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How Does Service Environment Enhance Consumer Loyalty in the Sport Fitness Industry? The Role of Servicescape, Consumption Motivation, Emotional and Flow Experiences

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Abstract: The purpose of the current study was to investigate the structural relationship between the servicescape, the emotional experience, space flow, satisfaction, and consumer loyalty in the context of sport fitness centers. Furthermore, the present study aimed to examine the moderating role of knowledge acquisition motivation in the effect of the servicescape on the emotional experience and space flow. For these research purposes, a survey study targeting 400 consumers of sport fitness centers was conducted via online and offline survey platforms in South Korea. After deleting 16 incomplete cases, 384 cases were included in the final data analysis. The results of latent moderated equations modeling (LMS) showed that the servicescape directly enhances the emotional experience and space flow. Also, it indirectly affects consumer loyalty via the emotional experience, space flow, and consumer satisfaction. Meanwhile, knowledge acquisition motivation was found to moderate the effect of the servicescape on space flow. The present study has several theoretical implications. First, the current study illuminates the process mechanism of the effect of the servicescape in sport fitness centers on consumer loyalty. Second, the present study empirically shows different patterns of consumer experiences and decision-making depending on consumption motivation. Based on the results, sport fitness center managers should not only pay more attention to the convenience of their servicescape but they should also design service environments maximizing consumers' emotional experiences. Additionally, the results imply that assigning exercise beginners to an attractive physical environment is an effective strategy, because they are more likely to evaluate their experiences based on the perceived servicescape.

Keywords: servicescape; emotional experience; space flow; satisfaction; consumer loyalty; knowledge acquisition motivation



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1. Introduction

The sport fitness center is viewed as an empirical space in which individuals can experience diverse sport activities and is a major component of the fitness industry. The scale of the sport fitness industry has consistently grown all over the world because of the global trend toward increased interest in a healthy lifestyle [1]. With the growth of the fitness industry and the global trend of healthy lifestyles, the number of sport fitness centers has continuously increased. Such increase of sport fitness centers results in price competition among them to secure customers, which in turn leads to economic losses. Moreover, many sport fitness centers are currently struggling due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation all over the world. In this situation, it is necessary to develop a durable, long lasting, and effective marketing strategy for sport fitness centers. Specifically, fostering loyal consumers should be centered on such a strategy because they are undisturbed by the abnormal situation, and they act as ambassadors of the sport fitness centers.

The present study relies on the perspective of sustainability marketing. Sustainable marketing is defined as marketing practices which forms and maintain sustainable relationships with customers, the social environment and the natural environment [2]. In particular, the current study focuses on sustainable relationships with customers and the social environment, because a sport fitness center is a space in which consumers engage in physical activities and they form social network with other people [3]. In line with the notion of sustainability marketing and sport fitness centers, managers and marketers should develop a differentiated and high-quality service environment as the social environment. Specifically, the concept of the servicescape [4] provides meaningful insight into the development of a high-quality service environment and an effective sustainability marketing strategy for successful sport fitness centers.

“Servicescape” is a compound of “service” and “scape” which refers to the service environment created by the interaction between service providers and customers [5]. Bitner [4] conceptualized the servicescape as the physical surrounding, including ambient conditions, functionality, spatial layout, signs, symbols, and artifacts. Based on the conceptualization of the servicescape, existing literature also considers design factors as a component of the servicescape [6,7]. With the increased attention to the concept of the servicescape, scholars have applied the concept to a wide range of service contexts including the leisure, sport, and fitness industry. For example, Wakefield and Blodgett [8,9] suggested that the servicescape has a positive impact on consumer satisfaction and revisit intention in the context of leisure services and sport spectatorship. Additionally, Wakefield et al. [10,11] developed the concept of the “sportscape”. They suggested that elements of the sportscape directly affect spectators’ intention to stay at the sport facilities and their attendance intention. As such, the concept of the servicescape plays a pivotal role in consumer loyalty.

However, little research has focused on the psychological mechanism of the effect of the servicescape on consumer loyalty in the context of sport fitness centers. Furthermore, the literature considers sport consumers as a homogeneous group rather than heterogeneous groups who have diverse consumption motivations as well as a variety of needs and wants. These limitations raise a couple of interesting questions. How does the servicescape lead to consumer satisfaction and loyalty? And is the effect of the servicescape on consumer behavior the same for all sport consumers?

To answer these questions, the present study aimed to examine the psychological mechanism by which the servicescape influences loyalty depending on consumption motivations using a survey study in South Korea. Specifically, the current study suggests consumers’ emotional experiences [12] and space flow [13] as the psychological mechanism of the effect of the servicescape on consumer behavior. These two psychological mediators cover an affective domain (i.e., emotional experiences) and a cognitive domain (i.e., space flow). Hence, they provide holistic insight into the psychological mechanism bridging the servicescape and consumer behavior. In addition, the present study suggests knowledge acquisition motivation as a moderator which modulates the effect of the servicescape on consumer experiences.

By doing so, the present study provides managers of sport fitness centers with meaningful insight into how the service environment maximizes consumer loyalty. Additionally, the current study helps practitioners in the fitness industry develop specific strategies to shape effective service environments for different types of consumers.

2. Theoretical Backgrounds and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Servicescape and Consumer Experiences

Scholars have conceptualized the servicescape differently. For example, Kotler [14] conceptualized the servicescape as the service environment, including visual, auditory, olfactory, and haptic factors. Hightower [15] operationalized the servicescape as ambient factors, design factors, and social interaction factors. Recently, the literature on the servicescape has suggested that it is any tangible aspect of a service business that influences

consumers' perceptions or behaviors [16]. A systematic review of the servicescape literature suggests that its conceptualization varies depending on the target service context.

In the context of the sport and fitness industry, the operationalization of the servicescape generally includes ambient conditions, spatial layout, aesthetics, convenience, and safety [16–19]. Ambient conditions refer to the background attributes of a service environment that stimulate the five senses of consumers, including air conditioning, temperature, lighting, and music [8]. The spatial layout represents how equipment and furniture in the service's surroundings are arranged and the spatial relationship among them [20]. Aesthetics denotes interior design and décor as well as architectural design, which contribute to the attractiveness of the target service facility [21]. Convenience indicates the extent to which consumers can easily use the equipment, furniture, and space in the service setting [22]. Lastly, safety refers to perceptions of potential hazards regarding the equipment and space [19]. Taken together, these sub-dimensions of the servicescape play a pivotal role in consumer experiences and behavior.

Researchers have suggested that the servicescape not only directly enhances consumer satisfaction but also influences a wide range of consumer experiences, including consumers' cognitive and affective responses [23,24]. These responses are considered as major determinants of consumer satisfaction and loyalty in hedonic consumption [25,26]. In line with the notion that the servicescape leads to affective and cognitive responses in consumers, the present study suggests the emotional experience as an affective dimension and space flow as a cognitive dimension following servicescape perception. First of all, the emotional experience is defined as the positive feelings, including fun, pleasure, and excitement, experienced from using a service [27]. Previous studies have revealed that the sensory cues of the servicescape lead to positive emotional experiences [23,28–32]. For instance, Stoel et al. [30] and Wakefield and Baker [31] found that negative and positive consumer emotions were affected by physical components of service environments. Furthermore, Chang et al. [32] revealed that physical surroundings played an important role in eliciting visitors' sense of excitement in the context of theme parks. These findings imply that the servicescape can be viewed as one of the major determinants of emotional experiences in the context of fitness center businesses.

Meanwhile, space flow is defined as an immersive experience while staying in the target service environment [33]. The operationalization of the flow experience is inconsistent in the flow literature because it is too broad and murky a concept [34]. Hence, the current study focuses on the perceptual nature of the flow experience, since the emotional experience, as a major outcome of the servicescape, is likely to capture the affective nature of flow experiences. Indeed, previous studies have measured flow experience focusing on the cognitive domains such as cognitive absorption, [tele]presence, merging of action and awareness, loss of self, sense of control and time distortion [35–39]. Among these cognitive domains, cognitive absorption and time distortion were frequently adopted by researchers. Hence, the present study suggests and operationalizes space flow as consumers' cognitive absorption and time distortion while staying in the target space (i.e., fitness centers). Lee and Jeong [7] suggested that a flow experience can be amplified by the ambience, design, and social factors of a servicescape. Additionally, Huang, Li, Mou, and Liu [40] empirically showed that the servicescape has a positive effect on flow experience and purchase intention in the context of the hotel industry. Based on the discussion on the concept of the servicescape and its potential effects on consumers' emotional and flow experiences, the following hypotheses were developed.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *The servicescape will positively influence emotional experiences in the context of fitness centers.*

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *The servicescape will positively influence space flow in the context of fitness centers.*

2.2. Outcomes of Positive Consumer Experiences

Consumer satisfaction is strongly affected by positive consumer experiences in the context of hedonic consumption. Marketing literature has suggested that consumer satisfaction is generally determined by the disconfirmation between performance expectation of a certain product/service and actual performance [41]. This perspective is useful in understanding and predicting consumer behaviors in certain product categories, where tangible features and utilitarian performance function as major determinants of their utility to consumers. Despite the theoretical contributions and practical applications of the disconfirmation and satisfaction framework, it has limitations for understanding consumer satisfaction in the context of hedonic consumption, such as using sport fitness centers, which is based on fulfilling hedonic desires and symbolic meanings rather than satisfying utilitarian functions [25].

In contrast to utilitarian products/services, the subjective and intangible aspects of sport consumption, such as multisensory responses, emotional arousal, and symbolic meanings, can be major determinants and consequences of sport consumers' satisfaction [42,43]. For instance, Caro and Garcia [43] examined the role of disconfirmation (i.e., the cognitive dimension) and affective responses in consumers' satisfaction with a sporting event. They specified two distinct models and compared them; one was a model with a disconfirmation variable, and the other was a model with disconfirmation and affective responses. It was found that the second model was better than the first and that affective responses more strongly influenced consumer satisfaction. This finding implies that satisfaction with sport consumption should be examined with cognitive and affective variables. Therefore, the present study suggests emotional experiences as an affective variable and space flow as a cognitive variable and examines their effects on consumer satisfaction with sport fitness centers. Indeed, previous studies have reported that emotional experiences and flow experiences positively influence consumer satisfaction in the context of sport consumption [26,44–46]. Therefore, the following hypotheses were suggested.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Emotional experiences will positively affect consumer satisfaction in the context of fitness centers.*

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Space flow will positively affect consumer satisfaction in the context of fitness centers.*

Meanwhile, the ultimate goal of a business is developing and maintaining consumer loyalty, because it is directly related to its profit and success. In general, the concept of consumer loyalty is defined as a deep commitment to re-patronize or repurchase a product/service in the future despite marketing efforts and influences having the potential to elicit switching behavior [47]. Recent studies have conceptualized consumer loyalty with repurchase behavior and word-of-mouth (WOM) [48–50], since WOM is becoming a powerful asset in contemporary marketing [51]. In line with this notion, the present study operationalized consumer loyalty as consumers' repurchase intention and WOM intention.

One of the most powerful determinants of consumer loyalty is satisfaction. The literature on marketing and consumer behavior has suggested that consumer satisfaction not only leads to repurchase behavior but also facilitates WOM [42,48,50,52–54]. If consumer satisfaction is a powerful determinant of consumer loyalty, it is reasonable to focus on strategies to maximize consumer satisfaction for consumer loyalty. As discussed, developing attractive servicescape can be a promising marketing strategy to escalate consumer satisfaction. Thus, servicescape is likely to affect consumer loyalty via enhanced satisfaction. Indeed, the existing literature has empirically shown the mediating role of consumer satisfaction in the relationship between servicescape and consumer loyalty [55]. Furthermore, according to McCain et al. [56], consumer loyalty is developed through a process including belief, cognition, and affect. Additionally, the existing literature has shown that consumer loyalty is developed via the cognitive-affective-conation-action process [57]. Taken together, consumer loyalty is not only directly affected by consumer satisfaction but

also developed through a serial process in which belief (i.e., the perceived servicescape), cognitive and affective responses (i.e., space flow and emotional experiences), and satisfaction are connected. Hence, the following hypotheses were proposed. In addition, the authors proposed a research model including all theorized hypotheses in the present study (Figure 1).

Hypothesis 5 (H5). *Consumer satisfaction will positively influence consumer loyalty in the context of fitness centers.*

Hypothesis 6 (H6). *The servicescape will indirectly influence consumer loyalty through emotional experiences, space flow, and consumer satisfaction in the context of fitness centers.*

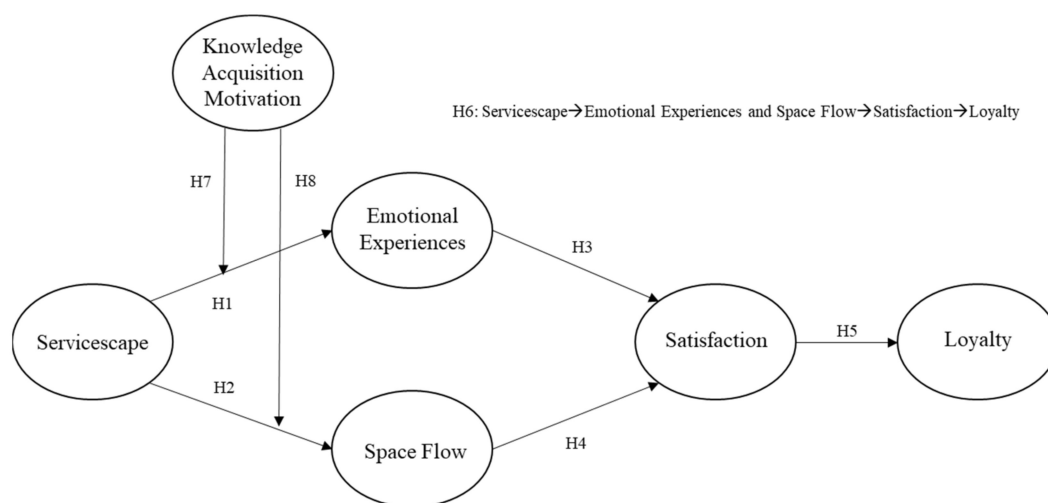


Figure 1. A Research Model Illustrating the Hypotheses.

2.3. The Role of Consumption Motivations

Consumption motivation refers to the specific reason a consumer purchases certain products or services to fulfill their own needs and wants [41]. Understanding consumption motivations is an essential task for researchers and practitioners because of their significant role in predicting consumer behavior [42]. For this reason, researchers have identified diverse motivations for sport consumption and examined their role in understanding and predicting consumer behavior in diverse sport contexts [43–50]. Specifically, McDonald, Milne, and Hong [50] profiled the motivation constructs of sport spectators and participants, including physical fitness, risk-taking, stress reduction, aggression, affiliation, social facilitation, self-esteem, competition, achievement, skill mastery, aesthetics, value development, and self-actualization. They also revealed that some of these constructs are more salient for sport spectators than for sport participants. Ridinger and James [48] suggested nine motivations of sport fans—action, escape, drama, achievement, aesthetics, knowledge, social integration, empathy, and family—and empirically showed that some of these motivations are more salient for male than for female consumers. The literature on sport consumption motivations implies that the reasons individuals watch or participate in sports vary depending on the sport type or individual characteristics.

In the context of the fitness industry, scholars have heavily relied on self-determination theory (SDT) to understand why individuals engage in sport and fitness activities [51]. Based on SDT, researchers have developed the “sport motivation scale (SMS),” which consists of intrinsic motivation, integrated motivation, identified motivation, interjected motivation, external motivation, and amotivation [51]. The existing literature has shown that SMS can predict participation in physical activity [52], practice frequency [53], and sport training [54]. These findings imply that sport motivations directly influence diverse sport consumer behaviors.

In addition to the direct effect of motivation on sport consumer behavior, researchers have examined the moderating role of motivations in explaining sport consumer behavior. For example, Caro and Garcia [47] reported that disconfirmation, which is the difference between actual sport experience and expectations, significantly affected loyalty for highly motivated sport consumers, whereas there was no significant relationship between those two variables for less motivated ones. They also found that disconfirmation significantly influenced satisfaction for less motivated sport consumers, whereas it was not the case for highly motivated ones. Although the researchers did not provide relevant theoretical backgrounds for such moderating effect of sport motivations, several plausible rationales for the moderating effect exist in diverse disciplines, including media and marketing literature.

One of the plausible rationales is dual-process models (e.g., the elaboration likelihood model or heuristic-systematic model) [55–59]. The general principle of dual-process models suggests that individuals tend either to expend much effort in forming beliefs and decisions or to use little effort and rely on heuristics depending on their level of involvement in the target issue, motivations, etc. Specifically, the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) posits that individuals process information via a central route, which refers to effortful cognitive thinking about the target information, or a peripheral route, which refers to evaluating the target information using simple cues or heuristic inferences, depending on their motivation or ability to elaborate [60]. Similarly, the heuristic-systematic model (HSM) also postulates that people process information with two concurrent modes of information processing: systematic processing, in which they examine all relevant information to make judgments, and heuristic processing, in which they use extrinsic cues to make judgements [61]. These two modes are not mutually exclusive, and they are placed on the same continuum of information processing, with one being activated or more dominant than the other depending on the situation or information processor's characteristics.

Based on the principle of the dual process model and its implications on the moderating role of consumer motivations, the current study proposes knowledge acquisition motivation as a potential moderating variable and considers it as one of the major consumption motivations in the context of the fitness industry. Knowledge acquisition motivation is defined as consumers' desire to learn about and participate in fitness programs provided by sport fitness centers. Although there are a wide range of reasons that consumers register at a certain sport fitness center, the present study considers knowledge acquisition motivation as a major consumption motivation for several reasons. First, the existing literature suggests knowledge acquisition motivation is a dominant motivation for consumers to engage in sport activities [54]. Second, it seems to be a useful variable for segmentation of consumers in the context of the fitness industry because it can be a proxy for the level of exercise skills: the higher the knowledge acquisition motivation, the lower the level of exercise skills. Third, including all motivations harms the development of a parsimonious research model. All in all, knowledge acquisition motivation is expected to modulate the effect of the servicescape on consumer experiences in the context of the fitness industry. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were developed.

Hypothesis 7 (H7). *The knowledge acquisition motivation will moderate the effect of the servicescape on emotional experiences in the context of fitness centers.*

Hypothesis 8 (H8). *The knowledge acquisition motivation will moderate the effect of the servicescape on space flow in the context of fitness centers.*

3. Methods

3.1. Participants and Procedure

To test the suggested hypotheses, a survey study based on a cross-sectional design was conducted in South Korea using Qualtrics Survey software. The target population for the current study was fitness center consumers in South Korea. A list of sport fitness centers was obtained from the Sport Council in South Korea. Based on systematic random sampling

methods [58], 20 sport fitness centers were selected in the list. After that, the authors contacted the owners to secure research participants. Among the 20 sport fitness centers, 12 sport fitness centers were agreed to perform a survey research. The authors randomly distributed the online survey link to 400 consumers of these fitness centers via the most popular smartphone app in South Korea. These consumers were continuously informed to participate in the survey until they complete the survey during two weeks. Finally, 384 consumers completed the survey and thus they were included in the final analysis.

The survey included an inviting message and a link to the Qualtrics Survey questionnaire, in which participants could answer the survey questions. The survey questionnaire comprised three sections. The first section consisted of a brief explanation of the research purpose, the procedure, instructions for survey completion, and an informed consent form. In the second section, participants were guided to answer the questions in terms of the servicescape of the fitness centers that they were using, emotional experiences, space flow, satisfaction with the fitness centers, loyalty, knowledge acquisition motivation, and demographic information. In the third section, they were provided information about the specific purpose of the present study and thanked. The information about the participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Information about the participants.

Variable	Classification	n	%
Gender	Female	148	61.5
	Male	236	38.5
	Total	384	100
Age	Teens	28	7.3
	20–29 years	200	52.1
	30–39 years	110	28.6
	40–49 years	32	8.3
	50–59 years	11	2.9
	Over 60 years	3	0.8
Total		384	100
Education	High school diploma	200	52.1
	Bachelor's degree	165	43.0
	Graduate school degree	19	4.9
	Total	384	100

3.2. Instrument

All of the constructs in the research model were evaluated using multiple items adopted from the existing literature, and the adopted items were revised to fit the research context. These items were assessed using a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 (not at all) and 7 (very much). Specifically, the servicescape was measured using 18 items adopted from Bitner [4]. The authors measured emotional experiences using four items adopted from Lin and Mattila [59]. Based on flow theory [33], space flow was measured with four items adopted from Morgan, Watson, and Hemmington [60]. The authors measured consumer satisfaction with five items adopted from Westbrook and Oliver [61] and Madrigal [62]. Consumer loyalty was measured with four items adopted from the repurchase intention and word-of-mouth literature [50–53]. Lastly, the authors measured knowledge acquisition motivation with three items adopted from Granero-Gallegos et al. [63] and Pelletier et al. [64].

The original measurement items were translated into the Korean language by a bilingual author, and then all the authors compared the translated measurement items with the original version to identify any cross-cultural differences. The authors resolved the identified differences through discussion and agreement. By doing so, the authors made revisions to the translated version to ensure content equivalence between the two versions,

and then finalized the measurement items. The original versions of the measurement items are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary results of measurement model validation.

Measurement Items	λ	CR	AVE
Servicescape *		0.928	0.722
Ambient Condition **	0.744	0.873	0.632
The temperature in the fitness center is appropriate	0.806		
The background music in the fitness center is appropriate	0.825		
The lighting in the fitness center is appropriate	0.792		
The air conditioning in the fitness center is appropriate	0.756		
Spatial Layout **	0.872	0.827	0.614
The flow of human traffic in the fitness center is efficient	0.812		
The arrangement of fitness equipment in the fitness center is appropriate	0.806		
The space for fitness and exercise in the fitness center is large enough	0.733		
Aesthetics **	0.854	0.892	0.675
The outdoor design of the fitness center is attractive	0.836		
The interior design of the fitness center is differentiated from other fitness centers	0.839		
The interior decor of the fitness center is attractive	0.791		
The interior decor and equipment are visually harmonious	0.821		
Convenience **	0.903	0.853	0.593
Using the exercise and fitness equipment in the fitness center is convenient	0.762		
The fitness center provides me with convenient rest areas	0.833		
It is easy to access the locker room in the fitness center	0.739		
The sterilization to prevent COVID-19 is convenient	0.764		
Safety **	0.864	0.790	0.558
The fire prevention system of the fitness center is well equipped	0.674		
There are no hazardous factors in the fitness center	0.777		
The material of the floor in the fitness center is safe	0.809		
Emotional Experiences		0.835	0.558
I feel enjoyment when I use the fitness center	0.747		
I feel excitement when I use the fitness center	0.729		
Using the fitness center is fun	0.735		
I feel entertained when I use the fitness center	0.776		
Space Flow		0.853	0.592
It feels like time flies in the space of the fitness center	0.733		
Time seems to go by very quickly in the space of the fitness center	0.782		
I am totally focused in the space of the fitness center	0.780		
I am absorbed intensely in the space of the fitness center	0.782		
Consumer Satisfaction		0.933	0.735
Overall, I am satisfied with the fitness center	0.856		
I like the fitness center	0.911		
I am satisfied with the facility of the fitness center	0.883		
I am satisfied with the service that the fitness center provides	0.829		
The quality of the fitness center outperforms my expectation	0.803		
Consumer Loyalty		0.936	0.785
I will register at the fitness center again once my current membership is expired	0.869		
I will recommend the fitness center to other people	0.869		
I will continuously use the fitness center	0.930		
I will consider the fitness center as my first choice rather than registering at other fitness centers	0.874		
Knowledge Acquisition Motivation		0.798	0.572
I registered at the fitness center to learn how to work out	0.788		
I registered at the fitness center to get me interested in exercise	0.843		
I registered at the fitness center to extend my knowledge about exercise	0.619		

Note: * second-order factor, ** factor loadings from the first-order factors to the second-order factor, λ = factor loading, CR = composite reliability, AVE = average variance explained value.

3.3. Data Analysis

The authors tested the multivariate normality of the data via Mardia's skewness and kurtosis test [65]. The result of Mardia's multivariate normality test indicated that the data violated the normality assumption, and thus the authors used Satorra and Bentler's scaling method in the subsequent analysis [66]. Thus, the authors used a traditional structural equations modeling for CFA and hypothesis testing with the Satorra-Bentler scaled (mean-adjusted) chi-square, where the chi-square statistic based on the usual normal-theory is divided by a scaling correction in order to better estimate chi-square statistic under non-normality. A confirmatory factor analysis was performed to validate the measurement model using Mplus8 software. The authors evaluated the theorized measurement model based on traditional model fit indices including normed chi-square value ($S-B\chi^2/df$), comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) [67]. The convergent validity was evaluated based on factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) values [67]. Furthermore, the authors assessed discriminant validity by comparing the AVE value of each construct to the squared correlation coefficients between it and any other constructs in the measurement model [68]. Lastly, reliability was evaluated based on the construct reliability coefficients of each construct in the measurement model [67].

To test the proposed hypotheses, the authors performed latent moderated structural equation (LMS) modeling as suggested by Klein and Moosbrugger [69]. In this method, a structural model referred to as Model 0 without latent interaction terms is evaluated based on the conventional model fit indices such as normed chi-square value, CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR in the first stage. Once Model 0 meets the criteria of the conventional fit indices, another structural model referred to as Model 1 with latent interaction terms is estimated in the second stage. If the result of a log-likelihood test based on a formula $\{D = -2[(\log\text{-likelihood value of Model 0}) - (\log\text{-likelihood value of Model 1})]$, with a degree of freedom (df) calculated by subtracting the number of free parameters of Model 0 from the number of free parameters of Model 1} indicates that Model 1 is statistically better than Model 0, the path coefficients of Model 1 are used for hypothesis testing [70].

4. Results

4.1. Measurement Model Validation

A six-factor measurement model, in which the concept of the servicescape was a second-order factor, was tested through CFA using Mplus 8. The results showed an acceptable fit between the data and the specified measurement model: $S-B\chi^2/df = 1207.815/645 = 1.873$, CFI = 0.934, RMSEA = 0.048, and SRMR = 0.049. All factor loadings were statistically significant and above 60 (Table 2). The construct reliability coefficients ranged from 0.798 (Knowledge Acquisition Motivation) to 0.936 (Consumer Loyalty). The AVE values of the factors in the measurement model ranged from 0.558 (Emotional Experiences) to 0.785 (Consumer Loyalty). Moreover, each AVE value of the constructs in the measurement model was greater than the squared correlation coefficients between each construct and any other constructs except for the discriminant validity between emotional experiences, satisfaction, and loyalty (Table 3). These results ensured convergent and marginal discriminant validity as well as reliability of the measurement model [67].

Table 3. Summary results of measurement model validation.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 SS	0.722					
2 EE	0.781 ***	0.558				
3 SF	0.707 ***	0.871 ***	0.592			
4 CS	0.720 ***	0.812 ***	0.740 ***	0.735		
5 CL	0.659 ***	0.678 ***	0.606 ***	0.750 ***	0.785	
6 KAM	0.458 ***	0.503 ***	0.470 ***	0.483 ***	0.510 ***	0.572

Note. SS = servicescape, EE = emotional experiences; SF = space flow; CS = consumer satisfaction; CL = consumer loyalty; KAM = knowledge acquisition motivation. *** $p < 0.001$, bold and italicized = AVE values.

4.2. Hypothesis Testing

The authors performed latent moderated structural equation (LMS) modeling to test the proposed hypotheses. First of all, a structural model (Model 0) without the latent interaction term between the servicescape and knowledge acquisition motivation was estimated (Figure 2). The results showed an acceptable model fit between the data and Model 0: $S-B\chi^2/df = 1308.212/652 = 2.006$, CFI = 0.923, RMSEA = 0.051 and SRMR = 0.059. Accordingly, the authors proceeded to the second stage, in which Model 1 with the latent interaction term was estimated (Figure 3). After this, the authors conducted a log-likelihood difference test using the log-likelihood values and df values obtained from Model 0 (log-likelihood value = $-18,801.360$, number of free parameters = 127) and Model 1 (log-likelihood value = $-18,796.990$, number of free parameters = 129). The result showed that Model 1, with the latent interaction term, statistically fit the data better than Model 0: $8.74 = 22122[(-18,801.360) - (-18,796.990)]$, with $df = 2$. Hence, the authors interpreted the path coefficients from Model 1 to test the proposed hypotheses.

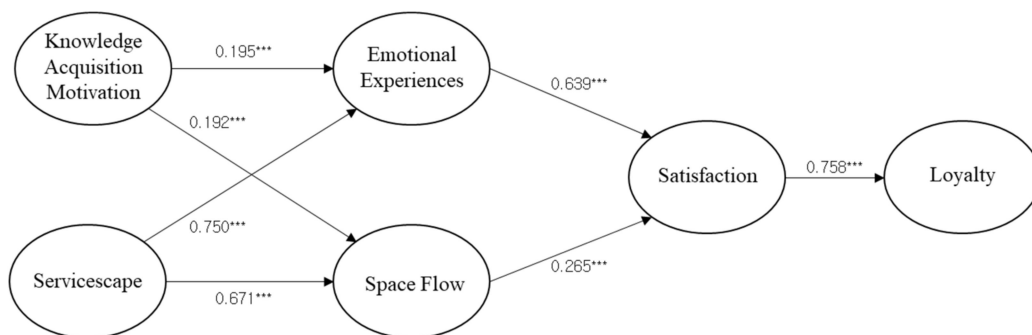


Figure 2. Results of Model 0. *** $p < 0.001$.

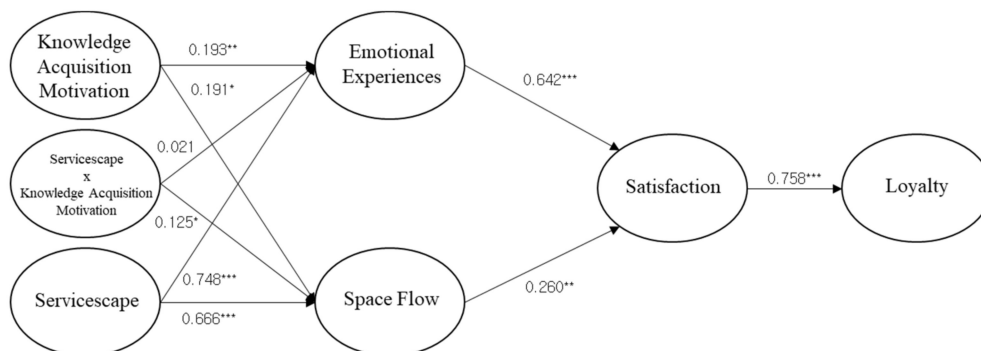


Figure 3. Results of Model 1. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

The results of testing Model 1 indicated that the path coefficients from the servicescape to emotional experiences (standardized $\gamma = 0.748$, $p < 0.001$) and space flow (standardized

$\gamma = 0.748, p < 0.001$) were statistically significant. Therefore, hypotheses 1 and 2 were tenable. The results also showed that emotional experiences (standardized $\gamma = 0.642, p < 0.001$) and space flow (standardized $\gamma = 0.260, p < 0.01$) had a positive impact on consumer satisfaction with fitness centers. Accordingly, hypotheses 3 and 4 were tenable. Additionally, the path coefficient from consumer satisfaction to consumer loyalty was found to be statistically significant (standardized $\gamma = 0.758, p < 0.001$), supporting hypothesis 5. Meanwhile, the result of testing the indirect effect of the servicescape on consumer loyalty indicated that servicescape indirectly affected consumer loyalty via emotional experiences, space flow, and consumer satisfaction (standardized $\gamma = 0.125, p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 6 was supported. Regarding the moderating roles of knowledge acquisition motivation (hypotheses 7 and 8), the results revealed that the path coefficient from the latent interaction term between the servicescape and knowledge acquisition motivation and space flow was statistically significant (standardized $\gamma = 0.125, p < 0.05$), whereas the path coefficient from the latent interaction term to emotional experiences was not (standardized $\gamma = 0.021, p = 0.619$). Thus, hypothesis 8 was supported, but hypothesis 7 was not. The final research model in which all path coefficients are summarized is shown below (Figure 4).

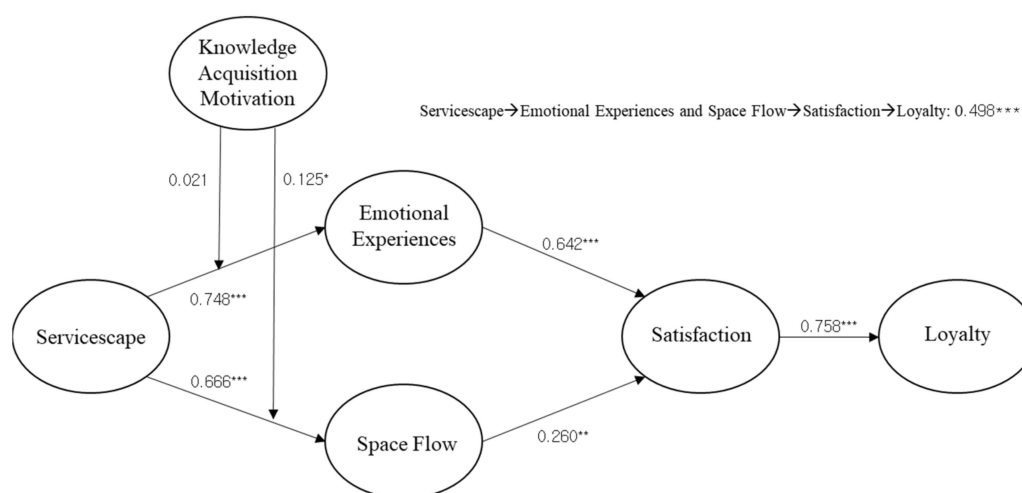


Figure 4. Final Research Model and Results. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

5. Discussion

The findings of the current study demonstrate that a positive perception of the servicescape in fitness centers enhances consumers' emotional experiences and space flow. These findings are consistent with the existing literature highlighting the importance of developing attractive servicescapes in diverse service contexts because it not only enhances consumers' affective experiences (i.e., emotional experiences) but also amplifies positive cognitive experiences (i.e., space flow) [23,24]. For example, Dedeoglu et al. [28] suggested that components of hotel servicescape strongly affected emotional values ($\gamma = 0.28, p < 0.05$ and $\gamma = 0.16, p < 0.05$). Stoel et al. [30] suggested that shopping mall service scope positively influenced utilitarian values considered as a cognitive experiences ($\gamma = 0.26, p < 0.05$). The results of hypothesis testing (H1 and H2) imply that servicescape would be more important factors for consumer experiences in the sport fitness industry than other industries because the coefficients from servicescape to emotional experiences and space flow are greater than the ones in the existing literature. Thus, it can be concluded that, by developing appropriate ambient conditions and spatial layout as well as an aesthetic, convenient, and safe space, a positive physical service environment allows fitness center consumers to experience diverse positive emotions and to be cognitively absorbed in the space of the fitness center.

Meanwhile, the present study found that consumers' emotional experiences (affective dimension) and space flow (cognitive dimension) had a positive impact on consumer

satisfaction with fitness centers. In particular, the effect of emotional experiences on consumer satisfaction (standardized $\gamma = 0.642$, $p < 0.001$) was found to be more powerful than the effect of space flow on consumer satisfaction (standardized $\gamma = 0.260$, $p < 0.01$). This finding can be interpreted as suggesting that consumers evaluate fitness centers while relying more on affective aspects of their consumption experiences. This interpretation corresponds to the sport consumer behavior literature suggesting that affective factors play a more significant role in predicting consumer satisfaction than cognitive factors in the context of hedonic consumption [12,25,26,43]. For instance, Caro and Garcia [26] compared two competing models in which affective dimensions was incorporated in the cognitive satisfaction model as an independent variable or as a mediator to explain consumer satisfaction in the context of sport events. They found that affective dimensions better explained consumer satisfaction as an independent factor than cognitive dimensions. Accordingly, it can be concluded that affective dimensions would play more significant role in explaining consumer satisfaction in the context of sport fitness centers.

In terms of consumer loyalty, not only does consumer satisfaction directly enhance loyalty, but the servicescape also indirectly influences consumer loyalty via emotional experiences and flow experiences in the context of the fitness industry. In other words, consumers are likely to engage in repurchase and word-of-mouth behavior when they are satisfied with fitness centers because they have developed attractive servicescapes that allow them to experience positive affective and cognitive experiences. This finding supports a bulk of literature that has suggested that consumer satisfaction is a major determinant of repurchase and word-of-mouth [48,50,52,53]. Additionally, the results regarding the indirect effect of service scape on consumer loyalty supports the existing literature on the indirect effects of servicescape on consumer loyalty in diverse industries [26,29,30,43]. Taken together, the authors conclude that developing an attractive servicescape is crucial for consumer experiences, satisfaction, and loyalty in the context of the fitness industry.

The current study also offers insight into the role of consumption motivations in overall consumer experiences. According to the results, knowledge acquisition motivation modulates the effect of the servicescape on space flow. Specifically, the effect of the servicescape on space flow escalates as the level of knowledge acquisition motivation increases. This implies that consumers who are in the beginner stage of exercise (i.e., high level of knowledge acquisition motivation) are likely to evaluate their flow experiences based on the service environment (i.e., the servicescape). This finding is in line with the principle of dual processing models such as ELM [71–73] and HSM [74]. These models posit that consumers evaluate a target object with different informational cues depending on their personal or situational characteristics. However, this principle may not be applicable to the evaluation of emotional experiences. Specifically, it was found that knowledge acquisition motivation did not moderate the effect of the servicescape on emotional experiences. Presumably, the servicescape is so important to consumers' emotional experiences (standardized $\gamma = 0.748$, $p < 0.001$) that all consumers, regardless of their knowledge acquisition motivation, consider the servicescape as the most valid informational cue to assess their emotional experiences.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The current research contributes several meaningful theoretical implications to the sport management literature. First, the present study offers a comprehensive model involving both affective and cognitive factors to explain consumer satisfaction and loyalty in the fitness center setting. Furthermore, the present study illuminates the psychological mechanism by which the servicescape influences consumer experiences, satisfaction, and loyalty by testing the indirect effect of the servicescape on consumer loyalty. By doing so, the present study adds new insight into the role of the servicescape in sport consumer behavior.

Second, the present study extends the servicescape literature by pinpointing the role of consumption motivation in sport consumers' experiences. The majority of studies on the servicescape and consumer experiences have tested the direct effects of the servicescape

on consumer experiences. As a result, little is known about when or in whom such direct effects are escalated or decreased depending on the level of a moderator (i.e., consumption motivation). Understanding such conditional effects of the servicescape on consumer behavior is practically and theoretically important, since it provides meaningful insight into an effective service environment for highly motivated or less motivated consumers.

Third, the current study also contributes to the flow experience and sport consumer behavior literature by expanding the concept of flow experiences. Previous studies on the flow experience in sport settings have mainly focused on immersive experiences during exercise; that is, the target of the immersive experiences is exercise. The concept of space flow focuses on the immersive experiences in the target space, which can be differently perceived depending on the valence of the servicescape. In other words, the target of the immersive experiences is the space in which exercise occurs.

Lastly, the present study provides a useful measurement model of servicescape in diverse sport contexts. Although, the research context mainly focused on sport fitness centers, the measurement model can be applied to a wide range of indoor sport facilities such as indoor golf, tennis, baseball, climbing, CrossFit, and martial arts because sport consumers usually have common service values when they engage in sport activities. Thus, the measurement model could be a useful tool to measure sport consumers' perception of service environment and its impact on their future consumption behaviors.

5.2. Practical Implications

The findings of the present study also provide several practical implications. First, the results of CFA with the second order factor structure imply that convenience of the service environment have a most strong effect on the overall servicescape. The literature on servicescape has suggested that convenience is the most thoroughly researched in designing products [75] and services, and it is the most desired attribute for consumers visiting restaurants, shopping malls, hotels, etc. [76,77]. Accordingly, sport fitness center managers should pay more attention to the convenience of their service environment by designing service settings in which consumers can easily use the equipment, furniture, and space. Second, fitness center managers should develop attractive service environments to enhance consumer loyalty. In particular, developing attractive service environments should be accomplished in a way that maximizes emotional experiences. For example, choices of color, scent, and background music should be made to elicit fun, excitement, and enjoyment. Second, the result of the moderating effect of knowledge acquisition motivation provides a new perspective on the arrangement of the fitness space. Specifically, it seems a better strategy to assign exercise beginners to an attractive physical environment for their exercise because they are more likely to evaluate their experiences based on the perceived servicescape than exercise experts. Additionally, the promotion strategy of an appealing, attractive servicescape would be more effective for exercise beginners.

6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

In spite of the theoretical and practical implications of the current study, several limitations should be discussed to identify future research opportunities. First of all, despite the fact that there is a wide range of consumption motivations, the present study only examined the moderating role of knowledge acquisition motivation in consumer experiences because of the complexity of the research model. Thus, future studies should test diverse consumption motivations such as social or health motivations to enhance the understanding of the relationship between consumption motivations and sport consumer behavior. Second, the present study suggested emotional experiences and space flow as the psychological mechanisms of the effect of the servicescape on consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Other mediators such as psychological attachment to fitness centers may successfully function as a psychological mechanism to explain the relationship between the servicescape and consumer satisfaction as well as loyalty. Lastly, the present study specified the concept of the servicescape as a second-order factor to examine its overall

effect on sport consumer behavior. Investigating the effects of the components of the servicescape would provide insight into specific strategies for developing an attractive service environment.

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