

An Experimental Investigation of Consumers' Perceived Value and Dining Satisfaction

Hsueh Hsun Tu

Department of Industrial Engineering and Management Information, Huaan University, Taiwan

Abstract The article proposes a model that related the mediating role of perceived value in the relationships among ambience, facilities aesthetics, staff appearance, food quality and food aesthetics and sumer's dining satisfaction. Data was collected from consumers who had dining experience in the most recent month.. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, of which 224 were successfully replied respondents, yielding a usable response rate of 56%. Multiple regression analyses were used for hypothesis testing. The results of this article show support the hypothesis that quality of food and the aesthetic presentation of food have a positive influence on perceived value. The results also show tht perceived value plays a mediating role in the relationship of food quality, food aesthetics and customers satisfaction. Our finding contributes new evidence to dispute views in previous studies, while at the same time offering important implications for both research and practice.as illustrated by the portions given in this document.

Keywords Satisfaction, Perceived Value, Staff Appearance, Facilities Aesthetics, Food Quality

1. Introduction

The quality of life in modern times is quite high, so price and functionality can no longer satisfy the needs of consumers. Outside of their jobs, consumers spend money to improve their quality of life so that they are satisfied spiritually. In light of this trend, many physical stores or enterprises are using aesthetic elements to arouse consumers' desire to spend, and to satisfy the consumers' emotional needs. For example, the styles and color combinations in stores give consumers young, fashionable, and bright feelings. Space designs and commodity displays and arrangements emphasize both experience and product quality, to attract customer attention.

Apart from aesthetics, another constant priority in the service industry is to let customers feel they are receiving good service quality. The attitude of service providers becomes the key to communicating services. In the food service industry, the quality of the served food will without a doubt be one of the important factors affecting customers' satisfaction and loyalty[1],[2],[3]. Staff's appearances and interactions with customers sometimes also play an important role[4].

To confirm the influence of multiple simultaneous factors, this study divided aesthetics in three categories, involving the facilities, people, and food. On the other side of the coin

are important physical factors such as the atmosphere and quality of food. The correlation among perceived value, the environment (ambience and facility aesthetics), people (appearance), food (quality and food aesthetics), and customer satisfaction was explored and empirical data analyzed, in order to find the major factors influencing the perceived value and satisfaction among consumers, and provide suggestions based on research results for the reference of academia and the outside world.

2. Literature

2.1. Satisfaction

Parasuraman and Grewal[5] believes that satisfaction is the difference between the desired service quality and the actual received service. is what every enterprise pursues and also an important strategy in terms of business operations. Cardozo[6] pointed out in his research that with high satisfaction after consumption, customers will also be more willing to purchase again. In other words, as long as customer's satisfaction with their food is enhanced, it will significantly help retain existing customers and attract new ones despite the fierce competition in the catering industry.

2.2. Environmental Factors

This study divided environmental factors into the ambience and aesthetics of facilities. Ambience is the environmental conditions of the surrounding areas, including temperature, illumination, noise, music, and aromas, Milliman[7] and Smith and Curnow[8] pointed out

* Corresponding author:

milk750101@hotmail.com (Hsueh Hsun Tu)

Published online at <http://journal.sapub.org/economics>

Copyright © 2013 Scientific & Academic Publishing. All Rights Reserved

in his study that the lighting and the tempo and volume of music in restaurants and retail stores do affect consumer behavior. Donovan et al.[9] research shows that stimulation from the ambience in a physical store will result in emotional responses among consumers. Ambient music can also affect customer satisfaction[10], or the willingness to buy[11],[12],[13]. In the food service industry, in particular, consumers spend a relatively longer amount time when they eat compared to ordinary shopping activities, and they are exposed to visual and taste sensations while eating, so they may have higher demands regarding aesthetics and facilities. The aesthetics of facilities refers to the fact that building design, interior design, and decoration can all help attract customers to a dining environment[14]. Cobe[15] indicated in his research that beautiful facilities are one of the keys for restaurants to retain customers. Theme restaurants that are created by applying facility aesthetics are one example. Therefore, this study proposes:

H1-1: Ambience is positively associated with customers' satisfaction.

H1-2: Facilities aesthetics is positively associated with customers' satisfaction.

2.3. Staff Factors

As far as global economic development trends are concerned, purchasing power and life of quality are gradually improving, along with the demand for services and the quality of services provided. High-ranking supervisors in many enterprises have also come to realize that better services help enterprises earn profits. Gale[16] believes that better service enables enterprises to charge a price that is 8% higher than their competition. With regard to staff appearances, Shao et al.[17] indicates in his study that bank clerks wearing suits rather than casual clothes resulted in better perceived quality of service and feelings. To sum up, service providers' appearances and the services they actually provide are likely to affect customers' emotions, opinions, and overall satisfaction after consumption. Therefore, this study proposes:

H1-3: Staff appearance is positively associated with customers' satisfaction.

2.4. Food Factors

In this article food factors is divided into the quality of food and food aesthetics. People live to eat. Regardless of the atmosphere in a high-end restaurant, when customers are eating, they tend to focus on the food, which is the core of the overall dining purpose. The quality of food is usually

determined by the flavor, ingredients, and nutritional value[18]. In the food service industry, the quality of food is considered to be one of the important factors affecting customer satisfaction and loyalty[1],[2],[3]. Besides quality, aesthetics also significantly adds to the value of the overall dining experience. This is why many restaurants strive to serve beautiful-looking food for enhanced visual impact, through garnishing and food presentation[2],[19]. Kivela et al.,[20] research also says that the quality of food includes food presentation, freshness of ingredients, menu variety, and food temperature. Therefore, this study proposes:

H1-4: Food aesthetics is positively associated with customers' satisfaction.

H1-5: Food quality is positively associated with customers' satisfaction.

2.5. Perceived Value

Perceived value is defined as "the overall rating of personal devotion and utility of the product actually received"[21]. When consumers' perception of the benefit they received is greater than the cost, the perceived value increases[22]. In fact, consumers' perceived value is an important factor affecting the willingness to purchase again[5]. Enterprises must provide customers with services or products more valuable than their competition in order to promote customer spending[23]. When clerks in restaurants provide effective services, the quality of service felt by customers can positively influence satisfaction and perceived value[24]. When employees demonstrate professional service attitudes, it helps enhance the perceived value and satisfaction among customers[25]. Many studies have indicated that consumers' perceived value exercises a pre-requisite effect on the satisfaction. Cronin et al.[22] indicated in his study that when consumers' perception of received interest is greater than the cost, their willingness to buy increases. Therefore, this study proposes:

H2-1: Perceived value plays mediating role between satisfaction and atmosphere.

H2-2: Perceived value plays mediating role between facilities aesthetics and customers satisfaction.

H2-3: Perceived value plays mediating role between staff appearance and customers satisfaction.

H2-4: Perceived value plays mediating role between food quality and customers satisfaction.

H2-5: Perceived value plays mediating role between food aesthetics and customers satisfaction.

In Figure 1, we outline the conceptual framework developed and tested in the study.

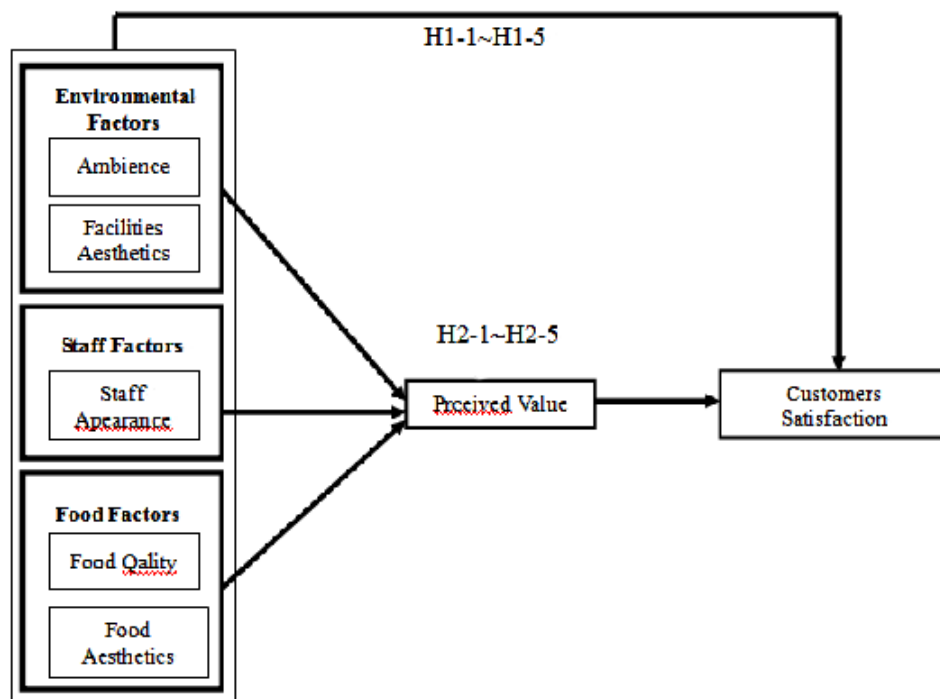


Figure 1. Research framework

3. Research Method

3.1. Sample

Respondents to the questionnaires were restricted to consumers who had dining experience in the most recent month. Convenient sampling was undertaken as a fast and easy way to collect data. A two-wave emailing method, supplemented by an email reminder, was adopted in data collection. A total of 400 survey questionnaires were sent out, of which 224 were completed and returned, representing a 56% return rate.

3.2. Questionnaire Development and Measures

All multi-item variables in this study were measured using a five-point Likert scale. In this study, “ambience” is measured by four items scale adapted from Kim and Moon[26]. “Facilities aesthetics” is measured by five items scale adapted from Kim and Moon[26]. “Staff appearance” was borrowed from Tam[27] and have been modified to fit the research goals. “Food quality” is measured by three items scale adapted from Kim, Lee and Yoo [28]. “Food aesthetics” was borrowed from and have been modified to fit the research goals. “Perceived value” is measured by three items scale adapted from Ryu, Han and Kim[29] and “customer satisfaction” is measured by three item scale adapted from Wu and Linag[24].

4. Results

4.1. Sample Description

The characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table I showed that most respondents were female (female 62%; male 38%), in the age of 16~25 (62%), with university degree (59%), and spend under 30 dollars each time (52%).

Table 1. Characteristics of the Sample (n= 224)

Demo graphic items	Valid percentage	Demo graphic items	Valid percentage
Gender		Age	
Male	38.0%	Under 15	2%
		16~25	62%
Female	62.0%	26~35	13%
	100.0%	36~45	9%
		46~55	10%
		Over 56	4%
			100.0%
Education		Purchase amount (\$NT.)	
Senior high school	36%	Under 500	52%
University	59%	501~1,000	27%
Master	4%	1,001~1,500	7%
Others	1%	1,501~2,000	7%
	100.0%	2,001~2,500	2%
		Over 2,501	7%
			100.0%

4.2. Adequacy of Measures

In this study, relevant research constructs are directly derived from existing studies. As their construct validities have been previously proven by scholars, they are dependable. The authors conducted the reliability analysis by way of Cronbach's alpha coefficient to measure the internal consistency reliability of the constructs. Alpha

reliabilities of these scales range from 0.700 to 0.895, demonstrating acceptable consistency. Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics and reliability indices for all the constructs.

Table 2. Measures Descriptive and Reliability Statistics

Measures	Items	Means	Coefficient α
Gender	2	-	-
Ambience	4	3.820	0.700
Facility aesthetics	5	3.547	0.875
Staff appearance	3	3.646	0.747
Food quality	3	3.869	0.852
Food aesthetics	4	3.652	0.854
Perceived value	3	3.591	0.888
Customers satisfaction	3	3.896	0.895

4.3. Model Specification

In this study, the authors performed four regression analyses to analyze their hypotheses and added gender as a

control variable. They are presented as follows.

Model 1:

$$(1) \text{ Satisfaction} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{gender}) + \beta_2(\text{Ambience}) + \beta_3(\text{Facility aesthetics}) + \beta_4(\text{Staff appearance}) + \beta_5(\text{Food quality}) + \beta_6(\text{Food aesthetics}) + \varepsilon$$

$$(2) \text{ Perceived value} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{gender}) + \beta_2(\text{Ambience}) + \beta_3(\text{Facility aesthetics}) + \beta_4(\text{Staff appearance}) + \beta_5(\text{Food quality}) + \beta_6(\text{Food aesthetics}) + \varepsilon$$

$$(3) \text{ Customers Satisfaction} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{gender}) + \beta_2(\text{Perceived value}) + \varepsilon$$

$$(4) \text{ Customers Satisfaction} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{gender}) + \beta_2(\text{Ambience}) + \beta_3(\text{Facility aesthetics}) + \beta_4(\text{Staff appearance}) + \beta_5(\text{Food quality}) + \beta_6(\text{Food aesthetics}) + \beta_7(\text{Perceived value}) + \varepsilon$$

4.4. Correlation Matrix

The correlation matrix is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Gender	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ambience	-0.028	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Facility aesthetics	-0.069	0.635**	1	-	-	-	-	-
Staff appearance	-0.027	0.539**	0.604**	1	-	-	-	-
Food quality	0.063	0.537**	0.541**	0.646**	1	-	-	-
Food aesthetics	-0.025	0.529**	0.549**	0.573**	0.703**	1	-	-
Perceived value	-0.200**	0.340**	0.299**	0.351**	0.454**	0.439**	1	-
Customers satisfaction	-0.019	0.455**	0.460**	0.458**	0.581**	0.527**	0.659**	1

*p<0.01

4.5. Results of Regression Analysis

Table 4 shows the results of the test. All of the F-statistics are significant at the $p < 0.001$ level, thus showing good fit of the models to the data, whereas the constructs account for a sizable proportion of the variance in dependent variables.

Table 4. Results of Regression Analysis

	Dependent variable			
	Regression(1) perceived value	Regression(2) customers satisfaction	Regression(3) customers satisfaction	Regression(4) customers satisfaction
Gender	-0.214*** (-3.683)	0.117* (2.291)	-0.026 (-0.486)	0.080** (1.701)
Ambience	0.097 (1.225)		0.107 (1.471)	0.060 (0.960)
Facility aesthetics	-0.059 (-0.712)		0.103 (1.348)	0.133+ (2.040)
Staff appearance	0.028 (0.341)		0.026 (0.338)	0.012 (0.183)
Food quality	0.293** (3.233)		0.342*** (4.082)	0.197** (2.714)
Food aesthetics	0.193* (2.253)		0.157+ (1.980)	0.061 (0.905)
Perceived value		0.682*** (13.373)		0.494*** (9.308)
F Statistic	14.478***	89.500***	23.150***	45.843***
R2	0.286	0.447	0.390	0.559
Adjusted R2	0.266	0.442	0.373	0.547
ΔR^2	-	-	-	0.169

+p<0.1, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

From Table 4, the results of testing hypotheses 1-1 to 1-5 involved regression (3) are as follows: H1-1, which hypothesizes that the ambience is positively associated with customers' satisfaction, is not supported. H1-2, which claims that facility aesthetics is associated with customers' satisfaction, is not supported. H1-3, which hypothesizes that staff appearance is positively associated with customers' satisfaction, is not supported. H1-4, which claims that food quality is positively associated with customers' satisfaction, is supported ($\beta = 0.342$, $p < 0.001$). H1-5, which claims that food aesthetics is positively associated with customers' satisfaction, is supported ($\beta = 0.157$, $p < 0.1$).

The results of testing hypotheses 2-1 to 2-5 involved four regression analyses are as follows: Regression (1) gender ($\beta = -0.214$, $p < 0.001$), food quality ($\beta = 0.293$, $p < 0.01$), food aesthetics ($\beta = 0.193$, $p < 0.05$), are significantly related to perceived value. Regression (2) shows that gender ($\beta = 0.117$, $p < 0.005$) and perceived value ($\beta = 0.682$, $p < 0.001$) is positively related to customers' satisfaction. Compare regression (3) and regression (4), the relationship between food quality and customers' satisfaction was weakened by the inclusion of perceived value. It follows that H2-5 hypothesis—"perceived value plays a mediating role in the relationship of food quality and customers' satisfaction (β dropped from 0.342 to 0.197)" was supported. The relationship between food aesthetics and customers' satisfaction was weakened by the inclusion of perceived value. It follows that H2-5 hypothesis—"perceived value plays a mediating role in the relationship of food aesthetics and customers' (β dropped from 0.157 to 0.0617)" was supported. The other hypotheses are not supported.

5. Conclusions

Results of this article show support the hypothesis that quality of food and the aesthetic presentation of food have a positive influence on perceived value. In other words, the higher the quality of the food and the more visually appealing the presentation of the food is, the higher the perceived value among consumers. We therefore advise that businesses enhance food quality (taste) and the aesthetic presentation of food accordingly to increase or maintain its perceived value among consumers. The atmosphere of a restaurant, aesthetic facilities, and appearance of the staff do not have a significant influence on perceived value. A possible reason is that the atmosphere, music, and lighting of most restaurants are unable to arouse special feelings in consumers. Consumers also do not have any expectations for aesthetic facilities and the appearance of the staff. As such, these traits are irrelevant to perceived value.

The aforementioned results show that consumer satisfaction is not determined by a single factor. In addition, the hypothesis that perceived value plays the role of an intermediary among quality of food, the aesthetic presentation of food, and consumer satisfaction is supported. This indicates that perceived value is the premise to satisfaction. As such, we advise that businesses enhance the

customer perceived value by means of flavorful food and a friendly attitude. Higher quality food that is presented more beautifully will increase perceived value and satisfaction among customers. Academically, the discussions in this study are done from the consumer's perspective. We suggest further exploration of different aspects of the staff or the atmosphere (e.g. the positive and negative emotions of service providers or customers, the personality traits of service providers, the intonation of service providers' speech, geographical location, or outside scenery) in the future in order to obtain different results.

REFERENCES

- [1] A. C. Clark, and R. C. Wood, "Consumer Loyalty in the Restaurant Industry – A Preliminary Exploration of the issues". *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, vol. 10, no.4, pp. 139-144, 1998.
- [2] Y. Namkung, and S. C. Jang, "Does Food Quality Really Matter in Restaurants? its Impact on Customer Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions". *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, vol. 31, no. 3, pp. 387-409, 2007.
- [3] J.M. Sulek, and R.L. Hensley, "the Relative Importance of Food, Atmosphere, Aand Fairness of Wait: the Case of A Full-Service Restaurant", *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 3, pp. 235-247. , 2004.
- [4] J. Baker, "The Role of Environment in Marketing Services: the Consumer Per-Spective". *American Marketing Association*, Chicago, pp. 79-84, 1986.
- [5] A. Parasuraman, and D. Grewal, "The Impact of Technology on the Quality-Valueloyalty Chain: a Research Agenda", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 168-174, 2000.
- [6] R. N. Cardozo, "An Experimental Study of Customer Effort, Expectation and Satisfaction", *Journal of Marketing Research*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 244-249, 1965.
- [7] Ronald E. Milliman, "The Influence of Background Music on the Behavior of Restaurant Patrons", *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 13, pp. 286-289, 1986.
- [8] P. Smith, and R. Curnow, "Arousal Hypothesis and the Effects of Music on Purchasing Behaviour", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 50, no. 3, pp. 255-286, 1966.
- [9] R. J. Donovan, and J. R. Rossiter, "Store Atmosphere: an Environmental Psychology Approach", *Journal of Retailing*, vol. 58, no. 1, pp. 34-57, 1982.
- [10] V.P. Magnini, and E. E. Parker, "The Psychological Effects of Music: Implications for Hotel Firms", *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 53-62, 2009.
- [11] L. Oakes, "From Internationalisation to Globalisation: Language and the Nationalist Revival in Sweden", vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 151-176, 2003, *American Society of Geolinguistics International Conference*.
- [12] J. Baker, M. Levy, and D. Grewal, "An experimental

- Approach to Making Retail Store Environmental Decisions", *Journal of Retailing*, vol. 68, no. 4, pp. 445–460, 1992.
- [13] A. C. North, and D. J. Hargreaves, "The Effect of Music on Atmosphere and Purchase Intentions in a Cafeteria", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 2254–73, 1998.
- [14] K. L. Wakefield, and J. G. Blodgett, "The Importance of Servicescapes in Leisure Service Settings". *Journal of Services Marketing*, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 66–76, 1994.
- [15] P. Cobe, "How to Revive a Tired Decor: Creative Ideas and Practical Tips to Help Perk Up Your Interior". *Restaurant Business April*, pp. 26–32, 2007.
- [16] J. Gale, "The Preliminary Results of a Study of a Couple and Therapist's Perspective of Meaningful Moments in Therapy", Paper presented at 42nd Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, 1992.
- [17] C. Y. Shao, J. Baker, and J. Wagner, "The Effects of Appropriateness of service contact personnel dress on Customer Expectations of Service Quality and Purchase Intention: the Moderating Influences of Involvement and Gender". *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 57, no. 10, pp. 1164–1176, 2004.
- [18] A. V. Cardello, R. Bell, and M. F. Kramer, "Attitudes of Consumers Toward Military and Other Institutional Foods". *Food Quality and Preference*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1996.
- [19] S. S. Andaleeb, and A. Caskey, "Satisfaction with Food Services: Insights from a College Cafeteria". *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 51–65, 2007.
- [20] J. Kivela, R. Inbakaran, and J. Reece, "Consumer Research in the Restaurant Environment. Part 1. A Conceptual Model of Dining Satisfaction and Return Patronage". *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, vol. 11, no. 5, pp. 205–222, 1999.
- [21] V. A. Zeithaml, "Consumer Perceptions of Price, Quality, and Value: a Meansend Model and Synthesis of Evidence", *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 52, no. 3, pp. 2–22, 1988.
- [22] J. J. Cronin, M. K. Brady, and G.T.M. Hult, "Assessing the Effects of Quality, Value, and Customer Satisfaction on Consumer Behavioral Intentions in Service Environments". *Journal of Retailing*, vol 76, no. 2, pp. 193-218, 2000.
- [23] A. Ravald, and C. Grönroos, "The Value Concept Relationship Marketing", *European journal of marketing*, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 19-30. 1996.
- [24] H. J. Wu, and R. D. Liang, "Effect of Experiential Value on Customer Satisfaction with Service Encounters in Luxury-Hotel Restaurants". *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 586–593, 2009.
- [25] A. A. Grandey, G.M. Fisk, A.S. Mattila, K.J. Jansen, L.A. Sideman, "Is "Service with a Smile" Enough? Authenticity of Positive Displays During Service Encounters". *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, vol. 96, no. 1, pp. 38–55. 2005.
- [26] W. G. Kim, and Y.J. Moon, "Customers' Cognitive, Emotional, and Actionable Response to the Servicescape: a Test of the Moderating Effect of the Restaurant Type". *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 144–156, 2009.
- [27] L. M. Jackie and Tam, "Examining the dynamics of Consumer Expectations in a Chinese Context". *Journal of Business Research*, pp. 777-786, 2005.
- [28] W.G. Kim, Y. Lee, and Y. Yoo, "Predictors of Relationship Quality and Relationship Outcomes in Luxury Restaurants". *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 143–169, 2006.
- [29] K. Ryu, H. Han, T. H. Kim, "The Relationships Among Overall Quick-Casual Restaurant Image, Perceived Value, Customer Satisfaction, and Behavioral Intentions". *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 459–469, 2008.