

A TWO-STAGED SEM APPROACH IN STUDYING CONSUMER BEHAVIORS AND BRAND PERCEPTIONS OF UPSCALE RESTAURANT SERVICES

Chai Ching Tan*
Umonrat Segson**

ABSTRACT

Brand trust development phenomenon in a structured component wise and layer manner is vital, which helps the restaurant service provider to systematically create and implement the needed strategies to establish brand trust. From a systems theory perspective, brand trust is a part of the overall brand management system, which would need antecedent structure and a clear consequence to indicate an effective brand trust. Thus, the research objective is to derive and validate an integrated model, which explains how brand trust – both cognitive and affective satisfaction aspect – is developed by incorporating the socio-psychological domains of influence in norm and attitude, and the reliability-ensured service operations performances, as stimuli, to impact significantly on the knowledge-based value perceptions, so that revisit intention and experiential sharing as a consequence of brand trust can be developed. That is, cognitive trust emerges as a result of customers forming value perceptions and knowledge of what the services can deliver. For testing the model, an upscale restaurant population in Chiang Rai is targeted, and the data collected were subjected to multivariate statistical analysis i.e. structural equation modelling (SEM) and hierarchical multiple regression method.

Keywords: Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR), Social Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Customer Value, Brand Trust, Revisit Intention, Experience Sharing, Social Media.

Introduction

In a recent report conducted by the Global Agricultural Information Network (GAIN, 2018), it estimated over 100,000 registered restaurant establishments across Thailand, with the majority in Bangkok (about 44%), and the north standing merely at 6%. While the report indicated three categories of Thailand's restaurants, namely Quick Service Restaurants (QSR), international/high-end (upscale) restaurants, and small restaurants operated by small and media enterprises, at market share about 10%, 10%, and 80%, respectively, the upscale restaurants continue to enjoy expansion owing to increasing urbanization. There are numerous macro-economic indicators pointing out to the significant role of upscale restaurant establishments, for instance, the wider penetration of social media usage and Internet, tourism industry expansion, urbanization and higher consumer disposable incomes, including Thai consumer lifestyles that favor brand trust. Brand trust and loyalty are important consumer trend in Thailand, in accordance with the recent Boston Consulting Group's report (BCG, 2017). When coupled with trend such as "growth is strong in categories that offer indulgence and experiences," and "a new social media model is driving e-commerce" in Thailand (BCG, 2017), it becomes necessary to study how brand trust is factored into the restaurant dining-out behaviors in Thailand. The middle-and-affluent class segments continue to eat out and thus empirical research work is needed, as shown in Fig. 1 (BCG, 2017), which can help restaurant owners and chain enterprises develop effective strategies to leverage their brand equities, and thus to create strong consumer pull and loyalty.

* Thesis Advisor, Rattanakosin International College of Creative Entrepreneurship (RICE), Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin, Thailand.

** Post-Graduate Student, Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand.

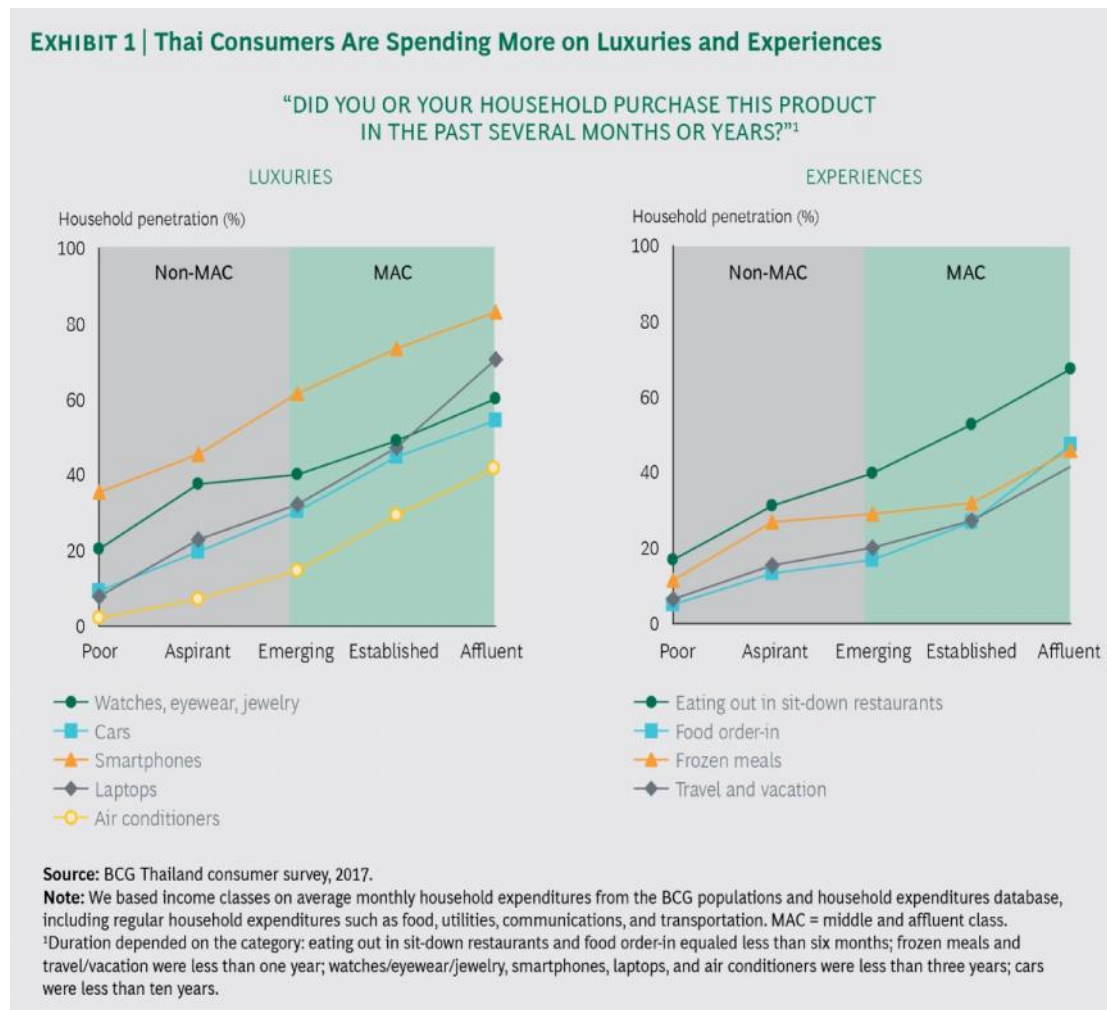


Fig. 1: The Eating-Out in Sit-Down Restaurant Trend in Thailand. Source: BCG (2017)

Research Objective

Motivated by a lack of empirical gap and clear theoretical guideline in understanding how customers form revisit intention and drive experience sharing (both positive words of mouth and social media engagement), this research thus establishes a research direction guided by stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model. The purpose is to identify and group the relevant variables in the domains of stimulus and organism, and study their interrelationships, by also considering the necessary hierarchical sequences by use of hypothetic-deductive reasonings, to ultimately entice customers to form revisit intention and actively share experience through positive words-of-mouth and social media platforms.

Operating Definition of Variables

- Food quality is defined in domains of tastiness, attractive presentation, freshness and menu variety which support the services.
- Service quality is defined as the extent to which assurance, responsiveness, reliability and empathy quality are perceived arising in the restaurant experiences.
- Attitude towards the restaurant is defined as the settled way of thinking about the restaurant as good choice for special gathering or overall value of dining at the restaurant is perceived high.
- Subjective norm is defined as the social influence through people around and friends in subject of the restaurant.

- Social media attitude is defined as the attitude formation as a result of seeing others sharing of the restaurant's food and service on social media which gives the customers the confidence and key reason to choose the restaurant (Patthracholakorn and Tan, 2016; Rugkhumkaew and Tan, 2016; and Theenanont and Tan, 2016).
- Restaurant atmosphere is defined to the extent the restaurant is capable to energize the customers, helpful to stimulate the spirit of the customers, through for instance, unique differentiation and design of layout.
- Customer value captures the values perceived happening to the customers in experiencing the restaurants in functional, hedonic and economic value. Functional value defines the extent to which the quality is as expected. Hedonic value captures the joy, excitement and peacefulness of the state of psychology. Economic value depicts good value for price paid.
- Experience sharing is defined in the word-of-mouth mode and social media sharing, which are the two most persuasive and influential form of marketing communication nowadays (Kozinets, 2010).
- Customer satisfaction captures in particular the happiness with the dining experience and enjoyment of food, and the mood arisen in association with the restaurant's provided experiences.
- Brand trust is defined as projecting the rationality for the customer to stand behind the restaurant without regret.
- Revisit intention is defined by the continuing intention of the customers back to the restaurant, in near future and frequency.

Contributions

There are numerous angles and scopes of contributions evidenced by how this research fills the research gaps either on theoretical or practical fronts. The different gaps are to a large extent overlapping so that the integrative considerations of them help illuminate the research topics.

First of all, based upon an earlier work by Luhmann (1979), a sociological theory of trust is established who proposes familiarity, confidence and trust as three fundamental modes capable of asserting the expectations about the future in the social system. Trust as a social bonding becomes critical particularly for the recent trend towards social media driven market (Tan and Patthracholakorn, 2018). Nevertheless, there is a research gap which shows how perceptions of social media played in impacting on brand trust. This would be a first gap to fill.

Second, to ensure customers gain a trustable knowledge justifying the beliefs (Tan and Kantabutra, 2014), this research integrates both validity-oriented (manifested through values established in the view of the customers) and reliability-ensured operations service performance evidenced by the quality of services, in food and the atmosphere of restaurants.

Third, this research contributes in outlining a structure-within-structure of an SOR framework, whereby value perceptions of the offers by the restaurants (an organism) can, in feedback manner, alter and mold the development of social media norm (a stimulus), while also, in feed-forward sense, impact on the overall attitude of the customers. The attitude is a theory-of-planned aspect and is shown actively influencing both brand trust and satisfaction, which highlights an area of discovery often been neglected in the consumer behavioral study in restaurant context.

Fourth, this research contributes further to the aspect of organism in the form of activeness (i.e. attitude formation, brand trust as a result of cognitive assessments), driven for instance by information processing (Moital, 2007), rather than inactive and unprepared organism (Eysenck and Keane, 2000) such as customer satisfaction. In other words, both active and inactive elements of organism are shown equally important for creating positive responses i.e., revisit intention and experience sharing.

Conceptual Model

The SOR model is shown in Fig. 2 as the conceptual model integrating fifteen deduced hypotheses and exhibiting the areas of contributions. Besides, the SOR concept has a practical benefit in that it can assist the marketers to be cognizant with how to create the conditions (Tresidder and Hirst, 2012, p. 46) in order to stimulate psychological responses of consumers to induce continuity of relationships.

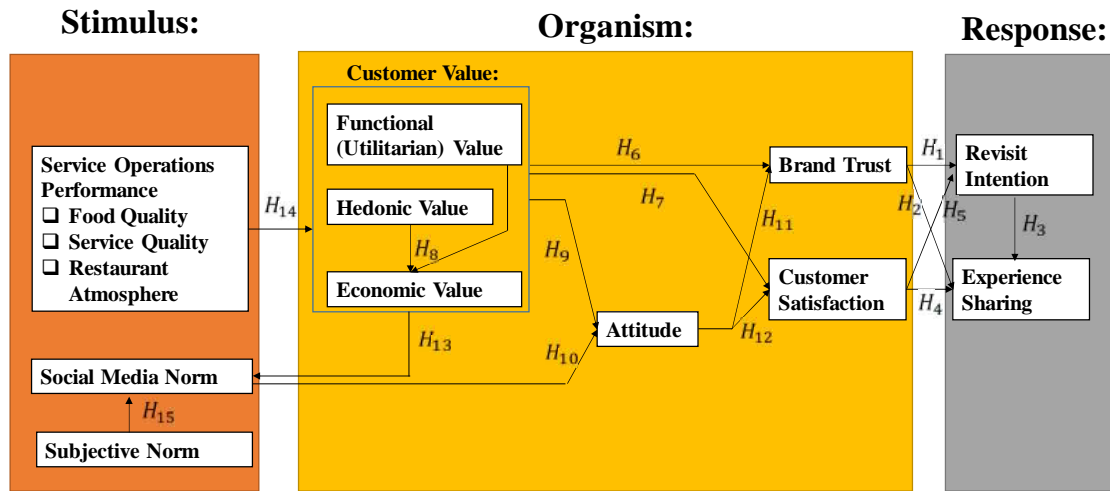


Fig. 2: The SOR Conceptual Model

The fifteen hypotheses depicted in the conceptual model are listed below:

- H₁:** Brand trust significantly influences revisit intention of customers.
- H₂:** Brand trust would significantly explain the variance of experience sharing.
- H₃:** Customer revisit intention would significantly explain the variance of experience sharing.
- H₄:** Customer satisfaction significantly explains the variance of experience sharing.
- H₅:** Customer satisfaction plays an important role in formation of future intention.
- H₆:** Customer values, constituting of functional, hedonic and economic values, are significant predictors of brand trust.
- H₇:** Customer values, constituting of functional, hedonic and economic values, are significant predictors of customer satisfaction.
- H₈:** Both functional and hedonic values can significantly indicate the favorable response of economic value.
- H₉:** Customer values, constituting of functional, hedonic and economic values, can significantly influence the formation of favorable attitude of customers.
- H₁₀:** Social media norm is a significant predictor of attitude.
- H₁₁:** Customer attitude has significant influence on brand trust.
- H₁₂:** Customer attitude has significant influence on brand satisfaction.
- H₁₃:** Customer values, constituting of functional, hedonic and economic values, can significantly influence the formation of social media norm.
- H₁₄:** Service quality, food quality and restaurant atmosphere are significant predictors of customer values, represented by functional value, hedonic value, and economic value.
- H₁₅:** Subjective norm can significantly explain the variance of social media norm.

Literature Review

The literature review layouts first the restaurant context as the background, followed by: first, stressing the role of adapting stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory as the theoretical platform for studying the consumer behaviors for upscale restaurants; second, delineating the nature of customer value; third, deducing of the extant knowledge for rationalizing the hypothetical relationship structure enabled within the SOR framework.

Restaurant Context

In simple term, the restaurant businesses can easily be positioned based upon the nature of service in terms of speed and activity orientation, namely as quick service, fast-casual, family/midscale, moderate/theme and find. The definitions of these different manifestations or nature of restaurant services are given in Reynolds and McClusky (2013), as follows:

- **Quick Service:** Offering food at speed and usually at low price.
- **Fast-Casual:** An extension of quick service in responding to customer demanding not only quick service but for “a little higher quality and better ambiance” (ibid, p. 11).
- **Midscale:** This type offers segment of family friendly with tableside services but at a relatively low price, perhaps with an assortment of special menu such as appetizers.
- **Moderate or Theme-Style:** Relying on a unique theme or concept, supplemented with thematic ambiance, to allure and appeal to a broad market.
- **Fine Dining:** Aimed to maximize customers’ overall dining experience enabled by uniqueness or thematic differentiation of restaurant atmosphere and menu.

Clearly, the different types of restaurants are of much overlapping. With Thailand setting its aspirational national goal to attain high-income status in the 20-year national strategy (World Bank, 2018, April), the study of upscale restaurants becomes necessary important, especially there are hardly any empirical and theoretical findings in Thai context. The upscale types for this research include moderate or theme-style and fine-dining.

Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory

If we accept the Kotlerian definition of marketing, as “managerial activities that lead toward the facilitation and consummation of exchanges” (Holbrook, 2015, p. 155), the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory thus is a suitable theory which can be used to explain how and what marketing activities are to be emphasized that can significantly influence consumer perceptions and thus induce exchanges manifested in revisit intention and experience sharing. Patthracholakorn and Tan (2016), Rugkhumkaew and Tan (2016) and Theenanont and Tan (2016) identify the marketing-induced and customer-induced interactions and activities, and customer attitudes, as playing significant stimuli role in influencing brand trust and satisfaction, and thus continuing relationships both toward the brand and within the brand community’s social media platforms.

The SOR theory is fundamentally a learned behavior theory which extends the S-R theory of Woodworth and Scholoberg (1954) to include psychological structures and processes as mediating between stimulation (S) and behavior (R). The general SOR model is shown in Fig. 3.



Fig. 3: The General SOR Model Structure

Customer Value Concept

Based on the SOR concept, customer value is an important strategic theme that restaurant businesses must focus upon (Tresidder and Hirst, 2012, p. 46). Customer value can be defined in many different ways: For instance, in interactive, relativistic, comparative, personal, situational, preference or experience domains (Holbrook, 2015a, p. 156): interactive in the sense that it involves a relationship between a consumer and a product, relativistic insofar as it reflects a comparison of the product and service with alternative providers, preference embodiment manifested in cognitive perceptions toward the products and services, and experience involving feelings and fun aspect of customer satisfaction from product or service usage (ibid, p. 156). These domains also connote the fact that customer value is interactive (Holbrook, 2015b, p. 309), relativistic (p. 310), preferential (p. 311), and an experience (p. 312), as key sources on customer value formation. Customer value can also be defined in Holbrook (2015b, p. 313) in the lens of extrinsic versus intrinsic, self-oriented versus other-oriented, and active versus reactive nature. Extrinsic value pertains to “a means-end relationship wherein consumption is prized for its functional, utilitarian, or banausic instrumentality in serving as a means to accomplishing some further purpose, aim, goal or objective” (ibid, p. 313). Intrinsic value occurs “when some consumption experience is appreciated as an end in itself- for its own sake – as self-justifying, ludic or autotelic” (ibid, p. 313). Self-oriented value relates to aspects of consumption selfishly, for own sake, whereas other-oriented value looks beyond the self (ibid, p. 314). The active versus reactive values are very much experience in nature, entailing “a physical or mental manipulation of some tangible or intangible object” (p. 315) in the experience by consumers, and mere “apprehending, appreciating, admiring, or otherwise responding to some object” (p. 315) in reactive value. Holbrook (2015b) highlight a combination of these values as forming typological configuration of customer value.

To simplify, this research adapts the two important distinctive nature of customer value in order to clarify the decision-oriented versus experiential view of consumer behavior, namely utilitarian or functional value, and hedonic value (Addis and Holbrook, 2001). In addition, economic value is included as the perceptual indication that the decision made and experience obtained are worthy of price paid.

Theoretical Framework Development

In today's exponential development of complexity in the markets, characterized by networks and Internet-based structures of actors, development of trust relationships with the markets, through branding, is extremely critical (Castaldo, 2007). To secure trust, organizations like restaurants engage in marketing and a set of business activities that aim to affect the behaviors of actors in the markets and the industry (Bagozzi, 1975). Why trust is so fundamentally important? On a generic domain, in a mutual exchanging process such as restaurants providing the services to customers, trust is an indicator – perhaps a mental one – which points out the customers' willingness to be dependent on the service provider in believing that it will not intentionally disappoint them (Deutche, 1958). In other words, customers trust a brand and a service provider's effort in the commitment and capability to fulfill its obligations and will do the best to pull its weight towards positive long-lasting relationships (Dwyer and Oh, 1987). When the relational bond is established based on trust, between the brand or service provider and the customer, Hiscock (2001) argues that the ultimate goal of marketing is established. Thus, studying how brand trust is established becomes a key yardstick as implication that the business has done the right thing right, which leads to fulfilling a part of the research objective in the aspect of organism, in that brand trust is the penultimate of organism, often complemented with customer satisfaction as delineated in the hedonic nature of customer value reactions already discussed early.

Research efforts published in the extant literature indicate still a lack of attention paid to brand trust, sharing the similar discovery and assertion given in Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (2001), in spite of the established theoretical and empirical linkage between brand trust and customer satisfaction (*ibid*, p. 1240). In consumer behavior and brand disciplines, the literature of brand trust lacks theoretical foundation, and those that exist mainly are psychological in orientation, which is concerned with cognitive and affective processes supporting attitude development (Dick and Basu, 1994). Towards this end, a review of the embedded theory of trust is necessary. On an earlier work, by Luhmann (1979), a sociological theory of trust is established who proposes familiarity, confidence and trust as three fundamental modes capable of asserting the expectations about the future in the social system. Trust as a social bonding becomes critical particularly for the recent trend towards social media driven market (Tan and Patthracholakorn, 2018). Nevertheless, there is a research gap which shows how perceptions of social media played in impacting on brand trust. This would be a first gap to fill. Trust has a social function, as demonstrated in Luhmann (1979), by its ability to reduce the complexity of business system or objective world, in broader sense (*ibid*, p. 71).

In view of the complexity reduction function of brand in a business system, another angle of approach to studying branding is systems theory. According to Tan (2007a,b) and von Bertalanffy (1968), systems theory has the advantage of reducing the complexity of an objective or subjective world, much more complex than systems, to organized set of conditioning and causal relationship structure. That is, seeing in the lens of systems, trust is treated as a part of the system cohesiveness and stability. Systems are better able to achieve their goals, such as brand trust, when the systems are operated within robust knowledge framework – a sort of validity-oriented strategy on trust (Bordum, 2004, p. 4). Thus, to help customers gain a trustable knowledge in their belief justification (Tan and Kantabutra, 2014), this research makes use of treating brand trust as the validity-oriented strategy to branding, which takes root in reliability-ensured strategy of operations performance (Djailani and Tan, 2015) by means of customer values and the stimulation bases such as service quality, food quality and enjoyable restaurant atmosphere. Knowledge presenting both reliability-ensured and validity-oriented strategies of brand trust are neglected in the extant literature and to be filled in this research.

In addition, the most prevalent psychology-oriented conception of brand trust study is borrowed, which is concerned with the cognitive and affective processes of the customers in supporting the development of attitude strength (Dick and Basu, 1994). This is particularly important, as brand trust is a psychological state constituting of customer perceptions and attitudes both about the brand leading to brand trust as well as into the futuristic intention (Tan, 2017). Thus, brand trust serves as a confidence that the expectations about the future or the services would be met (Mollering, 2001). As such, brand trust – as a mode of asserting expectations about the future (Luhmann, 1979) – is hypothesized as a predictor of customers' revisit intention to the restaurant.

H₁: Brand trust significantly influences revisit intention of customers.

Furthermore, by borrowing the theory of planned behavior (Tungchaiwana and Tan, 2018), due to brand trust which is mainly directed at the present and future (Bordum, 2004, p. 7), customers' revisit intention will lead to behavior aligned with brand trust, which is exemplified by the experience sharing of the customers through words of mouth and social media sharing. Thus, the following hypotheses are assumed.

H₂: Brand trust would significantly explain the variance of experience sharing.

H₃: Customer revisit intention would significantly explain the variance of experience sharing.

H₄: Customer satisfaction significantly explain the variance of experience sharing.

Experience behavioral sharing is a phenomenon rarely addressed in the brand trust literature, in particular relating to social media context (Tan and Patthracholakorn, 2018; Patthracholakorn and Tan, 2016; Rungkhumkaew and Tan, 2016; Theenanont and Tan, 2016).

From the view of social psychology and mere psychology, brand trust can be conceptualized as forming both cognitive and affective basis (Lewis and Weigert, 1985; McAllister, 1995). Apart from the cognitive aspect of brand trust, defined as knowledge-driven trust, taken in this research as represented by the knowledge of values received from the services, there is another aspect of brand trust – at least from the psychological aspect of the literature, namely affective brand trust (Srivastava, Bhushan and Mookerjee, 2015). According to Ballester (2004), affective brand trust is generated on the basis of customer satisfaction, referring to the emotional or affective part of customer reaction to the services, leading to the following hypothesis.

H₅: Customer satisfaction plays an important role in formation of future intention.

Empirical evidence on H5 can be found in the extant literature, for instance, in Carpenter (2008).

Having exploited, in the aforementioned, the various theories of trust suitable to study brand trust, the antecedents can be examined by borrowing stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory of consumer behaviors (Tan, 2017) and Bandura's socio-cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977; 1986) in consumer behavior applications (Anchittha and Tan, 2015), and theory of planned behaviors (Thandar and Tan, 2015; Tan, Praditmon, Pattanadeekul and Chinwan, 2017). Establishing the relationship between brand trust and its antecedents highlights the alignment with the definition of brand trust as "the willingness of the consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function" (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001, p. 82). Rooted in the theory of brand trust which is validity oriented, the most proximal layer suggested to influence brand trust is customer value. Three types of customer values are highlighted in this research, namely utilitarian or functional value, hedonic value and economic value. These values have been empirically tested to significantly impact on buying process (Kazakaviciute and Banyte, 2012). While functional value aims to meet the utilitarian expectation such as quality and good food criteria (Swe and Tan, 2015), the hedonic value reflects the consumers' perceived psychological value received from the restaurant services (Carpenter, 2008). Economic value is indicative of both the functional and hedonic values perceived, stated in the following hypothesis.

As such, the following hypotheses are assumed:

H₆: Customer values, constituting of functional, hedonic and economic values, are significant predictors of brand trust.

H₇: Customer values, constituting of functional, hedonic and economic values, are significant predictors of customer satisfaction.

H₈: Both functional and hedonic values can significantly indicate the favorable response of economic value.

While brand trust is more cognitive in nature, customer satisfaction is indicative of the affective aspect of trust. Extended to another antecedent layer, the relationship insight would examine the ability of the restaurant service features to inspire the favorable utilitarian evaluation, arouse the affective or hedonic value perceptions towards the services experienced, and economic value which justifies the price reflective of good value received from both the hedonic and functional values (Chen, Tan and Kantabutra, 2014). Three domains of ability of the service provider are studied in this research to indicate the stated functions (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001) which the service provider, namely the restaurant, is obligated: service quality, food quality, and restaurant atmosphere. These are the areas customers experience in order to form value perceptions toward the services, and further contributing towards the attitude of customer which can significantly influence both the cognitive and affective states of trust – brand trust and customer satisfaction. Apart from the attitudinal aspect of influence on brand trust, social media also forms a key part of stimuli, particularly in today's social media era (Tan and Patthracholakorn, 2018). Thus, the following hypotheses are raised:

H₉: Customer values, constituting of functional, hedonic and economic values, can significantly influence the formation of favorable attitude of customers.

H₁₀: Social media norm is a significant predictor of attitude.

H₁₁: Customer attitude has significant influence on brand trust.

H₁₂: Customer attitude has significant influence on brand satisfaction.

H₁₃: Customer values, constituting of functional, hedonic and economic values, can significantly influence the formation of social media norm.

Social media norm is a construct that represents the reassurance or social domain of brand trust, which reflects the attitude at the market domain revealed through social media evidences.

H₁₄: Service quality, food quality and restaurant atmosphere are significant predictors of customer values, represented by functional value, hedonic value, and economic value.

These qualities represent and are indicative of the consistency of experiences of the customers, which is a fundamental root characteristic of trust, with a belief about its predictability (Eliot and Yannopolou, 2007). H14 also implies that the customers have been acquainted with the service provider's competencies and values offered. Based on service operations performance, brand trust is an action-oriented construct which is derivative of action-driven bases (Darley, 1996) such as service quality, food quality, restaurant atmosphere and the values offered. By considering the perceived customer values as indicative of behavioral control by the customers in that the services are trustable (Sinsoponkit and Tan, 2018), the theory of planned behavior (TPB, Ajzen, 1991) is extended which assumes a hypothesis that the subjective norm, together with customer values, are significant predictors of the variance of social media norm:

H₁₅: Subjective norm can significantly explain the variance of social media norm.

Integrating H1 to H15 yields the conceptual model for the research as shown in Figure 2. Note that the conceptual model can theoretically be simplified as a stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model where stimulus is consisted of service operations performance (food quality, service quality, and restaurant atmosphere), subjective norm and social media, and organism factors are customer values (utilitarian, hedonic, and economic), attitude, brand trust and customer satisfaction, and responses are revisit intention and experience sharing. The SOR concept was originally proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). The SOR advocates on the mediating role of organism or mental structure and processes in between the stimulus and response. Since the introduction of the SOR concept, the consumer (Tan, 2017) and other behavioral studies (Jacob, 2002) have shifted from Behaviorism in the approach to Cognitivism (Furedy and Riley, 1987), particularly towards Cognitive Psychology (Cziko, 2000; Neisser, 1967). This research contributes further to the aspect of organism such as involving active (i.e. attitude formation, brand trust as a result of cognitive assessments) element, driven for instance, by information processing (Moital, 2007), rather than through inactive and unprepared organism (Eysenck and Keane, 2000) such as customer satisfaction.

Method

• Survey Instrument

The design of questionnaire is made by following the principles of validity and reliability, of which the fundamental validity is construct validity which defines the extent to which the construct operationalization represents the intended construct (de Leeuw, Hox and Dillman, 2008). A robust base of valid and reliable questionnaires item is cornerstone in minimizing measurement error (error of observation) associated with the data collection process (ibid, p. 11). The construct and content validity are maintained by use of the operational definition guidelines in view of the theoretical context of stimulus-organism-response theory and contribution in consumer behavioral studies.

• Sampling

Sampling coverage includes consumer population of interest to visit upscale restaurants in Chiang Rai. Based upon 5% margin of error, confidence 95%, a minimum sample size 384 is recommended for consumer behavior study. From Noema (2012), Chiang Rai population is about 1.2 million (2012), with population intensity at 102.79 persons/km-squared (2012), and near equal distribution on gender. In view of the population amount, although Chiang Rai is a favored tourist destination with its own international airport, a minimum sample size 384 is used, as recommended by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), determined by the following equation:

$$s = \frac{X^2NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2P(1-P)}$$

Having met the validity and reliability assessment criteria of the constructs, a two-hierarchical staged structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis was conducted with the results indicated in Fig. 4 and Fig. 5, alongside with the model fit statistics which are indicative of perfect fits, in absolute (i.e., root mean square error of approximation, RMSEA at 0.000) and incremental senses, i.e., shown in NFI (normed fit index), CFI (comparative fit index), TFI (Tucker Lewis index), close to 1.0.

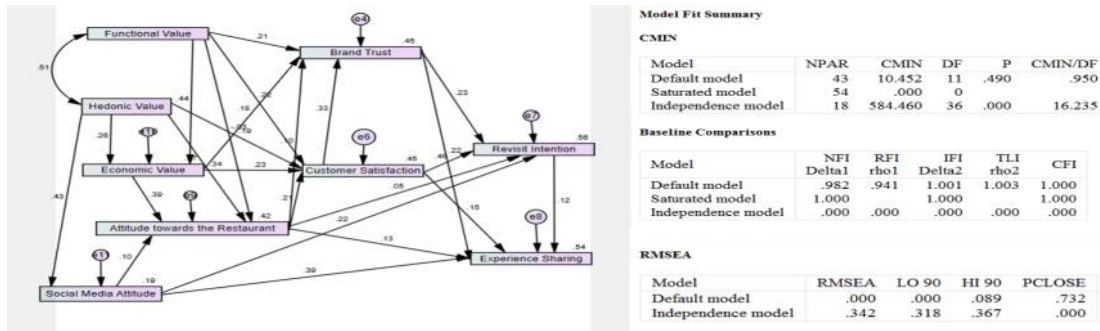


Fig. 4: Layer One Validated Model of the SOR

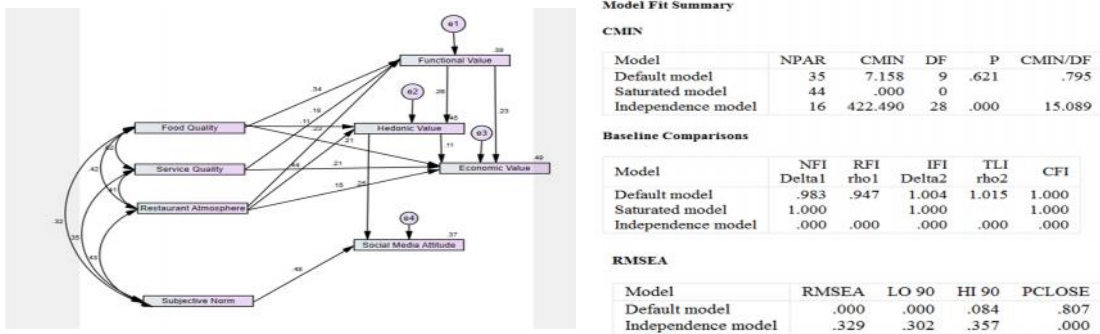


Fig. 5: Layer Two Validated Model of the SOR

The significant predicting ability of social media-induced norm in influencing consumer attitude and thus towards brand trust, satisfaction and social media sharing, shown in Figure 4, is also reflecting the accelerating trend of social media driving role for restaurant dining in a survey conducted by Boston Consulting Group (BCG, 2017), depicted in Fig. 6.

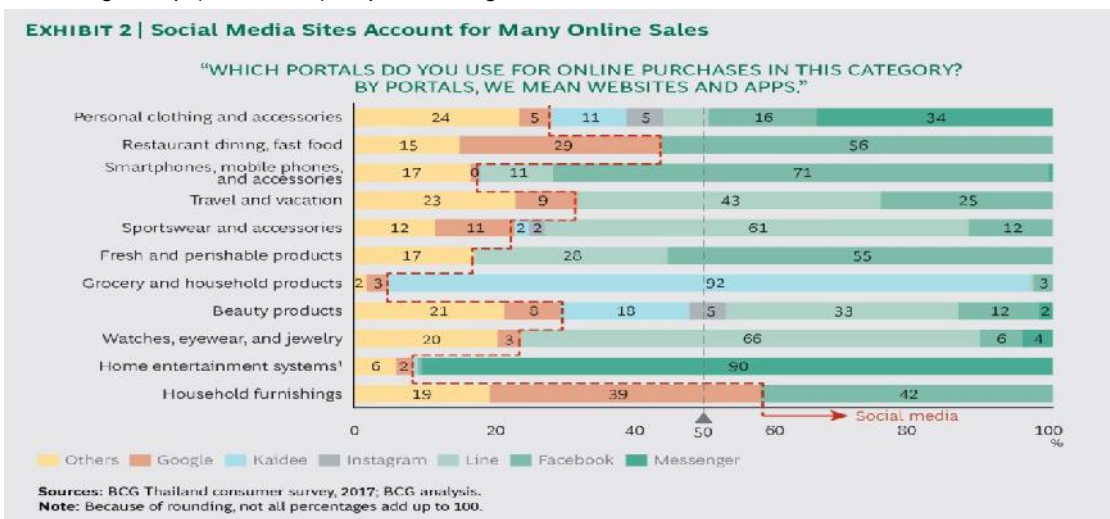


Fig. 6: The Role of Social Media Sharing in Restaurant Context.

Source: BCG (2017)

Based on either T-test and ANOVA test, there are no significant differences found on gender, age, education, occupation, and staying in close proximity to restaurant or far away. Salary is -0.238^{**} related to social media induced norm, implying the younger groups are more towards engaging with the social media sharing of the restaurants in their decision making. The dining-out frequency is positively correlated to revisit intention, at $+0.234^{**}$ (significant at 0.01 level, 2-tailed), signifies a good share of the restaurants sharing the dining-out of the customers. Thus, on the segment side, those frequent dining-out should be targeted, perhaps offering them with some memberships as these groups would certainly use the membership for revisit purpose. As there is no significant difference between the customers who visit the restaurants closer to home or far away, it would simplify the marketing strategy to treat all in equal basis. The overall fifteen hypotheses, as the results of both the two-staged empirical models show, are all supported. The following section states the conclusion and draws some of the important implications.

Conclusion and Implications

The research objective is met with the empirical validation of the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model at its stringent level by the use of structural equation modeling (SEM) fitting rather than relying on mere correlations studies or hierarchical multiple regression analysis. In particular, the consumer behavioral response is of two types namely revisit intention to the restaurant and experience sharing which contributes to create brand awareness of the restaurant and establishes brand integrity and trust further. These behavioral responses provide the basis for continuity of relationship and revenue expansion through awareness expansion. The empirical evidences show these consumer behavioral responses are result of an interplay of organism and stimulus factors. The organism factors shown significantly important are brand trust and customer satisfaction, occupying the standardized coefficient weights (BETA) of 0.23 and 0.46, respectively. Brand trust and customer satisfaction play two distinctive characteristics of organism to fill the research gaps, namely as active and inactive element of organism, and as the validity-oriented strategy to branding, which takes root in reliability-ensured strategy of operations performance (Djailani and Tan, 2015) by means of customer values and the stimulation bases such as service quality, food quality and enjoyable restaurant atmosphere. Knowledge presenting both reliability-ensured and validity-oriented strategies of brand trust are neglected in the extant literature and to be filled in this research.

In addition, the empirical evidences show the interplay forces of food quality, service quality and restaurant atmospheres are significantly important to stimulate the perceptual role of customer values as mediating means to explain both brand trust and customer satisfaction. Based on service operations performance, these factors essentially form the action-driven bases of the action-oriented brand trust, sharing the concept advocated in Darley (1996).

There are theoretical and practical domains of implications. There are important theoretical contributions which this research highlights a sociological theoretical base and systems approach to justifying the role of brand trust, and also this research presents the active and inactive aspects of brand trust and customer satisfaction, respectively, including a validity-oriented strategy that must be supported by reliability-oriented strategy as well. The study can also imply some important type of competitive forces for upscale restaurant businesses to cope with competition, by stressing on social media attitude, attitude towards the restaurant, customer satisfaction and brand trust in establishing the driving forces for creating revisit intention. The inclusion of social media attitude is an apparent addition to the extant literature with a reliance on Ajzen's (1991) subjective norm influence. Subjective norm is a more generalized version which captures the prevalent cultural or societal discussions at the moment, whereas social media attitude highlights the stability of personalized norm that drives behavior. By incorporating social media attitude, this research is thus capturing the current trend of social media and further imply a theoretical contribution towards social presence theory (Osei-Frimpong and McLean, 2018) on consumer behavior. From the empirical finding of this research, social presence theory is adapted for the social presence of a consumer behavioral subject – i.e. dining at restaurant – to influence attitude towards restaurant and thus revisit intention and further experience sharing. Experience sharing further induce the positive externality effect which contributes to instill brand awareness creation and strengthening brand trust.

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