

A META-ANALYSIS OF THE ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF DELIGHT IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Customer delight is a concept that has recently gained momentum in consumer behavior, marketing, and hospitality literature. This study investigated the antecedents and subsequent of delight in a hospitality context. A meta-analysis was conducted, including 22 articles and producing 141 independent effect sizes. Results revealed a strong relationship between experiential context (service quality, physical environment, and authenticity), positive emotions, and surprise as antecedents of delight, with behavioral intentions, satisfaction, and loyalty as consequences of delight. Furthermore, gender was tested as a moderator, yielding a strong relationship between surprise and loyalty. Practical and theoretical implications are discussed as well as future research perspectives.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of customer delight emerged in the 1990s as an extension of satisfaction (Rust & Oliver, 2000), emphasizing the emotional response produced by customers when experiencing a product or service (Chandler, 1989). The key to delighting customers resides in firms' capabilities to provide experiences that yield a pleasurable experience by exceeding

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satisfaction (Patterson, 1997) to a positively surprising degree (Finn, 2012; Rust & Oliver, 2000). Delight is also considered as an expression of emotional effect that can be assimilated to a high arousal manifestation of satisfaction (Oliver, 2010). Although satisfaction and delight are two different constructs, scholars prior to the 1990s seemed to equate them. Since the 1990s, an important body of marketing and consumer behavior literature departed from the classical assumption that delight and satisfaction are the same concepts and went on to investigate on the two constructs separately.

In general, findings from those studies went in the direction that rather than merely satisfying customers, managers ought to delight them. For instance, delight has been assessed as a stronger predictor of loyalty than satisfaction (Reichheld & Teal, 1996; Torres & Kline, 2006). This follows that satisfied customers may still leave a firm suddenly because of a lack of interest or commitment (Dolnicar et al., 2015; Kumar et al., 2013; Schneider & Bowen, 1999); however, they are less likely to do so if they are delighted customers. According to Magnini et al. (2011), very satisfied guests are more likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth and recommending behaviors as compared to satisfied guests; as well, delighted guests display a higher tendency for such behavioral responses as compared to very satisfied guests. Consequently, hospitality organizations have come to terms that delight needs to be integrated within their strategic goals and objectives (Kim & Mattila, 2010; St-James & Taylor, 2004; Vanhamme & de Bont, 2008), understanding that delighted customers are often more loyal and profitable to the business. The concept of delight carries uniqueness as compared to satisfaction given that it entails an emotional dimension involving surprise and joy (Plutchik, 1980, 2003). This is supported by scholars in consumer behavior literature who agree delight is a positive emotional state well beyond satisfaction (Füller & Matzler, 2008; Loureiro & Kastenholz, 2011; Plutchik, 1980, 2003). Assuming this distinction between the constructs of satisfaction and delight, it follows that in the service-settings industry, firms should aim at delivering delight beyond satisfaction, which occurs through delivering service with a surprising or unexpected value exceeding customers' expectations. In fact, positive surprise is a necessary precondition for customers to be delighted by a service (Finn, 2005; Oliver et al., 1997; Rust & Oliver, 2000; Vanhamme & De Bont, 2008).

Although the concept of delight has itself been discussed in the literature as an antecedent or outcome of other constructs, there exists scarcity in terms of studies investigating an overall model in the form of a meta-analysis. Even though Torres and Ronzoni (2018) conducted a

systematic literature review of the concept of delight, the purpose of this study is to offer an objective view of the antecedents and outcomes of delight. This meta-analysis represents a direct answer to opportunities and research agenda of delight cited in Barnes and Krallman (2019), who advocated for further investigation beyond joy and surprise, as well as investigating different moderators. The notion of delight has evident ramifications in the literature and industry, however variances regarding the concept itself subsist, especially in terms of antecedents and outcomes. Hence, the current study adds to the consumer behavior literature with a broad outlook on the concept of delight in hospitality.

A notable aspect of the literature regarding delight and its related constructs is the inconsistency of findings within different studies, and difficulty in measuring it (Ali et al., 2018). This lack of coherence within published studies in the literature indicates a need for further clarity in conceptualizing delight. There exists broad agreement that managers need to delight customers by creating surprise (Torres & Kline, 2013) rather than simply satisfy them. In other words, delighting customers should be the highest desired end in cognitive-affective evaluations. Though, it remains unclear which levers should be activated in order to delight customers in hospitality organizations. It is also less clear which antecedents should be prioritized for desired outcomes in customers' evaluations of their services. In view of the above information, it is evident that it would be difficult for a traditional study to comprehensively capture the extent of antecedents and consequences of customer delight. An appropriate means to come through this maze is to use meta-analysis. Meta-analytical research investigates conclusive definitions and allows the researchers to jointly analyze the results with diverse methods, samples, and industry scenarios (Dickersin, 2002). Consequently, this study aims at a) exploring the magnitude of relationships between delight antecedents and subsequent, and b) whether gender plays a moderating role.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of delight has first been discussed within emotion literature in the 1980s with notable studies such as Plutchik's (1980) model of primary emotions, and the following studies that treated delight as a positive emotion (e.g., Morgan & Heise, 1988; Plutchik, 1980; Storm & Storm, 1987). Oliver (2010) provided a definition of delight, 'an extreme expression of affect' and stressed that it is 'a high-arousal manifestation of satisfaction' (p. 22). Patterson (1997) explained that delight is what results when an

experience goes beyond satisfaction, producing a highly pleasant experience. Although considered by some scholars as more important than satisfaction, delight remains an under-researched construct within consumer behavior literature (Ali et al., 2018). As explained by Finn (2005), the notion of customer delight stems from works on affective and experiential emotional responses to consumption (Westbrook, 1987; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). On one hand, delight as an emotion involves a cognitive component (experiential) influenced by joy and involving high levels of pleasure and arousal (Kim et al., 2015; Oliver, 2010) while on the other, delight leads to a positive emotional (affective) state involving—beyond pleasure and joy—a surprise effect as expectations are exceeded (Magnini et al., 2010).

Delight has often been examined in parallel with satisfaction, even though the two concepts are different (Kim et al., 2015). In reality, delight can be viewed as an extension of satisfaction, a higher end than satisfaction on the spectrum of customers' cognitive evaluations of services (Finn, 2005). For instance, while satisfaction can generate pleasure, it does not necessarily entice arousal (Wang, 2011). As compared to satisfaction, delight prompts a highly positive response, with even higher impacts on post-consumption behaviors, i.e., loyalty (Ahrholdt et al., 2017; Ali et al., 2018; Kim & Perdue, 2013; Ou & Verhoef, 2017). Nonetheless, studies with contradictory viewpoints exist within the literature (e.g., Alexander, 2010; Finn, 2012), supporting the viewpoint that delight is not an extreme form of satisfaction (Ma et al., 2017). Although they are distinct constructs, empirical evidence has been provided for the simultaneous occurrence of delight and satisfaction. Customer delight as a concept recently received considerable attention from researchers in consumer behavior literature with subjects related to the tourism industry (Ahrholdt et al., 2017; Torres & Ronzoni, 2018), whose findings attest that delight is mainly influenced by cognitive-affective antecedents.

Experiential Antecedents: Service Quality, Physical Environment, and Authenticity

The results from Wang's (2011) study revealed that service quality influenced repurchase intentions consumer delight rather than consumer satisfaction. Similarly, Rivera et al. (2019) also discussed in their study about the impact of service quality on behalf of employee behavior on delight, suggesting a positive relationship. Furthermore, Ellis et al. (2019) investigated the impact of service quality performance by experience and interaction on delight, amongst other variables. These authors pointed out

in their results that investing in increasing service quality will yield delighted customers. In a similar study, Ahrholdt et al. (2017) also confirmed the important function of service quality in predicting delight and loyalty. As well, the atmosphere, and experiential antecedent, were also strongly related to delight. Moreover, Chua et al. (2015) discussed in their results that the functional congruity of the physical environment and the facilities were positively related to delight. In a winery setting, Bufquin et al. (2018) empirically prove that the perceived congruence between the brand image and the surrounding physical environment had a positive effect on delight. Lastly, Jiang (2020) provided empirical support for the strong positive relationship between authenticity and delight, which was also previously confirmed by Kageyama (2016) in the context of service encounters. In light of the prided literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: *Experiential antecedents (such as service quality, physical environment, authenticity) have a positive direct impact on delight.*

Positive Emotions and Surprise

Delight occurs as an emotional reaction when consumers experience surprisingly high echelons of performance, arousal or activation, and positive affect (Oliver et al., 1997). The construct involves a positive emotional condition, which is a crucial condition for delight to occur. Loureiro (2014) demonstrated in their study that positive emotions—manifested as positive affect and arousal—play an important part in the mediation between surprising consumption and delight. This conceptualization was also confirmed in similar studies (Dixon et al., 2010; Kumar et al., 2001). Positive emotions have widely been assessed as an essential predictor of customer delight (Bowden & Dagger, 2011; Finn, 2005; Oliver et al., 1997). Regarding surprise, while it has been assessed as positively related to delight (Crotts & Magnini, 2011; Finn, 2005; Oliver et al., 1997; Torres et al., 2020), scholars such as Chitturi et al. (2008) and Ma et al. (2013) indicated surprise was not a prerequisite of delight; for Bowden and Dagger (2011), “surprising consumption was found to be negatively related to delight” (p. 517). This infers that even though surprise can cause delight, there certainly exist other ways to reach this emotional state (Kumar et al., 2001; Loureiro, 2010). Stemming from the above discussion, the following hypotheses are posited:

H2: *Positive emotions are positively related to delight.*

H3: *Surprise is positively related to delight.*

Behavioral Intentions

Customer delight is an emotional response to experience and, as such, becomes critical in influencing future behavioral intentions (Schlossberg, 1993; Schneider & Bowen, 1999). Bartl et al. (2013) found that delighted customers were more prone to display behavioral outcomes, including loyalty and purchase intentions. Delight is elicited while the service is being delivered, and involves a pleasurable and intense service experience, which in turn entails an emotional response/state stronger than satisfaction (Kwong & Yau, 2002; Patterson, 1997). Similarly, as compared to satisfaction, delight has been weighed more significant in impacting loyalty, repetitive purchase behaviors, but also competitive advantages (Torres & Kline, 2006; Wang, 2011). In fact, prior studies have evaluated customer satisfaction as a crucial but less important determinant of customer loyalty (Dolnicar et al., 2015; Kumar et al., 2013), suggesting the construct of delight acts as reinforcement to satisfaction in order to create loyalty (Albayrak & Caber, 2015; Magnini et al., 2011; Torres et al., 2014). Several studies have assessed that the effect of delight on behavioral intentions is non-linear (Finn, 2005, 2012; Keiningham & Vavra, 2001; Rust & Oliver, 2000). Conversely, in the context of websites, Bartl et al. (2013) found that delight's effect was stronger than satisfaction in impacting purchase intentions.

The positive effect of delight in inducing behavioral intentions with regards to repurchases and word-of-mouth was supported by several studies in consumer behavior and marketing literature (Barnes et al., 2010; Chitturi et al., 2008; Kumar, 1996; Oliver et al., 1997; Paul, 2000). In their study evaluating emotions and behavioral intentions of visitors to a winery, as influenced by architectural congruence perceptions, Bufquin et al. (2018) found delight has a positive effect on spreading positive word of mouth and intention to revisit. In fact, delightful experiences likely lead to loyal customers, who, in turn, contribute at spreading positive word-of-mouth (Akamavi et al., 2015; Arnold et al., 2005; Kumar et al., 2013). Jiang (2020) found customer delight has a positive effect on the propensity to engage in positive word-of-mouth intentions. In addition, Paul (2000) also reported customer delight brings about positive word-of-mouth.

Numerous researches in the literature also investigated the outcomes of customer delight. One of the most prominent subsequent is loyalty (Dey et al., 2017; Finn, 2005, 2006; Kim, 2011; Kim et al., 2015; Loureiro, 2010; Oliver et al., 1997; Wang, 2011). Consequently, firms should aim at delighting customers beyond merely satisfying them (Hwang & Hyun, 2017; Lyu &

Hwang, 2017; Magnini et al., 2010; Torres & Kline, 2006; Voss et al., 2008). Customer delight occurs when the provided service positively exceeds customers' expectations, resulting in pleasure, joy, and unexpected level of surprise. As such, the construct has been discussed as a crucial driver of customer loyalty (Berman, 2005; Finn, 2005; Oliver et al., 1997). An important body of literature agrees delight has a stronger effect than satisfaction when it comes to affecting behavioral intentions (Bartl et al., 2013). Similarly, delight has been assessed as stronger than satisfaction in predicting loyalty (Chitturi et al., 2008). In the literature regarding the subsequent of delight, there also exists a lack of coherence within findings per the different published studies. In this picture, the disagreements are also related to satisfaction. For instance, in a study having satisfaction and loyalty as concurrent constructs, Bowden and Dagger (2011) found satisfaction to be the main driver of repurchase intentions and even concluded customer delight did not cause loyalty. Similarly, Finn (2005) also found satisfaction to have a stronger positive effect on intention, while Kim (2011) found no relationship between delight and loyalty. Other interesting findings include Loureiro (2010), which found satisfaction to be more important in determining loyalty than delight, but also Rust and Oliver (2000) who found that customer delight can lead to positive outcomes only in the course that satisfaction is having a strong effect on repurchase intentions. The following hypotheses emerge from the above discussion:

H4: *Delight has a positive direct impact on behavioral intentions.*

H5: *Delight has a positive direct impact on satisfaction.*

H6: *Delight has a positive direct impact on loyalty.*

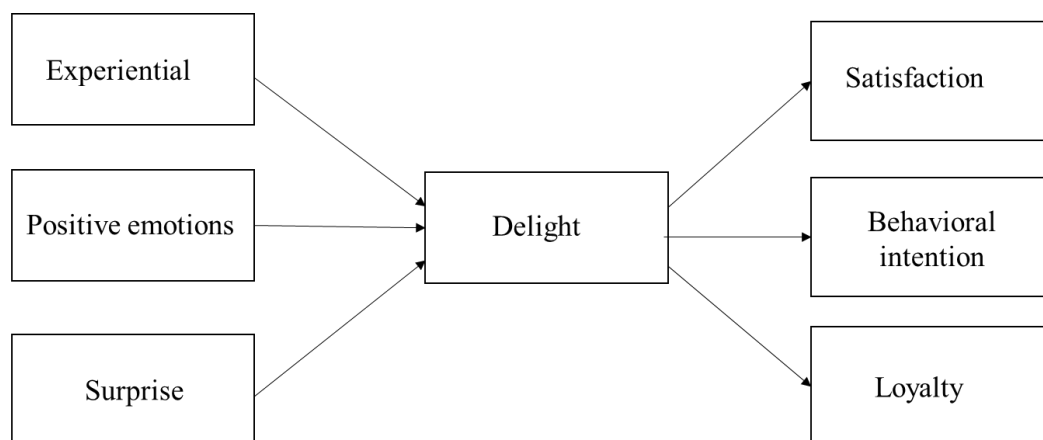


Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework of Delight Relationships*

The conceptual framework depicting delight antecedents and outcomes is presented in Figure 1. As well, all considered constructs are defined in Table 1.

Table 1. *Construct Definitions*

Construct	a.k.a.	Definitions	Representative Studies
Antecedents			
Experiential antecedents	Service quality, physical environment, authenticity	Experiential antecedents are those that the customer experiences while on the property	Tanford (2016)
Emotions	Positive and negative consumption emotions, affect, hedonic value	"A mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts; has a phenomenological tone; is accompanied by physiological processes; is often expressed physically; and may result in specific actions to affirm or cope with the emotion, depending on its nature and the person having it."	Bagozzi et al. (1999, p. 184)
Surprise	Positive and negative surprise	Surprise constitutes a major feature of the organizational entry experience and simply represents a difference between an individual's anticipation and subsequent experience. Surprises can be positive and/or negative, and anticipation may revolve around the job, the organization or self	Louis (1980)
Subsequent			
Behavioral Intentions	Revisit/repurchase intentions, word-of-mouth, positive - word-of-mouth, switching intentions	Intention to revisit, recommend, and say positive things about the brand/property (often combined into a composite measure); willingness to pay more for preferred brand, likelihood to switch	Tanford (2016)
Satisfaction	Satisfaction	Satisfaction is a positive reaction resulting from favorable appraisals of consumption experiences	Oliver et al. (1997)
Loyalty	Customer loyalty brand loyalty	"A deeply held commitment to re-buy and re-patronize a preferred product or service constantly in the future"	Oliver (1977, p. 34)

Gender as a Moderator

Gender has long been associated and examined in the context of consumer behavior. An extensive amount of research has been done on the topic of males and females regarding various buying and consuming activities. Several researchers, such as Petrides and Furnham (2006), Kolyesnikova et

al. (2009), and Vitz and Johnston (1965) concluded that gender also reflects trait differences. Palan (2001) presented that femininity is correlated with relational and independent aspects, while masculinity is linked with rationality, assertiveness, independence. Chang and Chieng (2006) found that gender identity can be used to predict certain attitudes in consumers. In the context of experiential antecedents, gender has been explored by several researchers such as Franck (1985), who explored the social construction of the physical environment, or Schmidt and Sapsford (1995), who examined the issues in gender and the servicescape; whereas Narula et al. (2022) further suggested that female travelers' expectations on servicescape focused more on personalization services. Brebner (2003) empirically proved that females experience certain emotions much more intensely than males. Similarly, female and male appear to be different in adaptability and dealing with challenges (Çizel, 2018). In the context of hospitality products, Velez (2011) discussed that women have been documented to be the head decision making authority for households. Hence the following hypotheses were also developed:

H7: *Gender will moderate the relationship between a) experiential antecedents and delight, b) positive emotions and delight, c) and surprise and delight.*

H8: *Gender will moderate the relationship between a) delight and behavioral intentions, b) delight and satisfaction, c) delight and loyalty*

Figure 2 depicts the relationships between delight and its antecedents and outcomes, as influenced by gender.

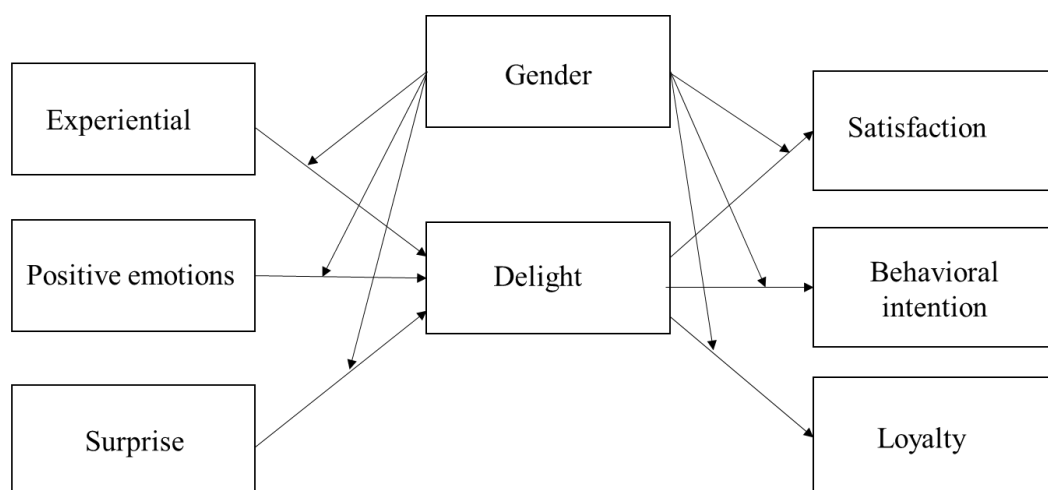


Figure 2. *Gender as a Moderator*

METHODS

Literature Search

For a successful meta-analysis, a comprehensive compilation of literature is essential (Borenstein et al., 2011; Lipsey & Wilson, 2001). As the current study aimed to analyze the concept of delight with the hospitality and tourism field, a literature search was conducted via four systematic procedures. First, an initial search was performed using all journals available on the *Scimago Journal & Country Rank* (SJR) under the subject area of Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management. Similar step was taken by Güzeller & Çeliker (2018) and Kirtil & Aşkun (2021) through a bibliometric analysis search, where SJR was considered as one of the sources when conducting the search. This initial step yielded a total of 123 journals. Second, in order to broaden the inclusion criteria beyond the scope of only research papers, the *Scholar Commons* database was used to retrieve Theses and Dissertations. Third, additional searches were conducted using the databases of Science Direct, Scopus, Emerald Library, Taylor & Francis, and Elsevier, using the keyword “delight,” as adding other attributes to the term would limit the results. Fourth, Google Scholar was also queried to make sure no papers were missed. These searches yielded a total of 3097 from which only 22 yielded the effects needed. A total of 141 effects measuring the relationships proposed in the hypotheses, were found. Figure 3 is a PRISMA flowchart that shows the identified papers, and study selection process (Moher et al., 2009).

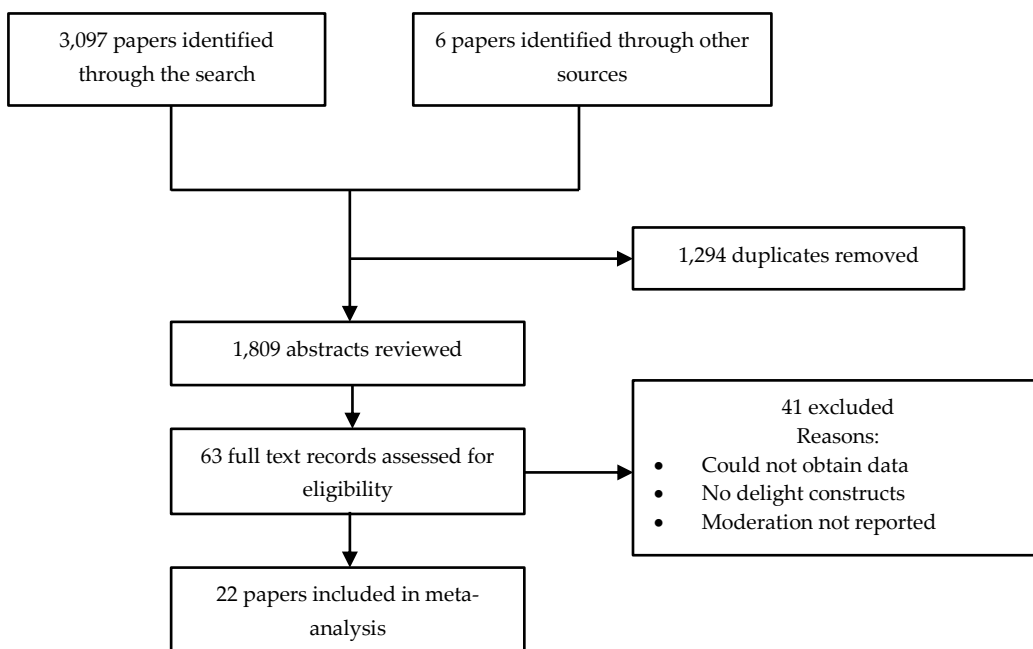


Figure 3. *Study Selection Flowchart*

Coding Studies

Following the keyword search, a total of 3097 papers were collected and examined for their relative fit for the purposes of this study. As such, they were assigned with the codes “Yes,” “No,” or “Maybe”. When an article fell under the “No” or “Maybe” field, a reason for such categorization was provided. As well, the antecedents, subsequent, moderators, and mediators were recorded. Once this master list was completed, the authors checked the papers categorized under “Maybe” and decided on which of them could be used for analysis. Following this initial selection, a second list was created with all papers labelled “Yes”—including article titles, journal names, author names, year of publication, statistical indexes, and the application area of research. Statistical indexes recorded in the present analysis included correlations, sample size, reliability, as well as the percentage of female participants for a potential moderator.

Performing the current meta-analysis involved using the correlation coefficient r for measuring the size of the effect on the variables in the construct. In all of the cases, the correlation matrix or correlation between the variables of interest was reported. Psychometric meta-analysis by Schmidt and Hunter (2014) was adopted, two programs were used in the data analysis process, one being open psychometric meta-analysis (Wiernik, 2017), and the other Meta essentials correlation data 1.2. According to Rosenthal and Rubin (1991), the fail-safe number k provides an estimate of the required number of nonsignificant studies needed to alter the size of the total effect of the relationship toward nonsignificant. Therefore, a significant effect size requires the calculation of the fail-safe number, which equals $k [(r/0.05) - 1]$.

RESULTS

Analysis of Main Effects

Table 2 and Table 3 display the direct effects of respectively antecedents of delight and subsequent of delight. Studies on delight antecedents, positive emotions, and surprise, had the largest combined effect size, whereas delight on behavioral intention were the largest in terms of sample sizes. Academic interests in understanding the construct of delight can be considered a more recent trend, as shown through its number of sample sizes, and its combined effect sizes. Overall, experiential, positive emotions, and surprise had a significant impact on delight, with the effect sizes of .53, .68, and .68, respectively, and a significant p -value. Therefore, hypotheses

H1, H2, and H3 were supported. Regarding the subsequent of delight, satisfaction, behavioral intention, and loyalty all had a significant relationship with delight, with the effect size of .55, .63, and .49, respectively. Therefore, hypotheses H4, H5, and H6 were supported. In addition, a forest plot is also included to provide a visual representation of the correlation range from the main effects (Figure 4). The correlation range, which is plotted at the top of the plot, is formed by the x-axis. Each row—except for the bottom row—depicts a study correlation corresponding to a main effect estimate, depicted using a point within a 95% confidence interval. In statistical terms, the use of an estimate of an interval—within which the “true” correlation (in the population) would lie—is considered a correct way to represent each study’s correlation range in a main effect from a meta-analysis.

Table 2. *Main Effects of Antecedents of Delight*

Antecedents of delight	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	Combined effect size	<i>p</i> -value	95% conf. Int.	<i>Q</i>	<i>P_Q</i>	<i>I²</i>	Fail-safe- <i>k</i> number
Experiential	8	2306	.53	<.05	.46, .79	138.63	<.05	94%	67
Positive emotions	7	3172	.68	<.05	.71, .91	223.03	<.05	97%	88
Surprise	6	4790	.68	<.05	.71, .91	151.30	<.05	96%	88

Note: *k* = number of studies used from analysis; *N* = aggregated samples of the assessed studies; Combined effect size = the total effect size found in the studies; *p*-value = degree of significance of the effect size; 95% Conf. Int. = minimum and maximum confidence interval; *Q* = test of heterogeneity to the individual an aggregate level; *P_Q* = heterogeneity significant level; *I²* = percentage of variation across studies that is due to heterogeneity; fail-safe *k* number = a statistic to estimate the number of studies needed for the result to become non-significant.

Table 3. *Main Effects of Subsequent of Delight*

Subsequent of delight	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	Combined effect size	<i>p</i> -value	95% conf. Int.	<i>Q</i>	<i>P_Q</i>	<i>I²</i>	Fail-safe- <i>k</i> number
Satisfaction	7	4673	.55	<.05	.55, .75	111.34	<.05	93%	69
Behavioral intention	10	5651	.63	<.05	.60, .91	159.41	<.05	94%	116
Loyalty	7	5426	.49	<.05	.45, .70	207.41	<.05	97%	61

Note: *k* = number of studies used from analysis; *N* = aggregated samples of the assessed studies; Combined effect size = the total effect size found in the studies; *p*-value = degree of significance of the effect size; 95% Conf. Int. = minimum and maximum confidence interval; *Q* = test of heterogeneity to the individual an aggregate level; *P_Q* = heterogeneity significant level; *I²* = percentage of variation across studies that is due to heterogeneity; fail-safe *k* number = a statistic to estimate the number of studies needed for the result to become non-significant.

In addition to the forest plot, a funnel plot was generated to evaluate the small study bias. Figure 5 displays the funnel plot which is a scatterplot

visually depicting meta-analysis bias. In general, a symmetrical plot is perceived as good indicator for less bias; however, assessing symmetry with regards to a funnel plot is usually subjective (Sedgwick, 2013). According to the current study's funnel plot, there is a level of asymmetrical pattern based on our observations. Asymmetry funnel plot can be caused by many reasons. Therefore, to better justify publication bias, the present study adopted Egger et al.'s (1997) method and used Egger's test of regression for funnel plot asymmetry. The results from Egger's test $SE=0.08$, $CI [0.75,1.07]$, $p = 0.11$, indicate that the funnel plot is not asymmetric, and therefore there is no significant bias detected (Sterne et al., 2011).

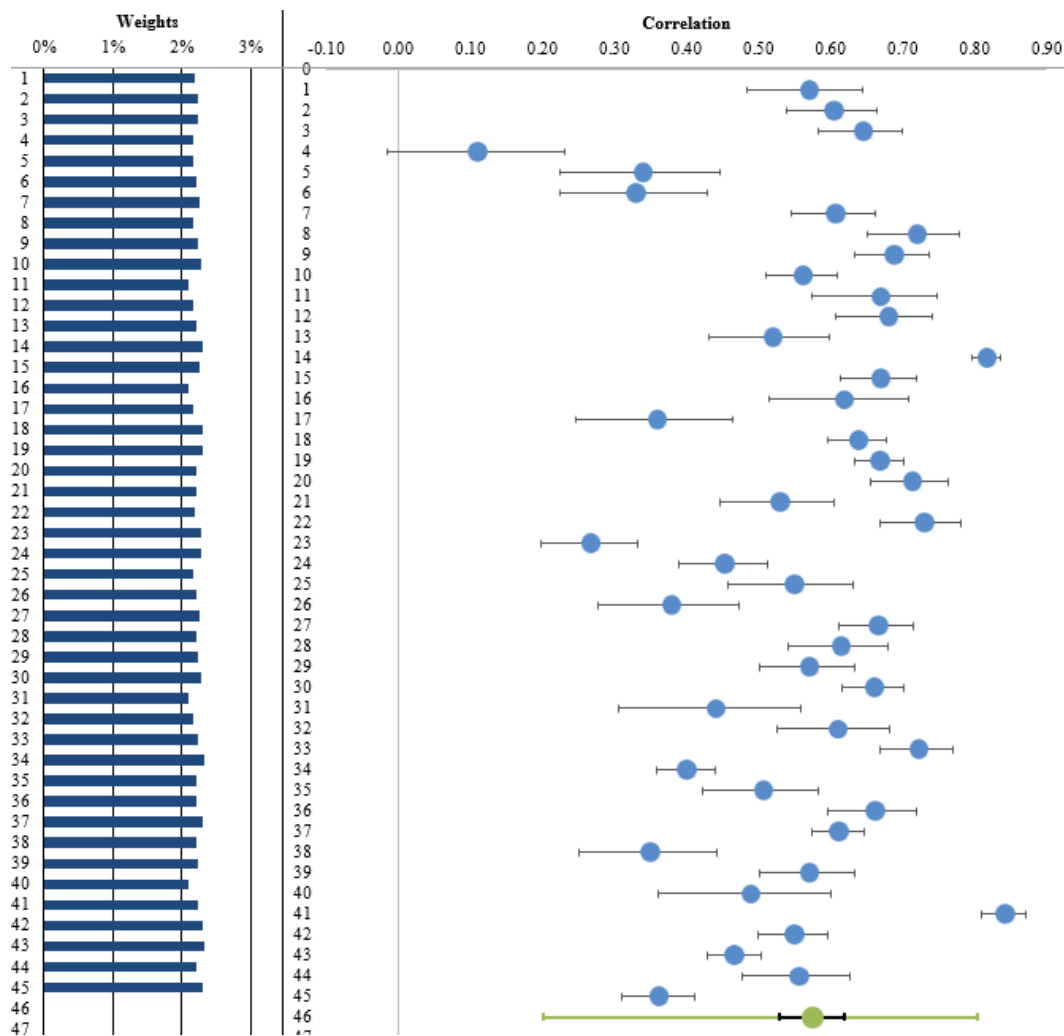


Figure 4. Forest Plot for Studies' Correlations of all the Main Effects

Analysis of Moderator Effects

Heterogeneity shows the extent to which effect sizes vary within a meta-analysis. From the result of the heterogeneity test, the antecedents and

subsequent of delight all indicate statistical significance, with p values $<.001$. The yield study number of current meta-analysis is not large in quantity, and Cochran's Q is highly dependent on the size of the meta-analysis. Thus, I^2 is reported in addition to Cochran's Q . $I^2 = 100\% \times (Q-df)/Q$. I^2 is not sensitive to changes in the number of studies in the analyses: when I^2 is larger than 75%, it shows substantial heterogeneity (Higgins et al., 2003). From the heterogeneity test, all the antecedents and all the subsequent are showing $I^2 > 75\%$, which indicates that there should be shared variance among the relationships. Therefore, gender was tested as a moderator, and it was found that gender can moderate the relationships of surprise on delight ($\beta = -.64, p = .039$) and delight on loyalty ($\beta = -.74, p = .013$). Since gender was coded as percentage female participants in the sample, the finding indicates that female customers are at a higher level of need for surprise to achieve delight, and higher delight level is required to achieve loyalty. Based on the findings, H7c and H8c were supported, which confirms moderating effect of gender in the relationships between surprise and delight, and delight and loyalty respectively. However, there was no moderating effect of gender on the relationships between experiential antecedents and delight (H7a), positive emotion and delight (H7b), delight and behavioral intentions (H8a), and delight and satisfaction (H8b) (See Table 4).

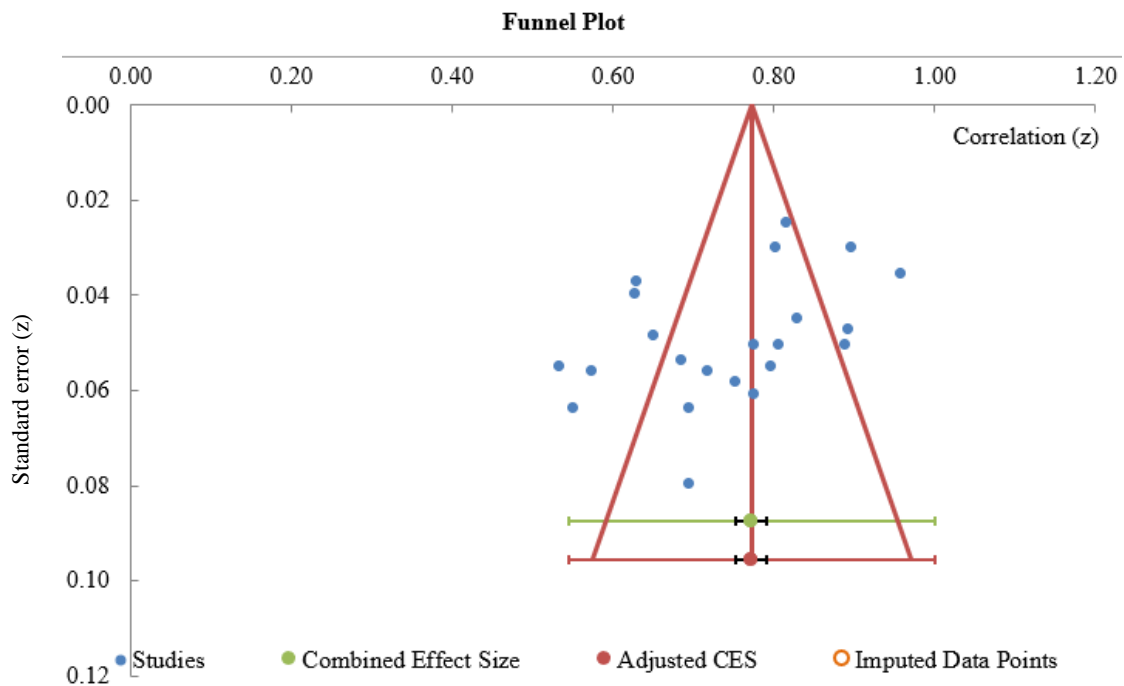


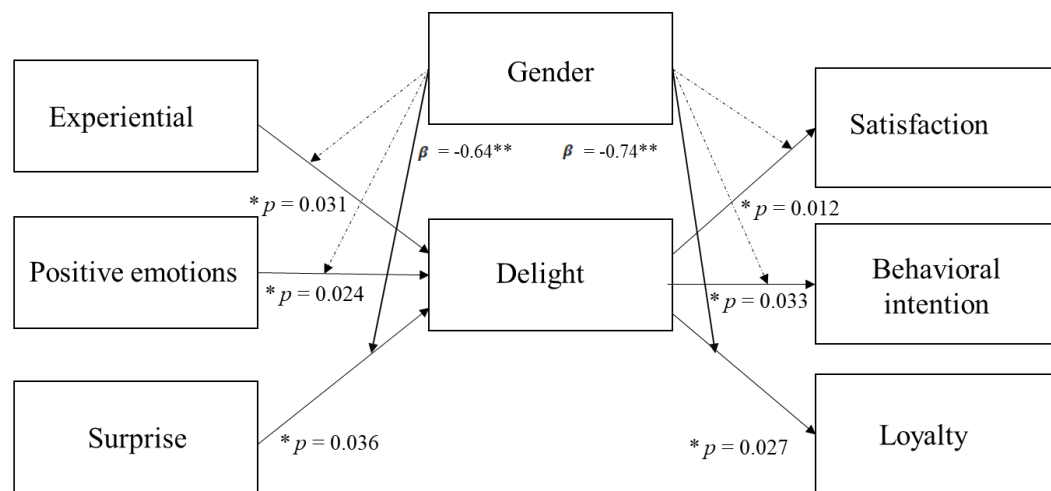
Figure 5. *Funnel Plot*

Table 4. *Gender as a Moderator*

Variables	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SE</i>	CI LL	CI UL	β	Z-value
Experiential	8	2306	0.09	-0.27	0.13	0.43	7.39
positive emotions	7	3172	0.19	-0.43	0.42	0.31	4.83
surprise	6	4790	0	-0.02	-0.01	-0.64	-9.31 *
Satisfaction	7	4673	0.06	-0.01	0.06	-0.45	-5.73
Behavioral intention	10	5651	0.03	-0.01	0.01	-0.27	-9.27
Loyalty	7	5426	0	-0.02	0	-0.74	-13.46 *

Note: *k* = number of studies used from analysis; Sample size *N* = aggregated samples of the assessed studies; *SE* = the standard error; CI LL = 95% confidence interval lower bound; CI UL = 95% confidence interval upper bound; β = beta coefficients; * *p*-value < 0.001.

Overall, the main effects of delight had a great impact on satisfaction, behavioral intention, and loyalty, while experiential, positive emotions, and surprise had a great impact on delight. The overall effect sizes of main effects and sample size demonstrate the significance of the relationships. In addition, the moderator effects indicated that gender could moderate the relationship of surprise and delight as well as delight and loyalty. Figure 6 depicts the overall results of the proposed model.

Figure 6. *Results of Proposed Model*

Note: Dotted line shows the unsupported relationships; * *p* < 0.05, ***p* < 0.01

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined antecedents and subsequent of delight. Per the research questions proposed above, this study aimed at 1) examining the magnitude of relationships between delight and its antecedents, and 2) whether gender was a moderator of the antecedents and subsequent of delight. Informed by the literature search, this study proposed experiential

antecedents (i.e., service quality, physical environment, and authenticity) as well as positive emotions and surprise as antecedents of delight, while behavioral intentions, satisfaction, and loyalty were assessed as subsequent of delight. Moreover, gender was proposed to moderate the relationships between delight and its antecedents on one hand, and delight and its subsequent on the other. Relationships between those constructs were statistically tested through analysis of main effects, and moderator effects, and hypotheses 1 to 6 were supported. Among the supported hypotheses, the finding suggested that delight has a strong association with positive emotions, surprise, and experiential factors. In addition, satisfaction was found to be an outcome of delight, given that adopted scales from the literature considered delight as an affective factor conducive to satisfaction.

Regarding the moderator effects, gender was found to moderate the relationships between surprise and delight, delight and loyalty; but not to experiential antecedents and delight, positive emotion and delight, delight and behavioral intentions, delight and satisfaction. Gender as a key variable in moderating consumer evaluation has been discussed (Holbrook, 1986), and gender is used as basic market segmentation (Darley & Smith, 1995). While some argued that gender differences are not significant, (e.g., O'Keefe, 2015), some literature suggested that gender differences vary in many ways. For example, men often make decisions based on judgment on selected information, whereas women could be perceived as "comprehensive processors", mainly assimilating all available information to make a decision (Kim et al., 2007). Others implied that women tend to respond more to nonverbal stimuli and are more sensitive to subjective and intuitive cues (Haas, 1979). Therefore, the debate on gender as a moderating role indicated the complexity of gender influences. In this study, only two relationships were tested significantly moderated by gender: surprise and delight, and delight and loyalty.

Furthermore, the study provided future research directions through the analysis of previous research efforts and the significant relationships therein. The construct of delight has garnered much attention in the fields of hospitality and tourism. The examinations on delight have included the analysis of different fields, including tourism experience, theme park, customer service, hospitality consultant, retail, restaurants, employee delight, and information technology. The majority of articles adopted scales from the studies of Finn (2005) study and Oliver et al. (1997). This study clarified the definition of delight and how delight is different from other related constructs, such as satisfaction. In addition, 22 published articles were synthesized with the goal of drawing informative conclusions that

may not be pulled when evaluating the studies individually. Results from testing the 12 hypotheses proposed provided strong support for the statistically significant relationships among delight's different dimensions. Consequently, the definitive proposition incorporates delight's important role in achieving satisfaction, behavioral intentions, and loyalty.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The current meta-analysis contributes to the related literature on delight in three different ways. First, an in-depth examination of the construct of delight is provided, along with an analysis of its antecedents and subsequent from different dimensions. Since the number of studies was limited, the links among the antecedents and subsequent delights were not able to get tested for integrating the multiple dimensions. Based on prior related research, the current study proposed and confirmed the framework of antecedents and subsequent of delight, which is more comprehensive and representative of the different dimensions. Second, while the relationships tested showed the significance, a meta-analysis was able to reveal how the relationships vary. Out of all the relationships, it was determined which factors had the largest impact based on the combined effect size and sample numbers. The results of this study deserve to be considered, especially given that existing literature has largely focused on loyalty and behavioral intentions, based on the number of direct effects and sample sizes. This study also demonstrated the potential of delight for serving as a strong antecedent of behavioral intention and loyalty.

The present meta-analysis also contributes to the existing literature on delight in its relationship with satisfaction by assessing satisfaction as a subsequent of delight. The inconsistent findings among the various relationships between those two constructs has been poorly conceptualized (Ma et al., 2017). This can be attributed to the fact that delight has mostly been examined from a business standpoint, neglecting in the process consumers' goals (Füller & Matzler, 2008). Previous research has assessed the uniqueness of delight (as compared to satisfaction) as a construct, especially due to the fact that it brings about emotional responses involving surprise and joy (Plutchik, 2003; Wu et al. 2015). In this sense, delight can be perceived as an emotion or affect response (Kim et al., 2015). Previous research also assessed affective responses as antecedents of satisfaction (Arnold et al., 2005; Finn, 2005; Oliver et al., 1997; Schümmer, 2007), which imply that satisfaction is an antecedent of delight. This study adds to the related literature through establishing satisfaction as a subsequent of delight. Future studies will need to further analyze the link between

satisfaction and delight; notwithstanding, in the case of a meta-analysis, the number of direct effects may be limited by the number of studies involved.

Despite the positive, significant effect of delight and satisfaction, the combined effect size, and the number of direct effects were found relatively lower than behavioral intention. This shows that although the previous literature drew a link between delight and satisfaction, the behavioral intention is the main focus, such as revisit, purchase, and recommendation intentions (Bufquin et al., 2018; Kageyama, 2016; Ma et al., 2017; Robinson, 2012). As it has been previously mentioned, delight can be viewed as an emotion (Kim et al., 2015), which incorporates in its process the goals of consumers in their experiences (Füller & Matzler, 2008). This is consistent with Fredrickson (2001, 2004) who assessed that behavioral intentions result from emotions in line with the success of those goals' realization. In the same vein, Jiang (2020) explains that customers may spread positive word-of-mouth as a response to hedonic emotion, and with the desire of re-living it through sharing. This meta-analysis also found delight to be an antecedent of loyalty. This relationship is consistent with those in consumer behavior literature (e.g., Barnes et al., 2010; Chua et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2015; Ma et al., 2017).

The findings also provided evidence of gender playing an important role among two relationships, which are between surprise and delight and delight and loyalty. In other words, females and males react differently when surprise is involved, and it leads to a different degree of loyalty. Females seem to be more sensitive to surprise and show a higher level of loyalty when they feel delighted. Consistent with prior research, this study assessed that surprise plays a key role in evoking delight (Bartl et al., 2013; Torres et al., 2020), confirming its antecedence to delight.

This finding is similar to Crofts and Magnini's (2011) who found that surprise is a crucial factor in eliciting delight. It is important to nuance however that in service industry, the quality of the experience matters much more than the sole need to create surprise. In fact, a body of research considered that consumers do not need to be 'consistently' surprised to feel delighted (Chua et al., 2017; Kumar et al, 2001; Loureiro, 2014; Ma et al., 2013, Torres & Kline, 2006, 2013), but also that delight may be experienced based solely on joy (Barnes et al., 2010; St-James & Taylor, 2004).

In terms of practical implications, all the antecedents and subsequent variables found in the study were recognized critical for achieving competitiveness. Thus, our findings carry managerial implications for the tourism and hospitality industry, from both employees and customers'

stand of point. First of all, a positive experience and positive emotions can benefit the businesses and lead to higher satisfaction, loyalty, and intention to revisit, recommend, or repurchase. Employees' delight is as important as customers'; thus, they are the experience creators for customers (Kim et al., 2016). Second, female and male process certain emotions differently (Brebner, 2003). From a strategic perspective, it is much important for managers, employees, and hospitality marketers to recognize the differences and promote differently and induce the desired attitude in target markets. Third, emotional experiences and feelings customers and employees deserve managerial attention. Marketers should reinforce multiple dimensions in their promotional efforts. Hospitality workers should make an effort to create delight, surprise, and other positive emotions beyond satisfaction so that businesses can benefit from behavioral intention and loyalty. Nordhorn et al. (2018) explained that consumers' response to good and quality service is shaped in emotional terms as at that point, intangible aspects of the experience become as much important as tangible attributes in stimulating emotional reactions (Nordhorn et al., 2018; Rivera et al. 2019). As such, companies should focus on eliciting delight in consumers by providing services generating positive emotions (arousal and positive affect).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study adopted a meta-analysis analytical tool in exploring the relationships with delight. As for most research studies, the current examination is not exempt of limitations. First, not all previous studies related to delight could be included in the sample, due to the language barriers, availability of online resources, and data availability presented in the articles. A second limitation pertains to an inherent aspect of meta-analysis, which is the inability to capture qualitative studies and failure to include all characteristics of the samples, sometimes resulting in a loss of contextual information (Field, 2003). Delight, as an emotional construct, has been studied by qualitative researchers, however, the findings of qualitative studies are not able to contribute as data for meta-analysis methods. As a consequence, this study failed to report all the details and variation in samples, such as demographic information other than gender. Since individual studies report different demographic aspects of sample by using different categories, the total sample demographic is unobtainable. The third limitation lies in meta-analyses' high reliance on data reported within published studies and for which significant relationships exist. Thus, the findings of this study is a reinforce and a consolidate result from a set of

study. The unpublished studies were relatively limited. Fourth, the current study provides a conceptualized and operationalized construct of delight.

In order to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, future studies may consider multiple-item scales when measuring delight. In addition, future studies should distinguish satisfaction and delight in definition, conception, and composition. Relationship between satisfaction and delight should be studied further and deeper, it should not be limited in one scale. More scale development studies are encouraged to contribute on measuring delight.

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