

## Evaluating Servicescape – A Holistic Contextual Approach

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The physical surroundings of a service provider are playing a critical role in defining the quality of the service, because more than often, the service is provided and consumed simultaneously within a particular environment which is presented as a package of the service and represents an essential part of it (Bitner, 1992; Barrey, 1992; Mari & Poggese, 2011). As many researchers have focused their study on how the physical environment influence the customers' over-all experience and their subsequent evaluations and behaviors, there have emerged at least two major, intertwined research streams in the study of environmental impact - atmospherics and servicescape (Kotler, 1973; Bitner, 1992). However, despite numerous researches have been carried out, it is still difficult to accurately predict an individual's evaluation of physical surroundings (Goi et al. 2014). Several affective-cognitive models proposed by Cohen and Areni (1991), Berkowitz (1993), Forgas (1995), LeDoux (1996) and Wyer, Clore, and Isbell (1999) the interplay between physical stimulus and the perception of the stimulus give rise to the overall evaluation of the environment. Therefore, this research focuses on exploring the forming process of perception, as it is the key in projecting one's evaluation.

Literature from diverse disciplines provides theoretical foundation for developing a holistic contextual model that explores the dynamic nature of perception forming process. This research recognises the decisive role of context in forming and changing perceptions by pointing out that not only sensations moderated by contextual factors, contextual factors are also affected by sensations (Tonks, 2008; Schiffman, 1990). Similarly, it is argued that not only the context effect one's perception, perception can also change the context factors. Thus, build upon Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Stimulus-Organism-Response model and Bitner's (1992) framework of servicescape, a holistic contextual model that emphasis the importance of the context in which the service action take place, as well as the interaction between the contextual factors is presented in this research. This advanced model could provide a better understanding of perception generating and changing process, and it also contributes in the knowledge of developing context-aware technology such as context-aware mobile computing and context-aware sensing.