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TITLE: Space Perception (Spaceception): Effects on Tourists' Dining Experiences and Satisfaction

ABSTRACT

Delivery of a high quality and memorable dining experiences to customers is one of the main objectives of restaurateurs. There are many internal and/or external factors playing significant role either separately or interactively on how dining experience is perceived by the customer. The model proposed in this research assumes that seating preference is a driving force that shapes how the customer perceives cues in the environment and consequently what sort of inferences s/he draws from these external cues. Once the customer chooses a particular place, which is believed to help the customer enjoy the ambiance most, then the customer is likely to start evaluating the restaurant in a reverse manner. That is, instead of an outward-to-inward (funnel like) evaluation process an inward-to-outward (inverse-funnel) perspective takes place and the customer reevaluates the macro environment from where s/he sits. This recurs during the dining experience and a revision over the global ambiance evaluation may or may not follow. Depending on the concept-type of the restaurant, the customer checks the buffet and evaluates both the buffet itself (its location, size, layout, queue, décor etc) and what the buffet offers (e.g., size, shape and layout of food). This overall evaluation of the buffet and table setting, together seating preference determine the time that the customer spends on the buffet and the type and amount of the food preferred, and overall dining enjoyment. Depending on the effectiveness of these settings, as well as the customer's motivation, the customer is likely to indulge himself/herself in un/concerned dining which eventually leads to an interval evaluation as to how functional and/or hedonic value is gained. This ends with judging how satisfactory was the dining experience overall.

KEYWORDS: Dining experience, restaurant design, seating preferences, customer satisfaction, ambiance.