



# **Servisscape in the Finest Cinema: Is It Works for Young Customers?**

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## **Abstract**

*The aim of the study is to investigate the consequences of servicescape and to explore the application of it in the premium cinema. Several stimuli related to cinemas' physical attraction are added to determine their relation such as ambiances, spatial layouts, and signs. 154 visitors are taken by purposive sampling. The respondents are the young regular audience in the finest cinema. Closed structure questioners are spread for primary data and examined with path analysis. The results show that servicescape is related to perceived quality, perceived value, and willingness to pay a premium. Meanwhile, a significant relation also is shown between perceived quality and perceived value. There is also evidence that both perceived quality and perceived value as antecedents of willingness to pay the premium price. The findings provide the applicability of servicescape in the cinema industry, especially in high-class cinema where the consumer-brand relationship is needed.*

**Key words:** *Servicecape, Perceived Quality, Perceived Value, Premium Price, Hedonic Behaviour*

**JEL classification:** M31

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## **Introduction**

The history of servicescape is begun since Kotler (1973) proposed the service establishment of store atmosphere. Bitner (1992) offered the term "servicescape" with holistic perspective consists of ambient conditions, spatial layout, functionality and signs, symbols and artifacts. Afterward, marketing academics and practitioners have been challenged to observe the suitable model of unique atmosphere in attaining customers. The previous study shows that customers' reaction to the physical environment is differed depends on their involvement. It could be emotionally when hedonic consumption occur (Lin, 2004; Ryu &

Shawn Jang, 2008). In contrast, cognitive or functional spending is generally exposed by utilitarian consumers.

Academicians and practitioners are agreeing on the importance of servicescape in increasing customer experience. In recent day, servicescape has been the central issue in the hospitality industry. Most of the recent studies focus on hotel and restaurant, tourism destination, retail, education, healthcare, and airport. Meanwhile, none study the application of servicescape in the entertainment industry including cinema, club, or theme park. The physical environment becomes the first contact customers have with the theatre. Consequently, every dimension of the cinema (layout, appearance, atmosphere, and lightning) will provide a comprehensive profile of the cinema. Surely, servicescape helps customers in gaining their experiences and impressions. Moreover, it can create and enhance emotion and memorable experience (Lin et al., 2010). In order to reach the objective, the theatres have to provide the first class services supported by the physical environment. The indication of classy cinema can be seen on the spacious lobby, premium lounge, widescreen, ambient, and special effects auditorium (scent, water splash, 3D/4D with the circularly polarized screen, curve screen, reclining seat bed for 2 persons including pillow and blanket, and Dolby sound). The supporting facilities are also considered such: restroom, cleanliness, tasty food and beverages, marketing campaign, and parking area. As a result, those high-class facilities are costly. However, as long as the audience reach higher enjoyment level and perceived it as high value then they will not resist sacrificing and paying more. It is the challenge for marketing practitioners to get customers without being rejected to pay higher.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of servicescape and to explore the application of servicescape in the finest cinema. The article is organized started by analyzing the theoretical framework of servicescape and its dimensions. Next, the methodology and instrument used in the study and presented the statistical analyses as well as the principal findings. Lastly, this study offers the conclusions, limitations, and directions for future research.

## **Literature Review**

### **Servicescape**

Servicescape is defined as the physical factors that influence customers' holistic perception of the service. It is designed by the firm to enrich both employees and customer behavior (Lin, 2004). Bitner (1992) suggested that servicescape has three dimensions: ambiances condition, spatial layout and functionality, and signs, symbols, and artifacts. The latest study proves that physical dimension is not the only stimuli in influencing customers' interaction and behavior. Rosenbaum & Massiah (2011) added social dimension, socially-symbolic dimension, and natural dimension. However, most of the scholars agree that the easiest way to understand and measure servicescape is through physical dimension (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2018).

The ambiance is the background environment or atmospheric stimuli (Grayson & McNeill, 2009) that affect human sensations. It represents temperature (Reimer & Kuehn, 2005; Ward, Davies, & Kooijman, 2007), visual such as lighting, colors, brightness, and shapes (Dijkstra, Pieterse, & Pruyn, 2008), olfactory such as: air quality, odor, scent, and fragrance (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001), and auditory, for instance: noise, music (Morin, Dubé, & Chebat, 2007; Oakes & North, 2008).

Space refers to an interior environment including layout, equipment, and furnishing arrangement (Bitner, 1992) of the location as supporting facilities in the service area. Numerous aspects of space decision have been advised such as comfortability and accessibility (Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011), and functionality (Bitner, 1992).

The signs, symbols, and artifacts are the organizations' tools for communicating their servicescape to customers (Bitner, 1992). It consists of the label of departments, directions to supporting facilities, the caution of wet floors or escalators, and rules of behavior (no smoking area). Symbols are used by organizations to reflect the meaning of the place. Flags, artworks, and decorative items are the frequent symbols.

In order to be competitive, servicescape should be based on the ability to meet customers' expectation and to compete with opponents. Particular changes in physical surrounding may affect customer's perceived

quality. Therefore, servicescape must be a part of marketing strategy in case the visitors evaluate the atmosphere and how it affects their perceived quality. Thus, this study proposes:

*Hypothesis 1a: There is a relationship between servicescape and perceived quality.*

Further, servicescape might play a crucial role in determining whether or not consumers have seen it attractive, important, and valuable. If the customers perceive the physical environment more favorable then they will have high perceived value. A prior study shows that atmospheric as a tool in gaining value and customer share (Babin & Attaway, 2000). Thus, this study proposes:

*Hypothesis 1b: There is a relationship between servicescape and perceived value*

A fancy service counter needs a high-quality physical environment. The environment factor may increase customer evaluation. Maslow & Mintz (1956) found that evaluation of a beautiful room was significantly higher than either average room or ugly room. A high ambient temperature may decrease customer mood and enhance negative outcome. Thus, this study proposes:

*Hypothesis 1c: There is a relationship between servicescape and willingness to pay premium.*

## **Perceived Quality**

Perceived quality is defined as consumer's perception of the product or service level of quality. It involves superiority or excellence of the product performance (Zeithaml, 1988). However, he argued that the customer's perceived quality is unequal to actual quality. When actual quality is measurable and verified based on predetermined standard and associated to mechanical or technical superiority (Monroe and Khrisnan, 1985 in Jacoby and Olson), perceived quality is determined by customer's judgment from their direct experience (Rao & Ruekert, 1995). The customers' valuation emerges when the products or services meet their expectations. Perceived quality is a critical element that customers widely used to evaluate product strength. Since the experience and expectation are varying among customers, the perceived quality has become more challenging for marketers and academicians. Moreover, perceived quality is essential and become customer's predictor for actual buying behavior such as purchase intention and loyalty ((Bloemer & de Ruyter, 1998). Customers will have a positive attitude when they perceived the product has high quality compared to a similar product offered by competitors. They are more likely to exhibit positive behavioral intention. A high perceived quality can lead to customer's willingness to pay more. However, the willingness to pay premium will be negative if the price increase without compensating quality (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). Based on the above discussion, thus, this study proposes:

*Hypothesis 2a: high perceived quality will lead to customer willingness to pay premium price*

When a product has high quality level, a consumer will perceive it with a high value either. The evaluation through cost-benefit analysis means customers will compare what they deserve to receive and what they are given. Hence:

*Hypothesis 2b: higher perceived quality will lead to customer perceived value*

## **Perceived Value**

Perceived value is defined as the consumer perception of overall assessment of the product's utility by comparing on cost-benefit analysis (Zeithaml, 1988). The evaluation is on product attributes, performances, and consequences of achievement (Woodruff, 1997). Customers will perceive the goods valuable if its performance is better than their sacrifice. Further, consumers will create positive or negative consequences in their mind (Hellier, Geursen, Carr, & Rickard, 2003). Perceived value is a critical element in building a long-term relationship and competitive advantage (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000). It is operationalized as a multidimensional construct; consist of acquisition value and transaction value (Al-Sabbahy, Hesham & Riley, 2004), in-use value, and redemption (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000). Acquisition value refers to the potential value that buyers will get after product acquisition. Transaction value reflects customer feeling for having a good deal. In-use value means the utility derived by-product consumption. Previous researches show that perceived value has a relationship to both attitudinal and behavioral intentions ((McDougall & Levesque, 2000; Pura, 2005). Johnson, Herrmann, & Huber (2006) argue that enhancing perceived value will affect

attitude and affective commitment. It also means that the higher the perceived value is, the more likely consumer will sacrifice for the money. Therefore it is proposed that:

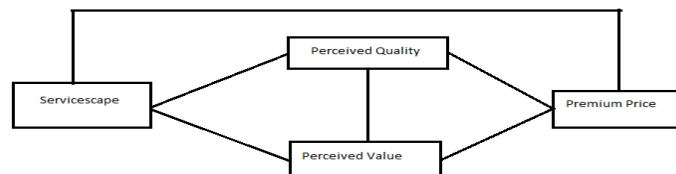
*Hypothesis 3a: the greater customer perception on value is, the higher the likelihood of the willingness to pay premium*

## Premium Price

The premium price is a term when consumer willing to sacrifice higher than to pay for a similar product offered by other brands (Netemeyer et al., 2004). It reflects the maximum amount of money of a customer is willing to spend on a product or service (Voelckner, 2006). As an attitudinal behavioral construct, willingness to pay a high price is related to the hedonic customers who want to make their lives easier, valuable, and stable in the long-term relationship (Choi, Kim, Kim, & Kim, 2006). It also symbolizes their social level and self-esteem. The price does not only means a monetary cost but also lifestyle, comforts, and classy. In marketing literature, it is widely recognized that the willingness to pay premium price is a consequence of brand commitment (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006), brand loyalty (Choi et al, 2006), and brand love (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-florence, 2008)

## Conceptual Framework

The recent study is conceptualized in figure 1 where servicescape is hypothesized as the antecedent of perceived quality, perceived value, and premium price. The conceptualization recognizes that the relationship between servicescape as a latent variable to predict perceived quality, perceived value, and premium price. Although the relation between servicescape and perceived quality and perceived value have been examined before, no one has developed the similar model including premium price.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Model**

**Source:** Modification of Reimer and Kuhn (2005)

## Research and Methodology

### Population and Sample

Primary data is gathered from questionnaires where respondents are asked to answer closed structure questionnaires. Secondary data is collected from the journals, prior studies, and libraries. Participants are regular young customers who visit the cinema and taken by purposive sampling. Respondents will answer the questions based on their experience.

### Measurement and Procedures

The questioners were consists of two sections. The first section was to collect participants' demographic properties whilst the second section included parameters of constructs measurement. All parameters are measured by 7- point Likert like scale. The parameters of servicescape are taken from (Brüggen, Foubert, & Gremler, 2011) consists of 13 items parameter. Perceived quality is adapted from Aaker (1991) comprises 3 items parameter. 4 items parameter of perceived value is designed by Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol (2002), and 3 items parameter of willingness to pay premium price is adopted from Rodrigues & Reis (2013). The

instruments were delivered to the participants directly. Participants were debriefed by telling them the aims of the study and the approval of their contribution was obtained. None refused to cooperate with the study. The approximation to finish the questioner is about twenty minutes. The parameters will be examined through validity and reliability analysis then respondents are classified based on their demography and background. Next, the hypothesis is testing to measure the relationship between those constructs.

## Empirical Findings

### Data

162 respondents are collected from 180 distributed questionnaires. Only 154 questionnaires are qualified while the rest is unfeasible to assess because the respondents did not complete the answers.

### Respondents' Characteristic

Distribution of respondents' characteristics under gender, age, cinema brand, and intention to visit as follow:

**Table 1:** Respondents' Characteristic Based on Demographics

Demographic Variable		n	(%)
Gender	Male	49	31.8
	Female	105	68.2
Age	17	1	.6
	18	13	8.4
	19	29	18.8
	20	3	1.9
	21	46	29.9
	22	50	32.5
	23	12	7.8
Cinema	XXI Premiere	81	52.6
	Cinemaxx Gold	40	26.0
	CGV Velvet	33	21.4
Frequency	Always	21	13.6
	Often	31	20.1
	Sometime	36	23.4
	Rarely	52	33.8
	Once	14	9.1

**Source:** Author's analysis

Table 1 shows respondents characteristic based on their demographic. The largest population age group is 22 years old (32.5%) followed by 21 years old (29.9%), 17 years old and 20 years old (.6% and 1.9% respectively).

Female is the most participants with 105 customers and male are the rest with 49 respondents. Half of them are preferred to visit at XXI Premiere (52.6%), rather than Cinemaxx Gold (26%), or CGV Velvet (21.4%), since the theatre is located at the downtown, while the other two finest cinema in the suburban area.

The table also mentions respondents purchase behavior where most of them admit spends rarely and sometimes (33.8% and 23.4 % respectively). The high price offered by the provider is the reason for young customers to enjoy the fancy cinema.

## Validity And Reliability Test

Validity test on each construct is used to examine to what extent indicators measure theme the construct. Validity testing is used to measure how well the item parameter may predict its construct (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 1998). Reliability analysis is used to examine to what extent the parameters consistent to measure its construct. Cronbach alpha coefficient is used to eliminate parameters that interfere with the construct. The requirement value of Cronbach Alpha is no less than 0.6.

**Table 2:** Validity Testing & Reliability

Variable	Validity	$\alpha$
In general, the environment pleases me	.717	.895
The external appearance is welcoming	.767	
The interior design is contemporary	.781	
The furniture inside the cinema appeals to me	.687	
The furniture in the lobby is appealing	.715	
The cinema's space makes me feel comfortable	.764	
I like the interior layout of this cinema	.671	.714
The wall decorations are fashionable		
The lighting is comfortable	.676	
The colors of the interior are pleasing	.708	
Compared to the regular cinema, premium cinema is reliable	.943	
Compared to the regular cinema, the quality of premium cinema is higher		
Overall, the quality of premium cinema is very high	.962	
For the prices you pay for this cinema, watching at this cinema is a	.823	
For the time you spent, watching at this cinema is a		
For the effort involved in, watching at this cinema is a	.844	
How would you rate your overall experience with this cinema?		
Buy a ticket at this cinema is a good idea, although more expensive.	.856	
I am willing to pay a higher price to get a ticket for this cinema	.933	
I will continue to buy in this cinema even regular cinema is cheaper	.829	

**Source:** Author's analysis

Table 2 shows the exhibit results of validity test conducted for 20 items parameter. The results show that 3 items of servicescapes are excluded in order to reach construct validity. The first item, "*the physical facilities are comfortable*" is not eligible because all cinemas did not provide sufficient tangible facilities in order to extend their lobby spaciously. Meanwhile, the item "*the atmosphere is warm*" is not working because the light is very bright outside although indoors was dim. The last excluded item is "*the colors of the exterior are pleasing*" is not relevant since all the cinema is a part of the mall. All item parameters of other constructs are eligible and feasible to assess. It also shows that all variables' alpha is higher than the minimum Cronbach Alpha value. However, the premium price shows the lowest Cronbach-alpha while perceived quality is the highest.

## Hypothesis Testing & Discussion

Hypothesis testing is in two ways. First, we analyze the significant causal relationship among constructs in the research model which can be seen in *t<sub>value</sub>*. Second, it can be seen in *standardized structural (path) coefficients* on each hypothesis where the relationship has an appropriate direction as like as we hypothesized.

**Table 3:** Unstandardized Structural Paths

Hypothesis	Path	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	t	p
H1a	Servicescape→Perceived Quality	0.176	0.031	2.204	.000
H1b	Servicescape→Perceived Value	0.206	0.042	2.593	.001
H1c	Servicescape→Premium Price	0.293	0.086	3.781	.000
H2a	Perceived Quality → Perceived Value	0.266	0.071	3.397	.001
H2b	Perceived Quality → Premium Price	0.287	0.082	3.963	.000
H3	Perceived Value → Premium Price	0.366	0.134	4.854	.000

**Source:** Author's analysis

#### *Hypothesis 1*

The objective of this hypothesis is to analyze the relationship between servicescape and perceived quality, perceived value, and premium price. There is a significant effect from servicescape to perceived quality (2.204), perceived value (2.593), and premium price (3.781). Further explanation, customers are likely to see physical environments (ambient, spatial layout, and sign & symbol) as a reflection of cinema quality. Physical facilities also reveal the benefit and value offered by providers. Moreover, customers have seen it reasonable to pay a high price in order to be there. In addition, customers might do repetition behavior to fulfill their goals such as social level, community acceptance, and wealth.

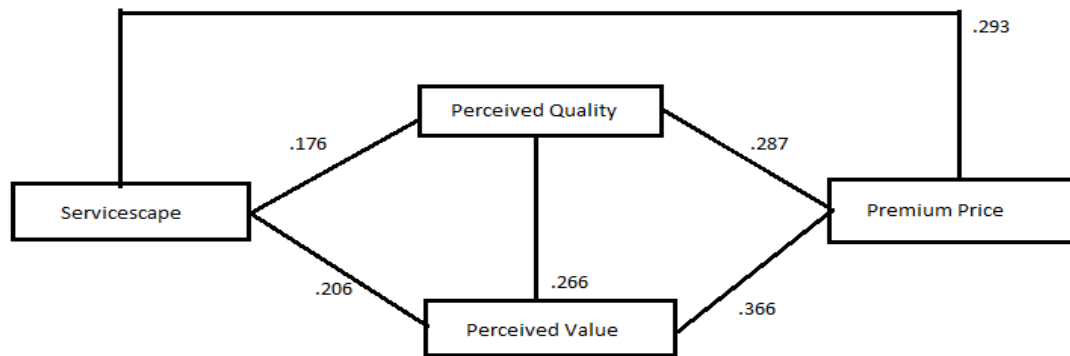
#### *Hypothesis 2*

This study examines the relationship of perceived quality to perceived value and willingness to pay premium. It is found that perceived quality significantly related to perceived value (3.397) and premium price (3.693). It means customers admit that high price as a consequence of the high-quality environment offered by the company. Customer's willingness to pay premium exists since they understand that high quality also brings a high sacrifice. Furthermore, they see the money spent is suitable for the value they get. In the meantime, high quality brings high value to customers and that reflects their lifestyle and behavior.

#### *Hypothesis 3*

This study measures the relationship of perceived value and willingness to pay premium price. It is found that the relationship is significantly positive (4.854). It also confirms the customer's sincerity to pay higher as long as they get valuable service and product. Since the company targeted the prosperous customers, the surcharge is no longer the big issue.

Figure 2 describes the quantitative results and showed us that wealthy young customers who buy tickets in premium cinema frequently are positively perceived it as high quality and high value. Consequently, they are willing to pay more to ensure high-quality service offered by the company.



**Figure 2:** Causality Relationships among Constructs

**Source:** Author's analysis

### Implication Managerial

According to the result, cinemas need to apply finest servicescape to improve consumers' positive perception. The physical environment consists of internal and external appearances, layout arrangements, lighting and odor, furniture and decorations, and colors and space. The higher consumers satisfied upon the facilities, the higher their perceived both value and quality. Further, a terrific servicescape will not decrease customers' attention even though the price is increasing. Although consumer face premium price, they tend to ignore since they rate the servivescape, value, and quality highly.

### Conclusion

This research shows that all hypotheses are accepted. First, there is a significant relation of servicescape to perceived quality, perceived value, and willingness to pay premium price. Second, it is noted that both perceived quality and perceived value influence willingness to pay premium price. Three, there is evidence that perceived quality significantly affect perceived value. In addition, this study shows that perceived quality failed to play as an intervening variable. Surprisingly, perceived value works as mediator variable from servicescape to premium price and from perceived quality to premium price.

The findings confirm that servicescape is crucial in building customer perceived quality and perceived value. Customers tend to feel comfort in cool temperature, sweet scent in all areas especially in the restroom and cafeteria, and spacious lounge with comfortable benches. There is also evidence that customers prefer a lucid light and minimal noise in the lobby but dimly and terrific surround system in the theater room. Directions and signs or symbols must be obvious and clear with smooth and secure access. The challenge is whether the company may address customers' wants simultaneously and perfectly.



Furthermore, if a customer perceived is high, they also value their sacrifices by comparing to what they give and what they get. A valuable sense comes when they get more than their expectation. Hence, customers will not resist paying more in order to get high and valuable experiences.

This research is carried only in the cinema industry which is not enough to generalize the findings. The samples taken are also narrow, i.e. young hedonic customers, where lifestyle and the courage to try new things as a basic consideration. Thus, for the future research, this study suggests some decisive elements such as the comparison among two or more product categories, brand name, and reputation, or evaluation of hedonic and utilitarian behavior toward servicescape.

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