

The Evolution of Consumer Behavior in The Coffee Shop Industry

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Abstract

The global coffee shop industry has evolved from a transactional, caffeine-centered trade to a multidimensional experiential market. However, the consumer behavior literature documenting this shift remains fragmented across marketing, hospitality, food science, and sustainability disciplines. To consolidate this fragmented landscape, this study conducts a systematic literature review following the PRISMA 2020 protocol, mapping the thematic, theoretical, and methodological frontiers of coffee consumer behavior research. A structured Scopus search covering 2015–2025, combined with multistage screening and a strict journal-quality threshold (SJR Q1–Q2), yielded a final corpus of 51 empirical studies. Thematic synthesis identified six distinct research streams: servicescape and interpersonal exchange, cognitive-sensory processing, identity and symbolic consumption, corporate social responsibility, omni-channel marketing, and disruptive technology. Methodologically, the synthesis reveals a heavy overreliance on cross-sectional survey designs analyzed via structural equation modelling (SEM), concentrated primarily in Asian markets. Crucially, this review exposes three persistent theoretical and empirical gaps requiring urgent scholarly attention: distinct satisfaction–loyalty decoupling in experiential contexts, a stubborn sustainability intention–action gap resistant to standard behavioral nudges, and an unresolved novelty effect regarding human–robot service interactions. This study contributes an integrated thematic map and advances a structured future research agenda emphasizing the need for behaviorally validated, longitudinal, and cross-cultural methodologies. The findings offer strategic and actionable insights for franchise and independent coffee shop operators navigating an increasingly saturated, digital, and value-driven market.

Keywords: consumer behavior, coffee shop industry, systematic literature review, PRISMA, and research agenda

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INTRODUCTION

Coffee, commercially classified as an agricultural commodity, ranks among the most significant products in both international trade and domestic supply in terms of both quantity and value (Vegro & de Almeida, 2020). The coffee industry is one of the most economically significant and culturally ingrained consumer markets globally, with retail sales surpassing USD 460 billion in 2023 and approximately 2.25 billion cups consumed daily across over 70

producing countries (International Coffee Organization, 2023). Over the past decade, the industry has experienced substantial structural transformation, shifting from a provider of functional, transactional caffeine consumption to a complex experiential platform (De Vasconcelos Teixeira, 2020).

The transformation in this sector explained by using the metaphor of three waves (Teles & Behrens, 2020). The first wave was marked by the rapid expansion of commodity coffee consumption, primarily valued as an energy drink and distributed through supermarkets (Lourenzani et al., 2020). The second wave, spanning approximately from the 1960s to the 1990s, introduced an increased focus on quality, intensive use of *Coffea arabica*, popularization of coffee chains, and heightened attention to bean origin. The third wave reflects the current demand for differentiated quality, artisanal craftsmanship, bean-to-cup transparency, and a specialized atmospheric design (Aydın & Temizkan, 2024; Costa, 2020; Ferreira & Ferreira, 2018). This movement has advanced the "seed-to-cup" philosophy, where products are valued for their unique characteristics associated with the edaphoclimatic conditions of their origin, the farmers, and traditional expertise (Sabio & Spers, 2020)

Beyond mere economics, the widespread emergence of specialty coffee shops, single-origin roasteries, and high-end coffeehouse chains throughout urban areas in Asia, the Americas, Europe, and Africa signifies a fundamental shift in consumer interaction with coffee products. It is now perceived not only as a consumable product but also as a curated experience (De Vasconcelos Teixeira, 2020). The significance of visiting a coffee shop has evolved well beyond the straightforward act of buying a drink; nowadays, cafés function as essential "third places" where individuals gather to socialize, study, hold business meetings, and enjoy leisure time (Dhisasmito & Kumar, 2020; Ferreira et al., 2021; Oldenburg, 2013; Yuliani et al., 2025). Consequently, coffee has moved beyond its traditional role as a caffeinated commodity and become a medium for expressing identity, engaging in social rituals, and aspiring to a particular lifestyle (Ferreira & Ferreira, 2018; Tran et al., 2020).

Although the coffee shop industry is profitable, it is also highly competitive. The relatively low startup costs associated with opening a coffee retail shop make it an attractive business opportunity for new entrepreneurs, naturally leading to heightened market competition (Dhisasmito & Kumar, 2020; Ge et al., 2021). In this competitive landscape, merely operating a shop that offers quality coffee is insufficient to ensure survival or success, operators must concentrate on delivering comprehensive value and high service quality to customers. This saturation underscores the strategic necessity of understanding consumer behavior.

Despite the rapid change in the industry, the academic literature is still marked by considerable fragmentation, which hinders both theoretical progress and practical application (Samoggia & Riedel, 2018). Research is scattered across various disciplinary journals, including marketing, hospitality management, food science, consumer psychology, and sustainability, often functioning independently. Theoretical models are used separately rather than being integrated, and the predominant use of cross-sectional survey designs analyzed with partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) has resulted in a large body of confirmatory results (Hair et al., 2016). However, there is a lack of systematic synthesis to assess established knowledge, pinpoint contradictions, and outline knowledge frontiers.

Therefore, it is crucial to unify the existing empirical data. Systematic literature reviews (SLRs) have become a methodological benchmark for integrating fragmented evidence in the social sciences (Tranfield et al., 2003). The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework offers a stringent, transparent, and reproducible protocol for conducting these reviews. To date, no PRISMA-based SLR has comprehensively

mapped the thematic, theoretical, and methodological scope of coffee consumer-behavior research. This gap represents both a scholarly void and a lost opportunity to equip the field with a foundation for building cumulative knowledge. This study addresses this gap through a systematic literature review guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework. Four research questions were used to organize the inquiry.

RQ1: *What are the dominant themes and research streams in studies on consumer behavior and experience in the coffee shop industry?*

RQ2: *Which research designs, analytical methods, and data sources dominate consumer-behavior research in the coffee shop industry?*

RQ3: *How has research on coffee consumer behavior evolved over time in terms of topics, methods and outcomes?*

RQ4: *Which underexplored variables or contexts for future research on coffee consumer behavior?*

This review contributes to the literature in three significant ways. Initially, it presents the inaugural comprehensive thematic map of research on coffee consumer behavior, highlighting six unique research streams and the theoretical frameworks that support them. Next, it conducts a critical evaluation of the methodologies used in the field, noting the prevalence of survey-based SEM and its effect on the accumulation of knowledge. Finally, it proposes a structured agenda for future research, centered on specific knowledge gaps, each accompanied by suggested methodological and theoretical approaches for addressing them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Frameworks in Coffee-shop Consumer Behavior

To understand the rapid expansion of research on coffee consumer behavior highlighted by bibliometric analysis, it is crucial to explore the core theoretical frameworks underpinning these empirical investigations. Modern cafés have transformed from being merely places to buy drinks into complex environments encompassing social, emotional, and ecological dimensions (Tran et al., 2020). Consequently, researchers have increasingly embraced an interdisciplinary approach to interpret this evolving context. By utilizing a diverse array of theoretical perspectives from fields such as environmental psychology, sociology, consumer behavior, and economics, current studies have effectively unraveled the intricate connections between today's consumers, coffee brands, and the experiential environment (Kim et al., 2018).

Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R)

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) paradigm serves as a foundational theoretical stream for understanding how external environments influence customer decision-making and loyalty (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974a; Tran et al., 2020). This framework suggests that external environmental factors (S) serve as stimuli affecting consumers' internal psychological conditions (O), which in turn determine their behavioral reactions (R) (Candra et al., 2022; Peng & Kim, 2014; Tran et al., 2020). Within a café setting, these stimuli are often interpreted through the servicescape model, which includes elements such as spatial design, aesthetics, music, lighting, and sensory inputs (Bitner, 1992; Oh et al., 2019; Tran et al., 2020).

Over time, the model has been broadened to incorporate socially responsible cues, such as a brand's eco-friendly image and sustainable practices (Ko & Jeon, 2024; Le et al., 2022; Suttikun et al., 2025).

The organism aspect involves the internal evaluative mechanisms activated by these stimuli, encompassing emotional reactions (pleasure, arousal, and dominance) and cognitive assessments such as perceived value and environmental attitudes (Le et al., 2022; Meeprom & Kokkhangplu, 2025; Tran et al., 2020). Importantly, a positive emotional state fostered by the café environment often leads to favorable evaluations through heuristic processing, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction (Meeprom & Kokkhangplu, 2025; Oh et al., 2019). The response element of the S-O-R model captures the behavioral outcomes resulting from this internal assessment, which can manifest as approach or avoidance behaviors (Candra et al., 2022; Donovan & Rossiter, 1982).

In the context of branded coffee shops, positive approach behaviors are reflected in customer loyalty, intentions to revisit, and the development of a strong brand image (Meeprom & Kokkhangplu, 2025; Oh et al., 2019; Tran et al., 2020). These outcomes also extend to customer citizenship behaviors, such as word-of-mouth promotion and increased tolerance for occasional service lapses (Le et al., 2022; Meeprom & Kokkhangplu, 2025). Overall, the S-O-R framework offers a valuable structural perspective for understanding how carefully designed atmospheric elements and brand identity contribute to enduring loyalty and a competitive edge in the coffee industry's market (Oh et al., 2019; Tran et al., 2020).

Self-Congruity and Social Identity Theories

Self-Congruity Theory (SCT) explains how consumers develop preferences for brands whose symbolic images resonate with their actual or ideal self-concepts (Sirgy, 2018). In the context of coffee shops, this resonance triggers deep psychological reactions, such as brand attachment and brand love, because customers perceive an alignment between their own identities and the lifestyle associations projected by the café (Al Balushi et al., 2024; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Chen & Demirci, 2025). This evaluation frequently occurs through a peripheral cognitive pathway as described by the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), where symbolic elements such as store aesthetics, ambient design, and social media presence, function as primary persuasive cues for low-involvement decisions, overriding purely functional features (Chen & Demirci, 2025).

Social Identity Theory (SIT) elucidates how individuals shape and enhance their self-esteem and self-concept through categorization into specific social groups (Kim et al., 2017; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Osmanova et al., 2023; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Visiting premium or specialty coffee shops serves as a form of conspicuous and symbolic consumption, enabling young consumers, particularly Generations Y and Z, to project aspirational lifestyles, demonstrate social status, and signal social belonging (Kim & Jang, 2014a; Tangsupwattana & Liu, 2018; Wang et al., 2024). The convergence of these symbolic and social mechanisms leads to Consumer Brand Identification (CBI), a psychological condition wherein consumers view a coffee brand as an extension of themselves, characterized by a profound sense of oneness, belongingness, and shared values (Kim et al., 2017; Osmanova et al., 2023).

Consumers exhibiting strong brand identification are highly motivated to engage in brand evangelism and customer citizenship behaviors (CCB) (Kim et al., 2019; Le et al., 2022; Osmanova et al., 2023). These outcomes manifest as defending the brand from criticism, spreading positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and maintaining resilient repurchase intentions even in the presence of competitive options (Kim et al., 2019; Osmanova et al., 2023). Furthermore, high self-congruity strengthens these desirable behaviors by directly

enhancing emotional brand love, trust, and enduring brand loyalty (Song et al., 2019). Together, these theoretical streams highlight that modern coffee consumption extends far beyond merely acquiring a beverage; it functions as a deeply symbolic resource for self-expression, identity construction, and social affirmation (Kim & Jang, 2014a; Tangsupwattana & Liu, 2018; Wang et al., 2024).

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) originally introduced to predict user acceptance of corporate information systems (Davis, 1989). This theory serves as a foundational theoretical framework for understanding consumer behavior toward digital and automated innovations in the competitive food and beverage sector. This model suggests that technology acceptance is directly influenced by perceived ease of use and usefulness (Shim et al., 2021). In the café industry, user-friendly mobile ordering systems lower cognitive demands and simplify the purchasing process, which greatly affects consumer intention (Pu et al., 2023; Shim et al., 2021). The E-brand experience framework further explores digitalization by capturing consumers' subjective psychological responses to brand interactions across digital platforms, such as social media and live streaming (Armawan et al., 2023; Pu et al., 2023). Engaging and informative digital content, alongside robust electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), has been found to boost satisfaction and loyalty, indicating that the modern coffee experience begins long before a customer visits a physical store (Chen & Demirci, 2025; Pu et al., 2023; Salmiah et al., 2024).

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and Robot Barista Coffee Shops (RBCS) has introduced a new food technology paradigm in the industry, accelerated by the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the COVID-19 pandemic (Kim et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2022; Sung & Jeon, 2020; Yoo et al., 2022). Affect-as-Information Theory offers an interpretive perspective, suggesting that consumers use their emotional states as evaluative information when making judgments about a service (Chiang et al., 2022; Schwarz & Clore, 2003). When robot baristas display human-like characteristics through anthropomorphism, they create a sense of intimacy and social presence, leading customers to rely on positive emotions rather than detailed analysis when assessing service quality (Chiang et al., 2022; Gursoy et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2022).

Grounded Cognition Theory

Grounded Cognition Theory posits that human cognition is not merely an abstract computational process but is fundamentally rooted in sensorimotor experiences, bodily states, and situated actions (Barsalou, 2008). This theory offers a cognitive foundation for understanding how consumers interpret sensory inputs, suggesting that mental simulations are intrinsically linked to sensory modalities (Kim et al., 2025). The act of drinking coffee is closely associated with sensory marketing, which deliberately engages the five senses (sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch) to enhance brand perception and evoke emotional reactions (Candra et al., 2022; Rodas & Montoya, 2018). Activating these senses is essential for influencing consumer evaluations, as positive sensory experiences lead to pleasure and increased behavioral intention (Toribio-Tamayo et al., 2024). In café settings, visual elements such as high-quality menu images prompt sensory-rich mental simulations, allowing consumers to imagine taste, texture, and aroma before making a purchase. Eye-tracking research provides empirical evidence for the picture superiority effect, showing that visual stimuli are processed more efficiently than text and are significantly more effective in

activating consumers' consumption vision and fostering positive product attitudes, especially in fast-paced retail settings (Kim et al., 2025).

Dual Coding Theory

According to Dual Coding Theory, humans utilize two separate cognitive systems for processing information: verbal (textual) and nonverbal (visual), with the latter requiring considerably less mental effort (Kim et al., 2018; Paivio, 1990). Memory encoding becomes notably more efficient when both systems are engaged rather than separately (Paivio, 1990). This concept is particularly applicable to the coffee shop sector for crafting effective marketing messages. Studies have indicated that combining text-based benefits with striking images, such as those showcasing the advantages of eco-friendly packaging, greatly boosts consumers' environmental awareness, social media engagement, and purchasing intentions (Kim et al., 2018; Sahin et al., 2020; Suttikun et al., 2025). By simultaneously activating both cognitive pathways, coffee brands can reduce mental strain while fostering deeper, value-oriented relationships with consumers.

Visual attention indicates the extent to which individuals focus on particular environmental cues, acting as a key factor in how consumers assess café offerings (Solomon et al., 2012). Studies using eye-tracking technology have demonstrated a picture superiority effect, where visual elements on both digital and physical menus draw consumers' attention away from simple text, leading to more intense cognitive and emotional reactions (Kim et al., 2025). High-quality images on menus trigger consumers' consumption vision, which involves vivid mental imagery of enjoying the product, thereby greatly boosting positive perceptions of menu items and confidence in decision-making (Barsalou, 2008; Chang, 2012; Kim et al., 2025). In contrast, menus that rely solely on text consistently fail to evoke the same level of mental imagery, highlighting the influence of visual stimuli in modern foodservice settings.

Uses and Gratifications (UandG) Theory

Originating from the functionalist view of mass media communication, Uses and Gratifications (U&G) Theory explores the reasons and methods by which individuals actively pursue specific media to meet their distinct needs (Katz et al., 1973; Menon & Meghana, 2021). The core idea of this theory is that consumers are not merely passive recipients of information; rather, they are motivated by particular communication goals. These goals influence both the enjoyment they derive from media and their attitudes towards the medium and its content, which in turn actively shape their media consumption (Menon & Meghana, 2021; Rubin, 2002).

In the realm of digital marketing for coffee brands on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, the U&G theory offers a framework for comprehending how digital content satisfies consumer needs (Nguyen et al., 2022; Salmiah et al., 2024). For example, informativeness is a gratification need, where brand content that provides valuable and accurate information can positively alter consumer perceptions and directly influence their purchase intentions (Armawan et al., 2023; Krasnikolakis, 2022). By determining whether consumers are driven by entertainment, information, or social connections, coffee brands can create more targeted digital interactions and advertising strategies that enhance engagement and purchasing behavior. This makes U&G an especially useful framework for organizing research on digital content and the e-brand experience within the coffee industry (Pu et al., 2023).

Synthesis: Theoretical Fragmentation

Research on coffee consumer behavior often draws from fields such as psychology, sociology, and management. However, these perspectives are typically applied in isolation, leading to a fragmented understanding of coffee consumers (Kim et al., 2018; Samoggia & Riedel, 2018; Tran et al., 2020). For instance, the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model is prevalent in studies of store atmospherics (Chiang et al., 2022; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974b; Yoo et al., 2022). This model outlines how physical stimuli influence psychological comfort and the intention to revisit; however, it is fundamentally reactive and tends to overlook the complex sociocultural motivations that initially attract consumers to cafés. Conversely, research on ethical consumption, such as the use of reusable cups, often employs cognitive-rational models, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Sandhu et al., 2021). While these models effectively capture attitudes, they frequently neglect the sensory experiences of the servicescape, which can override rational intentions in practical scenarios.

Additionally, there is a separate focus on sociological and identity-based research. Studies on third-wave specialty coffee often use Self-Congruity and Social Identity Theories to interpret consumption as a social distinction act (Chen & Demirci, 2025; Wang et al., 2024; Xu & Ng, 2023). However, this sociological research seldom intersects with information-processing frameworks such as Dual Coding Theory, which explores how consumers process visual and textual marketing cues (Kim et al., 2018; Paivio, 1990). This theoretical division highlights a significant gap in the literature. The modern café experience blends sensory, rational, and symbolic elements. Future research should aim for theoretical integration by creating multidimensional frameworks that encompass environmental, cognitive, and sociocultural factors influencing coffee consumer behavior.

METHODS

This research employs a systematic literature review (SLR) approach in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 reporting standards (Page et al., 2021), which provide a transparent, structured, and reproducible framework for identifying, screening, evaluating, and synthesizing scholarly evidence. Systematic literature reviews have become an established methodology for consolidating fragmented knowledge, identifying research gaps, and developing future research agendas within management and marketing disciplines (Snyder, 2019; Thomas & Harden, 2008; Tranfield et al., 2003). The review is designed as a descriptive-bibliometric and thematic synthesis, focusing on mapping the intellectual structure, topical evolution, theoretical foundations, and methodological characteristics of coffee consumer behavior research rather than statistically aggregating effect sizes through meta-analysis (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). Consistent with best practices in evidence synthesis, the review protocol, including search strategy, eligibility criteria, and screening procedures, was established prior to data collection to enhance transparency, consistency, and replicability throughout the review process (Page et al., 2021; Higgins et al., 2022). The main literature search was conducted in January 2026, using only the Scopus database because of its broad coverage of peer-reviewed literature in business and social sciences, and was limited to publications from January 2015 to December 2025. To explore the intersection of the coffee industry and consumer psychology, the following Boolean string was applied to the titles, abstracts, and keywords:

(“coffee” OR “coffee shop” OR “café” OR “specialty coffee”) AND (“consumer behavior” OR “purchase intention” OR “customer satisfaction” OR “customer experience”)

Applying the filter for the "article" document type yielded 407 entries. During Stage 1, the use of Scopus subject-area filters narrowed the selection to research in Business,

Management and Accounting; Social Sciences; and Economics, Econometrics and Finance, with the additional inclusion of Agricultural and Biological Sciences and Environmental Science to encompass interdisciplinary sustainability studies, reducing the count to 360 entries. Table 1 summarizes the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

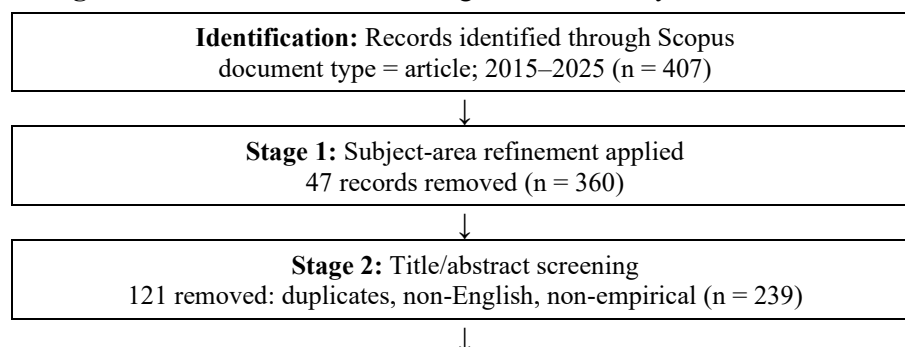
Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

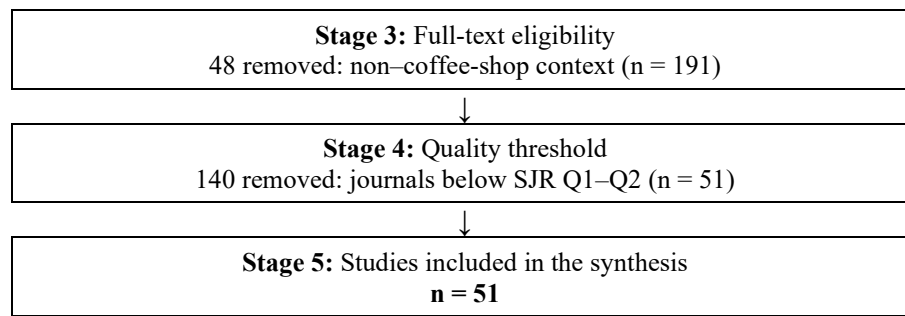
Criterion	Description
Database	Scopus (Single primary source)
Publication Period	January 2015 – December 2025
Document Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles only
Inclusion Criteria	Study Type: Empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods) Focus: Measuring marketing, operational, and behavioral variables. Setting: Café/coffee-shop contexts. Quality and Language: English, indexed in Scopus Journal Rank (SJR) Q1–Q2 journals.
Exclusion Criteria	Document Type: Conceptual papers, editorials, reviews, conference proceedings, theses, and book chapters. Language: Non-English articles. Scope & Context: Studies on agricultural or supply chain mechanics lack a consumer interface in non-coffee shop settings. Quality: Journals ranked below SJR Q2.
Subject Areas	Business, Management and Accounting, Social Sciences, Economics, Econometrics and Finance, Agricultural and Biological Sciences, Environmental Science

Source: Authors' elaboration.

In Stage 2, an initial review of titles and abstracts eliminated duplicates, non-English publications, and non-empirical works, such as conceptual papers, editorials, and previous reviews. Stage 3 involved evaluating abstracts and full texts for contextual relevance, excluding studies not focused on coffee shop environments, such as those related to general food retail, standard restaurant settings, and agricultural production lacking a consumer-facing aspect. Stage 4's quality assessment retained only those articles published in journals classified as Q1 or Q2 by the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR). Stage 5 resulted in a corpus of 51 empirical studies, which served as the foundation for the thematic synthesis. Figure 1 illustrates the selection process.

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process





Source: authors' elaboration following Page et al. (2021)

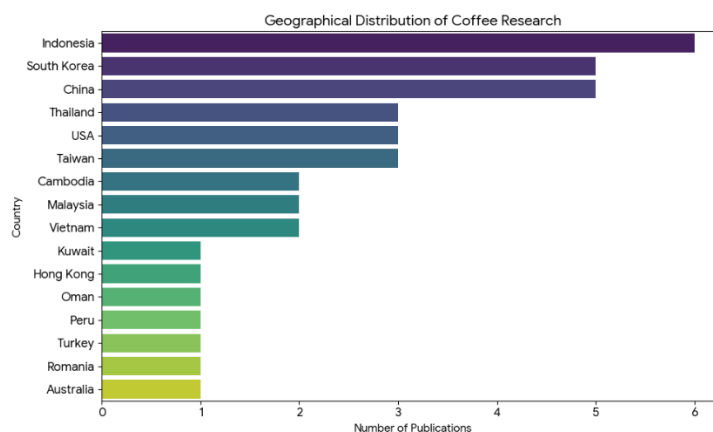
Information was organized into a structured matrix that detailed, for each study, the author(s) and publication year, thematic emphasis, methodology, sample and context, external variables, mediating and moderating mechanisms, internal outcomes and significant structural findings. The analysis unfolded in three stages: descriptive-bibliometric profiling to examine publication trends, methods, and geographical distribution; thematic synthesis to pinpoint research streams; and content analysis to describe methodological patterns and theoretical applications.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Bibliometric Analysis

To map the academic terrain of the chosen literature, a descriptive bibliometric analysis was performed on a final set of 51 peer-reviewed articles. The examination of these articles highlights a significant focus and unique publishing trends in the study of coffee consumer behavior. The empirical data are predominantly centered in Asian and emerging markets, with Indonesia (n=6), South Korea (n=5), and China (n=5) being the main areas of study. This pattern aligns closely with global industry movements, showcasing the swift growth of third-wave specialty coffee culture, the rapid spread of both local and international franchise coffee shops, and the evolving lifestyle trends among younger generations (Gen Y and Z) in these areas. Other studies have been conducted in contexts involving global brands or unspecified settings, often featuring Starbucks or generic robot-barista environments without a specific national focus. Despite their significant roles in coffee production, regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and much of Latin America are notably underrepresented. This focus, along with the methodological uniformity previously mentioned, prompts the question of whether the field's consistent findings indicate true cross-cultural similarities or merely reflect the shared positivist research approach prevalent in Asian business schools. Figure 2. illustrates the research on consumer behavior in coffee shops across different geographical areas.

Figure 2. Geographical Distribution of Coffee Research



Source: authors' analysis

Regarding dissemination, the literature is largely rooted in prominent international publishing houses, underscoring the multidisciplinary importance of the topic. An examination of these publishers shows a market heavily dominated by major academic entities. MDPI, Elsevier, and Emerald Publishing are the leading platforms in this field, each contributing 19.61% (10 articles each) and together accounting for nearly 60% of the total literature reviewed. Despite this, their structural distribution varies; MDPI's publications are mainly concentrated in just two journals, with a strong emphasis on Sustainability, whereas Elsevier and Emerald have a wider thematic range, each spanning seven journals. Taylor and Francis also plays a notable role in the dataset, with eight articles (15.69%) distributed across five journals. In contrast, traditional powerhouses, such as Springer and SAGE Publications, hold smaller shares (3.92% each), alongside highly specialized or institutional open-access platforms.

Table 2. Distribution of Publications by Publisher

Publisher	Journal	Stat
MDPI	<i>Sustainability</i>	9
	<i>Information</i>	1
Elsevier	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	4
	<i>Business Horizons</i>	1
	<i>International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science</i>	1
	<i>Journal of Cleaner Production</i>	1
	<i>Journal of Environmental Management</i>	1
	<i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i>	1
	<i>Technological Forecasting and Social Change</i>	1
Emerald Publishing	<i>Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics</i>	2
	<i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights</i>	2
	<i>Young Consumers</i>	2
	<i>Consumer Behavior in Tourism and Hospitality</i>	1
	<i>Tourism Review</i>	1
	<i>International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research</i>	1
	<i>Marketing Intelligence and Planning</i>	1
Taylor and Francis	<i>Cogent Business and Management</i>	3
	<i>Journal of International Food and Agribusiness Marketing</i>	2

	<i>Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management</i>	1
	<i>International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Administration</i>	1
	<i>International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research</i>	1
Springer	<i>Cluster Computing</i>	1
	<i>Service Business</i>	1
SAGE	<i>SAGE Open</i>	1
Publications	<i>International Journal of Market Research</i>	1
Others		9
Total	32 Journals	51

Source: authors' analysis

Descriptive Profile of the Corpus (RQ2 and RQ3)

The 51 studies revealed a noticeable increase over time. Prior to 2017, output was limited, but it grew consistently during the experiential shift from 2017 to 2019, reaching its highest point in 2022, with 10 studies. This high level of output continued in 2024 and 2025, with eight studies each year. The surge in 2022 aligns with the increase in pandemic-era research focusing on contactless services, robot baristas, and risk perception. Meanwhile, the sustained interest in 2024 and 2025 is driven by growing focus on sustainability and digital engagement. Table 3 provides a detailed distribution of the data by year.

Table 3. Distribution of Studies by Publication Year

Year	Number of studies	Share (%)
2015	1	2.0
2016	1	2.0
2017	3	5.9
2018	5	9.8
2019	3	5.9
2020	2	3.9
2021	6	11.8
2022	10	19.6
2023	4	7.8
2024	8	15.7
2025	8	15.7
Total	51	100.0

Source: authors' analysis

In terms of methodology, this discipline is predominantly quantitative and confirmatory. Approximately 60% of the studies employed structural equation modelling, which includes covariance-based SEM, variance-based PLS-SEM, path analysis, and multi-group analysis. When combined with survey, regression, and correlation studies, the quantitative portion rises to approximately 90%. Qualitative and mixed-methods approaches are a small fraction, and experimental or natural-experimental studies are particularly noteworthy because of their scarcity. Table 4 summarizes the methodological profiles.

Table 4. Methodological Profile of the Corpus

Method category	n	Share (%)
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SEM-based quantitative (e.g., PLS-SEM, CB-SEM, path, multi-group)	30	58.8
Other quantitative (e.g., survey, regression, correlation)	11	21.6
Mixed-methods (e.g., eye-tracking + survey, text-mining + SEM, experiment + interview)	4	7.8
Experimental / natural experiment (e.g., field experiment, quasi-experiment, etc.)	3	5.9
Qualitative (e.g., interviews, case research, observation)	3	5.9
Total	51	100

Source: Authors' analysis.

Thematic Synthesis (RQ1)

Table 5 outlines the six research streams derived from coding the 51 studies, highlighting their relative significance and analytical emphasis. The following sections explore each stream, detailing its scope, prevailing theory, key findings, and unresolved tensions or gaps.

Table 5. Six Research Streams in Coffee Consumer-Behaviour Research

Research stream	n	Analytical focus
Servicescape, service quality and interpersonal exchange	13	Physical environment, operations, menu nudges, employee/customer interaction
Experiential and cognitive-sensory processing	10	Experiential modules, sensory and affective value, habit, health and environmental cues
Consumer-brand relationships, identity and symbolic consumption	10	Brand love, loyalty, self-congruity, conspicuous/status consumption, ethnocentrism
CSR, sustainability and the intention–action gap	8	Eco-friendly practices, green image, nudges, willingness to pay a premium
Omni-channel and digital marketing	5	Social-media marketing, eWOM, e-brand experience, online advertising
Disruptive technology, automation and crisis-driven behaviour	5	Robot baristas, anthropomorphism, novelty, pandemic risk perception
Total	51	

Source: Authors' synthesis of extraction matrix.

Stream 1: Servicescape, service quality, and interpersonal exchange

The predominant perspective considers physical and social surroundings as the main factors influencing customer reactions (Lovell & Wirtz, 2004). Based on service quality and S-O-R frameworks, research indicates that elements such as layout, decoration, cleanliness, and ambiance significantly contribute to customer satisfaction (Ge et al., 2021; Zainurossalamia et al., 2022). Additionally, the characteristics of the servicescape are crucial in determining the quality of interactions between employees and customers, as well as among customers, accounting for most of the differences in service experiences (Tran et al., 2020). It is perceived value, rather than mere satisfaction, that consistently acts as the key link to

customer loyalty (Oh et al., 2019; Tsai, 2018; Zeithaml et al., 1996). A subtle aspect of this perspective is the impact of authentic interpersonal communication; engaging in "genuine small talk" can turn negative experiences around but requires significant emotional intelligence (Saragih, 2024). Moreover, interactions between customers can independently enhance the satisfaction and social well-being of older adults (Altinay et al., 2019). An unresolved issue is whether the effects of the physical environment remain constant are overshadowed by the quality of interactions and outcomes (Ren et al., 2023).

Stream 2: Experiential and cognitive-sensory processing

This perspective views consumers as emotional and non-logical information processors. Experiential components, especially those involving Thinking, Feeling, and Acting, create emotional value that influences the journey from service interaction to satisfaction, word-of-mouth promotion, and the willingness to pay more (Ihtiyar et al., 2019; Meeprom & Kokkhangplu, 2025; Schmitt, 1999). Positive emotions and increased purchase frequency are driven by sensory experiences (Candra et al., 2022), whereas visual marketing captures attention, leading to intentions to revisit, although this effect is moderated by location (Dao Cam et al., 2025). Notably, in franchise environments, habits and familiarity with heuristics can surpass formal service criteria (Lee, 2022). A challenge arises as not all experiential aspects are effective, behavioral components were found to be insignificant in two studies, indicating that the experiential framework is more varied than commonly believed (Ihtiyar et al., 2019; Pu et al., 2023).

Stream 3: Consumer-brand relationships, identity, and symbolic consumption

Drinking coffee is a form of self-expression, the intention to continue consuming a brand is influenced by its image and the consumer's attachment to it (Al Balushi et al., 2024). The connection between brand symbolism and brand evangelism is mediated by customer-brand identification and varies by generational cohort (Osmanova et al., 2023). Among younger consumers, specialty coffee represents conspicuous consumption linked to social media signals (Wang et al., 2024). Additionally, whether a consumer's income is gifted or earned affects their sensitivity to prestige signals (Kim & Jang, 2014b; Tangsupwattana & Liu, 2018). A notable issue is the disconnect between satisfaction and loyalty: high satisfaction does not necessarily lead to loyalty (Pleshko & Heiens, 2015), shifting the focus to identification and brand-citizenship behavior as the real drivers of customer retention (Kim et al., 2018; Le et al., 2022).

Stream 4: CSR, sustainability, and the intention–action gap

Although eco-friendly initiatives enhance a brand's green reputation, attachment, advocacy, and loyalty, particularly among Generation Z (Ko & Jeon, 2024; Le et al., 2022), a persistent discrepancy remains between expressed values and actual actions. Offering financial incentives does not effectively promote the use of personal cups, and communication strategies may even lead to a reduction in desired behavior (Metta & Rousseau, 2025). Factors such as price sensitivity, distrust of green marketing, and ineffective communication hinder sustainable purchasing (Adiyanto et al., 2025; Mocan et al., 2025). Research indicates that institutional support, such as waste management systems and concrete incentives, is more effective than messaging alone in driving change (Sandhu et al., 2021). This gap highlights the need to measure behavior rather than attitudes in this field.

Stream 5: Omni-channel and digital marketing

Digital interactions play an increasingly significant role in coffee consumption. Although service quality and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) contribute to building a brand's image

and trust, relying solely on social media marketing may not achieve the same effect (Armawan et al., 2023; Kang et al., 2014). The use of social media is linked to community trust, which subsequently influences loyalty among Gen Z (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Salmiah et al., 2024). A combination of online branding and in-store experiences is essential, with satisfaction and alignment with the brand fully mediating the route to brand loyalty (Chen & Demirci, 2025; Pu et al., 2023). Additionally, personalized and credible advertisements enhance purchase intentions, although privacy concerns indirectly influence attitudes towards ads (Nguyen et al., 2022). The missing element is a comprehensive model that integrates the entire phygital journey, from the initial discovery to the review after a visit.

Stream 6: Disruptive technology, automation, and crisis-driven behaviour

Studies on coffee shops featuring robot baristas indicate that experiential value, ambiance, novelty, and consumer return on investment are key to customer satisfaction and their intention to return (Kim et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2022). Generational differences influence the moderation of loyalty pathways (Kim et al., 2021). Importantly, anthropomorphism does not directly enhance perceived service quality; instead, intimacy and companionship completely mediate this relationship (Chiang et al., 2022). Research conducted during the pandemic highlighted that risk perception and trust significantly altered purchase intentions (Shim et al., 2021). A major limitation is the novelty issue, existing models capture a moment when automation is still seen as novel, leaving open the question of whether the sense of intimacy with machines will endure once the technology becomes commonplace (Kim et al., 2022).

Temporal Evolution of the Field (RQ3)

The chronological analysis of the corpus outlines a three-phase progression in research on coffee consumer behavior, reflecting significant trends in the industry. This segmentation is an analytical insight derived from the temporal and thematic grouping of the literature reviewed rather than being pre-established. The first phase, known as the foundational era (up to 2016), examines the global expansion of coffee chains, emphasizing service quality, customer satisfaction, basic loyalty, and willingness to pay. During this time, traditional surveys, regression analyses, early structural equation modeling (SEM), and basic experiments were employed to directly link service delivery and customer retention (Chen & Hu, 2010; Pleshko & Heiens, 2015; Rahman & Norman, 2016).

Following this, Wave 2, termed the Experiential Turn (2017–2019), shifted the focus of the literature towards the third-wave craft movement and the comprehensive café environment. Research in this phase utilized environmental psychology frameworks, particularly the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model, Experience Economy, customer-based brand equity (CBBE), and self-congruity theory, to assess the effects of experiential elements, identity, and symbolic consumption. Methodologically, this period was predominantly characterized by the use of partial least squares SEM (PLS-SEM) to explore complex mediation and moderation effects (Ihtiyar et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2017; Oh et al., 2019; Samoggia & Riedel, 2018; Tsai, 2018).

Wave 3 (2020–2025) represents a significant shift towards digitalization, sustainability, and technological integration, a transformation hastened by the COVID-19 pandemic and grounded in prior experiences. Research during this period delved into contactless services, robotic baristas, eco-friendly initiatives, perceived pandemic threats, and the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) via social media. Theoretical frameworks have broadened to encompass the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory,

Service-Dominant (S-D) logic, and the intimacy of human-robot interaction (HRI). To explore these intricate topics, researchers have adopted mixed and advanced methodologies, moving beyond traditional surveys to include big data text mining, eye-tracking, and natural experiments, alongside sophisticated survey SEM (Chiang et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2025; Ko & Jeon, 2024; Metta & Rousseau, 2025; Shim et al., 2021; Tao & Kim, 2022). Although Wave 3 is still evolving, academic research often trails behind commercial practices by several years, especially in areas such as artificial intelligence personalization and functional wellness coffee, highlighting essential paths for future empirical studies (Rodrigues et al., 2020). Table 6 compares the waves in terms of topics, theories, methods, and representative studies.

Table 6. Three-Wave Periodisation of Coffee Consumer-Behaviour Research

Research Wave	Dominant Topics and Focus	Key Theories Applied	Primary Methodologies	Representative Studies
Wave 1: Foundational Era (≤ 2016) <i>"What are they drinking?"</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Basic product attributes 2. Coffee quality and pricing 3. Location convenience 4. Fundamental service quality 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Service Quality Theory 2. Satisfaction Theory 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cross-sectional surveys 2. Simple regression 3. Structural Equation Modeling 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pleshko and Heiens (2015) 2. Rahman and Norman (2016)
Wave 2: Experiential Turn (2017 – 2019) <i>"Where and why are they drinking it?"</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Café as a "Third Place" 2. Experiential marketing 3. Servicescape 4. Customer-barista interactions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stimulus-Organism-Response 2. Experience Economy 3. Customer-Based Brand Equity 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PLS-Structural Equation Modeling 2. Complex mediation / moderation analysis 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tsai (2018) 2. Ihtiyar et al. (2018) 3. Kim et al. (2018) 4. Oh et al. (2019)
Wave 3: Digital and Ethical Era (2020 – 2025) <i>"How does this align with my ethics and digital lifestyle?"</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainability and CSR 2. Symbolic consumption 3. Technology 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technology Acceptance Model 2. Value-Belief-Norm 3. Service-Dominant 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mixed-methods 2. Big data analytics (text mining) 3. Natural experiments 4. Eye-tracking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wang et al. (2024) 2. Yoo et al. (2022) 3. Metta and Rousseau (2025) 4. Chiang et al. (2022) 5. Ko and Jeon (2024) 6. Tao and Kim (2022)

Source: Authors' inductive periodization of the corpus.

Conceptual Synthesis and Methodological Critique

The research landscape concerning coffee consumer behavior has transitioned from perceiving coffee merely as a functional commodity based on basic service-quality models (Pleshko & Heiens, 2015) to recognizing it as a domain rich in experiential elements. Present-day studies frequently employ the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) framework to elucidate how sensory atmospherics and social interactions evoke emotional reactions that foster experiential loyalty (Candra et al., 2022; Saragih, 2024). Additionally, theoretical models have been expanded to include contemporary consumer identities, incorporating self-congruity to elucidate status signaling among younger consumers (Chen & Demirci, 2025; Wang et al., 2024), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to assess trust in robotic baristas (Chiang et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2021), and the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory to explore pro-environmental decisions (Metta & Rousseau, 2025).

Historically, this field has predominantly utilized quantitative, cross-sectional survey designs and structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze intricate mediation and moderation pathways, such as brand love and customer citizenship behavior (Ihtiyar et al., 2019; Le et al., 2022). Although these methods have been crucial in establishing foundational insights, their heavy reliance on self-reported data presents inherent challenges, particularly common method variance (CMV) and social desirability bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Spector, 2006). These issues are especially pronounced in studies assessing willingness to pay and eco-friendly practices, where stated consumer intentions often do not align with actual purchasing actions.

To address these limitations, current research is embracing promising diversification methodologies. Researchers are increasingly employing mixed methods and objective empirical approaches, such as big-data semantic network analysis, eye-tracking for menu design evaluation, experimental taste tests, and behavioral nudges in real-world settings (Kim et al., 2025; Metta & Rousseau, 2025; Ohlau & Risius, 2022; Tao & Kim, 2022). Despite these advancements, significant gaps remain; the literature urgently needs more longitudinal studies to observe habit formation over time, as well as comprehensive cross-cultural comparative analyses to better understand the dynamic, globalized nature of the modern coffee industry.

Future Research Agenda (RQ4)

Although the exploration of coffee consumer behavior has evolved considerably, shifting from basic service assessments to intricate, technology-enhanced experiential frameworks, several significant gaps remain. Drawing from the current body of literature, future academic research should focus on four main areas: closing the gap between sustainability attitudes and behaviors, assessing the long-term effects of artificial intelligence and robotics, broadening cross-cultural comparative studies, and enhancing methodological precision.

Sustainability Attitude-Behavior Gap

Addressing the sustainability attitude-behavior gap, even with the increased focus on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and environmentally friendly practices (EFPs) in Wave 3 research, a notable discrepancy remains between consumers' expressed eco-friendly intentions and their actual buying actions. Future investigations should go beyond self-reported willingness-to-pay measures. Researchers should emphasize conducting natural field experiments to assess the effectiveness of choice architecture, financial incentives, and behavioral nudges, such as discounts for using reusable cups, in promoting genuine circular

consumer behavior (Metta and Rousseau, 2025; Sandhu et al., 2021). Furthermore, longitudinal research is necessary to ascertain whether temporary sustainable measures lead to lasting habit formation among younger populations (Wang et al., 2024).

The Long-Term Viability of HRI and Untact Services

The rapid increase in the use of contactless services and robot baristas calls for a more thorough empirical investigation. Existing research primarily focuses on the initial novelty effect of human-robot interaction (HRI) in cafés, highlighting the significant initial experiential value and astonishment (Kim et al., 2021; Yoo et al., 2022). Future research should examine whether brand affection and customer acceptance persist after novelty diminishes. Additionally, scholars need to investigate the role of AI personalization, particularly how big data algorithms can mimic the genuine small talk and emotional warmth typically offered by human baristas, and how this influences long-term brand equity (Chiang et al., 2022; Candra et al., 2022).

Cross-Cultural and Contextual Nuances

As the third-wave specialty coffee movement spreads worldwide, consumer motivations are increasingly influenced by local cultural settings. There is an urgent need for cross-cultural comparative research that examines the differences between saturated Western markets and rapidly growing markets in places such as China and Taiwan (Ferreira & Ferreira, 2018). Future studies should investigate how ethnocentrism influences brand loyalty between global corporations and local artisanal coffee roasters (Al Balushi et al., 2024). Additionally, examining how high- and low-context cultures view servicescape elements and customer-to-customer interactions (CCIs) offers essential insights for the expansion of international franchises.

Methodological Advancements and Objective Measurement

To address the historical dependence on cross-sectional surveys and the issues associated with common method variance (CMV), future studies should adopt objective and mixed-method approaches to collect data. Incorporating big data text mining techniques, such as semantic network analysis of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), provides a method with strong ecological validity for identifying unprompted consumer experience drivers (Tao & Kim, 2022). Furthermore, expanding the use of biometric and physiological tools, such as eye-tracking, to assess digital menu interfaces and conduct experimental blind taste tests is essential for accurately capturing subconscious consumer reactions to both physical and digital stimuli (Ke et al., 2024; Ohlau & Risius, 2022). Table 7 converts the identified gaps into a practical agenda by aligning each gap with a suggested method, theoretical framework, and potential context.

Table 7. Future Research Agenda

Research gap	Method	Theoretical frame	Potential Context
Satisfaction-loyalty decoupling and Brand-citizenship behaviour	Longitudinal panel, experiment	Customer-Based Brand Equity, Customer Brand-Citizenship Behaviour	Premium and independent specialty cafés

Sustainability intention-action gap	Field experiment behavioural-trace tracking	VBN + implementation intentions	Generation Z, Global South consumer markets
Robot-barista novelty decay	Longitudinal / cohort design	HRI, affect-as-information	Automated and hybrid-service cafés
The phygital or omni-channel journey	Mixed-methods customer-journey mapping	Service-Dominant Logic, customer-experience theory	Digital-native consumer markets
Cross-cultural invariance of established models	Multi-group comparative survey	Hofstede cultural dimensions	Western / European versus Asian markets
Niche and specialised café formats	Qualitative theory-building + survey	New experiential constructs	Pet, board-game, and third-wave artisan cafés

Source: Authors' synthesis.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This systematic literature review compiled 51 peer-reviewed empirical studies from 2015 to 2025 to explore consumer behaviour in the coffee shop sector, guided by four research questions. For RQ1, the field was divided into six research streams: servicescape and service quality, experiential and cognitive-sensory processing, consumer-brand relationships and symbolic consumption, CSR and sustainability, omni-channel and digital marketing, and disruptive technology and robot baristas. Regarding RQ2, the research is predominantly quantitative and confirmatory, with a focus on survey-based SEM, primarily conducted in East and Southeast Asia. Concerning RQ3, the literature has progressed through three phases: an initial service quality era, followed by an experiential and identity phase, leading to the current digital, sustainability, and technology era. For RQ4, the most promising research opportunities involve behaviorally validated, longitudinal, and cross-cultural designs that tackle satisfaction–loyalty decoupling, sustainability intention–action gap, novelty effect of robot baristas, phygital journey, and underexplored niche formats.

Theoretically, the review reframes coffee consumption as a multi-sensory, identity-expressive, and digitally embedded experience ecosystem and argues that single-theory applications produce narrow explanatory models; a multi-theoretical, integrative approach combining experiential, rational, and normative influences is warranted. It also identifies clear theoretical voids, the limited application of Service-Dominant Logic, and the underuse of self-congruity in independent specialty contexts as tractable extension opportunities.

Practically, the findings suggest that operators should treat the servicescape as a measurable, sensory asset; personalized digital loyalty programmes outperform generic point systems in building affective loyalty; sustainability positioning requires concrete traceability claims rather than generic ecolabelling; and user-generated content should be managed as part of the servicescape. For the rapidly expanding Indonesian specialty coffee market, these implications underscore the value of identity-driven, experience-rich, and transparently sustainable positioning.

This review has some limitations. The restriction to English-language Scopus articles may exclude relevant work in other languages and databases; the search string, although comprehensive, may have missed niche food-science or psychology terms; the review offers a cross-sectional snapshot of a fast-moving field that will require updating within three to five years; and quality appraisal involved a degree of reviewer judgement in borderline cases.

Future studies can address these constraints by widening the database and language coverage and adopting multi-method, longitudinal, and cross-cultural designs. As digital technology, sustainability pressure, health consciousness, and identity-driven consumption converge, coffee consumer behavior research is entering a richly complex era whose central questions can only be answered by observing what consumers do.

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