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Exploring Third-Place Experience Using Digital Footprints from Google Maps Coffee-Shop Reviews

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Introduction & Background

Coffee shops function as contemporary third places where consumption, repeated presence, and informal social contact overlap. Their relevance extends beyond the service encounter, supporting everyday interactions and urban social value. Visitors experience these places through spatial, social, and symbolic qualities, which makes the coffee-shop servicescape central to third-place research. Prior research treats this servicescape as multidimensional, but it remains unclear which dimensions are associated with specific customer responses at scale.

Objectives & Approach

This study examines how servicescape dimensions appear in expressed third-place experience in New York City coffee-shop reviews. It uses the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework and 105,021 Google Maps reviews to connect environmental cues, expressed affective evaluation, and customer responses. BERTopic extracts review-derived experience aspects, which are manually classified into physical, social, socially symbolic, and restorative servicescape dimensions. Product, price, and operational aspects remain in the model as controls. Sentiment toward these cues represents the organism component as an expressed affective evaluation. Responses are measured through star ratings and review-based textual signals of recommendation and revisit intention. Regression models estimate how positive and negative sentiment toward each servicescape dimension is associated with these outcomes, controlling for other stimuli.

Relevance to Digital Footprints

Google Maps reviews are used as digital footprints because they contain cues, evaluations, and response signals within the same user-generated text.

Results

The results show that servicescape dimensions relate to customer responses in different ways. Positive social and socially

symbolic sentiment is most closely associated with ratings. Recommendation sentiment is more strongly linked to social and restorative cues, while revisit sentiment is linked to physical and socially symbolic cues. Negative physical sentiment shows the most consistent decline across all three outcomes.

Conclusions & Implications

The study contributes to a digital-footprint operationalisation of the S-O-R framework for third-place research. It shows that customer responses are linked to specific servicescape dimensions, not to the coffee-shop environment as a whole. These findings can inform the design of coffee shops as commercial venues with social value in urban life. The results are limited by self-selected, platform-mediated Google Maps reviews, possible inauthentic or bot-generated content, and the focus on New York City coffee shops.

Keywords

coffee-shop servicescape, third places, google maps reviews, BERTopic, sentiment analysis

