Exploring The Role of Store Environment in Creating Customer's Perception, Emotion, Perceived Experiential Value and Behavioral Intentions

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Abstract

The strategy of designing the environment in the store is increasingly used by businesses to create a positive mood for customers when shopping and consuming services, thereby creating favorable in-store behaviors. Based on that fact, the purpose of this study is to examine the role of store environment in creating customer's perception of restaurant service quality, their emotions, their perceived experiential value and behavioral intentions. With the data collected from 447 customers of ethnic restaurants from midscale operating in Hanoi, Vietnam, this research reveals that the restaurant's store environment has an important role in creating customer's perception of customer service quality/food quality as well as positive emotions. These perceptions and emotions then positively influence customer's perceived experiential value and behavioral intentions. From the results, this study confirms positive relationship between store environment and customer perceptions, emotions, perceived experiential value; and their effects on customer behavioral intentions. This study also proposes some managerial implications for managers in restaurant services to enhance customer's experience and intentions.

Keywords: store environment, customer perception, customer emotion, perceived experiential value, behavioral intention

1. Introduction

Over the years, the F&B (food and beverage) industry has always shown its role as an important economic sector with great potential for development in Vietnam. According to forecasted data of experts, the revenue of the F&B industry in Vietnam can reach 408 billion USD and this number may continue to increase due to the increase in the number of the middle class in the society (Tran, 2021). Besides, the fact that nowadays business tends to provide customers with more enjoyable and attractive environment in store partially proves the role of in-store environment in affecting customer behavior. Koo and Kim (2013) argue that in the competitive market where there is an increase in number of similar products/services provided within a similar range of price, the design of store has been considered as one of competitive advantages for business. Kim (2001) assumes that the understanding of which in-store cues can enhance or minimize experiences will help managers design an environment to provide customers with high quality experience. Store environmental factors may not be the sole determinants of customer behavior, but are increasingly important for today's customers when choosing where to dine (Kwun et al. Oh, 2007).

Despite of the importance of store environment in customer behavior, findings in store environment literature remain inadequate. Few studies have examine the effect of store

environments on the customer's holistic experience. The majority of research in store environment notes Mehrabian and Russell's model (the Stimulus-Organism-Response model) as theoretical basis. These previous studies used Stimulus-Organism-Response model (SOR model) to examine the effects of different environmental stimuli on either perception or emotion, which in turn affect customer behavior (Garrouch et al., 2020). Due to the literature's gaps, the understanding of how store environment has different influences on the customer's holistic evaluations in terms of perception, emotion and experiential value is limited. To fulfill the gap in literature, this study examines the role of store environment in creating customers' perceptions, emotions, perceived experiential value and behavioral intentions.

Prasad and Madhavi (2014) argue that the natural human desire is to have enjoyable experiences. In some cases, the location, or more specifically, the place's atmospheric where the product is supplied, has more influence than the product itself in the purchase decision (Kotler, 1973). As store environment plays an important role in creating a satisfying service experience for customers and is an important marketing tool to create a competitive advantage of stores, managers need to know how customers perceive experiential value thanks to the design of store environment. The store environment is especially important for intangible products or services, therefore a study of environmental effects on the customer

holistic experience in service sector is necessary. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of restaurant store environment in both customer perception and emotion. Then this research will access the effect of customer perception and emotion on customer's perceived experiential value, which in turn affect customer's behavioral intention. Finally, the implications of this study for restaurant practitioners are discussed.

2. Literature review

2.1. Store environment

The term "store environment" is derived from environmental psychology and is also known as "atmospheric", or "service scape". According to Slatten et al. (2009), "store environment" is regarded as the physical and unphysical factors in a store that can be controlled to effectively enhance behaviors of customers and employees. Wang and Ha (2011) define store environment as the store's physical environment, for e.g, music, lighting, store layout and arrangement of merchandise. Hooper et al. (2013) mention that the first term commonly used to refer store environment was "environmental psychology" by researchers in psychology - Mehrabian and Russell (1974). Later studies on the store environment have applied the theory of Mehrabian and Russell (1974) in the context of consumption. Han et al. (2018) argue that research on store environment for service businesses are derived from the study of Kotler (1973) and Baker (1986). Store environment is emphasized as an important marketing tool by Kotler (1973), referred to "atmospheric". "Atmospheric" is defined as the deliberate design of a space to positively influence customer emotions to increase the likelihood of purchase. This is achieved through design that engages the senses of sight (color, light, shape, size), hearing (sound), smell (scent) and touch (temperature). Baker (1986, 1994) also emphasizes the role of the store environment in service marketing and how the physical environment affects customer's perceptions of the service. Bitner (1992) argues that building a store environment for service organizations is extremely important as services are produced and consumed at the same time. Since customers are exposed to the environment at the place of service, their responses are related to environmental perception. Bitner (1992) has developed a new concept called "servicescape" applicable to service organizations. The "servicespace" is the combination of factors affecting the customer's overall perception of the service. The "servicescape" is opposed to the natural or social environment as it describes man-made physical environment that can affect customer's perception of service and increase or decrease customer satisfaction (Bitner, 1992). According to Slatten et al. (2009) and Bigdeli et al. (2014), environmental structure covers more than the physical environment where services are delivered. The design of store environment is to affect the customer's feelings, so the human factor or social interaction including employees and customers cannot be ignored (Baker, 1986). Consequently, for the purpose of this study, this study will use the term "store environment" and adopt the classification of Baker et al. (1994) that divides store environment into three elements: ambient factors, design factors and social factors to examine the role of store environment.

Ambient factors include stores environmental factors affecting one of the human's five senses such as scent, light, music, temperature, cleanliness... (Bitner, 1992). Studies show that when ambient factors are maintained at a satisfying level, they do not directly enhance consumer purchasing possibility; however if any ambient cues are beyond their acceptable limits, they may have a negative effect on consumer behavior (Baker,

1986; Hightower et al., 2002).

Design factors are more visual than ambient factors. Bitner (1992) emphasizes the importance of design in facilitating the transmission of messages to consumers about the level of service they receive. Researchers often classify design factors as functional or aesthetic, including elements from architectural design, to materials and colors used in decoration (Baker, 1986). Space and layout are also elements of design, often related to how furniture and equipment are arranged, and the spatial relationships between these objects (Bitner, 1992; Ryu & Jang, 2007). A customer-friendly layout design can improve service reliability, thereby facilitating better service delivery. Conversely, if the layout interferes with the customer's time in the store, it can cause an unsatisfactory experience for them (Bitner, 1992).

Social factors show how employees appear to customers and how employees communicate with customers during service. Baker (1986) state that the interaction between employees and customers can influence consumers' evaluation of service quality. The appearance and behavior of employees can reflect customer's perceived value of service received. Verbal and nonverbal communication, neat attire, attitude, politeness, friendliness, enthusiasm and empathy in service, and ability to handle complaints of the waiter/waitress are often used to measure customer's perception of social factors in a store environment (Baker et al., 2002).

2.2. The store environment model

Researchers have developed different frameworks for studying the impacts of store environment on customer behaviors. According to Kotler (1973), store atmosphere affects customer behavior by a causal chain. The sensory quality of space affects customer perception and modifies their information and affective state that impact on customer purchase probability. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) proposed the model which is widely used for research in environmental psychology and retail context to explain an individual's perception, affection, and behavioral response to the environment. In the model of environmental psychology, Mehrabian and Russell (1974) assume that the environment stimuli causes changes to an individual's internal emotional state, which in turn cause an approach or avoidance response behavior. Mehrabian and Russell's environmental psychology model is developed by using the foundation of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) paradigm. Though the original model of Mehrabian and Russell focuses on emotional state and approach or avoidance response behavior only, when SOR model is applied in the retail context, the SOR model has been used as the conceptual framework to explain other customer responses that result from exposure to stimuli of a particular environment (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). Stimuli (S) refers to store environmental cues that can influence on customer's internal state; Organism (O) refers to "internal processes and structures intervening between stimuli external to the person and the final actions, reactions, or responses emitted" (Bagozzi, 1986, p.46) and are listed as perception, cognition, physiology, emotion; Response (R) is customer's behavioral reactions, e.g. customer satisfaction, intention, items purchased, and money spent in the store (Bagozzi, 1986). Bitner (1992) shares similar finding with SOR model when positing that store environment can cause the internal responses of individual's cognition, emotion, and physiology. These internal responses will determine approach or avoidance behavior of employees and customers. Positive response leads to approach behavior, and negative response leads to avoidance behavior.

The SOR model and its modifications have been applied in different sectors such as retail service, hotel, restaurant,... These studies have striking similarities result that store

environment can influence customer behaviors through their internal response (emotions, cognitions and physical states) (Garrouch et al., 2020). However, few studies include customer's perceived experiential value in the customer's internal evaluation. The only research found on this issue was that by Lin and Chiang (2010) but the research was in retail sector and data were collected from a single retail store. These authors suggest future research to consider other industrial types and expand to different environments to constantly verify

the research's model. Hence, this study will adopt the SOR framework to develop a conceptual framework suggesting that stimuli from store environment will impact customer's holistic internal assessment (perception, emotion and perceived experiential value), which in turn affect customer's behavioral intentions in the context of restaurant service setting. In addition, a moderate variable - customer's past experience - is added to the conceptual model to test whether the customer evaluation depends on consumption situations.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Source: author's own research

2.3. Hypothesis development

2.3.1. The influence of store environment on customer perception and emotion

Consumer psychology has explained that people are likely to judge a store based on observing the characteristics and dress of the people serving in the restaurant as well as those who visit it. When there is not enough information in a restaurant, consumers can infer service quality according to the attire of waiters/waitress and guests. Research by Baker et al. (1994) reveals that employees have influences on customer's perceptions of product quality and service quality. Specifically, a store equipped with qualified social elements (e.g., more salespeople, salespeople dressed in professional clothing and salespeople greeting customers at the store entrance) was rated to provide a higher quality of service than a store characterized by poor qualified social factors (e.g. few salespeople, salespeople not wearing uniform). Singh (2006) and Truong et al. (2017) demonstrate that the social factor has an impact on customer's perception of service quality. Lin and Chiang (2010) assume that staff's service attitude, facial expression and appearance can affect their assessment of service quality. Based on the above research, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 1a: Social factors positively influence customer's perception of restaurant's customer service quality.

Hypothesis 1b: Social factors positively influence customer's perception of restaurant's food quality.

Previous studies suggest that employees have an important role in creating customer emotions (Baker et al., 2002). These

emotions are formed by the interactions between customers and employees. The positive relationship between restaurant service scape and customer emotion are also discussed in many studies (Lin & Mattila, 2010, Chen et al., 2015). In restaurant service social factors such as employee's friendliness and helpfulness can have the positive impact on customer emotional state (Ogruk et al., 2018). Based on the above research, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 1c: Social factors positively influence customer emotion.

It is mentioned by Marzursky and Jacoby (1986) that the appearance inside the store is a signal for customers to judge the quality of goods and services. Design factors influence an individual's assessment of objects in the environment (Baker et al., 1994; Kumar & Kim, 2014). The design elements used in the store can influence the customer's perception of goods and service quality, perception of price, and perception of efficiency (Bellizzi et al., 1983; Singh, 2006). Gardner and Siomkos (1985) argue that when the same merchandise is purchased from a qualified designed store (e.g., plush rugs, clear signage), a customer can evaluate its quality higher than that from an unqualified designed store (e.g., concrete floors, unclear signage). In addition, customers are more likely to believe that they are being served fresh food that is carefully prepared during the cooking process if they are in a neat and orderly restaurant (Lin & Chiang, 2010). Cho et al. (2019) state that plate color has an impact on customer's food evaluation. Based on the above research, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 2a: Design factors positively influence customers' perception of restaurant's customer service quality.

Hypothesis 2b: Design factors positively influence

customer's perception of restaurant's food quality.

Baker et al. (2002) argue that inconvenient layout design of a store may create negative emotions of customers, which in turn reduce repurchase intention. In contrast, in a careful designed environment, customers are encouraged to be more engaged with the store by positive emotions.

Ogruk et al. (2018) also assume that the display of a store can positively influence customer emotional state. Based on the above research, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 2c: Design factors positively influence customer emotion.

Results from researchers such as Baker (1986), Sweeney and Wyber (2002), Lin and Chiang (2010) indicate that ambient factors can affect consumer's perception of service quality and product quality. In a restaurant service setting, environmental factors including ambient factors have positive influences on customer perception in terms of service quality and food quality (Kim & Moon, 2009; Ha & Jang, 2014). Lin and Chiang (2010) reveal that customers' perceived product quality and service quality are positively affected by ambient factors such as a bright environment, relaxed atmosphere and pleasant music. Cho et al. (2019) reveal that music played in a restaurant can impact customer's food evaluation. Based on the above research, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 3a: Ambient factors positively influence customer's perception of restaurant's customer service quality.

Hypothesis 3b: Ambient factors positively influence customer's perception of restaurant's food quality.

Store environment literature shows that ambient factors can positively/negatively influence customers by attracting them or putting pressure for them. Research by North and Hargreaves (1996) points out that customer affection for the cafeteria increase based on their preference for the music played in the cafeteria. Ambient factors such as music, aroma and lighting have significant effects on customer emotional state (Ogruk et al., 2018). Ambient scent and music can influence customer's mood (Chebat & Michon, 2003; Osman et al., 2014). Based on the above research, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 3c: Ambient factors positively influence customer emotion.

2.3.2. The influence of customer perception and emotion on customer's perceived experiential value

As indicated by Zeithaml (1988), perceived value define how customer assess a product's utility as well as the value they are received. Schmitt (1999) uses the term perceived experiential value to define the value of experience that a customer perceive during consumption. Lin and Chiang (2009, p.287) argue that "perceived experiential value may be more appropriate used to see how both cognitive and emotional mechanisms mediate between the external stimulus of a store and consumers' behavioral intention". It is also concluded by Lin and Chiang (2009) that customer perceptions and emotions positively influence customer's perceived experiential value. Based on the above research, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 4a: Customer's perception of restaurant's customer service quality positively influences customer's perceived experiential value.

Hypothesis 4b: Customer's perception of restaurant's food quality positively influences customer's perceived experiential value.

Hypothesis 4c: Customer emotion positively influences customer's perceived experiential value.

2.3.3. The influence of customer's perceived experiential value on customer's behavioral intention

According to Dong and Siu (2013), a positive evaluation of a service experience will satisfy customers by creating a sense of joy and leaving memorable memories. A poor service experience frustrates customers and can even make them consider leaving the service provider, while a positive experience encourages customer loyalty and prompts them to re-purchase. According to Chang and Wildt (1994), perceived value is the main factor affecting purchase intention. It has a positive effect on customer satisfaction and determines whether they want to return to that store (Iglesias & Guillén, 2004). The relationship between customer's perceived experiential value and behavioral intention is also confirmed by Lin and Chiang (2009). Based on the above research, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 5: Customer's perception of experiential value positively influences customer's behavioral intention.

2.3.4. Moderating role of customer's past experience

Customer's past experience adjusts the amount and type of information an individual needs when making choices and can influence the individual's cognitive development regarding consumption (Kwun & Oh, 2006). The evaluations of received information are different from experienced customers to first-time customers, because experienced customers are familiar with and know more about the product. Experienced customers are more likely to develop a solid information structure about the product because of greater familiarity, and thus preference for the product tends to be stably established (Rao & Monroe, 1988). Therefore, it can be inferred that experienced customers are able to evaluate information available in memory more quickly and generate more effective information about restaurant, which result in more positive internal assessment. Based on the above research, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 6a: Customer's past experience has a moderating effect on the relationship between customer's perception of restaurant's customer service quality and perceived experiential value.

Hypothesis 6b: Customer's past experience has a moderating effect on the relationship between customer's perception of restaurant's food quality and perceived experiential value.

Hypothesis 6c: Customer's past experience has a moderating effect on the relationship between customer emotion and perceived experiential value.

3. Methodologies

3.1. Sampling and data collection

A survey was conducted in two months from March to April 2021 by using stratified random sampling method. Respondents are customers at ethnic restaurants from midscale in Hanoi (with an average spending per guest from VND250,000). Ethnic restaurants are the restaurants where food of some ethnicity is served and restaurant' setting is inspired by the local culture. From the total of 580 questionnaires distributed, 500 responses were collected, yielding a 86.2% response rate. 447 responses from 500 gathered responses are valid for the research. The socio-demographic characteristics of the sample is shown in Table 1.

Respondent characteristics	Percentage
Gender	
Male	35.1
Female	64.9
Age	
< 25 years old	55.9
25 – 34 years old	28.6
35 – 44 years old	11.0
From 45 years old	4.5
Marital status	
Single	69.4
Married and no children	4.9
Married and had children	25.7
Income	
< VND5,000,000	42.5
VND 5,000,000 – < VND 15,000,000	33.3
VND 15,000,000 – < VND 25,000,000	16.6
> VND25,000,000	7.6

Table 1: Respondent characteristics

Source: author's own research

3.2. Questionnaires

The scales used in this study were adopted from previous research and in some cases, modified to suit the Vietnamese restaurant service context. After interviewing restaurant managers, staff and customers, some modifications to the scale content are made. The questionnaire consists of 7 parts:

- (1) assessment of restaurant environmental factors (social, design and ambient);
- (2) assessment of customer perception (customer service

quality perception and food quality perception);

- (3) assessment of customer emotion;
- (4) assessment of customer's perceived experiential value;
- (5) customer behavioral intentions;
- (6) customer's past experience;
- (7) personal information.

All items from (1) to (5) were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (5) (see Table 2).

Variable	Number of items	Adopted from
Social factor (EM)	7	Heung and Gu (2012), Ryu and Jang (2008), Sigh (2006)
Design factor (DE)	9	Heung and Gu (2012), Huyn and Kang (2014), Ha and Jang (2009), Hooper et al. (2013)
Ambient factor (AM)	7	Heung and Gu (2012), Huyn and Kang (2014), Kim and Moon (2009), Lin and Chiang (2010), Chang (2016), Reimer and Kuehn (2005), Kumar and Kim (2014)
Customer service quality perception (CES)	4	Ha and Jang (2012), Hooper et al. (2013)
Food quality perception (CEF)	5	Jang and Namkung (2009), Huyn and Kang (2014), Marthur and Gupta (2019)
Emotion	4	Laros and Steenkamp (2005); Bagozzi et al. (1999); Marthur and Gupta (2019)
Perceived experiential value	5	Liu and Jang (2009); Ryu et al. (2010)
Behavioral intention (IB)	4	Ryu et al. (2012), Huyn and Kang (2014), Jang and Namkung (2009), Liu and Jang (2009), Ha and Jang (2014)
Consumption motives	12	Huyn and Kang (2014)

Table 2: Measurement items

Source: adopted from previous research

3.3. Data analysis

In order to test the reliability of the scales and reduce the scales into meaningful factors, this research used Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). After that, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied in order to determine whether the measured variables reliably reflect the hypothesized latent variables. Finally, structural equation modeling (SEM) and bootstrap technique were used

test the hypotheses 1-5 and 6a-6c respectively.

4. Results

4.1. Factor analysis

The three indicators for Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, total variable correlation coefficient and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient if item deleted were tested to check the reliability of the scale. After removing three unsatisfied items (AM1, EM1,

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IB4), all indices including Cronbach's Alpha coefficients (≥ 0.9), the correlation coefficient of the total variable (≥ 0.3), and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the scale if item deleted (less than the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale) confirmed

the scale's reliability. EFA was then used to detect observed variables loaded in multiple factors, and redefine the value of variables in the model. The results can be found in Table 3.

Constructs	Indicators	Standardized factor loading	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach's alpha
Design factors (DE)	DE6	.825	.776	.927	.935
	DE5	.787	.786	.926	
	DE4	.761	.775	.927	
	DE7	.745	.729	.929	
	DE2	.733	.733	.929	
	DE1	.720	.747	.928	
	DE8	.714	.757	.928	
	DE3	.706	.757	.928	
	DE9	.693	.754	.928	
Social factors (EM)	EM5	.957	.862	.909	.930
	EM4	.866	.848	.911	
	EM2	.829	.808	.916	
	EM6	.783	.783	.919	
	EM7	.704	.755	.923	
	EM3	.650	.729	.927	
Ambient factors (AM)	AM3	.983	.849	.901	.924
	AM4	.936	.849	.901	
	AM2	.881	.819	.905	
	AM7	.592	.743	.916	
	AM6	.556	.711	.920	
	AM5	.520	.721	.918	
Customer service quality perception (CES)	CES4	.906	.841	.891	.919
	CES5	.904	.837	.892	
	CES3	.878	.803	.898	
	CES2	.836	.747	.911	
	CES1	.827	.734	.912	
Food quality perception (CEF)	CEF4	.886	.809	.877	.907
	CEF3	.869	.786	.882	
	CEF1	.868	.786	.882	
	CEF5	.851	.758	.888	
	CEF2	.798	.693	.902	
Emotion (AE)	AE2	.922	.856	.894	.926
	AE3	.909	.834	.902	
	AE4	.908	.833	.902	
	AE1	.881	.791	.916	
Perceived experiential value (EV)	EV2	.897	.830	.898	.922
	EV3	.895	.828	.898	
	EV5	.873	.801	.904	
	EV4	.873	.799	.904	
	EV1	.830	.734	.917	
Behavioral intention (IB)	IB2	.956	.898	.891	.939
	IB1	.942	.868	.916	
	IB3	.935	.854	.926	

Table 3: Exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha

Source: author's own research

4.2. Measurement model

After EFA, in order to assess the construct validity and internal consistency, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied. The Chi-square statistic for CFA was 2384.963 with 832 degrees of freedom ($p = .000$), Chi-Squared/df=2.867, GFI = 0.793, CFI = 0.916, TLI = 0.909, RMSEA = 0.065. All indices indicate that the measurement model is fit with the data collected.

All of the constructs' composite reliability (CR) exceed 0.7 thresholds, thus confirming internal consistency in each

construct. To assess the convergent validity for the scale items, standardized factor loadings and average variances extracted (AVE) were checked. The results show that all factor loading values are more than 0.5 (from 0.72 to 0.94). The values of average variance shared between a construct and its measurement (AVE) are more than 0.5, thus, convergent validity for the scale items has been achieved. In addition, comparing AVE values for each construct and the squared correlations between the paired constructs shows that AVE for each construct was greater than the squared correlations between paired constructs, demonstrating discriminant validity

(see Table 4).

	CR	AVE	EM	DE	AM	CES	CEF	AE	EV	IB
EM	0.932	0.696	0.835							
DE	0.936	0.618	0.763***	0.786						
AM	0.925	0.674	0.639***	0.747***	0.821					
CES	0.920	0.897	0.932***	0.668***	0.550***	0.947				
CEF	0.908	0.865	0.663***	0.718***	0.595***	0.866***	0.930			
AE	0.927	0.860	0.678***	0.685***	0.612***	0.839***	0.832***	0.927		
EV	0.923	0.855	0.683***	0.692***	0.601***	0.832***	0.795***	0.912***	0.925	
IB	0.940	0.839	0.903***	0.612***	0.567***	0.502***	0.785***	0.814***	0.846***	0.916

Table 4: Model Validity Measures

Significance of Correlations:

† $p < 0.100$, * $p < 0.050$, ** $p < 0.010$, *** $p < 0.001$

Source: author's own research

4.3. Structural equation model

In this step, the proposed structural model was estimated to check whether it provides a good basis for hypothesis testing. The Chi-square statistic for the structural equation model was

2675.162, with 843 degrees of freedom ($p = .000$). $\chi^2/df = 3.173$, comparative fit index CFI = 0.901, Tucker-Lewis index TLI = 0.894, root mean square error of approximation RMSEA = 0.070. All indices indicate that the model's fit is acceptable, the proposed conceptual model is validated (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: Structural equation model

Source: author's own research

Hypothesized path	Standardized path coefficient	p-value	Results
H1a: EM → CES	.39	***	Supported
H1b: EM → CEF	.28	***	Supported
H1c: EM → AE	.35	***	Supported
H2a: DE → CES	.40	***	Supported
H2b: DE → CEF	.50	***	Supported
H2c: DE → AE	.36	***	Supported
H3a: AM → CES	.00	.95	Rejected
H3b: AM → CEF	.05	.42	Rejected
H3c: AM → AE	.12	.04	Supported
H4a: CES → EV	.32	***	Supported
H4b: CEF → EV	.08	.02	Supported
H4c: AE → EV	.66	***	Supported
H5: EV → IB	.86	***	Supported

Table 5. Results from Structural equation model

*** $p < 0.001$

Source: author's own research

The results show that both social factors and design factors have positive influences on customer perception and emotion ($p < 0.001$). However, ambient factors positively influence on customer emotion only ($\beta = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$). Customer perceptions of customer service quality/food quality and emotions have positive impacts on customer's perceived experiential value ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.08$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.66$, $p < 0.001$ respectively) which in turn positively affect customer behavioral intentions ($\beta = 0.86$, $p < 0.001$). Among three environmental factors, design factors have the strongest effect on either customer perception of customer service quality/food quality or emotion ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < .001$; $\beta = 0.50$, $p < .001$; $\beta = 0.36$, $p < .001$ respectively), followed closely by social factors ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < .001$; $\beta = 0.28$, $p < .001$; $\beta = 0.35$, $p < .001$ respectively). In addition, the differences between the impacts of social factors and design factors on customer perception of customer service quality and emotions are insignificant. Customer's perceived experiential value is most affected by customer emotion ($\beta = 0.66$, $p < .001$). All hypotheses from 1 to 5 are accepted except for hypotheses 3a and 3b ($p > 0.05$).

4.4. Moderating effects

The Bootstrap technique was applied in order to test the moderating effect. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), if a variable is a moderator, the multiplication of the independent variable and that variable must have an effect on the dependent variable. Thus, customer's past experience will have moderating effect if the values of EXP *CES, EXP *CEF, EXP *AE affect IB (EXP is the coded variable of customer's past experience).

Although customer's perception of customer service quality, customer's perception of food quality and customer emotion have positive impacts on customer's perceived experiential value, the multiplication of customer's past experience and customer's perception of customer service quality, customer's perception of food quality, customer emotion respectively (EXP *CES, EXP *CEF, EXP *AE) have no significant effect on customer's perceived experiential value (EV) due to p_value of Int_1 > 0.05 (p_value of Int_1 are 0.68; 0.52; 0.96 respectively). As a result, customer's past experience does not have a moderating effect on the relationship between customer's perception of customer service quality and experiential value, customer's perception of food quality and experiential value, customer emotion and perceived experiential value. The hypotheses 6a-6c are rejected.

5. Discussion

As the conceptual framework of this study is built based on the SOR model, the findings are mostly consistent with the store environment literature. The result of this study is in line with previous studies that imply the positive relationship between store environment cues and customer internal evaluations such as perception of quality and emotion. However, despite earlier studies show the direct impact of the ambient cues on customer's perception of quality (including customer service quality and food quality) (Baker, 1986; Sweeney and Wyber, 2002; Lin and Chiang, 2010; Cho et al., 2019), this study rejects this influence (H3a, H3b). The empirical data of this study show that due to the inadequate investment in ambient factors of ethnic restaurants in Vietnam, customers have not evaluated the ambient quality with high score (with the mean of 3.66 out of 5). This low assessment results in the insignificant influence of ambient factors on customer perception of service quality and food quality, even though the correlation between ambient factors and customer perception is positive. Additionally, although studies in the past assume that experienced customers can have more positive internal assessment than first-time customers, this study proposes that customer's past experience has no moderating role in the link between customer perception/emotion and perceived experiential value.

5.1. Theoretical implications

From theoretical perspective, the most important contribution of this study is to provide a more comprehensive view to understand the influence of the restaurant environment on consumer internal evaluations and behavioral intentions. It is the first one to examine the impacts of the different store environment cues on the customer's holistic experience, including both customer perception, emotion and perceived experiential value in the context of restaurant service setting. Not only contributing to provide an empirical research to confirm the influence of restaurant environment on customer perception and emotion in previous studies, this research also shows how environmental factors differently impact customer's perception of customer service quality and food quality as well as customer emotions, and how these perceptions/emotion in turn affect customer's perceived experiential value and behavioral intentions.

5.2. Managerial implications

From managerial perspective, as all three environmental cues have important roles in creating customer's overall perception, emotion, perceived experiential value and behavioral intentions, restaurant should improve quality of these three factors.

First, managers should pay special attention to design factors of the restaurant since they have the strongest impact on customer perception and emotion, these evaluations in turn affect experiential value and behavioral intentions. The quality of design factors can be ensured through the aesthetic and distinctiveness of restaurant's arrangement, layout and decoration. Furthermore, the layout of the dining table and chairs needs to make customers feel comfortable during the meal. Interior decoration such as plants, paintings, lights, wall decoration, tableware should create visual stimulation.

Second, social factors should be strictly controlled as they play the second important role in creating customer responses. This could be done by ensuring staff's initiative, friendliness and courtesy. Professionalism can be achieved by having uniforms for employees and training staff's attitudes and behaviors. Restaurants need to communicate to their staff the image they want to present to their customers and ensure that the staff fits the restaurant image.

Last, ambient factors related to music, temperature, scent must be adjusted to enhance customer positive emotions, experiential value and behavioral intentions. Restaurants need to control noise level to maintain a relaxed environment. Restaurants can provide customers with robes, aprons to minimize the inconvenience caused by food scent. Finally, lighting and temperature in the restaurant store should be adjusted to comfort customers.

6. Limitations and recommendations for future studies

This study has some limitations still. First, the study only considers the influence of store environment factors on customer's evaluations and intentions, so it is difficult to compare the influence or importance of these factors to other factors in the retail environment on consumer behavior. Later research projects can develop research models by combining some other factors that affect the service experience and customer behavior. Second, the study only focuses on studying customers at restaurants in Hanoi and the sample is 447. Thus, the conclusions or solutions outlined in the study can only be applied to restaurants in Hanoi. In the future, if it is possible to expand the scope of the research and the research sample, the topic will have a better meaning, and at the same time, it will be possible to compare the research results for different groups of customer samples. Third, measuring the evaluation and perception of customers based on the agreement scale has limitations because customers sometimes may not be able to accurately assess their feelings and tend to respond based on what they think is right, not how they feel. Last, as this study is aim for predicting customer behavioral intentions, there would be some gaps between customer intentions and behaviors that future research can work to solve this problem.

7. Conclusion

This study examines the roles of store environments in creating customer perception and emotion, which in turn affect customer's experiential value and behavioral intention. The extended proposed framework based on SOR model is verified

by the data analysis in this study. Store environment (stimuli) significantly influences customer perception, emotion, perceived experiential value (organism), these in turn affect customer's behavioral intention (response).

According to the research results, the environmental factors in the restaurant have positive influences on both customer perception of customer service quality and food quality. In particular, the social, design and ambient factors all have impact on customer emotion. However, only social and design cues have influences on customer's perception of customer service quality and food quality. Both customer perception of quality and emotion have positive influences on customer perceived experiential value, that in turn affect customer behavioral intentions, such as intention to revisit, willingness to recommend and spread positive words of mouth. In addition, although customer's past experience is regarded as a moderator for the impact of marketing factors on customer behaviors, this study assumes that it has no moderating effects on the relationship between customer perception or emotion and perceived experiential value.

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