

Customer Brand Personality, Dining Experience, and Satisfaction at Luxury Hotel Restaurants

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Abstract

The study's primary purpose is to investigate customer brand personality's effect on their dining experience and satisfaction at luxury hotel restaurants in Malaysia. Also, this study tests the mediation effect of dining experience on the brand personality and satisfaction interrelationship. A structured survey gathered empirical data from 482 luxury hotel restaurant customers. The AMOS software evaluated the research model using structural equation modelling (SEM). This study verifies that customer brand personality positively and significantly affects their dining experience and eventually influences their satisfaction with the luxury hotel restaurant services. The study findings suggest that dining experience significantly mediates the relationship between customer brand personality and satisfaction. As the brand personality concept has received considerable attention within the current business realm, these results are interesting for restaurant managers and business owners. Besides enriching the literature, this study provides essential theoretical and practical significance for restaurant owners to gain a competitive advantage through dining experience and customer brand personality characteristics.

Key Words: Luxury hotel restaurant; brand personality; dining experience; customer satisfaction.

JEL Classification: M10, M31

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1. Introduction

Customer brand personality is considered the critical factor in influencing purchase decisions (Banerjee & Phau, 2016; Freling et al., 2011; Su & Reynolds, 2019) and a vital element in boosting brand value (Davies et al., 2018; Liao et al., 2017; Varela et al., 2015). Besides, managing and maintaining the hotel restaurant food and beverage service brands and images are necessary and should be given utmost attention by restaurant managers. Notably, building a brand personality should be the restaurant's primary focus (Jogaratnam, 2017; Ryu et al., 2012; Su & Reynolds, 2019). Despite this, the influence of customer brand personality has not been holistically studied either in the general marketing fields or in the hotel restaurant realm (Chrisjatmiko, 2019; Erkmen & Hancer, 2019; Rodríguez-López et al., 2020).

Scholars have long explored the luxury goods market and its consumers, especially in travel and tourism (Ali et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2011; Yang & Matilla, 2016). Customers who choose luxury hotels think that local and international brands would perform similarly (Lee & Hwang, 2011) and expect similar quality service experiences (Meng & Elliott, 2008). Besides the desired service quality, restaurant facilities' attractiveness, exceptional food, and interaction between customers and employees are the restaurant management's concerns to meet their sophisticated customers' high expectations. Holding to this argument, a few questions were raised. First, how strong is the connection between customer brand personality and their intention to dine at a luxury hotel restaurant? Secondly, do the customer brand personality, and dining experience influence their satisfaction level and create repeat purchase behaviour? Notably, researchers claimed that a positive dining experience in the restaurant correlates with high quality of food (Mason et al., 2016), excellent services (Thielemann et al., 2018), and pleasant ambience (Ying et al., 2018). Consequently, numerous researchers highlighted that the dining experience directly influences the restaurant brand image (Yi et al., 2018; Zhong & Moon, 2020). Subsequently, these favourable customers dining experience elicits customer loyalty through positive emotion during their dining process (Hussein, 2018a, 2018b; Ong et al., 2018) and acts as a catalyser for restaurant branding (Janoskova & Kliestikova, 2018; Lo et al., 2018; Ying et al., 2018).

Abundant studies have researched restaurant operational service quality, customer attitudes, and many others. However, with regard to restaurant operation, many researchers were mainly looking at the menu design and its relation to profit (Ozdemir & Caliskan, 2014), the physical environment of restaurant operation (Horng et al., 2013; Ryu et al., 2012), restaurant design and layout (Almohaimmed, 2017; Heung & Gu, 2012), restaurant trend and theme (Liu & Tse, 2018; Meng & Choi, 2018; Nawawi et al., 2018) and food and sanitation (Al-Shabib et al., 2016; Harris et al., 2019; Ko, 2013). Still, although various researchers have studied luxury restaurant settings, minimal empirical studies have explored the relationship between customer brand personality experience (Lee & Hwang, 2011; Ismail et al., 2016) and attitudes toward luxury hotel restaurants (Harris et al., 2019). Similarly, little empirical research has been conducted on the effects of brand personality on customer behaviour within the luxury restaurant realm. Based on the gaps, this study includes brand personality, dining experience and customer behaviour in the study framework based on the luxury hotel restaurant realm.

From the service quality and restaurant services perspective, most early researchers assessed the influence of service quality on guest satisfaction (Sulek & Hensley, 2004; Wilkins et al., 2007). However, limited studies have been done concerning luxury hotel restaurants brand. Although there is no absolute definition for luxury hotel restaurants, it implies that such hotel restaurants provide luxurious dining experiences and well-trained food and beverages staff (Han & Hyun, 2017). Most of the published works on luxury hotel restaurants concentrate on customer experience, experiential value, satisfaction, brand equity, and performance (Ali et al., 2014; Han & Hyun, 2017). In addition, less research was done in emerging countries, such as the diverse Malaysian restaurant business realm (Melewar & Nguyen, 2015).

To fill the above gaps in the literature of brand personality in the luxury restaurant businesses, this study aims to determine the dimensions of brand personalities that will influence the dining experience and customer satisfaction. Accordingly, the study asks: What are the dimensions of the brand personality, and does it directly affect dining experience and customer satisfaction? By answering these questions, this study makes several contributions to the literature. First, this study justifies the effect of customer brand personality on dining experience and satisfaction at luxury hotel restaurants in Malaysia. While prior research has examined the antecedents and customer satisfaction (Becheur et al., 2017; Harris et al., 2019; Roy et al., 2016), no study specifically examines the process variables that connect customer satisfaction with brand personality perception with dining experience within luxury restaurants. This study also addresses the mediation effect of the dining experience on the brand personality and satisfaction interrelationship. While the literature converged on the idea that brand personality influences satisfaction (Hussein, 2018a, 2018b; Ong et al., 2018), this study is among the first to model the antecedents and consequences of brand personality, dining experience and customer attitude in the

context of the luxury hotel restaurant industry. The results of this study have notable implications. The theoretical implications include a better understanding of brand personality and its influence on customers' behaviour. Such knowledge offers insights into effective brand marketing strategic decisions regarding brand personality and customer relationship management within the luxury restaurant industry. On the other hand, restaurateurs with an understanding of the impact of dining experience on consumer behaviour may develop effective positioning strategies to enhance customer satisfaction.

This paper reports the relevant literature review and study hypothesis development based on the study aims and setting elaboration. This is followed by describing the research methodology, including the target population, sampling technique and survey instruments. Subsequently, the structural equation modelling assessment was described and reported. Finally, the paper concludes with the elaboration of the study findings, future research and limitations.

2. Literature review

Customer brand personality is commonly used as the personality trait or customer brand identity. Researchers utilised the concept of brand personality to distinguish the brand from the emotional aspects of the brand. Aaker (1997) defines personality traits as the patterns of personal thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and psychological mechanisms hidden or not hidden behind these patterns or the patterns in which customers express their actual or idealised self-image. According to Keller and Richey (2006), personality characteristics reflect a particular brand's value to a customer. Brand personality characteristics provide the basis for differentiation, leading to good behaviours and attitudes towards specific brands (Li et al., 2020). Under this premise, customers tend to comment more on brands and buy-back brands with favourable and distinctive characteristics (Roy et al., 2016) that resonate with their personality tendencies. Therefore, various scholars believe that the process of understanding a customer's brand personality is essential for brand marketers to increase brand performance, market share, and other core functions for successful business operations (Ali et al., 2014; Hultman et al., 2015; Molinillo, Ekinci, & Japutra, 2019; Polat & Çetinsöz, 2021). Besides, recent researchers claim that customer personality traits are an essential prerequisite for explaining and predicting human behaviour, and virtuous brand personality traits can lead to trust, loyalty or re-examination of behavioural intentions (Choi & Hyun, 2017; Jung et al., 2014; Li et al., 2020).

Most recent studies claim that customer brand personality significantly impacts customer satisfaction and is directly proportional to brand loyalty (Choi & Hyun, 2017; Kim et al., 2016; Rather & Camilleri, 2019; Sudari et al., 2019). Similarly, others confirm the positive effects of brand personality on positive emotion (Becheur et al., 2017; Roy et al., 2016), customer satisfaction (Ly, 2017; McNeil & Young, 2019), and brand loyalty (Li et al., 2020; Mabkhot et al., 2017). Most of them found that customer's brand personality increased the degree of "liking" (Jain et al., 2017; Molinillo et al., 2017) and produced positive intention or commitment (Li et al., 2020; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) toward a particular brand based on their previous experience. Notably, creating customer experience through entertainment, attention, and emotion has been part of the business activities. Researchers claimed the design and management of customers' experience and well-designed experience would build customer loyalty toward the organisation or products (Ali et al., 2016; Ieva & Ziliani, 2018). On the other hand, engaging the customers through experience, rather than just servicing them, is necessary to create value in an ever-increasing competitive business environment (Jain et al., 2017; Ong et al., 2018).

Scholars use various terms to describe the dining experience from the restaurant's perspective. The dining experience, eating out experience, restaurant experience, dining quality, and service experiences are distinct terms used interchangeably (Kement et al., 2021). Some of them divided these experiences into tangible and intangible experiences. The tangible experience is mainly associated with service elements that the customers can touch and feel, like food and beverages, ambience, and layout

(Almohaimmeed, 2017; Heung & Gu, 2012). All these attributes affect the experience quality of the customer and influence their purchase behaviour (Khan et al., 2021; Yang & Mattila, 2016; Ying et al., 2018). Meanwhile, the taste of food, efficiency of services, and staff attentiveness are intangible attributes equally important as the tangible attributes in forming a favourable customer experience (Dong & Siu, 2013; Hanks et al., 2017; Hanks & Line, 2018). Thus, for this study, assessing the tangible and intangible experiences is essential to understanding dining experiences' conceptions.

Customer satisfaction is defined as the pleasurable feeling a customer obtains from an appealing product based on an outcome or a process. In hospitality businesses, Pizam and Ellis (1999) proposed that customer satisfaction measurement serves two roles: providing information and enabling communication with customers. As reported, many restaurants struggle to satisfy their customers due to a lack of understanding of the basic building blocks of the customer satisfaction concept (Almohaimmeed, 2017; Ryu et al., 2012). In the restaurant realm, various researchers pointed out that keeping customers satisfied through food service is crucially vital for hotel restaurants to generate revenue (Meng & Choi, 2018; Yi et al., 2018; Ying et al., 2018; Zhong & Moon, 2020). Likewise, in foodservice industries, the concern was on employees' interactions with customers during the service encounter, and poor service delivery leads to poor results (Ali et al., 2014; Mason et al., 2016; McNeil & Young, 2019).

The role of employees in providing customer satisfaction and how the management acts are vital to support and motivate them as customer satisfaction is closely related to employee satisfaction (Alhelalat et al., 2017; Martinaityte et al., 2019). Besides, creating a memorable dining experience is integral to the foodservice business, including hotel restaurants. Hence, many studies have shown a strong link between brand personality and customer satisfaction (Ali et al., 2014). Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale consists of five dimensions, including Excitement (11 items), Sincerity (11 items), Competence (9 items), Sophistication (6 items) and Ruggedness (5 items). Besides, the restaurant employees also play a significant role in meeting customers' expectations and satisfaction with the services rendered (Rather & Camilleri, 2019). Hence, scholars argued that the hotel restaurant brands, which govern food, services, the physical environment, and other attributes, act as a bundle. It may influence customer dining experience (Chin & Tsai, 2013; Han & Hyun, 2017; Lee et al., 2019) and create satisfaction and post-dining behaviour (Ali et al., 2014; Ismail et al., 2016). This means that understanding the nature of customer satisfaction will depend on the degree to the customer brand personality and dining experience.

In this sense, customer brand personality is a crucial antecedent of the customer dining experience. Moreover, patron's dining experiences are the key determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Ismail et al., 2016). Based on the above discussion, two hypotheses are expressed as follows:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between customer brand personality and customer dining experience.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between the dining experience and customer satisfaction.

Many scholars posited that customers' brand personalities are critical to their purchase decision (Becheur et al., 2017; Davies et al., 2018; Li et al., 2020; Janoskova & Kliestikova, 2018; Rather & Camilleri, 2019). Customers with a strong brand personality are likelier to be loyal to a particular brand (Ieva & Ziliani, 2018; Mabkhot et al., 2017; Rather & Camilleri, 2019; Sudari et al., 2019). In contrast, the brand image's low level will create unfavourable customer behaviour (Almohaimmeed, 2017; Rather & Camilleri, 2019). On the other hand, researchers also suggest that dissatisfied customers with a dining experience might react differently (Bihanta et al., 2017). As they experience a terrible dining experience, some customers could express their discontentment to management; some might not do anything but would not return to that establishment (Almohaimmeed, 2017; Ying et al., 2018; Zhong & Moon, 2020). This implies that a customer with a high brand personality and obtained favourable dining experiences would be satisfied with the service experience and hence becomes loyal to the restaurant. Based on the past research propositions via the systematic review of the theory of value creation (Gummesson et al., 2014) and per the luxury hotel restaurant setting (Martinaityte et al., 2019; Sudari et al., 2019; Thielemann

et al., 2018), such experience lead to the favourable evaluation of the service received. Based on the above discussion, it can be hypothesised that an excellent dining experience can influence customer's dining interactions through their brand personality, which is a key factor for customer satisfaction. Based on the above discussion, a hypothesis is expressed as follows:

H₃: Dining experience mediates the relationship between customer brand personality and customer satisfaction.

3. Methods

This study investigates the effect of customer brand personality on dining experience and satisfaction at luxury hotel restaurants in Malaysia. This study also addresses the mediation effect of the dining experience on the brand personality and satisfaction interrelationship. This study adopts a cross-section approach, and the data were gathered using structured questionnaires. This study focuses on luxury hotel restaurants in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, based on the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Arts of Malaysia (2019). Specifically, this study's unit of analysis is customers over 18 years old with experience dining at a luxury hotel restaurant brand in Kuala Lumpur. The minimum sampling size (N=384) was based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling table.

The survey instrument consists of four sections, with Section A exploring the respondent demographic profile. Section B measured the customer's brand personality. Section C is concerned with their dining experience, while Section D focuses on their satisfaction behaviour. A total of 19 items were embedded in the questionnaire. The survey instruments were adopted and compiled relating to customer brand personality with seven items (Kim et al., 2016), dining experience with six items (Ying et al., 2018), and customer satisfaction with six items (Almohaimmed, 2017). A pilot study was conducted to verify and confirm the items used reliability and validity, resulting in Cronbach's alpha value of at least 0.90, indicating high reliability (Zikmund et al., 2013). A seven-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 with "strongly disagree" to 7 with "strongly agree") is utilised.

The target respondents were the hotel luxury restaurant guests, and the surveys were collected after they finished their lunch/dinner. Before distributing the survey, the researcher personally delivered the questionnaires to five respective luxury hotels and had a meeting with the hotel restaurant managers. A token of appreciation was given to the respondents who participated in the survey. A total of 500 questionnaires were collected. After the data cleaning process, 18 questionnaires were excluded as they contained missing data, and only 482 valid responses were computed for empirical analysis. The data were coded using the SPSS version 24 software and analysed using the AMOS software. First, the sample population and its distribution were reported through frequency and descriptive analysis. Next, the study model's fitness and validity were examined through the measurement model to ensure that the research framework is valid and reliable. Finally, the study hypotheses were analysed using the structural model assessment and mediation test via PROCESS proposed by Hayes et al. (2017).

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Profiles

The study population distribution and profiles are first explained in Table 1 through the frequency assessments.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis

Profiles	n	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	296	61.4
Female	186	38.6
Age		
18 to 39 years old	96	19.9
40 to 59 years old	221	45.9
60 years old and above	165	34.2
Education level		
Secondary Education	76	15.8
Undergraduate	232	48.1
Postgraduate	174	36.1
Profession		
Professional/Businessman	273	56.6
Administrative/clerical	136	28.2
Not working	73	15.1
Frequency of Dining		
First time	21	4.4
One or two times within six months	229	47.5
3 to 4 times within six months	105	21.8
5 to 6 times within six months	61	12.7
More than six times within six months	66	13.7
Reason for dining		
Leisure	34	7.1
Special occasion	98	20.3
Business matters	324	67.2
Others: Meeting friends/relatives	26	5.4
Dining companion		
Family	121	25.1
Spouse	76	15.8
Friends	131	27.2
Business associates	154	32.0

N=482

Source: own elaboration

A total of 482 respondents participated in this study. Referring to Table 1, the male respondents exceeded the female with 61.4 percent ($n = 296$) against 38.6 percent ($n=186$). The majority of respondents were between 40 to 59 years of age, which made up 45.9 percent of the total sample ($n = 221$), followed by 60 years old, which represented 34.2 percent ($n=165$), and the smallest proportion or 19.9 percent ($n=96$) were among the 18-39 years old. The highest percentage of the walk-in customers who dined at the luxury hotel restaurant was in the category of professional / businessman (56.6 percent, $n=273$) compared to administrative/clerk (28.2 percent; $n=136$) and semi-skilled and others (15.1 percent; $n=73$). Next, 4.4 percent ($n=21$) of the respondents patronised the luxury hotel restaurant for the first time, followed by 47.5 percent ($n=229$) for the second time in the six months and 21.8 percent ($n=105$) who had patronised this type of restaurant around three to four times in the six months.

Next, 12.7 percent ($n=61$) reported dining at luxury hotel restaurants between five to six times in the six months, and 13.7 percent ($n=66$) dined more than six times. On the reason of dining, 7.1 percent ($n= 34$) dined for leisure purposes, followed by 20.3 percent ($n=98$) eaten for special occasions, 67.2

percent (n=324) dined for business matters, while only 5.4 percent (n=26) dined for other reasons. 32.0 percent (n=154) of the respondents reported that their business associates accompanied them, followed by 27.2 percent (n=131) accompanied by friends, and 25.1 (n=121) dined with the family. Lastly, 15.8 percent (n=76) reported being accompanied by a spouse.

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

The research constructs were evaluated simultaneously in the measurement model assessment proposed by Hair et al. (2017) and Hanafiah (2020). Table 2 depicts the results of the measurement model evaluation.

Table 2. Measurement model assessment

	Research Variable	Loadings	Composite Reliability	AVE	Cronbach Alpha
Customer Brand Personality (items CBP1 & CBP7 removed)			0.853	0.895	0.632
CBP2	Sincerity (honest, sincere, reliable, etc.)	0.839			
CBP3	Excitement (exciting, cool, young, etc.)	0.824			
CBP4	Competence (confident, secure, etc.)	0.843			
CBP5	Sophistication (charming, upper class, etc.)	0.698			
CBP6	Ruggedness (tough, rugged, etc.)	0.760			
Dining Experience (item DE1, DE5 and DE6 removed)			0.870	0.922	0.800
DE2	The type of food offered in this luxury hotel restaurant influenced my dining experience	0.943			
DE3	Prompt and quick services render in this luxury hotel restaurant influence my dining experience	0.956			
DE4	The friendliness and attentiveness of the staff influence my dining experience at this luxury hotel restaurant	0.772			
Customer Satisfaction (item SAT1 & SAT2 removed)			0.774	0.854	0.595
SAT3	I am satisfied with the service experience offered by this luxury restaurant	0.866			
SAT4	The food prepared in these luxury hotel restaurants satisfied my palate	0.730			
SAT5	The attentiveness performed by the service staff in this luxury hotel restaurant satisfied me	0.784			

SAT6	I felt satisfied with the comfortable dining environment (seating) at this luxury hotel restaurant	0.696			
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N=482

Source: own elaboration

Table 2 reports the measurement model evaluation (loadings, reliability, convergence and discriminant validity). First, only items with loadings higher than 0.70 were retained to indicate convergent validity. Seven items were removed from the measurement model (Customer Brand Personality: CBP1 & CBP7), (Dining Experience: DE1, DE5 & DE6) (Customer Satisfaction: SAT1 & SAT2). The Cronbach Alpha is higher than 0.70 for the rest of the items, which is above the stipulated threshold level of acceptance reliability. Similarly, the AVE value is greater than 0.5, which indicates the existence of convergence validity. The study constructs incorporated in this measurement model produced high reliability in terms of composite values, with all constructs reaching values greater than 0.70, in line with the suggested score by Bagozzi and Yi (1988). Reliability evaluation or summary indicators of convergent validity based on AVE are greater than 0.50, exceeding the suggested value suggested by Fornell & Larcker (1981). The above results of composite reliability and AVE tell the study that the variance captured by the construct is greater than the variance accounted for by measurement error, thus further confirming that adequate convergence exists for all sub-models. In sum, the values of the goodness-of-fit indices suggest that the data is fit and adequate. This indicates that the measurement model for customer brand personality, dining experience, and satisfaction exhibited strong evidence of unidimensionality, convergent validity, and reliability (Hair et al., 2017). Hence, it has sufficient measurement characteristics for the second stage of the analysis process, which is the structural model evaluation.

4.3 Structural Model Assessment

The interrelationships among the variables in this study model or all the direct relationships between antecedents and consequences are simultaneously tested through structural equation assessment. The standardised estimates for hypothesised models with structural components would only be supported when it shows a good fit and all the hypothesised paths are significant (Hair et al., 2017). Table 3 reports the overall fit indices of the structural model. The structural model outputs are compared with the threshold's values. The values obtained (CMIN/DF= 2.33), RMR= 0.05; GFI= 0.858, IFI= 0.925; CFI= 0.918; RMSEA= 0.053) explicitly response or met with the thresholds showing in the column of the table which indicating that the structural model has an adequate good fit (Hair et al., 2017). Nonetheless, the GFI (0.858) was slightly below the cut-off point of 0.90, as Hair et al. (2017) proposed. However, Kline (2015) posited that three to four model fit indexes are sufficient to signify an acceptably good fit - therefore, no modifications were made to this model. In conclusion, the customer perceived value measurement model strongly indicates unidimensionality, convergent validity, and reliability.

Table 3. Structural Model Fit

Measures	Structural Model	Threshold Values
χ^2	12758.19	
df	741	
p -value	0.000	
χ^2/df	2.333	Less than 5
RMR	0.05	Nearer to 0 the better
GFI	0.858	0.900 and above

IFI	0.925	0.900 and above
CFI	0.918	0.900 and above
RMSEA	0.053	Between 0.03 and 0.08

$N=482$

Source: own elaboration

4.4 Path analysis

The subsequent analysis looks at the outer model or structural model that focuses on the relationship between the underlying exogenous and endogenous constructs. The path analysis was performed to evaluate all hypotheses and examine the direct relationships between interest variables (Hair et al., 2017). A standardised parameter with maximum likelihood estimation was used to estimate the path coefficients. Table 4 illustrates the result of the path analysis.

Table 4. **Structural path assessment**

	Structural Path	β	SE	Results
H ₁	Customer Brand Personality (CBP) → Dining Experience (DE)	0.052**	.030	Supported
H ₂	Dining Experience (DE) → Satisfaction (SAT)	2.001***	.594	Supported

Notes: ***Significant at $p < 0.01$; **Significant at $p < 0.05$

Source: own elaboration

Hypothesis one proposed a causal relationship between customer brand personality and walk-in customer dining experience. Based on the result ($\beta=0.052^{**}$; t -value= 1.743), it is confirmed that there is a strong positive relationship between the predictor and the criterion variable, which directly supports the hypothesis (H1). This result demonstrated that customer brand personality would influence the walk-in customer dining experience. The second hypothesis proposed causal relationships between the dining experience and walk-in customer satisfaction. The result ($\beta=2.001^{***}$; t -value=3.367) suggested a significant positive relationship between dining experience and walk-in customer satisfaction. Hence, the second hypothesis (H2) was supported. This result indicates that the walk-in customer dining experience at the luxury hotel restaurant influences their satisfaction.

4.5 Mediation Test

The mediation test is administered using a special PROCESS menu using 1000 bootstrap samples for bias correction and establishing 95 percent confidence intervals (Hayes, Montoya, & Rockwood, 2017). The result of the mediation test is compiled in Table 6.

Table 5. **Mediation test via PROCESS**

Path	Path	β	Results
Path (a)	CBP → DE	$\beta=0.052^{**}$	Significant
Path (b)	DE → SAT	$\beta=0.438^{***}$	Significant
Path (c)	CBP → SAT	$\beta=0.116^{**}$	Significant
Path (c')	CBP + DE → SAT	$\beta=0.095^{**}$	Significant
Indirect Effect (a*b)	CBP * DE	$\beta=.3751$ LLCI: .534	Significant

		ULCI: .193	
H ₃	Dining experience (DE) mediates the relationship between customer brand personality (CBP) and their satisfaction (SAT)	Since there is no 0 in the indirect effect (a*b) CI, the mediation effect is confirmed (Zhao et al., 2010)	Supported: Mediating effect

Notes: ***Significant at $p < 0.01$; **Significant at $p < 0.05$

Source: own elaboration

The third hypothesis tests the mediating effect of the dining experience (DE) on the relationship between customer brand personality (CBP) and their satisfaction (SAT). The result revealed that the path between customer brand personality (CBP) to the Dining Experience (DE) is significant ($\beta = 0.052^{**}$). The path between dining experience (DE) and customer satisfaction (SAT) is significant ($\beta = 0.438^{***}$). Also, findings show that the proposition that the dining experience (DE) mediated the relationship between customer brand personality (CBP) and Walk-In customer satisfaction (SAT) is significant ($\beta = 0.095^{**}$). Considering the indirect effect (a*b) shows a significant confidence interval due to the absence of zero between the lower CI and upper CI; thus, this study proposes a significant mediation effect (Hayes et al., 2017). Therefore, hypothesis three (H3) is accepted.

5. Discussion & Implication

This study proposed customer brand personality influences their dining experience. This result demonstrated that customer brand personality would influence the walk-in customer dining experience, which is in line with the notion made by other marketing researchers. This study's finding strengthens the marketing researchers' notion that customer brand personality influences their preferences, as highlighted by Banerjee and Phau (2016), Becheur et al. (2017), Mabkhot et al. (2017) and Varela et al. (2015) studies. This study confirms customer brand personality is critical to customer purchase decisions. Similarly, other researchers such as Davies et al. (2018), Liao et al. (2017) and Roy et al. (2016) also proposed customer brand personality as a vital element for strengthening business brand value.

In addition, the study result indicates that the walk-in customer dining experience at the luxury hotel restaurant influences their satisfaction. Besides, this study also confirms that customers' dining experience influences their level of satisfaction. These findings are parallel with the previous results: a favourable dining experience positively affects customer satisfaction (Ali et al., 2014; Hussein, 2018b; Ying et al., 2018). In other words, regardless of their first or repeat visits, the tangible and intangible elements that comprehend the customer dining experience act as a precursor for their satisfaction (Ying et al., 2018). As customer brand personality is expressed and highlighted through dining experience, various scholars strongly argued that customer brand personality leads to satisfaction and directly increases their trust and loyalty (Choi & Hyun, 2017; Kim et al., 2016; Ly, 2017).

This study also confirmed that the dining experience mediates the relationship between customer brand personality and satisfaction. Notably, restaurant-based scholars proposed that customer's brand personalities, together with a positive experience, would enhance the level of satisfaction. Specifically, they suggested that brand personality induces consumer emotions (Erkmen & Hancer, 2019) and increases consumer preference and satisfaction (Lo et al., 2018). Besides, limited research explores the roles of customer experience in influencing brand personality and customer behaviour. Based on the result, providing a memorable dining experience is vital for every restaurant operation. The level of satisfaction obtained from such experience will elevate their intention towards re-patronisation.

This study confirms the effect of customer brand personality on dining experience and satisfaction at luxury hotel restaurants. This study empirically highlights the mediation effect of the dining experience on the brand personality and satisfaction interrelationship. Based on the result of this study, the most important aspects that the hotel food and beverage director, restaurant managers and restaurant operators should be aware of are the cause and effect of brand attributes on the walk-in customer dining experience. This indicates that the restaurant brand components, through food quality, service quality, and physical environment provided by the hotel restaurant can attract in-house guests and walk-in customers. The brand personality and the restaurant's components strongly influence the walk-in customers' dining experience at five-star hotel restaurants. Therefore, the restaurant managers and the independent restaurant operators should not overlook this optimistic attitude held by the walk-in customers but rather concentrate on maintaining or uplifting the restaurant brand attributes by providing the quality of food, excellent service, and a pleasant restaurant environment to the customers.

The study result explicitly indicates that customer brand personality strongly influences the dining experience. Besides, this study empirically demonstrated that customer brand personality or brand-conscious affects their satisfaction. The study provides insight to the hoteliers that customer brand personality should be considered an essential feature to improve customer satisfaction, leading to loyal customers and attracting new customers. The results offer the latest understanding of restaurant customer behaviour and the fundamental basis for other researchers to expand into a broader scope, particularly concerning luxury restaurant services and customer brand personality. This study suggests that customer brand personality is indispensable in strengthening customer satisfaction. Besides, the significant impact through the mediating role of dining experience confirms that customer brand personality and the favourable dining experience exhibit high satisfaction, leading to loyalty and positive word of mouth.

6. Conclusion

Attracting and retaining customers is essential for restaurant performance. As walk-in customers and in-house guests are part of the business strategy, understanding how customer brand personality influences their dining experience and its consequences is crucial and need further research. In this sense, the customers' patronisation is typically obtained by providing good food and services. This study explores the effect of customer brand personality on dining experience and satisfaction at luxury hotel restaurants. Providing a poor service delivery system to customers in any restaurant operation, including the hotel restaurant, may result in their inability to attract new, maintain or keep the regular ones. Failure to maintain the overall service delivery may make customers feel their restaurant expectations are unmet and be disappointed with their patronage. This may further affect their dining mood and diminish their repeat patronage. If these practices continue, restaurant revenue and the investment of money in the restaurant will be wasted. Other determinants such as physical environment also affect the customer dining inclinations, and the components of these three elements make up the brands' attributes for the restaurants. This study also addresses the intervening effect of the dining experience on the brand personality and satisfaction interrelationship. It is apparent that the level of sustainability of each restaurant besides the other depends on the ability of the restaurant management and operators to improve the dining experience. In other words, besides having a solid restaurant brand, offering a favourable dining experience might significantly impact attracting new and retaining existing customers.

The results of this study have notable theoretical and practical implications. This study contributes to luxury hotel marketing research by offering new insights into luxury restaurant customers' behaviour. Notably, this study highlighted the importance of brand personality and its associates with customer satisfaction-dining inter-relationship experience. It is generally agreed upon that the greater the dining experience, the greater the customer satisfaction. This logic acts as a basis for the finding that brand personality, particularly competence, serves as a critical determinant of customer satisfaction-dining

experience inter-relationship. In other words, it was found that customers tend to associate the luxury restaurant with their brand personalities, which in turn enhances their satisfaction with the restaurants' services.

Meanwhile, as the brand personality concept has received considerable attention within the current business realm, these results are interesting for restaurant managers and business owners. The study findings proposed practical information for restaurant owners to gain a competitive advantage by managing their customers' dining experience and focusing on their brand personality characteristics. Besides, a better understanding of the customers' expectations and experience would also provide restaurant operators with valuable information so their operation management techniques can be more customer-centric, improving customer satisfaction and repeat patronage. The researchers hoped that the recommendations and information from this study would better understand other elements that contribute to natterier gritty aspects of restaurant operations. Knowing and understanding the weaknesses and strengths of those parameters can help restaurant operators position themselves well and be more competitive in the ever-growing restaurant businesses.

This research possessed limitations that should be considered. First, the study's methodological approach or time horizon is the apparent limitation. Despite giving meaningful results, as argued by many researchers, the cross-sectional design can only tap the opinion of the samples or respondents on the issues of interest with less definite conclusions. Despite being costly and time-consuming, the mixed-method research design could provide more robust inferences for causality and improve the understanding of the dynamics of the walk-in customers' dining behaviour. The second pertains to the generalisability of the findings. The present investigation only dealt with the overall walk-in customers without looking or specifically focusing on the customer with brand personality characteristics; thus, generalisations of the study findings must be inferred cautiously. Therefore, the study's centrally looking at the high and low brand-conscious individuals should be encouraged in future.

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