

# The Relationship between Store Decoration and Customer Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Service Quality

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**Abstract: Background and Aim:** The present study examined how the interior decoration of the store impacts customer satisfaction, taking into account the mediating influence of service quality.

**Methods:** A descriptive-correlation approach was employed in the current investigation, utilizing structural equation modeling. The study consisted of 384 customers (201 women) of various stores in Tehran, aged between 18 and 45 years (with a mean age of  $32.87 \pm 9.67$  years), who willingly participated. The research was conducted in Tehran, Iran, in the year 2022. The participants were selected through a convenience sampling method. Standard questionnaires were used for data collection. Pearson correlation test and the structural equation modeling were used for data analysis.

**Results:** Results revealed that interior decoration significantly affected customer satisfaction ( $T=4.159$ ). Moreover, interior decoration significantly affected service quality ( $T=5.237$ ). Furthermore, service quality affected customer satisfaction ( $T=6.847$ ). Finally, service quality has significantly mediated the relationship between interior decoration and customer satisfaction ( $P<0.001$ ). Results of model fit indicated that the research model has good fit.

**Conclusion:** According to the results of this study, it is advised that businesses concentrate on boosting and improving the aspects and elements that impact the interior decoration of stores and shopping centers. Furthermore, there should be a stronger emphasis on service quality.

**Keywords:** Store, Decoration, Customer, Satisfaction, Service Quality

## Introduction

Customer satisfaction is a frequently discussed topic in marketing. It is a measure of how well an organization's products and services meet the needs of its customers. Customer satisfaction is determined by the number or percentage of customers who are content with their experiences with a company. In a study of 200 marketing managers, 71 percent emphasized the importance of customer satisfaction in management and organizational oversight. Therefore, effective management of customer satisfaction is crucial for organizations. To achieve this, companies require reliable and representative scales for measuring satisfaction (Hazrati et al. 2022; Herrick & Ainsworth, 2003; Seyyedrezaei et al. 2021). In customer satisfaction research, companies typically inquire whether their product or service has met customer expectations. Therefore, expectations play a significant role in discussions about satisfaction. In his article "Seven stages for customer satisfaction,"

Thompson (2010) examines the various stages of customer satisfaction and emphasizes the importance of maintaining close contact with customers in order to meet their needs. This includes: 1. Encouraging face-to-face negotiations; 2. Establishing a friendly and close relationship with customers; 3. Paying attention to details, such as the personal characteristics of customers. A possible factor that may influence customer satisfaction is store decoration (Afsanepurak et al. 2012; Sadeghipor & Aghdam, 2021a, 2021b; Taso et al. 2014).

Numerous studies have been carried out regarding the stimuli and motivators present in store spaces that influence the behavior of buyers at the point of purchase (American Psychological Association, 2014; Sadeghipor et al. 2021; Vasconcelos et al. 2013). While most of these studies have focused on the sensory stimuli within store spaces and their impact on buyer behavior separately, there has been limited research on the social motivators within store spaces and their influence on buyers' extra-role behavior at the point of purchase (Ghorbani et al. 2020a, 2020b). Store spaces typically consist of products, customers, sellers, and shelf arrangements, with social stimuli, emotional-perceptual indicators of buyers, and buyers' trans-role behavior being key variables in chain stores (Abdoshahi & Ghorbani 2022; Ohler et al. 2010; Ramachandra et al. 2013; Taghva et al. 2020). According to Kotler, factors that can shape buyers' perceptions in shopping environments fall into two categories: environmental stimuli and marketing stimuli. This study specifically focuses on environmental motivators due to their significance in buyers' decision-making processes (Letvak et al. 2012; Masten, 2001). Building on Turley and Milliman's findings that the interior space of a store plays a crucial role in buyers' decision-making, this research will explore the impact of interior stimuli within store spaces on buyers' emotional, perceptual, and trans-role behavior indicators (Dana et al. 2021).

Approximately half of customers make purchases without prior planning. Therefore, by implementing effective planning and design, particularly in the store layout, they can be guided towards making purchases that are beneficial for the retailer (Hosseini, et al. 2022). It is also emphasized that by enhancing the overall shopping experience and increasing the frequency of customer visits to the store, the likelihood of their making a purchase will also rise. Hence, it is crucial to create an enjoyable store environment and shopping experience for customers in order to positively impact their emotions and perceptions (Davidson, 2003; Ellis et al. 2013; Faircloth, 2017; Seyedi Asl et al. 2016, 2021). Additionally, various environmental cues can have varying effects on different individuals. The degree of influence depends on factors such as the purpose of the purchase and the customer's satisfaction with their shopping experience. It appears that customers seeking convenience must feel content with their overall shopping experience. A common thread among these findings is that factors within the store that influence customer perception and emotions can result in changes in buyer behavior. The present study examined how the interior decoration of the store impacts customer satisfaction, taking into account the mediating influence of service quality.

### Methods

A descriptive-correlation approach was employed in the current investigation, utilizing structural equation modeling. The study consisted of 384 customers (201 women) of various stores in Tehran, aged between 18 and 45 years (with a mean age of  $32.87 \pm 9.67$  years), who willingly participated. The research was conducted in Tehran, Iran, in the year 2022. The participants were selected through a convenience sampling method.

Jong Mei et al. developed the standard store environment questionnaire in 2008, consisting of four questions in one dimension (Baniasadi, et al. 2018). The questionnaire utilizes a five-point Likert scale (ranging from very little to very much) and has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.819. Store design factors are divided into functional (store layout, showcase, comfort, and privacy) and aesthetic (architecture, color, materials, and style) elements. These elements help retailers establish the store's identity and enhance customer shopping experiences. Social factors encompass the individuals in the store environment, such as the number, type, and behavior of salespeople and customers. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for this scale to be 0.92.

The customer satisfaction was assessed using a self-made questionnaire (Chris, et al. 2010). This questionnaire comprises 22 five-choice questions and is scored using a five-point Likert scale, with options ranging from 1=very low to 5=very high. A score of 1 indicates the lowest level of satisfaction, while a score of 5 indicates the highest level. The questionnaire demonstrated high reliability, as evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.90.

Chen (1996), Shen (1999), and Wu (2003) utilized a sports service quality questionnaire, which was later adapted by Liu in (2008). Liu (2008) developed a questionnaire to assess the quality of sports environments and facilities across various dimensions (tangibility, credibility, responsiveness, confidence, empathy). The questionnaire consists of 22 questions and 5 dimensions, and employs a five-option Likert scale to gauge the quality of sports services, including inquiries about privacy and preservation in the sports environment. This questionnaire demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.88, indicating high internal consistency.

We utilized SPSS-26 and Lisrel software to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were employed to characterize the variables. Pearson correlation test was conducted to assess the relationships between the variables. The structural equation method was applied to investigate the

impact of interior decoration of the store impacts customer satisfaction, taking into account the mediating influence of service quality. The significance level was set at  $P < 0.05$ .

**Results**

Descriptive data are presented in Table 1. Descriptive results show that in general the level of interior decoration, customer satisfaction and service quality are higher than the average. The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests revealed that all variables were normally distributed (all  $P > 0.05$ ). Results of Independent t tests showed that there were no significant differences between men and women in all variables of the study.

**Table 1.** Descriptive data

	interior decoration	customer satisfaction	service quality
Mean	2.86	33.64	28.74
SD	0.89	6.41	8.47

Bivariate relationships between interior decoration with customer satisfaction and service quality are demonstrated in Table 2. Results revealed significant direct relationship between interior decoration and customer satisfaction ( $P < 0.001$ ). Moreover, interior decoration was directly and significantly associated with service quality ( $P < 0.001$ ). Finally, service quality was directly and significantly associated with customer satisfaction ( $P < 0.001$ ).

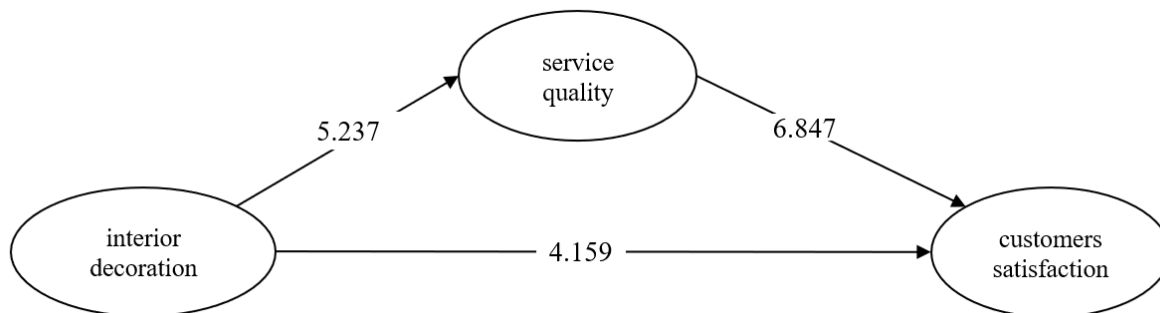
**Table 2.** Results of bivariate relationships between variables

	1	2	3
1. interior decoration	-		
2. customers satisfaction	r=0.428 P<0.001	-	
3. service quality	r=0.517 P<0.001	r=0.693 P<0.001	-

Table 3 and Figure 1 show the results of structural equation modelling. Results revealed that interior decoration significantly affected customer satisfaction ( $T=4.159$ ). Moreover, interior decoration significantly affected service quality ( $T=5.237$ ). Furthermore, service quality affected customer satisfaction ( $T=6.847$ ). Finally, service quality has significantly mediated the relationship between interior decoration and customer satisfaction ( $P < 0.001$ ). Results of model fit are presented in Table 4 and indicated that the research model has good fit.

**Table 3.** Results of structural equation modelling

Path	$\beta$	T-value
1 interior decoration => customers satisfaction	0.427	4.159
2 interior decoration => service quality	0.531	5.237
3 service quality => customers satisfaction	0.694	6.847
	Z	P-value
4 interior decoration => emotions => customers satisfaction	5.287	P<0.001



**Figure 1.** Structural equation modelling in the form of T-values

**Table 4.** Results of model fit

Index	Optimal Range	Obtained Value	Conclusion
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.06	Good fit
X <sup>2</sup> / df	< 3	2.95	Good fit
RMR	Closer to 0	0.03	Good fit
NFI	> 0.9	0.96	Good fit
CFI	> 0.9	0.95	Good fit

### Discussion

The present study examined how the interior decoration of the store impacts customer satisfaction, taking into account the mediating influence of service quality. Results revealed that interior decoration significantly affected customer satisfaction. Moreover, interior decoration significantly affected service quality. Furthermore, service quality affected customer satisfaction. Finally, service quality has significantly mediated the relationship between interior decoration and customer satisfaction. In recent times, there has been a significant growth in chain stores, which have been a key focus of the Ministry of Commerce for many years in the effort to reform the distribution system (Hazrati et al. 2022; Herrick & Ainsworth, 2003; Seyyedrezaei et al. 2021). Following a period of construction and faced with numerous challenges in the distribution sector, largely due to the chaotic economic conditions and the outdated structure of the traditional distribution system, the government was prompted to enhance the distribution landscape by introducing new chain stores into the market. In the realm of academia, research activities related to customer loyalty have been somewhat limited. However, when it comes to addressing customer orientation and loyalty, as well as developing suitable models and frameworks for service-oriented businesses, chain stores are deemed essential. Chain stores offer various advantages over traditional distribution outlets and retail stores, including a wider range of products, self-service options, time-saving benefits for customers, competitive pricing, standardization, and more (Afsanepurak et al. 2012; Sadeghipor & Aghdam, 2021a, 2021b; Taso et al. 2014).

Prior marketing research indicates that the primary determinant of a company's success and its ability to gain a competitive edge lies in the store atmosphere, which in turn enhances perceived value and customer satisfaction. This article delves into the correlations between store atmosphere, perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions (Sadeghipor et al. 2021; Vasconcelos et al. 2013). Certain scholars have argued that single-dimensional metrics are insufficient in capturing the various facets of a store, thus failing to fully encapsulate the intricacies of customer satisfaction. Consequently, it is advisable to gauge customer satisfaction across different elements and aspects of the store in studies pertaining to store satisfaction. Numerous organizations nowadays tend to invest in customers who bring little value to the organization, resulting in a waste of resources and missed opportunities for growth and profitability. It is crucial for organizations to identify the root causes of program ineffectiveness and develop strategies to enhance sales to existing customers while also attracting new ones (Hosseini, et al. 2022). The research findings indicate that stores which prioritize providing satisfactory services to customers tend to have repeat customers who return to make purchases. Similarly, stores that focus on creating a pleasant atmosphere for customers through environmental stimuli also experience repeat business. Essentially, the level of satisfaction plays a crucial role in customer retention, regardless of the time and effort spent on the initial purchase. These results offer valuable insights for Iranian marketers and retail store managers, including those in chains and supermarkets (Dana et al. 2021).

To establish an infrastructure that enhances customer service and creates a stimulating store environment to leave a lasting impression on customers, marketers and store managers should dedicate a portion of the marketing budget to store services and environmental stimuli. Given that the impact of service on satisfaction and repeat purchases outweighs that of the store atmosphere, it is advisable to prioritize resources towards improving the ease of accessing store services, especially in cases of budget constraints (Ohler et al. 2010; Ramachandra et al. 2013; Taghva et al. 2020). Seeking guidance from specialists or consultants can be beneficial, and in larger stores with multiple branches, forming training teams to assess and enhance environmental and service factors is recommended. Leveraging service and environmental factors as competitive advantages is crucial in the face of growing competition. Additionally, training store personnel to identify, create, or reinforce factors within their responsibilities can greatly contribute to enhancing the overall customer experience (Sadeghipor et al. 2021; Vasconcelos et al. 2013).

### Conclusion

Ultimately, it is evident that interior decoration plays a vital role in improving customer satisfaction. Moreover, it is important to highlight that the influence of interior decoration on customer satisfaction is strengthened by the quality of service. According to the results of this study, it is advised that businesses

concentrate on boosting and improving the aspects and elements that impact the interior decoration of stores and shopping centers. Furthermore, there should be a stronger emphasis on service quality.

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