

The Elements of Customer Experience in the Themed Restaurants: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to systematically review the strengthening of the concept of customer experience in themed restaurants and to find out what variables affect customer experience at themed restaurants. This research is based on researches relating to customer experience at themed restaurants. The research applied three databases: Science Direct, Emerald, and EBSCO. The literature reviewed is customer experience at restaurants in the last 10 years, specifically 2012 to 2022. There are only 13 researches on themed restaurants from 2012-2021. Researches applied 23 independent variables and 5 dependent variables in examining themed restaurants. The limitation of this research is that the researcher only examines published research regarding customer experience at restaurants that have a special theme with a time span of 2012-2022. The implication of this research is that stakeholders can consider customer experience as an important factor in the hospitality and tourism industry, especially in restaurants. Some of the variables shown in this study can be a reference for stakeholders in improving customer experience at themed restaurants. This research has a big impact on society because it affords to increase the value of a restaurant. This has the potential for visitors to come back. The originality of this research is that there is no literature review that discusses customer experience and the variables used by researchers in themed restaurants.

Keywords

Customer Experience, Variable of Customer Experience, Themed Restaurants.

1. Introduction

Experience has become a widely used strategy to be integrated across all industries. In particular, experience may increase consumption because consumers are looking for a better experience and prioritize hedonic feelings, so industry practitioners need experience factors to consider the right strategy and design memorable experiences for the sustainability of their companies (Pine and Gilmore 1998). Experience is the main factor of consumption because experience is the most important part of an individual's life. Consumer experience has largely been conceptualized as a holistic phenomenon that is specific to an individual towards an event in a particular context. Experiences have special meaning for individuals because experiences are highly subjective and imply that they involve an emotional aspect, or evoke feelings. Therefore, each experience is unique and the consumer has a personal connection to the experience (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al. 2013).

In recent years, consumer habits for eating at a restaurant have changed. Eating out has become a common everyday behavior for many people (Cheng et al. 2020). Analyzing motivation in food tourism is important for restaurant managers because most visitors go to restaurants to eat and fulfill the most basic physiological needs. The motivation for food consumption and tourism is closely related because food can provide emotional stimulation and is a major contributor to the overall travel experience (Chang et al. 2021).

In today's society, people are looking for restaurants that can provide more experiences. A restaurant with a unique theme has the potential to improve the customer experience (Liu et al. 2018). A themed restaurant is a thematic restaurant that offers a dining area that allows guests to enjoy food in a unique atmosphere (Marinkovic et al. 2015).

A number of studies on customer experience at themed restaurants have been discussed in several countries on every continent, especially in Asia, but there is no review of the customer experience literature on themed restaurants in Indonesia. There is very little theoretical discussion on the variables that affect customer experience at themed restaurants. This study aims to develop an understanding of the customer experience in the service sector, specifically in themed restaurants, which have been found in the last 10 years of research in three databases: Science Direct, Emerald, EBSCO.

1.1 Objectives

This paper answers two questions that can contribute to the development of an understanding of customer experience in themed restaurants: First, based on a systematic and in-depth review of the concept of customer experience in themed restaurants. Second, what variables may affect customer experience at themed restaurants.

2. Literature Review

The Concept of Customer Experience in Themed Restaurants

A themed restaurant is a restaurant that offers a place to eat for its guests to enjoy ethnically authentic food, as well as a distinctive atmosphere. A themed restaurant is defined as a restaurant that serves dishes from another country or regional food from a country combined with an authentic dining atmosphere that has a physical building and interior similar to those found in that country/region (Marinkovic et al. 2015). Since a themed restaurant such as an ethnic theme is located in a foreign country, it can potentially experience difficulties in achieving authenticity objectives, such as getting the right ingredients used in their home country and following traditional cooking methods. In addition, ethnic themed restaurants usually target local people in the foreign country they are in rather than individuals from their home country (Hyeong et al. 2016). A restaurant with a special theme provides a special attraction for visitors because it provides a pleasant experience (Catibog-Sinha 2015). A restaurant with a special theme may increase repeat visits for diners (Cheng et al. 2020).

Variables that Affect Customer Experience in Themed Restaurants

Before discussing the variables of customer experience at themed restaurants, there is a discussion about customer experience at restaurants which is generally practiced in several restaurants. Stakeholders need to pay attention to customer experience (Homburg et al. 2015). Customer experience is an important factor for stakeholders to pay more attention to because a good customer experience will make customers to visit again (Kaushal and Yadav 2020). Stakeholders need to pay attention to customer behavior because this can be a predictive tool for visitors to make repeat visits (Meng & Choi 2018).

There is a relationship between consumer behavior and perceived dimensions of customer experience (Cetin and Dincer 2013). Experience value influences customer behavior in revisiting (Chua et al., 2014). Atmospheric, technology, communication, process, customer interaction with employees, interaction between customers are variables that can affect customer experience (Stein and Ramaseshan 2015).

Technology has an important role in the restaurant industry in knowing the behavior of visitors (DiPietro 2017). Social media influences potential tourists in their decisions. They collect information through social media (O'Connor et al. 2016). Consumer behavior today prefers to share food through social media (Clauzel et al., 2019). Online reviews on restaurants influence customers in deciding to buy at a restaurant (Mathayomchan and Taecharunroj 2020).

Perceived value affects restaurant visitors on repeat visits (Xu et al. 2020). The affective dimension affects tourist loyalty (Brun et al. 2017). Service quality, customer satisfaction, and restaurant image have a positive influence on repeat visit behavior (Clèmes et al. 2018). In addition, the music in the restaurant affects the comfort of customers in the restaurant (Cho et al. 2020).

The customer experience at a restaurant that has an authentic theme influences the customer to revisit (Tsai Chen-Tsang and Lu, 2012). Restaurants with special themes provide a unique experience for visitors. A restaurant with a

homemade menu and the feel of a place that is designed like the original place provides customer satisfaction (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al. 2013). The atmosphere in the restaurant affects the customer experience in the restaurant (Chen et al. 2014). Food quality, price, interior and exterior that determine visitors in visiting a restaurant that has a theme (Marinkovic et al. 2015). Consumers like restaurants that have a special culture in their restaurant atmosphere (Sinha et al. 2015).

Experience, food taste, memorable experiences, advertisements influence diners in visiting themed restaurants (Hyeong et al. 2016). Servicescape dimensions, customer emotion, satisfaction are variables in the measurement of themed restaurants (Meng and Choi 2017). There is a relationship between customer experience with word-of-mouth and return visits (Sotiriadis 2017). Diners are more attracted to restaurants that have a special, authentic theme (Liu et al. 2018).

Service commitment, dietary preferences, design styles, additional value, delicate information collection, and dining environments are variables in measuring visitor satisfaction in restaurants with special themes (Cheng et al. 2020). Music may add to the customer experience in a themed restaurant (Wen et al., 2020). Physical environment, product, service quality are factors that influence customers in deciding to visit (Horng and Hsu 2020). Experience, motivation, and emotional values affect customer satisfaction with restaurants (Chang et al. 2021).

3. Methods

This research is prepared based on researches relating to customer experience at restaurants. The research applied three databases: Science Direct, Emerald, and EBSCO. The literature reviewed is customer experience at restaurants in the last 10 years, specifically 2012 to 2022.

4. Data Collection

The literature review was implemented in four stages. In the first stage, articles were searched in the three databases: Science Direct, Emerald, EBSCO, by searching for the words “Customer Experience” “Tourist Experience” “Themed Restaurant” “Theme Restaurant” and “Ethnic Restaurant” each word used to search for articles that have the term in the title or abstract or keywords and it was obtained 1843 articles. After being checked and adjusted, it was yielded 149 articles. In addition to relevance to the customer experience the article also examined the study's objectives, scope, variables, relationships, research design, findings, implications, and research contributions. In this selection stage, 122 articles were issued and 27 articles were selected. The selected articles are articles that examine the customer experience in restaurants. There are 13 articles that examine customer experiences at themed restaurants from the 27 selected articles.

5. Results and Discussion

In the search for customer experience at restaurants, researchers found 27 articles that examined customer experience at restaurants.

Table 1. Number of Customer Experience Articles by Year

Years	Number of Articles
2012	1
2013	2
2014	2
2015	4
2016	2
2017	4
2018	3
2019	1
2020	7
2021	1
Total	27

The data above shows that the most research on customer experience was published in 2020, with a total of 7 studies (Table 1).

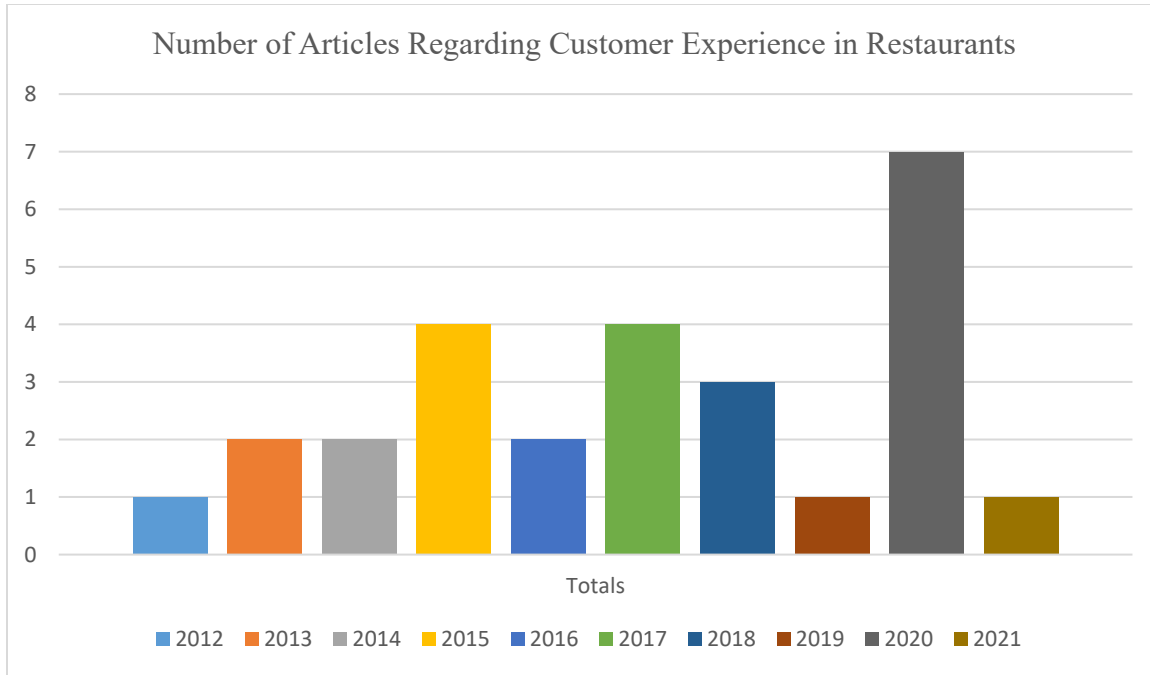


Figure 1. Number of Articles Regarding Customer Experience in Restaurants

The methods used in researching customer experience at restaurants are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method methods. The most widely used method for researching customer experience is the quantitative method with 23 studies, followed by the qualitative method with 3 studies and 1 mixed-method research.

Table 2. Methods

Methods	Number of Articles
Quantitative	23
Qualitative	3
Mixed-Method	1
Total	27

Publisher British Food Journal and International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management are the publishers who publish the most research on customer experience in restaurants, with 5 studies each. Followed by the publisher of the International Journal of Hospitality Management as many as 3 studies. Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management and Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services each published 2 studies and was followed by other publishers who each published 1 study. Here are the details:

Table 3. Publisher Publishing Customer Experience in Restaurants

Publication	Author's	Number of Articles
e-Review of Tourism Research (eRTR)	O'Connor et al. (2016)	1
Service Industries Journal	Brun et al. (2017)	1
British Food Journal	Chang et al. (2021); Cheng et al. (2020); Cho et al. (2020); Kauppinen	5

	et al. (2013); Marinkovic et al. (2015)	
Tourism Management	Clemes et al. (2018)	1
Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research	Cetin et al. (2013)	1
Journal of Foodservice Business Research	Chua et al. (2014)	1
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	DiPietro(2017); Hyeong et al. (2016); Liu et al. (2018); Meng et al. (2018); Xu et al. (2020)	5
International Journal of Tourism Cities	Kaushal et al. (2020)	1
International Journal of Hospitality Management	Mathayomchan& Taecharungroj (2020); Meng& Choi(2017); Tsai Chen & Lu (2012)	3
Journal of Business Research	Chen (2014)	1
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	Horng & Hsu(2020); Wen et al. (2020)	2
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	Clauzel et al. (2019); Stein & Ramaseshan (2015)	2
Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal	Sinha et al. (2015)	1
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	Homburg (2015)	1
Tourism and Hospitality Management	Sotiriadis (2017)	1
Total		27

Number of studies by country sampled for customer experience research and the country in which the research takes place. The Americas consisted of 6 studies whose data was taken for customer experience with the distribution of Canada 1 research and the United States being the most productive with 5 studies. The European continent has 8 studies with 1 study in each country where data were taken including Ireland, Finland, England, France, Germany, Portugal, Serbia, Turkey. The Asian continent has 11 published studies with Taiwan being the most productive country with 5 studies, followed by China with 3 studies, Malaysia 1 study, India 1 study, and Australia 1 study. On the African continent, only South Africa has conducted research on customer experience at restaurants with 1 study. There was 1 study that was not identified where the research country took place because the research was a literature review.

Table 4. The Continents that Researches Restaurant Customer Experience

Continents	Countries	Number of Articles
America	Canada	1
	U.S.	5
European	Ireland	1
	Finland	1
	England	1
	France	1
	Germany	1
	Portugal	1
	Serbia	1
	Turkey	1
Asia	Malaysia	1
	Taiwan	5
	China	3
	India	1
	Australia	1
Africa	South Africa	1
Not Identified (Literature Review)		1

Total	27
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Here's a figure of each continent based on customer experience research.

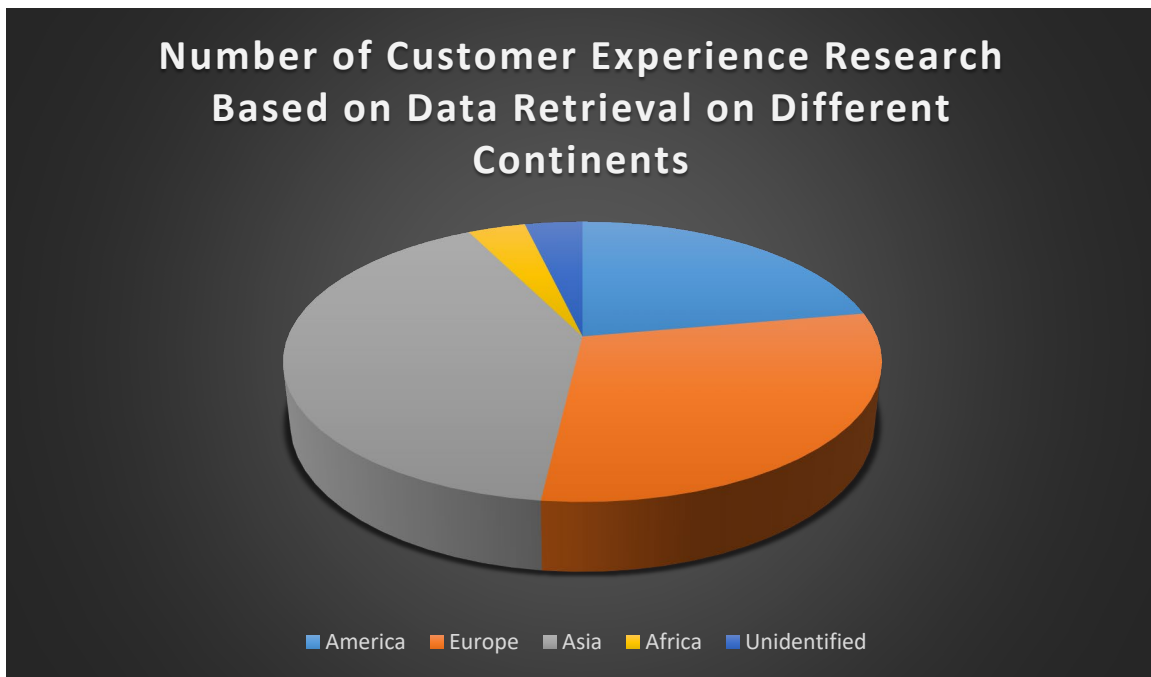


Figure 2. The Continent that Researches Restaurant Customer Experience

However, there are only 13 researches on themed restaurants, with 3 studies being mostly conducted in 2020, followed in 2015 and 2017 with 2 studies each and 1 study for each year as described in the following Table 5:

Table 5. Number of Customer Experience Articles on Themed Restaurants

Years	Number of Articles
2012	1
2013	1
2014	1
2015	2
2016	1
2017	2
2018	1
2020	3
2021	1
Total	13

From the data above, it is clear that there are only 13 researches on themed restaurants from 2012-2021 (not including 2019). This shows that very few studies have examined customer experience at themed restaurants. Overall, from 13 studies that discussed themed restaurants, it was found that there were 23 independent variables and 5 dependent variables that researchers used to research themed restaurants. Here are the details:

Table 6. Customer Experience Variables in Themed Restaurants

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	
Physical environment	Visit decision	
Product		
Service quality		
Atmosphere	Customer experience	
Music		
Custom themes (menu, ambiance)	Customer satisfaction	
Experience value		
Motivation		
Emotional		
Service commitment		
Dietary preferences		
Design styles		
Additional value		
Delicate information collection		
Dining environments		
Food quality		Revisit
Price		
Interior and exterior		
Experience		
Taste of food		
Memorable experiences		
Advertisement		
Customer Experience	Word-of-mouth and repeat visits	

6. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that along with changes in consumer behavior, previously consumers went to restaurants just to eat, but now consumers go to restaurants to travel. Many restaurants have offered special themes in their restaurants. The theme given is the original theme of the country/place of origin. Restaurants that have special themes can provide benefits for tourism managers because visitors have great potential to make repeat visits. The special attraction of a restaurant that has a unique theme is an experience that cannot be felt anywhere else. Previous research has shown that visiting decisions, customer experience, customer satisfaction, repeat visits, and word-of-mouth are the variables that are the focus of researchers in conducting research on themed restaurants.

The limitation of this research is that the researcher only examines published research regarding customer experience at restaurants that have a special theme with a time span of 2012-2022. Future research can go further for the time span of the research and examine customer experience in other hospitality industries such as hotels, cruises, lodging, etc.

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