

Restaurantscapes and its Impact on Customer Patronage: An Empirical Perspectives

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Received September 12, 2021; Accepted December 12, 2021

ISSN: 1735-188X

DOI: 10.14704/WEB/V19I1/WEB19175

Abstract

There is a considerable signal from empirical studies that many factors influence customer's patronage. The primary purpose of this research is to review the impact of restaurantscapes (space/function, hygiene, and social interaction) on customer patronage and customer emotional response to restaurantscapes in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Customer familiarity is a moderation variable the has been explored in this study. The framework of the present study was developed based on a systematic review of past literature, which has not been tested yet. Three hundred and nine (319) usable responses were obtained. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Based on the importance of the study's variables, the present paper stated a positive result in the relationship between restaurantscapes on customer emotional response and customer patronage and a positive relationship between customer emotional response and customer patronage. However, the study does not support the moderation role of customer familiarity. Thus, restaurantscapes will improve the Saudi restaurant's performance by increasing customer patronage. The paper emphasizes the critical value of restaurantscapes for restaurants owner/managers. Stimulus Organism and Response (S-O-R) theory was used to underlie the conceptual framework. In addition, some implications of this conceptual model for theory and practice are discussed.

Keywords

Restaurantscapes, Customer Familiarity, Customer Emotional Responses, Customer Patronage.

Introduction

Designing process in services literature is considered as the core activity to attract new and existing customers. These designs are used as strategies to enhance customer satisfaction and patronage (Bitner 1992). Several past studies were conducted to identify the core factors to identify the customer's priorities that can attract customers and enhance customer satisfaction and customer patronage. Several past studies, particularly in services perspectives, studied different industries such as hotels, retail, and airport services. However, little attention has been paid to discuss and identify the restaurant industry and its performance. In addition, what are the main attributes that can attract customers and enhance the satisfaction level for the customers to patronize.

This specific study will put the efforts to identify the restaurant industry's main attributes that can help attract to the industry and remain loyal. The study used the term restaurants dimensions; initially, the term was used as a servicescape by (Bitner, 1992). The study of servicescapes was based in the services industry, and the lead had followed by other researchers and conducted several studies. Additionally, several studies have coined the term servicescapes quite differently; for instance, a study conducted in a restaurant by (Ryu & Jang, 2008) and named it dinescape. Another study was conducted in the festival and named it festivalscapes (Lee, Wei, Kysar & Hone, 2008), and many others conducted and followed the same lead.

The dimensions for the present study of restaurants are space/functions, social interaction, and the most important is hygiene. Different attributes were considered based on the past studies recommendations. The study then organized these attributes effects on customer emotional responses with the moderating construct named customer familiarity, and ultimately their impact on customer patronage. As discussed earlier, sufficient like research can elaborate more clearly on which dimensions require more attention, which attribute requires less, and which requires more attention. Additionally, this would increase and extend the contemporary literature to explore the diverse group of people with their opinions.

Literature Review

1. Restaurant Dimensions and Customer Patronage

Past several studies well stressed the settings of service industries, and these settings mainly consist of the tangible and intangible environment (Teng *et al.*, 2018; Wakefield &

Blodgett, 2016). Settings of the environment are necessary from different perspectives, such as acquiring customer satisfaction, loyalty, and patronage. The core aim of such an environment is to seek and understand the customer's needs and wants. This study is conducted in restaurants and considered the dimensions that can attract customers. The dimensions considered for the restaurant industries are proper spacing, social interaction, and the most important is hygiene. The study was thus conducted to acquire the impact of these factors on customer patronage. The term customer patronage can be conceptually categorized as the objectives of the individuals to spend on services (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). The following study framework Figure. 1 can be divide based on Russel and Mehrabain theory. The concept is generated with the SOR theory. According to this theory, the present framework can be divided into Stimulus, Organism and Responses. The tangible components of industries are considered a stimulus; organisms are considered the process conducted inside the industry. In contrast, the response is the behaviour, either positive or negative (Approach and Avoidance). Dimensions and customer patronage are considered as stimulus and responses. Further, it can be elaborated if the tangible and intangible environment of the industry is according to the customer's expectation, most likely customers will stay longer in the industry and would not be hesitating to spend more. Spending more is the positive behaviour of customer response.

Thus, we could say that if the services are aligned according to customers' expectations, then there will be more chances for customers to patronize the same industry in the future. Based on the following discussion, the present study, therefore, suggesting the following relationship and developed the hypotheses.

H1-There is a positive relationship between Restaurant Dimensions and customer patronage.

2. Restaurant Dimensions and Customer Emotional Responses

Customers' cognitive and emotional responses are subjective characteristics for customer perception to make a decision (Bustamante & Rubio, 2017). In addition, past studies confirmed the link between environmental dimensions and customer emotional responses because these are customers' responses that impact and enhance the belief of customers, place attachment and variety of products (Cicenaite & Maciejewska, 2012). Also, customers may feel different depending upon the industry's nature, such as the settings of fast food industry settings are different from other services industries such as the hotel industry, different resorts, etc. (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler, 2009). Service industries

must be organized to the expectations of the customers. As far as concerned as emotions, these are the states which are reliable, consistent, and considered as a vital predictor of consumer behaviour (Carlson, Betteridge, Kisiel, Settles, Hruschka & Mitchell, 2010). These states influence the information process and could be used in the analyzing process and marketing stimuli responses, the well-being of customers (Gaur, Kumar & Singh, 2014). Thus, customer emotions can play a significant role to patronize the industry (Kumar & Jeong-Yeol, 2019). Presence in an ideal place can make the difference in the shape of joy, pleasure and comfortableness; ideal place could be the internal and external environmental settings such as proper spacing, social interaction and hygiene, different colouring schemes etc. (Cicenaite & Maciejewska, 2012). As discussed earlier, categorizing customer responses is either positive or negative and to the arousal stage. Hence, it is an environment according to customers' expectations; they spend time and money if they feel in their comfort zone. On the contrary unpleasing environment, they might feel uncomfortable, depressed and decided to avoid the behaviour.

The present study thus considered the relationship between restaurant dimensions and customer emotional responses and suggested the following hypotheses.

H2-There is a positive relationship between Restaurant Dimensions and customer emotional responses.

Customer Emotional Responses and Customer Patronage

In any service industry, customers consider their visit fruitful if industry settings are according to their expectations; these are the states and formation when the customer makes their decision based on the contemporary environment of services (Kumar & Jeong-Yeol, 2019). This is a crucial stage because customers will adopt either approach or avoidance behaviour. According to SOR theory (Mehrabian & Russel, 1974), approach behaviour is considered positive behaviour, and most likely, the customer will remain loyal and make positive decisions. Customer emotional attachment is a chain of the series. For instance, this attachment could be with a brand or could be with the environment. Emotional attachment can be increased based on the provided service that further lead customer to patronize the service.

Additionally, this could lead to more WOM (word of mouth) in the mainstream media (social network sites) and physically spreading the word. Thus, settings of services industries should require good integration of environment which lead customers to stay

more and make more purchases (Hussain & Ali, 2015). Thus, based on the following discussion and past studies' recommendations, this study linked customer emotional responses and patronage and suggested the following hypotheses below.

H3-There is a positive relationship between Customer emotional responses and customer patronage.

Customer Familiarity as Moderator

Term customer familiarity received attention from several past marketing researchers'; familiarity with services can play a dynamic role in deciding on purchase (Lucia-Palacios, Pérez-López & Polo-Redondo, 2016). Fundamentally, it depends on the past and present experiences that have been accumulated by the customer's Alba and Hutchinson (1987). This is because the frequent use of products and services reduces customers' uncertainty (Flavia'n *et al.*, 2005). With lower familiarity, customers will observe the environment because of lacking a straightforward situation. While familiar with services and products, customers could accumulate information and knowledge about the industry, allowing customers to assess the quality of services and products based on their experience (Ha & Jang, 2010). Consistently marketers are looking for long-term connections, which is one step ahead of expecting consumers to make a long-lasting relationship with the industry (Soderlund, 2002). A long-lasting relationship with high familiarity may have an inadequate response to the environmental stimuli compared with the low familiarity of customers (Soderlund, 2002). In a similar context, when the familiarity of customers increases, the experience is also increasing (Soderlund, 2002). In addition, it is asserted that familiarity can play a crucial role between the settings of the services industry and confusion of familiarity (Lucia-Palacios *et al.*, 2016). According to several past studies, customer familiarity moderates between the settings of industries and customer responses (Ha & Jang, 2010; Lucia-Palacios *et al.*, 2016; Soderlund, 2002). Moreover, the reason is that customers' familiarity effectively and efficiently encouraged customer behavioural intentions (Ha & Jang, 2010). Thus based on the previous recommendations and contemporary discussion, this study suggested the moderating effect of customer familiarity between restaurant dimensions and customer emotional responses and suggested the following hypotheses.

H4- Customer familiarity moderates the relationship between restaurant dimensions and customer emotional responses.

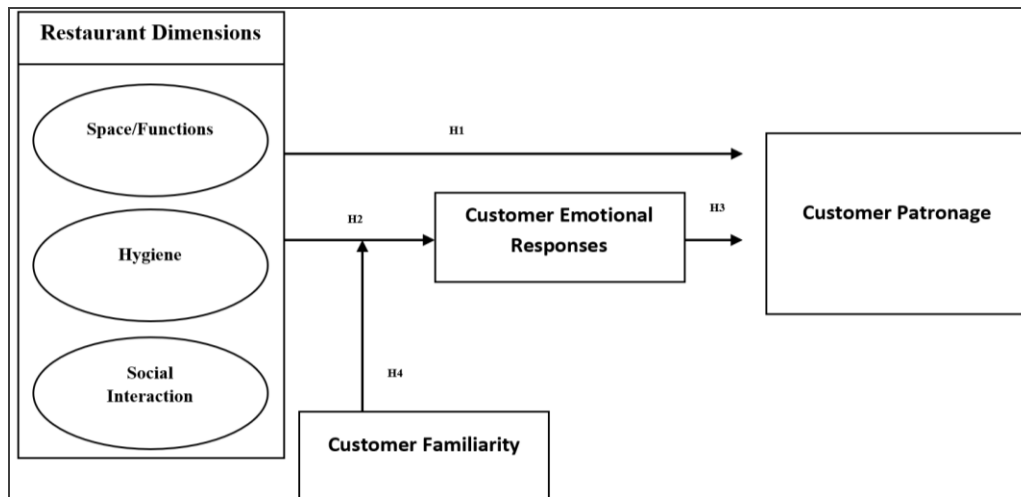


Figure 1 Research Framework

Methodology

The study aimed to see how restaurantscapes, which included (space/functions, hygiene, and social interaction), influenced consumer emotional responses and patronage, which was moderated by customer familiarity. The research was carried out in Saudi Arabia. This study's survey was based on a set of questions derived from prior research on the subject of restaurantscapes and consumer patronage. From May 2021 until August 2021, the study used open data from social networks. The respondents randomly came from all of Saudi Arabia, and the data was obtained using cross-sectional methods. The current study has a total of 319 participants. Since the number of respondents in this study is uncertain, a suitable sampling approach was used. Convenient sampling is a nonprobability sampling approach that involves sample units that are conveniently accessible and is one of the most often used nonprobability sampling methods (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2013).

A five-point Likert Scale was used to measure the study variables, namely (space/functions, hygiene, social interaction, customer emotional response, customer familiarity, and patronage). The scales were ranging from “1” strongly disagree to “5” strongly agree. In the present study, the instruments were adopted from past studies. For pace/functions instruments, four (4) items were adopted from Dagger and Danaher (2014), and four (4) items were adopted to measure hygiene which was adopted from Siu et al. (2012), while nine (9) items were adopted from Bustamante and Rubio (2017) to measure social interaction. Moreover, measuring customer emotional responses were measured using four (4) items adopted from the past study (Ali & Amin, 2014). The customer familiarity items (3) were adopted from Shukla and Banerjee (2014), and lastly, four (4) items were adopted from Panichpathom (2016) to measure customer patronage.

Study Findings

Descriptive Statistic

To give an overview of the respondents' backgrounds, the descriptive statistic was employed. The male represents the highest percentage of respondents (58%), followed by the female (42%). Moreover, the highest age group were (20-30 years) and were (42%) followed by the age group of (31-40 years) and were (40%), while the lowest percentage was (6%) for the age group of (50 years and above). The results explain in detail in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographical Information

Demographic	Features	No	%
Gender	Male	185	58
	Female	134	42
	Total	319	100
Age	20-30 Years	134	42
	31-40 Years	128	40
	41-50 Years	39	12
	50 Years and above	18	6
	Total	319	100

Data Analysis

The model we built was evaluated using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach in this study. According to Hair, Sarstedt, Pieper and Ringle (2012), PLS is a second-generation multivariate approach for evaluating measurement models (the relationships between constructs and their corresponding indicators). The structural model reduces error variance by establishing connections between constructs and related indicators (Hair et al., 2012). We utilized Smart PLS M2 Version 2.0 to evaluate the data (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005). The significance criteria for loadings, weights, and route coefficients were determined using the bootstrapping approach (500 resamples), as proposed by (Hair et al., 2013). Because the research model is theoretically operationalized at a higher degree of abstraction, producing a higher-order model for restaurantscapes. The researcher utilized a reflective second-order model to model the study framework.

Measurement Model

Convergent validity is defined as the degree to which several items used to test the same notion agree. We utilized the extracted factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010; Hair Jr et al., 2013). The loadings must exceed 0.5, the average variance extracted (AVE) must exceed 0.5, and the composite reliability (CR) must exceed 0.7. Restaurantscapes have been conceived as second-order concepts, as seen in Figure 2. As a result, we used the repeated indicator technique to represent the second-order variables in the PLS analysis, as indicated in the literature. The

findings of the measuring model are shown in Table 2. As a consequence, the results show sufficient convergence validity.

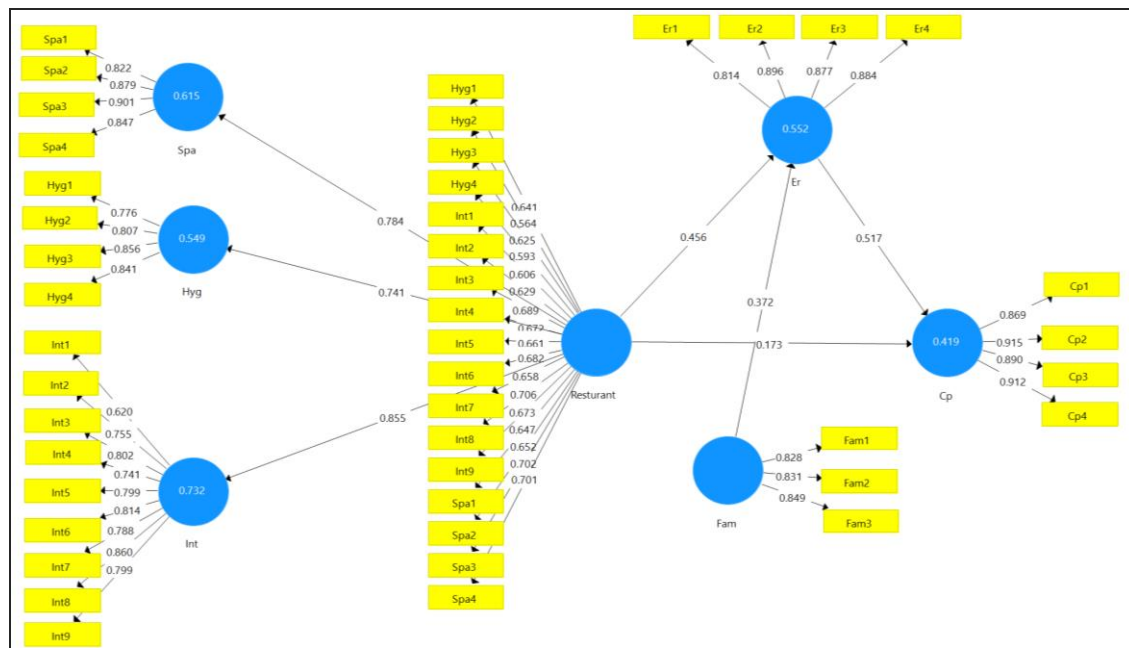


Figure 2 (The PLS Algorithm Results)

Table 2 Measurement Model

First Order Construct	Second Order Construct	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR
Space/Functions		Spa 1	0.822	0.744	0.921
		Spa 2	0.879		
		Spa 3	0.901		
		Spa 4	0.847		
Hygiene		Hyg 1	0.776	0.674	0.892
		Hyg 2	0.807		
		Hyg 3	0.856		
		Hyg 3	0.841		
Social Interaction		Int 1	0.620	0.605	0.932
		Int 2	0.755		
		Int 3	0.802		
		Int 4	0.741		
		Int 5	0.799		
		Int 6	0.814		
		Int 7	0.788		
		Int 8	0.860		
		Int 9	0.799		
	Hotelscapes	Space/Functions	0.784	0.632	0.837
		Hygiene	0.741		
		Social Interaction	0.855		
Customer Familiarity		Fam 1	0.828	0.699	0.875
		Fam 2	0.831		
		Fam 3	0.849		
Customer Emotional Responses		Er 1	0.814	0.754	0.925
		Er 2	0.896		
		Er 3	0.877		
		Er 4	0.884		
Customer Patronage		Cp 1	0.869	0.804	0.943
		Cp 2	0.915		
		Cp 3	0.890		
		Cp 4	0.912		

After verifying convergent validity, we utilized the (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) approach to evaluate discriminant validity. Discriminant validity refers to how well items discriminate between different conceptions or assess different concepts. The AVE is compared to squared correlations or the square root of the AVE with correlations as a criterion for determining this. As indicated in Table 2, the square root of the AVE was compared to the correlations using the second approach. The measures are discriminant if the square root of the AVE in the diagonals is greater than the values in the row and columns on that particular construct. As seen in Table 2, the diagonal values are greater than the corresponding row and column values. As a result, the measures utilized in this investigation are different, showing that discriminant validity is sufficient.

Table 3 Discriminant Validity (Fornell and Larcker Criteria)

Construct	1	2	3	4
1-Customer Patronage	0.897			
2-Customer Emotional Responses	0.635	0.868		
3-Customer Familiarity	0.681	0.648	0.836	
4-Resturantscapes	0.525	0.681	0.604	0.654

Structural Equation Modelling—Partial Least Squares

The R2 was used to measure the structural models' ability to predict. R2 indicates how much variance is explained by external variables (Barclay, Higgins, & Thompson, 1995). The three variables together explained 50% of the variance. The projected connections' route estimates and t-statistics were calculated using a bootstrapping technique with a re-sampling of 500.

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Beta	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	Decision
H ₁	Res > Cp	0.173	0.069	2.518	0.012	Supported
H ₂	Res > Er	0.456	0.057	7.969	0.000	Supported
H ₃	Er > Cp	0.517	0.068	7.566	0.000	Supported
H ₄	Res > Fam > Er	0.173	0.191	0.909	0.364	Not Supported

Table 4 shows the structural model analysis. The analysis found that resturantscapes ($\beta = 0.173$, $p < 0.05$) were positively related to customer patronage. Resturantscapes ($\beta = 0.456$, $p < 0.05$) was positively related to customer emotional responses. Moreover, customer emotional responses ($\beta = 0.517$, $p < 0.05$) was positively related to customer patronage. The present study tested the moderation effect of customer familiarity in resturantscapes on customer emotional responses relationship. The researchers used the bootstrapping procedure suggested in the literature to test the moderation effect, and the

results show ($\beta = 0.173$, $p > 0.05$). The results show that there is no moderation effect of customer familiarity.

Discussion

Based on the results obtained, restaurantscapes have a positive and significant relationship with customer patronage. The research finding is consistent with past studies on patronage (Ali & Amin, 2014; Han & Ryu & Jang, 2008; Teng *et al.*, 2018; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996, 2016). According to the conclusions of this study, restaurantscapes elements are critical for consumer patronage. Consequently, restaurant owners and managers should continue to concentrate on enhancing the restaurantscapes elements, which are essential for customer loyalty. A stimulus (S) combining restaurantscapes components, according to Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) S-O-R theory, may boost customer patronage and improve industry performance. Moreover, the research finding is consistent with past studies that reported a positive and significant relationship between restaurantscape and customer emotional responses (Ali & Amin, 2014; Bustamante & Rubio, 2017; Lucia-Palacios *et al.*, 2016; Wakefield & Blodgett, 2016). As a result, traditional retail shop managers should pay attention to restaurantscape components to capture positive customer responses. In the SOR theory, the element of an organism is customer emotional responses, which refers to the "internal structure and process between external stimuli for the person and final action, re-activity, and replies" (Chang, Eckman & Yan, 2011).

Moreover, the research finding is consistent with the past studies that reported there is a positive and significant relationship between customer emotional responses and customer patronage (Abubakar & Mavondo, 2014; Ali & Amin, 2014; Ali, 2015; Bustamante & Rubio, 2017; Jysma, 2012; Kasiria, Kenny, Chengb & Samsinar, 2017; Wakefield & Blodgett, 2016). From the standpoint of the S-O-R theory, which is based on the principle of stimulation between customer responses and the external world, where internal processes and structures participate, emotional consumer reactions are viewed as organisms (Chang, Eckman & Yan, 2011). Last, the present research found no evidence to support the moderation role of customer familiarity. The research proved that customer familiarity does not influence the relationship between the restaurantscape and customer emotional response.

Conclusions and Managerial Implication

This study aims to examine the effect of restaurantscapes on customer emotional responses and customer patronage. The present study also examines the moderating effect of customer familiarity between restaurantscapes and customer emotional responses. The

research concludes a positive relationship between restaurantscapes and customer patronage, as well as customer emotional response. A positive relationship also exists between customer emotional response and customer patronage. However, customer familiarity as a moderator was not supported in this study. From a practical standpoint, the findings of this study might be beneficial in raising awareness among owners/managers of restaurants businesses to enhance consumer satisfaction and patronage. The study adds to the current understanding of owners/managers in the restaurant business in Saudi Arabia regarding how restaurantscape components impact customer patronage. Furthermore, the findings of this study may be used to improve the restaurant's industry's performance and, as a result, the economy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the findings of this study may aid policymakers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in developing short and long-term strategies and policies to assist and promote the expansion of restaurants establishments in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia economy.

Limitation and Future Research

Even though the empirical findings of this study add to the current literature, the study's results cannot be generalized. To generalize findings, future studies should use the suggested study methodology among various influences on consumer patronage. The function of consumer familiarity in moderation was investigated in this study. Future studies should consider a different moderation between restaurantscapes and customer patronage or another independent variable in the different industries of the country.

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