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Measuring the Effect of Restaurant Servicescapes on Customer Loyalty

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the perceptions of customers towards restaurant servicescapes and to find out the influential role of restaurant servicescapes in customer loyalty. Therefore, a survey was conducted at three restaurants in the context of servicescapes in Safranbolu, Turkey. Respondents were interviewed at the end of their meal and asked to complete a scoresheet that consisted of 35 servicescape factors. Using data collected from 327 guests, it was found that the guests' perception of the restaurant servicescape influences their loyalty. Results indicate that both direct/indirect external servicescape influences and physical environment: external presentation had the highest scores that positively affect the loyalty of customers.

Keywords: Servicescapes, restaurants, customer loyalty, Turkey.

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INTRODUCION

Today's customers are seeking a memorable "experience," and servicescapes are an extremely important component of this experience. Therefore, the servicescape of a restaurant is among the key factors in attracting and satisfying customers in this food and beverage industry. The servicescape (e.g., pleasant interior design, nice music, lighting, color, ambient odor, spacious layout, appealing table settings, and attractive service staff) has a strong impact on consumption experiences (Kotler, 1973; Reimer & Kuehn, 2005; Bitner, 1992), such that it affects overall customer satisfaction and loyalty. Customers evaluate service consumption experiences in a holistic manner, by paying attention to both the servicescape and employee interactions (Lin & Mattila, 2010). For the success of restaurant operations and the sustainability of the enterprise, restaurateurs should create a pleasant atmosphere, pay attention to exterior and interior design, and provide excellent service to their customers.

Research (Bitner, 1992; Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003; Kearny et al., 2007) shows that the servicescape can influence a consumer's perceptions of service, and have a strong impact on the customer's emotions, purchase decisions, behaviors, and loyalty intentions. Servicescapes provoke emotional responses that lead customers either to patronize a particular service provider or to discontinue patronage. Therefore, understanding the patronage behaviors and loyalty intentions of consumers is important in the marketing efforts of restaurants, because the retention of just one customer creates immense benefits. Reichheld et al. (2000) find that a five percentage-point shift in customer retention consistently results in 25–100% profit increases. In order to provide customer loyalty, much importance has been given to the interior and exterior design of the building by restaurateurs, hoteliers, and interior designers.

Some empirical research studies have been conducted on the restaurant's servicescape and its effects on customer experience, satisfaction, purchase decisions (Cronin, 2003; Foxall & Yani-de-Soriano, 2005; Ryu & Han, 2011; Kim & Mon, 2009; Han & Ryu, 2009; Ellen & Zhang, 2014; Lee & Kim, 2017) and loyalty (Harris & Ezech, 2008) because of the apparent importance of servicescapes to customers in the service facilities. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the servicescape factors (e.g., architecture, exterior building design, wall color, furnishing, exterior and interior lighting, music, odor, comfort level, and the uniqueness of the interior layout and design) and service encounters (e.g., the interaction between customers and service staff) that have an

influential role in customers' satisfaction and loyalty intentions, and also to highlight the most important servicescape factors for good restaurant management. In this regard, a survey instrument is used that was designed by McDonnell and Hall (2008) specifically for the servicescape at winery cellar doors, which includes both tangible and social aspects of a food and beverage enterprise. The survey was conducted at three restaurants in Safranbolu, Turkey, which is a cultural tourism destination and attracts almost 750,000 tourists annually (Karabuk Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 2018).

Beginning with definitions of servicescapes, this paper will review the previous literature and subsequently present the findings of the empirical study conducted at three restaurants, offering recommendations for both theorists and practitioners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The servicescape is a concept that was developed by Booms and Bitner (1982) to emphasize the impact of the physical environment in which a service is delivered and in which the service provider and the customer interact, and of any tangible commodities that facilitate the service. The servicescape consists of the physical attributes of a service organization where the service transaction occurs; it is composed of numerous elements, such as color, music, scent, layout, and design of the physical environment (Kim et al., 2012; Zhang, 2014).

According to Hall and Mitchell (2008: 179), "the servicescape is the physical setting within which service occurs and which influences customers' perceptions of the servicescape (perceived quality) and the subsequent internal (i.e. degree of satisfaction) and external (i.e. behaviour concerning patronage and purchase) response." The term servicescape refers to both exterior attributes (such as building exterior, signage, parking, waiting areas, reception, and landscape) and interior attributes (such as design, layout, equipment, and décor; (Zeithaml et al., 2006).

Bitner (1992) determined a model of servicescape variables such as the following:

- (1) ambient conditions (i.e., temperature, air quality, noise, music, odors);
- (2) spatial layout and functionality (i.e., the way in which equipment and furnishings are arranged, and the ability of those items to facilitate consumers' enjoyment); and
- (3) signs, symbols, and artifacts (i.e., signage and décor used to communicate and enhance a

certain image or mood, or to direct customers to desired destinations).

However, definitions of the servicescape in the literature have expanded from a narrow attention to the physical environment comprising tangible elements to the social aspects. Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2003) propose a “social-servicescape model” and suggest that not only the physical aspect but also the social aspect (other customers and service providers in the environment) affect consumer behavior. As coined by Bitner (1992), the servicescape is “the design of the physical environment and service staff qualities that characterize the context which houses the service encounter, which elicits internal reactions from customers leading to the display of approach or avoidance behaviours.” In summary, the servicescape has been described as having both physical and non-physical elements, including social, psychological, and contextual factors.

In the servicescape literature (Milliman, 1982, 1986; Yalch & Spangenberg, 1988, 1990; Baker et al., 1992; Areni & Kim, 1993; Dubé et al., 1995; North et al., 1999; Mattila & Wirtz, 2001), there are many factors affecting the customer’s satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Most of the research has focused on the interior physical appearance of the service organization, such as music, odor, color, lighting, décor, furnishings, and so on. The next section briefly reviews previous research related to servicescapes.

A customer’s evaluation of any particular service is not based on a single environmental stimulus. In general, consumers view servicescapes holistically and take into account multiple aspects in their satisfaction evaluations (Bitner, 1992; Lin, 2004). Bitner (1992) identifies primary dimensions of the servicescape that influence customers’ holistic perceptions (i.e., perceived quality) and their subsequent internal (i.e., satisfaction with the servicescape) and external responses (i.e., approach/avoidance, staying, resupport). According to Lin and Mattila (2010), customers evaluate service experiences in a holistic manner, by paying attention to both the servicescape and employee interactions.

Research shows that music is an important component of servicescapes in that it stimulates emotions, affects the perceptions, moods, and purchasing behaviors of customers (Areni & Kim, 1993), and influences customer satisfaction and relaxation (Ryu & Han, 2010). Research conducted at restaurants and hotels indicates that music tempo can affect the pace of shopping, the length of stay, and the amount of money spent (Milliman, 1982, 1986). Moreover, noise and loudness usually have negative effects on consumers. Noise has been perceived as irritating and annoying (Kryter, 1985).

Temperature is a factor that can be unpleasant if not controlled adequately. An extremely hot or cold atmosphere can cause negative emotions in customers (Medabesh & Upadhyaya, 2012).

Scent (odor) can have an impact on a consumer’s desire to make a purchase. In their study, Morrin and Ratneshwar (2003) concluded that “pleasant scents encourage customers to spend more time in the servicescape.” Hirsch (1991) found that the systematic use of aroma in bakeries increases sales by 300%. Coffee chains such as Starbucks give great emphasis to aroma in the service setting (Hunter, 1995).

Research indicates that lighting can be one of the most powerful physical stimuli in restaurants. There is a relationship between lighting level preferences and individuals’ emotional responses, in that bright lighting may symbolize quick service and relatively low prices at fast-food restaurants (e.g., McDonald’s), while subdued lighting may symbolically convey full service and high prices (Ryu & Han, 2010).

Décor (the quality of materials used in construction, artwork, and floor coverings) is a visual symbol used to create an appropriate atmosphere within the servicescape (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2002), in that it gives implicit cues to customers on the norms and expectations for behavior in the servicescape (Bitner, 1992). Décor is important in the social setting of a restaurant such that it affects human behavior, particularly having an influence on social intimacy (Gifford, 1988). Similarly, décor can influence a customer’s belief about whether a restaurant is trustworthy or not, expensive or affordable (Bitner, 1992), and successful or unsuccessful (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2002).

Furnishing may have a direct effect on customers’ quality perceptions, excitement levels, and indirectly on their desire to return (Ryu & Han, 2010). Furnishing affects the comfort of customers in a restaurant (Baker, 1987; Bitner, 1992; Arneill & Devlin, 2002) as well as their assessment of the service quality. As noted by Wakefield and Blodgett (1996: 54), comfort becomes very important as “customers remain in the same seat for extended periods of time.”

Cleanliness has been considered an influential component of the service environment (Turley & Milliman, 2000). It affects the service quality perceptions (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996) and satisfaction levels of customers. It has an impact on customers’ first impression of the service and, thereby, their intentions to revisit (Harris & Sachau, 2005). When cleanliness is as expected, the confirmation of expectations produces basic satisfaction. When servicescape cleanliness is better than initially expected, the result is positive

disconfirmation and positive reactions (Vilnai-Yavetz & Gilboa, 2010). Hoffman et al.'s (2003) study revealed that dirty rooms and other spaces were accounted servicescape failures by customers. Firms with the greatest cleanliness problems had the lowest customer retention rates. Lucas (2003) found that in a casino cleanliness was related to customers' servicescape satisfaction, willingness to recommend the service, intentions to revisit the site, and desire to stay in the casino. Vilnai-Yavetz and Gilboa (2010) found in their research that cleanliness is important as a predictor of approach behavior and affects customers' intention to repatronize the restaurant.

As noted by Eiseman (1998), color is a strong visual component of an interior setting. Research has shown that color stimulates personal moods and emotions. Dull-colored facades and seats may be relatively unattractive compared with brightly colored walls and seats (Tom et al., 1987). Therefore, the right colors and color combinations will stimulate or relax an individual at a restaurant.

High-quality table décor such as flatware, glassware, cutlery, and table coverings can influence customers' perceptions of overall restaurant service quality. Table decoration (e.g., fresh flowers, candles) can also make customers feel that they are in an upscale restaurant.

Spatial layout and how the service areas, restrooms, entrance, doorways, and passageways are arranged are important at a restaurant. Customers may spend more time in accessible service areas. This may increase the amount of money they are likely to spend. Research in the hotel business shows that there is a positive relationship between time and money spent in the hotel (O'Neill, 1992).

Signage that gives implicit cues to customers about the restaurant's image, norms, and expected behaviors can play an important role in communication. Other aspects of interior design, such as ornamental signs, banners, pictures, and other fixtures, may also serve to enhance the perceived quality of the servicescape.

Service presentation is related to the physical appearance, qualifications, and behaviors of the staff. Restaurant staff have a great influence on customers' attitudes and purchase and loyalty intentions. The behaviors of frontline service providers are crucial to customers' evaluations of a service (Lin & Mattila, 2010). Hill et al. (1989) found that staff competence is the most important criterion applied by customers in their subsequent selection of service providers. The physical appearance of the service staff can greatly enhance the service experience (Baker, 1987: 81). Hutton and Richardson (1995: 59) state that the

physical attractiveness of the staff, "a pleasing physical demeanour through clean and colourful uniforms and proper personal grooming," forms the major part of a service organization's image. Vilnai-Yavetz and Gilboa (2010) found in their research that the perceived cleanliness and neatness of the waiter's clothes were positively correlated to feelings of pleasantness and trust of the customers.

The physical environment is the first impression that consumers have of a restaurant and its services. Therefore, attributes of the restaurant (including layout, architecture, appearance, furnishing, and staff) have extreme importance in the first image of customers. The restaurant servicescape is important for customer experiences in that the service settings evoke emotional reactions (pleasure, arousal, customer satisfaction) toward the potential service delivery (McDonnell & Hall, 2008). Customers assess the physical design, the interior and exterior attributes, and the environs of the restaurant, and this assessment affects guests' satisfaction and their perception of pleasure (Lin & Mattila, 2010). The servicescape of a restaurant may also induce cognitive or perceptual responses (service quality, disconfirmation, value) in customers (Kim & Moon, 2009) when they make judgments on the quality of the restaurant and the dining experience. Reimer and Kuehn (2005) found that servicescapes influence restaurant guests' perception of overall quality in that they affect how long customers desire to stay in the restaurant and whether they intend to repatronize the service provider. According to Herrington (1996), customers in a service environment can be exposed to numerous stimuli that potentially affect how they act, what they buy, and their satisfaction with the service experience. Research studies on customers' responses to servicescapes show that they are the cues for evaluating service delivery (Baker, 1987; Bitner, 1992). Atmospheric (such as music, temperature, lighting, colors, scent) influence the customer's purchase behavior (Kotler, 1973).

Harris and Eze (2008) developed a conceptual model that depicts the proposed linear relationships between nine servicescape elements and loyalty intentions. The first five variables reflect physical aspects of the servicescape (ambient conditions such as music, aroma, cleanliness; design factors such as implicit communicators and furnishing), while the remaining four variables are more social in nature, including staff behavior such as customer orientation, credibility, and staff image such as competence, physical attractiveness. In their model they added two moderating effects of personal and environmental factors that affect customer loyalty. The researchers found a strong relationship between servicescape variables (such as music, aroma, cleanliness, furnishing, customer orientation,

credibility, physical attractiveness of staff, etc.) and the loyalty intentions of customers. The results show that five servicescape variables (cleanliness, implicit communicators, furnishing, customer orientation, physical attractiveness) were found to be significantly directly related to loyalty intentions.

Ünal et al. (2014) revealed that lighting, interior temperature, odor, interior decoration, pictures, color, plants, music, location, layout and arrangement, dining equipment, and furnishing affect customer satisfaction at a restaurant. It has been determined that the restaurant atmosphere affects the feelings and emotions as well as the satisfaction and behavioral intentions of customers (Nguyen and Leblanc, 2002). The atmosphere of the restaurant is influential on the emotions, in that a good atmosphere increases positive emotions. Furthermore, positive emotions increase customer satisfaction. Moreover, behavioral loyalty is highly influenced by customer satisfaction. Satisfaction affects the future behaviors of customers in that satisfied customers have repatronage intentions, recommend the restaurant to others, eat at the restaurant more often, offer positive word-of-mouth advertising, and are willing to pay more. Han and Ryu (2009) confirmed the positive relationship between the three elements of the restaurant's physical environment (i.e. de'cor and artifacts, spatial layout, and ambient conditions) and customer perceived value perception. Patterson and Spreng (1997) examined the role of customer perceived value in explaining consumer behavior in a service context and found that customer's perceived value was a positive and direct antecedent of customer satisfaction. Harris and Ezeh (2008) found in their study of restaurants that five servicescape factors (cleanliness, implicit communicators/aesthetic appeal, furnishing, customer orientation, physical attractiveness of staff) were highly significant in the loyalty intentions of customers. Therefore, maintaining glorious food and service quality is an important precursor to satisfying customer and maintaining customer loyalty. McDonnell and Hall's (2008) "Winery Cellar Door Servicescape Scoresheet" is particularly relevant to this study. They suggested that the higher level of service quality customers received from restaurant, the higher level of a satisfaction would be instilled in the minds of customers. Based on the aforementioned discussion, it is logical to posit the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Restaurant servicescapes have positive effect on customer loyalty

METHODOLOGY

This study was undertaken between January and March 2015 in order to assess the servicescape of three

restaurants in Safranbolu, Turkey. The most significant reason for the selection of Safranbolu as a research area is the fact that Safranbolu is one of the most important cultural tourism destinations of the Western Black Sea Region and is recognized worldwide as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city is a popular tourist destination for both domestic and international visitors as it hosts the best examples of Ottoman civil architecture. Therefore, the customer satisfaction with modern restaurants located in Safranbolu is an important criterion for the tourist flow.

Restaurants were selected according to their popularity, number of customers, architectural design, and appeal. Restaurants specializing in Turkish food are considered full-service, casual-dining, reasonable restaurants. The restaurants' primary target markets include university students, locals, officials, and employees. Using a convenience sampling method, 365 respondents were interviewed at three restaurants. However, 327 valid questionnaires were obtained from the survey. Frequency and reliability analyzes were performed using a statistical software package for social sciences. In addition, correlation and regression analysis were conducted in order to reveal the relationships between servicescapes and customer loyalty and to test the research hypotheses. Reliability results of the scales showed that the scales are reliable with the the alpha coefficient for restaurant servicescapes is 0.733 and the alpha coefficient for customer loyalty is 0.727. The reliability value of the overall survey is 0.764. As the value is higher than the adopted α value in social sciences, that is to say as $\alpha \geq 0,70$, it can be asserted that the scale used in this research is reliable (Nunnally, 1976)

The research was undertaken via a measurement tool with several modifications designed by McDonnell and Hall (2008) specifically for the servicescape at winery cellar doors, called the "Winery Cellar Door Servicescape Scoresheet". It was used to collect data, due to its specificity to cellar doors, and face validity of being a comprehensive analysis of servicescape. This type of data collection is considered to be a VCA (Visual Content Analysis) approach, which is used to systematically evaluate the actual and symbolic content of all forms of communication (McDonnell & Hall, 2008). This data collection is considered to be a VCA approach, where observers visit cellar doors and use the scoresheet to evaluate a number of specific servicescape elements. Quantitative data were analyzed using mean scores, correlation, and regression analysis.

Using a scoresheet, customers were asked to evaluate a number of specific servicescape elements of three restaurants in this survey. A draft framework was pre-tested using tourism management students.

Table 1. The Servicescape Scoresheet

| Section A – Physical Environment: External Presentation | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| | Very Good–Excellent 7–9 | Satisfactory–Good 4–6 | Poor–Not Applicable 1–3 |
| Architecture/exterior building design | Consistent with the image of the restaurant | Inconsistent with the image of the restaurant or mixed architectural design | Totally inconsistent with the image of the restaurant or bad architectural design |
| Car parking | Many parking spaces/very close to the entrance | Enough parking spaces/close to the entrance | Minimal parking spaces/long walk to the entrance |
| Signage on building exterior | Excellent condition Clean Advertises business name and/or products accurately | Fair condition. Advertises business name and/or products | Poor condition Appears to be rarely cleaned Fails to promote business name and/or products |
| Opening hours/other notices | Opening hours displayed clearly | Opening hours displayed | No opening hours displayed |
| Paintwork on walls and window frames | Clean Excellent condition | Reasonable condition | Needs cleaning and repair |
| Entrance of the building/doorways | No rubbish in the entrance Clean Door paintwork in good condition Door mats in good condition Safe | Appears to be swept as required Door paintwork in fair condition Door mats in fair condition | Needs sweeping Door paintwork in poor condition Door mats in poor condition Rubbish around |
| Access for wheelchairs and other mobility devices | Entrance designed for safety for wheelchairs and other mobility devices | Reasonably safe access for wheelchairs and other mobility devices | Entrance unsuitable for wheelchairs and other mobility devices |
| Exterior window treatments | Clean windows Blinds, umbrellas/awnings in good condition, bright and attractive | Clean windows Blinds, umbrellas/awnings reasonably clean and in good condition | Dirty windows Blinds, umbrellas/awnings in poor condition |
| Outdoor seating, furnishing, and equipment arrangement | Modern/style suits overall architecture of restaurant | No specific style to match restaurant design or architecture, average condition | Plastic or ugly furniture, shabby/poor condition |
| External lighting | All lights either are or appear to be in working order Lighting does or may enhance exterior | Lighting either is or appears to be in working order, but may not enhance outdoor area | Poor external lighting/apparent dark areas |
| Overall impression of exterior/layout/design/landscape | External presentation creates a highly favorable impression Attracts interest and looks inviting | Reasonable external presentation likely to attract and encourage customers to enter | External presentation of premises unlikely to attract interest or encourage customers to enter |
| Section B – Physical Environment: Internal Presentation | | | |
| Interior design/color/style/furnishings | Professionally designed Conforming to high quality, distinctive design Consistency in style and color | Good quality Consistency in design/style/color | Poor design/poor quality Confused style/theme/colors |
| Interior lighting/fixtures and fittings | Good lighting Lighting creates a good, attractive image High-quality fixtures and fittings in good condition High-quality design | Reasonable lighting Fixtures and fittings of reasonable quality, in good condition Quality design | Dim or unsuitable lighting Fixtures and fittings of poor quality, in poor condition or unsuitable |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| Restrooms | Spotlessly clean with ample toiletry supplies of soap/toilet paper Has hand cloth/air drying facility | Reasonably clean Minimal spare toiletries | Dirty/no soap/no toilet paper |
| Housekeeping | Restaurant area very clean and tidy Presents a professional image | Restaurant area reasonably clean and tidy Flooring in reasonably clean condition | Restaurant area poorly cleaned or untidy Dirty floors |
| Table décor/ coverings | Fresh flowers/ stylish Cutlery and crockery style in keeping with interior décor design Clean, fresh table cloths/matching serviettes | Minimal table decoration/ dried flowers Mismatched crockery/ cutlery No table cloths/moderately clean/paper serviettes | No table decoration Dirty tables/cluttered Chipped or dirty crockery No serviettes |
| Point of purchase/cashier | Well designed and functional Uncluttered | Practical design Uncluttered | Poor design Cluttered Scanty Mismatched with overall appearance of restaurant |
| Layout and arrangement of interior of restaurant | Attractive Distinctive qualities that differentiate it from other restaurants Excellent spatial layout | Warm, welcoming | Austere or cluttered Unattractive No spatial planning |
| Artifacts/ artwork/ photos/pictures | Artistic/distinctive Integrates well with overall theme of restaurant | Mixed theme | Austere or cluttered atmosphere Artifacts having no relationship with the theme of the restaurant |
| Section C – Qualifications of the Staff and Service Presentation | | | |
| Uniforms | Clean/tidy/highly compatible with the image of the restaurant Coordinated/ branding | Clean/tidy | No uniform |
| Personal grooming | Impeccable/well groomed/hair off the face | Tidy | Untidy |
| Social congestion | Service is not denied because of high number of customers | Service is denied to some extent because of high number of customers | Service is totally denied because of high number of customers |
| Section D – Interior and Exterior Ambient Conditions | | | |
| Exterior shelter | Excellent shelter from wind and sun Integrates with overall architectural design of restaurant | Moderate shelter from wind and sun | No or little shelter |
| Interior temperature /air quality | Comfortable, warm, odorous | Mostly comfortable, odorous | Uncomfortable /unpleasant/waste oil odor |
| Noise | Comfortable | Mostly comfortable | Uncomfortable /unpleasant |
| Music | Suitable for atmosphere | Mostly suitable | Unsuitable |
| Odor | Fresh/pleasant | Mostly pleasant | Smoke/stuffy/musty/ dusty |
| Harmony with natural environment | Surrounding environment has been considered in restaurant design | In keeping with surroundings | Not in keeping with natural environment |

| Section E – Product/Brochures/Menus/Web Page | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| Food and beverages | Wide selection of food and beverages Food and beverages consistent with image of restaurant | Moderate selection of food and beverages | Limited selection Food and beverages inconsistent with image of restaurant |
| Brochures/ business cards | Informative/ distinctive branding and logos/artistic/good paper /easy to read/good layout | Informative/ indistinct branding and logos/ ordinary paper | Unprofessional branding and logo design |
| Menu | Clean/well designed/easy to read /informative about style and brand of restaurant | Clean, tidy/easy to read | Tatty-looking menus/ handwritten price amendments |
| Web page design | Easy to navigate website/well designed/colorful /distinctive/ informative/artistic headline | Easy to navigate/ good design/plain | Difficult to navigate website/bad design/ amateur looking |
| Section F – Direct/Indirect External Servicescape Influences | | | |
| Information centers/maps | Indicated on brochures and maps of information center/multinational symbols on map | Indicated on brochures and maps of information center | No information about restaurant on brochures and maps |
| Regional promotional activities /trade fairs | Positively promote and accurately represent or inform desired market image positioning of restaurant | Promote winery but do not represent actual image of restaurant | No promotional activities |
| Scenery | Pleasant or interesting scenery Scenery in keeping with restaurant design and reflecting brand image | Moderate or uninteresting scenery | Poor scenery Scenery not in keeping with restaurant image |

As seen in Table 2, in order to provide an overall picture of the restaurants, the scoresheet contains six sections: external physical presentation; physical internal presentation; staff and service presentation; external and internal ambient conditions; product/brochures/menus/web; and direct and indirect external influences. The scoresheet requires a score of 1–9 to be given for every item, in which 7–9 represents very good–excellent, 4–6 satisfactory–good, and 1–3 poor–not applicable. In the original study of McDonnell and Hall (2008), the scoresheet required a score out of 10 (7–10 representing very good–excellent), but in this study the scoresheet was modified to a score out of 9, in order to evaluate the items on a nine-point Likert scale.

The scoresheet evaluates the servicescapes of a restaurant and includes sections on the following dimensions:

Section A – Physical Environment: External Presentation. The physical environment is often perceived as a first impression. The exterior architecture of the building, car parks, exterior signs, doorways,

the entrance to the building, outdoor furnishing, and external lighting can often affect the perceptions of customers about the restaurant.

Section B – Physical Environment: Internal Presentation. This includes the interior design of the restaurant, color, lighting, furnishing, table décor, layout, fixtures, settings, artifacts, and cleanliness, which are all evaluated by customers.

Section C – Qualifications of Staff and Service Presentation. This includes uniforms and personal grooming of the service staff and also social congestion, which affects the satisfaction and behavioral intentions of customers.

Section D – Interior and Exterior Ambient Conditions. This includes some of the intangible aspects such as air quality, temperature, music, noise, odor, and harmony with the natural environment, which are important for the satisfaction of customers.

Section E – Product/Brochures/Menus/Web Pages. This includes the food and beverages, which are the

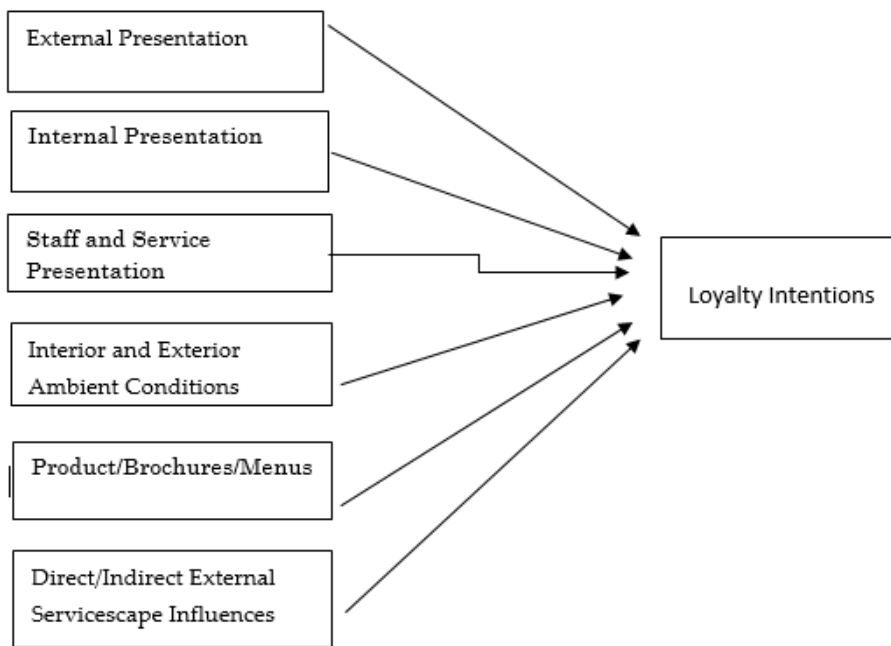


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Study

most important element for the customer to patronize the restaurant. It also includes many items such as brochures, menus, and web pages giving information about the restaurant and its quality.

Section F – Direct and Indirect External Servicescape Influences. This includes the external impact of other intangible variables, including information provided by information centers, promotional activities, trade fairs, and tangible evidence such as maps and brochures on the restaurants. It also includes variables such as weather conditions, which are not within the control of the restaurant.

Finally, customer loyalty was assessed using a 7-point Likert scale with three items (e.g., “I would recommend this restaurant”) (Oliver, 1993; Ryu et al., 2012).

The conceptual model of this study (Figure 1) depicts the proposed linear relationships between six servicescape dimensions and loyalty intentions. The first and second variables reflect the physical external and internal environments of the restaurants, while the third is related to the service encounter. The fourth variable includes the ambient conditions such as music, odor, noise, and temperature. The fourth servicescape dimension is related to the products and the marketing tools of the restaurants, while the last factor includes the tools that provide information and are used to promote the enterprise.

FINDINGS

Respondent Profile

Table 2 shows the demographic features of the respondents.

Table 2. Demographic variables of the respondents

| | n = 327 | f | % |
|---|---------------------------|-----|------|
| Gender | Male | 191 | 58.4 |
| | Female | 136 | 41.6 |
| Age | 15-24 | 187 | 57.2 |
| | 25-34 | 91 | 27.8 |
| | 35-44 | 27 | 8.3 |
| | 45 + | 22 | 6.7 |
| Marital Status | Single | 261 | 79.8 |
| | Married | 66 | 20.2 |
| Education | High school | 47 | 14.4 |
| | University | 280 | 85.6 |
| Occupation | Artisan | 28 | 8.6 |
| | Student | 154 | 47.1 |
| | Housewife | 13 | 4.0 |
| | Civil servant | 35 | 10.7 |
| | Worker | 28 | 8.6 |
| | Employer | 33 | 10.1 |
| Frequency eating at the restaurant | Other | 36 | 11.0 |
| | Once in a week | 124 | 37.9 |
| | Two-three times in a week | 53 | 16.2 |
| | Four–five times in a week | 63 | 19.3 |
| | Not regularly | 87 | 26.6 |

Frequency analysis was conducted to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants. As shown in Table 2, the majority of the participants were males (%58.4), between 15 and 24 years of age (%57.2), university graduates (%85.6). In addition, most of the participants comprised students (47.1%) and 37.9% of the participants dined in a restaurant at least once a week.

Consumer Perceptions of Servicescapes

Tables 3–8 illustrate the mean scores of consumer perceptions of servicescapes.

Table 3. Physical Environment: External Presentation

| Physical Environment: External Presentation | Mean | s.d. |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Architecture/exterior building design | 7.474 | 1.411 |
| 2. Car parking | 3.859 | 2.066 |
| 3. Signage on building exterior | 6.535 | 1.877 |
| 4. Opening hours/other notices | 5.152 | 2.617 |
| 5. Paintwork/walls/window frames | 7.859 | 1.194 |
| 6. Pavement area/doorways | 7.700 | 1.290 |
| 7. Access (for buggies and wheelchairs where appropriate) | 3.094 | 2.205 |
| 8. Windows/exterior window treatments | 7.339 | 1.475 |
| 9. Outdoor seating, furnishing, and equipment arrangement | 7.284 | 1.529 |
| 10. External lighting | 7.596 | 1.451 |
| 11. Overall impression of exterior/layout/design/landscape | 6.963 | 1.570 |
| | Mean = 6.425 | s.d. = 0.853 |

Table 3 indicates the average of participants' assessments of the external qualities of the restaurant (s.d. = standard deviation). Upon examining the results, the participants tend to assess in favor of the following qualities of the restaurant: painting of walls and window frames (= 7.859), entrance/doors (= 7.700), exterior lighting (= 7.596), and exterior architecture (= 7.474). External qualities, parking space (= 3.859), and entries for the disabled (= 3.094) are among the qualities that the participants dislike the most. This reveals that customers have a positive opinion of the architectural structure of the restaurant, the color and design of the building, the entrance doors of the restaurant, and its outdoor lighting.

Nonetheless, it seems that the vast majority of restaurant parking lots have no accessibility ramps in restaurants, or modifications have not been arranged that would facilitate the entry of disabled people.

Table 4. Physical Environment: Internal Presentation

| Physical Environment: Internal Presentation | Mean | s.d. |
|---|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Interior design/color/style/furnishings | 7.578 | 1.530 |
| 2. Interior lighting/fixtures and fittings | 7.685 | 1.478 |
| 3. Restrooms | 7.229 | 1.640 |
| 4. Housekeeping | 7.351 | 1.377 |
| 5. Table decoration/coverings | 6.847 | 1.594 |
| 6. Point of purchase/cashier area | 6.764 | 1.932 |
| 7. Layout of the restaurant | 7.137 | 1.605 |
| 8. Artifacts/artwork/trinkets/photos | 7.272 | 1.793 |
| | Mean = 7.233 | s.d. = 1.094 |

Table 4 indicates the averages of the participants' assessment of the interior spaces in the restaurant. Participants provided positive feedback about lighting/accessories and equipment (= 7.685), interior design/color/style/furnishings (= 7.578), general cleaning services (= 7.351), toilet/sanitary fixtures and materials such as toilet paper, paper towels, etc. (= 7.229) of the restaurant. This indicates that customers are satisfied with the equipment and materials.

Table 5. Staff and Service Presentation

| Staff and Service Presentation | Mean | s.d. |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Uniforms | 6.097 | 1.704 |
| 2. Personal grooming | 6.250 | 1.735 |
| 3. Social congestion | 6.630 | 1.719 |
| | Mean = 6.326 | s.d. = 1.500 |

Table 5 shows the evaluations of guests of the qualities and service presentation of the restaurant employees. The participants state that the staff uniforms are in compliance with the business image and clean (= 6.097), the staff are well groomed (= 6.250), and the service is not hindered by the number of customers in the restaurant (= 6.630). Thus, it is seen that the customers are satisfied with matters related to service staff and there are no service-related problems.

Table 6. Interior and Exterior Ambient Conditions

| Interior and Exterior Ambient Conditions | Mean | s.d. |
|--|-------|--------------|
| 1. Exterior shelter | 6.795 | 1.708 |
| 2. Interior temperature/air quality | 7.308 | 1.446 |
| 3. Noise | 6.440 | 1.714 |
| 4. Music | 6.504 | 1.828 |
| 5. Odor | 6.400 | 1.687 |
| 6. Harmony with natural environment | 6.547 | 1.786 |
| Mean = 6.666 | | s.d. = 1.227 |

Table 6 shows the evaluations of customers of the interior and exterior attributes of the enterprise. The overall interior and exterior ambient characteristics of the restaurant shown in the table are satisfactory for the participants. The temperature and indoor air quality in the restaurant (= 7.308) are very good. The restaurant’s exterior canopy and shelters are well sheltered (providing protection from wind and sun) and also compatible with the architecture (6.795). The design of the restaurant is harmonious with the outdoor environment (6.547), while the music is compatible with the atmosphere of the restaurant (6.504). The restaurant is peaceful and comfortable (= 6.440) and has a nice odor (6.400).

Table 7. Product/Brochures/Menus/Web Page

| Product/Brochures/Menus/ Web Page | Mean | s.d. |
|-----------------------------------|-------|--------------|
| 1. Products/food and beverages | 7.097 | 1.689 |
| 2. Brochures/business cards | 5.893 | 2.195 |
| 3. Menu card | 6.954 | 1.762 |
| 4. Web page design | 4.385 | 2.460 |
| Mean = 6.082 | | s.d. = 1.261 |

The customers are content with the food and beverages offered at the restaurant (the variety of food and beverages on the menu is satisfactory and compatible with the restaurant’s image). The highly informative design of the menu cards (= 6.954) is regarded as satisfactory. The respondents, however, considered the brochure and business card of the restaurant as moderate in quality. In addition, the web pages of the restaurants are not well designed (= 4.385).

Table 8. Direct/Indirect External Servicescape Influences

| Direct/Indirect External Servicescape Influences | Mean | s.d. |
|--|-------|--------------|
| 1. Information centers/maps | 4.021 | 2.239 |
| 2. Regional or area promotional activities/trade fairs | 3.960 | 2.492 |
| 3. Landscape | 4.893 | 2.238 |
| Mean = 4.291 | | s.d. = 1.861 |

There is a lack of information about the restaurants in the brochures and maps of the information offices (= 4.021), and the restaurant is not adequately promoted (= 3.960). Respondents think that the scenery of the restaurant is not interesting (= 4.893).

Loyalty Intentions

Customer loyalty was assessed using a 7-point Likert scale with three items (e.g., “I would recommend this restaurant”) (Oliver, 1993; Ryu et al., 2012). Tables 9 shows the results of correlation analysis conducted to determine the level and direction of relationship between servicescape and customer loyalty intention. Servicescapes factors, customer loyalty intention, and the mean and standard deviations regarding the variables are also included in this table.

According to the results of the correlation analysis performed, it is seen that there is a positive, low-level (<0.40), but significant correlation between the servicescape dimensions of the restaurant and customer loyalty. According to the results, the highest relationship value is found to be between loyalty and direct/indirect external servicescape influences (.319 **). The second highest level of relationship is related to the external presentation dimension (.300 **). Other dimensions in terms of relationship levels with customer loyalty are interior and exterior ambient conditions (.244**), internal presentation (.214**), and staff and service presentation, which has the same level of relationship (.156**) as product/brochures/menus.

It is seen that customer loyalty is more related to direct and indirect external servicescape factors such as landscape and promotional activities. On the other hand, external factors such as the architectural structure, exterior building design, entrances to the building, signage, parking lots, disabled entrances, outdoor furnishing, and lighting are also the environmental factors affecting customer loyalty. The results indicate that indoor air temperature, air quality, noise, music, odor, and the harmony of the restaurant’s design with the surrounding environment are also important dimensions of customer loyalty. Moreover, according to the results of the analysis, it is determined

that there is a meaningful relationship among the dimensions related to the features of the restaurant.

two variables aforementioned in predicting customer loyalty have significant and positive effects, while the

Table 9. Correlation Analysis

| | (\bar{x}) | s.d. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|--|---------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| Customer Loyalty Intention | 3.772 | 0.793 | 1.000 | | | | | | |
| External Presentation | 6.441 | .911 | .300** | 1.000 | | | | | |
| Internal Presentation | 7.233 | 1.094 | .214** | .532** | 1.000 | | | | |
| Staff and Service Presentation | 6.326 | 1.500 | .156** | .211** | .413** | 1.000 | | | |
| Interior and Exterior Ambient Conditions | 6.666 | 1.227 | .244** | .599** | .716** | .436** | 1.000 | | |
| Product/Brochures/Menus | 6.082 | 1.261 | .156** | .394** | .408** | .414** | .504** | 1.000 | |
| Direct/Indirect External Servicescape Influences | 4.291 | 1.861 | .319** | .247** | .138* | .294** | .223** | .405** | 1.000 |

** p<0.01

* p<0.05

In addition to the correlation analysis determining the relationship between customer loyalty and dimensions. According to the results, the simple regression model, in which the restaurant facilities with six dimensions are assumed to be the independent variable, explains about 16% of customer loyalty ($R^2 = .165/p<0.01$). In other words, 16% of restaurant features contribute to customer loyalty; 84% of customer loyalty is explained with different variables.

Table 10. Regression Analysis

| Attributes | Loyalty | | |
|--|---------|--------|------|
| | β | t | p |
| External Presentation | .196 | 2.944 | .003 |
| Internal Presentation | .057 | .755 | .451 |
| Staff and Service Presentation | .021 | .349 | .727 |
| Interior and Exterior Ambient Conditions | .064 | .765 | .445 |
| Product/Brochures/Menus | -.100 | -1.540 | .124 |
| Direct/Indirect External Servicescape Influences | 0.283 | 4.934 | .000 |
| R | | .406 | |
| R² | | .165 | |
| P | | .000 | |
| F | | 10.351 | |
| Durbin-Watson | | 1.438 | |

Upon examining the contributions of the dimensions to the model, it is seen that only two dimensions have significant effects on customer loyalty. According to standardized beta coefficients, the direct/indirect external servicescape factors have significant and the highest importance ($\beta = 0.283$), followed by the external presentation dimension (.0196) in the model that explains 16% of customer loyalty. Considering these results, it would be said that the

other dimensions of the model have no significant effect on customer loyalty.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study has attempted to find out the role of physical surroundings and employee-oriented aspects of servicescapes in the restaurant business. The main goal of this empirical study was to contribute to the servicescapes literature and to find out the servicescape factors affecting customer loyalty in the restaurant business.

A servicescape evaluation framework developed by McDonnell and Hall (2008) was used in order to evaluate the servicescape factors and to present the relationships between the servicescape variables and loyalty intentions of consumers at three restaurants located in the historical city of Safranbolu in Turkey. In this study, most of the servicescape factors perceived by customers were satisfactory, while some of them were insufficient and did not meet the expectations of customers. It can be concluded that customers are highly satisfied with the servicescapes of the restaurants operating in Safranbolu. The paintwork/walls/window frames, pavement/doorways, external lighting, exterior building design, windows, and outdoor furnishing as external physical factors, and interior lighting/fixtures and settings, interior design (color, style, furnishing), and cleanliness as physical interior factors were among the highest-ranked issues in customer satisfaction. In addition, consumers were content with staff uniforms, personal grooming, and the service quality of the restaurants. Also, interior temperature/air quality and the food and beverages offered at the restaurants were scored very well. However, car parking facilities, access for buggies and wheelchairs, web page design, regional or area promotional activities, information provided by the information centers, and landscape were the

least-ranked factors in terms of customer satisfaction. These results are not surprising, as past research studies (Eiseman, 2000; Baker et al., 2002; Reimer & Kuehn, 2005; Ünal et al., 2014) revealed that interior design, lighting, and cleanliness are important servicescape factors for consumers. As many previous studies (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003; Ryu & Jang, 2007; McDonnell & Hall, 2008) have suggested, the service staff and presentation of service are important, because pleasant service influences customer satisfaction and repurchase behavior.

While the vast majority of servicescape studies have focused on single servicescape factors such as lighting (Areni & Kim, 1994), music (Milliman, 1982, 1986; Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990; Areni & Kim, 1993), and aroma (Hirsch, 1995), only a very few studies have attempted to incorporate the effect of more than one servicescape factor (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996; Mattila & Wirtz, 2001). This study differs from previous servicescape studies by positioning servicescape factors along several dimensions.

Customers' evaluation of the overall dining experience encompasses not only the visual cues of the servicescape, but also the qualifications of the service staff and service presentation. Unlike the majority of studies in the literature, this study focuses on the perceived servicescape factors in a holistic manner, as customers evaluate service experiences by paying attention to both the servicescape and employee interactions.

Since servicescapes are the components of customers' loyalty intentions, restaurants should consider the various servicescape factors and how they can be utilized in retaining customers. For the success of the business, restaurants have to pay much attention to servicescapes, as these factors affect customer satisfaction, purchase decisions, loyalty, and revisit intentions. This study highlights that there is a linear relationship between servicescape variables and customers' loyalty intentions. Two servicescape factors affecting customers' loyalty intentions, direct/indirect external servicescape factors (promotional activities, landscape, information provided by information centers) and external presentation (architecture, exterior settings of the restaurant such as painting, windows, lighting, outdoor furnishing), were found to be significant in the linear relationships with loyalty intentions. It is notable that the direct/indirect external servicescape factors that were found to be significant have the lowest mean degrees (mean = 4.291), which implies that consumers are not satisfied with these servicescape factors. The servicescapes literature (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Hooper et al., 2013; Han &

Ryu, 2009; Kim & Moon, 2009; Harris & Ezech, 2008) supports the results of this study that the servicescape is a powerful determinant of overall service quality perceptions as well as behavioral and loyalty intentions.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the study, the results present important implications for restaurant managers. As consumers evaluate services in a holistic manner, service providers should consider both the physical environment and the service delivery process. Service managers should take servicescapes into consideration when designing the physical attributes of a restaurant. It is important to enhance customers' memorable experiences by paying attention to novel servicescape attributes. Therefore, a restaurant can create a unique atmosphere and compete with other providers, because there is a high level of competition among restaurants. The obvious implication of this study is that restaurant managers should consider the overwhelming benefits and pay particular attention to the servicescape variables and service staff in order to satisfy customers and to affect their patronage and loyalty intentions.

Safranbolu is a cultural heritage destination that attracts 750,000 tourists annually, of which approximately 250,000 are overnight visitors, while 500,000 are excursionists. In this regard, the atmosphere and the service settings of restaurants increase the appeal of the city in terms of quality restaurants and the tourism product. Although the restaurants' main target market are the residents, promoting these businesses in the tourism market will attract new customers.

A number of limitations related to this research are evident. While the research was conducted at full-service, casual-dining restaurants specializing in Turkish food, other studies might focus on other classes of restaurants and identify different servicescape attributes. Moreover, consumers have different opinions about servicescape factors, so that comparative studies in different markets and different cultures should be carried out in order to reveal the servicescape evaluations of consumers. Similarly, other studies conducted in other service settings, such as hotels, airports, casinos, and exhibition centers, would contribute to the servicescape literature. Significant difficulty was encountered during the revision of the scoresheet as the scale was designed for the evaluation of wineries. Therefore, some modifications were made. This study attempts to evaluate the satisfactory servicescape factors and to determine customers' loyalty intentions, focused on restaurant customers. However, further servicescape studies could consider other aspects (for example, service providers) in order to meet the needs of customers more effectively.

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