

The Impact of Experiential Value on Food Truck Consumers' Satisfaction and Loyalty: The Mediating Role of Experience Quality

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Abstract

This study developed an integrated model linking experiential value, experience quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty to examine the psychological process and behavioral responses of food truck consumers. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with 363 valid samples, the results indicated good model fit. Experiential value positively influenced experience quality, and both experience quality and satisfaction significantly influenced loyalty. The direct effect of experience quality on loyalty was insignificant, confirming the full mediating role of satisfaction. These findings highlight that satisfaction is the key mechanism transforming perceived quality into loyalty behavior. The study validates the “experience–satisfaction–loyalty” framework and offers practical insights for food truck operators, emphasizing experience design and experience quality management as effective strategies to enhance customer satisfaction and long-term brand loyalty.

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Keywords: Food trucks, Experiential value, Experience quality, Customer satisfaction, Customer loyalty.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, with the transformation of urban lifestyles and the diversification of dining cultures, food trucks have evolved from traditional street vendors into dynamic consumption spaces that integrate cuisine, culture, and social interaction (Sobaihi, 2020). Beyond meeting consumers' demands for convenience, food trucks—with their mobility, creativity, and local flavor—have become symbolic representations of urban lifestyle and regional identity (Privitera and Nesci, 2015). Unlike fixed restaurants, food trucks provide open and participatory consumption environments where customers experience multisensory stimuli through design, music, and on-site interaction (Lawton, 2016). Therefore, food truck consumption behavior is influenced not only by product attributes or price but also by the psychological and emotional value derived from the overall experience. These values—such as taste, interaction, and emotional connection—significantly affect consumers' enjoyment (Pansukum et al., 2024).

Within this context, experiential value becomes a key concept for understanding customer behavior toward food trucks. Experiential value refers to the perceived overall worth obtained through sensory, emotional, and social engagement during service encounters (Mathwick et al., 2001). For food trucks, this value arises not only from food quality but also from the atmosphere, employee interaction, and novelty of the experience (Hanssen and Jørgensen, 2015). Pleasant music, the aroma of on-site cooking, and friendly exchanges between customers and vendors create positive experiences that foster emotional attachment and shape service evaluations. During consumption, customers form subjective evaluations of overall experience quality, which focuses on perceptions of the process rather than technical aspects of service delivery (Chang and Horng, 2010; Wu and Liang, 2009). In the food truck context, perceptions of quality derive from multiple dimensions, including food freshness, cleanliness, reasonable waiting time, friendliness, and comfort. High experience quality leads to enjoyable and seamless service encounters, enhancing customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Lin et al., 2024). Satisfied customers are more likely to repurchase and engage in positive word-of-mouth (Ajao Ganiyu et al., 2012). Loyal customers, in turn, provide stable revenue and amplify brand influence through repeat visits and recommendations (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Given the mobility and short-term contact nature of food trucks, understanding how customer loyalty forms is crucial for sustaining competitiveness. In summary, experiential value influences experience quality, which in turn enhances satisfaction and ultimately fosters loyalty. In the food truck context, emotional and interactive experiences shape perceived quality, satisfaction, and loyalty intentions. Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationships among experiential value, experience quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty in the food truck industry. The findings will offer managerial insights for improving experience quality and strengthening customer retention.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Experiential Value

Experiential value refers to the subjective perceptions that arise from consumers' sensory stimulation, emotional pleasure, and social interaction during a service encounter (Mathwick et al., 2001). Unlike functional value, experiential value emphasizes the psychological fulfillment and symbolic meaning gained through participation. According to Mathwick et al. (2001), experiential value comprises four key dimensions: consumer return on investment, service excellence, aesthetics, and playfulness. In the hospitality industry, experiential value has been identified as a critical antecedent of customer attitudes and behavioral intentions (Cetin et al., 2014). Food trucks derive their appeal from open spaces and spontaneous interaction, fostering psychological engagement and emotional resonance among consumers (Shin et al., 2018). Moreover, experiential value encompasses not only sensory enjoyment but also the relational and emotional bonds formed between customers and service providers (Tang, 2022). Particularly in the food truck context, on-site cooking aromas, lively music, and friendly interactions act as psychological stimuli that shape perceived quality (Hansen, 2002). Thus, the experiential value of food trucks represents a holistic perception encompassing atmosphere, interactivity, novelty, and emotional engagement. Tang (2022) argued that experiential value serves as the foundation for evaluating experience quality, enhancing consumers' positive perception of service processes. In this study, experiential value is conceptualized as a key antecedent influencing customers' perception of experience quality.

2.2 Experience Quality

Experience quality refers to the overall evaluation formed by customers' subjective perceptions during the service process (Otto and Ritchie, 1996; Wu and Liang, 2009). Unlike service quality, which focuses on technical outcomes, experience quality emphasizes consumers' emotional and sensory interpretation of the service journey (Schembri and Sandberg, 2002). Chang and Horng (2010) suggested that experience quality reflects the overall impression derived from participation, sensory engagement, and emotional connection, all of which directly influence satisfaction and loyalty. Wu and Liang (2009) found that high levels of experience quality lead to greater enjoyment and comfort, thereby fostering positive satisfaction. Lin et al. (2024) further revealed that experience quality not only directly affects satisfaction but also indirectly enhances revisit intention and brand loyalty through emotional mechanisms (Manikandan et al., 2025). In the food truck context, the service environment, food presentation, and interpersonal interaction jointly shape perceived experience quality. Overall, experience quality acts as the crucial link connecting experiential value to behavioral intention, implying that superior quality generates both emotional and cognitive satisfaction, which in turn strengthens customer loyalty.

2.3 Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction refers to the psychological evaluation resulting from the comparison between perceived and expected experiences (Shaikh, 2024). When experience quality exceeds expectations, consumers experience positive satisfaction; when it falls short, dissatisfaction arises (Xu, 2011). In hospitality and tourism, numerous studies have confirmed the positive impact of experience quality on satisfaction (Veloso and Gómez-Suárez, 2023). Wu and Liang (2009) demonstrated that experience quality enhances satisfaction by increasing pleasure and a sense of control, thereby strengthening emotional attachment to the brand. Satisfaction represents not only a transient emotional response but also a foundation of long-term trust and commitment (Li, 2013). In the food truck industry, satisfaction directly influences customers' willingness to repurchase and recommend, making it a central factor for sustaining relationships and competitive advantage.

2.4 Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty can be categorized into attitudinal and behavioral dimensions (Bandyopadhyay and Martell, 2007). Attitudinal loyalty reflects emotional attachment and trust toward a brand, while behavioral loyalty manifests through repurchase and positive word-of-mouth (Mao, 2010). Loyal customers not only provide stable revenue but also enhance brand equity through positive recommendations and community influence (Heskett, 2002). In the food truck industry, loyalty plays a particularly critical role. Given the mobile and short-term nature of food truck interactions, businesses rely heavily on returning customers to maintain stability. When consumers perceive high experiential value and superior quality, they are more likely to develop lasting satisfaction, which ultimately translates into revisit intention, recommendation behavior, and sustained loyalty.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Framework

Based on the literature review, this study proposes an integrated model linking experiential value, experience quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty to explore the psychological process and behavioral responses of food truck consumers. In the context of food truck consumption, customers are first influenced by the atmosphere, interactivity, and novelty of the experience. These dimensions of experiential value shape their overall perception and evaluation of service performance. When customers experience higher levels of enjoyment and engagement, they tend to form more positive evaluations of experience quality.

Experience quality not only determines customers' immediate impressions but also influences their subsequent emotional responses and attitudes. High experience quality generates satisfaction by meeting or exceeding expectations, thereby enhancing overall customer fulfillment. Moreover, satisfaction serves as a bridge between experience quality and loyalty, transforming emotional reactions into behavioral intentions. Satisfied customers are more likely to revisit and recommend

the brand, which in turn strengthens their loyalty. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Experiential value has a positive effect on experience quality.

H2: Experience quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

H3: Experience quality has a positive effect on customer loyalty.

H4: Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on customer loyalty.

3.2 Questionnaire Design

This study employed a questionnaire survey to collect data from customers who had purchased food from food trucks in urban areas. Convenience sampling was used, and respondents completed the survey through an on-site QR code, providing their subjective evaluations. The questionnaire was developed and refined based on prior studies and consisted of four major constructs: experiential value, experience quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) to assess respondents' perceptions, emotions, and behavioral intentions related to food truck experiences. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire underwent expert review and a pilot test before formal distribution, verifying the clarity and appropriateness of each item. The finalized questionnaire data were then analyzed for reliability, validity, and structural relationships using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the proposed hypotheses.

Table 1: Questionnaire items

Construct/Variable	Measuring Items
Experiential Value (EV)	EV1: The atmosphere of the food truck makes me feel relaxed and comfortable. EV2: Interacting with the staff at the food truck is enjoyable. EV3: The food truck provides a unique and novel experience compared to traditional restaurants. EV4: The design and appearance of the food truck are visually appealing. EV5: The overall dining experience at the food truck is fun and engaging.
Experience Quality (EQ)	EQ1: The food truck provides high-quality service throughout my visit. EQ2: The staff of the food truck are friendly and attentive to my needs. EQ3: The environment of the food truck is clean, comfortable, and well-maintained. EQ4: The overall experience at the food truck is consistent and reliable. EQ5: The service process at the food truck runs smoothly and efficiently.
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	CS1: Overall, I am satisfied with my experience at the food truck. CS2: My experience at the food truck exceeded my expectations. CS3: The food truck provides a pleasant and enjoyable experience. CS4: I feel happy about choosing to dine at this food truck.
Customer Loyalty (CL)	CL1: I intend to revisit this food truck in the future. CL2: I would recommend this food truck to my friends or family. CL3: I consider this food truck as my preferred choice among mobile dining options. CL4: I will continue to support this food truck even if other options are available.

4. Empirical Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics Analysis

A total of 400 questionnaires were collected, of which 363 were valid after excluding incomplete responses, yielding an effective response rate of 90.75%. To understand the overall characteristics of respondents, this study analyzed demographic and behavioral variables, including gender, age, education, monthly disposable income, and food truck consumption patterns.

In terms of gender, female respondents accounted for 52.07%, slightly higher than males (47.93%), suggesting no significant gender bias in food truck consumption. Regarding age, most respondents were between 21–30 years old (34.99%) and 41–50 years old (33.06%), indicating that food truck consumption is concentrated among economically active young and middle-aged groups. As for education, 44.90% of respondents held a bachelor's degree and 25.07% a postgraduate degree, demonstrating a relatively high educational level. In terms of income, over half reported a monthly disposable income between NT\$20,001 and NT\$60,000, with the largest share falling in the NT\$40,001–60,000 range (25.07%). These figures suggest that most respondents belong to middle-income groups with stable spending power. The primary reason for visiting food trucks was “tasting food” (55.37%), followed by “enjoying the atmosphere” (20.11%), indicating that food truck experiences fulfill both functional and emotional needs. Social media (44.90%) was the most common source of information, followed by online news/blogs and word-of-mouth recommendations (20.10%), reflecting the industry's reliance on digital and social media marketing. Most respondents spent NT\$200–499 per visit (55.10%), with NT\$200–299 (30.03%) being the most common range, suggesting that food trucks represent affordable mid-range dining options. The most popular categories were snack/light meals (30.03%) and beverages (25.07%), indicating a preference for convenient and creative food options.

Overall, the sample distribution is balanced and representative of urban food truck consumers—primarily young and middle-aged individuals with moderate income and higher education levels. This demographic profile provides a sound empirical foundation for analyzing the relationships among experiential value, experience quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

4.2 Reliability and Validity Analysis

A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement model. Table 2 presents the factor loadings, Cronbach's α , Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct. The standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.658 to 0.814, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.60 (Hair et al., 2019), indicating strong item representation of the latent constructs. Cronbach's α values ranged from 0.781 to 0.833, and CR values ranged from 0.842 to 0.880, both surpassing the 0.70 criterion, suggesting satisfactory internal consistency and measurement reliability. All constructs demonstrated AVE values between 0.516 and 0.646, above the 0.50

benchmark recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981), supporting convergent validity. Collectively, the four constructs—Experiential Value (EV), Experience Quality (EQ), Customer Satisfaction (CS), and Customer Loyalty (CL)—exhibited robust reliability and validity, providing a solid foundation for subsequent Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis.

Table 2: Results for factor loading, reliability, and validity

Constructs	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Experiential Value (EV)	EV1	0.708	0.811	0.842	0.516
	EV2	0.724			
	EV3	0.764			
	EV4	0.658			
	EV5	0.735			
Experience Quality (EQ)	EQ1	0.750	0.833	0.863	0.558
	EQ2	0.719			
	EQ3	0.770			
	EQ4	0.741			
	EQ5	0.755			
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	CS1	0.742	0.781	0.856	0.598
	CS 2	0.766			
	CS 3	0.785			
	CS 4	0.799			
Customer Loyalty (CL)	CL1	0.805	0.808	0.880	0.646
	CL2	0.796			
	CL3	0.814			
	CL4	0.801			

Note: CR: Composite reliability; AVE: Average variance extracted.

4.3 Structural Equation Modeling and Hypothesis Testing

After confirming the reliability and validity of the measurement model, this study employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the overall model fit and verify the hypothesized relationships among Experiential Value (EV), Experience Quality (EQ), Customer Satisfaction (CS), and Customer Loyalty (CL). The model fit indices were as follows: GFI = 0.91, AGFI = 0.88, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.04, NFI = 0.98, CFI = 0.99, and PNFI = 0.84. According to the criteria suggested by Hair et al. (2019) and Hu and Bentler (1999), GFI, NFI, and CFI values exceeding 0.90, together with RMSEA and SRMR values below 0.08 and PNFI greater than 0.50, indicate a good overall model fit. Thus, the proposed theoretical model provides a valid representation of the relationships among the study constructs.

As shown in Table 3 and Figure 1, the SEM path analysis revealed that experiential value significantly and positively affected experience quality, supporting H1.

Experience quality had a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction, supporting H2, while customer satisfaction had a significant positive effect on customer loyalty, supporting H4. However, the direct effect of experience quality on customer loyalty was not significant, hence H3 was not supported. Overall, the results demonstrate that experiential value not only enhances experience quality but also indirectly influences customer satisfaction through it. Customer satisfaction, in turn, acts as a crucial mediator influencing loyalty. In other words, customers who feel satisfied with their food truck experiences are more likely to revisit and remain loyal to the brand. Conversely, high perceived quality without emotional satisfaction does not necessarily lead to loyalty. This finding confirms a full mediation effect of satisfaction between experience quality and loyalty.

Table 3: SEM analysis results and hypothesis verification

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Path	Path coefficient	Results
H1	EV→EQ	0.87 ***	Supported
H2	EQ→CS	0.88 ***	Supported
H3	EQ→CL	0.10	Not Supported
H4	CS→CL	0.86 ***	Supported

Note: *** $p < 0.01$

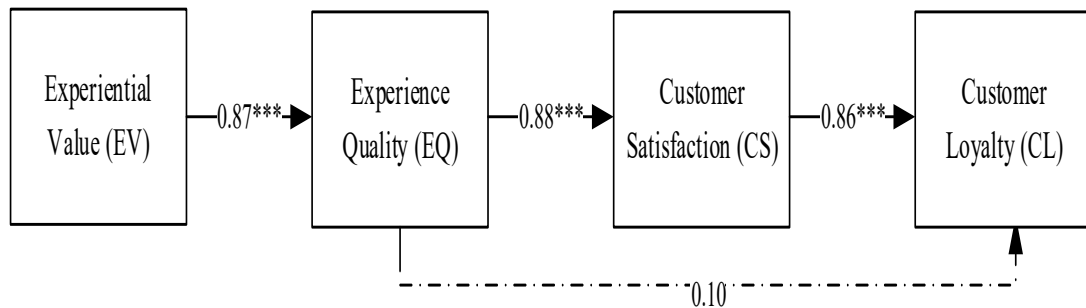


Figure 1: Results of the research model

Note: *** $p < 0.01$

In conclusion, this study validates the sequential relationships among experiential value, experience quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. The strong association between experiential value and experience quality indicates that when customers perceive novelty, engagement, and interactivity in food truck experiences, they are more likely to evaluate experience quality positively. The significant effect of experience quality on satisfaction confirms that quality serves as a key driver of emotional fulfillment. However, the non-significant direct effect of experience quality on loyalty suggests that superior experience quality alone is insufficient to

sustain customer loyalty without the emotional reinforcement of satisfaction. Finally, the strong positive relationship between satisfaction and loyalty underscores the central role of satisfaction as a psychological mechanism linking experience and behavioral intention.

5. Conclusion

This study developed an integrated model linking experiential value, experience quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty to examine the psychological process and behavioral responses of food truck consumers. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the results indicated good model fit and stable, significant positive relationships among the constructs. Experiential value had a strong positive effect on experience quality, suggesting that when consumers perceive novelty, interactivity, and sensory appeal in food truck experiences, their evaluation of experience quality improves. Experience quality significantly enhanced customer satisfaction, confirming that high-quality service encounters generate emotional pleasure and fulfillment. Customer satisfaction, in turn, exerted a significant positive influence on loyalty, demonstrating that satisfied customers are more likely to revisit and recommend food trucks. However, the direct effect of experience quality on loyalty was insignificant, indicating that satisfaction fully mediates this relationship and functions as a key psychological mechanism transforming perceived quality into loyal behavior.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature in three key ways. First, it extends the concepts of experiential value and experience quality to the context of food trucks, addressing the research gap in experiential consumption studies that have primarily focused on traditional or stationary restaurants. Second, it empirically validates the mediating roles of experience quality and satisfaction, revealing the sequential psychological process that links perception, emotion, and behavioral intention. Third, the findings integrate experiential value theory with experience quality theory, reinforcing the chain relationship between satisfaction and loyalty and providing a conceptual foundation for understanding customer behavior in experience-oriented industries.

From a managerial perspective, four recommendations are proposed. First, food truck operators should design multisensory experiences by incorporating lighting, music, and aroma to create an immersive atmosphere that enhances sensory pleasure. Second, interactive and participatory experiences should be emphasized through live demonstrations, real-time engagement, or customer involvement in the cooking process to foster stronger emotional connections. Third, experience quality consistency must be ensured through fresh ingredients, cleanliness, and friendly service, which together reinforce customer satisfaction. Finally, operators should build brand communities and maintain customer relationships via social media engagement, loyalty programs, and thematic events, thereby encouraging repeat patronage and word-of-mouth communication to strengthen brand loyalty.

In conclusion, the success of food trucks depends on the strategic integration of

experience design and experience quality management. Only when customers achieve sensory, emotional, and social satisfaction can these experiences translate into loyalty behaviors. By adopting experiential marketing principles and maintaining consistent experience quality, food truck operators can enhance customer satisfaction, foster emotional attachment, and cultivate long-term loyalty, ultimately achieving sustainable brand growth and competitive advantage.

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