaurant atmosphere, service quality and food quality were found to positively affect customers' revisit intention and WOM intention (Ha and Jung, 2012). Jullivand *et al.* (2017) and Jin *et al.* (2019) found that the perceived value of dining experiences indirectly influences customer WOM intention. Similarly, Taylor *et al.* (2018) contended that experiential value indirectly affects WOM intention, revisit intention and willingness to pay at pop-up restaurants. Chen *et al.* (2014) suggested that restaurant image mediates the relationship between experiential value and behavioral intentions. On the one hand, experience-related factors such as food quality, service quality, physical environment and perceived trust were found to influence restaurant image (Erkmen and Hancer, 2019). On the

other hand, it is hypothesized that the indirect effects of aesthetics and service excellence on revisit intention and WOM intention differ by party type (solo vs. social).

- H4. Party type moderates the mediating effect of restaurant image in the relationship between aesthetics and diners' behavioral intentions (i.e. revisit intention (H4a) and WOM intention (H4b)), so that the indirect effect of aesthetics is significant for social diners only.

- H5. Party type moderates the mediating effect of restaurant image in the relationship between service excellence on diners' behavioral intentions (i.e. revisit intention (H5a) and WOM intention (H5b)), so that the indirect effect of service excellence is significant for social diners only.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research model and hypotheses

The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1. Indirect CCI is hypothesized to positively influence each of the five dimensions of diners' experiential value (H1), which, in turn, positively affects customer behavioral intentions via restaurant image (H2 and H3). Party type is expected to moderate the indirect effect from aesthetics (H4) and service excellence (H5) on behavioral intentions.

3.2 Sample and construct measurement

Data were collected in October 2020 through a Qualtrics online panel. Participants were at least 18 years old and had patronized either a casual or a fast-casual restaurant 12 months before the data collection period. In the USA, restaurants are classified into quick-service restaurants, fast-casual restaurants, casual dining restaurants, family restaurants and fine dining restaurants (Dixon *et al.*, 2018). The casual and fast-casual restaurants were selected for this study as they offer a considerable amount of table service and have a high

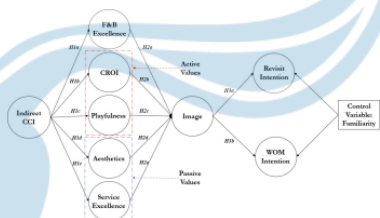


Figure 1.
Conceptual model

but above 0.400 is also acceptable, and the convergent validity is adequate as long as the composite reliability of the construct is higher than 0.600. Indirect CCI had an AVE of 0.481 and a composite reliability score of 0.736, indicating adequate convergent validity. As *Mathwick et al. (2001)* acknowledged during the development of the CCI, the hierarchical structure of the CCI is not a hierarchical structure of hierarchically organized constructs and subsequently demonstrated discriminant validity in a weak sense by examining confidence intervals ($\pm$ two standard deviations) around the correlations. In the retained measurement model, none of the confidence intervals for the correlations surrounding pairs of constructs with significant factor loadings (R^2 less than their respective AVEs) included zero, suggesting discriminant validity (*Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981*). Reliability values were above the suggested value of 0.700 (*Hair et al., 2009*), indicating acceptable internal consistency. From the correlations shown in the lower triangle of Table 3, all factor correlations were statistically significant and in the expected directions.

4.2 Common method bias testing

Using self-reporting surveys may introduce common method bias (CMB). To test for CMB, models were built according to Williams *et al.* (2010) comprehensive CFA marker technique, and incremental model fit indices were computed. Respondents' independence underpins the use of CFA and was theoretically unrelated to the substantive variables that reflected respondents' dining experience. The results in Table 4 indicate that the method factor loadings (assumed to be equal) were significantly different from zero ($p < 0.001$). This result supports the presence of method variance associated with the marker variable. The comparison of the Method-C and Method-R yielded non-significant results by the marker variable method effect (Method-C vs Method-R model, $\chi^2(77) = 29.391, p = 1.00$). The substantive reliability scores shown in Table 5 indicate that the measurement of all latent variables yielded adequate reliability scores. The average variance extracted (AVE) for the substantive variables was 0.227, of the total reliability values for the substantive factors. Sensitivity analysis

Model	χ^2	Df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
1. CFA	1,508.803	574	0.902	0.921	0.058
2. Baseline	1,645.326	602	0.904	0.916	0.059
3. Method C	1,587.213	601	0.928	0.930	0.058
4. Method U	1,528.858	589	0.928	0.915	0.060
5. Method R	1,586.349	646	0.931	0.929	0.063

Chi square model comparison tests

Models	χ^2_{df}	Δdf	Chi square critical value, $\alpha = 0.05$
1. Baseline vs Method C	58.013 (1)	1	3.84
2. Method C vs Method U	29.381 (1)	1	3.84
3. Method C vs Method R	29.381 (1)	77	95.02

Table 4.
Chi-square,
goodness-of-fit
values and model
comparison tests for
common method bias
testing

Δ Models	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	Chi-square critical value, $\alpha = 0.05$
1. Baseline vs Method C	58.013	1	3.84
2. Method C vs Method U	28.355	32	46.19
3. Method C vs Method R	29.391	77	96.22

Note: *** $p < 0.001$

results suggest that the factor correlations only have a small corresponding change in value when method factor loadings were manipulated. In conclusion, although the model comparison results indicated the presence of CMB represented by the marker variable effects, these effects did not significantly bias factor correlation estimates (Williams *et al.*, 2010).

4.3 Structural model

After confirming the acceptable fit of the measurement model and accounting for CMR, SEM was used to test the overall fit of the proposed model and to examine the hypotheses. The full structural model indicated an acceptable and reasonable fit to the data, $\chi^2 = 1,465.640$ (df = 9, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.065) (90% CI: 0.061, 0.069), CFI = 0.923, TLI = 0.915. Figure 2 shows the model with unstandardized and completely standardized estimates. Fully supporting *H1a*, *H1b*, *H1c*, *H1d* and *H1e*, indirect CFI was positively and significantly associated with customer satisfaction. Contrary to expectations, *H2a*, *H2b*, *H2c*, *H2d*, *H2e*, *H2f*, *H2g*, *H2h*, *H2i*, *H2j*, *H2k*, *H2l*, *H2m*, *H2n*, *H2o*, *H2p*, *H2q*, *H2r*, *H2s*, *H2t*, *H2u*, *H2v*, *H2w*, *H2x*, *H2y*, *H2z*, *H2aa*, *H2ab*, *H2ac*, *H2ad*, *H2ae*, *H2af*, *H2ag*, *H2ah*, *H2ai*, *H2aj*, *H2ak*, *H2al*, *H2am*, *H2an*, *H2ao*, *H2ap*, *H2aq*, *H2ar*, *H2as*, *H2at*, *H2au*, *H2av*, *H2aw*, *H2ax*, *H2ay*, *H2az*, *H2ba*, *H2bb*, *H2bc*, *H2bd*, *H2be*, *H2bf*, *H2bg*, *H2bh*, *H2bi*, *H2bj*, *H2bk*, *H2bl*, *H2bm*, *H2bn*, *H2bo*, *H2bp*, *H2bq*, *H2br*, *H2bs*, *H2bt*, *H2bu*, *H2bv*, *H2bw*, *H2bx*, *H2by*, *H2bz*, *H2ca*, *H2cb*, *H2cc*, *H2cd*, *H2ce*, *H2cf*, *H2cg*, *H2ch*, *H2ci*, *H2cj*, *H2ck*, *H2cl*, *H2cm*, *H2cn*, *H2co*, *H2cp*, *H2cq*, *H2cr*, *H2cs*, *H2ct*, *H2cu*, *H2cv*, *H2cw*, *H2cx*, *H2cy*, *H2cz*, *H2da*, *H2db*, *H2dc*, *H2dd*, *H2de*, *H2df*, *H2dg*, *H2dh*, *H2di*, *H2dj*, *H2dk*, *H2dl*, *H2dm*, *H2dn*, *H2do*, *H2dp*, *H2dq*, *H2dr*, *H2ds*, *H2dt*, *H2du*, *H2dv*, *H2dw*, *H2dx*, *H2dy*, *H2dz*, *H2ea*, *H2eb*, *H2ec*, *H2ed*, *H2ee*, *H2ef*, *H2eg*, *H2eh*, *H2ei*, *H2ej*, *H2ek*, *H2el*, *H2em*, *H2en*, *H2eo*, *H2ep*, *H2eq*, *H2er*, *H2es*, *H2et*, *H2eu*, *H2ev*, *H2ew*, *H2ex*, *H2ey*, *H2ez*, *H2fa*, *H2fb*, *H2fc*, *H2fd*, *H2fe*, *H2ff*, *H2fg*, *H2fh*, *H2fi*, *H2fj*, *H2fk*, *H2fl*, *H2fm*, *H2fn*, *H2fo*, *H2fp*, *H2fq*, *H2fr*, *H2fs*, *H2ft*, *H2fu*, *H2fv*, *H2fw*, *H2fx*, *H2fy*, *H2fz*, *H2ga*, *H2gb*, *H2gc*, *H2gd*, *H2ge*, *H2gf*, *H2gg*, *H2gh*, *H2gi*, *H2gj*, *H2gk*, *H2gl*, *H2gm*, *H2gn*, *H2go*, *H2gp*, *H2gq*, *H2gr*, *H2gs*, *H2gt*, *H2gu*, *H2gv*, *H2gw*, *H2gx*, *H2gy*, *H2gz*, *H2ha*, *H2hb*, *H2hc*, *H2hd*, *H2he*, *H2hf*, *H2hg*, *H2hh*, *H2hi*, *H2hj*, *H2hk*, *H2hl*, *H2hm*, *H2hn*, *H2ho*, *H2hp*, *H2hq*, *H2hr*, *H2hs*, *H2ht*, *H2hu*, *H2hv*, *H2hw*, *H2hx*, *H2hy*, *H2hz*, *H2ia*, *H2ib*, *H2ic*, *H2id*, *H2ie*, *H2if*, *H2ig*, *H2ih*, *H2ii*, *H2ij*, *H2ik*, *H2il*, *H2im*, *H2in*, *H2io*, *H2ip*, *H2iq*, *H2ir*, *H2is*, *H2it*, *H2iu*, *H2iv*, *H2iw*, *H2ix*, *H2iy*, *H2iz*, *H2ja*, *H2jb*, *H2jc*, *H2jd*, *H2je*, *H2jf*, *H2jg*, *H2jh*, *H2ji*, *H2jj*, *H2jk*, *H2jl*, *H2jm*, *H2jn*, *H2jo*, *H2jp*, *H2jq*, *H2jr*, *H2js*, *H2jt*, *H2ju*, *H2jv*, *H2jw*, *H2jx*, *H2jy*, *H2jz*, *H2ka*, *H2kb*, *H2kc*, *H2kd*, *H2ke*, *H2kf*, *H2kg*, *H2kh*, *H2ki*, *H2kj*, *H2kk*, *H2kl*, *H2km*, *H2kn*, *H2ko*, *H2kp*, *H2kq*, *H2kr*, *H2ks*, *H2kt*, *H2ku*, *H2kv*, *H2kw*, *H2kx*, *H2ky*, *H2kz*, *H2la*, *H2lb*, *H2lc*, *H2ld*, *H2le*, *H2lf*, *H2lg*, *H2lh*, *H2li*, *H2lj*, *H2lk*, *H2ll*, *H2lm*, *H2ln*, *H2lo*, *H2lp*, *H2lq*, *H2lr*, *H2ls*, *H2lt*, *H2lu*, *H2lv*, *H2lw*, *H2lx*, *H2ly*, *H2lz*, *H2ma*, *H2mb*, *H2mc*, *H2md*, *H2me*, *H2mf*, *H2mg*, *H2mh*, *H2mi*, *H2mj*, *H2mk*, *H2ml*, *H2mm*, *H2mn*, *H2mo*, *H2mp*, *H2mq*, *H2mr*, *H2ms*, *H2mt*, *H2mu*, *H2mv*, *H2mw*, *H2mx*, *H2my*, *H2mz*, *H2na*, *H2nb*, *H2nc*, *H2nd*, *H2ne*, *H2nf*, *H2ng*, *H2nh*, *H2ni*, *H2nj*, *H2nk*, *H2nl*, *H2nm*, *H2nn*, *H2no*, *H2np*, *H2nq*, *H2nr*, *H2ns*, *H2nt*, *H2nu*, *H2nv*, *H2nw*, *H2nx*, *H2ny*, *H2nz*, *H2oa*, *H2ob*, *H2oc*, *H2od*, *H2oe*, *H2of*, *H2og*, *H2oh*, *H2oi*, *H2oj*, *H2ok*, *H2ol*, *H2om*, *H2on*, *H2oo*, *H2op*, *H2oq*, *H2or*, *H2os*, *H2ot*, *H2ou*, *H2ov*, *H2ow*, *H2ox*, *H2oy*, *H2oz*, *H2pa*, *H2pb*, *H2pc*, *H2pd*, *H2pe*, *H2pf*, *H2pg*, *H2ph*, *H2pi*, *H2pj*, *H2pk*, *H2pl*, *H2pm*, *H2pn*, *H2po*, *H2pp*, *H2pq*, *H2pr*, *H2ps*, *H2pt*, *H2pu*, *H2pv*, *H2pw*, *H2px*, *H2py*, *H2pz*, *H2qa*, *H2qb*, *H2qc*, *H2qd*, *H2qe*, *H2qf*, *H2qg*, *H2qh*, *H2qi*, *H2qj*, *H2qk*, *H2ql*, *H2qm*, *H2qn*, *H2qo*, *H2qp*, *H2qq*, *H2qr*, *H2qs*, *H2qt*, *H2qu*, *H2qv*, *H2qw*, *H2qx*, *H2qy*, *H2qz*, *H2ra*, *H2rb*, *H2rc*, *H2rd*, *H2re*, *H2rf*, *H2rg*, *H2rh*, *H2ri*, *H2rj*, *H2rk*, *H2rl*, *H2rm*, *H2rn*

Latent variable	R _{Total}	R _{Substantive}	R _{Method}	(%) R _{Method}
CC	0.778	0.690	0.088	11.3
FAIR	0.910	0.780	0.122	13.3
CROI	0.913	0.812	0.101	11.0
PL	0.876	0.783	0.094	10.7
AE	0.876	0.774	0.102	11.7
SE	0.881	0.784	0.097	11.0
IM	0.880	0.778	0.082	9.3
RV	0.846	0.761	0.085	10.1
WOM	0.916	0.708	0.208	22.7

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Figure 2. Structural model with unstandardized coefficients and standardized coefficients in parenthesis

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

significantly associated with revisit intention and WOM intention. Subsequently, *H3a* and *H3b* were supported. In total, the model explained 87.2% of the variance in F&B excellence, 85.2% of the variance in CROU, 73.6% of the variance in playfulness, 88.8% of the variance in aesthetics, 86.2% of the variance in service excellence, 94.3% of the variance in restaurant image, 74.1% of the variance in revisit intention, and 79.5% of the variance in WOM intention.

Although measured *readiness* were not on a behavioral scale, the model suggests that images with the effect of *readiness* are based on hypothetical intentions. These indirect effects were tested using bootstrapping. The test results revealed a significant indirect effect of F&B exposure on revisit intention (F&B-RI) and WOM intention (F&B-WOM) via *readiness* ($\beta = 0.287, 95\% \text{ CI} = [0.051, 0.485]$), a significant indirect effect of aesthetics on revisit intention (AE-RI) and WOM intention (AE-WOM) via *restaurant image* (indirect effect $\beta = 0.288, 95\% \text{ CI} = [0.143, 0.475]$), indirect effect $\beta_{\text{aesthetics}}$ = 0.374, 95% CI = [0.188, 0.560], a significant indirect effect of *readiness* on revisit intention (RI) and WOM intention (SE-WOM) via *restaurant image* (indirect effect $\beta = 0.231, 95\% \text{ CI} = [0.07, 0.421]$). Indirect effect $\beta_{\text{readiness}}$ = 0.289, 95% CI = [0.18, 0.325], however, indirect effect $\beta_{\text{readiness}}$ = 0.002, 95% CI = [-0.175, 0.166] indirect effect $\beta_{\text{aesthetics}}$ = 0.044, 95% CI = [-0.017, 0.129], indirect effect $\beta_{\text{aesthetics}}$ = 0.015, 95% CI = [-0.206, 0.237], indirect effect $\beta_{\text{aesthetics}}$ =

To test *H1* and *H2*, multi-group structural models were fitted to the data to explore the effects of the social type (solo vs. social) on the mediating effect of the restaurant images on the relationships between aesthetics and diners' behavioral intentions and between service excellence and diners' behavioral intentions. Prior to testing the multi-group structural models, analyses were conducted in two distinct phases to examine measurement invariance across party types. In the first phase, a CFA was estimated separately in the solo and social subsamples to examine whether the hypothesized factor structure provides an acceptable fit to each sample. Factor loadings were constrained to be equal across the two samples. In the second phase of analysis, the retained model was subjected to multiple-group tests of measurement invariance across party types.

measurement invariance across party types. The model fit was acceptable and reasonable for the data, $\chi^2(95) = 965.94$, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.068 (95% CI, 0.062–0.074), CFI = 0.913, TLI = 0.897. Analogously, the test of the model in the social desirability group provided a close and reasonable fit to the data, $\chi^2(145) = 1,019.1$, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.068 (95% CI, 0.062–0.074), CFI = 0.913, TLI = 0.897. The factor loadings in both subsamples were uniformly moderate-to-strong and statistically significant. After confirming the acceptability of the CFA models in each subsample, we tested the measurement invariance of the CFA models across the two subsamples and fit indices for the models of invariance across party types. The configural invariance model provided an acceptable and reasonable fit to the data. Support was also found in the additive invariance of factor loadings, intercepts, and error variances. The measurement model was found to be invariant across both solo dimers and social dimer groups at all levels. The CFA tests for weak factorial invariance, strict factorial invariance, scalar invariance, and factorial score invariance were all significant. RMSEA was within the acceptable interval of the model fit.

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Model	β	σ^2	TL	RMS-E	RMSE	$\Delta\hat{\mu}^{1/2}$	ACF	ATE
WZS-AR(1)	1.0 (0.04)	500	0.0023	0.009	0.064 (0.027)	0.000	0.000	0.000
WZS-AR(1)-R	1.0 (0.04)	500	0.0023	0.009	0.064 (0.027)	0.000	0.000	0.000
WZS-AR(1)-R + Δ	1.0 (0.04)	500	0.0023	0.009	0.064 (0.027)	0.000	0.000	0.000
WZS-AR(1)-R + Δ + PCV	2.0 (0.02)	500	0.0016	0.006	0.064 (0.027)	0.000	0.000	0.000
WZS-AR(1)-R + Δ + PCV + Δ	2.1 (0.02)	500	0.0014	0.009	0.064 (0.027)	0.000	0.000	0.000
WZS-AR(1)-R + Δ + PCV + Δ + Δ	2.1 (0.02)	500	0.0017	0.010	0.064 (0.027)	0.000	0.000	0.000

Notes: $\Delta\hat{\mu}^{1/2}$ = the half-width of the 95% confidence interval for the true mean; Δ = the difference between the predicted and observed ACF; RMS-E = the root-mean-square error; RMSE = the root-mean-square error; ATE = the average treatment effect.

Table 6.
Fit statistics for the
multiple-group
models of invariance
across the solo and
social subsamples

factorial invariance model, the ΔTLI were ≤ 0.05 (Tucker and Lewis, 1973) and the $\Delta\text{CFI} \leq -0.01$ (Hu and Bentler, 1998). Taken together, these results suggest that it is reasonable to assume there was not a significant loss in model fit (Wu *et al.*, 2007).

Given adequate measurement invariance, tests of moderated mediation effect were performed using the "model constraint" command in Mplus. Table 7 suggests that the moderated mediation model provided a close and reasonable fit to the data, $\chi^2(1024) = 2,326.793$, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.072 (90% CI 0.068, 0.076), CFI = 0.901, TLI = 0.898. In line with expectations, bootstrap tests indicated that the indirect effect of aesthetics on revisit intention via restaurant image (z -score = -2.773 , $p < 0.01$) and the indirect effect of aesthetics on WOM intention (z -score = -3.288 , $p < 0.001$) via restaurant image were significantly different between the solo diner and social diner groups. The effect of aesthetics on revisit intention and WOM intention via restaurant image was significant for the social diner group ($B_{\text{AE,SI}} = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$; $B_{\text{AE,WI}} = 0.457$, $p < 0.001$). However, the effect of aesthetics on the two behavioral intention constructs via restaurant image was not significant for the solo diner group ($B_{\text{AE,SI}} = 0.041$, $p = 0.510$; $B_{\text{AE,WI}} = 0.049$, $p = 0.517$). Accordingly, $H4a$ and $H4b$ were supported. Contrary to expectations, bootstrap tests indicated that the indirect effect of service excellence on revisit intention via restaurant image (z -score = 0.771 , $p = 0.441$) and the indirect effect of service excellence on WOM intention (z -score = 0.395 , $p = 0.693$) via restaurant image were not significantly different between the solo diner and social diner groups. Thus, $H5a$ and $H5b$ were not supported.

5. Discussion

5.1 Conclusions

This research examined the impact of indirect CCI on restaurant diners' experiential value and suggests that an enjoyable interaction between customers directly increases customer perception of every dining experience aspect. Successively, customer perception influences behavioral intentions, and this study verified the significant predictive effect of indirect CCI on revisit intention and WOM intention via the mediating effect of experiential values and restaurant image. Indirect CCI positively affected behavioral intentions by influencing aesthetics, service excellence and F&B excellence. The findings imply that increased positive perception of a restaurant's physical environment, service quality and food quality can significantly improve restaurant image, which sequentially increases revisit intention and intention of recommending the restaurant to others. However, this study did not find

Table 7.

Moderated mediation

of behavioral

intentions mediated

on aesthetics and

service excellence via

restaurant image

	Coefficient (b)	SE	z-score
	Solo diner group (N = 248)	Social diner group (N = 248)	
Aesthetics $\rightarrow$ image $\rightarrow$ revisit intention	0.312***	0.041	-2.773**
Aesthetics $\rightarrow$ image $\rightarrow$ WOM intention	0.457***	0.049	-3.288**
Service excellence $\rightarrow$ image $\rightarrow$ revisit intention	0.102	0.240	0.425
Service excellence $\rightarrow$ image $\rightarrow$ WOM intention	0.102	0.240	0.425

Note: N = 496; *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Furthermore, this research extends the literature on experiential value by adding F&B excellence to Mathwick *et al.*'s (2001) experiential value measurement scale. Results indicate that F&B excellence is a dominant factor that significantly affects restaurant image and customer behavioral intentions. This corresponds to Jallu *et al.*'s (2017) findings that suggested food quality influences restaurant customers' WOM intention. However, it contradicts Taylor *et al.* (2018), who did not find a significant impact of F&B excellence on revisit intention. This study did not find significant impacts of playfulness on restaurant image and behavioral intentions. Customers' individual differences might explain this finding. For instance, the impact of enjoyment on customers' satisfaction for quick service restaurants highly depends on customers' cultural backgrounds (Galbraith-Graziano *et al.*, 2020).

5.3 Practical implications

In addition to the theoretical contributions, this research offers insights for restaurant industry practitioners regarding approaches to enhance customer engagement. It also identifies customers' needs according to party type and provides strategies for restaurant operation optimization (Hyer and Seo, 2018).

Indirect CCI often occurs when customers group together in situations such as in a queue or lobby (Lee *et al.*, 2018; Krishnan *et al.*, 2020) indicated that atmospherics during a pre-event (e.g. while waiting in line) could foster a positive attitude and build anticipation prior to the main event. As such, managers can control the environment in and around their outlets with friendly hosting employees, proper signage and information, proactive messaging (e.g. employing technology for queuing times) and planning for crowds. Management needs to effectively address crowd management in their restaurants according to customer party type. For example, if the majority of customers are social diners, unproductive crowd management will have a more pronounced negative impact. If customers cannot be seated in a reasonable timeframe, restaurant managers should redirect them to other venues or offer them bar seating with a complimentary snack or beverage. Management should have rigorous knowledge of their target market's differentiated needs and expectations. Strategies such as deliberately seating different types of guests to foster positive interactions should be considered. A harmonious atmosphere created by other customers should be fostered, and restaurant employees should be trained to give appropriate attention to different types of customers to afford a sense of responsiveness without being perceived as intrusive. To mitigate the effects of negative CCI, restaurant managers need to be actively involved in front-of-the-house activities and remain visible in the dining room to recognize and address troublesome customer behaviors. Proactively managing unruly and intruding customers in a professional and courteous manner will be appreciated by other customers and subsequently minimize the effects of negative indirect CCI. In addition, employees need to be confident in their management's support when dealing with difficult and disruptive customers. Finally, the restaurant's marketing communication should set the tone for an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Since this study found that F&B excellence, aesthetics and service excellence affected restaurant image and behavioral intentions, management can innovate and experiment with these constructs. Interestingly, the results indicated that aesthetics has the biggest impact on behavioral intentions via restaurant image. This construct, together with service excellence and F&B excellence to a lesser extent, significantly affects restaurant image, which suggests its importance to management.

evidence supporting CROI and playfulness affecting behavioral intentions. For both results, the type of dining experience is likely the reason for the insignificant results. Jin *et al.* (2012) found differences in the environment as an antecedent to restaurant brand image based on whether the dining motivation is a quick meal versus a social occasion. The non-significant effect of CROI may be explained by the selection of casual and fast-casual restaurants as scenarios in the study design. As the prices of these restaurants are generally reasonable and affordable, customers' perceived value of the price may not be a salient factor in determining behavioral intentions. The non-significant effect of playfulness may be attributed to the varied dining purposes. If customers visit restaurants primarily for business meals, the value they place on the enjoyment of the dining process may not be aligned with customers who dine in restaurants for social or leisure purposes.

This study found that party type moderates the relationships between aesthetics and behavioral intentions so that the effect is significant only for social diners. For solo diners, aesthetics is not a predictive factor of behavioral intentions. However, the moderating effect of party type in the relationship between service excellence and behavioral intentions is not significant, suggesting that service excellence is an antecedent of revisit intention and WOM intention for both solo diners and social diners.

5.2 Theoretical implications

This study theoretically contributes to the literature in several ways. First, the significant impact of indirect CCI on each dimension of diners' experiential value echoes Hao (2020), who suggested that CCI contributes to customer evaluation of their service experience. Second, the findings extend CCI research by identifying which customer experience variables eventually influence diners' revisit and WOM intention. Unlike prior research, this study examined subdimensions of EVS and found that only basic experiential value traits (F&B excellence, aesthetics, service excellence) affected restaurant image and behavioral intentions. Third, the results provide empirical evidence for the positive effect of restaurant image in mediating the relationship between indirect CCI and behavioral intentions. This finding is consistent with recent work highlighting the importance of CCI as a precursor to brand commitment and WOM (An *et al.*, 2019). Fourth, this study adds to previous CCI research on perspectives of customer dissimilarity. By investigating the influence of different party types patronizing restaurants, this study shows that aesthetics play a significant role in assessing restaurant image and, ultimately, behavioral intentions for social diners. However, this is not the case for solo diners. The moderated effect of party type is partially consistent with Chau *et al.* (2014), who found that certain customer groups place less value on a restaurant's physical environment. Meanwhile, this study addressed previous research that called for the study of different segments of diners throughout the pandemic (Tuunio *et al.*, 2021). Since this study collected data during the COVID-19 pandemic, it may project insights on restaurant diners' post-pandemic behavior. The positive effect of service excellence on behavioral intentions was found to be consistent across party types. This result confirms the significant impact of service quality in the restaurant literature (Kim *et al.*, 2009; Taylor *et al.*, 2018). It also supports the unswerving value of service excellence in achieving customer satisfaction during the global pandemic (Hao and Chon, 2021; Jiang and Wen, 2020; Sun *et al.*, 2021).

Management should pay close attention to the physical aspects of their restaurant to ensure that an appropriate physical environment is maintained to reflect the image of the restaurant. It is imperative to note that perceptions of aesthetics differ by customer type. This study reveals that aesthetics are important to social diners but not to solo diners, further highlighting the need for managers to understand their customer segments. To maximize the value of a restaurant's physical attributes, managers should consider seating social diners in locations with higher aesthetic value since this party type places higher merit on this experiential value dimension. For new restaurants, tables in the dining room with the lower aesthetic value could be designed to accommodate solo diners because there is a lower associated increase in behavioral intentions resulting from aesthetics for this party type. Service excellence significantly affects restaurant image and behavioral intentions, and it is important to both solo and social diners. Management can assume that service quality is crucial to all customers and should provide high-quality service accordingly. Customized services such as communal tables, special table settings, or robotics could be adopted to boost customer satisfaction (Hao and Chon, 2021; Zhang *et al.*, 2021). In addition, the findings of this study are particularly important during the ongoing pandemic. Since service excellence remains constantly vital to customer loyalty, restaurants should be more attentive to hygiene and protective procedures to prevent service failure and promote overall health in the post-pandemic era (Jiang and Wen, 2020; Sun *et al.*, 2021).

5.4 Limitations and future research

Similar to other studies, the current research exhibits several limitations. First, it explored the linkage between indirect CCI and diners' behavioral intentions in the context of casual and fast-casual restaurants. The dining facilities were chosen for their high possibility of appealing to solo customers. Considering the impact of service settings on indirect CCI (Lin *et al.*, 2020a), future research could explore this relationship across different market segments, such as fine dining or fast-food restaurants. Second, since this study collected data during the COVID-19 pandemic, it provides insights for future research on restaurant diners' post-pandemic behaviors. For instance, it would be interesting to replicate the study in a post-pandemic setting and draw conclusions by comparing the results. Third, to enhance the conceptual model, the constructs in the EVS that were found to be insignificant in this current study could be removed in a future study. Fourth, respondents in this study answered questions related to their past experiences. This process may yield inaccurate information recall; as such, a field experiment could be conducted in the future to generate additional support for the relationships of interest. Finally, a different analysis technique could be used, such as fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (Krisznan *et al.*, 2020).

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4. The restaurant served tasty food.
5. Food was served at the appropriate temperatures.
- CROV* (Jin et al., 2013)
1. The menus in this restaurant were a good value.
2. The restaurant offered such good service that it was worth its price.
3. The prices at this restaurant were acceptable.
- Physicians* (Keng et al., 2007)
1. Dining at this restaurant made me feel cheerful.
2. I felt happy when I dined at this restaurant.
3. Dining at this restaurant made me forget my troubles.
- Antibodies* (Chen et al., 2014; Jin et al., 2019; Wu and Liang, 2020)
1. The furnishing of the restaurant was aesthetically appealing.
2. The atmosphere of the restaurant was appealing.
3. The food presented was visually appealing.
- Service confidence* (Wu and Liang, 2020)
1. The service in this restaurant was consistently reliable.
2. The service provided in the restaurant was attentive.
3. Whenever I think of this restaurant, I appreciate its excellent service quality.
- Restaurant image* (Erikson and Hansen, 2019; Jung et al., 2015)
1. This restaurant had a pleasant atmosphere.
2. This restaurant had a reputation for quality.
3. The restaurant was popular with customers.
- Repeat intention* (Wu et al., 2017)
1. The probability that I will eat at this restaurant is high.
2. I consider myself a loyal patron of this restaurant.
3. I will choose this restaurant again for my next visit.
- WOM intention* (Jellison et al., 2017)
1. I would say positive things about this restaurant to other people.
2. I would recommend this restaurant to someone who seeks my advice.
3. I would encourage friends and relatives to return to this restaurant.

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