An exploratory study of the experiencescape dimensions and customer revisit intentions for specialty urban coffee shops

Abstract

Purpose –The main aim of this research was to explore specialty coffee experience dimensions and what drives revisit intentions through experiencescapes. The theoretical framework on experience co-creation in food and wine consumption by Carvalho et al. (2021) was employed to explore the dimensions of specialty coffee shop experiences and specialty coffee consumer revisit intentions.

Design/methodology/approach– Using the interpretivist epistemology, this research explored these factors from the perspectives of customers, coffee shop baristas, and managers and owners to better understand consumer behaviour in the context of urban coffee shops. In-depth interviews were employed to collect data to obtain first-hand, emic perspectives

Findings – The notion of specialty coffee and its experiencescape were examined in the context of a region of tea-dominated landscapes. This research highlighted the significance of baristas as agents of coffee connoisseurship, being able to introduce the beans and the art of coffee making to customers in active ways. The findings amplified that olfactory encounters triggering a myriad of senses are crucial to the specialty coffee experiencescape.

Originality/value - This is among the first studies to explore the driving factors for customer visits and revisit intentions to urban coffee shops. The findings point to greater sophistication and engagement in-person and online for urban coffee shops. More importantly, the olfactory encounters differed for solo and group customers.

Keywords: Coffee shop; experiencescape; revisit intentions; urban tourism; Taiwan

Introduction

Customer experience is a topical issue in scholarly research that has been generating discussions in the fields of marketing and service quality (Maklan & Klaus 2011; Shaw & Ivens 2002; Vanharanta et al. 2015). There is a concerted effort by companies to improve and attract customers via enhancing experiences through sensory and cognitive cues including sounds and smells (Vanharanta et al. 2015). Companies are using various means and resources to measure the satisfaction levels of their customers to remain competitive. Several scholars (e.g., Maklan & Klaus 2011; Vanharanta et al. 2015) argue that customer satisfaction

is not equal to customer loyalty; a satisfied customer does not necessarily translate to a loyal customer with the intention to revisit.

There are disagreements on what predicts customer loyalty and revisit intention. While some scholars (Gallarza et al. 2011; Han et al. 2018; Song et al. 2019; Walter et al. 2013) postulate that satisfaction is a predictor of customer loyalty, others are of the view that positive customer experiences are a better antecedent to customer loyalty (Maklan & Klaus 2011; Vanharanta et al. 2015). In their study of the coffee shop industry, Han et al. (2018) argued that brand satisfaction and relationship commitment significantly affect brand loyalty. They further suggested that among the variables analysed, brand satisfaction was the strongest predictor of brand loyalty. Their study provides concrete support for the role of brand satisfaction in determining customer loyalty in chain coffee shop brands. In contrast, Vanharanta et al. (2015) asserted that favourable customer experiences, in addition to products and services, are more salient indicators of the customers' final decisions on loyalty than satisfaction. It is therefore critical for companies to pay attention to experiences in addition to devoting time and resources to measuring customer satisfaction.

Amid these uncertainties in intellectual discourse, there is a lack of research on what drives specialty coffee consumers' revisit intentions within Taiwanese urban coffee shops. According to Thong *et al.* (2017), specialty coffee generates a remarkable source of revenue for many countries around the globe. Specialty coffee shops have witnessed phenomenal development and advancement (Ferreira *et al.*, 2021) and presently, it has been conceptualised as the 'third wave' coffee shops (Ferreira, 2015). Specialty coffee due to its uniqueness of service and products offered (Silanoi *et al.*, 2022) provides a place for urban residents to relax and develop relationships (Ferreira *et al.*, 2021). However, the experience dimensions and what drives urban dwellers' consumption of specialty coffee have been alluded to by researchers in coffee research scholarship (e.g., Ferreira *et al.*, 2021; Silanoi *et al.*, 2022). Using the theoretical framework on experience co-creation in food and wine consumption by Carvalho et al. (2021), this research had two main research questions: 1. What are the dimensions of specialty coffee shop experiences? 2. What drives specialty coffee consumer revisit intentions?

This research makes theoretical and practical contributions to the field of food and beverage consumption in hospitality. First, this is among the first studies to explore the motivational factors for customer visits and revisit intentions to urban coffee shops. Using the

interpretivist epistemology, it explored these factors from the perspectives of customers, coffee shop baristas, managers, and owners to better understand consumer behaviour in urban coffee shops. The practical contributions to stakeholders are in advising operators on how best to design superior experiences for guests. State and other government agencies should also be enlightened on the importance of coffee shops to citizenry's well-being and identity.

Theoretical framework and literature review

Theoretical framework

This research adapted the integrative theoretical framework on experience co-creation in food and beverages by Carvalho et al. (2021) (Figure 1). The development and conceptualisation of this model are based on Schmitt's (1999) model of consumer behaviour, Pine and Gilmore's (1998) framework for consumer experiences, Campos et al.'s (2018) model for co-creation experiences, and Minkiewicz et al.'s (2014) co-creation model. This integrative model contends that customers engage in an active participation process that leads to personalised experiences. The personalisation process is supported by technology and digital devices, which trigger emotional and cognitive engagement that are determinants of revisit intentions (Carvalho et al. 2021). Thus, the customer experiencescape has direct implications for revisiting intentions. This integrative model was employed because it provides a holistic perspective on customer experiences underpinning social and physical (experiencescape) attributes and values.
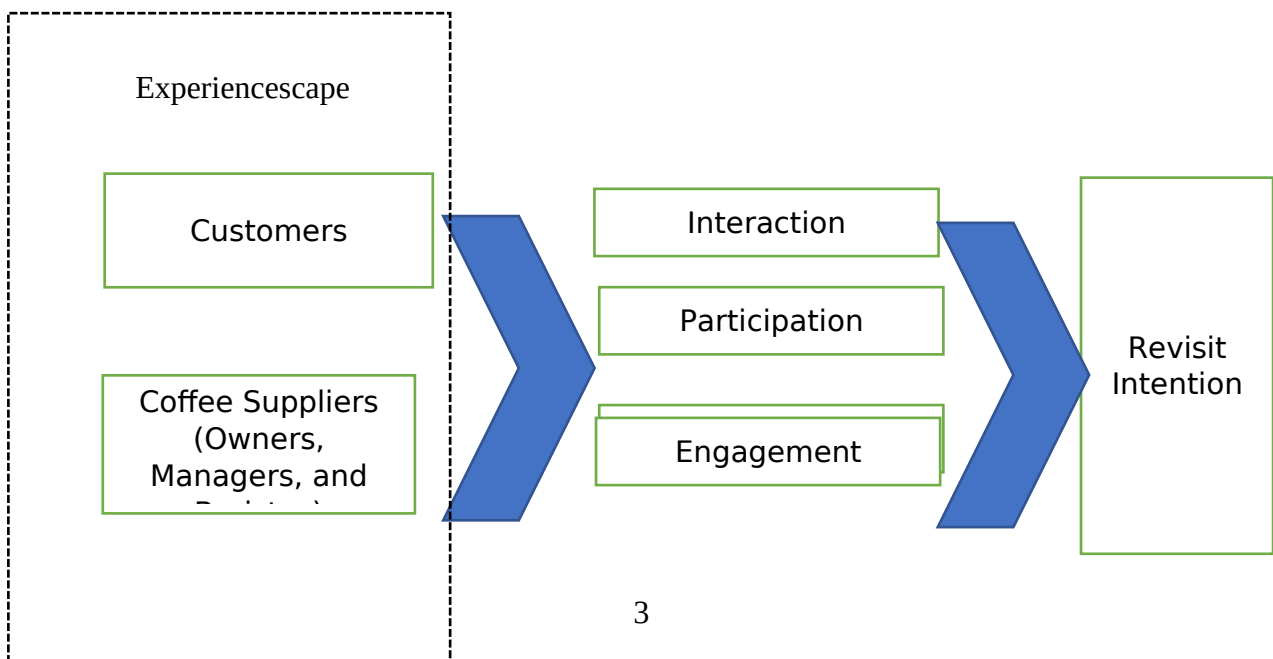
Figure 1. Integrative theoretical framework on experience co-creation in food and beverage consumption. Adapted from Carvalho et al. (2021).

Literature review

Experiencescapes in hospitality. Experiencescapes in hospitality are receiving increasing scholarly and practitioner attention due to the highly intangible nature of the service encounter (Kandampully et al. 2022). Interest in experiencescapes is becoming a key focus in understanding this complex concept that is often an interplay among service providers, the physical or online environment, the consumer role, as well as other guests who are attending in person (Chen et al. 2020). Experiencescape is a crucial concept because urban coffee shops feature all the aforementioned dimensions, as well as other sensory stimuli such as the tasting of food and beverages, ambient music, and olfactory senses of coffee and other food aromas (Spence & Carvalho 2020). An experiencescape is a kaleidoscope of five different components - social, cultural, sensory, functional, and natural (Pizam & Tasci 2019). It should be noted that the concept of experiencescapes varies across different hospitality and tourism sectors (e.g. hotels, cruises, airlines), and variations may occur due to other externalities e.g. peak periods of travel, equipment malfunction, and COVID-19 restrictions. Nonetheless, it is essential to ensure a comprehensive understanding of experiencescapes to deliver desired consumer experiences that lead to positive memories and likely repeat visits for loyalty effects (Line & Hanks 2020).

Customer experience dimensions in hospitality. Customer experience is not a new concept in academic research (Cetin & Dincer 2014); it has been applied and studied in fields such as anthropology, philosophy, tourism, and psychology (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). For instance, MacCannell (2013) viewed experiences from the sociological perspective and concluded that people travel primarily to seek novelty and authenticity from different socio-cultural settings that differ from their normal ways of life. Customer experience affects the perception of value and can be regarded as products and services (Pine et al. 1999). However, unlike products and services, experiences are hard to imitate but are required for long-term profitability as they influence satisfaction, loyalty, and recommendations (Cetin & Dincer 2014; Pine et al. 1999).

Customer experience is defined from different viewpoints and is largely dependent on the situation (Ren et al. 2016). To Palmer (2010), experiences are the impressions that

customers derive from encounters with services and products delivered by a business entity. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) said that an experience is a perception formed by the customer that relates to their emotions and fantasies. Also, the seminal work of Pine and Gilmore (1998) defined customer experience as a unique economic value that has sustainable and memorable outcomes shared with others. Meyer and Schwager (2007) defined customer experience as "the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company", while Mossberg (2007) saw experiences as a conglomeration of events that affect customers physically, intellectually, and spiritually. His conceptualisation of experience was analogous to Oh et al. (2007) who succinctly defined customer experience as memorable and engaging moments or events that customers encounter. The aforementioned literature sources exhibit differing opinions on customer experiences based on varying situations. However, for this research, the conceptualisation of customer experience by Oh et al. (2007) was adopted because of its brevity and shared characteristics with the problem under study.

In hospitality, various dimensionality approaches are proposed to understand the customer experience (Hemmington 2007; Knutson et al. 1990; Walls 2013). Knutson et al. (1990) in their study of hospitality settings elaborated on four dimensions (accessibility, environment, incentive, and driving benefit), whereas Walls (2013) listed two dimensions (physical environment and human interaction). Ren et al. (2016) argued that these aforementioned dimensions of customer experiences are based on luxury or full-service hotels that are different from coffee shop settings. The mushrooming of urban coffee shops across many emerging and developed countries is creating unique coffee cultures within major cities while remaining under-investigated (Morland 2018). Hence, the extant literature (or the lack thereof) justifies undertaking this research to fill the knowledge gaps.

Customer revisit intentions in hospitality. Customer retention is a critical consideration for most business entities for their survival and to improve the bottom line of operations (Chua et al. 2017; Kim et al. 2016). Consequently, retaining existing customers and improving the revisit rates are paramount in a hypercompetitive market (Scarpi et al. 2019). Revisit intention is defined as the willingness or inclination of a person to visit the same destination or locality (Abubakar et al. 2017; Cole & Scott 2004).

A plethora of studies (Dhisasmito and Kumar, 2020; Suhud *et al.,* 2020; Ting *et al.,* 2018) have examined the critical factors that underpin consumer satisfaction and revisit

intentions of coffee shops in academic scholarship. However, there is no agreement on what informs customer revisit intentions for coffee shops in the extant literature. Paradoxically, these works are underpinned by the positivist epistemology which maintains one true reality (universalism) (Saunders *et al.*, 2009), inconsistencies which are guided by different theoretical frameworks are evident and apparent in what drives consumer revisit intentions in coffee shops (e.g. Dhisasmito and Kumar, 2020; Suhud *et al.*, 2020; Ting *et al.*, 2018a). For example, Ting *et al.* (2018a) postulated that product quality and service quality have positive effects on regular customers while service quality and experience quality impress infrequent consumers. This study provides novel insight on the quality dimension (i.e. product, experience, and service) that influence regular and infrequent consumers, it was not specific on the frequency of visits that differentiate the two types of consumers and additionally resorted to a social constructionist ontology (qualitative paradigm) (Saunders *et al.*, 2009) to determine eligibility. Moreover, the study employed the mixed-method explanatory design which begins with a quantitative approach, thereby, limiting this investigation to only the quality dimensions that underpinned the employed theoretical framework. Ting *et al.*'s (2018) conclusion contradicts Islam *et al.*'s (2019) observation that authenticity, interpersonal justice, and prior experience affect customer revisit intentions for coffee shops. Islam *et al.* (2019) provide useful and novel findings by underscoring that factors such as involvement, authenticity, interpersonal justice, and prior experience affect coffee users' revisit intentions in Pakistan; however, this could have been influenced by the younger consumers (between 20-30 years) who formed a majority (78%) of the target population. Older people might have a different perspective on the matter under study. Interestingly, Dhisasmito and Kumar (2020) contradict Islam *et al.* (2019) and Ting *et al.*, (2018) that customer satisfaction is an antecedent of coffee shop customer loyalty. They found that customer satisfaction mediated service quality and price fairness and its relationship to customer loyalty. The study observes that service quality is the major driver of consumer satisfaction in coffee shops. However, this observation could have been influenced by the framework (i.e.. Parasuraman's SERVQUAL) as well as the variables that were tested by the researchers. The study adopted an etic rather than an emic approach which grounded the current study (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). The aforementioned studies indicate there is no agreement on factors that predict consumer revisit intentions in hospitality and tourism and research on coffee shop experiencescapes is lacking. These gaps in knowledge highlight the need for more studies to shed greater light on urban coffee shop characteristics.

Other studies (Bigne et al. 2001; Loi et al. 2017; Um et al. 2006) put forward different factors that affect consumer revisit intentions. Bigne et al. (2001) concluded that there was no direct relationship between tourist satisfaction and revisit intentions. However, destination image predicts satisfaction, intention to revisit, and the tendency to recommend to others. Um et al. (2006) revealed that perceived attractiveness is a strong predictor of revisit intentions. Revisit intention is an extension of satisfaction but does not demonstrate a causation effect. Notwithstanding these predictors of consumer revisit intentions, there is not yet a study that investigates this phenomenon in Taiwanese urban coffee shops.

Specialty coffee consumers. Specialty coffee is a new way of consuming coffee that is based on differentiation, quality, and value-added characteristics (Sepúlveda *et al.*, 2016). Hence, Kwast (2010) maintained that specialty coffee has metamorphosised from a niche to a fully-fledged industry. Interestingly, there are inconsistent definitions of specialty coffee (Sepúlveda *et al.*, 2016). Specialty coffee is broadly defined as high-quality and differentiated coffee which has unique extrinsic and intrinsic characteristics from conventional coffee that is sold in the market (CBI 2014). The pour-over brewing method is used in specialty coffee production (Ufer *et al.* 2019) and this provides the consumer with a more balanced flavour and prevents over-extraction (Mestdagh *et al.*, 2017). According to Sepúlveda et al. (2016), specialty coffee can be defined based on certain criteria laid down by the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA), the Columbian Coffee Growers Federation (CCGF), and the Specialty Coffee Association of Europe (SCAE). These groups explain that coffee can be classified as specialty coffee based on extrinsic aspects tied to the production systems, and intrinsic aspects such as taste. The extrinsic aspects refer to sustainable coffee including certified coffees that balance social, economic, and environmental measures in their production processes. Intrinsic aspects cover product differentiation based on tastes and social priorities that suit consumer demands. There are factors that affect consumer experiences of specialty coffee. However, few studies explore factors that influence consumers' experiences of specialty coffee in Taiwanese urban coffee shops (Liu et al. 2019; Wann et al. 2018; Wei et al. 2019).

The existing studies (Carvalho and Spence, 2019, 2021; de Sousa *et al.*, 2020) show that numerous factors impact consumer experiences of specialty coffee. Carvalho and Spence (2019) concluded that the colour of the cup significantly affected the sensory and hedonic judgements of specialty coffee in an analysis of Brazilian and Kenyan coffee. Carvalho and Spence (2021) found that higher sensory and hedonic ratings were observed if the Brazilian

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coffee was tasted from a bronze cup, and when the Kenyan coffee was served from a gold cup. This suggests that numerous factors influence consumer experiences of specialty coffee. While such factors exist, it remains unclear if they are consistent across time and place. Moreover, studies on speciality coffee experiencescapes in Asian cultures such as Taiwan are scarce. Hence, this research is needed to determine if there are similarities or differences in urban coffee shops based on geographical locations.

Methodology

Research purpose

The main aim of this research was to explore specialty coffee experience dimensions and what drives revisit intentions through experiencescapes. This study employed a qualitative, interpretivism epistemology (Sandiford and Seymour, 2007) due to the scarcity of literature and the exploratory nature of the analysis. Therefore, in-depth interviews were employed to collect data to obtain first-hand, emic perspectives of consumers, baristas, and managers/owners (Marshall & Rossman 2014).

Approach to interviews

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants for this qualitative research. The study chose customers who have at least five years of specialty coffee consumption experience and visited specialty coffee shops. In addition, the study ensured gender balance in the selection of the participants. All were solo customers when interviewed, but they sometimes visit coffee shops with their friends. Coffee shops were selected that provide a variety of specialty coffee brewed by hand drip or syphon instead of only brewed by machines. Also, bar areas are provided for better interactions with customers. Owners or managers and baristas were invited to participate to obtain better insight into the experiences supplied by urban coffee shops.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data as they allowed for probing and seeking clarification (Finn et al. 2000). Table 1 summarizes the interview questions related to the research questions. This approach permitted the researchers to obtain multiple 'truths' and interpretations as the participants were offered a leading role (Golubovskaya et al. 2017). According to Ritchie et al. (2005), this enables the researchers and participants to be co-

researchers in the data collection process as participants share their lived, inner feelings and experiences. The respondent demographic information is presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Research questions and corresponding interview questions.

Customers	
Research Questions	Interview Questions
RQ1. What are the dimensions of specialty coffee shop experiences?	How often do you visit this coffee shop? Can you tell us about your interactions with the baristas? What are your interactions with other customers in this coffee shop? Can you tell us what role you take at this coffee shop? What special services are you given at this coffee shop? Can you tell us how engaged you are with the baristas? Can you tell us how engaged you are with other customers?
RQ2. What drives specialty coffee consumer revisit intentions?	Why do you always visit this coffee shop? Can you tell us why you would recommend this coffee shop to someone else? What excites you the most at this coffee shop?
Other questions	With whom do you visit this coffee shop regularly (solo or with family/friends)? How long do you spend in this coffee shop? What is your frequency of visits to this coffee shop (no. of times a week or month)? Can you share your estimated expenditure at this coffee shop per visit (In New Taiwan Dollars)? To what extent do you order the same item on the menu (or are you likely to pick something new)? Do you follow the coffee shop on its social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram)? Why or why not? Does this interaction make you want to visit the coffee shop more?
Baristas	
RQ1. What are the dimensions of specialty coffee shop experience?	Can you tell us about your interactions with customers? Can you tell us what roles customers play at this coffee shop? What special services do you give at this coffee shop? Can you tell us how engaged you are with customers? What makes this coffee shop stand out from others?
RQ2. What drives specialty coffee	Why do customers always visit this coffee shop? Can you tell us what a customer will tell someone

consumer revisit intentions?	about this coffee shop? What excites customers the most about this coffee shop?
Other questions	Do you run specialty classes for your customers in the store? Would this be something you are considering? What was the experience like? How often do you hold special promotions/activities on your coffee shop's social media sites? What were the experiences like?

Table 2. Background information of study respondents.

Respondent codes	Age	Gender	Years of specialty coffee experiences	Position
Respondent 1	35	Female	10	Customer
Respondent 2	60	Male	20	Customer
Respondent 3	40	Female	15	Customer
Respondent 4	58	Male	12	Customer
Respondent 5	45	Female	25	Customer
Respondent 6	40	Male	10	Customer
Respondent 7	55	Female	15	Customer
Respondent 8	40	Female	10	Customer
Respondent 9	50	Female	15	Customer
Respondent 10	38	Female	10	Customer
Respondent 11	22	Male	5	Customer
Respondent 12	40	Male	5	Customer
Respondent 13	35	Female	10	Barista (coffee shop 1)
Respondent 14	30	Female	7	Barista (coffee shop 1)
Respondent 15	25	Female	5	Barista (coffee shop 2)
Respondent 16	55	Female	20	Owner (coffee shop 1)
Respondent 17	35	Female	15	Manager (coffee shop 2)
Respondent 18	36	Male	6	Owner & barista (coffee shop 3)
Respondent 19	35	Male	8	Owner & barista (coffee shop 4)

Trustworthiness issues

The study ensured the trustworthiness of the data collected by following Lincoln et al.'s (1985) criteria. This is based on the credibility, dependability, transferability, and

confirmability of the data collected from the field. Credibility was ensured by the cross-checking done among the researchers and recordings of all responses from participants. Dependability of the data was achieved through maintaining the viewpoints of participants and the data collected was sent back to participants for confirmation and verification (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). In addition, the researchers checked the completed transcripts to ensure uniformity and confirmability (Lincoln et al. 1985). To ensure the transferability of the findings, the study described the context of the study in the analysis to help outsiders to appreciate and make sense of the findings (Korstjens & Moser 2018).

Data analysis

Data were analysed after data collection was completed. Data were collected in the Chinese language and back-translated to English by bilingual experts, while those in English were analysed directly. The audio data recorded were transcribed verbatim and this was followed by content analysis of the data. With the aid of ATLAS.ti 9 qualitative data analysis software, the transcribed data were analysed. This research followed Corbin and Strauss's (1990) coding procedure of open, axial, and selective coding. The initial open coding generated 23 codes (Table 3). This was followed by axial coding where sub-categories were linked to major categories to ensure data coherency. The final stage was selective coding where major themes were grouped according to the main research questions.

Table 3. Codes and themes based on data analyses.

Research question	Extracted codes	Themes
What are the dimensions of specialty coffee shop experiences?	Atmosphere of the shop, comfortable accessories, image and feel of the shop, location, and parking facilities, privacy assured, relaxed environment, the smell of the coffee beans	Coffee shop environment
	Interact with customers, discuss business with clients, visit with family and friends	Human engagement
	No interaction with a barista, not a social place to make friends, solo visitor	Solo destination experience
What drives specialty coffee consumer revisit intentions?	Learn different culture and art of making coffee	Coffee culture learning
	Equipment used for the coffee, service delivery, and interaction by	Coffee equipment and

barista	artistic display by barista
Affordable price	Price affordability
Alternate cups to choose from, coffee bean quality and taste, flavour and smell of the coffee, and brewing techniques	Product quality and variety
Marketing promotions, social media promotions, social media reviews	Marketing and social media promotions

Results

1. What are the dimensions of specialty coffee shop experiences?

For the first research question, the findings are presented based on respondents' shared accounts of experience dimensions within specialty coffee shops in Taiwan. The customer lived experience dimensions of specialty coffee shops were broadly categorised into the three aspects of coffee shop environment, human engagement, and solo destination experiences. For the coffee shop environment, the physical and atmospheric considerations included comfortable accessories (chairs, furnishings), image, relaxed and congenial environment, location and parking facilities, privacy assurance, and aroma of the coffee beans. The coffee shop environment was a combination of tangible and intangible features. An interplay of these factors formed the basis of specialty coffee shop experiences in Taiwan. As expressed by respondent 16 (owner) in her remarks:

> "*Nevertheless, we still satisfy our target customer base by providing different seating areas for different purposes. I also believe stepping into a coffee shop triggers all five senses. Other than the coffee itself, it is also an important place to provide a comfortable environment and atmosphere for the customer, as well as providing food at affordable prices. For us, I believe our coffee shop provides an exceptional quality food and beverages with great deals in this particular area* (near Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts)".

It could be suggested that the atmosphere (intangible) and tangibles items (coffee beans, beverages) combined to provide memorable experiences (coffee shop environment) to customers. Respondent 7 (customer) confirmed this combination:

> "*I enjoy the atmosphere in that coffee shop, it's very quiet and peaceful*."

Respondents were expressive about the role that coffee shop environments played in the total customer experience in specialty coffee shops in Taiwan.

All the coffee shops involved in this research designed interaction areas where baristas brew the coffee (see photo below in Figure 2). Seats were available for the customers to observe the brewing process and meanwhile to talk to the barista about the coffee brewing methods, which helps to enhance human engagement in a co-creation fashion.

Figure 2. The interaction between barista and customers (Author photo).

Echoing Carvalho et al.'s (2021) study, the co-creation process prompts personalised experiences and thus increases revisit intentions, as indicated by respondent 11 (customer):

"I usually chat with the barista whom I am familiar with and I learn some coffee
knowledge from him. One barista even taught me how to make pour-over coffee, which is

a memorable experience."

Apart from the coffee shop environment that plays a critical role in the customer experience, studies have shown that human engagement cannot be overlooked (Walls 2013). Hence, in addition to environmental considerations, the human factor is a significant force in delivering holistic customer experiences. Customers cherished the interaction and engagement with their family, friends, co-customers, and the baristas at coffee shops. The coffee shop provided a place for them to socialise and connect with others casually or for business purposes as respondent 4 (customer) and respondent 13 (barista) highlighted:

> "*I go to coffee shops with my friends and family to share time together. We usually spend between 1-2 hours (in the coffee shop).*" (Respondent 4, customer)

> "*Most of the people who come to this coffee shop are accompanied by friends. Some customers will bring their laptops and stay here for the whole day.*" (Respondent 13, barista)

Paradoxically, it was found that while some customers cherished human-to-human engagement, others did not need human interaction at the specialty coffee shops. To them, the coffee shop afforded them the 'third place' apart from home and work to reflect and have time for themselves (Wang & Morrison 2022). This is broadly captured by the concept of a 'solo destination experience'. This means that the coffee shops have two types of customers that have dissimilar needs in these settings. Respondents 5 (customer) and 6 (customer) expressed this as follows:

> "*I rarely interact with other customers. When I go to a coffee shop, I want to enjoy my time alone. So I seldom interact with other customers.*" Respondent 5 (customer)

> "*I'm just a guest. I like to quietly read a book in the afternoon, with no interaction with other guests in the coffee shop.*" Respondent 6 (customer)

These findings show that specialty coffee shop experiences have three dimensions (environment, human-to-human interactions, and solo destination experiences). These dimensions appeal to two different types of customers; those who cherish human-to-human interaction and others who prefer solitude within the speciality coffee shops.

Both groups of customers build their coffee shop experiences on environmental considerations and Figure 3 illustrates this.
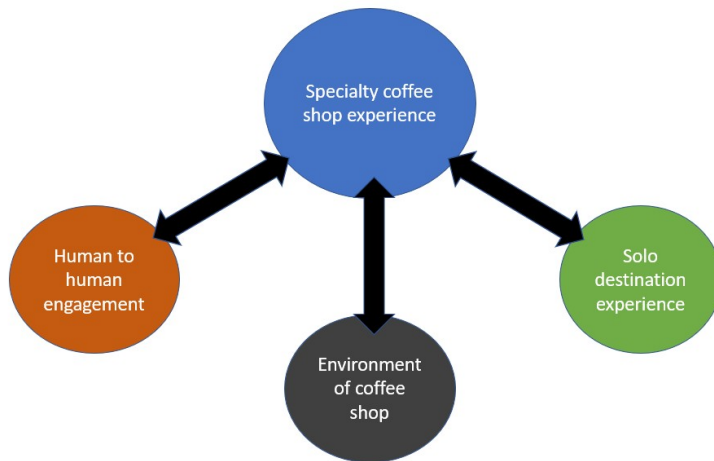
Figure 3. Specialty coffee shop customer experience dimensions.

2. What drives specialty coffee consumers' revisit intentions?

The codes (Table 3) from the data analysis were broadly classified into the five themes of price affordability, product quality, and variety, coffee culture learning, coffee equipment, artistic display of baristas, and marketing and social media promotions. In every competitive business environment, companies use price differentials to win against their competitors. Customers are very sophisticated and hence, compare prices and product quality when buying. This was also evident and conspicuous in the decision-making processes of the customers of specialty coffee shops. They were concurrently concerned about price and product quality. Thus, there was a relationship between price and quality in their decision-making as reflected in the remarks of customers (respondents 7 and 12) and baristas (respondent 13 and 18):

> "*For me I am enthused by price affordability and with good coffee of course*".
> Respondent 7 (Customer)

" I like hand drip because the fragrance is much powerful and better than the machine-made coffee. Also, when the coffee is made from the hand drip, the aroma is felt at the whole coffee shop". Respondent 12 (Customer).

"For us the biggest difference is we have our own roasting room and all the coffee beans were all roasted by ourselves with many options (prices) and good quality." Respondent 13 (Barista)

" Today, most customers will like drinking espresso but will encourage them to take handmake . I have to make sure that the smell, aroma and sweetness is unique". Respondent 18 (Barista).

Closely related to factors associated with specialty coffee (quality and pricing), there are auxiliary activities such as coffee culture learning, coffee equipment, and artistic displays by baristas. Of greater importance in this regard were the artistic displays and professional displays by baristas. Most customers were enthused by the artistic displays and aesthetic skills of the baristas. Hence, the barista is a critical point of attraction and drives the loyalty tendencies of coffee shop customers. This observation was succinctly emphasised by respondents 1 (customer) and 5 (customer):

"There is a coffee shop that is very interesting. Their barista will specially bring their dry coffee to your table and let you smell its aroma. When you are engaging in the experience, they will do some introductions of coffee. This service makes me feel that the barista is full of passion for coffee. Although I can't clearly understand their description when I drink the coffee, this service will let me want to try more new things and listen to their introduction." Respondent 1 (Customer).

"That barista broadens my horizon with his attentive knowledge of coffee. So from then on, I changed from drinking coffee latte and cappuccino to specialty coffee. This barista is now a poet as well, which I found very interesting. One time my friends and I went to this coffee shop at lunchtime. We noticed that this coffee shop didn't sell any light meals. We expected the barista to tell us to come back after we finish our lunch, but instead, he recommended us to try a restaurant across the street, and that we can leave our bags in the coffee shop. I found this extremely warm and thoughtful. This service was remarkable and unforgettable". Respondent 5 (Customer)

In addition to barista artistic and professional displays, which are an internal marketing strategy to encourage customers to revisit, marketing and social media promotions drive revisit intentions for speciality coffee shop customers. The management of these coffee shops post pictures of their flagship products and introduce promotional packages during festive occasions such as Chinese New Year. These promotions include discounts or special treats given to their cherished customers. This was well captured by respondents 7 (customer) and 17 (manager):

> "I *visit this coffee shop frequently. I find it convenient to follow their social media for discounts and new items. This coffee shop will also hold some cultural activities occasionally. Therefore, it's fun to catch up with their latest activity*". Respondent 7 (Customer).

> "*A lot of Instagram models will take a photo in front of our coffee shop or shoot with our neon light. Moreover, the stairs appear pink. So, people's first impression of our coffee shop is that our soufflé tastes good and our coffee shop is good to take a photo.*" Respondent 17 (Manager).

Specialty coffee customers' revisit intentions were an interplay of product characteristics (quality and pricing), auxiliary activities (e.g., learning about coffee culture), the artistic and professional displays by baristas, and marketing and social media promotions. Product characteristics (pricing and quality) reflect the uniqueness of specialty coffee in the coffee industry. Greater emphasis and premium are placed on the product and the variety of methods used in the production processes (Ferreira, 2015; Ferreira *et al.*, 2021; Silanoi *et al.*, 2022). Consumers of speciality coffee are excited by the intrinsic attributes of the beans as well as demanding value for money. Aside from these specific product characteristics, auxiliary activities, and the artistry and personalities of baristas could be termed as 'complementary or extrinsic attributes' that excite specialty consumption. Consumers of specialty coffee are interested in how the production is done and the unique blend that specialty coffee shops provide (Ferreira *et al.*, 2021). The role of the barista in the production process is paramount and indispensable. According to Lee and Ruck (2022), the role of a barista transcends just the making of coffee in shops. Therefore, a barista is an epitome of managing

operational chaos through aesthetic displays and the ability to transform coffeemaking services that add value to hospitality services (Lee and Ruck, 2022). Finally, marketing and social media promotions provide the medium for coffee shop owners to reach potential customers in the present turbulent business environment and also ensure co-creation among consumers (Silanoi *et al.*, 2022). Consumers of specialty coffee are encouraged by discounts and special promotions which are advertised via social media channels. These social media could be the coffee shop's website or social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. Hence, multiple factors influence loyal customers of these coffee shops (Figure 4) in their selection and inclination to revisit.
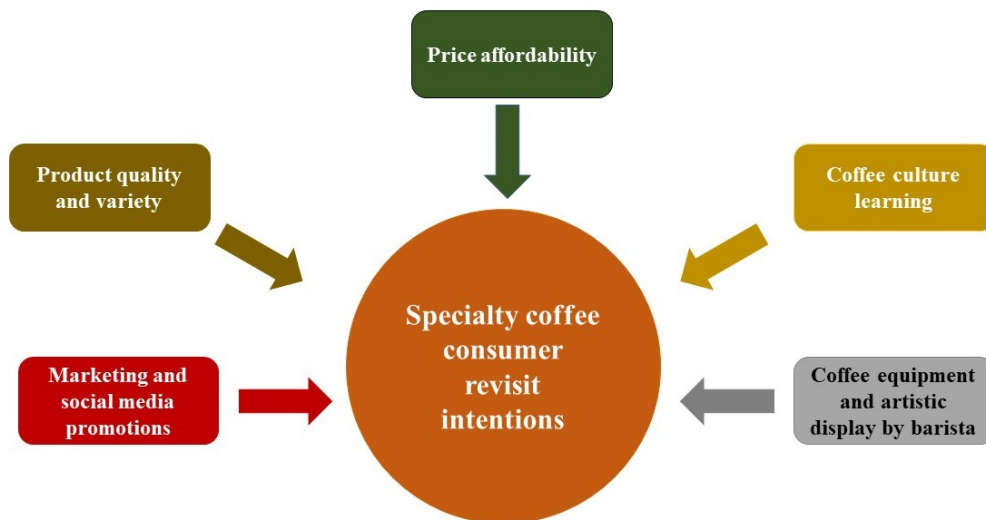
Figure 4. Specialty coffee consumer dimensions of revisit intentions.

Discussion, theoretical and practical implications

This research makes three theoretical contributions. First, the notion of specialty coffee and its experiencescape is explained in the context of Taiwan, a region of tea-dominated landscapes. The research finds that specialty coffee experiencescapes are constructed out of a combination of factors including individual preferences, social networks, and coffee shop atmospherics and staff. This finding is consistent with what other studies have identified,

indicating that specialty coffee experiencescapes are similar across countries and urban landscapes (Lee et al. 2018; Surya 2019).

Second, the research highlights the importance of baristas as agents of coffee connoisseurship, being able to introduce the beans and the art of coffee making to customers in active ways, which is supported by other scholars (Adhi & Yunus 2022). Baristas enable the co-creation of positive and memorable experiences, in contrast to customers being passive recipients of coffee products. Such an outcome leads to an apparent willingness of customers to participate in conspicuous consumption lifestyles involving specialty coffee and thereby demonstrate brand loyalty based on interactions that personalise specialty coffee shop experiences (Goktan & Uslu 2022; Suhud et al. 2017).

Third, the research suggests that olfactory encounters trigger a myriad of senses that are crucial to the specialty coffee experiencescape. The findings point to greater sophistication and engagement in-person and online for urban coffee shops. More importantly, the olfactory encounters differ for solo and group customers, adding to the body of literature about specialty coffee shops (Candra et al. 2022; Lannigan 2020).

Derived from the findings are two practical implications for specialty urban coffee shops. First, these venues should consider ways to incorporate business-to-customer interactions for those who are unable to access the location physically due to geographical or health reasons. Opportunities to run digital workshops that could be classified as coffee chats or classes could be beneficial in extending the boundaries of the experiencescape to online audiences, as advocated by (Ietto et al. 2021). Another avenue for the specialty urban coffee shops is to explore new product lines such as shampoo, soap, or apparel to diversify their business models and create brand extensions (Cotter & Valentinsson 2018). This will assist in reducing the potential risks of having business impacted by coffee supplies or COVID-19 business restrictions.

At a policy level, these urban coffee experiencescapes lend rich insights for potential destinations to create a coffee trail, akin to how other beverages such as craft beers have undertaken elsewhere (Williams et al. 2019). These themed concerted efforts will showcase unique coffee experiences and help build iconic food attraction clusters as a mechanism to harness competitive advantage for their destinations.

In addition, the advancement of technologies such as ubiquitous QR codes can be part of the product label and packaging for the coffee shops to further engage with customers. By

scanning the QR code, customers can learn more about the business, its baristas, as well as how to make a good cup of coffee at their convenience. This will extend the experiencescape beyond the walls of the coffee shop and add to co-creation opportunities where customers share their coffee insights on the coffee shop's social media platforms e.g. Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These developments suggest a future stream of research surrounding coffee value co-creation (Silanoi et al. 2022).

Limitations and future research directions

The research is not without its limitations. As a qualitative investigation, the findings may not be easily generalisable across specialty coffee shop experiencescapes elsewhere. In addition, there may be cultural factors at play that were not explored in the context of this research (Ardekani & Rath 2020).

These limitations notwithstanding, the research has documented avenues for future studies. Future researchers should examine other atmospheric factors that could enhance the experiencescape of specialty coffees, such as the presence of robots or virtual reality (Spence & Carvalho 2020; Sung & Jeon 2020). Likewise, scholars may wish to test the propositions in the conceptual framework to independent or specialty coffee shop chains as to which of the dimensions are most influential on the service experience and brand loyalty (Lee 2022). Finally, in the advent of the rise of non-fungible tokens (NFTs), future work should investigate whether customers are willing to pay for such digital artefacts, and how much they are prepared to spend (Malaker 2022).

In conclusion, the research has further illuminated coffee shop experiencescapes and antecedents of these experiences for urban landscapes such as Taiwan, which may enhance the growing awareness and importance of this sector in a tea-dominated environment. The findings may open up new conversations and debates on the roles and responsibilities that specialty coffee shops play as incubators for co-creating service experiences and their increasing role as tourism attractions.

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