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## **The cultural aspect in the relationship customer-place: Proposal and test of an integrated model**

### **Abstract**

This research examines the perception of a heritage place, richness from a historical and architectural point of view, and rehabilitation at the place of service. The question is how the fingerprints of the past, allow customers to experience a unique experience. The advanced conceptual framework tested with structural modeling can identify dimensions of a service space holding significant cultural value and the perceptions of clients according to their degree of acculturation and appropriation to space. The results show that the level of acculturation of the client moderates the relations between the rehabilitated physical environment and the quality of the offer on the one hand and the intention of fidelity on the other hand.

**Key-words:** physical environment, service, acculturation, perception, rehabilitation

## Introduction

With the development of service activities on the one hand and their globalization on the other hand, there is a multiplicity of service locations. It is now necessary to reflect on original axes of positioning beyond that of price, quality of service or form of relationship. More than a supply to consume, the time is to share a consumer experience. In this aim, commercial environments, commercial places, tourist and leisure sites have evolved to offer spaces more playful, more exotic, more sensory, more emotional.

In the context of increasing competitiveness and demand, service centers play an increasingly central role: more than a context or a scenic place capable of supporting the service experience, they become the heart of the offer. Examples proliferate that the customer consumes as much - if not more - space than the service itself (e.g., Starbucks, themed restaurants or amusement parks). This becomes more complex when there is a strong cultural dimension. We can then ask ourselves what is the perception of a space heavily burdened culturally for a client, also strongly acculturated.

Today, the importance of the physical environment in services is recognized by managers who constantly spend energy and considerable financial resources in order to develop it, to theatricalize it, to particularize it to make it more user-friendly and more conducive to endure the service experience. This desire to offer strong and original spaces of experience leads the provider to turn to places of rehabilitation of which the first life could give thickness to the emotions.

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### Box 1: The challenges of rehabilitated service spaces

After the wave of renovations in the 90s during which, shops and malls were redesigned to allow for strolling, appropriation and comfort shopping experiences (such as Levi's stores, American Girl stores, *Nature & Découverte* And other Nike'town), after the craze for technology and 3D-loaded spaces (such as the NewYork Information Center, Colourmatic's interactive windows, LED architecture abundant at the Beijing Olympics and even The holograms to assist passengers boarding the Paris-Orly airport), after the hyper-sensorialized spaces (from Abercrombie & Fitch shops to the restaurant Dans le Noir, via the Icehotels, and other Underwaterhotels of the chain PoseidonResort) The thematized spaces which play on the theatricalization and the simulacrum like the Rainsforestcafe or the CentersParks, after the e Spaces such as Dinning in the Sky, Viktor & Rolf's Upside Down spaces or hotels in the trees), and finally the artistically designed places of service such as the Mama Shelter, the Phantom The Opera Garnier, the Guggenheim museums, the Kring in Seoul or even the Stockholm underground, after all these spatial forms, here are the rehabilitated spaces.

As a result, many service activities take place in hidden places. These new spaces have lost their original vocation which, nevertheless, remains present in certain architectural details. The providers will then exploit the dual identity of the place to play on the ambiguity and to reinforce the symbolic charge. For example, a church becomes a luxury hotel (Martin's Patershof), or a bookshop (Waanders In de Broeren), or a skateboard track (La Iglesia Skate). Another example is the prisons rehabilitated in hotels ("Hostel Celica" in Ljubljana, "The

Liberty Hotel” in Boston, “Malmaison” in Oxford, “Het Arresthuis” in the south of the Netherlands, “Hi Ottawa Jail Hostel” in Ottawa...). Another example is the hotel, a former military fortress (Cap Rocat), or the one in an airplane (Jumbo Stay), or in a former hospital hotel Dieu (Intercontinental Marseille-Hotel Dieu). Finally, let's mention the unusual development of aquatic spaces: the old swimming pool Lutetia which Hermès has rehabilitated for its flagship boutique in Paris, The old municipal swimming pool of the city of Roubaix became the industrial museum, and even the old Turkish baths in Plovdiv (Bulgaria) redesigned into a space of contemporary art.

Rehabilitating old places in service spaces is an interesting innovation path in terms of space that allows us to re-live an abandoned place and to revalorize the place in the eyes of the client from its history.

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However, we can imagine that these places, which are part of the historical and cultural heritage, are perceived differently according to the customer's own history and more specifically, its culture.

The objective of our research is to evaluate the influence of the perceived physical environment on the client's affective, cognitive and behavioral responses according to the moderating effect of acculturation. Our research is part of the general problem that questions the place-individual relationship and introduces two new elements: one specific to the place: a rehabilitation space strongly marked culturally, the other relative to the client: its level of acculturation.

Our research ground is made up of ancient palaces of caliphs Omeiyades rehabilitated and transformed into restaurants in Old Damascus in Syria. They are frequented by a varied customers that goes from the foreign tourist to the local inhabitant. These places have the particularity of houses courtyard formerly built according to the characteristics peculiar to the Syrian culture. At a time of globalization and the mobility of individuals, we have chosen to consider this perception according to the level of acculturation of clients from two different cultures: Syrian and French. At the same time, there is a fortuitous but challenging interest in teaching: at a time when Syria is experiencing war, many cultural heritage buildings (including palaces) are unfortunately destroyed. Our research was able to be realized just before the events and thus possesses in spite of us a unique character.

After presenting the key concepts of our research, we will propose a model whose hypotheses will be tested. We will then discuss and discuss our results. We conclude with the managerial implications and the perspective of the research.

## **1. The conceptual framework**

The first step towards the construction of the conceptual model of this research is to clarify the concepts of physical environment and acculturation.

### ***1.1 The physical environment***

The first research using the term "atmospherics" in marketing returns to the year 1973 when Kotler defined it as "the efforts made to design a buying environment capable of producing specific emotional effects in buyers that can increase their probability of Purchase "(page 50). Aubert-Gamet (1997) was the first to highlight this conceptual blurring and to pave the way for research on service spaces.

Several authors have relied on the first conceptualization proposed by Kotler to identify the term physical environment which refers to all controllable elements that can influence the psychological and / or behavioral emotional responses of consumers. From a service marketing perspective, Bitner (1992) studies the effects of the servicescape that it calls servicescapes. It emphasizes the importance of physical elements in the service delivery process. Thus, Eze and Harris (2007) define the physical environment of a service as the one in which occurs the service encounter. According to the authors, the physical environment can arouse to the customer reactions that leads him to show an approach or avoidance behavior. For Temessek-Behi (2008), the physical environment of the service refers to "all artificial, natural and social conditions partially controllable and exercise (alone or in interaction) influence on the affective states, cognitive, physiological, and behavior of the occupants of the service (customers and employees)" (page71).

The literature reflects a multiplicity of definitions of the concept of physical environment. The definition of Baker (1987) defines three constituents of the physical environment: 1) ambient factors (air quality, sensoriality and cleanliness); 2) design factors (layout, shapes and materials) and 3) social factors related to all the people co-present in the place (other clients and staff). We chose to adopt the typology of Baker (1987) because it is considered the most cited typology in marketing research, the most comprehensive and the most general in a wide variety of industries (Hightower, 2010).

### ***1.2 Acculturation and the perception of the physical environment***

Acculturation describes all the changes that occur as a result of contact between individuals and groups from different cultures. Thus, by entering into the process of acculturation, individuals or groups gradually adopt elements of the other culture (ideas, words, values, norms, institutions) (Stamboli-Rodriguez, 2011). Berry & al. (2006) define acculturation as the general process of intercultural contacts and their results. For Peñaloza (1994), acculturation is the movement and adaptation to the cultural environment of the consumer in a country by people from another country.

Marketing research has focused on the role of acculturation in leisure (Carr and Williams, 1993), the type of object consumed (Lee and Tse, 1994), and the effectiveness of advertising (Kara and Kara, 1996).

Only few studies consider the effect of the environmental elements of the point of sale on consumer behavior by considering its culture. Some exceptions, however, should be highlighted: Seock (2009) who studied the influence of perception of the environmental elements of clothing stores as well as the influence of Hispanic customer demographic characteristics, such as his age and the number of years that he lived in the United States, on

his choice of different store formats; Veresiu and Giesler (2012) who cited the role of public and private space in constructing the ethnic identity of immigrants; and Schau, Dang and Zhang (2017) who have examined online forums as an acculturation platform for Chinese consumers in the United States, where they help each other by navigating and even exploiting the American retail servicescape. If these online forums are considered a virtual space, play the role of a lever of acculturation of Chinese immigrants to the United States (Schau, Dang and Zhang (2017), we can think that a culturally marked place of service can be perceived differently depending on the level of acculturation of the client. For the sake of clarity, we should already point out that acculturation with respect to a national culture does not interest us, but it is with respect to the degree of appropriation of a culturally marked space that we are considering the concept of acculturation.

Although acculturation is a widespread phenomenon and has important consequences on consumer behavior, to our knowledge there is no work that has verified the role that the level of acculturation of the client can play in the perception of a service space. However, acculturation seems important to evaluate the perception of a rehabilitated place which, by definition, is strongly marked culturally by its history. When the client shares the cultural values that are readable in the place, it can be assumed that his perception will be different and more intense than when he is foreign. This is what our research model seeks to demonstrate.

## **2. The research model**

The construction of the conceptual model of this research makes it possible to understand the role of the acculturation level of the client in the process of influencing the physical environment of a rehabilitation space on its responses. The effects of the various variables of the conceptual model will be explained in the following.

### ***2.1 Effects of the physical environment***

To study the effects of the physical environment on the client's perceptions, we will distinguish the hypotheses relating to each of its dimensions: ambient, design and social factors, knowing that these dimensions are identifiable with those resulting from the proposed typology By Baker (1987) that we adopted as part of our research.

The basic proposition of Mehrabian and Russell's SOR (Stimulus Organism Response) (1974) posits the existence of a relationship between the physical environment and the emotional states. Empirical studies on this theme have, in their majority, convergent results that go in the direction of the existence of an effect of the physical environment on the emotional states. We can make the following assumptions:

**H1a:** The perceived ambient has a direct positive influence on the emotional states.

**H1b:** Perceived design has a direct positive influence on emotional states.

**H1c:** Social factors perceived have a direct positive influence on emotional states.

The physical environment appears as a tool capable of influencing the perceived quality of service (Bitner, 1992). We postulate the following set of assumptions:

**H2a:** The perceived ambient has a direct positive influence on the perceived quality of service

**H2b:** Perceived design has a direct positive influence on the perceived quality of service.

**H2c:** Perceived social factors have a direct positive influence on the perceived quality of service.

Work on the direct link between the service space and loyalty intentions has demonstrated the existence of significant relationships between the different elements of the physical environment and the intention of recommendation (Keillor et al., 2007). Thus, we make the following assumptions:

**H3a:** The perceived mood has a direct positive influence on behavioral intentions.

**H3b:** Design perceived has a direct positive influence on behavioral intentions.

**H3c:** Perceived social factors have a direct positive influence on behavioral intentions.

## ***2.2 Effects of emotional states***

The most tested proposal in the literature demonstrates a causal link between emotional states and perceived quality of service (Jang and Namkung, 2009, Kim and Moon, 2009). We have adopted here the fact that quality of service has a cognitive character (Bitner, 1992) and that the experiential approach favors the anteriority of affect on cognition.

This leads us to propose the following hypothesis:

**H4:** Emotional states have a direct positive influence on perceived quality of service.

Work on the link between emotions and loyalty intentions has revealed sometimes contradictory results. Thus, Jang and Namkung (2009) found a positive effect of positive emotions on behavioral intentions. However, Walsh et al (2011) find that the experience of a coffee can often go beyond a good cup of coffee and can cause an emotional connection. The authors show that the emotions measured by pleasure and stimulation, positively influence the loyalty of the client. We propose to re-test this link by stating the following hypothesis:

**H5:** Emotional states have a direct positive influence on behavioral intentions.

## ***2.3 The effects of perceived quality of service***

Much of the research on the relationship between perceived quality of service and loyalty intentions (Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman, 1996) is consistent. For their part, Jang and Namkung (2009) found a direct and positive influence The quality of service perceived on the behavioral intentions of the client. However, Kim and Moon (2009) obtain different results. In order to re-test this relation, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H6:** The perceived quality of service has a direct positive influence on behavioral intentions.

## 2.4 The Moderating Effects of Acculturation

Despite the abundant literature on the concept of acculturation, no research has examined the role it can exert in the process of influencing the physical environment on the reactions of the client. Our hypotheses concerning the moderating effect of acculturation emerge from a qualitative exploratory study we carried out among 12 clients (6 Syrians and 6 French) and 4 experts (architects and archaeologists including 3 Syrians and 1 French): local customers have a high level of acculturation while foreign clients are a low level of acculturation. We can assume that acculturation is a mediator and we formulate the following two groups of propositions:

**H7a:** The acculturation of the client has a moderating influence on the relationship between the perceived ambient and the perceived quality of service

**H7b:** Client acculturation has a moderating influence on the relationship between perceived design and perceived quality of service

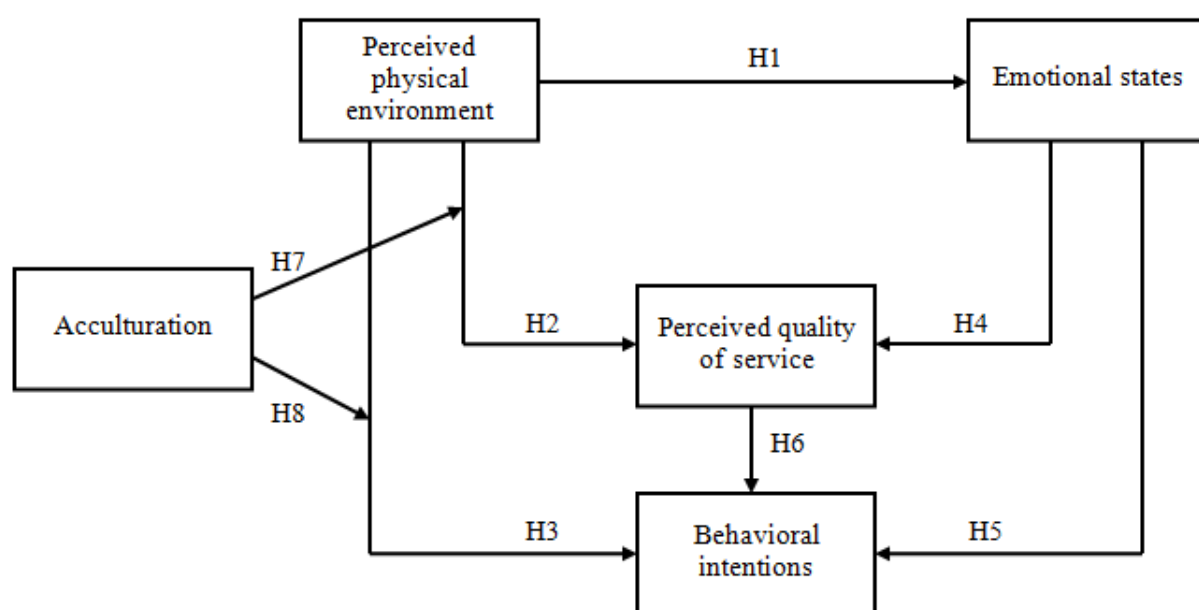
**H7c:** Client acculturation has a moderating influence on the relationship between perceived social factors and perceived quality of service

**H8a:** The acculturation of the client has a moderating influence on the relationship between the perceived ambient and the behavioral intentions.

**H8b:** Client acculturation has a moderating influence on the relationship between perceived design and behavioral intentions.

**H8c:** Client acculturation has a moderating influence on the relationship between perceived social factors and behavioral intentions.

**FIGURE 1:** below gives a graphical presentation of the proposed research model



### 3 Research Methodology

This research was conducted in restaurants located in the heart of the historic city of Damascus in Syria. These restaurants exist in old districts like "Bab Touma", "BabSharqi", "Medhat Pasha", "Qaimaryah", in the old town.

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#### Box 2: Data collection and measurement of variables

The measurement items already tested and validated in a French context have been translated from French to Arabic using the method of blind parallel translation ". They were validated by 4 experts who spoke perfect French and Arabic. The questionnaires were administered face-to-face and electronically to a sample of customers in Old Damascus restaurants. This step resulted in the collection of 326 usable questionnaires<sup>1</sup> divided into two equal sets of data (N1 = 163, N2 = 163) for exploratory factor analysis and testing of research hypotheses. The instruments for measuring constructions were developed based on the literature supplemented by a qualitative phase. The distribution of respondents in the sample was checked for optimal representativeness in terms of age, sex, and CSP. The majority of items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "Strongly Disagree" to 5 "Strongly Agree". The perceived physical environment scale of rehabilitation Was created based on a qualitative exploratory phase, but also on previous work. The validated scale consists of two levels of latent variables and 16 items. The scale of emotional states (4 items) was adapted from Rieunier (2000). The perceived quality of service (5 items) was measured by adapting the SERVQUAL measurement scale. The behavioral intentions (3 items) are measured by an adapted scale of Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996). The scale of acculturation (5 items) is based on recent research (Jolibert and Benabdallah, 2009, Sabatier and Berry, 2008). Appendix A lists validated items from our scales.

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### 4 Search Results

We have processed the data by structural modeling using a PLS approach to the XLSTAT software. Thus, the measurement models first made it possible to ascertain the structure and validity of the measurement scales. Then, the test of the global model revealed the hypothetical causal relations of the research model.

#### *4.1 Validation of measures and quality of adjustment of the global model*

The scale of the perceived physical rehabilitation environment that was developed by us according to the Churchill paradigm (1979) reveals a multidimensional structure. Item purification (27 final items) measures the ambient, design and social factors. Moreover, it seemed essential to integrate the temporal dimension by differentiating three moments: 1) elements of design that existed before the activity of service and which are part of the past; (2) the "social factors" dimension, which belongs to the service experience and which takes place at the very moment when the service is used; 3) the elements of ambient that were created by the provider before the arrival of the customer and therefore before the experience of service.

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<sup>1</sup> The sample consists of 176 Syrian respondents (Syrian native residents residing in Syria and Syrian expatriates residing outside Syria) and 150 French respondents (French immigrants residing in Syria).

As shown in the table in appendix B, the reliability and convergent validity indices of the scale of physical environment and other scales are satisfactory (Rho of DG equal to or greater than 0.7 and AVE equal to or greater than 0.5). Discriminant validity is also ensured (see appendix C).

The quality of the global model was verified by using a global adjustment indicator to probe the performance of the PLS model: the Gof. The results show that Gof is 0.526; Value higher than the reference value (0.36) proposed by Wetzels et al. (2009). This leads us to conclude from the satisfactory quality of the research model.

Thus, we can appreciate the structural model (see appendix D) and examine the hypothesis test of the research. It should be pointed out that acceptance or rejection of a hypothesis is based on the significant relationships provided by PLS, that is, on the basis of significant structural links (path coefficients) at 1% or 5 %. We also verified the predictive power of the model presented by  $R^2$ .

#### ***4.2 Testing hypotheses and discussion***

We present and discuss first the test results of the direct effects between the variables of the model, and then the test results of the moderating effect of acculturation.

##### ***4.2.1 Direct Effects Testing***

We proceed variable by variable, focusing first of all on effects on emotional states. 28% of the variability of emotional states was explained by perceived mood, perceived design and perceived social factors. Only the perceived ambient directly and positively influences emotional states (Path coefficient = 0.430,  $p < 0.01$ ). These results corroborate hypothesis H1a, and reject hypotheses H1b, H1c. This confirms the results of previous research showing a direct impact of the ambient on the client's emotions (pleasure and activation) (Ryu and Jang, 2008). However, the absence of a direct effect of design on emotions against Bellizzi and Hite (1992), according to which color (strong visual component) stimulates its emotional responses. While the fact that social factors do not influence the emotional states of the client confirms the results obtained by Ryu and Jang (2008)

The verification of assumptions about the effects on quality of service shows that 20.8% of the perceived quality of service variability was explained by the ambient, design, social factors and emotional states, and that two environmental elements contribute to a positive perception of quality of service: ambient and social factors (Path coefficient respectively = 0.252 and 0.227;  $p < 0.01$ ). However, neither design nor emotions have a direct effect on the perceived quality of service. The hypotheses H2a and H2c are therefore corroborated whereas H2b and H4 are rejected. Thus, the elements of the ambient (Pond water quality, cleanliness, odors from flowers and plants, lighting, noise intensity and temperature) have an influence on perception Quality of service. This confirms previous work (Bitner, 1992). Moreover, the direct link between social factors and the quality of service confirms that it is possible to act on it through interpersonal relationships.

Testing hypotheses about the effect of the model variables on behavioral intentions shows that 17.5% of variability in loyalty intentions was explained by ambient, design, social factors, emotional states and quality of service. Only the design and quality of service have a positive and direct effect on behavioral intentions (Path coefficient = 0.184, 0.318,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , respectively). This corroborates hypotheses H3b and H6, and reject hypotheses H3a, H3c, H5. These results are consistent with those found in several previous studies that found a direct link between design and behavioral intentions; (Ryu and Jang, 2008), or the results obtained, for example, by manipulating the colors of the shop's walls (Bellizzi and Hite, 1992). Similarly, the direct link between quality of service and loyalty intentions converges with the results of previous research (Jang and Namkung, 2009), and confirms that it is possible to act on declared loyalty intentions by offering a The quality of which can be positively perceived.

#### *4.2.2 Test of the moderating effect of acculturation*

We verified the moderating effect of acculturation at the level of the overall sample and on the highly acculturated (Syrian) sub-sample ( $n_1 = 88$ ) and sub-sample weakly acculturated (French) ( $n_2 = 75$ ) Using an interaction<sup>2</sup> variable of the acculturation variable in the relationship between two other variables.

The H7a, H7b, H7c hypothesis test results (Table1) show that at the overall sample level there is a significant positive effect of interaction of the "ambient" and "acculturation" variables at the 1% threshold, and a significant negative interaction effect of the variables "design" and "acculturation" and the variables "social factors" and "acculturation" at the 1% threshold. Cross-validation on sub-samples partially confirms hypothesis H7b with a positive modulation effect of acculturation for the French sub-sample (path coefficient = 0.341;  $p < 0.01$ ) and fully confirms hypothesis H7a with an effect Moderator negative for the Syrian sub-sample (path coefficient = -0.262,  $p < 0.05$ ) and a positive moderating effect for the French subsample (path coefficient = 0.508;  $p < 0.01$ ); As well as the hypothesis H7c with a negative moderating effect for the two Syrian and French subsamples.

The hypothesis test results H8a, H8b, H8c show that in the overall sample, acculturation moderates negatively all relationships ( $p < 0.01$ ). Cross-validation on subsamples fully confirms hypothesis H8a with a negative moderator effect of acculturation for the two Syrian and French sub-samples (path coefficient = -0.229,  $p < 0.05$  and path coefficient = -0.552;  $P < 0.01$ ), and partially confirms hypothesis H8b with a positive moderating effect for the French sub-sample (path coefficient = 0.417;  $p < 0.01$ ), as well as hypothesis H8c with and a negative moderator effect For the French sub-sample.

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<sup>2</sup>In order to measure the impact of each interaction variable created and integrated in the global model, the analysis was carried out in six steps, since it is not possible to study the moderating effect of the six variables of Interaction at the same time.

**TABLE 1: Results of test of the moderating effect of acculturation**

Hypothesis	Testing of the moderating effect of acculturation		
	Overall sample	Syrian sub-sample	French sub-sample
	<i>Path coefficient</i>	<i>Path coefficient</i>	<i>Path coefficient</i>
H7a: Ambient x Acculturation → perceived quality of service	0,344**	-0,262*	0,508**
H7b: Design x Acculturation → perceived quality of service	-0,226**	-0,201n.s.	0,341**
H7c: Social factors x Acculturation → perceived quality of service	-0,273**	-0,266**	-0,329**
H8a: Ambient x Acculturation → behavioral intentions	-0,388**	-0,229*	-0,552**
H8b: Design x Acculturation → behavioral intentions	-0,277**	-0,156n.s.	0,417**
H8c: social factors x Acculturation → behavioral intentions	-0,189**	-0,197n.s.	-0,288**

\* :  $p < 0,05$  ; \*\* :  $p < 0,01$  ; n.s.= not significant

We conclude from a moderating effect of acculturation on the links physical environment - quality of service and physical environment - behavioral intentions. Taking into account the elements of the relationship, its significance and the level of acculturation of the client<sup>3</sup>, we identified three roles of acculturation: 1) relationship amplifier, 2) relationship reducer, 3) relationship developer.

1. The enhancing role is the positive moderating role of acculturation on already significant relationships. Only two links are concerned and only among the least acculturated group (French):

- Ambient - Quality of service: the elements that culturally mark the ambient (the water of the pond and the specific noise it makes, the smells of jasmine and orange, etc.) may seem unknown or unusual to French customers Who perceive the ambient positively, and consequently, to evaluate the quality of service positively. In other words, the positive perception of quality of service will be amplified by the culturally marked ambient.

- Design - Behavioral Intentions: The same phenomenon of ignorance of design and its elements (Islamic architecture, layout, authenticity) explains the role of acculturation in the relationship between design and behavioral intentions. When the level of acculturation is low (in French), a positive perception of design boosts the intention to return or to develop a positive buzz on the provider.

<sup>3</sup>In order to better understand the level of acculturation of each group of respondents (Syrian native, Syrian expatriate and French immigrant), we calculated the distance in terms of consumption subculture between, on the one hand, expatriate Syrians and French immigrants and, on the other hand, the native Syrians considered to be the referent of the subculture of consumption in the host country (Syria). We found that expatriate Syrians are more acculturated to space than French immigrants. Details of the calculation are presented in appendix E.

2. The reductive role of acculturation indicates that it moderates negatively a (already significant) link between two variables. The relations concerned are:

- Ambient - Quality of service and Social Factors - Quality of service among highly acculturated (Syrian) group. This is due to an addictive effect, or habituation effect to the ambient and social factors. These clients are so accustomed that it can be assumed that they become less sensitive to the ambient and social factors and that, consequently, the perceived quality of service will be less linked to the perception of the ambient and the factors social partnerships.

- Social factors - Quality of service for the weakly acculturated group, which translates into the fact that the client is less expansive and more socially reserved and that, as a result, culturally marked social factors are less related to quality of perceived service.

3. The revealing role is the role of acculturation when it moderates a non-significant relationship. Three links are concerned:

- the link between Design and Quality of service that acculturation reveals with positive moderation in the less acculturated group and which is explained by the existence of a form of progressive adoption of the design of the rehabilitated space. These customers gradually become accustomed to the elements of design until they evaluate the quality of the offer.

- the link Social factors - Behavioral intentions generated by acculturation with negative moderation in the less acculturated group. This is reflected in the customer's indulgence with regard to staff in contact. Thus, in a possible problem with the employee, French excuses it more easily than the Syrian. However, culturally marked, the employee intervenes only slightly in the fact that the foreign client declares or not intends to return to this place or to recommend it.

- the Ambient - Behavioral Intentions link revealed by acculturation with negative moderation in the weakly acculturated or strongly acculturated group. Indeed, it is the attraction for an ambient strongly marked culturally that would justify the fact that the French goes in this kind of space compared to a Syrian who would go there in a more systematic way. However, this sensitivity to the ambient only weakly influences the customer's loyalty intentions.

## **5 Conclusion**

At the end of our research, we present, first, the contributions for the marketers and then, we put into perspective the results obtained.

### ***5.1 Managerial Contributions***

If we consider that the trend of managers to choose to rehabilitate places to set up their activity is increasingly strong (see Box 1), the perception of these places and their influence on quality and intention To come back needs to be considered by integrating the concept of acculturation. The three roles (amplifier, reducer or developer) played by acculturation open up new horizons as regards the management of rehabilitated places. More specifically, it can

be said that in the case of rehabilitated places of service, the degree of acculturation of the customers can be considered as a criterion of segmentation:

- For highly acculturated clients (i.e. who are familiar with the architectural and spatial culture expressed by the place), the high level of acculturation:

- reduces the link between the ambient factors and the quality of service as well as that of the social factors with also the quality of service. In other words, Aboriginal clients who know the history of the place and share the values of the culture that this place symbolizes, use less ambient factors and social factors to evaluate the quality of service. Thus, the manager has no interest in betting on the physical environment if he wants to increase the perception of quality of service and more specifically on the ambient and social factors (since the hypothesis H7B Design on quality of service has not been corroborated). Other marketing variables, other than the physical environment, deserve the attention of the manager (such as value for money or accessibility to the service).
- reveals the link of ambient factors with the intention of returning to the site. Thus, the manager can count on the factors of ambient to develop in these highly acculturated customers an intention of fidelity.

- For weakly acculturated clients (i.e. those who do not understand the culture to which the building refers - usually foreign customers), the low level of acculturation:

- amplifies the link between ambient factors and quality of service, as well as that of design with behavioral intentions. For these weakly acculturated clients, managers have an interest in focusing on ambient factors to increase perceived quality and design to increase the intention to return. In particular, this situation could be effective when other performance variables (restaurant quality, staff competence, service delivery process, etc.), other variables related to the customer (length of stay, tourist status vs resident) or other market variables (harsh competition) are unfavorable; the factors of ambient and design thus compensate for these disadvantages. It's to the manager to communicate on the history of his place, to stage the initial culture, or even to build an experiential offer of animation (music, dance, exhibitions) or visit the place.
- reduces the link between social factors and perceived quality. For these clients, the folklore of the staff in contact does not intervene in the quality perceived. The same applies to actions devoted to the management of other clients. Knowing, as stated above, that our results show the same for highly acculturated clients, it is questionable whether the manager really has an interest in investing in the social factors (personnel and other clients) of the physical environment. The manager should focus on other elements typically marked with the place culture, such as ambience or also design for non-native guests.
- reveals the link of design factors with quality as well as the link of ambient factors with the intention to return to the place. For the manager, it would be interesting to insist on marking and even culturally over-designing the design and to preserve as much as possible the traditional and authentic character of the place. The gain achieved at this level

lies in the positive evaluation of the design and, subsequently, in the demonstration by the weakly acculturated customer of an intention of fidelity.

We can thus see that the manager can exploit acculturation as a criterion of segmentation. If, in a non-counter-intuitive way, the weakly acculturated clients are more sensitive to the place in their evaluation of the quality of the service and their intention to return, for highly acculturated customers, the rehabilitated place intervenes little on the relations of the environment physical activity with quality of service and behavioral intentions. But we can assume that for the latter, the place strongly marked culturally, plays a major role in their process of spatial appropriation. This is in line with the identity dimension of acculturation (Berry, 2000). Contrary to what we thought, when the client shares the cultural values that are readable in the place, his perception is no more intense than when he is foreign.

### *5.2 Putting the results of the research into perspective*

It should be noted that this research has limitations which are as many avenues for future research. First, the sample size may be larger than ours, to allow for the application of other methods such as the method of analyzing covariance structures. This could make it possible to ensure a better validity of the scale of measurement of the physical rehabilitation environment developed by us. We have also carried out this research in one sector (the catering sector) with customers in a single rehabilitated area (former Omeyyad palace rehabilitated in restaurants) and in one country (Syria). Consequently, it is difficult to generalize the results obtained to other sectors, to other rehabilitation areas and to other countries. These are indeed different from an economic, cultural and social point of view. We therefore recommend that this research be replicated taking into account these different elements. For example, it would be interesting to validate our results in other sectors, such as the hotel sector, such as hotels that resemble the restaurants we studied. It would also be desirable to examine the influence of a rehabilitated physical environment in the cultural field (such as museums and live shows) or other forms of rehabilitation (from an industrial space to a restaurant) (Rehabilitation of Riad in North Africa or castle in France). Finally, acculturation remains a concept to be deepened, as for example on the relevance of acculturation in general or according to the reference cultures. What we have done by differentiating the natives, expatriates, immigrants and foreigners deserve to be reworked according to different cultures.

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**Appendix A:** Validated scale Items

Variable Level 2	Variable Level 1	Items
Perceived Ambient	Pond water quality	Le bruit de l'eau du bassin attire l'attention
		J'aime entendre le bruit de l'eau du bassin
		Le bruit de l'eau du bassin est apaisant
		Je sens le frais grâce à l'eau du bassin
	Cleanliness	Le restaurant est propre
		La vaisselle est propre
		Les habits du personnel sont propres
	Odor	Je sens l'odeur du jasmin
		Je sens l'odeur de la cuisine damascène
	Lighting	Je trouve la lumière : agressive/ douce
		Je trouve la lumière : artificielle/ naturelle
		La cour est éclairée par la lumière de soleil
	Noise intensity	Je trouve la musique d'ambiance : forte/ faible
		L'ambiance est bruyante/ calme
Temperature	La cour amène de la fraîcheur	
	La végétation permet d'avoir une température modérée	
Perceived design	Islamic architecture	L'architecture du restaurant est islamique
		Je trouve l'alternance des pierres déplaisante/ séduisante
		Je trouve les motifs décoratifs non islamiques/ islamiques
	Layout	L'aménagement est bien adapté
		La disposition des tables facilite la prestation de service
	Authenticity	Le restaurant est inauthentique/ authentique
Je trouve la décoration rénovée/ en l'état		
Perceived social factors	Personnel	Le personnel est en nombre suffisant
		La tenue de la personne qui s'occupe des narguilés est inspirée de la tradition
	Other clients	Les autres clients sont dérangeants/ sympathiques
		Les autres clients sont bien habillés
	Emotional states	Je me sens heureux
		Je me sens gai
		Je me sens calme
		Je me sens détendu
	Perceived quality of service	Le personnel travaille bien et rapidement
		Le personnel est très à l'écoute
		Le personnel est aimable
		Le personnel a le souci de me rendre service
		Le personnel accorde une attention individualisée à chacun
	Behavioral intentions	Je dirais du bien de ce restaurant à d'autres personnes
		Je recommanderais ce restaurant à toute personne qui me demandera conseil
		Si je veux manger dans un restaurant, je considérerais ce restaurant comme mon premier choix
	Acculturation	J'aime écouter de la musique arabe orientale
		J'aime écouter de la musique syrienne arabe
		J'aime la musique de l'Oud
		Je pense que ma culture est plutôt syrienne
		Je pense que ma culture est plutôt française

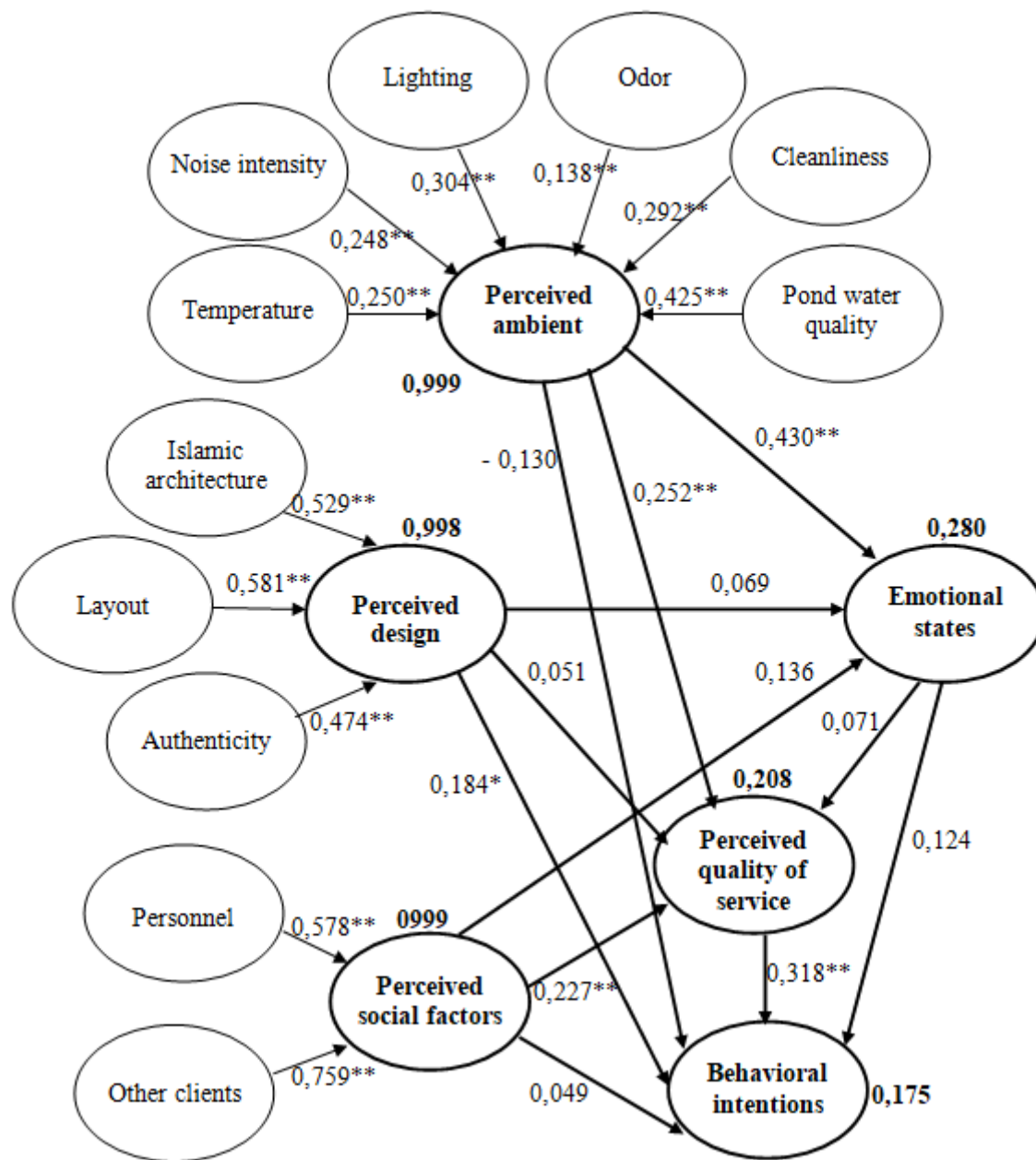
**Appendix B: Reliability and validity of the measurement model**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Reliability (Dillon-Goldstein's rho &gt; 0,7)</b>	<b>Convergent validity (AVE &gt; 0,5)</b>
<b>Perceived Ambient</b>		
- Pond water quality	0,843	0,572
- Cleanliness	0,813	0,582
- Odor	0,888	0,771
- Lighting	0,815	0,592
- Noise intensity	0,819	0,694
- Temperature	0,786	0,647
<b>Perceived design</b>		
- Islamic architecture	0,782	0,547
- Layout	0,848	0,732
- Authenticity	0,856	0,741
<b>Perceived social factors</b>		
- Personnel	0,727	0,558
- Other clients	0,743	0,591
<b>Emotional states</b>	0,786	0,474
<b>Perceived quality of service</b>	0,835	0,504
<b>Behavioral intentions</b>	0,901	0,753

**Appendix C:** The discriminant validity of the measurement model

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<b>AVE (x) &gt; Cor2 (x,y)</b>														
Pond water quality	<b>0,572</b>													
Cleanliness	0,067	<b>0,582</b>												
Odor	0,002	0,005	<b>0,771</b>											
Lights	0,036	0,060	0,002	<b>0,592</b>										
Noise intensity	0,075	0,052	0,001	0,262	<b>0,694</b>									
Temperature	0,082	0,030	0,002	0,092	0,041	<b>0,647</b>								
Islamic character	0,008	0,000	0,011	0,081	0,000	0,020	<b>0,547</b>							
Planning	0,075	0,113	0,007	0,006	0,010	0,010	0,001	<b>0,732</b>						
Authenticity	0,010	0,010	0,001	0,266	0,228	0,020	0,055	0,001	<b>0,741</b>					
Staff	0,048	0,044	0,037	0,006	0,021	0,003	0,023	0,036	0,015	<b>0,558</b>				
Other customers	0,128	0,091	0,008	0,008	0,042	0,030	0,000	0,055	0,000	0,010	<b>0,591</b>			
Emotional states	0,172	0,070	0,009	0,080	0,094	0,093	0,010	0,058	0,035	0,008	0,103	<b>0,474</b>		
Quality of service	0,053	0,130	0,009	0,018	0,026	0,118	0,001	0,091	0,005	0,043	0,086	0,079	<b>0,504</b>	
Behavioral intentions	0,037	0,000	0,004	0,001	0,002	0,052	0,013	0,062	0,005	0,013	0,026	0,046	0,130	<b>0,753</b>

**Appendix D:** Structural model with PLS



Caption:

- On the arrows are placed the path coefficients
- The presence of a single star near the path coefficients indicates that they are significant at the threshold of 5%
- The presence of two stars in the path coefficients indicates that they are significant at the 1%
- The figure in bold is the R<sup>2</sup> of each latent variable

**Appendix E:** The calculation of distance in terms of consumption subculture

In order to calculate the distance in terms of subculture of consumption, we used the Euclidean distance indicator applied by Jolibert and Jourdan (2006).

The results show that immigrant French are far removed from native Syrians in terms of consumption subculture, while expatriate Syrians are closest to native Syrians (distance is 0.580 and 0.293 respectively). The Syrians are thus strongly acculturated to the culturally marked space compared to the French which are weakly acculturated.

The Euclidean distance is given by the following formula:

$$D_{ij} = \left( \sum_{k=1}^p (X_{ik} - X_{jk})^2 \right)^{1/2}$$

Where:  $D_{ij}$ : distance between individuals  $i$  and  $j$ .

$P$ : number of variables.

$X_{ik}$ : value of the variable  $k$  for the subject  $i$ .

$X_{jk}$ : value of the variable  $k$  for the subject  $k$ .

In order to calculate this distance, we rely on the clients' answers to the items relating to the measurement of the elements of acculturation, as follows:

1. we calculated the average of each item in each sub-sample obtained after dividing our database by respondent groups (native Syrians, expatriate Syrians and immigrant French);
2. Based on the averages of the items composing each cultural element, we calculated the averages per element.
3. Once these averages were obtained, we used the Euclidean distance formula to calculate the distance between the groups of expatriate and French Syrians on one side and the group of Syrians native on the other side;
4. After calculating the distances between these groups, we have interpreted the results to empirically identify the nearest group and that away from the group having the pure sub-culture of consumption in the host country.