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Examining the impact of experiential value on emotions, self-connective attachment, and brand loyalty in Korean family restaurants

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how experiential value as perceived by customers of Korean family restaurants influences consumption emotions, self-connective attachment to the restaurant brand, and, ultimately, brand loyalty. Having conducted a comprehensive literature review, the study proposes and estimates a model that specifies the interrelationships among four dimensions of experiential value (i.e., atmosphere, escapism, customer return on investment, and service excellence), and latent variables of positive and negative emotions, self-connective attachment, and brand loyalty. Analysis with structural equation modeling was conducted with data collected from customers of family restaurants in South Korea. The results show that dimensions of experiential value influence either positive or negative emotions. The emotion variables, together with self-connective attachment, also mediate the relationships between perceived value of dining experience and brand loyalty.

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Experiential value; emotion; self-connective attachment; brand loyalty; family restaurant

Introduction

The concept of experiential value refers to “a customer’s perceptions of value arising from the consumption experience” (Jin, Line, & Goh, 2013, p. 680). While the influences of experiential value have been considered in various retail contexts (Keng, Huang, Zhang, & Hsu, 2007; Mathwick, Malhotra, & Rigdon, 2001, 2002), interest in this phenomenon has recently been extended to the context of dining behavior (Jin et al., 2013; Wu & Liang, 2009). A restaurant is a place where people not only eat but interact socially, where they are entertained, celebrate a special day with family or close friends, or relax and refresh from their daily life. All these restaurant experiences make experiential value concept very relevant to study the total dining experience in a restaurant consumption setting (Jin et al., 2013; Oh, Lee, Kim, & Shin, 2015). It has been suggested that the experiential value is derived from

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perceptions of restaurant ambience, escape from routine, quality of service, and overall evaluation of whether the experience is worth time and money spent. These dimensions of value, often termed as atmosphere/aesthetics, escapism, service excellence, and customer return on investment, are essential to building and maintaining positive relationships (e.g., satisfaction and trust) with restaurant customers, which result in a high level of behavioral loyalty (Jin et al., 2013; Keng et al., 2007; Wu & Liang, 2009).

While Jin et al.'s (2013) study identified the structure of perceived experiential value, relationship quality, and behavioral loyalty, further studies are necessary to determine the extent to which emotion should be considered a mediator of the relationship between perception and behavior. This needs to be considered that emotion is based on the notion that experience states may be categorized into cognition, affection, and conation (or intention) (e.g., Lazarus, 1991). According to Lazarus's (1991) cognitive theory of emotions, perceptions of the environment influence emotional states and subsequent consumer behaviors. In this theoretical model, emotional states mediate the relationship between perception and consumer behavior. Based on the model's conceptual framework, several empirical studies have identified paths through which experiential value perception affects future behaviors (e.g., purchase intention and store patronage) through the emotional states of consumers (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007). In particular, this study draws on the Lazarus (1991) theory to investigate the relation between restaurant stimuli customers experience (e.g., atmosphere, food, and service) and the subsequent emotional and cognitive processes of developing brand loyalty (Kähr, Nyffenegger, Krohmer, & Hoyer, 2016). The customers perceiving the restaurant stimuli favorably are more likely to experience enhanced feelings of the stimuli (Hyun, 2010). The theory is especially related to understanding the influence of restaurant stimuli on a customer's emotions and cognitions and the resulting escalation process toward brand loyalty (Kähr et al., 2016).

From the brand management perspective, the fundamental goal of restaurant marketing is to develop brand loyalty among customers to discourage them from switching to other restaurant brands even if the competitors provide better offers (e.g., special discount or promotion) (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011). Scholars in the branding management field (Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004) have employed the concept of emotional brand attachment in order to explain such dedicated branding behavior among customers. They have compiled evidence that an effective branding strategy can promote customers' emotional attachment to particular brands. Emotional brand attachment helps induce customers' dedicational behaviors toward the brands and is therefore an important driver of the success of a restaurant company (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005).

Today's trend of globalization has fostered the introduction of many Western restaurant franchises into the Korean market. The trend has led to an increase in the frequency of eating out and a sharp change in the dietary patterns of Korean

consumers (Lee, Park, Park, Lee, & Kwon, 2005). Since the early 1990s, in accordance with this trend, family restaurants of Western brands have sought several discriminative branding strategies for winning the competitive foodservice market arena and for obtaining high levels of brand loyalty to compete against traditional Korean restaurants (Oh et al., 2015). Utilizing this situational context as the setting for the study, the objectives of this study are: 1) to examine the influences of experiential values on emotions and self-connective attachment; 2) to identify the influences of emotions and self-connective attachment on brand loyalty; and 3) to test the mediating role of emotions and self-connective attachment on the perception of experiential values and brand loyalty in the Korean family restaurant context.

Literature review and hypothesis development

Theoretical background

Lazarus (1991) has developed a cognitive theory of emotions that is particularly applicable to the consumer–brand relationship. Lazarus (1991) has insisted that emotions happen as a consequence of the customers' cognitive appraisals of their environment. Based on this theory, Ailawadi and Keller (2004) have suggested that the cognitive and emotional aspects of brand relationships are important because they occur simultaneously when consumers establish a relationship with a particular brand. Therefore, several studies have investigated the interaction between cognition and emotion in a branding field. For example, Agarwal and Malhotra (2005) incorporate the two constructs and examine their influence on consumers' brand preference and choice. Their research model, which integrates cognition and emotion based on the notion of Lazarus (1991), demonstrates a joint function of holistic emotions, brand attributes, and their interaction. Moreover, Grimm (2005) examines the interaction influence within the components of Lazarus's (1991) model (cognitive, emotion, and conative behavioral intention) to determine the ability of each construct to explain brand preference. The existing literature on Lazarus's (1991) theoretical background has suggested that emotional and cognitive attributes are distinctly significant for consumers' evaluations of a particular brand (Malhotra, 2005). Based on the existing literature, this study extends Lazarus's (1991) cognitive theory of emotions by suggesting that the relationship among experiential value perceptions, emotions, and brand loyalty is mediated by a customer's self-connective attachment. Restaurant experiences can play an important marketing role in inducing brand loyalty, positive emotional states, and brand attachment, resulting in increased brand loyalty. In fact, Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) and Jin et al. (2013) have suggested that more research should be performed that considers the new consequences of experiential

value with a basis in brand loyalty. Recognition of the importance of experiential value enables scholars to develop more-sophisticated theoretical models for the restaurant industry compared with other theoretical models.

Experiential value

The existing literature has suggested the experiential perspective as a main approach to examining consumption in the service setting (Keng et al., 2007). The experiential perspective indicates that service practitioners need to provide excitement, fun, and entertainment for their customers as well as encourage them to participate in the service experience process (Wu & Liang, 2009). Similarly, Shobeiri, Laroche, and Mazaheri (2013) state that one of the main benefits a brand provides is the satisfaction of a consumer's experiential needs, including the desire for cognitive stimulation, variety, and sensory pleasure. Mathwick et al. (2001) and Mathwick et al. (2002) examine how the benefits of consumer experience generate new experience value following the values of goods, commodities, and services. In this context, one of a restaurant's tasks is to continuously stage memorable and unique experiences (Jin et al., 2013).

Holbrook (1994) uses a theoretical model to incorporate three spheres (i.e., self- vs. other-oriented value, active vs. reactive value, and extrinsic vs. intrinsic value) into the traditional experiential value concept. In a shopping setting, the extrinsic perspective of value is derived from achieving utilitarian consumption objectives, while the intrinsic perspective of value is acquired from a playful and enjoyable shopping experience (Holbrook, 1994). Meanwhile, active value is elicited from a customer's efficient control of the components of shopping to fulfill his or her affective or functional needs. In contrast, reactive value is defined as a situation where customers positively respond to service providers or acknowledge the physical shopping atmosphere (Mathwick et al., 2002). Because an individual/personal shopping experience is typically viewed as a self-oriented activity, this current study emphasizes intrinsic/extrinsic and reactive/active values. Combining the two dimensions leads to four aspects of experiential values, namely, atmosphere, escapism, consumer return on investment, and service excellence, as labeled by Mathwick et al. (2001) and Jin et al. (2013). Such an approach is important to any complex treatment of the perceived value concept because the specific dimensions of experiential value are perceived simultaneously rather than separately (Yuan & Wu, 2008).

First, atmosphere value is defined as "the consonance/unity of physical objects and their cadence in terms of an overall performance" (Jin et al., 2013, p. 681). Atmosphere value is further dimensionalized with a focus on both entertainment and visual appeal (Mathwick et al., 2002). Visual appeal is defined as salient visual components of the environment, while entertainment refers to those components of the service environment that excite customers (Yuan & Wu, 2008). Second, escapism, which arises from an absorbing activity, creates a feeling of temporary

getaway from everyday routines (Mathwick et al., 2001). Third, customer return on investment (ROI), based on the utilitarian facets of the consumption procedure, captures an active investment in behavioral, temporal, economic, and psychological components traded in return for the experience (Sullivan & Heitmeyer, 2008). Fourth, service excellence is defined as the extent to which services/products meet customers' expectations (Keng et al., 2007). Consumers favor certain products, goods, experiences, and even brands, owing to their ability to perform particular expected functions or accomplish certain goals (Holbrook, 1994). That is, excellence value ensures that value-added services will exceed mundane expectations.

If restaurant layout is considered one element of services provided, customers view a well-designed restaurant package as demonstrating multiple components of their perceptions of atmosphere value. Therefore, restaurant layout may significantly influence their emotions and attachment to the restaurant's brand. From an empirical perspective, if the atmosphere is unpleasant, positive emotion will be lower and negative emotion will be higher among restaurant customers (Lee, Khan, & Ko, 2008). Furthermore, a store manager can create a sophisticated atmosphere through carefully chosen music or interior design color compounds that provoke cognitive curiosity of customers, resulting in an emotional attachment (Cox, Cox, & Anderson, 2003). Thus, this study proposes the following:

H1₁: Atmosphere is positively associated with positive emotion.

H1₂: Atmosphere is negatively associated with negative emotion.

H1₃: Atmosphere is positively associated with self-connective attachment.

Escapism results from an internal and self-oriented experience. Customers' experiences, emotions, and feelings are derived from how they value the experiential and hedonic perspectives of a product (Wu & Liang, 2009). Consequently, most restaurants heavily emphasize hedonic value, since customers eat out to feel a sense of escapism (Wu & Liang, 2009). The value a customer places on escapism directly influences the symbolic meaning of a product/service as well as emotional arousal (Ha & Jang, 2010). In addition, Keng et al. (2007) found that pleasure provoked by a restaurant's atmosphere appears to have a stronger influence on customers' attachment to the restaurant than expected. Thus, this study establishes the following:

H2₁: Escapism is positively associated with positive emotion.

H2₂: Escapism is negatively associated with negative emotion.

H2₃: Escapism is positively associated with self-connective attachment.

Customers tend to expect the value of their service experience to be greater than their investment of, for example, time, money, and effort. Jones, Reynolds, and Arnold (2006) found that the perception of utilitarian value among customers can elicit a substantial emotional response. This indicates that perceiving the price as reasonable compared to the service experience positively influences emotional responses and attachment to the service provider (Jin et al., 2013). Also, economic costs related to consuming and buying a brand lead to strong emotional brand connection based on a utilitarian benefit of the brand consumption regarding extrinsic and intrinsic brand attributes (Belaid & Temessek Behi, 2011). Accordingly, this study considers customer ROI a determinant of a customer's positive and negative emotional response as well as attachment to a restaurant's brand:

H3₁: Customer ROI is positively associated with positive emotion.

H3₂: Customer ROI is negatively associated with negative emotion.

H3₃: Customer ROI is positively associated with self-connective attachment.

Providing high-quality services through employees tends not only to enhance organizational reputation and competitiveness but also to increase customers' positive emotions (Keng et al., 2007). Similarly, Jang and Namkung (2009) investigated the impacts of food and service quality on positive emotion and negative emotion, finding service quality to be a more important antecedent to emotional responses than food quality in full-service restaurants. Consumers' emotional outcomes resulting from service excellence range from feeling satisfaction, and thus being delighted or happy, to feeling dissatisfied, and thus becoming angry or melancholy (Hume and Sullivan Mort, 2012). Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011) also indicated that service quality provides assurance, confidence, and trust toward a brand to customers and therefore, plays a role as the antecedent of emotional brand attachment. Thus, this study proposes that:

H4₁: Service excellence is positively associated with positive emotion.

H4₂: Service excellence is negatively associated with negative emotion.

H4₃: Service excellence is positively associated with self-connective attachment.

Self-connective attachment

Bowlby (1979) views attachment as a relationship-based concept reflecting the emotional tie that connects a person with a certain target object. An individual with a stronger attachment to a specific object exhibits emotion-laden mental preparation that can influence the target object's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral element allocation (Holmes, 2000). The attached object leads to psychological outcomes, proximity of separation distress and seeking behavior. Although this phenomenon has been comprehensively studied in psychology, researchers in the brand and marketing literature have paid limited attention to this attachment (Bowlby, 1979; Fedorikhin, Park, & Thomson, 2008). Even though prior psychological studies have emphasized the attachment of an individual to others (e.g., a romantic partner, mother, infant), the marketing literature indicates that customers become attached to a particular brand (Fedorikhin et al., 2008).

The principle of self-connective attachment focuses on the emotion-laden tie between a brand and a person (Park, MacInnis, & Priester, 2006). On that basis, Park et al. (2006) define self-connective attachment as the "strength of the cognitive and emotional bond connecting the brand with the self" (p. 9). Thus, a certain brand can arouse a strong cognitive response once the consumer connects the brand to personalized components of the self. Connecting the brand to the self can be emotional since the associated memories and experiences have strong self-implications and are inherently self-relevant (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Due to the brand's relevance to the self, the consumer's emotional status reflects a self-connective attachment that induces desire for the brand and hope for its future acquisition (Park et al., 2006). This psychological attachment is even more relevant considering that consumers buy certain brands to communicate to others who they are.

Emotion

Emotion is defined as an individual's negative (e.g., annoyed, nervous) and positive (e.g., pleased, relaxed) feelings (Lee, Back, & Kim, 2009). Individuals who have a positive emotional status are more likely to simplify their decision making and spend less time-making decisions than individuals who have a negative emotional status (Desmet & Schifferstein, 2008). Numerous researchers have considered emotion as a significant driver of service quality evaluation, development of brand loyalty, repeated purchasing behaviors, and the selection of service providers (Hollebeek, 2011). To further grasp the process of customer service evaluation, several scholars have concentrated on how the experience of consumption affects customers' emotions. Dubé and Menon (2000), for example, indicate that "consumption

emotions are the affective response to one's perceptions of the series of attributes that compose a product or service performance" (p. 288).

Scholars have traditionally employed a structural approach when examining the underlying characteristics of consumption emotion (Prayag, Hosany, & Odeh, 2013). The structural dimension contiguity, which is based on the measure's bipolar structure, hypothesizes that emotional status is associated with other emotional states in a structured way rather than based on others' independency (Lee et al., 2009). Consumption emotions, more specifically, have been gauged with a chain of semantic measures, namely, a bipolar succession of arousal (unaroused–aroused), pleasure (annoyed–pleased), and dominance (submissive–dominant). Machleit and Eroglu (2000) suggest that negative and positive emotions affect others' behaviors separately and that they have distinct variance. In addition, Jang and Namkung (2009) posit that consumers are influenced by each unipolar dimension such that they lead to either a negative or a positive emotion toward consumption.

Lee et al. (2009) propose that people continuously try to avoid negative mood states and strive for positive moods. Customers do not want to be in a service situation where they might experience a negative emotion, while they actively pursue a service situation in which they expect to experience a positive emotion. Therefore, if customers experience a positive emotion toward a family restaurant, they are more likely to become emotionally attached to the family restaurant and, as such, will become loyal to the brand (Thomson et al., 2005). Thus, this research proposes the following hypotheses:

H5₁: Positive emotion is positively associated with self-connective attachment.

H5₂: Positive emotion is positively associated with brand loyalty.

H6₁: Negative emotion is negatively associated with self-connective attachment.

H6₂: Negative emotion is negatively associated with brand loyalty.

Brand loyalty

Customer loyalty has a significant impact on hospitality organizations' performance. Since a customer is considered one of the major stakeholders in the hospitality context, their brand loyalty is directly associated with the success of a hospitality organization's performance. Brand loyalty is defined as "a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing,

despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior” (Oliver, 1999, p. 34). Loyal customers make an effort to advocate a certain brand by showing higher return intentions and spreading positive word-of-mouth (WOM). Thus, loyal customers have often been viewed as the most valuable consumer group among companies (Ganesh, Arnold, & Reynolds, 2000).

Consumers form a strong self-connective attachment only when a brand image is important in defining their self-concept. Thus, as customers connect with a certain brand, they tend to maintain a closeness with the brand, since this self-connective attachment provides feelings of security, comfort, and happiness (Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004; Thomson et al., 2005). Therefore, it is suggested that a customer with attachment toward a family restaurant brand is willing to be loyal to that brand:

H7: Self-connective attachment is positively associated with brand loyalty.

Method

Sample and data collection

This study sampled customers from 20 restaurants of four family restaurant brands—Outback Steak House, VIPS, Ashley, and T.G.I. Fridays—located in the downtown area of Seoul, South Korea. These restaurants position themselves as international, “westernized” establishments by using Western themes in interior decoration and offering westernized dishes to the patrons. The leading author of the article contacted the Korean Society for Franchise Management, and was connected with representatives at the headquarters of each family restaurant company listed in their registry. The representatives of the four mentioned brands agreed to distribute 100 questionnaires (400 in total) in their chain restaurants in Seoul on the condition that the results of the study would be available to them. Each brand distributed questionnaires in five restaurants, with 50% of questionnaires distributed on weekdays and 50% on weekends. Questionnaires were handed to customers during lunchtime while they were waiting for their check; thus, it was ensured that the participants had an appropriate dining experience. A dessert, a beverage, or a discount coupon was offered as an incentive to complete the questionnaire. The data collection phase took place during four weeks in August–September 2014.

A total of 360 survey questionnaires were distributed (T.G.I. Friday did not fulfil their quota) and 288 responses were received (96 from Outback Steak House, 94 from VIPS, 75 from Ashley, and 23 from T.G.I. Fridays; a usable response rate of 80.0%), 22 were deleted for excessive missing data. Therefore, this study had a final sample size of 266 for data analysis. As shown in [Table 1](#), over half of the participants were male (55.3%) and 20–29 years of age (61.3%). Approximately two-thirds (68.4%) of the

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

| Variables (<i>N</i> = 266) | Characteristics | Frequency (%) |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Gender | Male | 147 (55.3%) |
| | Female | 119 (44.7%) |
| Age | 20s | 163 (61.3%) |
| | 30s | 55 (20.7%) |
| | 40s | 29 (10.9%) |
| | 50 above | 19 (7.1%) |
| | | |
| Education | High school | 27 (10.2%) |
| | 2 or 4-year college | 182 (68.4%) |
| | Graduate school | 57 (21.4%) |
| Monthly household income | Less than \$1,000 | 1 (0.4%) |
| | \$1,000–\$2,000 | 28 (10.5%) |
| | \$2,001–\$3,000 | 70 (26.3%) |
| | \$3,001–\$4,000 | 63 (23.7%) |
| | \$4,001–\$5,000 | 61 (22.9%) |
| | \$5,001 or above | 43 (26.2%) |
| Vocation | Student | 130 (48.9%) |
| | Housewife | 11 (4.1%) |
| | Profession | 16 (6.0%) |
| | Owner | 25 (9.4%) |
| | Office clerk | 71 (26.7%) |
| | Etc. | 13 (4.9%) |

respondents graduated from or were attending a two- or four-year college. The monthly household income range of the respondents was distributed across two categories: \$2,001–\$3,000 (26.3%), followed by \$5,001 or above (26.2%). Approximately half of the participants were students (48.9%), followed by office clerks (26.7%).

Measures

A questionnaire was developed through a comprehensive review of the literature, with reference to four critical dimensions of the experiential value that have been identified in previous studies: atmosphere (e.g., *the family restaurant doesn't just sell menus—it entertains me*), escapism (e.g., *dining in this family restaurant released me from the reality and helps me truly enjoy myself*), customer ROI (e.g., *eating-out at the family restaurant was convenient*), and service excellence (e.g., *I am very satisfied with the service attitude of the family restaurant staff*). Each dimension was represented by several items (25 in total), largely based on the works by Mathwick et al. (2001) and Jin et al. (2013) (Table 2). These items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree” response options. Emotions were divided into two distinct dimensions: positive and negative (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Eight items measuring positive emotions (happy, energetic, excited, and relaxed) and negative emotions (bored, sleepy, annoyed, and angry) were selected using Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (PAD)

Table 2. Measurement Model from CFA

| Constructs and variables ^a | Standardized Loading (t-value) | CCR ^a | AVE ^b |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Atmosphere ($\alpha = .709$) | | .716 | .390 |
| The furnishing of the family restaurant is aesthetically appealing.* | – | | |
| The atmosphere of the family restaurant is wonderful.* | – | | |
| The food presented is delicate. | .533(Fixed) | | |
| Eating-out at the family restaurant was fun and pleasant. | .603(6.850) | | |
| The family restaurant doesn't just sell menus—it entertains me. | .624(6.985) | | |
| I ate out at this family restaurant since I could have good feelings. | .727(7.513) | | |
| Escapism ($\alpha = .807$) | | .811 | .418 |
| Dining in this family restaurant is so enjoyable that makes me feel comfortable and relaxed.* | – | | |
| Dining in this family restaurant makes me feel like being in another world.* | – | | |
| Dining in this family restaurant released me from the reality and helps me truly enjoy myself. | .656(Fixed) | | |
| I can relax my mood here. | .599(8.542) | | |
| The dining experience at the family restaurant was truly a joy. | .698(9.716) | | |
| I enjoyed the experience for its own sake, not just because I had something to eat. | .691(9.644) | | |
| I enjoyed being immersed in exciting new menus. | .602(8.575) | | |
| Compared to other things, the experience was truly enjoyable. | .626(8.876) | | |
| Customer ROI ($\alpha = .714$) | | .726 | .403 |
| Dining in this family restaurant improves my quality of life. | .597(Fixed) | | |
| Eating-out at the family restaurant was convenient. | .592(7.493) | | |
| Service at the family restaurant was quick.* | – | | |
| I found just the menu items I was looking for.* | – | | |
| I feel that consumption was cost-effective.* | .564(7.228) | | |
| I feel that pricing was reasonable here. | .765(8.791) | | |
| I feel that it was worth of spending money here. | | | |
| Service excellence ($\alpha = .803$) | | .813 | .526 |
| I experienced the high quality service. | .616(Fixed) | | |
| The family restaurant staff was very professional in explaining facilities and operation. | .813(9.704) | | |
| I am very satisfied with the service attitude of the family restaurant staff. | .813(9.702) | | |
| I am very satisfied with the family restaurant staff's appearance. | .636(8.300) | | |
| Positive emotion ($\alpha = .805$) | | .816 | .528 |
| Happy | .803(Fixed) | | |

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

| Constructs and variables ^a | Standardized Loading (t-value) | CCR ^a | AVE ^b |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Energetic | .761(12.806) | | |
| Excited | .731(12.224) | | |
| Relaxed | .595(9.641) | .863 | .614 |
| Negative emotion ($\alpha = .861$) | | | |
| Bored | .727(Fixed) | | |
| Sleepy | .924(13.943) | | |
| Annoyed | .765(12.073) | | |
| Angry | .700(11.716) | .850 | .656 |
| Self-connective attachment ($\alpha = .845$) | | | |
| I like this family restaurant brand very much because it shows who I am. | .730(Fixed) | | |
| I am intrigued by this family restaurant brand because it shows who I want to be. | .895(13.097) | | |
| I like this brand because it makes me feel more special than other people. | .796(12.279) | | |
| This family restaurant brand goes so well with my lifestyle that I would feel empty without it.* | – | | |
| This family restaurant brand signals what is important to me in life.* | – | | |
| Brand loyalty ($\alpha = .845$) | | .795 | .497 |
| I intend to keep purchasing this family restaurant brand.* | – | | |
| I would be willing to pay a higher price for this family restaurant brand over other brands. | .641(Fixed) | | |
| I will choose this family restaurant brand next time when I buy this product category. | .574(7.928) | | |
| I will speak positively about this family restaurant brand to others. | .769(9.941) | | |
| It is very likely that I will recommend this family restaurant brand to people who ask for suggestion. | .811(10.255) | | |

^aComposite construct reliability.

^bAverage variance extracted.

*Items were deleted during the confirmatory factor analysis.

Table 3. Construct Intercorrelations (Squared Correlation), Mean, and Standard Deviation

| | Mean | SD | AP | EC | CR | SE | PE | NE | SA | BL |
|----|-------|------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|----|
| AP | 3.445 | .501 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| EC | 3.213 | .612 | .542** (.294) | 1 | | | | | | |
| CR | 3.106 | .576 | .433** (.187) | .620** (.384) | 1 | | | | | |
| SE | 3.613 | .603 | .383** (.147) | .395** (.156) | .399** (.159) | 1 | | | | |
| PE | 3.372 | .568 | .558** (.311) | .634** (.402) | .593** (.352) | .417** (.174) | 1 | | | |
| NE | 1.868 | .634 | -.288** (.083) | -.136** (.018) | -.165** (.027) | -.236** (.056) | -.235** (.055) | 1 | | |
| SA | 2.193 | .663 | .204** (.042) | .460** (.212) | .427** (.182) | .170** (.029) | .338** (.114) | -.190** (.036) | 1 | |
| BL | 3.208 | .601 | .401** (.161) | .498** (.248) | .494** (.244) | .312** (.097) | .576** (.332) | -.240** (.058) | .495** (.245) | 1 |

Note: Squared correlations are given in brackets.

AP: Atmosphere, EC: Escapism, CR: Customer ROI, SE: Service Excellence, PE: Positive Emotion, NE: Negative Emotion, SA: Self-connective Attachment, BL: Brand Loyalty.

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

framework. Self-connective attachment was evaluated by five items to measure memories related to a brand that evoked a customer’s attachment to the brand (Kim, Lee, & Lee, 2005): for example, *I like this family restaurant brand very much because it shows who I am*. Brand loyalty was assessed by five items taken from the study of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001): for example, *I will speak positively about this family restaurant brand to others*. The questionnaire was pre-tested as an onsite survey at five family restaurants in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the measurements; minor changes to survey layout and formulation of the items were made after pre-testing.

Empirical results

Measurement model

The measures employed in the questionnaire were subjected to validity and reliability analyses. This study used Cronbach’s alpha coefficients to evaluate reliabilities, which ranged from .709 to .861, exceeding the minimum alpha of .70 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). Although exploratory factor analysis (EFA) may serve as a precursor of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), EFA extracts factors from data without specification of the pattern between latent factor variables and observed indicator variables. CFA, in contrast, specifies the pattern, meaning, association, and number of free parameters before the data are analyzed (Bollen, 2002). Thus, all measurements were subjected to CFA to test validity (Anderson & Gerbing 1992). Ten items with factor loadings

lower than .50 were removed for further analyses to ensure acceptable levels of convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 1998).

As shown in Table 2, the CFA results indicate a good fit: $\chi^2 = 834.188$ (d. f. = 467, $p < .001$), CFI = .903, NFI = .906, IFI = .904, RMSEA = .054. After the purification procedure, all standardized factor loadings exceeded the minimum acceptable level of .50 ($p < .01$), which signified evidence of convergent validity. The construct reliability was greater than .60 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The proportions of variance extracted (AVE) for atmosphere (.390), escapism (.418), customer ROI (.403), and brand loyalty (.497) were less than the recommended value of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), which means that the measured construct indicators accounted for less than 50 percent of variance in the respective latent construct. Considering that AVE is only one indicator of validity and that the items used pertained to the constructs' conceptual definitions as validated by other studies, it was decided to proceed with the analysis and discuss the possible reasons for low AVE indices in the limitation section. To ensure that despite a lower-than-desirable variance extracted, the constructs nevertheless were sufficiently different from each other, the discriminant validity of each construct was established by comparing the AVE of each construct to the square of the coefficients, indicating its correlation with other latent variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). For all latent constructs, respective AVE values were larger than the squared correlations (Φ^2), indicating the presence of discriminant validity: atmosphere $.042 \leq \Phi^2 \leq .311$; escapism $.018 \leq \Phi^2 \leq .402$; customer ROI $.027 \leq \Phi^2 \leq .384$; and brand loyalty $.058 \leq \Phi^2 \leq .332$.

Common method variance (CMV) refers to the amount of spurious (see Table 3) covariance that is shared among constructs because of the common method employed in collecting data (Bagozzi & Yi, 1990). CMV results from response formats and scale types as well as response biases (e.g., social desirability and halo effects) (Bagozzi & Yi, 1990). To test for CMV, this study employed Harman's one-factor test (Bauer, Falk, & Hammerschmidt, 2006). To do so, this study compared the proposed model's fit against that of a single factor model. If a high level of CMV is present, entering all of the constructs together will lead to a single factor accounting for most of the variance (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). The single factor model had $\chi^2 = 2,122.797$ and d.f. = 495 (compared with the $\chi^2 = 834.188$ and d.f. = 467 of the eight-dimensional measurement model). The unidimensional model's fit was considerably worse, suggesting that CMV may not be a serious threat to this study.

Structural model and test of hypotheses

AMOS 20.0 W was used to conduct structural equation modeling (SEM). The overall model fit indices indicate that the model fits the data well: $\chi^2 = 835.217$, d.f. = 472, $p < .001$, CFI = .904, NFI = .906, IFI = .905,

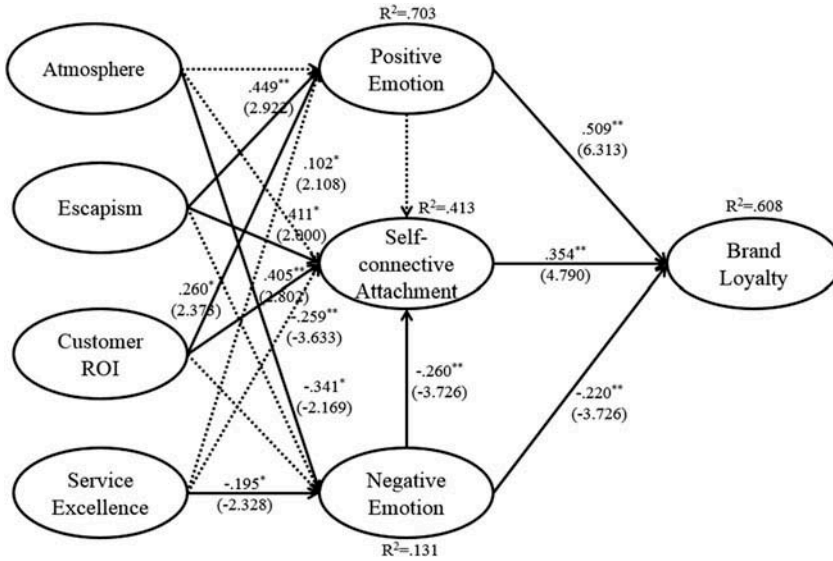


Figure 1. Estimates of Structural Model. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. Standardized coefficient (t-value), solid line: significant path, dotted line: insignificant path.

Table 4. Standardized Parameter Estimates

| Path | Standardized estimates | Standardized error | t-value |
|---|------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| H1 ₁ Atmosphere → Positive emotion | .193 | .051 | 1.736 |
| H1 ₂ Atmosphere → Negative emotion | -.341 | .032 | -2.169* |
| H1 ₃ Atmosphere → Self-connective attachment | -.200 | .039 | -1.371 |
| H2 ₁ Escapism → Positive emotion | .449 | .031 | 2.922** |
| H2 ₂ Escapism → Negative emotion | .256 | .033 | 1.233 |
| H2 ₃ Escapism → Self-connective attachment | .411 | .021 | 2.000* |
| H3 ₁ Customer ROI → Positive emotion | .260 | .035 | 2.373* |
| H3 ₂ Customer ROI → Negative emotion | -.129 | .051 | -0.887 |
| H3 ₃ Customer ROI → Self-connective attachment | .405 | .066 | 2.802** |
| H4 ₁ Service excellence → Positive emotion | .031 | .064 | 0.521 |
| H4 ₂ Service excellence → Negative emotion | -.195 | .069 | -2.328* |
| H4 ₃ Service excellence → Self-connective attachment | .022 | .095 | 0.292 |
| H5 ₁ Positive emotion → Self-connective attachment | -.019 | .074 | -0.132 |
| H5 ₂ Positive emotion → Brand loyalty | .509 | .085 | 6.313** |
| H6 ₁ Negative emotion → Self-connective attachment | -.260 | .077 | -3.726** |
| H6 ₂ Negative emotion → Brand loyalty | -.220 | .060 | -3.574** |
| H7 ₁ Self-connective attachment → Brand loyalty | .354 | .065 | 4.790** |
| Endogenous variables | SMC (R ²) | | |
| Positive emotion | .703 | | |
| Negative emotion | .131 | | |
| Self-connective attachment | .413 | | |
| Brand loyalty | .608 | | |

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

RMSEA = .054. Maximum likelihood estimates for the parameters of the research model are demonstrated in [Figure 1](#) and [Table 4](#).

H1₁ to H1₃ predicted that atmosphere would affect positive emotion, negative emotion, and self-connective attachment. The results showed that atmosphere significantly influenced negative emotion (coefficient = $-.341$, t -value = -2.169 , $p < .05$). However, atmosphere did not significantly affect positive emotion and self-connective attachment. Therefore, H1₂ was supported. H2₁ to H2₃ posited that escapism would affect positive emotion, negative emotion, and self-connective attachment. The results showed that escapism significantly affected positive emotion (coefficient = $.449$, t -value = 2.922 , $p < .01$) and self-connective attachment (coefficient = $.411$, t -value = 2.000 , $p < .05$), while escapism did not significantly influence negative emotion. Thus, H2₁ and H2₃ were supported. H3₁ to H3₃ postulated that customer ROI would affect positive emotion, negative emotion, and self-connective attachment. The results showed that customer ROI significantly influenced positive emotion (coefficient = $.260$, t -value = 2.373 , $p < .05$) and self-connective attachment (coefficient = $.405$, t -value = 2.802 , $p < .01$), whereas customer ROI did not significantly influence negative emotion. Therefore, H3₁ and H3₃ were supported. H4₁ to H4₃ predicted that service excellence would affect positive emotion, negative emotion, and self-connective attachment. The results showed that service excellence significantly influenced negative emotion (coefficient = $-.195$, t -value = -2.328 , $p < .05$), while service excellence did not affect positive emotion and self-connective attachment. Therefore, H4₂ was supported.

H5₁ and H5₂ predicted that positive emotion would influence self-connective attachment and brand loyalty. The results showed that positive emotion significantly influenced brand loyalty (coefficient = $.509$, t -value = 6.313 , $p < .01$), while positive emotion did not have a significant effect on self-connective attachment. Therefore, H5₂ was supported. H6₁ and H6₂ posited that negative emotion would affect self-connective attachment and brand loyalty. The results showed that negative emotion significantly affected self-connective attachment (coefficient = $-.260$, t -value = -3.726 , $p < .01$) and brand loyalty (coefficient = $-.220$, t -value = -3.574 , $p < .01$). Therefore, H6₁ and H6₂ were supported. Lastly, H7 postulated that self-connective attachment would influence brand loyalty. The results showed that self-connective attachment significantly influenced brand loyalty (coefficient = $.354$, t -value = 4.790 , $p < .01$). Therefore, H7 was supported.

The mediating effect of emotions and self-connective attachment on the relationship between experiential value and brand loyalty was tested with the Aroian version of the Sobel test and the BC bootstrapping method (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, and Sheets (2002)

Table 5. Results of Mediating Role Estimation of Positive Emotion, Negative Emotion, and Self-connective Attachment between Experiential Value and Brand Loyalty

| Paths of mediating role | Indirect effects | 95% bootstrap CIs | | Z-values | Mediating roles |
|--|------------------|-------------------|--------|----------|------------------|
| | | LL CIs | UL CIs | | |
| Atmosphere → Negative emotion → Self-connective attachment | -.092 | -.267 | .009 | -3.620** | Full mediator |
| Atmosphere → Negative emotion → Brand loyalty | .070 | -.142 | .264 | 3.487** | Full mediator |
| Escapism → Positive emotion → Brand loyalty | .338* | .012 | .609 | 5.638** | Full mediator |
| Escapism → Self-connective attachment → Brand loyalty | .338* | .012 | .609 | 4.677** | Full mediator |
| Customer ROI → Positive emotion → Brand loyalty | .291* | .106 | .532 | 4.712** | Full mediator |
| Customer ROI → Self-connective attachment → Brand loyalty | .291* | .106 | .532 | 3.951** | Full mediator |
| Service excellence → Negative emotion → Self-connective attachment | .051* | -.131 | -.002 | 2.399* | Full mediator |
| Service excellence → Negative emotion → Brand loyalty | .048 | -.041 | .151 | 2.356* | Full mediator |
| Negative emotion → Self-connective attachment → Brand loyalty | .092** | .031 | .167 | -2.908** | Partial mediator |

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Note: The direct effect of experiential value on brand loyalty is not presented in Table 4, but when the direct path from experiential value to brand loyalty is conducted, they were not significant.

suggest that this combined approach to mediation analysis may be more appropriate than traditional mediation analysis approaches. The Aroian version of the Sobel test indicates the level of significance of the indirect influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable via a mediator (see Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Table 5 indicates that positive emotion, negative emotion, and self-connective attachment significantly mediates the effects of four dimensions of experiential value on brand loyalty (e.g., escapism → positive emotion → brand loyalty .338; 95% bootstrap CI = .012L CI, .609UL CI; $Z = 5.638$, $p < .01$). The direct effects of the four dimensions of experiential value on brand loyalty are not significant. Thus, positive emotion, negative emotion, and self-connective attachment play full mediating roles in the relationship between experiential value and brand loyalty. Meanwhile, self-connective attachment significantly mediates the effect of negative emotion on brand loyalty (negative emotion → self-connective attachment → brand loyalty; .092; 95% bootstrap CI = .031L CI, .167UL CI; $Z = -2.908$, $p < .01$). The direct effect of negative emotion on brand loyalty is also significant. This indicates that self-connective attachment plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between negative emotion and brand loyalty.

Discussion and implications

The empirical findings of this study in the family restaurant context supported the influences of experiential value dimensions on brand attachment as well as positive and negative emotions by expanding Lazarus's (1991) cognitive theory of emotions. From a theory perspective, this research refines an experiential value model by considering the development of a strong consumer-brand relationship (Gentile et al., 2007). Based on the theoretical perspective, the aim of this research was to examine the effects of diverse dimensions of experiential value on the family restaurant business in Korea. This study examined the critical roles played by positive and negative emotions as well as brand attachment in understanding Korean family restaurant customers' brand loyalty. This research contributes to the existing literature and proposes practical implications for family restaurant brand management.

The study found that positive emotions are affected by the escapism and customer ROI dimensions of the experiential value (similar to findings by Liu & Jang, 2009), but not by atmosphere or service excellence dimensions. While this result might seem counter-intuitive, Korean customers tend to perceive family restaurants of Western brands as more upscale restaurants compared to traditional Korean restaurants (Oh et al., 2015). It is quite possible that they are likely to take for granted that a "Westernized" family restaurant has an attractive dining environment and provides high-quality service. The lack of these factors, that is, pleasant ambiance and excellent service, however, leads to stronger negative emotions; this finding runs in

concurrence with Lin and Mattila (2010) and provides further evidence that satisfaction attributes in the context of dining experience can be classified into different groups in terms of their potential to satisfy customers.

Lu and Stepchenkova (2012), following Cadotte and Turgeon (1988), empirically found that there are different categories of factors which lead to either customer dissatisfaction or satisfaction. A *dissatisfier*, in Lu and Stepchenkova's (2012) terms, can result in customer dissatisfaction when not met, but does not lead to satisfaction when exceeded or met. On the other hand, a *satisfier* can help enhance customer satisfaction when delivered, but raise no dissatisfaction when not delivered. Since customer satisfaction is emotional as well as cognitive, meaning that it arises from both feeling-based points and logical points of reference, this study views atmosphere and service excellence as dissatisfiers and escapism and customer ROI as satisfiers. Similar results were obtained in the research of Matzler, Bailom, Hinterhuber, Renzl, and Pichler (2004) who suggest *basic* (i.e., dissatisfiers) and *excitement factors* (i.e., satisfiers) which lead to either customer dissatisfaction or satisfaction. In this study, atmosphere and service excellence would be basic factors while escapism and customer ROI would be excitement factors.

From the practical perspectives, family restaurant managers can consider to what extent their customers expect tangible aspects (e.g., facility atmosphere and service employees) and intangible aspects (e.g., aroma, temperature, background music, and service) as the restaurant stimuli. If their budget permits, family restaurant managers can offer an atmosphere with a reasonable investment in interior design and can efficiently train their service employees based on what their customers expect from their family restaurant brand. In addition, in Western cultures, a family restaurant is viewed as a convenient and economical place for eating out (Lee & Hwang, 2011). However, Korean customers have recognized the family restaurant not just as a place to eat out but as a social and pleasant place (Oh et al., 2015). Even the efficient and standardized appearance of family restaurants seems to be new and exotic to Korean customers. Therefore, family restaurants can be perceived as more enjoyable, playful, pleasant, and fun, leading to positive emotions and self-connective attachment among their customers. The marketing strategies of family restaurants in Korea could concentrate on a variety of menu items, reputation and image, mood, and kindness of employees. The significant paths from customer ROI to positive emotion and self-connective attachment imply that family restaurant managers should consider the best balance between food quality and price when they develop menu items and decide the prices of the items. Lastly, brand loyalty was significantly influenced by positive emotion, negative emotion, and self-connective attachment. Therefore, family restaurant managers may wish to separately analyze customers with positive emotional experiences and those with negative emotional experiences. Managers need to take immediate action to address

customers' negative emotional experiences. By understanding these emotions, managers can enhance their long-term relationship with customers.

Limitation and further research

Even though this research has theoretical and managerial implications for the family restaurant context in Korea, it has several limitations. The sample composition is skewed toward the younger people, which may have affected the study results. For example, the younger crowd may value less the restaurant atmosphere and more the customer ROI dimension of experiential value that emphasizes price and convenience. The time of the data collection, that is lunchtime, might have skewed to some degree the sample toward students and office clerks who, on weekdays, are likely to prefer quick, less expensive, and efficient service to sophisticated restaurant atmosphere, thus weakening the proposed link between atmosphere and positive emotion. Overall, the findings of the research are well aligned with the sample composition. However, to confidently generalize the results to the whole sector of Korean family restaurants of Western brands, running the model with a more demographically—and geographically—representative sample of respondents and over both lunch and dinner day periods is highly advisable.

Another limitation is that the study tested the research model only at family restaurants of Western brands in Korea. Further research with other restaurant brands should be utilized to identify the extent of applicability of the study findings to different restaurant types like fast-food establishments or traditional Korean restaurants. The question of whether mechanisms of building brand loyalty differ for customers in other restaurant contexts may lead to better understanding consumer behavior and have practical implications as well. Third, the AVEs for escapism, customer ROI, and specially atmosphere, were less than .50, meaning that adequate psychometric properties of respective constructs might not be yielded by the measurement instrument used in this study. It can also signal that, contrary to Jin et al.'s (2013) empirical findings, due to the different context (a full-service restaurant context in the United States vs. a family restaurant context in Korea), the meaning of restaurant brand experiences may not be universal across countries and contexts. Therefore, future research needs to thoroughly develop a restaurant related construct of experiential value and measure in various culture and contexts.

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