

## The Effect of Servicescape on Customer Satisfaction

### ผลกระทบของภูมิทัศน์บริการที่มีต่อความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า

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#### Abstract

Many firms compete exploiting and exploring substantial resources to build their place attachment in order to maintain a competitive advantage. The purpose of this research is to examine the influence of servicescape through the consequential factors in order to achieve on customer satisfaction. Data were collected from 391 customer of Toyota customer service center in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. A questionnaire is used to collect data. The statistic techniques was analyzed by multiple regression analysis at the statistically significant level of .05 is employed to examine all hypotheses. The results reveal that servicescape plays a significant role in determining place attachment. Likewise, place attachment has a significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction. In addition, conclusion and future research will be discussed. Both theoretical and managerial contributions support are clearly provided.

**Keywords:** Servicescape, Place Attachment, Customer Satisfaction

### บทคัดย่อ

บริษัทมากมายช่วงชิงความได้เปรียบและการสำรวจทรัพยากรที่สำคัญในการสร้างความผูกพันกับสถานที่ เพื่อรักษาความได้เปรียบในการแข่งขัน การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อตรวจสอบอิทธิพลของภูมิทัศน์บริการผ่านผลลัพธ์เพื่อให้บรรลุความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล จำนวน 391 คน จากศูนย์บริการโตโยต้า จังหวัดนครราชสีมา โดยใช้แบบสอบถามในการเก็บข้อมูล การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้สถิติการวิเคราะห์การถดถอยพหุคูณที่นัยสำคัญทางสถิติระดับ .05 สำหรับการทดสอบสมมติฐานทั้งหมด ผลการวิเคราะห์ พบว่า ภูมิทัศน์บริการมีบทบาทสำคัญต่อความผูกพันกับสถานที่ ในทำนองเดียวกันความผูกพันกับสถานที่มีความสำคัญและส่งผลกระทบต่อความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า นอกจากนี้ผลการศึกษานี้ยังสามารถใช้เป็นข้อสรุปและแนวทางของงานวิจัยในอนาคต รวมทั้งประโยชน์ที่สนับสนุนด้านทฤษฎีและเชิงปฏิบัติที่ชัดเจน

**คำสำคัญ:** ภูมิทัศน์บริการ ความผูกพันกับสถานที่ ความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า

### Introduction

The essential of place in service administration and marketing has been conceptualized as service-scape for service. It was defined as the situation in which the service is collected for customers, where buyer and seller interact together (Booms & Bitner, 1981). The servicescape figures the expectations of the customers and also their gratifications (Booms & Bitner, 1981; Bitner, 1990). The servicescape is conventionally worried with the atmospherics of service, which can have a strong impact on customers' awareness of the service experience (Bitner, 1990; Reimer & Kuehn, 2005) and in communicating the firm's image and purpose to its customers. The place where service is shaped and inspired is also a place of service co-production, and acknowledged as such by many consumers, whether taking the form of physical place or virtual space.

A firm's servicescape typically comprises interior design issues (layout, equipment and décor) the exterior physical environment, highlighting signage, parking and landscape characteristics (Bitner, 1992; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Several studies also show behavioural effects due to cooler and light (Areni & Kim, 1994), contextual music (Milliman, 1982, 1986; Morrison, Gan, Dubelaar & Oppewal, 2011) and odours (Spangenberg, Crowley & Henderson, 1996; Morrison, Gan, Dubelaar & Oppewal, 2011). The symbolic logic of servicescape is recognized within the services'

marketing, hospitality, retailing, service operations, health care and organizational behavioural literature (Vilnai-Yavetz, Rafaeli & Yaacov, 2005; Elsbach & Bechky, 2007) and more generally (Kotler, Asplund, Rein & Haider; 1993, 1999; Anholt, 2006).

The capacity of the servicescape to impact customer behaviour, and contribute to the development of firm reputation, is obvious for traditional service businesses such as retail stores, banks, restaurants and hospitals (Kotler, 1973; Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1985). However, a servicescape not only effects customer perceptions or customer satisfaction of service functions and service quality, but more subtly, also influences the meanings a customer draws from the many intangible, contextual and symbolic components of a service businesses.

This study begins by reviewing the relevant literature reviews, provides significant research hypotheses development, discusses the research methods used to test the hypotheses, indicates the results and reasonable discussions of the study, and concludes by discussing contributions for theory and management and providing directions for future research.

### Research Objectives

The study of addressed the following objectives: (1) To examine the relationships among each dimension of servicescape (place identity,

place facility and place dependence) on place attachment. And (2) to investigate the influences of place attachment on increased customer satisfaction within the context of Toyota customer service center in Nakhon Ratchasima Province.

### Literature Review and Hypothesis Developments Service Dominant Logic (S-D Logic)

Vargo & Lusch (2004), in their award-winning Journal of Marketing article set out to challenge the fundamental goods-dominant (G-D) logic premise on which modern marketing has been based. Underlying traditional marketing logic, goods are assumed to be embedded with value in production. In other words, the traditional view is that finished goods come ready with value added. Vargo & Lusch challenge this logic when they say that value is assessed by customers and other beneficiaries from service offerings at the time of use, not at time of purchase. This means that companies can make value propositions but the value proposed is provisional until tested by customers in use. Thus, service-dominant (S-D) logic has the influence of displacing exchange value as the historically located context for value realization, and substituting instead value-in-use.

Vargo & Lusch (2004) also challenge existing marketing assumptions by locating service interaction as a pivotal concept. In their terms, all marketing is S-D. Following Bastiat (1964), argue that goods are a form of service provision and so service is always exchanged for service, directly or indirectly. This perspective gives further emphasis to the value derived from goods in use, as well as value derived directly through service interactions with providers, which of course gives rise to the conventional term “services”.

Vargo & Lusch (2008) argue that value-in-use is the phenomenological expression of the service experienced by a beneficiary (usually a customer) in particular contexts. The service experiences of everyday business life are co-created in interaction, but the act of bringing the value of these experiences to consciousness is the act of an individual. Vargo & Lusch have proposed S-D logic as an evolving logic, and invite supportive and critical comments. Whether co-created value is a general or a special case is currently a matter of scholarly debate (Aitken, Stringer & Ballantyne, 2012).

The conceptual models explaining the effects of three dimensions of servicescape on the place attachment and on the customer satisfaction are shown in Figure 1.

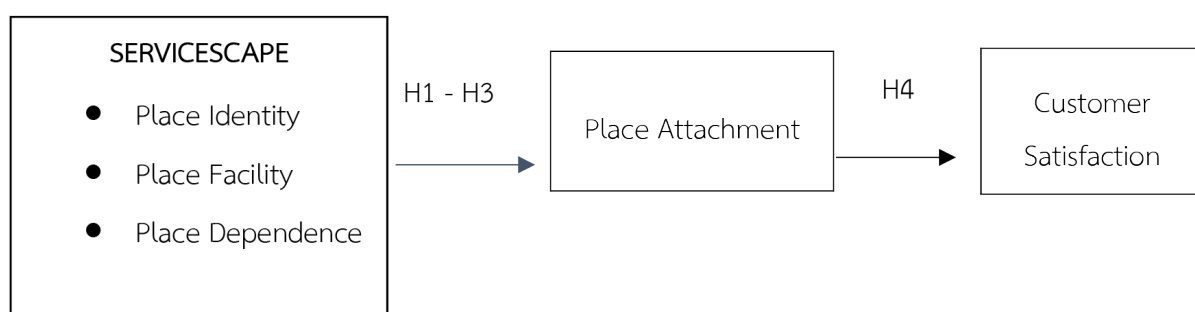


Figure 1: A Conceptual Model

### Servicescape

The greatest widely cited typology of the service setting is Bitner (1990; 1992). Her framework points to a composite mix of environmental and psychological factors that influence the internal responses and external behaviours of customers and

employees. The servicescape is the context of the service encounter that effects the customers' sense of well-being, directly or indirectly. The servicescape effects on customer sensory gratefulness of place, and its importance to the determination of the service. In other words, it helps customers clarify

both their expectations and their satisfaction with their service experience (Booms & Bitner, 1981; Morrison, Dubelaar & Oppewal, 2011). By connecting the “atmospherics” of place to specific purchase situations, servicescape has demonstrated positive (and/or negative) effects on customers’ attitudes and decision-making.

The servicescape environment can also be reflected in terms of three physical factors: ambient conditions; spatial layout and functionality; and signs, symbols and artefacts (Bitner, 1992). First, ambient conditions such as temperature condition, lighting, noise, music and scent directly relate to the sensory. For example; background music can effects what people buy and how long they stay in the store. Normally, soft music gets people to stay longer and fast music makes people move along (Milliman, 1982; Areni & Kim, 1994). Gender also has an impact on how influenced a customer is by the service environment. Second, spatial layout and functionality are essential factors, as the spatial relationship of items within the servicescape and their ease of use help to facilitate the provision of service. Finally, third signs, symbols and artefacts are features designed into the service environment, and they provide cues about the service provision to the users of the service.

How the service environment is built and designed is important for particular target markets. There has design harmony between different parts of the store and the offerings. The servicescape concept also includes the layout and placement of the products. Is it easy for the customer to find what they are looking for? Is the customer moving along the aisles at an adequate speed? Not every storeowner understands how to create a servicescape that influences both customer behaviour and ultimate satisfaction with the service experience (Bitner, 1992). This suggests to us that the service environment should be considered not only in terms of its physical aspects but also the

mix and density of the people in that service space effect on the overall atmosphere.

The behaviours resulting from interactions within servicescapes can be described as individual behaviours but also as social interactions between customers and employees (Bitner, 1992). Employees and customers can respond cognitively, emotionally and physiologically to dimensions of their physical surroundings (Bitner, 1992). A servicescape may elicit cognitive responses (influencing the customers’ beliefs about people and products found in that place) and also emotional responses (customers having feelings of pleasure are more likely to spend time and money in the store). These responses effect on customer and employees behaviour in the service environment. Similarly, physiological dimensions (ambient temperature, loud noises, lighting and air quality) may influence whether the customer wants to stay in the store (Bitner, 1992).

In summary, service setting design can strongly influence individual and social behaviour within that setting in ways that constrain or support the service experience of customers and staff at a functional level and in symbolic ways. Thus, this study extends the prior research of servicescapes comprising three dimensions, which are place identity, place facility and place dependence. Linking these to place attachment leads to customer satisfaction.

### Place Identity

Place identity is defined as the congruency between a person’s self-image and the physical and social aspects of a place (Proshansky, 1978). The concept of place identity is based on work by Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff (1983) that extends traditional identity theories from an emphasis on social contact between a child and an adult to include objects and places which have position in the formation of an individual’s identity.

Leveraging these values in a marketing context, Bhattacharya & Sen (2003), determine



that correspondence between a person's identity and that of relevant businesses can be a source of self-identification. Extending these principles of self-identity to physical retail places, it is possible for individuals to rely on specific locations to support their social identities, thus creating a sense of place identity. Once an individual self-categorizes as being a member of a place or environmental setting, he or she is able to use it as a means of reference, a form of personal expression, and a communication tool (Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg 2000). Ultimately, when there is congruence between the self-image of the individual and the image of the service place, feelings of attachment are increased. Place identity is similar in nature to Park, MacInnis, Priester & Iacobucci (2010) brand-self connection. Thus, the research hypothesis is as follows:

H1: Place identity has a positive influence on place attachment.

### Place Facility

A firm's place facility's typically comprises interior design issues (layout, tools and décor) and the exterior physical environment, highlighting signage, parking and landscape characteristics, air quality, acoustics, visual attractiveness, lighting, furniture (Bitner, 1992; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). The facility's temperature and noise level seem to be at a comfortable level. The facility has daylighting in the area, but the waiting area did not have access to daylighting. The facility was clean but had an outdated look due to the finishes and materials. Therefore, the research hypothesis is as follows:

H2: Place facility has a positive influence on place attachment.

### Place Dependence

Place dependence is an individual's evaluation of the environment in terms of its function-

ality in satisfying unfulfilled needs (Backlund & Williams, 2004). Jorgensen & Stedman (2001) define place dependence as a concern for "how well a setting serves goal attainment given an existing range of alternatives (i.e., how does this setting compare to others for what I like to do?)" Furthermore, an individual's choice of a specific place decreases the perceived substitutability of other places (Milligan, 1998). Place dependence has been found to influence attitudes towards fees and spending preferences (Kyle, Absher & Graefe, 2003), visitation within a recreational setting (Backlund & Williams, 2004), and place attachment (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Kyle, Graefe & Manning, 2005).

The link between place dependence and strength of place attachment is based on principles from environmental psychology that suggest that functional evaluations reflect the importance of a place in providing features that support desired goals and activities (Williams & Vaske, 2003). Stokols & Shumaker (1981) argue that the greater the number and range of needs met by a place, the more positive individuals' feelings will be toward that place. Thus, the research hypothesis is as follows:

H3: Place dependence has a positive influence on place attachment.

### Place Attachment and Customer Satisfaction

In the first study, we propose that three servicescape dimensions lead to strength of place attachment. Moreover, we argue that place attachment matters because it explains relational outcomes better than customer satisfaction.

### Place Attachment

Studies have investigated attachment in terms of relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1994), social friendships (Weiss, 1988), possessions (Belk,

1988), recreational/natural settings (Kyle, Absher, Mowen & Tarrant, 2004a), third places and social helpful environments (Rosenbaum, Ward, Walker & Ostrom, 2007), and homes/ neighborhoods (Easthope, 2004). The place attachment concept provides a theoretical basis to assess critical aspects of place because it is based on individuals' cumulative experiences with both physical and social aspects of an environment that lead to strong emotional bonding with that place (Low & Altman, 1992). However, place attachment theory has not been adapted and examined in a comprehensive way in the context of commercial organizations.

Consistent with theory, we conceptualize place attachment to be location specific. Therefore, in the case of a multilocation organization, consumers tend to develop attachment and loyalty to a specific location and its personnel that is distinct from any bond that they form with the organization in general. For example, an individual might have a strong attachment to one location of a restaurant, but not necessarily to all restaurants within a brand franchise. Therefore, the research hypothesis is as follows:

H4: Place attachment has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

### Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction may be regarded as a customer's response to consumption experiences (e.g. Oliver, 1997). One of the pivotal definitional issues in the literature is whether satisfaction is best conceived as a transaction-based evaluation, or as an overall evaluation of a series of transactions. Traditionally, satisfaction has been viewed as transaction specific, an immediate post-purchase evaluative judgment, or as an affective reaction (Gupta & Zeithaml, 2006). In more recent studies of the relation between customer satisfaction and

companies' performance, the focus of satisfaction is often (the long-lasting relation with) the company and not a single product from, or a single contact with, the company. For example, studies such as Anderson, Fornell & Lehmann (1994) consider satisfaction an 'overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a good or service over time'; that is, customer satisfaction is evoked by the customer's entire experience with the company. We therefore define customer satisfaction with a business service which the customer's experiences with the service value evoke.

Marketing literature generally suggests that a firm with high customer satisfaction should devote fewer resources to complaint management and field service recovery costs. In addition, satisfied customers tend to be loyal and willing to purchase more of the firm's services at higher prices. Finally, positive word of mouth from satisfied customers lowers the costs of attracting new customers; this benefit may manifest itself at the business unit or firm levels, but not at the individual level.

### Research Methodology Sample Selection and Data Collection Procedure

The population and sample of the study is drawn from the members in Toyota service center of Nakhon Ratchasima Province. Toyota service center are interesting to investigate because the businesses face the challenge of competing with numerous local competitors, and quickly reacting to dynamic changes in the economy. A sample size calculation method suggested by Yamane (1973) is used to calculate the number of sufficient members of a sample for this study. In this paper, the allowable error can be calculated at five percent ( $e = .05$ ), while 400 is the members in the sample. This study applies the simple random

sampling technique to verify the hypotheses and research model from May 10, 2018 to July 10, 2018. With regard to the questionnaire mailing, 400. Due to nine found incomplete and with response errors, they were deducted from further analysis. As a result, completed questionnaires are 391.

The questionnaire was developed from existing literatures of marketing. First, prior to mailing to the respondents, two experts and scholars were asked to modify the questionnaire to ensure comprehensiveness, clarity and reliability of the questionnaire. Second, the questionnaire was done among thirty customers randomly chosen in Toyota customer service, resulting in some minor modifications of the wordings of some survey items on place facility and place dependence. Internal consistency and reliability of the scale was measured by the use of Cronbach's alpha (Hair, Babin & Anderson, 2010).

### Measurements

This research employs a questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. All constructs in the model include multiple-item scales. Each of these variables is measured by a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In addition, all constructs are developed for measuring from definition of each construct and examine the relationship from theoretical framework and prior literature reviews. The details of each variable are presented in the following sections.

### Dependent Variables

In this research, customer satisfaction is the dependent variable of the research, and it is the operational outcomes by linking it to both inside and outside that enhance servicescape. Customer satisfaction may be regarded as a customer's res-

ponse to consumption experiences (e.g. Oliver, 1997). In addition, satisfied customers tend to be loyal and willing to purchase more of the firm's services at higher prices, and its measurement includes five items scale.

### Independent Variables

Servicescape is the focal construct of this research. It comprises three dimensions: namely, place identity, place facility, and place dependence. All independent variables are discussed as below:

Firstly, place identity is defined as the congruency between a person's self-image and the physical and social aspects of a place to measure place identity, and its measurement includes four items scale was developed, based on its definition and relevant literature reviews (Proshansky, 1978). Secondly, place facility is temperature and noise level seem to be at a comfortable level. The facility has daylighting in the area, but the waiting area did not have access to daylighting. To measure place facility, and its measurement includes five items scale. This construct is developed as an adopted scale from the definition and literature review. Thirdly, place dependence is an individual's evaluation of the environment in terms of its functionality in satisfying unfulfilled needs to measure place dependence. The measurement of the four item scale was developed, based on its definition and relevant literature reviews (Backlund & Williams, 2004).

### Mediator Variables

Place attachment is the mediator variable of the research, place attachment in terms of relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1994), social friendships (Weiss, 1988), possessions (Belk, 1988), recreational/natural settings (Kyle, Absher, Graefe, Mowen & Tarrant, 2004a), third places and social helpful environments (Rosenbaum, Ward, Walker & Ostrom, 2007), and homes/ neighborhoods

(Easthope, 2004). To measure place attachment, and its measurement includes four items scale.

### Reliability and Validity

The results of measure reliability and validity show in table 1.

**Table 1:** The Reliability and Validity Measurement of 5 Variables

Variables	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha
Place Identity (PI)	.814 - .848	.869
Place Facility (PF)	.757 - .909	.845
Place Dependence (PD)	.606 - .887	.838
Place Attachment (PA)	.763 - .877	.862
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	.874 - .916	.857

Table 1 illustrated the results of measure validation and reliability. The value of factor loadings of each construct are 0.606 (PD) to 0.909 (PF), and are greater than 0.4, which indicates acceptable construct validity (Hair, et al., 2010). Moreover, the Cronbach's alpha for all variables are shown between 0.838 (PD) to 0.869 (PI), and are greater

than 0.70 (Hair, et al., 2010). It can be concluded that the internal consistency of the entire scale exists in this research.

### Results and Discussion

The descriptive statistics and correlation matrix for variables are provided as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix for 5 Variables

Variable	PI	PF	PD	PA	CS
PI	1				
PF	.616**	1			
PD	.691**	.404**	1		
PA	.570**	.687**	.431**	1	
CS	.730**	.654**	.463**	.626**	1
Mean	4.091	4.361	4.156	4.514	4.294
SD	.341	.2963	.234	.395	.418

\*\* P<.01, \* P<.05, a Beta Coefficients with Standard Errors in Parenthesis

To verify the multicollinearity problems of the study, multicollinearity might occur when intercorrelation in each predict variable is more than 0.80, which is a high relationship (Hair, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). The correlations ranging from .404 to .730 at the  $P < .05$  level, which means that the possible relationships of the variables in the conceptual model could be tested. Similarly,

variance inflation factors (VIFs) were used to provide information on the extent to which non-orthogonality among independent variables inflates standard errors. The VIFs range from 1.025 to 5.212, well below the cut-off value of 10 as recommended by Neter, Kutner, Nachtsheim & Wasserman (1985), means that the independent variables are not correlated with each other. Therefore, there are no

substantial multicollinearity problems encountered in this study.

To investigate the effects of servicescape

on customer satisfaction, the results of multiple regression analysis of the research relationships are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** The Effects of Servicescape on Customer Satisfaction by Multiple Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	
	Place Attachment	Customer Satisfaction
Place Identity (PI)	.361** (.053)	
Place Facility (PF)	.417** (.120)	
Place Dependence (PD)	.420** (.121)	
Place Attachment (PA)		.515** (.154)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.511	.241

\*\* P<.01, \* P<.05, a Beta coefficients with standard errors in parenthesis

Firstly, servicescape plays an important role in determining the customer satisfaction of the Toyota customer service center in the Nakhon Ratchasima Province. This study proposes three dimensions of servicescape which comprise place identity, place facility and place dependence. Thus, the results demonstrate that place identity, place facility and place dependence has a significant and positive effect on place attachment ( $\beta = .361$ ,  $\beta = .417$ , and  $\beta = .420$ ,  $P < .01$ ). It is congruent with Hernández, Martín, Ruiz & Carmen (2010) who found that there is a significant impact of servicescape on customer satisfaction (Raza, 2013). Moreover, Miles, Miles, & Cannon (2012) found that the results support the assertion that firm competitive strategy has an impact on the strength of the relationship between servicescape characteristics and customer satisfaction. In addition, empirical research agreed that place identity and place dependence were significant predictors of respondents' perceptions of setting density (Kyle, Graefe, Manning & Bacon, 2004b). According to prior research, relevant results found that place dependence has been found to influence attitudes towards fees and spending

preferences (Kyle, Absher & Graefe, 2003), visitation within a recreational setting (Backlund & Williams, 2004), and place attachment (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). Similarly, Reimer, & Kuehn (2005) found that the servicescape is of greater importance in determining customers' evaluations of the expected service quality in a hedonic service compared to a utilitarian service. Therefore, H1, H2, and H3 are supported.

Secondly, the results point out that place attachment has a significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction ( $\beta = .515$ ,  $P < .01$ ). It is consistent with the work of Yuksel, Yuksel & Bilim (2010) found that a positive relationship between place attachment and satisfaction using a sample of domestic and international visitors respectively. In addition, empirical research agreed that personal involvement and place attachment has a positive significant effect on interpretation satisfaction (Hwang, Lee & Chen, 2005). Likewise, Prayag & Ryan (2012) confirmed that place attachment has an important positive determinant of visitors' loyalty but this relationship is mediated by satisfaction levels. Therefore, H4 is supported.

## Conclusion

Servicescape becomes a valuable service marketing strategic tool in helping firms obtain opportunities in doing businesses to the development of new ideas. Hence, the objective of this study is to examine the relationships between servicescape, place attachment and customer satisfaction of Toyota customer service center. Servicescape comprising three dimensions, which are place identity, place facility and place dependence. In this study, 391 respondents of Toyota customer service center in Nakhon Ratchasima are the samples. The empirical results found that servicescape has a significant and positive effect on place attachment. Likewise, place attachment explicitly leads to customer satisfaction.

## Contributions Theoretical Contribution

This study attempts to integrate place identity, place facility and place dependence as key characteristics of servicescape. It is provide a unique theoretical contribution, expanding on previous knowledge and literature of servicescape, place attachment and customer satisfaction. In addition, confirms that these characteristics play important roles in determining customer satisfaction. To expand the research results, future research may need to test the direct effects of place identity, place facility and place dependence on customer satisfaction while the current study did not. To verify the generalizability of the study, future research may need to collect data from other populations and countries.

## Managerial Contribution

Executives of firms can implement and should understand servicescape in order to fulfill customer needs, requirements and expectations, increase attachment in doing marketing activities and practices within highly and rapidly competitive markets. This study also provides important to executive officers marketing manager or business owners, who responsible for generate businesses strategic, creative and planning of location. Managers should

be a priority to servicescape, place attachment and customer satisfaction via customer value creation thoroughly understand, manage, and utilized leading to business growth, has superior performance and firm sustainability. Toyota customer service center must be aware of changes in customer needs and preferences marketing; and anticipates competitors' actions and reactions to the development of new ideas and strategies.

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