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Consumer Comfort in the Café Industry: The Role of Interior Design, Atmosphere, And Sensory Marketing

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the effect of interior design, café atmosphere, and sensory marketing on consumer comfort at KOA Café in Perdagangan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. This study uses a quantitative approach with associative methods. A total of 100 respondents were selected through purposive sampling techniques, and data were collected using questionnaire instruments related to interior design, café atmosphere, sensory marketing, and consumer comfort variables. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression techniques. The results of partial analysis showed that interior design has a significant effect on consumer comfort with a value of tcount = 6.190 greater than Ttable = 1.986 and significance 0.000 (<0.05). Similarly, café atmosphere has a significant effect with a value of tcount = 2.564 greater than Ttable = 1.986 and significance 0.012 (<0.05). However, sensory marketing does not have a significant effect on consumer comfort with a value of tcount = 1.710 smaller than Ttable = 1.986 and significance 0.091 (>0.05). Simultaneously, interior design, café atmosphere, and sensory marketing significantly affect consumer comfort with a value of Fcount = 29.741 greater than Ftable = 2.704 and significance 0.000 (<0.05). The determination value of 46.6% indicates that the variables explain variations in consumer comfort. This study recommends that KOA Café management improve ergonomic interior design, maintain atmosphere consistency, and strengthen sensory marketing strategies to enhance consumer comfort and emotional attachment.

Keywords: *Consumer Comfort, Café Atmosphere, Interior Design, Sensory Marketing*

INTRODUCTION

The food and beverage (F&B) industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, particularly in the café sector. Cafés are no longer viewed merely as places to consume food and beverages; they have evolved into social and experiential spaces where consumers seek relaxation, interaction, and emotional experiences. Modern consumers tend to value not only product quality but also the overall environment and atmosphere of cafés. This shift has encouraged café businesses to compete by creating comfortable and memorable customer experiences.

Consumer comfort has become one of the most important factors influencing customer satisfaction and revisit intentions in the café industry. In the context of cafés, comfort is associated with consumers' perceptions of physical convenience, emotional relaxation, and environmental suitability while spending time at the café. Comfortable environments encourage consumers to stay longer, interact more frequently, and develop positive perceptions of the business.

Several studies have highlighted the importance of environmental and sensory factors in shaping consumer experiences. Research conducted by Goel (2024) found that aesthetic and functional interior design significantly influences customer comfort in restaurant environments. Similarly, Budhiyanto (2024) demonstrated that café lighting positively affects customers' perception of comfort. These findings indicate that the visual and ergonomic aspects of interior design play a crucial role in creating a pleasant environment for consumers.

In addition to interior design, the café atmosphere contributes significantly to customer comfort. The café atmosphere includes lighting, music, temperature, noise level, layout, color composition, and overall ambience. A pleasant atmosphere can stimulate emotional responses and influence customer behavior.

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Previous studies by Apriliani and Tuti (2024) revealed that the café atmosphere positively affects customer satisfaction, purchase decisions, and customer retention. Furthermore, Susanto and Darmayanti (2024) confirmed that the atmosphere significantly influences spatial comfort in café environments.

In addition to physical and atmospheric factors, sensory marketing has emerged as an important strategy in the hospitality and café industry. Sensory marketing refers to marketing activities that engage consumers' five senses to create emotional and behavioral responses. The visual appearance, music, aroma, taste, and tactile experiences can influence consumers' perceptions and overall experiences. According to Satti et al. (2021), sensory marketing positively affects customer satisfaction and emotional engagement. Likewise. Silaban et al. (2023) stated that sensory stimulation can encourage consumers to spend more time in cafés and strengthen their emotional attachment to the business.

Despite the growing number of studies discussing interior design, atmosphere, and sensory marketing, most previous studies have focused primarily on customer satisfaction, purchase intention, or revisit intention in metropolitan or large urban café settings. Limited studies have specifically examined consumer comfort as the main dependent variable, particularly in non-metropolitan café contexts. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by examining the influence of interior design, atmosphere, and sensory marketing on consumer comfort at the KOA Café located in Perdagangan, North Sumatra, Indonesia.

The KOA Café represents a growing café business in a non-metropolitan area where competition among cafés is increasingly dynamic. Preliminary observations indicated several issues related to consumer comfort, including inadequate ergonomic furniture, inconsistent music volume, external noise disturbance, and limited sensory identity, such as distinctive aroma. Although the café possesses visually attractive interior elements, some consumers reported discomfort during extended visits. These phenomena indicate that visual attractiveness alone may not be sufficient to create optimal consumer comfort in a restaurant.

This study contributes to the literature by integrating interior design, café atmosphere, and sensory marketing into a single research framework to explain consumer comfort. Practically, the findings are expected to provide managerial insights for café owners and hospitality businesses to design more comfortable and emotionally engaging environments for consumers. Based on the above background, this study aims to analyze the influence of interior design, atmosphere, and sensory marketing on consumer comfort at KOA Café.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interior Design

Interior design plays an important role in shaping consumer experiences and comfort within hospitality environments, particularly cafés. Interior design is associated with visual aesthetics and functionality, ergonomics, emotional responses, and psychological comfort experienced by consumers while interacting with a physical environment. According to Noorwhata (2018) and Hidayat et al. (2024), interior design refers to the process of planning and organizing spatial elements such as color, lighting, texture, layout, and furniture arrangement to achieve harmony between aesthetic value and user comfort. The author further explains that spatial quality influences users' physical and psychological well-being because environmental elements can create emotional responses and behavioral reactions.

In the context of cafés, consumers increasingly expect environments that are not only visually attractive but also comfortable. A café with proper lighting, ergonomic seating, harmonious colors, and organized spatial arrangements can encourage consumers to feel relaxed and emotionally attached to the environment. Research conducted by Goel (2024) found that the balance between aesthetic and functional design significantly improves consumers' dining experiences and comfort in restaurant environments. The study explained that aesthetically pleasing interiors alone are insufficient if consumers experience discomfort during long visits owing to poor ergonomics or ineffective layouts.

Similarly, Budhiyanto (2024) demonstrated that café lighting positively influences customer comfort perception. Lighting contributes not only to visual clarity but also to the emotional ambience and social warmth within cafés. Warm lighting, natural colors, and material selection may create a calming atmosphere that supports consumer comfort and encourages longer visit durations.

Furthermore, Viver (2024) explained that interior design elements, such as color, material, texture, and spatial arrangement, significantly affect users' psychological perceptions within hospitality spaces. Consumers tend to perceive cafés with organized and visually balanced environments as more comfortable and emotionally satisfying. Therefore, interior design can be understood as an important environmental factor that shapes both physical and emotional comfort in cafes .

Based on these explanations, this study conceptualizes interior design as consumers' perceptions of

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layout arrangement, lighting quality, furniture ergonomics, color harmony, and visual attractiveness within the KOA Café.

Café Atmosphere

The café atmosphere is one of the most influential environmental factors affecting consumers' emotional responses and behavioral experiences in the hospitality industry. Atmosphere refers to the combination of environmental elements intentionally designed to create specific emotional impressions and consumer experiences in a retail setting. These elements include music, lighting, temperature, aroma, noise level, spatial arrangement, and overall ambience of the café environment.

Previous studies have consistently indicated that the atmosphere significantly influences customer satisfaction, emotional engagement, and behavioral intentions. Apriliani and Tuti (2024) found that the café atmosphere positively affects customer satisfaction, purchase decisions, and customer retention. Their findings indicate that consumers tend to spend more time and develop stronger attachments to cafés that provide warm, relaxing, and visually pleasing atmospheres. Similarly, Ali (2023) reported that the coffee shop atmosphere significantly influences customer satisfaction and loyalty. Environmental comfort created through music, lighting, cleanliness, and ambience contributes to consumers' emotional experiences and determines their willingness to revisit cafés.

Research conducted by Susanto and Darmayanti (2024) and Reiwines and Hidayat (2022) confirmed that the atmosphere significantly affects spatial comfort in cafés. Their study emphasized that environmental consistency, proper noise control, comfortable circulation, and emotional ambience contribute directly to consumers' perceptions of comfort and "coziness." Consumers who perceive café environments as calm and welcoming are more likely to stay longer and experience emotional relaxation.

These findings indicate that the café atmosphere is not merely a physical setting but also an emotional mechanism capable of influencing consumers' comfort and behavioral responses. Therefore, the café atmosphere in this study refers to consumers' perceptions of warmth, ambience, environmental calmness, music suitability, and overall emotional comfort experienced at the KOA Café.

Sensory Marketing

Sensory marketing has emerged as an important strategy in the hospitality and food-service industry because modern consumers increasingly seek emotional and multisensory experiences rather than merely consuming products. Sensory marketing refers to marketing activities designed to stimulate consumers' five senses visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile to influence emotional responses, perceptions, and consumer behavior.

According to Satti et al. (2021), sensory marketing positively influences customer satisfaction and emotional engagement because sensory stimulation strengthens consumers' experiences and emotional attachment to a business environment. The study explains that visual attractiveness, suitable music, pleasant aroma, product taste, and tactile comfort collectively contribute to consumers' positive experiences in service environments.

Similarly, Silaban et al. (2023) found that sensory stimulation encourages consumers to spend more time in restaurants and cafés while improving customer satisfaction. Their research suggests that multisensory experiences are more effective than conventional marketing approaches because sensory elements create stronger emotional memories and behavioral attachment.

Furthermore, Rahayu et al. (2024) identified that sensory dimensions, such as visual presentation, music, aroma, taste, cleanliness, room temperature, and tactile comfort, significantly contribute to consumers' dining experiences and perceived comfort. Consumers tend to evaluate cafés not only based on food quality but also on environmental sensations that influence emotional comfort and relaxation.

In café businesses, sensory marketing is closely associated with consumers' emotional perceptions because sensory stimuli directly affect their mood, memory, and environmental evaluation. Pleasant music, calming aromas, attractive product presentations, comfortable temperatures, and clean environments may increase consumers' comfort while spending time in cafés. Therefore, sensory marketing in this study refers to consumers' perceptions of the multisensory experiences provided by the KOA Café.

Consumer Comfort

Consumer comfort refers to a subjective condition in which consumers experience physical relaxation, emotional calmness, and psychological satisfaction while interacting with the service environment. Comfort is influenced by various environmental factors that support consumer activities without causing physical or

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emotional disturbance.

According to Agustin (2021), comfort emerges when individuals' physical and psychological needs are fulfilled, resulting in feelings of well-being and satisfaction. In hospitality environments, comfort is associated with consumers' ability to enjoy activities, relax, and feel safe while spending time in cafés or restaurants.

Additionally, Susanto and Darmayanti (2024) explained that comfort within café environments is shaped by both physical and non-physical environmental elements, such as atmosphere, spatial arrangement, environmental calmness, and emotional ambience. Consumers who perceive cafés as comfortable tend to stay longer and develop positive behavioral intentions.

Pranadewi et al. (2025) found that facility comfort mediates the relationship between restaurant atmosphere and customer satisfaction. Their study demonstrated that seating comfort, cleanliness, environmental support, and facility quality significantly improved consumers' dining experiences and emotional satisfaction.

Based on these explanations, consumer comfort in this study refers to consumers' perceptions of physical relaxation, emotional calmness, environmental suitability, and overall comfort experienced while spending time at the KOA Café.

METHODOLOGY

Desain Study

This study employed a quantitative research design. According to Sahir (2022), quantitative research is a scientific research method that emphasizes systematic measurement, objective analysis, and statistical testing to examine relationships among variables. The approach applied in this study is an associative approach aimed at analyzing the causal relationships between independent and dependent variables. According to Ahyar et al. (2020), causal relationships explain the influence of independent variables on dependent variables through hypothesis testing and statistical analyses.

This study analyzed the influence of interior design, café atmosphere, and sensory marketing on consumer comfort at KOA Café located in Perdagangan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The interior design, atmosphere, and sensory marketing were the independent variables, and consumer comfort was the dependent variable.

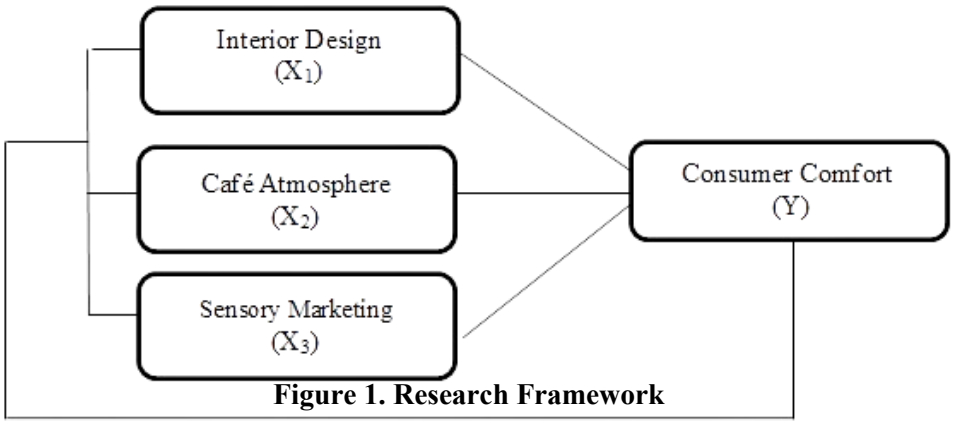


Figure 1. Research Framework

Hypothesis

Based on the theoretical framework and previous empirical studies, the hypotheses proposed in this study are as follows:

H_1: Interior design has a significant effect on consumer comfort at KOA Café.
H_2: The café atmosphere has a significant effect on consumer comfort at KOA Café.
H_3: Sensory marketing significantly affects consumer comfort at KOA Café.
H_4: It is suspected that interior design, café atmosphere, and sensory marketing simultaneously have a significant effect on consumer comfort at the KOA Café.

Population and Sample

According to Sahir (2022), the population refers to the entire group of individuals or objects possessing characteristics relevant to a study. The population in this study consisted of consumers who visited KOA Café in Perdagangan, North Sumatra. Because the exact number of consumers is unknown, this study used

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an appropriate sampling technique to obtain representative data. According to Ahyar et al. (2020) and Hidayat (2026), a sample is a subset of the population selected to represent the characteristics of the entire population. The sampling technique applied in this study was purposive sampling, where respondents were selected based on specific criteria determined by the researcher. The Cochran formula was used to calculate the sample size for an unknown population. Based on the calculation, the required sample size was 96 respondents and rounded up to 100 respondents. The inclusion criteria in this study were consumers who had visited KOA Café and were willing to participate as respondents. Respondents who could not provide complete information were excluded from the study.

Analytical Techniques and Research Instruments

To complete this study, the researcher distributed questionnaires to KOA Café consumer to collect the required data. The questionnaire used in this study was based on a Likert scale, which aimed to measure respondents' levels of agreement with the statements provided by the researcher. The questionnaire items were related to interior design, café atmosphere, sensory marketing and consumer comfort.

The indicators of interior design included layout arrangement, lighting quality, furniture arrangement, color harmony, and visual attractiveness. The indicators of café atmosphere included ambience, environmental calmness, music suitability, and overall comfort. The sensory marketing indicators consisted of visual presentation, aroma, taste, music, cleanliness, room temperature, and tactile comfort. Consumer comfort indicators included emotional relaxation, physical comfort, calmness, and environmental suitability while spending time at the KOA Café.

The analytical technique used in this study was multiple linear regression analysis. This statistical method aims to examine the relationship between two or more independent variables and a dependent variable. In this study, multiple linear regression analysis was employed to determine the influence of interior design, café atmosphere, and sensory marketing on consumer comfort.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of interior design, café atmosphere, and sensory marketing on consumer comfort at the KOA Café. The regression analysis results indicate that all independent variables have positive regression coefficients, indicating that improvements in these variables tend to increase consumer comfort. The regression equation obtained in this study is as follows:

$$Y = -0.319 + 0.467X_1 + 0.395X_2 + 0.208X_3 + e$$

Based on the regression equation above, the coefficient value of interior design is 0.467, indicating that every one-unit increase in interior design increases consumer comfort by 0.467 units, assuming other variables remain constant. Meanwhile, the atmosphere variable has a coefficient value of 0.395, meaning that improvements in the café atmosphere positively contribute to consumer comfort. The sensory marketing variable also shows a positive coefficient value of 0.208, indicating that sensory stimulation tends to improve consumer comfort, although its statistical significance needs further examination.

Partial Significance Test (t-test)

A partial significance test was conducted to determine the individual influence of each independent variable on consumer comfort. The t-test results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Partial Significance Test Results (t-test)

Variable	t-value	Sig.	Result
Interior Design	6.190	0.000	Significant
Café Atmosphere	2.564	0.012	Significant
Sensory Marketing	1.710	0.091	Not Significant

The results show that interior design has a positive and significant effect on consumer comfort because the significance value is less than 0.05 (0.000 < 0.05). This finding indicates that better layout arrangement, lighting quality, furniture comfort, and visual aesthetics improve consumers' comfort while visiting the KOA Café. Similarly, the café atmosphere also had a positive and significant effect on consumer comfort, with a significance value of 0.012, which is lower than 0.05. This result indicates that environmental ambience,

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music suitability, calmness, and atmosphere consistency contribute positively to consumers' emotional and physical comfort.

However, sensory marketing did not have a significant effect on consumer comfort because the significance value was higher than 0.05 (0.091 > 0.05). Although sensory marketing has a positive coefficient, its influence was statistically insignificant. This finding indicates that sensory stimulation, such as aroma, music, and tactile experiences provided by the KOA Café, has not been optimally perceived by consumers as a major factor influencing comfort.

Simultaneous Significance Test (F-test)

A simultaneous significance test was conducted to determine whether interior design, café atmosphere, and sensory marketing collectively influenced consumer comfort. The results of the F-test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Simultaneous Significance Test Results (F-test)

Variable	F-value	Sig.	Result
Interior Design, Café Atmosphere, and Sensory Marketing	29.741	0.000	Significant

The results indicate that the calculated F-value of 29.741 is greater than the F-table value of 2.704, with a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, interior design, café atmosphere, and sensory marketing have a positive and significant effect on consumer comfort at KOA Café. This finding demonstrates that consumer comfort is collectively influenced by environmental and sensory factors within the café environment.

Determination Test

A coefficient of determination test was conducted to determine the extent to which the independent variables explained consumer comfort. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination Results

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
0.694	0.482	0.466

The results show that the adjusted R Square value is 0.466, indicating that 46.6% of consumer comfort can be explained by interior design, café atmosphere, and sensory marketing. Meanwhile, the remaining 53.4% is influenced by other variables outside the scope of this study, such as service quality, product quality, pricing, and social interaction.

The findings of this study demonstrate that interior design is the most dominant factor influencing consumer comfort at the KOA Café. This result is consistent with the findings of Goel (2024), who stated that the combination of aesthetic and functional interior design creates comfortable experiences for consumers. Consumers tend to feel more comfortable in cafés with organized layouts, ergonomic furniture, suitable lighting, and visually appealing environments.

Atmospherice variables also significantly influence consumer comfort. This result supports the findings of Apriliani et al. (2024) and Susanto and Darmayanti (2024), who explained that the atmosphere contributes positively to consumers' emotional experiences and environmental comfort. Consumers tend to prefer cafés with a calm ambience, appropriate music, controlled noise levels, and relaxing environmental conditions.

Sensory marketing had a positive but insignificant effect on consumer comfort. This finding suggests that sensory stimulation at the KOA Café was not sufficiently strong to create a significant emotional influence on consumers. One possible explanation is that sensory identity elements, such as distinctive aromas, multisensory ambience, or tactile experiences, have not been fully optimized. This finding differs slightly from those of Satti et al. (2021) and Silaban et al. (2023), who found significant relationships between sensory marketing and customer satisfaction. This difference may occur because consumers at KOA Café are more influenced by environmental comfort and the physical atmosphere than by sensory stimulation itself.

Overall, the findings indicate that environmental and physical factors remain highly important in shaping consumer comfort in non-metropolitan café businesses. Therefore, café managers should focus on improving ergonomic interior design, atmosphere consistency, lighting quality, and environmental comfort to enhance consumers' experiences and emotional attachment to the café.

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CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that interior design has a positive and significant effect on consumer comfort at KOA Café. This finding indicates that elements such as layout arrangement, lighting quality, furniture comfort, and visual aesthetics play important roles in creating a comfortable environment for consumers. Consumers tend to feel more relaxed and emotionally comfortable when the café environment is visually attractive and functionally organized.

The café atmosphere also has a positive and significant effect on consumer comfort. Environmental ambience, music suitability, calmness, and overall atmosphere consistency contribute positively to consumers' emotional experiences while visiting cafés. A comfortable and relaxing atmosphere encourages consumers to spend more time in the café and improves their overall perception of comfort.

Sensory marketing has a positive but insignificant effect on consumer comfort. Although sensory elements such as aroma, music, visual presentation, and tactile experience positively contribute to consumer perceptions, their influence has not yet become a dominant factor affecting comfort at the KOA Café. This finding indicates that the sensory marketing strategies implemented by the café still need to be improved and strengthened to create stronger emotional attachment and multisensory experiences for consumers.

Simultaneously, interior design, café atmosphere, and sensory marketing have positive and significant effects on consumer comfort. The coefficient of determination results indicate that 46.6% of consumer comfort can be explained by these three variables, while the remaining 53.4% is influenced by other factors not included in this study. Overall, this study confirms that environmental and experiential factors are important determinants of consumer comfort in the café industry, particularly in non-metropolitan café businesses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed. First, KOA Café management should prioritize improvements in interior design by enhancing ergonomic furniture, spatial layout, lighting quality, and visual harmony to increase consumers' physical and emotional comfort.

Second, the café atmosphere should be managed more consistently, particularly regarding music volume, environmental calmness, temperature, and noise control. Creating a stable and relaxing atmosphere may improve consumer experiences and encourage longer visit durations.

Third, sensory marketing strategies should be strengthened by developing a more distinctive sensory identity, such as signature aromas, consistent background music, attractive product presentation, and tactile comfort. These sensory elements may help create memorable experiences and stronger emotional attachments among consumers.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to expand this study by including additional variables such as service quality, product quality, pricing, customer satisfaction, and revisit intention. Future studies may also examine café businesses in metropolitan cities or apply mediating and moderating variables to provide broader insights into consumer behavior within the hospitality industry.

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