



## Emotional customer experience and revisit intention for spa treatment: A conceptual analysis

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**Abstract:** *Regardless of the type of service or mechanism of delivery, the client experience during service delivery is critical. Individual experiences influence one's attitudes, feelings, and comprehension of spa treatments before to, during, and after product consumption. This research attempted to conceptualize specific emotional experiences that improve the overall experience and encourage people to return. To meet the study's main goal, the researcher offered various emotional experience aspects that could improve the emotional experience of customers. Relaxation and relief, well-being, satisfaction, and pleasant feeling were presented and evaluated as characteristics of emotional experiences they may have throughout treatment. The study provides expanded knowledge and new material on service delivery and emotional customer experience elements. Furthermore, the study aids spa managers by increasing their understanding of the relevance of a pleasant emotional customer experience in rekindling customer loyalty and revisiting intention.*

**Key Words:** *Emotional Customer experience, revisit intention, spa treatments, The Appraisal Theory.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

The spa and wellness sectors are multi-trillion-dollar global industries that have grown at a breakneck pace over the last decade, with more expansion on the way [1]. Spa tourism has become incredibly important around the world, and it is unquestionably becoming an important aspect of a tourist destination's total tourist experience. As a result, to produce a feeling of complete contentment, one must first comprehend the demands and expectations of clients, as well as their subsequent evaluation and experience. People's demand for leisure and health travel has been spurred by greater knowledge of leisure travel, wellness, and personal health ideas [2], [3], [4]. In relation to that, wellness tourism has grown rapidly in response to a growing interest in improving one's health and well-being by luring people to participate in wellness-related activities because of the health benefits [5], [6]. Wellness tourism, according to [7], allows people to disconnect from their hectic lives, easing the stress of city life and taking time off to spend quality time with family. The link between consumer experience and well-being has been acknowledged in tourist and hospitality environments [8], [9], [10], where the participatory aspects of the consumption process are likely to have an impact on happiness. Tourist experience is thought to be an important aspect in determining a customer's happiness and future behaviour [11], [12]. Subsequently, academics have focused on the significance of tourist experiences by looking at how they relate to positive mood, life satisfaction, well-being, and future behaviour [13], [14]. According to [15], the relationship between spa and wellness from the perspective of visitor experience is connected with spa experiences, which contribute to mental and physical health improvement. [16] explain that spa experiences that engage the consumer's five senses, such as the taste of spa cuisine and herbal tea, or the scent of essential oils, lead to the consumer's feeling of pleasant mood and wellness pursuit. Previous researchers have found that spas, which combine water-based treatments with health-related services, are inextricably linked to the pursuit of health and well-being as one of the most well-known kinds of wellness tourism [17], [18]. For example, [19] have effectively established the rising importance of spas in the current wellness tourism literature. Disease prevention and rehabilitation, stress elimination, physical fitness development, as well as mental and psychological balance through participation in wellness services that improve overall well-being, are the essence of holistic spas [20]. The wellness sector must therefore focus on the customer experience in order to provide unique offerings for a demanding and diverse wellness tourist market [21]. While the notion of well-being and spa treatment has received considerable attention in the tourism and hospitality literature, the purpose of this study is to fill a research gap by concentrating on emotional customer experience and its influence on revisit intention to spas. The primary goal of this research is to



gain a better understanding of consumer revisit intentions to spas as a result of emotional experiences during previous treatments. To accomplish this goal, the study will conceptualize various dimensions of emotional experience and their impact on the intention to return to a spa treatment. Therefore, the study intends to answer the research question: (1) What emotional experiences do customers have at spas? The rest of the sections follow with a literature review, the conceptual analysis of emotional experiences, the conceptual model, implications, limitations, and future research, and a conclusion.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

This literature covers theoretical foundation, customer emotional experience during their treatments at the spa and revisit intention, which is motivated by those emotional experiences.

### 2.1 Theoretical foundation:

In accordance with the appraisal theory, [22] posit that a cognitive evaluation of service encounters with service providers yields customer emotion. Mood, emotion, and affect have all been used interchangeably in previous studies [23]. To distinguish emotion from other related concepts, in this study, customer emotion refers to a person's mental state of readiness in relation to a specific referent, such as an object, event, or person [24]. Theoretical approaches to emotion study have mainly been centered on three approaches. To begin, the bipolar dimensional approach uses many bipolar dimensions to differentiate emotions [25]. The categorical approach, on the other hand, concentrates on emotion categories and semantic expression [26]. The appraisal theory explains that people's discrete emotions are based on their own assessments of the social environment, which leads to a variety of behavioural responses [27]. Appraisal is the process by which a person assesses the significance of a stimulus or event for his or her own well-being [28]. A distinct emotion is one that is elicited by a combination of evaluation dimensions such as goal congruency, motivation, pleasantness, agency, and control [29]. Several studies have shown that result desire and agency are the two most important appraisal dimensions, and that they account for the majority of discrete emotions [30]. The outcome desirability component includes both evaluative and motivating processes, while the agency dimension is concerned with one's perception of responsibility and control over service interactions [31].

Goal congruence and motivation are two sub-dimensions of the resultant desire dimension. Individuals' evaluations of service contact outcomes in terms of personal wellbeing are referred to as "goal congruence" [32]. Customers judge whether service interactions meet their demands or improve their situation based on three major criteria: usefulness, pleasantness, and rightness [33]. A happy feeling is elicited by a congruent aim, whereas a negative emotion is elicited by an incongruent goal. A customer's motivational response also reveals if a goal congruence is centered on attaining a favourable outcome or avoiding a negative outcome (aversive motivation) [34].

The agency dimension relates to a determination of "who" or "what" is to blame for a situation's outcome. Anger, for example, is an emotion brought on by others, whereas shame is a self-initiated emotion [35]. Controllability is a sub-dimension of agency that refers to whether or not an agent has control over the service engagement. To put it another way, the agency dimension distinguishes between emotions elicited by oneself, other people, an item, or an event. Aside from the two appraisal dimensions, emotion intensity describes how closely a service contact meets the expectations or desired result [36]. Every scenario is viewed via the lens of the individual's particular sensations, anticipation, and aims [37]. For the same service encounter, customers' emotions and intensities differ [38].

### 2.2 Spa Treatment:

According to [39], the name "spa" comes from the Latin phrase "sanus per aquam," which means "healthy by water." A spa is a "business that offers water-based treatments performed by qualified personnel in a professional, relaxing, and healing environment" [40], it is dedicated to enhancing people's overall well-being through a variety of personal services that promote mind, body, and spirit renewal (International Spa Association [ISPA]). Day spas, resort/hotel spas, destination spas, medical spas, mineral spring spas, club spas, and cruise ship spas are among the seven types of spas described by [41].

Spas were discovered by some researchers [42], [43] in a variety of tourism and hospitality establishments. These spas offer a wide range of services to fit different requirements and desires all around the world [44], [45]. As a result, going to a spa has evolved into a necessity rather than a mere act of satisfying one's desires [46]. Globally, there has been an increase in demand for spa items [47]. Spa treatments today range from water-based (wet) to non-water-based (dry), with a variety of physical and psychological benefits [48]. According to some research, items like spring water are drunk for spiritual reasons as well as to maintain body, mind, and spirit balance [49] However, because of the diversity of nations and cultures around the world, some spa items are unique [50].



### **2.3 Customer spa experience:**

Generally, experiences are psychological and subjective feelings that are peculiar to every individual. Spa treatments have become popular due to the perceived positive experiences enjoyed by spa customers. Some of these treatments are targeted at health issues and body enhancement objectives, and also where individuals go for well-being and wellness [51]. Some of these wellness treatments are beauty, physical fitness, health and nutrition, relaxation, meditation, among others [52]. Spas, according to a number of academics, constitute experiences for clients [53], [54]. [55] argue that a spa's primary service is to provide clients with an immersive experience that engages all five senses. According to [56], experiences can be found in every part of the spa service, including the atmosphere, customer service, treatment quality, distinct feelings, thoroughness before and after treatment, and wellness. The emotional experience during massages, the smell of the essential oil, the sight of the beautiful interior decorations, the taste of special herbal teas, the sound of running water and, the natural and serene environment all contribute to the total spa experience. [57] posits that people who are experiencing positive emotions can make decisions faster than those who are experiencing negative emotions. This is because customers who have pleasant feelings as a result of a great experience are better able to filter out irrelevant information and digest it more efficiently; they also tend to place less emphasis on difficulties and simplify decision-making.

### **2.4 Customer revisit intention:**

The intention to repeat visitation has been acknowledged as an important research subject in the tourism literature [58]. Many studies have found that repeat tourists stay longer at a place, engage in more consumptive activities, are happier, and generate positive word of mouth, all while incurring far fewer marketing expenses than first-time visitors [59]. The intention to return to a tourist site has been characterized as a visitor repeating an activity or returning to a destination [60]. It also has to do with the visitor's assessment of the likelihood of returning to the same location [61], [62]. Customer satisfaction is widely recognised as crucial in building loyalty, not just in the physical world, but also in the tourism industry [63]. [64] consider revisiting intention to be an extension of contentment. Tourists are more likely to be satisfied with a tourist location if they have positive feelings about it, which increases their interest in returning. Several studies have been published that show that tourist satisfaction has a favourable impact on the likelihood of returning [65], [66].

## **3. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF EMOTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE:**

### **3.1 Relaxation and Relief:**

In spa treatments, many clients seek different treatments to cater for enhancement of beauty or for medical purposes. Customers volunteer themselves in all of these circumstances to acquire the greatest treatment from these spas. The feeling of relaxation and relief is often associated with successful treatment, which has a positive effect on the inner self of the individual. The facial treatments, body massages, yoga, and other essential treatments give relaxation to some customers during treatments. Some confirm that the relief they experience contributes to their overall wellness and health benefits. [67] claimed that spa experiences that engaged the consumer's five senses, such as the taste of spa cuisine and herbal tea, or the smell of essential oils, contributed to the consumer's experience of positive emotions and the pursuit of wellness. The findings are closely related to [68] suggestion that spas and their associated activities provide the health advantages of rejuvenation, relaxation, self-discovery, re-establishment of self-esteem, and self-development, all of which improve one's wellness and well-being.

### **3.2 Satisfaction:**

When it comes to product purchases or service interactions, customer satisfaction has a large influence on consumer future behaviours. Most consumers intend to revisit when satisfaction is achieved during and after their treatment. While good customer service helps to increase customer happiness, other aspects such as the interior decor and the tranquil environment also help. In addition, individual experiences during service encounters may influence revisit intention.

### **3.3 Well-being:**

Wellness and health issues have been identified as reasons for many customers' patronizing spa treatments. In the pursuit of these health solutions, customers expect instant relief from their predicaments. An emotional feeling of wellness is crucial in impacting the physical well-being of an individual customer. [69] investigated the link between spa and wellness from the perspective of visitor experience, claiming that the wellness value connected with spa experiences adds to emotional health improvement. During spa treatments, certain treatments could enhance emotional well-being, resulting in total healing of the customer. When customers experience emotional well-being, their



attention is targeted at repeating those treatments to enhance their health physically. Repeated patronage is likely to improve customer loyalty.

### 3.4 Pleasurable feeling:

A pleasant experience is one that is pleasurable and involves the enjoyment of something. Because pleasure is intimately tied to value and want, people find it delightful, positive, and desirable of seeking. Eating, intercourse, touching (or being stroked), pleasant fragrances, and listening to good music are all examples of bodily sensory pleasures. Body pleasures are fleeting and centered on the present moment. These appear to be physiological joys, albeit they could be linked to intellectual pleasures. There is no consensus on whether pleasure is a sensation, a quality of experiences, an attitude toward experiences, or anything else. Pleasure is important to the hedonism philosophical theory family. Individual clients can experience pleasurable feelings as a result of spa services, particularly during massages. People’s sensations of pleasure and happiness improve their emotional experiences. Customers who are exposed to these enjoyable sensations are able to create lasting memories that will influence their future behaviour in terms of revisit intention.

## 4. A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON EMOTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE:

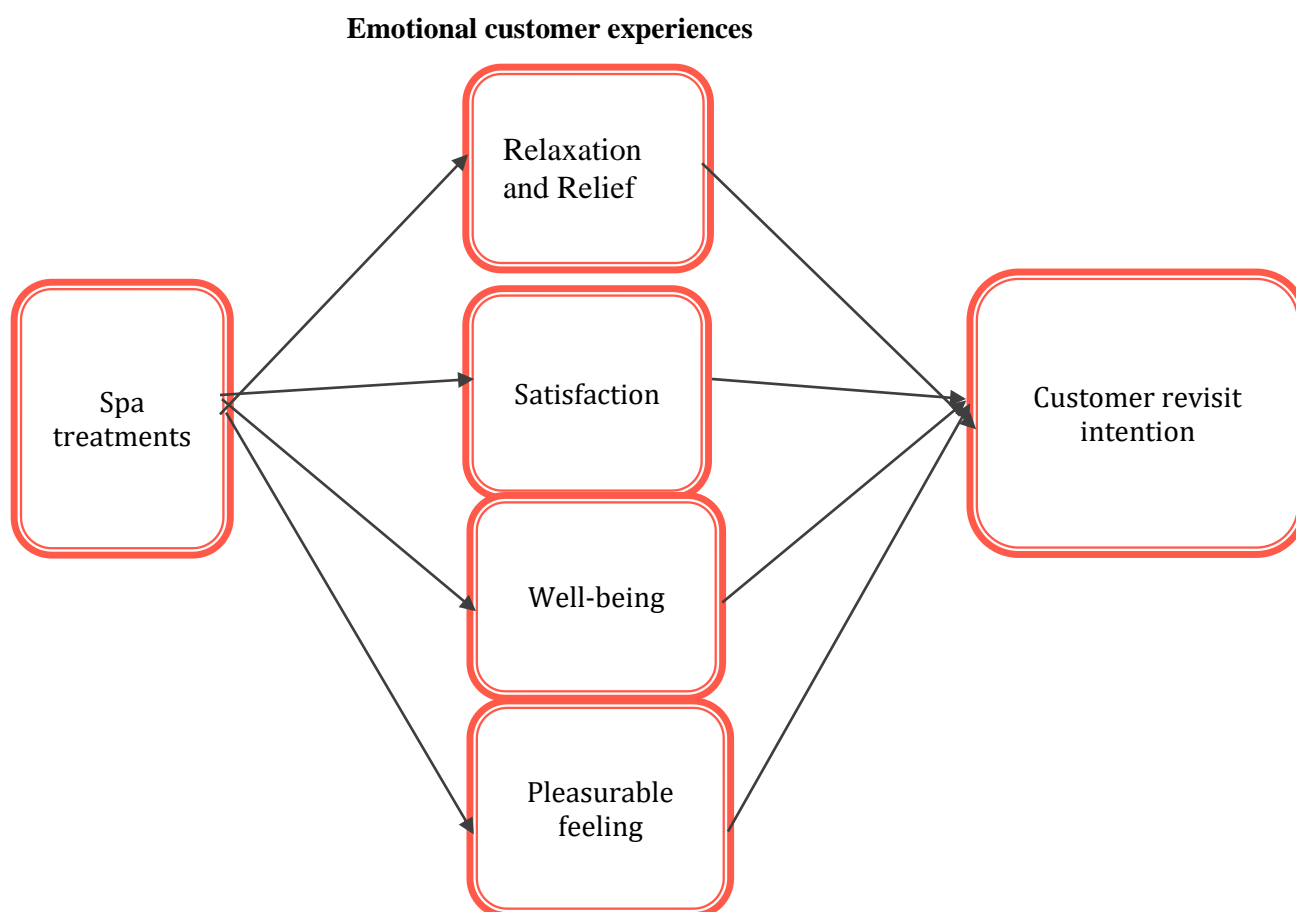


Figure 1: (Source: Author’s own conceptual model on emotional customer experience in spa treatment, 2022)

## 5. IMPLICATIONS:

This article offers both theoretical and practical implications for both literature and the hospitality and tourism industry. First, the paper contributes to the literature on the service delivery on emotional customer experiences in spa treatments. The dimensions analysed in the article also add knowledge to the previous literature. Practically, industry players may benefit from the knowledge shared in this paper on enhancing the positive emotional experiences that are capable of improving customer loyalty and frequent visitation, which will aid the growth and profitability of these spas.



## 6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDY:

The study was conceptual and concentrated only on the emotional experiences of customers. It is recommended that future studies be conducted empirically to unravel the real experiences of customers. Furthermore, a comparative study could be carried out to investigate different dimensions of customer experience and their impact on customer revisit intention. Again, the study only analysed positive dimensions in this study. It is believed that an empirical study may come up with some negative dimensions of emotional customer experience.

## 7. CONCLUSION:

This article attempts to conceptualize the dimensions of emotional experience that enhance the revisit intention of customers for subsequent treatment. The paper's main objective is to deepen understanding of the various emotional feelings that result in individual experiences during spa treatments. There are several forms of spa treatments that comprise facial treatments, full-body massages, water therapy, spot treatments, herbal body wraps, and waxing, among others. These treatments could trigger various physical and emotional experiences for each customer, considering the type of treatment the customer opts for. As marketers and industry players in the hospitality and tourism industries, customer revisit intention and loyalty are crucial to the sustainability of the service industry. Therefore, customer experience during service delivery is vital to customer service. To further the discussion, the article looks at positive emotional experience dimensions such as relaxation and relief, satisfaction, well-being, and pleasurable feelings. It is believed that these emotional experiences contribute to customer delight, which could enhance their revisit intention. The paper serves as a source of an additional literature on emotional experiences and their impact on spa revisit intentions, as well as prompts spa owners to implement measures regarding the engagement of skilled spa attendants or employees who have extensive knowledge on how to improve customer feelings and experiences during treatment.

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