

# THE IMPLICATION OF SERVICESCAPE, EMOTION AND TRUST TO A POSITIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERIENCE: WELLNESS SPA CONTEXT IN THE U.S.A.

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## ABSTRACT

*This article examined the antecedents of a positive wellness service experience by identifying factors leading to customers' positive wellness service experience. This study proposes that servicescape has a positive relationship with the service experience, and that servicescape may strengthen the effects of emotion and trust. The research hypotheses were tested with data collected directly from customers of a spa located in the Midwestern United States. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to estimate how emotion, trust, and servicescape affect customers' evaluations of spa experiences. An estimation was carried out on the interaction effects between servicescape, emotion and trust. The results indicate that the main effects of servicescape, emotion and trust, were significant, while the interaction effects did not prove to be significant. Trust has the biggest effect on customers' wellness experience followed by emotion and servicescape. Prior research has not simultaneously addressed the role of servicescape, emotion and trust and their subsequent influence on customers' emotional evaluation of service experience. This study therefore provides valuable insight to extend present understanding of the simultaneous role of these factors as effective predictors of the evaluation of service experience.*

**Keywords:** Servicescape; emotion; trust; service experience; wellness service

## INTRODUCTION

Today, people are increasingly engaging in wellness experiences (Chen, Liu & Chang, 2013; Valentine, 2016). Wellness care is now regarded as a sub-category of health care. The term wellness was coined by the American doctor Halbert Dunn in 1959 (Demiris, Thompson, Reeder, Wilamowska & Zaslavsky, 2013). More specifically, the term 'wellness' closely relates to promoting health and primary prevention by striving for a healthy and natural lifestyle by engaging in a variety of activities (Schuster, Dobson, Dobson, Jauregui, & Blanks, 2004). Prevalence of this idea has transformed the term 'spa' to be a common label when referring to general health and wellness resorts, regardless of whether the facility is based on natural hot springs or not (Altman, 2000). Chen et al. (2013) also posits that the spa is recognized as the most renowned form of wellness behaviour and the terms "spa" and "wellness" are used together interchangeably. Within the wellness industry, the spa industry in particular has made steady progress as shown in the increase of its sales volume and the number of facilities (McNeil & Ragins, 2005). This study specifically focuses on customers' experience in day spas which have been the largest spa category (80%) in the U.S.

The wellness market is now entering its maturation phase. What customers are seeking in wellness is also changing (Tabacchi, 2010). Even though wellness is a component of health services, the concept of wellness is very different from the traditional health care context. In the traditional health care context, customers are passive recipients of health care service and, hence, emphasis has been on the service provider (the physician) treating customers with limited input from the customers themselves. However, affluent wellness customers on the other hand, take the initiative to prevent illness and demand personalized care and superior service (Choi & Stafford, 2013). This change in concept puts more emphasis on the personal responsibility for managing one's own quality of life (Joppe, 2010). In addition to basic wants and needs, customers seek to engage in authentic and enriching experiences (Trauer, 2004). Therefore, the wellness industry focuses more on customer-driven service compared to health service.

Service experience refers to customers' subjective feelings and reactions when she/he consumes a service (Manhas & Tukamushaba, 2015). Foster and Mandelbaum (2005) indicated wellness service fills the void of personalized human attention that customers value in today's high-tech society. Customers are paying more for this "high touch" as opposed to "high tech" experience as they look for balance and harmony (Foster & Mandelbaum, 2005; Madanoglu & Brezina, 2008). Unlike traditional health care that is reactive in nature and ensues following an illness, wellness is voluntarily practiced to enrich health and/or to prevent poor health. In nature, engaging in a wellness experience is highly psychological. Customers seek to engage in spa activities with a desire to promote health and happiness (Chen et al., 2013). Thus, the emphasis is on accessing customers' emotional needs through wellness offerings. It is also possible that some of the wellness customers may have a health condition. Thus, trust is an important component of wellness service. Consequently, it can be argued that building trust in wellness service may result in a positive wellness experience. According to Choi and Stafford (2013), wellness service has a high reliance on servicescape. Bitner (1992) coined the term servicescape to describe the man-made environment in a service context. It can be evidenced through past research that servicescape can either enhance or reduce customer's emotion and behavior (Ellen & Zhang, 2014). Therefore, carefully designing the servicescape to foster a healing experience may also enhance the positive wellness experience.

Most customers who visit a spa facility are looking for psychological healing through the spa experience. The purpose of this research was to identify which aspects of spa services lead to customers' positive service experience. Very few studies in the past have addressed the combined effects of emotions (Tugade, Fredrickson & Barrett, 2004), trust (Thom, Ribisl, Stewart & Luke, 1999) and servicescape (Dijkstra, Pieterse, & Pruyn, 2006) on customers' evaluation of health services. This study explores how servicescape, emotion, and trust can lead to a positive wellness spa service experience by addressing specific effects that each antecedent has on service experience. It is believed that these three factors, namely servicescape, emotion, and trust play a significant role in creating a positive customer wellness experience. In doing so, the gap of how servicescape factors can influence customers' emotion and trust, and how all three factors can influence customers' service experience, is addressed. Therefore, the objectives of this study were to estimate the effect of servicescape, emotion and trust on customer service experience, and to estimate the interaction effects of servicescape on emotion and trust.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *The Role of Servicescape on Service Experience, Emotion and Trust*

Kotler (1973) coined the term ‘atmospherics’ to define the design of the service environment in a way that affects customers’ emotion as a means to enhance his/her purchase intention. With atmosphere apprehended through the senses (Mari & Poggesi, 2013), Kotner (1973) notes how the surrounding environment influences customers’ evaluation of services. Bitner (1992) coined the term servicescape to describe the man-made, built environment and divided servicescape into three factors which were: a) ambient conditions, b) special layout and functionality, and c) signs, symbols, and artifacts. Previous evidences show that appealing servicescape communicates to customers as something that offer higher service quality and value (Harris & Goode, 2004; Montoya-Weiss, Voss & Grewal, 2003). In addition, literature has found that servicescape has a significant influence on customers’ service experiences (Bitner, 1992; Jain & Bagdare, 2009, Kotler, 1973). Atmosphere in a service context refers to the sense experience (Mari & Poggesi, 2013). In line with these evidences, this study specifically focuses on the sensory aspect, the so-called “ambient conditions” of servicescape. Ambient conditions refer to the background characteristics of a servicescape such as music, aroma, air quality, and temperature (Bitner, 1992). Previous research has found that different types of music affect customers’ behaviors (Slåtten, Mehmetoglu, Svensson & Svaeri, 2009). In addition, adequate ambient scent is found to have a positive effect on customers’ behavior (Baron, 1981). Since spas rely heavily on music and aroma to create a healing and relaxing environment, this paper proposes scent and music as the constituents of the ambient factor within the servicescape in the spa setting.

Kim and Moon (2009) have proposed that customers either consciously or unconsciously spend time in the service environment observing the servicescape, which then affects their emotional response to the facility. The environmental stimuli a customer receives during service delivery can result in either a favorable or an unfavorable response (Jain & Bagdare, 2009). Previous servicescape studies have found that features of servicescape within the service environment have a positive relationship on customers’ emotions (Bitner, 1992; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Jeon & Kim, 2012).

Furthermore, trust is regarded as the willingness to depend on another party through accepting the uncertainty and risk associated with the service with an assumption that the service provider will behave according to customers’ expectations (Deutsch, 1960). While many previous studies in environmental psychology have dealt with the impact of servicescape on the emotional responses of customers to environmental stimuli, others criticize this approach as too narrow in scope and propose that other variables, such as trust, should also be taken into consideration (Chang & Chen, 2008; Eroglu, Machleit & Davis, 2003). The role of trust has often been overlooked (Schneider & White, 2004). Previous research has revealed that the development of trust and its influence on service experience is highly dependent on the servicescape (Chen & Chang, 2003). Servicescape is known to influence customers’ evaluation of trust because customers subconsciously tend to associate a well-designed servicescape with more credibility (Harris & Ezeh, 2008). According to Gefen (2000), servicescape explains more variance in trust than other variables. In this regard, servicescape can be a proxy for a firm’s service experience, emotion and trust. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that:

*H1 : Servicescape affects service experience.*

*H1a: Customer emotion moderates the relationship between servicescape and service experience.*

*H1b: Customer trust moderates the relationship between servicescape and service experience.*

### ***The Role of Emotion and Trust on Service Experience***

In the context of service experience, customers' emotional response toward a service provider and its servicescape is referred to as "an interactive relativistic preference experience" (Walter, Edvardsson, & Ostrom, 2010). Several studies have shown that service environment provokes emotional responses which lead to customers' favorable behavioral responses (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003; Jeon & Kim, 2012). According to Daly, Lancee, and Polivy (1983), depth of experience is achieved through the intensity of the sensed emotion, ranging from no report of an emotion to an extremely emotional experience. Positive emotions have been found to lead to advantageous health and wellness outcomes, both physically and psychologically (Tugade et al., 2004).

Likewise, trust towards a service provider is viewed as the perception of a service provider's confidentiality, honesty, integrity, and high ethical standards (Coulter & Coulter, 2002). Especially, there is a greater need for trust when customers are faced with situations which involve a high degree of risk, uncertainty, and ambiguity in their performance (La & Choi, 2012). As unconventional therapies that substitute for conventional therapies have increased exponentially (Druss & Rosenheck, 1999; Jonas, 1998), the relationship between customers and wellness service providers is perceived to play an important role in wellness settings where caring and healing take place (Thom et al., 1999). Previous studies have found a positive relationship between trust and service outcomes (Sirdeshmukh, Singh & Sabol, 2002; Sultan & Mooraj, 2001). Based on previous literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H2: Customer emotion is significantly related to customer service experience.*

*H3: Customer trust is significantly related to customer service experience.*

## **METHODS**

### ***Sample Selection***

The majority of past studies linking the effect of servicescape to customers' evaluations were conducted in laboratory settings rather than in a real life setting (Lin, 2010; Lin & Mattila, 2010; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In this study, research hypotheses were tested using data collected directly from customers of a spa located in the Midwestern United States. Due to time and resource constraints, a convenience sampling method was employed in the survey. All customers of the participating spa were surveyed on-line. The constructs identified were measured by utilizing an external online survey tool, Qualtrics. The survey was disseminated to all customers listed in the participating spa's database through an invitation email that assured the anonymity of the respondents and included a link to the survey. Customers were given three weeks to participate. As an incentive, customers who participated in the study were given a \$10 gift certificate that was valid for use at the participating spa. Of 112 survey responses, nine were incomplete. In addition, one case was found as an outlier. After these were deleted, 102 remained (n=102).

### ***Instrument Development***

To empirically test the hypotheses, multi-item scales were identified and modified to fit the spa context. The survey solicited feedback on what customers considered important about their spa usage. A survey questionnaire was adopted from previous research that delineates servicescape (Soukup, 2011), emotion (Yoo, Park & MacInnis, 1998; Lindquist & Baret, 2008), and trust (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Thom et al., 1999). Service experience was measured as the dependent variable (Keating, Green, Kao, Gazmararian, Wu & Cleary, 2002). Each construct was measured using a 5-point Likert type scale. In addition, socio-demographic characteristics and spa usage characteristics were also solicited. Before the questionnaire was finalized, a spa professional in the industry and two academic experts who are familiar with the subject of this study reviewed the questionnaire to assure content validity. Minor revisions in the wording of items were made based on their suggestions.

### ***Data Analysis***

A multiple regression analysis was conducted on the responses to estimate how servicescape, emotion and trust affect customers' evaluations of their spa experiences. The significance of the regression coefficients for servicescape, emotions and trust were used to test hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. The statistical significance of the interaction effects between servicescape and emotion and trust was used to test hypotheses 1a and 1b. The signs of the regression coefficients for the interaction terms were used to determine whether servicescape increased or decreased the effects of emotion and trust on customer evaluations. The regression coefficients for the interaction terms provided the estimates of the size of the change in the effects of emotion and trust on customer evaluations in the presence of the servicescape attributes. Hypotheses tests were conducted at a 0.05 alpha level.

The testing of assumptions revealed one outlier. With the removal of the outlier data point, the assumptions of linearity, independence of errors, homoscedasticity, unusual points and normality of residuals were ensured. In addition, centered predictor variables were used to reduce multicollinearity among the interaction terms (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Specifically, to test these hypotheses, servicescape, emotion, and trust were regressed on service experience. Two interaction terms, one between servicescape and emotion and the other between servicescape and trust, were included in the model.

### ***Model***

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model of the proposed study. Based on the above literature review, this study tested the effect of servicescape, emotion and trust on customers' service experience. The moderating effects of emotion and trust with servicescape were also tested. Hypotheses tested were as follows:

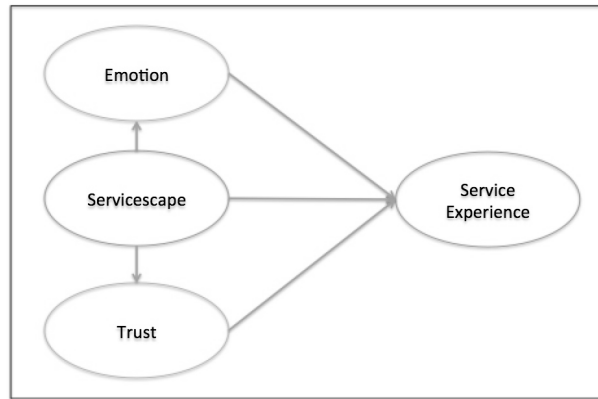
*H1 : Servicescape affects service experience.*

*H1a: Customer emotion moderates the relationship between servicescape and service experience.*

*H1b: Customer trust moderates the relationship between servicescape and service experience.*

*H2 : Customer emotion is significantly related to customer service experience.*

*H3 : Customer trust is significantly related to customer service experience.*



**Figure 1:** Proposed Analytical Model

## RESULTS

### *Sample Characteristics*

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table 1. Of the respondents, 83.3% were female. Nearly half of the respondents were married (49.0%), 44.1% were single while the other 6.9% were divorced or widowed. The largest group of respondents was aged 25-34 (36.3%), followed by the group aged 35-44 (22.5%). The age distribution of the customers using spa services were in their mid 20's to 30's followed by mid 30's to 40's which is similar to the findings of Mak, Wong and Chang (2009). The majority (80.4%) of the respondents were in full-time employment.

**Table 1:** Results of Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N=102)

Socio-demographic		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	17	16.7%
	Female	85	83.3%
	Total	102	100.0%
Age	18 to 25	15	14.7%
	25 to 34	37	36.3%
	35 to 44	23	22.5%
	45 to 54	19	18.6%
	55 to 64	6	5.9%
	Over 65	2	2.0%
Total	102	100.0%	
Marital Status	Single	45	44.1%
	Married	50	49.0%
	Other	7	6.9%
	Total	102	100.0%
Employment	Full Time	82	80.4%
	Part Time	8	7.8%
	Student	5	4.9%
	Not Employed	5	4.9%
	Retired	2	2.0%
	Total	102	100.0%

### *Spa Usage Characteristics*

Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of spa customers' past spa experience. With respect to how often they visit the spa, 40.2% of the customers reported they visit the spa two to four times a year, followed by once a month or 10 to 13 times a year (23.5%) and once a year or so (20.6%). In terms of the motivation for visiting a spa, the respondents rated "stress relief/relaxation" (78.4%) most frequently, followed closely by "time for me" (72.5%). This particular spa is located in a business district and most of the customers have full time jobs and have little time for themselves. Less frequently selected motivations were "gift" (38.2%), "health & wellness" (23.5%), and "improve mental health" (20.6%). Nearly half of the respondents (45.1%) found out about the Spa by word-of-mouth from their friends, family, and acquaintances while 31.4% learnt about the Spa on the internet. This highlights the intangible characteristics of spa services that are difficult to anticipate unless people have an indirect experience from those who have had the experience. However, once the respondents had the experience, their satisfaction level was quite high. The great majority of customers were willing to return to the spa (95.1%) and to recommend spa service to others (93.2%). Over 14% of respondents had a spa appointment on the day they completed the survey, and 9.8% had already booked their next appointment.

**Table 2:** Results of Past Spa Experience of the Respondents (N=102)

Past Spa Experience		Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of Spa Visit	Weekly	41	40.2%
	Every Couple of Weeks	21	20.6%
	Once a Month or 10 to 13 times a year	9	8.8%
	Less than Once a Year	24	23.5%
	Once a Year or so	6	5.9%
	Two to Four Times a Year	1	1.0%
Info Source	Internet	32	31.4%
	Direct Mailings from Spas	4	3.9%
	Professional Associations	6	5.9%
	Friend/Family/Acquaintance	46	45.1%
	Social Media	4	3.9%
	Magazines	1	1.0%
	Radio	1	1.0%
	Direct Mailings from Spas	4	3.9%
	Newspaper	1	1.0%
	TV	7	6.9%
Motivation	Stress relief/relaxation	80	78.4
	Health & Wellness	78	76.5
	Improve mental health	81	79.4
	Improve physical health	94	92.2
	Anti-aging	99	97.1
	Time for me	28	27.5
	Gift	63	61.8
	Invitation / Party	88	86.3
Return	Yes	97	95.1%
	No	5	4.9%
Recommended	Yes	96	94.1%
	No	6	5.9%
Total		102	100.0%

### ***Results of Hypothesis Tests***

To identify the relative importance of the antecedents of a positive wellness experience, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with the mean item scores for servicescape, emotion, and trust as the independent variables, and service experience as the dependent variable. The mean scores for these constructs were as follows: service experience (4.34), servicescape (4.49), emotion (3.78), and trust (4.03). The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) results for these constructs were as follows: service experience ( $\alpha=0.962$ ), servicescape ( $\alpha=0.911$ ), emotion ( $\alpha=0.864$ ), and trust ( $\alpha=0.841$ ). The adjusted  $R^2$  for the resulting equation was 0.636, which indicates that 63.6% of the variance in "service experience" was explained. The significant F ratio ( $F=36.288$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) indicates that servicescape, emotion, and trust as a set were able to explain service experience. On the other hand, while all the main effects of "servicescape", "emotion", and "trust" were significant, the interaction effects were insignificant.

Since the two interaction effects of emotion and trust with servicescape were not significant, these two coefficient's values are of little importance. In other words, the effect of emotion and trust on customers' evaluations of spa experiences has not been influenced by the presence of servicescape. This contrasts with past findings that servicescape elements are positively related to customer's emotion and trust (Yoo, Park, & MacInnis, 1998; Chen & Barnes, 2007). As Bitner (1992) suggests, this could be due to the characteristics of service occurring simultaneously in terms of production and consumption of the service, and that all of these three factors, servicescape, emotion and trust, can play an important role in the service experience separately.

As the interaction terms were insignificant, the regression analysis was repeated without those two interactions to examine the difference the interaction effects had on the model. When regression analysis was repeated to investigate whether the independent variables had significant impacts on service experience, the multiple regression model was still significant at an alpha level of 0.05. This time, the adjusted  $R^2$  of the model was 0.640, which indicates that 64.0% of the variance in "service experience" was explained. The significant F ratio ( $F=60.757$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) indicates that the main effects as a set were significant. This result shows that, compared to the original model, both adjusted  $R^2$  value and F ratio went up. The increase in the F-ratio from 36.288 to 60.757 shows that excluding the interaction effects raised the F-ratio of the model, therefore, enabling the model to better explain customers' service experience. Hence, the findings indicate that servicescape, emotion and trust were all significantly related to the customers' wellness experience. Based on the magnitude of the regression coefficients, trust (0.473) had the biggest effect on customers' wellness experience. Emotion (0.312) also had a relatively large effect while Servicescape (0.181) had a smaller effect on customers' wellness experiences. Thus, hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were supported, while hypotheses 1a and 1b were rejected.



**Table 3:** Regression Result

Predictors	Parameter Estimates (Standard Error)	T-statistics	P-value	Model Statistics
Servicescape	0.181*(0.088)	2.267	0.026*	F = 36.288 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.636
Emotion	0.312*(0.128)	3.944	0.000*	
Trust	0.473*(0.101)	5.276	0.000*	
Servicescape × emotion	0.045(0.221)	0.431	0.668	
Servicescape × trust	-0.101(0.192)	-0.908	0.366	

\*P &lt; 0.05

## DISCUSSION

The results suggested that both the trust customers placed on service providers, as well as the mood of the customers at the time of receiving spa service, had a positive relationship on customers' evaluation of their service experience. The organization's servicescape also had a positive relationship with the customers' experience. Trust (0.473) had the largest effect on the service experience, followed by emotion (0.312) and then servicescape (0.181). It can be said that customers' spa service experience is primarily influenced by the trust they have in the service provider, while their emotional state and the environment also determine customers' service experience. Consequently, all the proposed constructs, including emotion, trust, and servicescape, are considered essential for a positive spa service experience. The effect of trust is consistent with the study conducted by Dagger and O'Brien (2010) that found trust has a profound relationship in forming the service experience. In terms of emotion, this result aligns with the study conducted by Tumbat (2011) that found customer emotion plays a prevalent role in forming the service experience while for servicescape, Parish, Berry and Lam (2008) also found that this factor influences the service experience.

The rationale behind customers putting the trust factor foremost could be due to the fact that spa service is provided in an environment where the intimacy and hands-on nature of the service encounter are prevalent. This is quite different from other service industries where customers can get their desired outcome without the need to be intimate with the service provider. However, for spa services, such as massage, the core service offering that customers purchase has a "touch" component, consisting of customers' willingness to engage in the intimacy between themselves and the service providers. Hence, the trust factor may be more important in spa service than for other services.

Emotion, although less than trust, is also relatively important. Customer emotion has been found to be a principal factor when understanding customers' perceptions of service experiences. Indeed, the driving force for visiting a spa may be due to the customers' need for emotional experience. For example, customers might visit a spa when they feel stressed, they may expect to relax and feel better if they feel pampered. Therefore, the evaluation of customers' spa service experience could indicate whether the spa has met customers' desired emotional goals.

However, based on this study's results, servicescape proved to have a very limited effect on customers' spa service experience. This does not necessarily mean that the role of servicescape is not important in deriving a positive service experience. Nevertheless, it is an indication that merely equipping the spa with a good servicescape is not enough to ensure customers' high rating of their spa service experience. Once the trust and emotion factors are

met, the servicescape of the spa environment may help to enhance customers' service experience.

Therefore, to enhance customers' evaluation of service, it is important to manage trust, emotion and servicescape in a spa context. Previous studies have not tested the interaction effects of servicescape with trust and emotion; however, neither of the interactions were found to be statistically significant. One possible reason why this study did not find a significant relationship for these interaction effects could be because most respondents were already loyal customers of the Spa. This would have contributed to the fact that most customers coming to this spa have already developed trust towards the service provider as well as a positive emotion towards spa service. Therefore, the servicescape may not have much influence on loyal customers as it would on new customers.

## CONCLUSION

Service experience has become central to the marketing efforts of service industries (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Customers' evaluation of service has received significant attention in the services literature (Cronin, 2003; Essén & Wikström, 2008). There have been on-going attempts to identify antecedents of service experience (Mathwick, Malhotra & Rigdon, 2001). When customers engage themselves from the start to the end of the service delivery, they receive a complete service experience. Throughout the process, service experiences are created via the customers' interaction with people and objects in addition to their evaluation of the received service. However, to this point, the application of experiential marketing has focused mostly on the tangible aspects of marketing, such as details in the environment while overlooking the importance of customers' evaluation of overall service experience and how the intangible aspects also interact with a company's offering. Therefore, this study aimed to review the concept of service experience and identify its major determinants in the context of spa service. Specifically, this study has aimed to increase the understanding of customers' spa service experience by incorporating servicescape, emotion and trust as its antecedents. Not only has this study focused on the influence of emotion, trust, and servicescape on service experience, it also investigated whether servicescape has any interaction effects on customers' emotion and trust.

Wellness services can be considered as a highly personalized service where customers rely and trust service providers to attend to their emotional problems. Customers are usually the ones who initiate the service experiences and this study assumes that customer's feelings may influence service outcomes and their decision to seek the service. Among the many wellness related activities, spa treatments are one of the services people seek to relax, heal, rehabilitate and socialize in a convivial setting (Koh, Yoo & Boger, 2010). Therefore, customers' trust and emotional connection with the service provider/firm is imperative. The servicescape provides the appropriate environment for the customers to experience the trust and emotional connection. This study's findings provide valuable suggestions to the managers of spa and wellness organizations that have to identify new ways to satisfy ever-increasing customer demands. Spa and wellness organizations that adopt and practice customer-oriented strategies will be able to retain their loyal customers and will be able to gain a competitive advantage in the market by being able to acquire new customers.

### ***Theoretical Implications***

This study provides a theoretical contribution to the service literature in several ways. Firstly, it examines the interaction effects between emotion and trust on servicescape. The interaction did not show any significance effect. This could be because these Spa customers have been customers of this Spa and hence they have already developed trust towards the service provider as well as a positive emotion towards the spa service. By incorporating these interaction effects, this study highlights the importance of servicescape in a service context to gain customers' trust and emotion, which may aid the firm's efforts to improve its service offerings. Second, previous studies have considered emotion as the only factor that influences customer's experience. This study on the other hand, has examined how both emotion and trust have influence on customers' experience. According to Jiang and Wang (2006), all hedonic services were considered to be in the "emotional" category and proposed that customers evaluate services emotionally. Prior research has not addressed the role of emotion and trust simultaneously and their subsequent influence on customers' emotional evaluation of service experience. This study therefore provides valuable insight to extend our understanding of the role of trust as an effective predictor on the evaluation of service experience.

### ***Practical Implications***

Wellness services have the inherent challenge of inseparability of production and consumption. Further, various factors such as service provider, physical facility, and other tangible elements all contribute to the customers' experience of the service. According to Meyer, Jekowsky and Crane (2007), in order to effectively manage service, effective design of subsystems, as well as the management of interfaces between them, is required. Therefore, the overall goal of managers is to provide high quality care in the most cost-effective way. In order to do this, wellness organizations should understand what constitutes customers' service experience.

The findings of this study suggest, in order to maximize customers' positive service experience, spa and wellness organizations must focus on the emotional and trust component of the experience. It is also important for managers to consider that servicescape could also provide the environment that may enhance how customers evaluate their experience. Given the fact that servicescape is a man-made physical surrounding, it is possible to have control over it thus providing an opportunity to manage customers' positive service experience.

### ***Limitation and Future Study***

Although this study aimed to extend the present knowledge with reference to the antecedents of service experiences in a wellness context, there are some limitations. First, this study incorporated only a limited number of elements of ambient conditions among many servicescape factors. Second, data was collected from one particular spa brand. This spa is an established family business and hence most of their customers are loyal customers. Therefore the findings of this study cannot be generalized across the spa industry. Third, this study only took into account customers' evaluation of the spa experience after they had received a spa service.

Future research could address the limitations by incorporating more servicescape factors into the study. In addition, it is important to include both existing customers and new customers in

the sample pool. Considering that customers' service experiences tend to be context specific and vary between firms, the same instrument could be used in other spa settings to see if any variation might occur in terms of first-time visitors as opposed to repeat visitors. Finally, future studies could consider evaluation of pre-spa service and post-spa service.

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