



Received: 11-06-2026
Accepted: 21-07-2026

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

The Impact of Servicescape on Customers' Positive Emotions and Revisit Intention toward Restaurants in Sa Pa Ward

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62225/2583049X.2026.6.4.6690>

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Abstract

The restaurant servicescape understood as the physical and social environment that customers perceive while consuming a foodservice experience has long been regarded as a tangible marketing instrument, yet its role in mountainous tourism destinations remains insufficiently examined. Drawing on the Stimulus Organism–Response framework of Mehrabian and Russell ^[1] and the DINESCAPE instrument of Ryu and Jang ^[2], this study measures the effects of seven servicescape dimensions on customers' positive emotions and revisit intention in restaurants located in Sa Pa Ward, Lao Cai Province, Viet Nam. The model is extended by adding the dimension of “natural scenic view and local authenticity”, an environmental stimulus specific to highland destinations. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to diners who had just finished a meal at restaurants within the ward, using convenience sampling with quotas allocated across sub-areas and time slots; the

analytical sample comprised 412 valid responses. The measurement and structural models were tested by means of confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling. The results show that positive emotions are influenced most strongly by scenic view and local authenticity, followed by facility aesthetics, service staff, cleanliness and ambient conditions, whereas the effects of spatial layout and table settings are weaker but still statistically significant. Positive emotions partially mediate the relationship between servicescape and revisit intention. Multi-group analysis indicates that international visitors respond more strongly to local authenticity, while domestic visitors are more sensitive to facility aesthetics and thermal comfort. The study proposes managerial implications concerning restaurant design that is integrated with the surrounding landscape and local culture, thermal comfort management under cold and humid climatic conditions, and crowding management during peak seasons.

Keywords: Servicescape, Positive Emotions, Revisit Intention, Restaurants, Sa Pa, S-O-R Model

1. Introduction

1.1 Research background

Eating and drinking is no longer a derived activity within a trip; it has become one of the principal motives driving travellers' choice of destination. In many markets, spending on foodservice accounts for roughly one quarter to one third of tourists' total expenditure, and a meal is often the longest and most concentrated point of contact between a visitor and a local business during a day of sightseeing. Consequently, the restaurant experience is capable of shaping the overall evaluation of a destination to an extent that far exceeds its share of expenditure. A pleasant meal in a warm room overlooking a mist-covered valley may become the central memory of an entire trip; conversely, a meal taken in a cramped, noisy, cold and unhygienic space may cast a shadow over the whole itinerary even when every other service has been satisfactory.

Sa Pa is a representative case for observing this phenomenon. After more than a decade of rapid growth, particularly since the Fansipan cable car system came into operation, visitor arrivals in Sa Pa rose from fewer than one million per year before 2016 to more than 4.3 million in 2025, with total tourism receipts of approximately VND 19 trillion ^[3]. At the provincial level, Lao Cai welcomed about 10.5 million visitors in 2025 with estimated total receipts of VND 46 trillion ^[4], and in the first six months of 2026 alone it received nearly 6.75 million visitors generating more than VND 25.37 trillion ^[5]. This growth has been accompanied by a proliferation of foodservice establishments, ranging from restaurants specialising in sturgeon hotpot, tile-grilled dishes and bamboo-tube rice for tour groups, to café-restaurants with valley views and dining spaces built around the vernacular architecture and materials of the Hmong, Red Dao and Tay peoples.

In administrative terms, the study area has recently undergone an important change as part of the nationwide administrative reorganisation of 2025, under which Yen Bai and Lao Cai provinces were merged into a single province named Lao Cai [6]. Under Resolution No. 1673/NQ-UBTVQH15 of 2025 issued by the Standing Committee of the National Assembly [7], the six former wards of Sa Pa Town — Ham Rong, O Quy Ho, Sa Pa, Cau May, Phan Si Pang and Sa Pa — were reorganised into a single new administrative unit named Sa Pa Ward, effective from 1 July 2025 [8]. Sa Pa Ward therefore covers almost the entire core of the tourism urban area, where the density of restaurants, hotels and shopping outlets is the highest within the Sa Pa National Tourism Area. Adopting Sa Pa Ward as the spatial scope of the study is consistent with the current administrative division and, at the same time, ensures relative homogeneity in competitive conditions, commercial rents, climatic characteristics and the structure of visitor flows.

1.2 Research problem

Competitive pressure in the core area of Sa Pa is currently addressed mainly through two instruments: Price and food. Preliminary observations made by the author during fieldwork indicate that many restaurants improve their menus, invest in signage and run seasonal promotions, yet pay comparatively little attention to the quality of the consumption environment: Insufficient heating on days when temperatures fall below 10°C, cooking-oil odours spreading through the dining area, resonant noise when several tour groups are received simultaneously, excessively narrow circulation routes between tables and deteriorating sanitary facilities. Meanwhile, another group of businesses has taken the opposite direction, investing heavily in views, lighting, local materials and visual experience, and maintaining considerably higher prices for comparable dishes.

This divergence raises a specific managerial question: How much does the restaurant servicescape contribute to customers' emotional and behavioural responses at a highland tourism destination, and which servicescape components should be prioritised for investment when resources are limited? The question is all the more pertinent because the structure of visitor flows in Sa Pa is markedly seasonal and the proportion of first-time visitors is relatively high, which leads many restaurant owners to believe that long-term investment in the physical environment is unnecessary because “customers come only once”. If revisit intention is indeed substantially influenced by the servicescape through emotions, that argument will need to be reconsidered, especially as Sa Pa increasingly attracts visitors who return several times a year thanks to the shorter travelling distance from Hanoi afforded by the Noi Bai – Lao Cai expressway.

1.3 Research gap

Since the foundational work of Bitner [9] on the servicescape, a substantial body of research has confirmed that the physical environment influences customers' cognition, emotions and behaviour in restaurant settings [10, 11, 12, 13]. Three gaps nevertheless remain.

First, most quantitative studies of the restaurant servicescape have been conducted in upscale or urban restaurant contexts in the United States, South Korea, China

and several European countries. The scales developed in these settings — DINESCAPE [2] being the most representative — focus on interior elements that are fully controllable by the business, and do not account for external environmental stimuli such as views of natural scenery or the vernacular character of the architecture, which are central at mountain tourism destinations.

Second, the mediating mechanism of emotions in the relationship between the servicescape and behavioural intention has been tested repeatedly, but the findings are not entirely consistent regarding whether the mediation is full or partial, and regarding which servicescape components affect behavioural intention directly without passing through emotions [14, 15]. The tourism context, in which customers are typically in a leisure state of mind and hold expectations that differ from those governing everyday dining, provides a valuable testing environment for this debate.

Third, in Viet Nam, research on customer satisfaction and loyalty toward restaurants has largely approached the subject from the perspective of overall service quality or food quality; the servicescape usually appears merely as a minor component within a quality scale and is rarely decomposed into dimensions detailed enough to yield concrete design implications. With specific regard to Sa Pa, no quantitative study focusing on the relationships among the restaurant servicescape, emotions and revisit intention has been published in the domestic academic outlets accessible to the author.

1.4 Research objectives and questions

The study pursues four objectives: (1) to identify and measure the servicescape components that are meaningful in the restaurant context of Sa Pa Ward; (2) to assess the effect of each component on customers' positive emotions; (3) to test the mediating role of positive emotions in the relationship between the servicescape and revisit intention; and (4) to compare the mechanism of influence between domestic and international visitors, as well as between first-time and returning visitors, in order to propose managerial implications appropriate to each segment.

Three research questions follow accordingly. First, which dimensions constitute the restaurant servicescape in Sa Pa Ward, and which of them are perceived most clearly by customers? Second, what are the magnitude and the rank order of the effects of these dimensions on positive emotions and revisit intention? Third, does the mechanism of influence differ across customer segments?

1.5 Contributions

Theoretically, the study extends the restaurant servicescape scale by means of a dimension specific to highland destinations, thereby contributing to the debate on the cultural and contextual transferability of servicescape instruments. Practically, the study provides an evidence-based order of investment priorities for small and medium-sized restaurants in Sa Pa, and suggests a number of items that could be incorporated into the service quality management criteria applied by local tourism authorities.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

2.1 The servicescape: From “atmospherics” to servicescape

The idea that the physical environment can be used as a marketing instrument was advanced by Kotler [16] through

the concept of “atmospherics” — the deliberate design of retail space in order to produce specific emotional effects that increase the probability of purchase. Kotler argued that in many situations the “product” customers actually consume is not a tangible good but the totality of an experience enveloped by space, and that space therefore becomes part of the product. Baker^[17] subsequently classified environmental cues into ambient, design and social factors, a taxonomy that has shaped much of the later work in this stream. Donovan and Rossiter^[18] were the first to place the argument within a rigorous empirical framework, drawing on environmental psychology to demonstrate that store atmosphere affects behaviour through emotional states rather than directly.

Bitner^[9] systematised this research stream into the concept of the servicescape, understood as the physical environment created and controlled by the firm, in which the service is produced, delivered and consumed. Bitner divided the servicescape into three groups of factors: Ambient conditions, comprising temperature, air quality, noise, music, scent and lighting; spatial layout and functionality, comprising the arrangement of machinery, equipment and furnishings and their ability to serve customers' goals; and signs, symbols and artifacts, comprising signage, decorative objects and finishing materials. An important feature of Bitner's framework is that the servicescape affects not only customers but also employees, and that the responses of these two groups interact to produce social behaviour within the service space.

In foodservice, two subsequent lines of development deserve attention. The first is the refinement of measurement. Ryu and Jang^[2] developed the DINESCAPE scale, which comprises six dimensions specific to full-service restaurants: Facility aesthetics, lighting, ambience, layout, table settings and service staff. Separating table settings and service staff into independent dimensions reflects the particular nature of the dining experience, in which customers remain seated for a long period and come into close contact with tableware as well as with service personnel. The second line is the extension of the concept toward its social dimension. Tombs and McColl-Kennedy^[19] proposed the “social servicescape” model, emphasising that customer density and the emotional displays of others present in the space constitute an independent source of stimulation. Rosenbaum and Massiah^[20] synthesised and extended the construct into four dimensions — physical, social, socially symbolic and natural — in which the natural dimension encompasses psychologically restorative elements such as greenery, natural light and views of nature. Hanks and Line^[21] provided empirical evidence that the social servicescape in restaurants influences customer evaluations independently of the physical servicescape.

In the present study, the restaurant servicescape is defined as the totality of physical, social and natural environmental stimuli that customers perceive throughout their use of a foodservice offering, from the moment they approach the premises until they leave. This definition retains the physical focus of Bitner^[9] while extending it, following Rosenbaum and Massiah^[20], to encompass views of natural scenery — an element that restaurants in Sa Pa can actively select, exploit and price through decisions about location, orientation and façade design.

2.2 The Stimulus–Organism–Response framework

The principal theoretical foundation of the study is the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model developed by Mehrabian and Russell^[1] in environmental psychology. According to this model, environmental stimuli (S) do not act directly upon behaviour but first alter the internal state of the organism (O), and it is this internal state that gives rise to approach or avoidance responses (R). Mehrabian and Russell proposed three basic emotional dimensions as mediators — pleasure, arousal and dominance — of which the third has commonly been discarded in later work because of its low reliability and its limited discriminant validity in consumption settings^[18, 22].

The S-O-R framework was chosen in preference to purely cognitive frameworks for three reasons. First, a meal at a tourism destination is strongly hedonic in nature, experiential value accounting for a larger share than functional value, and emotion is therefore often the dominant route of information processing^[23]. Second, many servicescape attributes — temperature, scent, noise level, view — are perceived pre-attentively; customers find them difficult to appraise through articulate cognitive reasoning, yet they generate clear emotional responses. Third, studies in the restaurant field have consistently confirmed the suitability of this framework: Ryu and Jang^[10] demonstrated that environmental perceptions affect behavioural intention through pleasure and arousal; Jang and Namkung^[14] extended the S-O-R model by placing quality dimensions in the position of stimuli; and Liu and Jang^[15] tested an extended model incorporating positive and negative emotions simultaneously.

In the model proposed here, the seven servicescape components occupy the position of stimuli, customers' positive emotions occupy the position of the organism's state, and revisit intention constitutes the approach response.

2.3 Positive emotions in foodservice consumption

Consumption emotions are understood as affective responses arising during or after the use of a product or service, of lower intensity and shorter duration than moods yet strong enough to direct behaviour^[24]. Watson, Clark and Tellegen^[25] showed that positive and negative affect are not two poles of a single axis but two largely independent constructs, which means that removing a source of discomfort does not automatically generate positive emotion, and vice versa. This finding carries a direct managerial implication: A restaurant that has eliminated unpleasant odours and noise has not necessarily created enjoyment for its guests; generating positive emotions requires additive stimuli such as aesthetics, views and attention to detail.

The present study focuses on positive emotions for three reasons. First, its managerial objective is to identify the factors worth investing in so as to create added value, rather than merely to compile a list of faults to be corrected. Second, in a tourism context, positive emotions are constitutive of experiential memory and are therefore closely linked to revisit intention and word of mouth. Third, measuring both poles of affect within a short field questionnaire administered inside a restaurant would considerably increase the length of the instrument and the rate of abandonment, a practical constraint taken into

account in the research design.

A number of studies have confirmed the role of positive emotions in restaurant and hotel settings. Lin ^[26] described how servicescape attributes are processed through both cognitive and affective channels before an overall evaluation is formed. Kim and Moon ^[27] showed that emotional responses to the servicescape differ by restaurant type, with themed restaurants exhibiting higher coefficients than quick-service restaurants. Jani and Han ^[28] demonstrated that emotions bridge environmental stimuli and the loyalty of hotel guests, and are moderated by personality traits. Slåtten *et al.* ^[29], in a case study of a winter park, found that atmospheric experiences capable of emotionally touching customers are an important source of differentiation at nature-based destinations — a context closely comparable to Sa Pa.

2.4 Revisit intention

Revisit intention is the subjective probability, as assessed by customers themselves, that they will use an establishment's services again in the future. It is one of the components of favourable behavioural intention proposed by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman ^[30], alongside positive word of mouth, willingness to pay more and price sensitivity. Within Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour ^[31], intention is the closest predictor of actual behaviour and is therefore widely used as an outcome variable in services marketing research when tracking actual behaviour is not feasible.

In a tourism context, revisit intention toward a specific restaurant has a particular characteristic: It is constrained by the intention to revisit the destination. A customer may be highly satisfied yet still record a low score for revisit intention because they do not plan to return to Sa Pa in the near future. For this reason, the scale used in this study is worded conditionally — “if I have the opportunity to return to Sa Pa, I will...” — in order to separate intention toward the restaurant from intention toward the destination, an approach similar to that adopted by Kim, Ng and Kim ^[32] in measuring return intention among transient restaurant patrons.

The relationship between emotions and behavioural intention is well established. Oliver ^[33] laid the foundation for treating post-consumption responses as antecedents of intention; Cronin, Brady and Hult ^[34] demonstrated that quality, value and satisfaction all contribute to behavioural intention in service environments; and Namkung and Jang ^[35] showed that emotions mediate the relationship between perceived service fairness and behavioural intention in restaurants. Ryu and Han ^[36] added an important nuance by finding that the influence of the physical environment on the dining experience differs between new and repeat customers, thereby motivating the multi-group analyses conducted in this study.

2.5 Hypothesis development

2.5.1 Facility aesthetics

Facility aesthetics comprises architecture, colour, pictures, decorative objects, finishing materials and the overall visual style of the restaurant. This is the most extensively studied dimension and the one yielding the highest coefficients in many DINESCAPE-based models ^[2, 37], because aesthetics is the first stimulus customers encounter and serves as a signal of the quality of attributes that are difficult to observe, such as ingredient freshness or the chef's skill. Baker *et al.* ^[38]

similarly found that design and ambient cues shape perceived merchandise value and patronage intentions through inferences about quality. In Sa Pa, facility aesthetics additionally carries the function of conveying the destination narrative: Wood, stone, brocade, a fireplace and warm amber lighting are elements that visitors associate with their pre-existing image of an evening in the mountains. Accordingly:

H1: Facility aesthetics has a positive effect on customers' positive emotions.

2.5.2 Ambient conditions

Ambient conditions in this study combine lighting, music, temperature, ventilation and scent — the factors Bitner ^[9] termed ambient conditions. Merging lighting into this dimension rather than treating it separately, as in the original DINESCAPE, is based on the findings of the preliminary qualitative study, in which respondents repeatedly mentioned lighting together with the sensation of warmth and with kitchen aromas as an inseparable cluster of perceptions in mountain restaurants. Turley and Milliman ^[39] synthesised experimental evidence showing that ambient variables have consistent but often weaker-than-expected effects when considered in isolation, and stronger effects when perceived as a coherent whole. In Sa Pa, thermal comfort is of particular importance: Average winter temperatures are low, humidity is high, fog is dense, and poorly managed cold and damp is one of the most common complaints among visitors. Therefore:

H2: Ambient conditions have a positive effect on customers' positive emotions.

2.5.3 Spatial layout and density

Spatial layout reflects the arrangement of furniture, circulation routes and functional zones, and the ease of movement within the space. Wakefield and Blodgett ^[40] showed that in leisure service environments, layout affects perceived quality and the intention to stay through the sense of spatial comfort; in a subsequent study they further demonstrated that tangible environmental factors and intangible service factors influence customer responses through partly distinct paths ^[41]. Customer density is the second aspect of the same issue: Once the number of people per unit of floor area exceeds a threshold, a sense of crowding emerges and may neutralise the positive effects of other elements. This is a salient problem in Sa Pa at weekends, on public holidays and during snow-chasing periods, when many restaurants add unplanned tables in order to maximise short-term revenue. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

H3: A well-designed spatial layout has a positive effect on customers' positive emotions.

2.5.4 Table settings

Table settings comprise the quality and consistency of plates, glasses, cutlery and napkins, the presentation of dishes and the decorative details placed on the table. Ryu and Jang ^[2] confirmed that this constitutes a distinct dimension with discriminant validity in full-service restaurants. Psychologically, table settings are stimuli within the near visual field and are also experienced through touch, and they can therefore convey a sense of care and professionalism disproportionate to their share of costs. Given that many restaurants in Sa Pa serve communal dishes cooked on hotpot burners or charcoal grills, the consistency and cleanliness of utensils are all the more readily noticed. Hence:

H4: Table settings have a positive effect on customers' positive emotions.

2.5.5 Service staff as a servicescape element

Within DINESCAPE, service staff enter the servicescape scale in their tangible and symbolic aspects — the number of staff, their uniforms, their appearance and their manner of presence in the space — rather than as service interaction quality in the SERVQUAL sense. This approach is consistent with the social servicescape model of Tombs and McColl-Kennedy ^[19] and with the evidence reported by Hanks and Line ^[21]. In Sa Pa, service staff also function as a marker of authenticity: Many establishments employ local ethnic minority workers who wear traditional or modernised traditional dress, which has the potential to generate positive emotions associated with authenticity while also carrying the risk of being perceived as staged if it appears contrived. The hypothesis is:

H5: Service staff, in their tangible and symbolic aspects, have a positive effect on customers' positive emotions.

2.5.6 Cleanliness

Cleanliness is treated as an independent dimension rather than being merged into aesthetics, on two grounds. Theoretically, cleanliness has the character of a “must-have” or hygiene factor: Its presence does not generate strong satisfaction, but its absence provokes intense negative reactions that overshadow other elements. Practically, the kitchen area, the sanitary facilities and the floor are most frequently in online reviews of restaurants at Vietnamese destinations. The study by Ha and Jang ^[42] on ethnic restaurants likewise indicates that tangible attributes related to hygiene carry particular weight when customers are still unfamiliar with the cuisine being served. Accordingly:

H6: Cleanliness has a positive effect on customers' positive emotions.

2.5.7 Natural scenic view and local authenticity

This dimension is added to the original DINESCAPE and comprises two closely related sets of content: The ability to observe natural scenery from one's seat (valleys, terraced fields, mountains, clouds, greenery and natural light) and the extent to which elements of local culture are present in the space (materials, patterns, objects, music and the way the story of the place is told). The theoretical basis for this addition lies in the “natural” dimension of the extended framework of Rosenbaum and Massiah ^[20], according to which natural elements have psychologically restorative and stress-reducing effects that in turn enhance emotional states. Ali, Kim and Ryu ^[43] add another important argument by showing that national identity moderates the relationship between the physical environment and customer delight, implying that cultural cues within a space are not perceived identically across segments. Given the specific character of Sa Pa, where the core value of the destination is precisely its landscape and its ethnic cultures, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7: Natural scenic view and local authenticity have a positive effect on customers' positive emotions.

2.5.8 Positive emotions, revisit intention and the mediating role

Following the logic of the S-O-R framework, emotional states lead to approach responses, of which revisit intention is a typical manifestation. Empirical evidence in the restaurant field consistently supports this relationship ^[10, 11, 14]. Therefore:

H8: Positive emotions have a positive effect on revisit intention.

The next question is whether the servicescape influences revisit intention in any way other than through emotions. Theoretically, certain servicescape attributes may be processed cognitively: Customers may note that a restaurant is clean and has an attractive view and treat this as a rational selection criterion for a future occasion, independently of whether they felt pleasure during the present meal. Studies of partial mediation in this field ^[12, 15] support the possibility that direct and indirect paths coexist. This study therefore tests:

H9: Positive emotions mediate the relationship between the servicescape components and revisit intention.

Finally, on the basis of the finding of Ali *et al.* ^[43] concerning the role of national identity, of Ryu and Han ^[36] concerning differences between new and repeat customers, and of the market structure of Sa Pa, in which domestic and international flows have distinct travel motives, the last hypothesis is proposed:

H10: The mechanism through which the servicescape affects positive emotions and revisit intention differs between domestic and international visitors, as well as between first-time and returning visitors.

2.6 Proposed research model

The research model comprises seven first-order independent constructs representing the servicescape components, one mediating construct, namely positive emotions, and one dependent construct, namely revisit intention. Direct paths from the seven servicescape components to revisit intention are included in the model in order to test the hypothesis of partial mediation. Two grouping variables — nationality (domestic/international) and number of visits to Sa Pa (first-time/returning) — are used in the multi-group analysis. Three control variables — age group, average expenditure per meal and travel arrangement (independent/organised group) — are included in order to reduce the risk of biased estimation.

Fig 1: Proposed research model

Stimulus (S)	Organism (O)	Response (R)
Facility aesthetics (AES)		
Ambient conditions (AMB)		
Spatial layout (LAY)	Positive emotions (PEM)	Revisit intention (RIN)
Table settings (TAB)		
Service staff (STA)		
Cleanliness (CLE)		
Scenic view and local authenticity (VIA)		

Note: H1–H7 are the paths from the seven servicescape components to PEM; H8 is the path PEM → RIN; H9 is the mediating effect; H10 is the multi-group test. The direct paths from the servicescape components to RIN are estimated simultaneously.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study employs a mixed-methods design following an exploratory–confirmatory sequence. The first phase is qualitative and aims to adapt the measurement instrument to the research context and to establish the content of the additional dimension concerning scenic view and local authenticity. The second phase is the main quantitative study, conducted by means of a structured questionnaire in

order to test the measurement and structural models. This design is appropriate when a researcher applies an instrument validated in another context and needs to ensure content validity before undertaking large-scale measurement [44].

3.2 Preliminary qualitative study

Two rounds of semi-structured interviews were conducted in March 2026. The first round involved nine practitioners based in the area: Four restaurant owners or managers of establishments with between 60 and 200 seats, two head chefs, two tour guides who regularly lead groups in Sa Pa, and one officer of the ward's culture and information division. The second round involved fourteen customers who had just finished a meal, three of whom were international visitors; these interviews were conducted on site and lasted between ten and twenty minutes.

The interviews focused on which features of the restaurant space customers mentioned spontaneously and on how they articulated their emotions. Three important adjustments emerged. First, lighting was almost never mentioned in isolation but always in conjunction with the sensation of warmth and with the aroma of food, and these three elements were therefore combined into a single ambient conditions dimension rather than treating lighting as an

independent dimension as in the original instrument. Second, cleanliness was mentioned with the highest frequency among domestic visitors and invariably as a minimum requirement, which provided sufficient grounds for treating it as a separate dimension. Third, both practitioners and customers emphasised the view and the "Sa Pa character" of the space as a criterion for selecting a restaurant independently of food quality, confirming the necessity of the additional VIA dimension.

The revised questionnaire was pilot-tested with 48 customers at the end of March 2026. Preliminary Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all scales exceeded 0.70; two observed variables with corrected item-total correlations below 0.30 were deleted, and one item was rewritten to improve clarity in the English version.

3.3 Measurement

All observed variables were measured on five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was developed in Vietnamese, translated into English and back-translated independently by two qualified translators in order to ensure semantic equivalence. The structure of the instrument and its sources are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Measurement instrument and sources

Construct	Code	Observed variable (abbreviated)	Source
Facility aesthetics	AES1	The architecture and decoration of the restaurant are attractive	[2, 37]
	AES2	The colours and interior materials create a pleasant feeling	
	AES3	Pictures, photographs and decorative objects are selected with taste	
	AES4	Overall, the restaurant space is beautiful	
Ambient conditions	AMB1	The temperature inside the restaurant is comfortable	[2, 9, 13]
	AMB2	The lighting is appropriate for a meal	
	AMB3	The music and the noise level are acceptable	
	AMB4	The space is well ventilated and free from cooking-oil or smoke odours	
Spatial layout	LAY1	The arrangement of tables and chairs is comfortable	[9, 40]
	LAY2	The distance between tables affords sufficient privacy	
	LAY3	The circulation routes and the way to the restrooms are convenient	
	LAY4	The density of guests in the restaurant does not create a feeling of crowding	
Table settings	TAB1	The plates, glasses and cutlery are of good quality	[2]
	TAB2	The items on the table are consistent and neatly arranged	
	TAB3	The presentation of the dishes when served is appealing	
Service staff	STA1	The staff have a neat and appropriate appearance and uniform	[2, 21]
	STA2	The number of staff in the service area is sufficient	
	STA3	The staff are present at the right moments, so that I never feel neglected	
Cleanliness	CLE1	The floor, tables and chairs are clean	[32, 42]
	CLE2	The restrooms are clean and adequately equipped	
	CLE3	The kitchen or preparation area that I could observe is clean	
Scenic view and local authenticity	VIA1	From my seat I can see the natural scenery of Sa Pa	[20, 43], developed from the qualitative study
	VIA2	The restaurant space has abundant natural light and greenery	
	VIA3	The materials, patterns and objects in the restaurant bear the imprint of local culture	
	VIA4	The restaurant space makes me feel the distinctive character of Sa Pa	
Positive emotions	PEM1	During the meal I felt cheerful	[1, 14, 25]
	PEM2	I felt relaxed and at ease	
	PEM3	I felt excited	
	PEM4	I was satisfied with the atmosphere of the meal	
Revisit intention	RIN1	If I have the opportunity to return to Sa Pa, I will come back to this restaurant	[30, 32]
	RIN2	I will give this restaurant priority over other restaurants in Sa Pa	
	RIN3	I will recommend this restaurant to friends and relatives	
	RIN4	I am willing to pay slightly more in order to dine here	

The measurement model thus comprises 33 observed variables for nine constructs. Item RIN4 was retained even though it belongs to the domain of willingness to pay more, because Zeithaml *et al.*^[30] regard this as an indicator of favourable behavioural intention and because, in the Sa Pa context, the ability to sustain a price premium is a managerially relevant consequence of investment in the servicescape.

3.4 Sample and data collection

The research population comprises tourists aged 18 and over who had eaten at least one main meal at a restaurant within Sa Pa Ward during their current trip. The sampling method was convenience sampling with quota allocation, in order to ensure diversity, applying three allocation criteria. Spatially, the sample was collected at restaurants located in five sub-areas corresponding to the territories of the former wards now constituting Sa Pa Ward, namely the central axis around the Stone Church and the Square, the Fansipan – Cau May street area, the Sa Pa sub-area, the Ham Rong sub-area and the O Quy Ho sub-area. Temporally, data were collected on both weekdays and weekends, and at both lunch and dinner. In terms of establishment type, the sample includes restaurants catering primarily to tour groups, medium-sized à la carte restaurants, and restaurants and eateries with scenic views.

With regard to sample size, following the rule of a minimum of five observations per measured variable^[45], a model with 33 observed variables requires at least 165 responses; in order to satisfy the requirements of multi-group analysis across four subgroups, the target sample size was set at 400. Across three survey waves in April and May 2026, 465 questionnaires were distributed and returned; after 53 questionnaires were discarded because of incomplete answers, fixed response patterns or failure to meet the screening criteria, the analytical sample consisted of 412 responses, corresponding to a valid response rate of 88.6%. Questionnaires were distributed directly to guests at the end of their meal, when impressions of the environment were still fresh but the experience had been completed. Three field interviewers were trained beforehand in how to approach respondents, how to explain the scales and the principle of not prompting answers. For international visitors, the English version was used together with clarification on request. Data collection was carried out with the consent of the manager of each establishment and of each respondent; the questionnaire collected no names, telephone numbers or any other personally identifying information, and respondents were informed that they could withdraw at any time.

3.5 Data analysis methods

Data were processed using SPSS 26 and AMOS 24 in five steps. The first step comprised descriptive statistics of the sample and screening for missing data, univariate outliers by means of standardised scores and multivariate outliers by means of Mahalanobis distance. The second step assessed reliability using Cronbach's alpha, with an acceptance threshold of 0.70^[46] and a minimum corrected item–total correlation of 0.30^[47]. The third step was exploratory factor analysis with Principal Axis Factoring extraction and

Promax rotation, examining the KMO measure, Bartlett's test, total variance extracted and factor loadings. The fourth step was confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate the fit of the measurement model through CMIN/df, CFI, TLI, RMSEA and SRMR, together with composite reliability, average variance extracted and discriminant validity according to the criterion of Fornell and Larcker^[48] as well as the HTMT ratio proposed by Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt^[49] and discussed further by Hair *et al.*^[50]. The fifth step comprised estimation of the structural model, testing of mediating effects by bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples and bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals^[51], and finally multi-group analysis following the procedure of testing measurement invariance before comparing path coefficients. The risk of common method bias was addressed both in the design and in the testing stages. In the design stage, the order of question blocks was reversed between two versions of the questionnaire, the dependent variable was placed after the independent variables, and respondents were assured of anonymity^[52]. In the testing stage, Harman's single-factor test and the full collinearity assessment proposed by Kock^[53] were performed; the results are reported in Section 4.

4. Results

4.1 Sample characteristics

Of the 412 valid responses, domestic visitors accounted for 70.1% (289 responses) and international visitors for 29.9% (123 responses); this ratio is comparable to the structure of visitor flows in Lao Cai Province in 2025, in which international visitors represented about 14% at the provincial level but were concentrated in higher proportions in the core area of Sa Pa. In terms of gender, women accounted for 53.6% and men for 46.4%. The age structure was weighted toward younger and middle-aged groups, with 23.3% aged 18–25, 35.9% aged 26–35, 22.3% aged 36–45, 12.4% aged 46–55 and 6.1% over 55.

In terms of the number of visits to Sa Pa, 61.7% were first-time visitors and 38.3% had visited twice or more — a relatively high proportion of returning visitors for a destination 320 km from Hanoi, reflecting the effect of improved transport infrastructure. Regarding travel arrangements, 65.0% organised their trip independently and 35.0% travelled with organised groups. With respect to average expenditure per person for the meal being evaluated, 18.9% spent less than VND 150,000, 41.5% between VND 150,000 and 300,000, 26.5% more than VND 300,000 up to 500,000, and 13.1% more than VND 500,000.

4.2 Descriptive statistics of the scales

The mean values of the constructs are presented in Table 2. Positive emotions recorded the highest mean among the model's constructs, indicating that most customers had a pleasant experience. Within the group of seven servicescape components, facility aesthetics and table settings received the highest ratings, whereas spatial layout, cleanliness and ambient conditions received the lowest. These results should be read together with the structural coefficients reported in Section 4.5: Dimensions with low ratings are not necessarily the least important, and it is precisely in the gap between importance and performance that managerial implications are formed.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and reliability of the scales (n = 412)

Construct	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Facility aesthetics (AES)	4	3.72	0.71	0.873
Ambient conditions (AMB)	4	3.41	0.78	0.851
Spatial layout (LAY)	3	3.29	0.83	0.824
Table settings (TAB)	3	3.63	0.69	0.806
Service staff (STA)	3	3.55	0.74	0.812
Cleanliness (CLE)	3	3.38	0.81	0.867
Scenic view and local authenticity (VIA)	4	3.58	0.80	0.889
Positive emotions (PEM)	4	3.81	0.68	0.901
Revisit intention (RIN)	4	3.64	0.75	0.884

All Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeded the 0.70 threshold and the corrected item-total correlations of all observed variables were greater than 0.45, satisfying the requirements for internal consistency.

4.3 Exploratory factor analysis

The KMO measure reached 0.906 and Bartlett's test was significant at the 0.001 level, confirming that the data were suitable for factor analysis. Principal Axis Factoring extraction with Promax rotation produced nine factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, explaining 71.4% of total variance. Item LAY3, concerning the convenience of circulation routes and restrooms, loaded on two factors with a difference of less than 0.20, indicating that customers found it difficult to distinguish this element from their perception of cleanliness; the item was therefore deleted. After the deletion of LAY3, the model retained 32 observed variables, all with factor loadings of 0.612 or above and no cross-loading exceeding 0.35, confirming convergent and discriminant validity at the exploratory level.

4.4 Confirmatory factor analysis and scale validation

The measurement model comprising nine constructs and 32 observed variables achieved good fit: $\chi^2 = 745.8$; $df = 428$; $\chi^2/df = 1.743$; CFI = 0.951; TLI = 0.944; RMSEA = 0.043 with a 90% confidence interval from 0.038 to 0.048; SRMR = 0.046. All of these values fall within the thresholds recommended by Hair *et al.* [45] and Kline [54].

The results for composite reliability and average variance extracted are presented in Table 3. All standardised loadings were greater than 0.60 and significant at the 0.001 level; composite reliability ranged from 0.809 to 0.903 and average variance extracted from 0.586 to 0.700, all exceeding the minimum thresholds of 0.70 and 0.50 respectively as recommended by Bagozzi and Yi [55].

Table 3: Composite reliability and average variance extracted

Construct	Standardised loadings (range)	CR	AVE	Square root of AVE
AES	0.731 – 0.842	0.875	0.637	0.798
AMB	0.684 – 0.821	0.853	0.594	0.771
LAY	0.712 – 0.834	0.827	0.615	0.784
TAB	0.703 – 0.808	0.809	0.586	0.766
STA	0.715 – 0.812	0.815	0.595	0.771
CLE	0.776 – 0.879	0.869	0.689	0.830
VIA	0.772 – 0.861	0.891	0.672	0.820
PEM	0.801 – 0.879	0.903	0.700	0.837
RIN	0.758 – 0.853	0.886	0.661	0.813

Discriminant validity was confirmed by two criteria. Following Fornell and Larcker [48], the square root of the average variance extracted for each construct was greater than that construct's correlation with every other construct; the highest correlation in the matrix, between positive emotions and revisit intention, was 0.682. Following Henseler *et al.* [49], the largest HTMT ratio was 0.782, below the 0.85 threshold.

With respect to common method bias, Harman's single-factor test showed that the first factor explained only 31.2% of variance, well below the 50% threshold. The full collinearity assessment proposed by Kock [53] produced a maximum VIF of 2.41, below the threshold of 3.3. It can therefore be concluded that common method bias is not a serious problem in this dataset.

4.5 Structural model testing

The structural model achieved acceptable fit: $\chi^2/df = 1.896$; CFI = 0.938; TLI = 0.931; RMSEA = 0.049; SRMR = 0.052. The model explains 61.2% of the variance in positive emotions and 54.8% of the variance in revisit intention. The path results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of hypothesis testing for direct effects

Hypothesis	Path	β (std.)	SE	t-value	Conclusion
H1	AES $\rightarrow$ PEM	0.231	0.048	4.81***	Supported
H2	AMB $\rightarrow$ PEM	0.148	0.051	2.90**	Supported
H3	LAY $\rightarrow$ PEM	0.102	0.046	2.22*	Supported
H4	TAB $\rightarrow$ PEM	0.089	0.044	2.02*	Supported
H5	STA $\rightarrow$ PEM	0.176	0.049	3.59***	Supported
H6	CLE $\rightarrow$ PEM	0.154	0.050	3.08**	Supported
H7	VIA $\rightarrow$ PEM	0.284	0.047	6.04***	Supported
H8	PEM $\rightarrow$ RIN	0.436	0.054	8.07***	Supported
–	AES $\rightarrow$ RIN	0.118	0.052	2.27*	Significant
–	AMB $\rightarrow$ RIN	0.054	0.055	0.98	Not significant
–	LAY $\rightarrow$ RIN	0.047	0.050	0.94	Not significant
–	TAB $\rightarrow$ RIN	0.061	0.048	1.27	Not significant
–	STA $\rightarrow$ RIN	0.069	0.053	1.30	Not significant
–	CLE $\rightarrow$ RIN	0.142	0.051	2.78**	Significant
–	VIA $\rightarrow$ RIN	0.186	0.050	3.72***	Significant

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. The control variables age group, expenditure level and travel arrangement were included in the model; only expenditure level had a significant effect on revisit intention ($\beta = 0.092$; $p < 0.05$).

All seven hypotheses H1 to H7 were supported. Scenic view and local authenticity produced the largest coefficient, followed by facility aesthetics and service staff. The two dimensions of spatial layout and table settings produced the smallest coefficients but nevertheless attained statistical significance at the 0.05 level. Positive emotions had a strong effect on revisit intention, with a coefficient of 0.436, larger than every direct effect of the servicescape components.

4.6 Testing of the mediating role

The results of bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples and bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals are presented in Table 5. All seven indirect effects were statistically significant, as none of the confidence intervals contained zero; H9 was therefore supported. The form of mediation nevertheless differed across dimensions. For the three dimensions VIA, AES and CLE, both the direct and the indirect paths were significant, indicating partial mediation. For the four dimensions AMB, LAY, TAB and STA, only the indirect

path was significant, indicating full mediation: These factors affect revisit intention entirely through emotions.

Table 5: Indirect effects through positive emotions (bootstrap, 5,000 resamples)

Indirect path	Indirect effect	95% CI	Direct effect	Total effect	Mediation
VIA → PEM → RIN	0.124	[0.081; 0.174]	0.186***	0.310	Partial
AES → PEM → RIN	0.101	[0.062; 0.146]	0.118*	0.219	Partial
CLE → PEM → RIN	0.067	[0.030; 0.108]	0.142**	0.209	Partial
STA → PEM → RIN	0.077	[0.041; 0.118]	0.069	0.146	Full
AMB → PEM → RIN	0.065	[0.028; 0.105]	0.054	0.119	Full
LAY → PEM → RIN	0.044	[0.008; 0.083]	0.047	0.091	Full
TAB → PEM → RIN	0.039	[0.004; 0.079]	0.061	0.100	Full

In terms of total effects, the rank order of influence on revisit intention is: Scenic view and local authenticity, facility aesthetics, cleanliness, service staff, ambient conditions, table settings and spatial layout.

4.7 Multi-group analysis

Before comparing path coefficients, measurement invariance was tested by comparing the unconstrained model with a model in which factor loadings were constrained to be equal across groups. For the pair of domestic and international visitors, $\Delta\chi^2 = 31.4$ with $\Delta df = 23$ and $p = 0.113$, indicating that weak measurement invariance holds and that comparison of structural coefficients is legitimate.

The comparison revealed three significant differences. First, the effect of scenic view and local authenticity on positive emotions was 0.368 among international visitors, significantly higher than the value of 0.221 among domestic visitors ($\Delta\chi^2 = 6.92$; $p = 0.009$). Second, the effect of facility aesthetics was 0.268 among domestic visitors, higher than the value of 0.147 among international visitors ($\Delta\chi^2 = 4.51$; $p = 0.034$). Third, ambient conditions had a clear effect among domestic visitors, with a coefficient of 0.193, but did not attain significance among international visitors, with a coefficient of 0.081 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 4.08$; $p = 0.043$). The path from positive emotions to revisit intention did not differ between the two groups (0.421 versus 0.467; $p = 0.402$).

For the pair of first-time and returning visitors, two differences were recorded. The effect of positive emotions on revisit intention was stronger among returning visitors, with a coefficient of 0.512 compared with 0.389 among first-time visitors ($\Delta\chi^2 = 5.34$; $p = 0.021$). Conversely, cleanliness had a stronger effect on emotions among returning visitors, with a coefficient of 0.217 compared with 0.112 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 4.26$; $p = 0.039$). H10 was therefore partially supported: Differences exist in certain specific paths rather than across the model as a whole.

5. Discussion

5.1 The central position of natural scenery and local authenticity

The most notable finding of the study is that the additional dimension — natural scenic view and local authenticity —

produced the largest effect on positive emotions, exceeding even facility aesthetics, which usually occupies the leading position in DINESCAPE-based models [2, 37]. This result suggests an important theoretical implication: At a tourism destination, the boundary of the servicescape does not stop at the walls of the establishment. Restaurants in Sa Pa “borrow” the external landscape and turn it into a component of the consumption space through design decisions concerning location, orientation, the size and clarity of glazing, the height of railings and the arrangement of tables along sight lines. In other words, Bitner’s three-group framework [9] — which assumes that the servicescape is an environment created and controlled by the firm — needs to be extended to include natural stimuli that the firm does not create but whose accessibility it can organise, precisely along the lines proposed by Rosenbaum and Massiah [20].

This result is also consistent with the argument of Slåtten *et al.* [29] that at nature-based destinations, atmospheric experiences capable of touching customers emotionally are a more important source of differentiation than standardised service attributes. That carries direct competitive significance for Sa Pa: As menus across restaurants become increasingly similar and prices are flattened by online booking platforms, the organisation of views and local narrative within the space becomes one of the few advantages that are difficult to imitate.

5.2 Two distinct mechanisms among the servicescape components

The mediation results indicate that the servicescape components do not operate through a single mechanism. Four dimensions — ambient conditions, spatial layout, table settings and service staff — affect revisit intention entirely through the emotional route. This is consistent with the logic of Mehrabian and Russell [1] and with the findings of Liu and Jang [15]: These stimuli are processed pre-attentively and are difficult for customers to articulate as reasons for choice, yet they shape the affective tone of the meal and thereby influence intended behaviour.

By contrast, three dimensions — scenic view and local authenticity, facility aesthetics and cleanliness — operate both through emotions and directly. A plausible explanation is that these three dimensions are salient and articulable enough to become conscious selection criteria: Customers remember that a restaurant has a view over the valley, an attractive space and clean facilities, and use that information as a rational basis for a future decision, independently of how they felt during the meal itself. This is consistent with the finding of Ha and Jang [12] regarding the coexistence of two paths of influence, and adds a further nuance: The direct path is not evenly distributed but is concentrated in those attributes that are easily encoded in words and easily repeated in online reviews or personal recommendations.

5.3 Differences across customer segments

The finding that international visitors respond more strongly to local authenticity while domestic visitors are more sensitive to facility aesthetics and thermal comfort can be interpreted in two complementary ways. First, cultural distance creates informational value: Details of local materials, patterns and objects carry greater novelty and symbolic value for people from a different culture, consistent with the finding of Ali, Kim and Ryu [43]

concerning the moderating role of national identity. Second, for domestic visitors, and particularly younger ones, the restaurant space also functions as a backdrop for photography and social media sharing, so that facility aesthetics is evaluated against stricter visual criteria.

At the same time, an attendant risk must be acknowledged. MacCannell^[56] warned at a very early stage about staged authenticity, whereby cultural signs are arranged for visitors to the point of losing their naturalness. If local authenticity is exploited as purely formal decoration — mass-produced brocade hung on walls, “ethnic” uniforms belonging to no specific group, unrelated background music — the positive effect observed in this study may be reversed, especially among international visitors who research destinations in depth.

The difference between first-time and returning visitors also merits attention. The stronger relationship between positive emotions and revisit intention among returning visitors suggests that once the barriers of distance and novelty have been overcome, emotional experience becomes a more decisive factor in choosing a restaurant again. The greater effect of cleanliness on emotions among returning visitors may reflect the higher expectations formed by prior experience, a mechanism similar to that described by Ryu and Han^[36] in comparing new and repeat customers.

5.4 On the argument that “customers come only once”

The findings provide counter-evidence to the belief, widespread among business operators in Sa Pa, that investment in the physical environment is unnecessary because most customers visit only once. First, the proportion of returning visitors in the sample reached 38.3%, which is not a small figure. Second, the revisit intention scale used in this study includes both the intention to recommend the restaurant to others and willingness to pay more; even for customers who never return, these two components still generate economic value through word of mouth and profit margins. Third, the effect of positive emotions on revisit intention remained strong and significant among first-time visitors, indicating that the effect does not depend on whether a customer has visited before.

5.5 Theoretical contributions

The study contributes to the literature in three respects. The first is the addition and empirical validation of a context-specific servicescape dimension for highland tourism destinations, thereby contributing to the debate on the limits of transferability of servicescape scales developed in Western urban contexts. The second is the clarification that the mediating mechanism of emotions is not uniform across servicescape components, together with the proposal of a classification based on the extent to which an attribute can be encoded in words. The third is the provision of multi-group evidence showing that the same servicescape configuration generates different emotional responses depending on cultural distance and prior experience with the destination, which reinforces the argument for the cultural relativity of service space design.

6. Managerial Implications

6.1 Investment priorities for businesses

Comparing importance, measured by the total effect on revisit intention, with performance, measured by the mean of the corresponding scale, makes it possible to establish a

practical order of priorities. Three groups of actions are proposed.

The first group comprises items that are important but currently rated low and that should be addressed first: Cleanliness (total effect 0.209; mean 3.38), ambient conditions (0.119; 3.41) and spatial layout (0.091; 3.29). None of these requires large capital outlay, but all require operational discipline: Cleaning restrooms on an hourly rather than daily schedule, checking floors and table surfaces between seatings, installing distributed heating units instead of a single high-capacity heater in the middle of the room, strengthening extraction above tables used for hotpot and grilling, placing anti-slip mats at the entrance on rainy days and, most importantly, establishing a maximum seating threshold beyond which no additional tables are added during peak periods.

The second group comprises items that are important and currently performed relatively well, which should be maintained and deepened: Scenic view together with local authenticity (0.310; 3.58) and facility aesthetics (0.219; 3.72). For the view component, specific interventions include prioritising sight lines when arranging tables rather than maximising the number of seats, using double-glazed insulated windows to limit the condensation that blurs the view under cold and humid conditions, lowering or slimming down elements that obstruct the line of sight, increasing natural light and adding native plants. For the authenticity component, the key principle is provenance-based authenticity: Cooperating with local artisans rather than purchasing mass-produced decorative items, documenting the origin of materials and patterns, and allowing local staff to tell their own stories rather than following a script.

The third group comprises items with lower coefficients but low improvement costs, which should be dealt with in parallel: Table settings (0.100; 3.63) and the tangible aspects of service staff (0.146; 3.55). Replacing chipped tableware, standardising utensils, standardising uniforms and ensuring that a member of staff is always within the customer's field of view are measures with a high ratio of effect to cost.

6.2 Implications by segment

For international visitors, investment in local authenticity and scenic views yields the highest emotional return; at the same time, information in English about the origins of dishes, ingredients and the culture associated with the space is required. For domestic visitors, priority should be given to visual aesthetics suitable for photography, to thermal comfort and to details that create a sense of warmth. For visitors travelling in organised groups, who are typically served in high-density settings, separating group areas from à la carte areas, controlling noise and ensuring that at least some tables enjoy a view are ways of limiting the negative effects of density.

6.3 Implications for local authorities

At the destination level, the findings suggest three lines of intervention. First, criteria concerning the quality of the consumption environment should be added to the sets of criteria used to certify foodservice establishments serving tourists, specifically thermal comfort, ventilation and odour management, seating density per unit of floor area, and restroom standards; existing criteria commonly emphasise food safety while giving little attention to these factors.

Second, sight-line corridors and façade architecture in the core area should be managed, because the value of a view is a common asset of the destination: A high-rise building blocking the view over the valley diminishes the value of many neighbouring establishments. Third, training should be supported and links established between foodservice businesses and local artisans and craft villages, which would both enhance the authenticity of the space and increase the share of value retained within the community.

7. Conclusion

This study has developed and tested a model of the effects of the restaurant servicescape on customers' positive emotions and revisit intention in Sa Pa Ward, Lao Cai Province, on the basis of the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework and the DINESCAPE instrument extended by a dimension specific to highland destinations. The results show that all seven servicescape components have positive and significant effects on positive emotions, with natural scenic view and local authenticity in the leading position, followed by facility aesthetics and service staff. Positive emotions constitute the principal bridge leading to revisit intention, while the three most salient servicescape components also affect that intention directly. The mechanism of influence differs by segment: International visitors respond more strongly to local authenticity, domestic visitors are more sensitive to aesthetics and thermal comfort, and returning visitors convert emotions into intention more strongly than first-time visitors.

The central managerial message is that the servicescape is not an item of decorative expenditure but a constituent part of the service product; and at a destination whose core value lies in its landscape and its ethnic cultures, as is the case in Sa Pa, the way a restaurant organises its views, its materials and its local narrative is precisely the way in which it participates in the value of the destination. Given that Sa Pa Ward has just been established through the merger of six former wards and is under considerable pressure in terms of infrastructure and visitor density, raising the standard of the consumption environment in the core area is not merely in the interest of individual businesses but a condition for sustaining the long-term competitiveness of the destination as a whole.

8. Acknowledgments

This paper was conducted with the research support of the project “The impact of servicescape on customers' positive emotions and revisit intention toward restaurants in Sa Pa Ward”, code HUNRE.2026.20.03, led by Hanoi University of Natural Resources and Environment.

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