



VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU  
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Harriet Okumu-Nisula

# **EFFECT OF SERVICESCAPE ON THE SERVICE DELIVERY OF EMPLOYEES**

A case of Restaurants and Cafés

Business Economics 2021

## ABSTRACT

Author	Harriet Okumu-Nisula
Title	Effect of servicescape on the service delivery of employees
Year	2021
Language	English
Pages	55 + 6 Appendices
Name of Supervisor	Peter Smeds

---

Servicescape literature has extensively highlighted its influence on customer perceptions of the service environment. However, although employees spend more time than customers in the same surroundings, minimum focus has been placed on their perception of the service surroundings. Moreover, customers' perceptions have mainly been based on single elements of the servicescape.

Review of past studies indicates that individuals perceive environment cues, which they internally respond to cognitively, emotionally, or psychologically with either approach or avoidance behaviors towards or away from the servicescape.

This paper aimed at finding out how holistic perceptions of servicescape dimensions; *ambient conditions, space & functionality* and *signs, symbols & artifacts*, impact on the service delivery outcomes of restaurant/café employees.

Mixed methods research was conducted on a sample of 15 random employees within Vaasa, Finland through an online survey questionnaire. Findings revealed servicescape influenced employees positively or negatively, resulting in either approach or avoidance behaviors respectively. Positively perceived environments had positive effects on employee motivation, commitment, job satisfaction, and thus enhanced service delivery outcomes.

Hence, management of restaurants/café could feature service facility designs at the forefront of planning and decision-making stages, to complement positive perceptions of the servicescape by employees. This may enhance employee commitment and subsequently positive service delivery outcomes and increase profits.

---

Keywords    Servicescape, Restaurant/Café Employees, Approach/Avoidance behaviors, Commitment, Job Satisfaction, Service delivery

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ABSTRACT

1	INTRODUCTION .....	6
1.1	Research problem .....	7
1.2	Aim of the research.....	7
1.3	Research Questions .....	7
1.4	Limitations.....	7
1.5	Definitions.....	8
1.6	Structure of the Thesis.....	9
2	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
2.1	Environmental Psychology.....	10
2.2	Mehrabian-Russell (S-O-R) Model .....	11
2.3	The Gestalt Concept and perception .....	12
2.4	Servicescape.....	13
2.5	Response behavior of employees towards the Servicescape.....	19
2.6	Covid-19 and the servicescape .....	23
3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	26
3.1	Quantitative, qualitative and Pluralistic research methods .....	26
3.2	Sample.....	29
3.3	Data Collection.....	29
3.4	Reliability and Validity .....	30
3.5	Questionnaire .....	31
4	RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH .....	33
5	DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS.....	44
6	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION .....	50
	REFERENCES .....	51

## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

<b>Figure 2. 1</b> Stimulus Organism Response Model .....	12
<b>Figure 2. 2</b> The Servicescape Model.....	16
<b>Figure 4. 1</b> Job Title .....	34
<b>Figure 4. 2</b> Work history .....	34
<b>Figure 4. 3</b> Employment status.....	35
<b>Figure 4. 4</b> Work hours .....	35
<b>Figure 4. 5</b> Employee perceptions of space and functionality .....	36
<b>Figure 4. 6</b> Employee perception of "ambient conditions" .....	37
<b>Figure 4. 7</b> Employee perception of "signs, symbols and artifacts" .....	38
<b>Figure 4. 8</b> Employee Commitment and the servicescape .....	39
<b>Figure 4. 9</b> Employee Job satisfaction and the servicescape .....	39
<b>Figure 4. 10</b> Managements' efforts for continuous improvement of the servicescape and social interaction/service delivery .....	40
<b>Figure 4. 11</b> Approach/avoidance behaviour and the servicescape .....	41
<b>Table 1. 1</b> Typology of Service Organizations based on Variations in form and usage of the Servicescape.....	14

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX 1.** Email to restaurant/café employees

**APPENDIX 2.** Survey questionnaire

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Despite employees staying longer than customers in service environments, past studies and literature in the field of servicescape have extensively emphasized the effects of servicescape on customer responses. However, minimum focus has been placed on its impact on service employees. Moreover, according to Bitner (1992), an organization's goals such as employee turnover or increased job satisfaction are likely to be affected positively or negatively by the physical environment.

Servicescape is defined as the various elements of the physical surroundings within which the service encounter takes place (Bitner, 1992). Furthermore, it is believed that servicescape enhances employee well-being on an emotional, psychological and cognitive level, in a way that triggers either approach or avoidance behaviors of individuals toward their service environments (Bitner, 1992). According to the gestalt theory, individuals respond holistically to the environment in the evaluation of their servicescape perceptions. The same notion was adopted by Bitner (1992), who introduced three holistic servicescape dimensions; ambient conditions, spatial layout and functionality, and lastly, signs, symbols & artifacts.

This paper aims to examine these dimensions holistically, in determining how servicescape impacts on employees' behaviors and attitudes, and subsequently their service delivery outcomes. Additionally, the paper intends to capitalize on findings from the study that could assist restaurant/café managers in planning and making decisions during service facility designs, that takes into consideration the well-being of employees. This would thus aim to enhance employee perceptions of the servicescape, leading to job satisfaction, heightened employee commitment and subsequently have a positive impact on their service delivery to customers.

### **1.1 Research problem**

A review of past literature on servicescape indicates that extensive research has been conducted on its influence on customer responses. However, not much emphasis has been placed on employee perceptions of their physical environment. This research therefore intends to find out how the service delivery of employees is affected by the various elements of the physical surrounding of their service organization.

### **1.2 Aim of the research**

This research paper aims to find out how holistic dimensions of the servicescape impacts on the service delivery of restaurant/café employees.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

*RQ1.* How do holistic perceptions of the servicescape impact on employees in the service environment within which they operate?

*RQ2-* In what ways do positive or negative effects of servicescape on employees influence their service delivery to customers?

*RQ3-* How can negative effects of servicescape be overcome in order to improve the service delivery of employees and subsequently profit the organization as a whole?

### **1.4 Limitations**

- Service environment

There are various service offerings within the service industry. However, this research will be limited to random employees of various restaurants and cafés within Vaasa.

- Servicescape dimensions

Review of past literature highlights servicescape dimensions ranging from Bitner's three main dimensions to modified dimensions by subsequent scholars with same notion as Bitner, but from various perspectives. Although some scholars have conducted research on effects of servicescape on individuals, but based on single elements of the servicescape such as music, lighting, noise etc., for the purposes of this research, focus will be on a holistic approach of the three main dimensions of servicescape as outlined by Bitner, 1992. That is; "ambient conditions", "spatial layout", and "signs, symbols & artifacts". This is owed to the assumption that individuals (restaurant/café employees) perceive the elements of the physical surroundings holistically and respond to the environment emotionally, cognitively and psychologically. Moreover, it has been noted by some academics, that Bitner's conceptual framework did not entirely cover aspects of the servicescape dimensions deemed significant for service environments. Hence this paper will incorporate the cleanliness and social interaction dimensions in addition to the three earlier mentioned dimensions.

## 1.5 Definitions

### a) Servicescape

First coined by Bitner in 1992, the term "servicescape" describes the various elements of the physical surroundings where the service encounter occurs (Bitner, 1992). However, environment in which service encounters occur have been referred to differently by various scholars such as Kotler (1973) refers to it as "atmospherics", *marketing environment* by Turley and Milliman (2000), *physical environment* (Baker, 1987), while Cronin (2003), refers to it as *service environment*. (Ezeh and Harris, 2008). Turley and Milliman (2000), maintain that use of the term depends on its field of application. (Parish et.al., 2008.)



The reader, will understand that for this paper, the term 'servicescape' will be used interchangeably with 'physical surroundings' or 'service environment' to refer to the environments within which service encounters/hospitality activity occurs.

b) Approach/Avoidance behaviors

Mehrabian and Russell (1974), describe approach behaviors individuals to incorporate "all positive behaviors that might be directed at a particular place, such as desire to stay, explore, work and affiliate". On the contrary however, the opposite is deliberated in avoidance behaviors; individuals express "a desire not to stay, explore, work, and affiliate". (Mehrabian and Russell 1974.)

## **1.6 Structure of the Thesis**

The research paper has been divided into the following chapters. The First chapter introduces the reader to the research topic as well as the choice of topic, the research problem and the aim of the study. The research questions, limitations and definitions are also presented in this chapter. In the second chapter, the writer addresses past research within the literature review. The third chapter is the empirical part in which the reader is presented with the research methodology which highlights the research methodology as well as the authors choice of research method. This section also gives a descriptive overview of the sample selection, data collection, reliability and validity, as well as the questionnaire. In chapter four, the author presents the results of the study based on the mixed-methods research in relation to the research questions and aim of the study. Discussions, limitations and recommendations for further research are highlighted within the fifth chapter. The sixth and final chapter disseminates the summary and conclusion of the research findings.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The notion of physical surroundings was first conceptualized by Kotler (1973) as “atmospherics”. Kotler characterized atmospherics in sensory terms to comprise of the intangible features of the physical surroundings such as visual dimensions (brightness, color), olfactory dimensions (scent, freshness), tactile perceptions (temperature, smoothness) and aural dimensions (volume, pitch). Subsequently, Baker (1986), proposed a breakdown of the physical environment to encompass three factors: ambient factors, social factors and design factors. Bitner (1992), later coined the term “servicescape”, to delineate the aspects of the physical environment within which the service occurs. These aspects of the servicescape were classified by Bitner (1992), into three dimensions to include, “ambient conditions”, “spatial layout and functionality” and “signs, symbols and artifacts”. (Tran et.al., 2020.)

Research conducted by various environmental psychologists reveals that physical surroundings have an influence on human behavior (Parish et. al., 2007). For example, environmental psychologists Mehrabian and Russell (1974), developed a Stimulus, Organism and Response (S-O-R) model which stipulates that an organism (individual) responds to a physical surrounding with either an approach or avoidance behavior. According to Wohlwill (1976), emotion-evoking attributes within the environments act as aesthetic stimuli that trigger reactions from individuals (Kaminakis et. al., 2016). Moreover, Schiffman (2001), gestalt psychologists argue that although distinct stimuli are perceived by individuals, they respond holistically to the environment. (Lin, 2004).

### **2.1 Environmental Psychology**

Following its introduction by Mehrabian and Russell in 1974, the topic of environmental psychology has since attracted research by various scholars whose studies

have successfully revealed that the physical environment influences the behaviors of its occupants (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Bitner, 1992; Ryu & Jang, 2007; Parish et.al., 2008; Han & Ryu, 2009; Ellen & Zhang, 2014). Moreover, influence of physical environment on emotions have been attributed to Mehrabian and Russell (1974). While its influence on physiology were revealed by studies conducted by Riley & Cochran, 1984; Osborn, 1987. Rapport (1982), claims that the physical environments influence cognition. Furthermore, Barker (1968) and Bennett & Bennett (1970) suggest that the physical environment has an influence on social interactions. (Parish et.al., 2008.)

Environmental psychology is defined as “a field of study that examines the inter-relationship between environments and human behaviour” (De Young, 1999). The reader will understand that the term ‘environment’ in the context of this study will represent a broad field as described in environmental psychological terms to include “... social settings, built environments and international environments” (De Young 1999). Sundstrom & Sundstrom (1986) and Wineman (1982), highlight that employee satisfaction and performance in factory and office settings is influenced by the physical environment. Wineman (1982), suggests that ambient conditions and workspace design play a pivotal role in employee satisfaction and productivity. (Parish et. al., 2008.)

## **2.2 Mehrabian-Russell (S-O-R) Model**

Majority of servicescape literature has been underpinned on the Mehrabian and Russell S-O-R Model. The Stimulus Organism Response (S-O-R) model is a theoretical framework that was developed by Mehrabian and Russell in 1974 and has been utilized by various scholars in the marketing and psychology field. The model represents a connection between the physical surrounding, emotions and satisfaction. According to Mehrabian and Russell S-O-R model, environmental stimuli (S) have an influence on the way Organisms (individuals – O) perceive and process environment cues they receive from their surroundings and in turn, the way they

respond to them. These stimuli are believed to trigger emotional states of pleasure, arousal, and dominance, which then evoke various responses (R) in the form of approach or avoidance behaviors towards or away from the surrounding environment (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Lin and Mattila, 2010). Figure 2.1 below demonstrates the S-O-R Model developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974).



**Figure 2. 1** Stimulus Organism Response Model

Source: Mehrabian & Russell (1974)

Under the three emotional states, *Pleasure* is the extent to which an individual perceives happiness, joy, satisfaction and feels good in a situation; *Arousal* refers to how excited, active or stimulated an individual is in a situation, while *Dominance* is the degree to which one has control of or feels liberated to act in a situation (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982). This study will exclude the dominant factor owing to a study by Donovan & Rossiter (1982) and Russell & Prat (1980), which revealed that the factor has no significant effects on commercial environments.

### **2.3 The Gestalt Concept and perception**

German psychologists Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, and Wolfgang Kohler developed the Gestalt concept at the beginning of the twentieth century. *Gestalt* is a German word for 'whole'. According to Schiffman (2001), the psychologists studied stimulus patterns, findings of which revealed that spontaneous groupings of stimuli presented qualities with distinct visual fields that were often immediately perceived by individuals. This led to the notion that significant perceptions cannot

be broken down into basic entities but rather the perceptions themselves were derived from basic units they termed as “Gestalts”. For the same reason, the Gestalt psychologists concluded that “the whole is different from the sum of its components parts”. Thus, the assumption that humans tend to perceive objects as a whole configuration in the form of gestalts. (Lin, 2004.)

Moreover, Bitner (1992), adopts the same notion and suggests that although discrete stimuli are perceived by individuals, their environmental responses are determined by the total configuration of the stimuli. It is these holistic perceptions that are believed to eventually satisfy the needs of employees within the servicescape. (Bitner (1992.)) It is stipulated that although for example, an employee may not necessarily agree with the wall paintings or music of the servicescape, his/her perception of the servicescape may not be affected significantly if he/she positively perceives the servicescape as a whole. (Kaminakis et.al., 2016.)

Introducing the Gestalt concept into this research paper supports the supposition that regardless of how individuals perceive distinct stimuli, they respond holistically to the environment by taking into consideration the whole configuration of the stimulus. This study thus assumes that restaurant/café employees participating in this research consider holistic perceptions of the servicescape in evaluation of its effects on their service delivery.

## **2.4 Servicescape**

The term “servicescape” was first introduced by Bitner in 1992 to describe the *“built-in environment (such as manmade, physical surroundings) as opposed to the natural or social environment”* within which the service encounter occurs. According to Becker (1981, p. 130), “the way in which physical settings are created in organizations has been barely tapped as a tangible organizational resource. Rather, the way in which the physical setting is managed within organizations is viewed from a tangential perspective in comparison with promotions, supervisory roles, pay scales and benefits that are equally motivational variables within the

organization. In the same vein, when the consumer side is considered, the physical setting is attributed less attention in comparison to dimensions such as advertising, pricing, special promotions and value adds, when it comes to attraction and/or satisfaction with services of an organization (Bitner, 1992). Table 1 below table denotes a typology of the servicescape, with the various classifications.

**Table 1. 1** Typology of Service Organizations based on Variations in form and usage of the Servicescape.

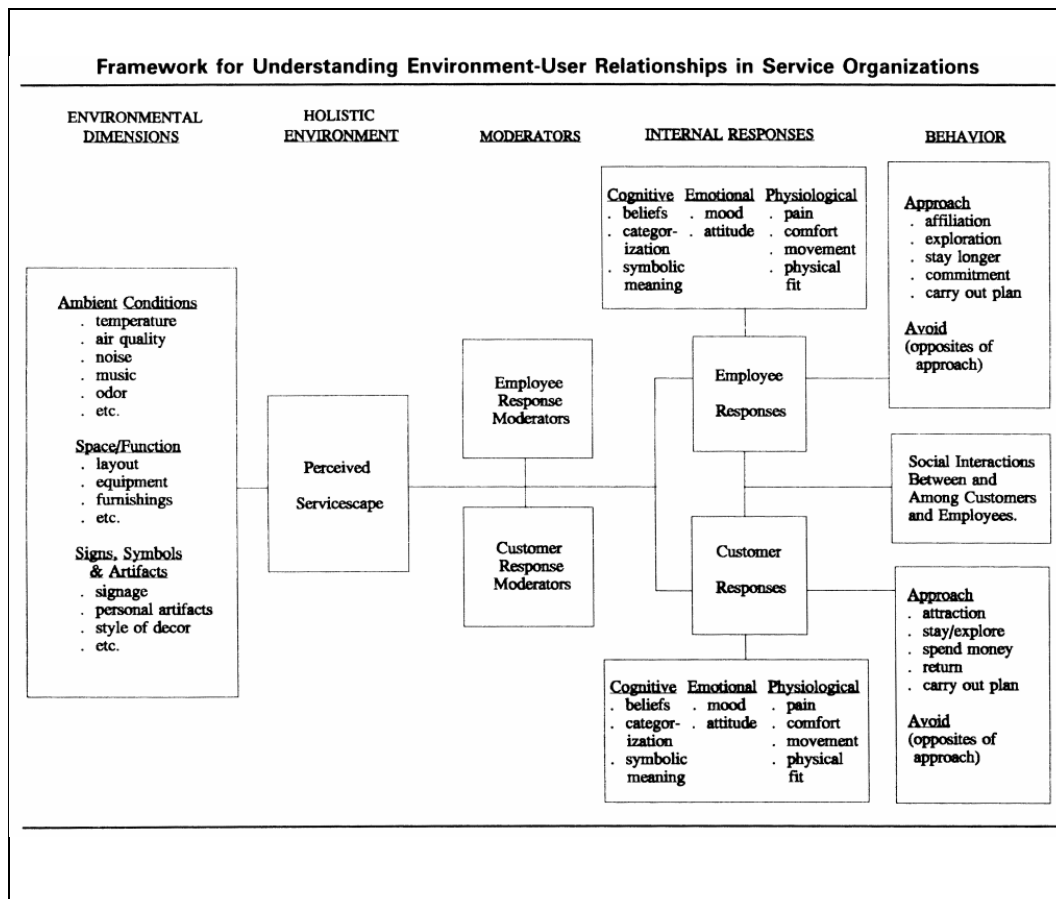
**Source:** Bitner, M.J., “Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customer and Employees”, Journal of Marketing 56 (1992)

Types of Service Organizations Based on Who Performs Actions Within the Servicescape	Physical Complexity of the Servicescape	
	Elaborate	Lean
Self-service (customer only)	Golf Land Surf 'n Splash	ATM Ticketron Post office kiosk Movie theater Express mail dropoff
Interpersonal services (both customer and employee)	Hotels Restaurants Health clinic Hospital Bank Airline School	Dry cleaner Hot dog stand Hair salon
Remote service (employee only)	Telephone company Insurance company Utility Many professional services	Telephone mail order desk Automated voice-messaging-based services

The horizontal aspects denote the complexity of the servicescape in terms of being *elaborate* and *lean*. Some service environments such as hotels, restaurants, airlines, hospitals, etc, are termed *elaborate* owing to their complexity for example a hospital with a variety of floor rooms. While others such as ATMs, Hot dog stands, Movie theatres are considered *lean* because they are simple as services are delivered from simple structures. The vertical aspects of the table show variables of who is the service is applicable to; that is the customer (“self-service”), the employee (“remote service”), or both the customer and employee (interpersonal ser-

vices). The vertical dimension determines whether the customers' needs, employees' needs, or both parties' needs should be considered when planning the servicescape. For example, the call center companies in which employees only communicate remotely with customers would call for only taking care of the employees' needs since they are the only ones in contact with the servicescape. Similarly, service environments with elaborate structures need careful planning and designing by management, thus facilitating customer comfort and satisfaction while simultaneously enhancing productivity and service delivery of employees. Moreover, "the physical setting can either aid or hinder the accomplishment of both internal organizational goals and external marketing goals" (Bitner, 1992). Furthermore, Bitner (1992) suggests that an organizations' goals such as motivation, employee satisfaction, and the efficiency with which they operate could be the primary goals in designing the physical setting.

The typology of the servicescape above, however, has a drawback in its failure to highlight how the environment would be planned and designed, for the achievement of distinct objectives, as well as it does not clarify which behaviors are influenced in the servicescape or why. For this reason, Bitner developed a conceptual framework of the servicescape below based on both the Mehrabian-Russell Model (1974) and the Gestalt theory.



**Figure 2. 2** The Servicescape Model (Bitner, 1992; Mehrabian and Russell, 1994)

**Source:** Bitner, M.J., "Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customer and Employees", *Journal of Marketing* 56 (1992)

According to Ezeh and Harris (2008), the majority of past studies in the field of servicescape have focused on single components of the servicescape and more so on customers perception, notably; focus on light (Areni and Kim, 1994; Summers and Herbert, 2001), music (Areni and Kim, 1993; Sweeny and Wyber, 2002), focus colors (Bellizzi and Hite, 1992) and olfactory cues (Bone and Ellen 1999; Spangenberg et al., 1996; Fiore et al, 2000). Very few studies however have been shown to utilize multiple aspects of the servicescape, for example; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996; Mattila and Wirtz, 2001; Spangenberg et al., 2005. (Ezeh and Harris, 2008.)



The servicescape model in Figure 2.2 assumes a holistic configuration of three main dimensions namely; (i) “ambient conditions” (ii) “spatial layout and functionality” (iii) “signs, symbols and Artefacts (Bitner, 1992). These dimensions have been empirically tested and proven by other scholars (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994, 1996, 1999; Spies et.al., 1997; Han & Ryu, 2009) to be the significant factors for describing the physical environment within the service sector. Moreover, both employees and customers are believed to holistically perceive environment dimensions and internally respond differently in terms of emotional, psychological, and cognitive factors. These inbuilt responses are presumed to act as influential factors in determining the way employees and customers behave in the servicescape as well as how social interactions between them is affected (Bitner, 1992). From Figure 2.2, the three holistic dimensions as introduced by Bitner (1992) are highlighted below.

#### *Ambient conditions*

Ambient conditions refer to intangible aspects of the servicescape such as, air quality, noise, lighting, temperature, music, aroma, and color theme, etc., that affect human perceptions and their responses to the environment (Bitner, 1992; Kearney et.al.,2007). Bitner (1992), claims that an individuals’ five senses are affected by ambient conditions. Mattila & Wirtz (2001), suggest that despite the subconscious experience evoked by ambient conditions, they form a key aspect in the way a guest holistically evaluates their service experience which in turn generates approach or avoidance behavior. Ambient conditions such as pleasant background music, warm lighting, enticing aroma, quality air, acceptable temperatures, and controlled noise levels have been known to positively affect the behaviors and attitudes of restaurant guests (Han & Ryu, 2009; Nguyen & Leblanc, 2002). Research conducted by Ellen & Zhang (2014), reveals that ambient conditions have a positive effect on pleasure and arousal in customers. For this study, ambient condition aspects are explored for restaurant/café employees.

### *Spatial Layout and Functionality*

Bitner (1992), describes the *spatial layout* as the “spatial relationship of machinery, equipment, and furnishings in terms of their sizes, shapes and how they are arranged in a service setting”. *Functionality* refers to the applicability with which similar items ease performance and fulfill goals (Bitner, 1992). Spatial layout and functionality are believed to be particularly significant in the fulfillment of distinct customer needs that are obtained through the successful actions of employees (Bitner, 1992). When customers or employees are pressure-bound, they become very conscious of how to perform their environment duties with relative ease. Moreover, the efficiency of spatial layout and functionality prove significant when tasks to be executed are more complex rather than simple (Bitner, 1992). Nguyen and Leblanc (2002), maintain that the arrangement of equipment and furniture needs to be in a way that correlates with the service delivery process. Ryu and Jang (2007), suggest that service facilities should ensure an ideal layout and functionality plan for their intended group, to evoke a degree of arousal to the service experience. It has been argued that spatial layout and functionality have a positive effect on pleasure and arousal of individuals (Ellen and Zhang, 2014). This study utilizes layout and functionality aspects with the employee in focus.

### *“Signs, symbols and artifacts”*

*Signs, symbols, and artifacts* are all aspects of the servicescape that symbolically communicate meaning and form a holistic impression of the service environment as perceived by guests (Bitner, 1994). They include interior design, quality of materials, décor, architectural design, signage, labels, etc. (Bitner, 1992; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). Conscious and subconscious observations of artwork and décor quality, as well as the level of attraction of interior designs, are most likely evaluated by restaurant guests within the physical surroundings. Hence, their attitudes and views towards the restaurant (Baker et.al., 1988; Bitner, 1992; Han and Ryu, 2009). Additional factors such as indoor plants have also been found to as exude pleasure and arousal in guests (Ryu & Jang, 2007). Ellen & Zhang (2014), suggest

that *Signs, symbols, and artifacts* have a positive effect on pleasure and arousal. For this study, the focus will be on employees.

## **2.5 Response behavior of employees towards the Servicescape**

Besides immersion of servicescape literature within the field of environmental psychology and services marketing, effects of design features of service environments on employees can also be found in a major part of literature in other disciplines such as organizational behavior. Moreover, according to Eagly and Chaiken (1993), when people evaluate an object favorably, they tend to engage in behaviors that foster and support it; and when individuals evaluate an object unfavorably, they have a tendency to engage in behaviors that hinder or oppose it (Kaminalis et. al, 2016).

### *a) Approach/Avoidance behaviors*

As denoted in Figure 2.1, the Mehrabian and Russell (1974) model suggests that individuals respond to environments with either approach or avoidance behavioral forms. These approach/avoidance behaviors of customers and employees are substantially influenced by the way they cognitively, emotionally, and environmentally respond to their environment (Bitner, 1992). The driving forces behind approach behaviors are believed to incorporate positive factors that draw one into a facility (positive internal responses), while avoidance behaviors assume the opposite (negative internal responses) that drive one away from the facility. Individuals such as restaurant and café employees are believed to respond to the environment with either approach or avoidance behaviours that relate with (i) “a desire to stay in (approach) or to get out of (avoid) the environment”, (ii) “a desire to explore the environment (approach) or to avoid moving through or interacting with the environment (avoidance)”, (iii) “a willingness to communicate with others in the environment (approach) as opposed to disengaging in any interactions and communication (avoidance). Thus, environmental stimuli are assumed to have an

effect on an individual's emotional states, behavioral reactions, and subsequently, their evaluations. (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Baker, 1986; Bitner, 1992.)

Environments that are positively loaded, for example, new service environments, evoke positive responses (such as happiness) from individuals, while those that are old, produce negative responses such as sadness, disappointment (Parish et.al., 2008). Skandrani et.al. (2010), suggest that retail store atmospherics can evoke both positive and negative perceptions to employees in terms of approach avoidance behaviors, for example; when the surroundings are stimulating, exuding enthusiasm and motivating, employees tend to affiliate, interact better with customers and better service delivery. Affiliation in this context is directed towards both employees and customers within the servicescape. Consistent with Mehrabian and Russell (1974) - Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) model together with the notion that emotional states of individuals and hence their behaviors are affected by the servicescape, this study assumes that approach-avoidance behavior is influenced by the servicescape and thus has an effect on the service delivery of employees within the restaurant/café servicescape.

#### *b) Commitment*

Morgan and Hunt (1994), define commitment as, "...an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it". Wiener 1982, describes commitment as "the totality of internalized normative pressures to act in a way that meets organizational interests." This definition by Wiener implies that commitment is "an intervening process viewed both as a mediator between certain antecedents and behavioural outcomes as well as a motivational phenomenon (Kaminakis et.al., 2016). However, commitment in everyday use is described as, "the state of being emotionally or intellectually devoted, as to a belief, a course of action or another person" (American Heritage Dictionary). Bitner (1992), highlights that both emotional and cognitive responses is believed to be caused by the servicescape. Studies by Parish et.al. (2008), suggest that employee commitment is indirectly linked to servicescape perceptions. Moreover, Kaminakis

et.al. (2016) argue that the link between the two can also be direct and they have additionally deemed its influence on approach-avoidance behaviors of employees.

From the above definitions of commitment, it is believed that service environments have emotion-evoking characteristics (Wohlwill, 1996), and therefore this research paper adopts the proposition by Kaminakis et.al. (2016), but with a modified version as follows to examine servicescape effects on employee service delivery as follows: *“positively perceived servicescapes will have a positive impact on employees’ commitment towards their workplace”*.

### *c) Job satisfaction*

Job satisfaction is defined by Locke (1976), as a pleasurable or positive emotional state that results from a person’s appraisal of his/her job experiences (Kaminakis et.al.2016). Although job satisfaction has been found to possess cognitive and affective aspects owing to the fact that it is assumed to be an attitude, Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), argue that it is often based on external and internal standards measuring an evaluative assessment of the job. For this reason, job satisfaction categorizations have often attracted critics from numerous scholars as being overly cognitive (Kaminakis et.al.2016). Bitner (1992), argues that physical environments not only affect customer beliefs but also employee beliefs - when a service employee perceives their environment pleasantly, they are presented with hedonic benefits such as pleasure and enjoyment (Parish et.al, 2008).

The Mehrabian and Russell - SOR would assume that positive responses such as job satisfaction are evoked by an individuals’ positive perceptions and evaluations of the stimulus (environmental characteristics). Moreover, servicescape is believed to be influenced by behavioral responses of employees and customers such as employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction respectively (Bitner, 1992). Parish et al. (2008) agree with the same notion, following their study findings on the influence of design facilities on employee job satisfaction. Their study revealed

that the perceived safety of the service facility was positively related to job satisfaction. Furthermore, findings by (Parish et.al., 2008), also revealed that job satisfaction and employee commitment were found to be positively influenced by the design facility within which employees work. Kaminakis et. al. (2016), assume the same notion and posit in their study that: *“positively (negatively) perceived servicescapes will have a positive (negative) impact on employees’ job satisfaction”*.

This study adopts the proposition by Kaminakis et. al., above. However, employees are presented with the positive aspects as: *“positively perceived servicescapes will have a positive impact on employees’ job satisfaction”*.

#### *d) Perception of organizational support*

Eisenberger et.al. (1990), define perceived organizational support as “the general perception concerning the extent to which the organization values employees’ general contributions and cares for their well-being”. According to Salancik and Pferrer (1978), employees are reliant upon their surrounding work environment to interpret events, develop corresponding attitudes and behaviors, and determine their consequences. Eisenberger et.al., (1986) and Eisenberger et.al., (1997), have proven that an employee’s perception of the organization is distinct in comparison to their job satisfaction (Eisenberger et. al., 1997) and organizational commitment (Van Yperen et. al., 1999). (Kaminakis et.al., 2016.)

Parish et.al (2008), suggest that service facilities of an organization are a human resource and marketing aspect that is reflective of its values and is a key component in the execution of its strategy. Therefore, the design of service facilities should not only be directed to facility planners and architects. Moreover, the well-being of employees on an emotional and cognitive level is enhanced by the servicescape. Hence, a building may have a tendency to communicate managements’ concern for its employees’ well-being or a lack of it, modernity or the opposite, managements’ “in-touch” or “out-of-touch” and progressiveness or regression. (Parish et.al., 2008.)

According to Piercy et.al. (2006), servicescape can enhance the well-being of employees on an emotional and cognitive level (Kaminakis et.al, 2016). Furthermore, study findings by McGuire and McLaren (2008), suggest for in order to enhance employee commitment, organizations need to address both the well-being of employees and their physical environment. Moreover, Hoffman and Turley (2002) suggest that Servicescape plays a major role in the service delivery process. This study thus assumes the preposition as proposed by Kaminakis et.al. (2016); *“positively perceived servicescape will have a positive impact on employees’ perceived organizational support”*. However, the construct is modified as *“Continuous improvement of the servicescape by management motivates my overall service delivery and interaction with customers/work colleagues”* to examine restaurant/café employees in this study.

## **2.6 Covid-19 and the servicescape**

Covid-19, a novel virus and infectious disease took a toll on Wuhan city of China in late 2019/early 2020. The virus quickly spread around the world starting with surrounding cities within China, then out into Italy, Spain, France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America shortly before its’ further outbreak around the rest of the world. The outbreak was so rapid that in early March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic. (World Health Organization, 2020.)

The Pandemic has since had a profound effect on the economy, with a vast majority of the hospitality and tourism industries among others closed. Only until recently, restaurants, bars, cafés, and all other industries have started to slowly reopen but with strict mask use and cleanliness, for both employees and customers. There were safety concerns and therefore implementation of social distancing, use of face masks/shields, and hand disinfectants were enforced by governments including Finland by all restaurant employees and customers who visited. Moreover, limitations in capacity for restaurant/café patrons and employees was set, implying that only part of the dining/café space was in use, with some tables and

chairs removed or blocked off from use. Some restaurateurs and café operators partially resorted to take-away services, implying that the consumption space was less populated by customers. (Taylor, 2020.)

Although each of the servicescape dimensions has been found to have a direct influence on individuals' perceptions (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1994; Tayler and DiPietro, 2017), researchers have noted that Bitner's three servicescape dimensions did not fully cover servicescape aspects (Skandrani et.al. 2010).

It has been noted, however, that the current Covid-19 pandemic presents limited aspects assessed by other researchers within the servicescape, notably cleanliness and the social servicescape. Cleanliness and sanitation have become increasingly important in pandemic times. Moreover, Bitner (1992) suggests that servicescapes has an effect on employee-customer social interactions. However, her framework lacked considerations for social aspects within the servicescape that was capable of influencing behavioral and internal responses of employees. Furthermore, from past literature there are no moderators for social interactions, employee-environment interactions, working hours, and history of working hours in Bitner's (1992) seminar paper. Skandrani et.al., (2010) argue that identification of moderators such as social interactions had a profound effect on providing a sound conceptual and empirical addition to their study, findings of which revealed that social aspects within the servicescape played a pivotal role in shaping internal and behavioral responses of employees. (Skandrani et.al. 2010.)

This study assumes that servicescape affects restaurant/café employee behavioral emotions primarily through the pleasure and arousal emotional states, based on the theoretical underpinning of the Mehrabian & Russell model S-O-R model. Moreover, the three above servicescape dimensions introduced by Bitner (1992), could assume the (S) portion of the model (i.e., Environmental stimuli). Hence, Bitner's conceptual framework which is based on the S-O-R model has been



adopted in this study in view of already existing stimuli - ambient conditions, spatial layout & functionality and signs, symbols and artifacts, whose combined effects have been found to impact on service delivery of employees.

Additionally, past literature above denotes response behavior of employees within the servicescape, highlighting that, individuals respond to environments with either approach or avoidance behavioral forms that are substantially influenced by the way they cognitively, emotionally, and environmentally respond to their environment (Bitner, 1992). When people evaluate an object favorably, they tend to engage in behaviors that foster and support it; and when individuals evaluate an object unfavorably, they have a tendency to engage in behaviors that hinder or oppose it (Kaminakis et. al, 2016). Thus, the current study examines employee response behaviors such as employee commitment, job satisfaction, and employee perception of managements' support with the servicescape. Furthermore, owing to the current Covid-19 situation, various professional reports highlighted the significant effect of the pandemic in the restaurant industry (Song et.al.,2020). Hence cleanliness and sanitation have become increasingly important in the pandemic times. Therefore, the cleanliness aspect in this study extends to examine the cleanliness dimension.

### **3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the reader with a description of the methodology used in conducting the research, thereby providing an understanding of the empirical research methods and objectives used in obtaining the findings. The writer disseminates the way in which the data was gathered in addition to what features were measured, thus helping the reader to assess the reliability of the findings. The research questions determine whether a researcher applies the quantitative method, qualitative, or a combination of both methods.

#### **3.1 Quantitative, qualitative and Pluralistic research methods**

- Quantitative Research Method

Various scholars have defined quantitative research differently. Bryman (2012), defines quantitative research as; “a research strategy that emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of data”. Creswell (1994), describes quantitative research as; “explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods” (Sukamolson, 2007). Researchers conducting quantitative research collect data for the assessment and testing of predefined models, theories, or hypotheses (Taylor et. al., 2016). It has been argued that quantitative research is the most commonly used method in marketing research for the collection of primary data.

Quantitative research is used in situations that require data quantification, for example, quantification of a population's behavior, opinions, and attitudes towards a concern. In addition to studying numerical changes, quantitative methods are applicable for “conducting audience segmentation” (Sukamolson, 2007), in which populations are grouped into similar members but differ from other groups. Moreover, hypothesis testing is conducted using quantitative research, with the aim of establishing the correlation between variables. (Sukamolson, 2007).

- Qualitative Research Method

Similarly, various definitions of qualitative research have been presented differently by various scholars. Bryman (2012) defines qualitative research as; “a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman, 2012). On the other hand, Taylor et.al. (2016), refers to qualitative research as an unstructured, non-standardized and open-ended methodology in which descriptive data is generated through observation and interpretation of respondents’ own spoken words. Corbin & Strauss (2008), describe qualitative research as; “understanding people from their own frames of reference and experiencing reality as they experience it”.

Contrary to quantitative research in which data is collected for assessment and testing of predetermined theories, models, or hypotheses, Taylor maintains that qualitative research is inductive, implying that insights, understandings, and concepts are derived and developed from the gathered data pattern. Marshall & Rossman (2011), suggest that throughout the entire qualitative research process, flexibility is observed in the research design (as cited by Taylor et.al., 2016). Studies have indicated that interviewing is the most commonly utilized practice for conducting qualitative research (Jamshed, 2014).

Researchers use qualitative research methods either when notable issues need to be determined and theorized or when a new field of study is being examined (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007), as cited by Jamshed, 2014. Moreover, qualitative analysis is suitable when a problem is complex and requires in-depth exploration, or in situations where theories and hypotheses have to be developed, as well as when investigating causality, that is cause and effect (Jamshed, 2014).

- Pluralistic research method

Although different research strategies are displayed by both quantitative and qualitative research methods numerous scholars argue that an overall research

project can incorporate a combination of both methods, referring to it as mixed-methods research (Bryman, 2012) or pluralistic research method. For example, during audience segmentation, quantitative research is employed for size estimation of an audience segment, for quantification of results derived from a qualitative study (Sukamolson, 2007). In other words, the use of one method while conducting particular research may prompt the use of the other research method (Sabel, 2021). For practical considerations, Bryman (2014), suggests that the method chosen for conducting research should be distinctive to the research question(s).

Thus, the research questions highlighted below formed the basis for the research methodology used for this study.

**RQ1.** How do holistic perceptions of the servicescape dimensions impact on employees in the service environments within which they operate?

**RQ2.** In what ways do positive or negative effects of the servicescape influence the service delivery outcomes of employees to their customers?

**RQ3.** How can negative effects of servicescape be overcome in order to improve the service delivery of employees and subsequently profit the organization as a whole?

The researcher initially sought to conduct the research using only qualitative method in view of the research questions above, as well as the limited marketing literature on employee responses to the servicescape. This way, unexplored employee responses would be uncovered. However, upon compiling interview questions for respondents in relation to the research questions, one respondent from a pilot study suggested that the qualitative questions were quite involving and time consuming to answer.

Moreover, the current situation with Covid-19 may have had a contributory factor on effects of restaurant employee servicescape, an area of research with limited

past literature considering the Covid-19 pandemic that took a toll on the restaurant/café industry was only a year into its outbreak by the time of conducting the study. Therefore, a survey questionnaire that incorporated both aspects of open-ended and attitudinal questions was designed. In light of the above, the research utilized a combination of both qualitative and quantitative; that is the pluralistic or mixed methods research.

### **3.2 Sample**

Prior intentions of the study were to interview employees of both Venn Vaasa restaurant and Espresso Coffee House in Vaasa. However, upon sending out a request letter together with the questionnaire to seek permission for conducting the thesis, the potential companies reverted with regrets. This was partially believed to have been due to the Covid-19 situation, which may have made it increasingly difficult to settle with employees of the mentioned facilities owing to the fact that the hospitality industry was hit hard by the pandemic and most facilities were struggling to revive their financial comeback. Notable also was the fact that employees were working at 50% capacity or even less. This led the writer to take a different approach by mass emailing survey questionnaire to random employees of 2 restaurants (XX) and 2 cafés (XX) within Vaasa through the email addresses of their organizations' webpages.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

Data collection in empirical studies can be from self-generated materials as well as from pre-existing material in the form of data from past studies, official statistics, and archives. The methods for data collection include interviewing respondents, documents, inquires, as well as observation.

A total of 15 random employees from the selected restaurants/café in Vaasa managed to fill out the online survey questionnaire. Additionally, this study utilized data from pre-existing secondary data that comprised of website articles,

journals, books as well as acquired knowledge from the educational institution, VAMK University of Applied sciences.

### **3.4 Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are key factors for the establishment and assessment of the quality and performance of the research. Reliability in quantitative research refers to “the consistency of a measure of a concept” (Bryman, 2012). Contrary to its aspects in quantitative research, several discussions exist among qualitative researchers with regard to the importance of reliability and validity in qualitative research. Since measurement connotations are more often associated with quantitative research, qualitative researchers tend to integrate reliability and validity into qualitative research by modulating the salience of measurement issues as opposed to changing the meaning (Bryman, 2012).

A reliable measure is one in which responses from respondents are similar or close to a predetermined set of responses from the researcher. Moreover, repeatability and stability are key factors in making decisions on the reliability of a research. This implies that performing the research under a similar set of conditions would yield similar results (Bush & Burns (2010).

Validity of a research describes the accuracy of the measurements used in conducting the research. Moreover, it seeks to ensure that the set of questions used for conducting research, obtain accurate measurements of what they intended to measure. (Bush & Burns, 2010.)

Consistent with Erlandson et.al., 1993 and Thomas, 2006, the researcher uses the gathered data and compares it with findings of past studies that were conducted under similar and related topics. This way credibility of the derived results can be assessed. For this study, the researcher gathered data from respondents, as well as utilized secondary data for the theoretical underpinning of the study based on a review of database-generated literature - journals, articles, and books of scholars

who have conducted research in a similar field of study. (Examples for this research: Bitner (1992) conceptual studies - Impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees; Parish et al. (2008) – Effect of Servicescape on service workers; Kaminakis et al. (2016) – Effect of Servicescape on frontline employee extra role performance)

### **3.5 Questionnaire**

This study uses an online survey questionnaire. A questionnaire refers to a set of questions that is pre-designed by the researcher, with the aim of obtaining respondents' data. When conducting a study based on questionnaires, a researcher tends to consider a set of interconnected activities that range from the basic design of the questionnaire, how valid the questionnaire is, to the method used for conducting the research. Hair et. al. (2003), maintain that the questionnaire wording is key to the accuracy of gathered data.

The first step in the design of a research questionnaire is the development of the questions, wordings of which must be easy to interpret, unbiased, unambiguous, brief, and grammatically clear. The next part of the questionnaire design is the way in which the sequence of statements and questions is developed. Two main parts are included in this phase; (i) an introduction that introduces the research and describes the general aim of the research (ii) the second part of the questionnaire design is the question flow. Question flow is the placement of questions in a format that is respondent-friendly, with the aim of easing the respondents' involvement. (Burns & Bush, 2020).

For this study, it is worth noting that upon designing the first set of questions and conducting a pilot study (initially qualitative) with one respondent, the impression was that "the interview questions were overly involving to interpret and answer. Furthermore, the term '*Servicescape*' was not familiar. Consistent with both Hair et.al. (2003) and Bush & Burns (2010) proposals, the researcher was prompted to redesign the questionnaire (mixed method in the form of an online survey for this

case) and kept the questions simple and easy to interpret and answer. Moreover, since there was unfamiliarity with the term servicescape in the pilot study, the author introduced the topic as well as a brief description of the term “servicescape” in an easily understandable format. The general questions were drawn from a review of the servicescape literature from past studies conducted from the perspective of both customers and employees (e.g., Bitner, 1992; Kaminakis et.al.2016, Parish et. al., 2008; Peters and Twint, 2011). Moreover, Covid-19 had limited supporting studies, hence the author relied on observational experiences of the restaurant and café servicescapes within Vaasa.



## **4 RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH**

The chapter herein presents the reader with the findings of the study. The researcher expected at least 30 respondents to respond to the survey, considering a mass email was sent to random restaurant employees of 4 restaurants/cafés (2 restaurants-x and 2 cafés-x). However, a total of 15 respondents managed to respond to the online survey questionnaire.

### **Data Analysis**

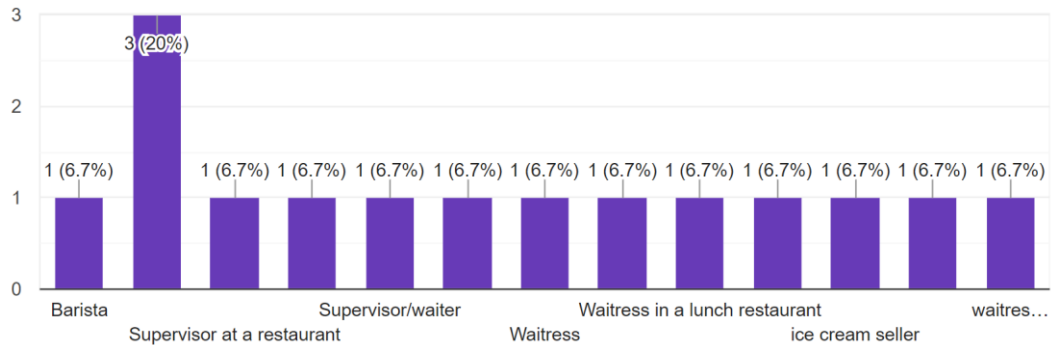
Analyzing the data involves an examination of the results for consistency, completeness, and conversion of the gathered data into knowledge. Analysis commences with summarizing the raw data (data matrix), in which the researcher describes the fundamental patterns, categorizes sample findings, and uses a mixture of words and of graphs for interpretation of the findings. There are five basic types of statistical analysis used by researchers; predictive analysis, associative analysis, descriptive analysis, comparative analysis and inferential analysis (Bush & Burns, 2010).

Examination of the data matrix in this research was done through eye observations to check for inconsistencies, followed by a combination of both descriptive analysis and comparative analysis as the statistical analysis methods of the self-generated and excel generated responses.

## Descriptive Analysis

### General information

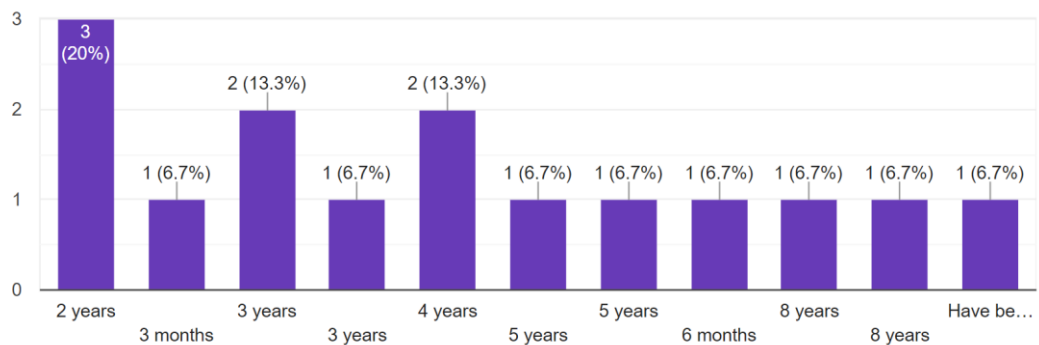
Could you please describe your job title and role function(s) within your work place?



**Figure 4. 1** Job Title

9 out of 15 were waiters/waitresses. Moreover 2 of the 9 carried out supervisory roles as well. Of the remaining 6 respondents, 4 of them were chefs, while one was an ice-cream seller and the other, a Barista.

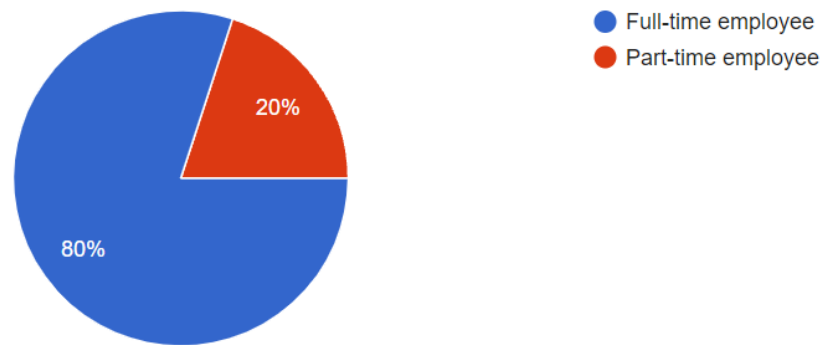
**a) How long have you been (or were you) employed at your workplace?**



**Figure 4. 2** Work history

From the above responses, it is notable that 9 out of the 15 employees have worked in their service environment for 3 years and below, while the other 6 respondents have worked for more than 3 years and above, precisely (3-8 years).

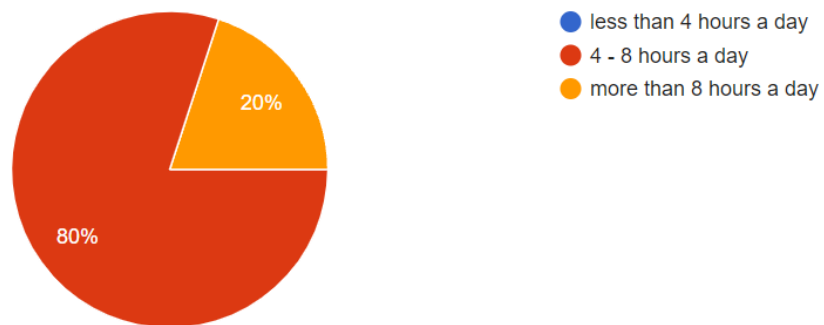
**b) Please select your employment status.**



**Figure 4. 3** Employment status

12 out of 15 respondents (80%) were full-time employees while 3 respondents (20%) were part-time employees.

**c) Hours spent per work-shift.**

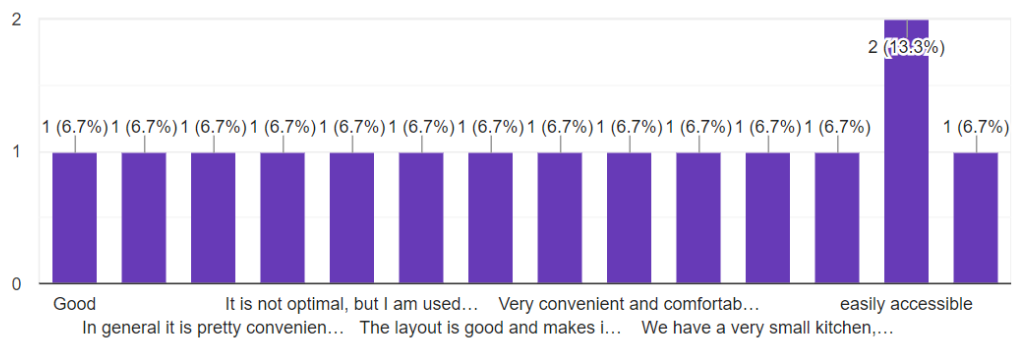


**Figure 4. 4** Work hours

From the responses, 12 employees worked 4 to 8 hours a day (80%) while only 20% worked more than 8 hours a day. None of the respondents reported working less than 4 hours a day.

**Employee perception of “space & functionality” within the workplace** (Physical layout, equipment/machinery, furnishings)

1. In terms of physical layout of furnishings, equipment and machinery, how convenient is it for you to access supplies within your work environment to facilitate your duties?



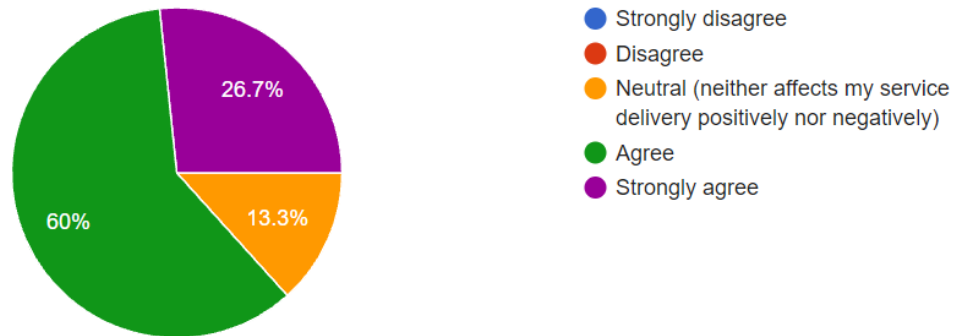
**Figure 4. 5** Employee perceptions of space and functionality

Overall, most of the respondents (80%) reported that the physical layout and functionality of their service environment presented easy access to supplies for them to perform their duties. Moreover, one of the added that, “It is well strategically designed to accommodate both workers and customers comfortably”. 3 of the respondents (20%) highlighted discomfort; one respondent mentioned, “It is not optimal, but I am used to the restaurant facilities after 5 years of working”, while one reported, “We have a very small kitchen, so not so convenient” and the other, “it is quite inconvenient to move around but it doesn't affect me to work with the customer, and do the services”.

### Employee perception of "ambient conditions" at the work place

(Air quality, noise, lighting, temperature, music, aroma, colour theme)

2. Overall, the ambient conditions above at my workplace are favourable and positively affect my service delivery to customers.



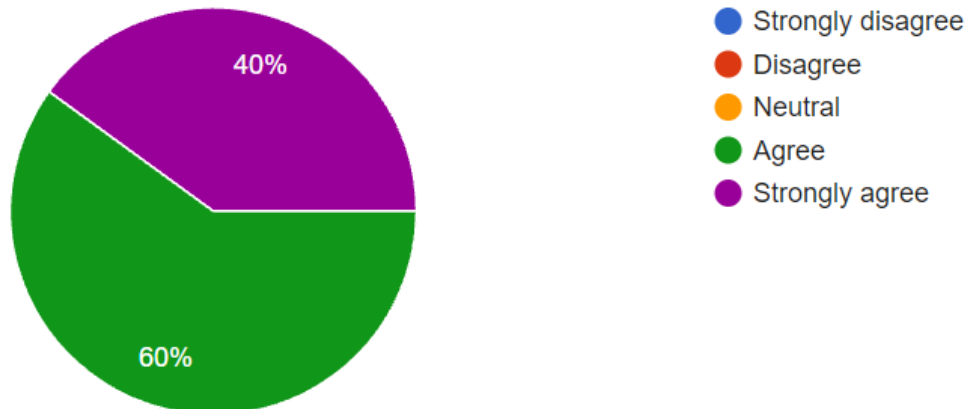
**Figure 4. 6** Employee perception of "ambient conditions"

9 respondents (60%), were in agreement with the ambient conditions being favorable and affecting their service delivery positively. 4 of the 15 respondents strongly agreed, while the remaining 2 respondents were neutral (neither affects their service delivery positively nor negatively).

### Employee perception of "signs, symbols and artifacts"

(Labels, directions and signs)

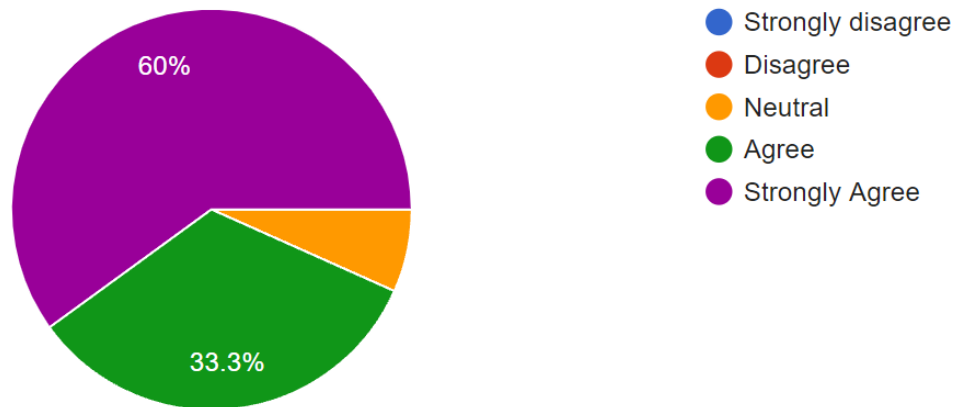
- Signs and symbols within the workplace are clearly marked and easy to spot, making my service delivery to customers very efficient.



**Figure 4. 7** Employee perception of "signs, symbols and artifacts"

Of the 15 respondents, 9 respondents (60%) agreed that signs and symbols at their work place was clearly marked, and easy to spot, making their service delivery to customers efficient. 6 respondents (40%) strongly agreed.

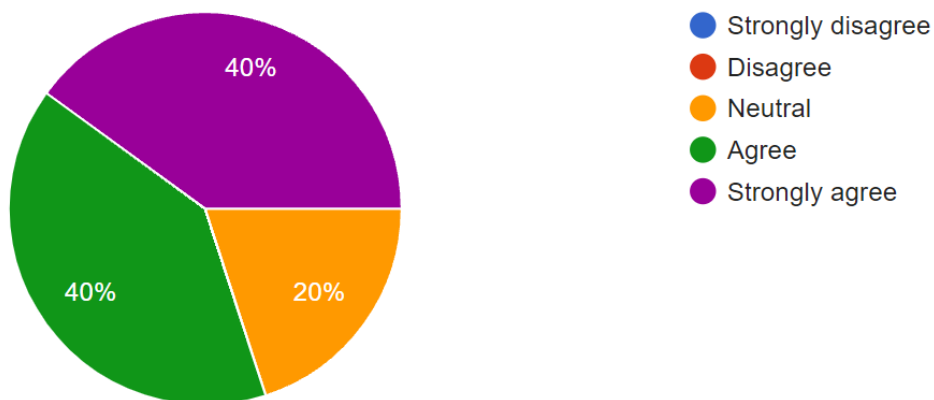
**4. A positively perceived service environment has a positive impact on my commitment towards my workplace.**



**Figure 4. 8** Employee Commitment and the servicescape

Out of 15 respondents, 9 respondents (60%) strongly agreed that positively perceived servicescape had a positive influence on their commitment towards their service environment. 5 respondents agreed, while 1 of the 15 respondents was neutral.

**5. A positively perceived servicescape has a positive impact on my job satisfaction.**

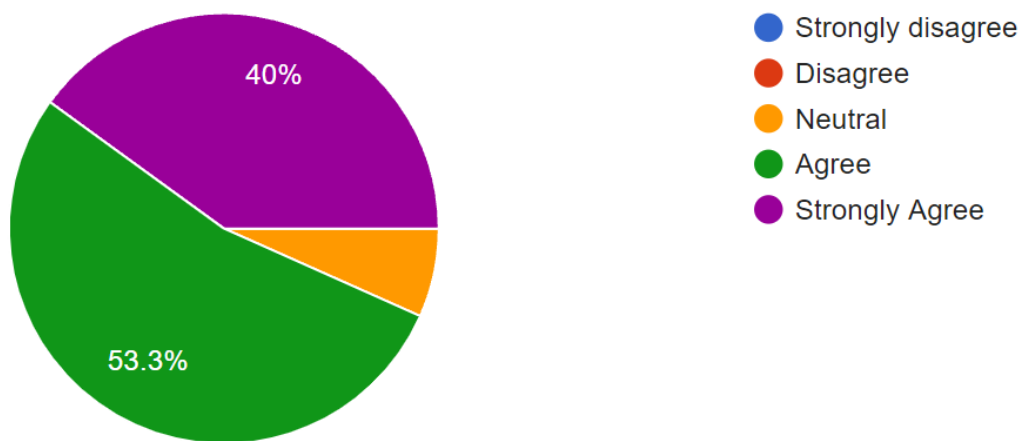


**Figure 4. 9** Employee Job satisfaction and the servicescape

6 respondents (40%) agreed that their job satisfaction was positively impacted upon by a positively perceived servicescape, while 6 out of the 15 respondents

(40%) strongly agreed. Moreover, 3 respondents (20%) were neutral (neither agree nor disagree).

**6. Continuous improvement of the servicescape by management motivates my overall service delivery and interaction with customers/work colleagues.**



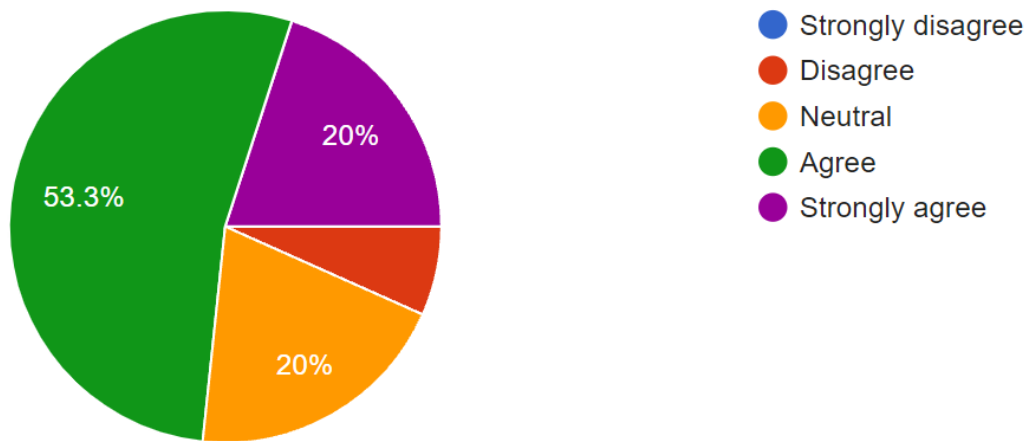
**Figure 4. 10** Managements' efforts for continuous improvement of the servicescape and social interaction/service delivery

6 respondents (40%) strongly agreed that managements' continuous improvement of the Servicescape motivates their overall service delivery and interaction with customers/work colleagues. 8 out of 15 respondents reported they agree, while one respondent was neutral.

### **Covid-19 and the Servicescape**

**7. At the onset of Covid-19, lack of social interaction with customers and work colleagues due to partial or total lockdown negatively influenced my approach behavior towards my workplace and my ability to stay longer at work.**





**Figure 4. 11** Approach/avoidance behaviour and the servicescape

8 respondents agreed that lack of social interaction with customers/fellow employees negatively affected their approach/avoidance behaviour towards their workplace during Covid-19 partial/lockdown. 3 respondents strongly agreed, while 3 of the 15 respondents were neutral. Moreover, 1 respondent out of the 15 was in disagreement.

**8. How has the current covid-19 situation influenced your perception of your service environment in terms of the overall cleanliness of facilities and interaction with fellow employees/customers.**

13 of the 15 respondents, reported that cleanliness of work facilities and surfaces made them feel safe at work. Additionally, use of face masks and safe-distancing both with customers and fellow employees gave them a sense of security. Furthermore, they indicated that they have become more aware of effective cleanliness at the workplace. One respondent indicated “It has made me more aware of clean work facilities and more aware of interactions with fellow employees and customers. I feel safe when employees and customers follow the cleanliness rules”. Another respondent mentioned “I perceive cleanliness much more than before covid-19 – I am more aware of the distance kept between me and the customer” and one indicated “the hygiene is prioritized more than ever in my work place - employees have to sterilize every 3 hours to keep facilities hygienic”. However,

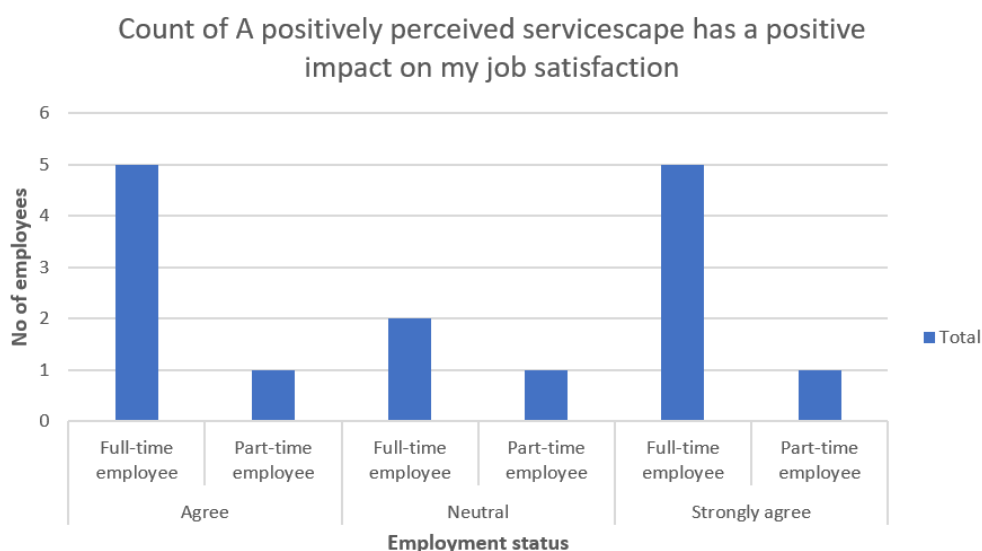
not all respondents were comfortable with the effects of Covid-19 and its impact on the servicescape overall besides the cleanliness dimension. 2 of the 15 participants shared their concerns: One respondent noted, “It has affected our daily routines - we were forced to implement a more rigid cleaning routine and we are exhausted and looking forward for this pandemic to be overcome”. Another respondent indicated, “Wearing facemasks and keeping safety distances to and between customers have ofcourse made our job more difficult”.

### Anything else you would like to add?

The question above was optional. Not all participants responded. However, 2 participants presented their comments; one respondent indicated, “I think the employer has to create more space especially in a smaller kitchen”, while the other respondent noted, “Management ensures our well-being is catered for by making our workplace surroundings as comfortable and practical enough for us to perform our duties”.

### Comparative Analysis

#### *Positively perceived servicescape on job satisfaction vs Employment status*

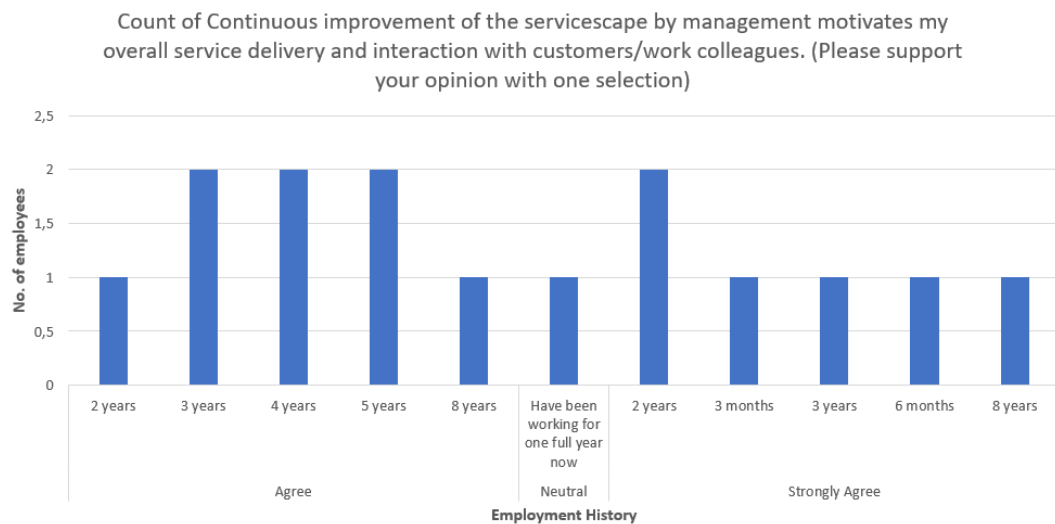


A comparative analysis of the employment status (Full-time/part-time), in relation to their responses regarding a positively perceived servicescape having a

positive impact on their job satisfaction was more significant with full-time employees agreeing/strongly agreeing to the fact that a positively perceived servicescape had a positive impact on their job satisfaction.

The full-time employment status could be a possible explanation for the reason behind high percentages of employees agreeing/strongly agreeing to job satisfaction as being positively influenced by a positively perceived servicescape.

*Continuous improvement of the servicescape by management impacting on employment history*



A comparative analysis of the length of time that employees have worked (3 years and above), in relation to their responses to continuous improvement of the servicescape by management

Findings show no significant variations in responses across employment history of employees regarding whether continuous improvement of the servicescape by management had a major effect on their service delivery and interaction with employees. A possible explanation for this could be that employee service delivery is non-dependent on an employee’s employment history in terms of years.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

Throughout the above literature, servicescape is believed to influence not only customers' responses to the physical surroundings but also its effects on employee responses and how it influences the service delivery outcome of employees within the same service environment as customers. Moreover, research has shown that servicescape dimensions of *ambient conditions, spatial layout & functionality, and signs, symbols & artifacts*. Hence the way in which the mentioned elements of the servicescape above are presented, have profound effects in the way employees respond with either approach or avoidance behaviors towards their work environments. These approach-avoidance behaviors have been known to elicit aspects of commitment and job satisfaction within employees as well as influence their perception of how well the organization supports their well-being.

Additionally, although the author had no intentions of including COVID-19 pandemic into aspects of this study, its aspects had to be considered to a reasonable extent in light of its effects on the restaurant industry. Hence the inclusion of the cleanliness and social interaction dimensions.

The first question on employee perceptions of the *spatial layout and functionality* of their design facility and its convenience of accessing supplies yielded an overall 80% of respondents highlighting easy access to supplies and subsequent efficiency of their service delivery process. A study conducted by Nguyen and Leblanc (2002), suggests that the arrangement of equipment and furniture needs to be in a way that correlates with the service delivery process (Nguyen and Leblanc (2002). Moreover, it has been argued by Ellen and Zhang, (2014) that spatial layout and functionality have a positive effect on pleasure and arousal of individuals. Findings from these prior studies could explain the findings of this study in relation to employee perception of the spatial layout and functionality.

Findings on employee perception of *Ambient conditions* were found to be favorable and to have a positive influence on the service delivery to customers by employees. Although most past studies have revealed that ambient conditions of the servicescape had a positive influence on guests/customers (Bitner, 1992; Mattila & Wirtz (2001, Kearney et.al.,2007), the current study could assume the same notion that ambient conditions equally affect the way in which restaurant/café employees are positively affected by ambient conditions of their work environments.

A review of literature embedded within this study indicates that *signs, symbols, and artifacts* communicate meaning symbolically to create holistic perceptions of the servicescape to guests (Bitner, 1994). They have been found to have an effect on employee perceptions of their workplace. Moreover, Ellen & Zhang (2014), suggest that Signs, symbols and artifacts have a positive effect on pleasure and arousal of patrons. Although limited research has been conducted on employee perceptions of *signs, symbols, and artifacts*, findings from the past studies conducted with customer perceptions could have a possible explanation for the third question of the current study. All respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to their service delivery being very efficient in light of clearly displayed symbols, signs and artifacts.

Findings from the study revealed a high percentage of respondents agreed/strongly agreed to a positively perceived servicescape as having a positive impact on their job satisfaction and commitment. This could be attributed to Parish et. al., (2008) and Kaminakis et.al., (2016) studies which suggest that design facilities were found to have a positive influence on job satisfaction and commitment.

For the sixth question, majority of employees (93%) agreed that managements' efforts of continuously improving the servicescape motivated their overall service

delivery and interaction with customers. Research by Eisenberger et.al., (1990) revealed a positive correlation between employees' overall perception of being valued and cared for by the organization, which subsequently leads to job satisfaction and thus their expression of affective and active involvement in the organization. Additionally, findings from the current research support research results by McGuire and McLaren (2008), which revealed that for employee commitment to be further enhanced, organizations need to address both employee well-being needs and their physical working environment aspects. Findings displayed in the sixth question could thus be in support of both Eisenberger et.al, (1990) and McGuire and McLaren (2008) studies.

The seventh question showed a total of over 70% in agreement with having been affected by lack of social interaction with customers and fellow employees during partial lockdown due to Covid-19, hence negatively affecting their approach/avoidance behaviors towards their workplace. Yet results also indicate a neutral response from 3 respondents and a disagreement from another. With Covid-19 being a recent development with only one year into its research, not many studies support its effects on the servicescape. However, current findings could be attributed to the fact that most individuals prefer human interaction as a drive towards their performance and service delivery. Moreover, it is likely that some individuals are not affected by fewer people within the servicescape. This could be the reason for the neutrality and disagreement in some of the responses.

For the eighth question, findings reveal that employee perceptions of the servicescape in terms of overall cleanliness of facilities and interaction with fellow employees/customers has been highly influenced by the current covid-19 situation. Furthermore, 13 out of 15 respondents (86%) reported that the cleanliness of work facilities and surfaces made them feel safe at work. Additionally, they felt safe with the use of face masks and safe-distancing both with customers and fel-

low employees gave them a sense of security. Like in the previous question, research regarding the effect of servicescape on the perception of individuals has not yet been fully explored since the virus only manifested itself within just over a year of this research. However, it seems likely that individuals (employees alike) have become self-aware and adopted a mindset that makes them value clean facilities at their workplace more than ever, with a positive perception of the cleanliness servicescape dimension. Feeling safe at work as a result of compliance with cleanliness routines and observation of safe working guidelines could lead to high motivation and a positive influence on their approach behavior towards their workplace, hence enhanced service delivery.

Yet 2 respondents (14%) had concerns about Covid-19 interfering with their routine, sighting that the situation led to exhaustion in view of intense cleaning; and the other respondent reported that their jobs had become more difficult owing to the use of facemasks and keeping distance from customers and fellow employees. For this reason, employee perception of the cleanliness servicescape dimension would likely impact on their approach behavior towards the service environment and instead lead to enhancement of the avoidance factor. This is more likely to have a negative influence on work motivation and subsequently a low service delivery mindset.

Although the last question about any additional comments was optional, two participants had concerns. One respondents' view was "I think the employer has to create more space especially in a smaller kitchen". A small work area within the service environment could negatively influence an employees' work motivation and hence low service delivery outcomes. Findings from the other respondent, however, showed that management ensured their well-being is catered for; "Management ensures our well-being is catered for by making our workplace surroundings as comfortable and practical enough for us to perform our duties". This is a motivational factor of the servicescape that is likely to enhance employee service delivery outcomes to customers.

## **Limitations & Recommendations for further research**

Covid-19 effects posed a limitation as it most likely contributed to receipt of regrets from management of earlier selected restaurant/café service settings. Moreover, the pandemic may have made it even more difficult to succeed with the mentioned businesses owing to the hospitality industry being struggling to revive their financial and employment status to normality. Furthermore, employees were working at 50% capacity or even less. The writer thus resorted to a different approach through mass emailing the survey questionnaire to random employees of two restaurants (XX) and two cafés (XX) within Vaasa through the email addresses of their organizations' webpages.

Additionally, the study was conducted with only a limited number of restaurant/café employees within the city of Vaasa, Finland. Moreover, prior intentions were to perform a purely qualitative-based study for the targeted employees. This way, the researcher thought, would be the best way to obtain in-depth employee perceptions of how the elements of their service environment within which they operate (servicescape), affect their service delivery to customers. Instead, however, the survey questionnaire with a combination of both qualitative and quantitative questions was emailed to respondents. For this reason, the author thought responses were not as in-depth as would have been otherwise.

Noted also that minimal research in the servicescape field from the past has focused on servicescape effects on employees. Therefore, the current paper recommends future researchers within the same field of study to consider conducting research using exclusively qualitative methods. This could elicit in-depth insights into employee perceptions of the servicescape, since a review of past literature has mainly concentrated on customer responses to the servicescape. Alternatively, considerations for purely quantitative research with a wide range of respondents across unlimited restaurants and cafes could equally yield amazing results.



It is also worth mentioning that since the current Covid-19 pandemic is a new strain of viruses with limited disposable literature available, its consequences on employee perceptions of the servicescape were based entirely on the limited available literature, own observations, as well as responses from respondents. Future researchers could consider focusing on effects of servicescape on employee service delivery post-Covid 19 pandemic with a focus on cleanliness and social interaction dimensions as findings from the research showed concerns about additional cleaning efforts and extra use of facemasks, social distancing, among others, as factors affecting their work routines.

## 6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Despite the effect of servicescape on customer responses being more emphasized in past research, employees spend a considerable amount of time within the service environments than their customers. Findings indicate that servicescape need not be limited only to customer perceptions but service employees as well, since their satisfaction with the service environment is shown to influence their well-being and subsequently their service delivery to customers. Additionally, employee well-being is seen to be influenced by holistic perceptions of the servicescape either positively or negatively. Moreover, servicescape is believed to complement the well-being of employees on an emotional, psychological and cognitive level, in a way that elicits either approach or avoidance behaviors to their service environments.

The current study thus projects a connection between the response behavior of employees and their service environments. Negatively perceived servicescapes is seen to display a negative influence on the service delivery outcomes of employees, while positively perceived service environments are seen to evoke positive responses.

Therefore, during decision-making efforts of service environments, management of restaurants/cafés could consider planning service facility designs in ways that enhance the well-being of employees. This could elevate their perceptions of the servicescape, promote their approach behavior towards the service environment hence job satisfaction, increased employee commitment and subsequently positive service delivery outcomes. Moreover, current studies complement past studies. However, Covid-19 effects remain questionable, in view of limited literature on the strain.

## REFERENCES

Baker, J. (1986), The Role of the Environment in Marketing Services: The Consumer Perspective. In: Czepiel, J., Congram, C.A. And Shanahan, J. (Eds.), The Services Challenge: Integrating for Competitive Advantage, Chicago: American Marketing Association, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp.79-84. Accessed: 03.10.2021

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313085224> The role of the environment in marketing services The consumer perspective

Baker J, Berry L.L, and Parasuraman A. (1988), "The Marketing Impact of Branch Facility Design," *Journal of Retail Banking*, 10 (2), 33-42.

Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(2), 57. Accessed: 07.02.2021

<https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.puv.fi/docview/227823024?accountid=27304>

Bryman, A.:2012. *Social Research Methods*. Oxford University Press. 4<sup>th</sup> edition.

Corbin J, Strauss A. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications; 2008. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Accessed: 02.02.2021

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1094428108324514>

Commitment: Oxford Dictionary definition. Accessed: 14/10/2021

<https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=commitment>

De Young, R. (1999) Environmental Psychology. In book: *Encyclopedia of Environmental Science*. Chapter: Environmental Psychology. Publisher: Kluwer Academic Publishers. Accessed: 08.10.2021

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259496136> Environmental Psychology

Donovan, R.J. and Rossiter, J.R. (1982). *Store Atmosphere: An Environmental Psychology Approach*. Accessed: 03.10.2021

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Robert-Donovan-2/publication/248766608> Store Atmosphere An Environmental Psychology Approach

Eagly, A. H., and Chaiken, S. (1993), *The psychology of attitudes*, Harcourt Brace, Fort Worth TX.

Eisenberger, R., Fasolo, P., and Davis-LaMastro, V. (1990), Perceived Organizational Support and Employee Diligence, Commitment, and Innovation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 1990, Vol. 75, No. 1, 51-59 Accessed. 05.09.2021.

<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.529.8528&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

Erlandson, D.A., Harris, E.L., Skipper, B.L. and Allen, S.D (1993), *Doing Naturalistic Enquiry: A Guide to Methods*, Sage, Newbury Park, CA.

Ellen, T. and Zhang, R. (2014). Measuring the Effect of Company Restaurant Servicescape on Patrons' Emotional States and Behavioural Intentions. *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*. Vol. 17, Issue 2, pp. 85-102. Accessed: 18.10.2021  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15378020.2014.902642>

Harris, L. C., & Ezeh, C. 2008. Servicescape and Loyalty Intentions: An Empirical Investigation. *European Journal of Marketing*, 42, 390-422. Accessed: 05.05.2021  
<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/03090560810852995/full/pdf?title=servicescape-and-loyalty-intentions-an-empirical-investigation>

Hightower, R; Brady, M.K; & Baker, L.T. 2002. Investigating the role of the Physical environment in hedonic service consumption. An exploratory study of sporting events. *Journal of Business Research*. Vol 55 (9), 697-707. Accessed: 08.10.2021  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222399330\\_Investigating\\_the\\_role\\_of\\_the\\_physical\\_environment\\_in\\_hedonic\\_service\\_consumption\\_An\\_exploratory\\_study\\_of\\_sporting\\_events](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222399330_Investigating_the_role_of_the_physical_environment_in_hedonic_service_consumption_An_exploratory_study_of_sporting_events)

Jamshed, S. 2014. Qualitative Research method-interviewing and observation. *Journal of Basic and Clinical Pharmacy*. 5(4): 87-88. Accessed 04.04.2021  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266946266\\_Qualitative\\_research\\_method-interviewing\\_and\\_observation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266946266_Qualitative_research_method-interviewing_and_observation)

Kaminakis, K; Papastathopoulos, A; Boukis, A; and Loannis, K. 2016. The Impact of Servicescapes on Front-Line Employee Extra-Role Performance: The mediating role of person-job fit. Accessed. 15.03.2021  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308900005\\_The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Servicescapes\\_on\\_Front-Line\\_Employee\\_Extra-Role\\_Performance\\_The\\_mediating\\_role\\_of\\_person-job\\_fit](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308900005_The_Impact_of_Servicescapes_on_Front-Line_Employee_Extra-Role_Performance_The_mediating_role_of_person-job_fit)

Kaminakis, K. and Boukis, A. (2012). Highlighting the role of servicescapes and organizational climate on employees' performance. Conference: Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) Annual Conference at New Orleans, USA. Accessed: 05.10.2021.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263818420\\_Highlighting\\_the\\_role\\_of\\_servicescapes\\_and\\_organizational\\_climate\\_on\\_employees'\\_performance](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263818420_Highlighting_the_role_of_servicescapes_and_organizational_climate_on_employees'_performance)

Kaminakis, K; Karantinou, K; Koritos, and Gounaris, S. (2019). Hospitality services-capes effects on customer-employee interactions: A multilevel study. *Tourism management* 72, pp. 134-144. Accessed: 12.10.2021.

<https://pdf.sciencedirectassets.com/271716/1-s2.0-S0261517718X00077/1-s2.0-S0261517718302826/main.pdf>

Kearney, T; Coughlan, J; and Kennedy, A. (2013). An Exploration of the Effects of the Servicescape on Customer and Employee Responses in a Grocery Retail Context. *Irish Journal of Management*, 32 (2). pp. 71-91. Accessed: 04.10.2021

<https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/6587/1/JC-Servicescape.pdf>

Kotler, P. (1973), "Atmospherics as a Marketing Tool", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 49 No. 4, pp. 48-64. Accessed: 12.02.2021.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239435728\\_Atmospherics\\_as\\_a\\_Marketing\\_Tool](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239435728_Atmospherics_as_a_Marketing_Tool)

Locke, E. A. (1976). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 1297-1343). Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.

Lin, I.T. (2004). "Evaluating a servicescape: the effect of cognition and emotion", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 23, Issue 2, pp.163-178, ISSN 0278-4319. Accessed 05.10.2021

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0278431903000951>

McGuire, D. and McLaren, L. (2009), "The impact of physical environment on employee commitment in call centres: The mediating role of employee well-being", *Team Performance Management*, Vol. 15 No. 1/2, pp.35-48. Accessed: 03.10.2021

<https://www-emerald-com.ezproxy.puv.fi/insight/content/doi/10.1108/13527590910937702/full/pdf>

Mehrabian, Albert and James A. Russell (1974), *An Approach to Environmental Psychology*. USA: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Namasivayam, K. and Mattila, A. S. 2007. Accounting for the joint effects of the servicescape and service exchange on consumers' satisfaction evaluations. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 31: 3–17. Accessed: 14.10.2021

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1096348006292996>

Nguyen, N., & Leblanc, G. (2002). Contact personnel, physical environment, and the perceived corporate image of intangible services by new clients. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 13(3), 242–262. Accessed: 04.09.2021.

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/09564230210431965/full/pdf>

Observation Method of Data Collection: Advantages, Disadvantages, Techniques, Types. Accessed: 25.02.2021.

<https://www.iedunote.com/observation-method-of-data-collection>

Parish, J.T.; Berry, L.L.; Lam S.Y (2008). The Effect of the Servicescape on Service Workers. *Journal of Service Research*. 2008;10(3):220-238. Accessed: 04.02.2021

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1094670507310770>

Ryu, K., & Jang J. (2007). The effect of environmental perceptions on behavioral intentions through emotions: The case of upscale restaurants. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 31(1), 56–72. Accessed: 28.10.2021

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1096348006295506>

Skandrani, H; Mouelhi, N.B.D. and Malek, F. (2010) Effect of store atmospherics on employees' reactions. *Store Atmospherics. International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management* Vol. 39 No. 1, 2011 pp. 51-67: Accessed: 04.06.2021

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/09590551111104477/full/pdf?title=effect-of-store-atmospherics-on-employees-reactions>

Song, H.J; Yeon, J; Lee, S. (2020). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: Evidence from the U.S. restaurant industry. *Int J Hosp. Management*. Accessed: 15.10.2021.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7528845/>

Sukamolson, S. 2007. Fundamentals of quantitative research. *Language Institute Chulalongkorn University* 1 (2007): 2-3.

[https://www.academia.edu/5847530/Fundamentals\\_of\\_quantitative\\_research](https://www.academia.edu/5847530/Fundamentals_of_quantitative_research)

Taylor, S.J.; Bogdan, R. & DeVault, M. 2016. *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods. A Guidebook and Resource*. Wiley, 4th edition.

Taylor, S. Jr. (2020). The socially distant servicescape: An investigation of consumer preference's during the re-opening phase. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*. Accessed: 15.10.2021

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7525274/>

Thomas, D.R. (2006), "A general inductive approach for analysing qualitative evaluation data", *American Journal of Evaluation*, Vol. 27 No. 2, pp. 237-46. Accessed: 27.10.2021.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1098214005283748>

Tran, Q.X., Dang, M.V and Tran Q.X; Tournois, N. (2020), "The role of servicescape and social interaction toward customer service experience in coffee stores. The case of Vietnam", *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*. Vol. 14 No. 4, pp.619-637. Accessed: 03.10.2021

<https://www-emerald-com.ezproxy.puv.fi/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJCTHR-11-2019-0194/full/pdf?title=the-role-of-servicescape-and-social-interaction-toward-customer-service-experience-in-coffee-stores-the-case-of-vietnam>

Wiener, Y. 1982. Commitment in Organizations: A Normative View. *Academy of Management Review*, Vol.7, No.3, pp. 418-428. Accessed: 14.10.2021

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/245703078> Commitment in Organizations A Normative View

Wohlwill, J.F. (1976) Environmental aesthetics: The environment as a source of affect. In I. Altman & J.F. Wohlwill (Eds.), *Human behavior and environment* (Vol.1). New York: Plenum Press, 1976, pp. 37-86.

[https://page-one.springer.com/pdf/preview/10.1007/978-1-4684-2550-5\\_2](https://page-one.springer.com/pdf/preview/10.1007/978-1-4684-2550-5_2)

## FIGURES

**Stimulus Organism Response Model - Source Mehrabian & Russell (1974)**

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321733402> Importance of location and product assortment on flea market loyalty/figures?lo=1

**Typology of Service Organizations based on Variations in form and usage of the Servicescape.**

**Source:** Bitner, M.J., "Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customer and Employees", *Journal of Marketing* 56 (1992). Accessed: 07.02.2021

<https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.puv.fi/docview/227823024?accountid=27304>

**The Servicescape Model (Bitner, 1992; Mehrabian and Russell, 1994).**

**Source:** Bitner, M.J., "Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customer and Employees", *Journal of Marketing* 56 (1992). Accessed: 07.02.2021

<https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.puv.fi/docview/227823024?accountid=27304>

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### **Email Caption of Introduction email to restaurant/Café employees.**

Dear staff,

Hope this email finds you well.

My names are Harriet Okumu-Nisula, a final year International Business student at VAMK University of Applied Sciences. I am currently writing my thesis with the theme topic: **Effect of "Servicescape" on the service delivery of employees** (a case of restaurants and/or cafés). I would appreciate if you took approximately 10-15mins to complete the online survey in the link below so that I can conclude the research. All responses are anonymous.

The term "**Servicescape**", also known by service environment or marketing environment, describes "the physical surroundings of a service organization where the service encounter occurs". It comprises of various elements such as Furniture, Equipment, Lighting, Color theme, Background music, Ambience and cleanliness among others. Most research in the past has mainly focused on how customers of restaurants and/or cafés are affected by the service surroundings where the service takes place. However, less focus has been placed on how the employees themselves within the same service environment are actually affected by the servicescape and how it, in turn, affects how they deliver service to their customers. Moreover, employees spend much more time in the same service environments than their customers.

For this reason, I was motivated to conduct research with the themed topic above.

Your support with participating in the online survey will be highly appreciated.

Kind regards,

Harriet Okumu-Nisula



**Online Survey Questionnaire**

**Effect of "Servicescape" on the service delivery of employees - A case of restaurants and/or cafés.**

The term "**Servicescape**", also known by various synonyms as service environment, marketing environment among others, describes "the various elements of the physical surroundings in service organizations, within which the service encounter occurs".

The various elements of the service environment could be the physical layout (machinery, furnishings, and equipment) of the service environment; the ambience (air quality, noise, lighting, temperature, music, aroma, colour theme); signs and symbols at the workplace; cleanliness of facilities; management and employees/customers among others.

The questions designed below, seek to assist the researcher in determining how the service delivery of employees is affected by elements of the physical surroundings within which the service occurs.

Your input in answering these questions will greatly assist with conducting the study and all responses will be treated confidentially. Responses take approximately 10 - 15 minutes to complete.

Thank you already in advance!

### General Information

- a. Could you please describe your job title and role function(s) within your work place? \*
  
- b. How long have you been (or were you) employed at your work-place? \*
  
- c. Please select your employment status. \*
  - i. Full-time employee
  - ii. Part-time employee
  - iii. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
- d. Hours spent per work-shift. \*
  - i. Less than 4 hours a day
  - ii. 4-8 hours a day
  - iii. More than 8 hours a day
  - iv. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Employee perception of "space & functionality" within the workplace**

(Physical layout, equipment/machinery, furnishings)

1. In terms of physical layout of furnishings, equipment and machinery, how convenient is it for you to access supplies within your work environment to facilitate your duties? \*
- 

**Employee perception of "ambient conditions" at the work place**

(Air quality, noise, lighting, temperature, music, aroma, colour theme)

2. Overall, the ambient conditions above at my workplace are favourable and positively affect my service delivery to customers. Please choose one \*

  - a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Neutral (neither affects my service delivery positively nor negatively)
  - d. Agree
  - e. Strongly agree

**Employee perception of "signs, symbols and artifacts"**

3. Signs and symbols (for example labels, directions, signs) within the workplace are clearly marked and easy to spot, making my service delivery to customers very efficient. (Please make one selection) \*

  - a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Neutral (neither affects my service delivery positively nor negatively)
  - d. Agree
  - e. Strongly agree

4. A positively perceived service environment has a positive impact on my commitment towards my workplace. (Please make one selection) \*
  - a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Neutral (neither affects my service delivery positively nor negatively)
  - d. Agree
  - e. Strongly agree
  
5. A positively perceived servicescape has a positive impact on my job satisfaction. (Please select one) \*
  - a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Neutral (neither affects my service delivery positively nor negatively)
  - d. Agree
  - e. Strongly agree
  
6. Continuous improvement of the servicescape by management motivates my overall service delivery and interaction with customers/work colleagues. (Please support your opinion with one selection) \*
  - a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Neutral (neither affects my service delivery positively nor negatively)
  - d. Agree
  - e. Strongly agree

### **Covid 19 and the servicescape**

(Cleanliness of facilities/Interaction with customers/employees and safety at the workplace).

7. At the onset of Covid-19, lack of social interaction with customers and work colleagues due to partial or total lockdown negatively influenced my approach behavior towards my workplace and my ability to stay longer at work. (Please choose one) \*
  - a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Neutral (neither affects my service delivery positively nor negatively)
  - d. Agree
  - e. Strongly agree
  
8. How has the current covid-19 situation influenced your perception of your service environment in terms of the overall cleanliness of facilities and interaction with fellow employees/customers. \*
  
9. Anything else you would like to add?

---

**Thank you for the participation!**