

Impact of Economic and psychological variables on Customer's Behavioral Intentions**Naif Mutlaq J Alruways***nalrowais@su.sdu.sa**Department of Business management, Shaqra University, KSA*

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Abstract

Objective: This study proposes a model to evaluate how food service quality dimensions—service, food, and physical environment—impact the restaurant image, customer satisfaction, perceived value, and behavioral intentions in Saudi Arabia.

Research Method: Cross-sectional data will be collected from customers at upscale Saudi restaurants in Madinah, Makkah, and Riyadh using a self-administered questionnaire. The hypotheses will be tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS.

Findings: The study aims to reveal the relationships between food service quality dimensions and their effects on restaurant image, customer satisfaction, perceived value, and behavioral intentions in the context of Saudi Arabia.

Research Limitations/Implications: The study is limited to upscale restaurants in three major cities, which may affect the generalizability of the findings across different types of restaurants and regions.
performance.

Uniqueness of Study: This study is unique as it is the first to implement this specific model in Saudi Arabia, offering new and practical insights into the restaurant industry within the region.

Keywords: Physical Environment, Satisfaction & Perceived Value, Behavioral Intentions

1. Introduction

The fast-food restaurant industry in Saudi Arabia has experienced rapid growth, yet businesses in this sector face challenges such as stiff competition, increased living costs, inflation, and health concerns. This uneven distribution of customers among restaurants highlights a significant research gap: understanding the factors that drive customer loyalty and behavioral intentions. Despite heavy investment exceeding 17 billion Saudi Riyals (Bouznif & AlMudbel, 2018), restaurants lack comprehensive knowledge about their customers' behavioral intentions and loyalty, leading to improper service delivery (Bukhari, 2015). Existing literature emphasizes the importance of high-quality service in gaining a competitive advantage and achieving customer satisfaction (Spotts, Weinberger, & Weinberger, 2019; Tuncer, Unusan, & Cobanoglu, 2020;

Kelloway & Myers, 2019). Specifically, in the restaurant industry, customers evaluate service quality based on food, physical environment, and employee services (Hanks & Line, 2018; Suhartanto et al., 2019; Torres et al., 2019). However, while the impact of an organization's image on consumer behavior and loyalty is well-documented (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Wu, 2013), few studies have explored the antecedents and consequences of restaurant image, particularly in the context of fast-food restaurants in Saudi Arabia (Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012).

To address this gap, this study employs a cross-sectional research design to collect data from customers at upscale Saudi restaurants in Madinah, Makkah, and Riyadh using a self-administered questionnaire. The core aspects of this methodology include the application of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS to test the hypotheses, providing a robust framework for analyzing the relationships between service quality dimensions and customer outcomes. The findings will link the influence of the physical environment, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions to existing literature, highlighting their role in shaping restaurant image and customer loyalty. This study's originality lies in its focus on the Saudi fast-food restaurant market, offering new insights and practical implications for restaurant managers and stakeholders to enhance service quality and business performance. By filling a crucial research gap, this paper contributes significantly to the field of Islamic economics and the understanding of customer behavior in the Saudi restaurant industry.

2. Literature Review

Restaurant Service Quality: Recently, few studies indicated that food, physical environment, and employee services should be considered vital components of the restaurant experience in forming perceptions of restaurant service quality (Iglesias & Guille'n, 2004). Gray & Boshoff (2004) and Padlee, Thaw, & Zulkiffli (2019) investigated the relationships between service quality, customer satisfaction, and frequency of patronage in the context of full-service restaurants. Marimon, Mas-Machuca, Berbegal-Mirabent, & Llach (2019) captured three main dimensions of service quality: interaction quality, physical quality, and outcome quality. Namkung & Jang (2008) conducted a study to identify key quality attributes that significantly distinguish highly satisfied diners from non-highly satisfied diners using the context of mid-to-upper scale restaurants. To address the lack of comprehensive evaluation of restaurant service quality, this study uses three dimensions of

restaurant quality: product, atmospherics, and service. There are few studies that examine the influence of food service quality on customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions in the context of restaurants. However, there is a lack of studies investigating how multiple components of restaurant service quality influence customers' perceptions of restaurant image and customer perceived value.

Influence of Physical Environment Quality, Food Quality, and Service Quality on Restaurant Image: Homer (2008) defined brand image as “a higher-order type of association that is more deeply felt, connected to self, and ‘socially’ impacted versus perceived product quality, which is a lower order type of association that can be more easily altered (e.g. via verifiable product design efforts).” In this study, restaurant image refers to the sum of the emotional perceptions, ideas, or symbolic attitudes that customers associate with restaurants. In the restaurant industry, a consumer's perception of a restaurant's image is likely to fully reflect the customer's cumulative consumption experience. It is reasonable to expect that the perception of restaurant service quality directly influences the perception of restaurant image. Hlee, Lee, Yang, & Koo (2019) and Prayag, Hosany, Taheri, & Ekiz (2019) state that the physical environment significantly shapes a place's brand image. Nguyen & Leblanc (2002) revealed that guest-contact personnel and physical environment had a significantly positive impact on perceived corporate image by new clients from a life insurance company. Jorge Vera & Andrea Trujillo (2013) found that a crowded restaurant tended to signal high food quality and conveyed a favorable restaurant image for Chinese restaurants in Hong Kong, implying a positive relationship between food quality and restaurant image. Nguyen & LeBlanc (1998) also demonstrated that service quality was an antecedent to building a corporate brand image. They suggested that the higher the level of service quality customers received from banking and financial institutions, the higher the level of an organization's brand image would be instilled in the minds of customers. Based on the aforementioned discussion, it is logical to posit the following hypotheses:

H1a. The quality of the physical environment has a positive influence on restaurant image.

H1b. The quality of the food has a positive influence on restaurant image.

H1c. The quality of the service has a positive influence on restaurant image.

Influence of physical environment quality, food quality, service quality on customer perceived value Extant literature shows that product quality and service quality serve as predictors of

customer perceived value (Lai et al., 2009; Zeithaml, 1988). Javed, & Ilyas, (2018) highlights that service quality features (e.g., tangibles, empathy, reliability, and responsiveness) are positively associated with consumer perceived value. To the best of our knowledge there is a dearth of research that investigated the direct impact of food quality as a latent variable on perceived value. Ryu et al. (2012)' study appears to be the only empirical evidence indicating that food quality significantly affected perceived value. However, Only the customer rather than a service provider can evaluate whether or not a product or service provides value and the concept of customer perceived value is perceived to be very subjective and personal (Parasuraman et al., 1985). McDonald's standardization efforts through the slogan of QSCV (Quality, Service, Cleanliness, and Value) led to their global brand success (Nuque-Joo, Kim, & Choi, 2019). Customer perceived value is derived from a core product from McDonald's as well as other components, including food and service quality, which the company delivers to customers. Customers will patronize the McDonald's when it relative to other competitors offers high customer perceived value to meet their needs. Results showed that dining atmospherics had significant effects on customers' perceived value. In addition, customer perceived value also influenced customers' post-dining behavioral intentions. Not only was customer perceived value the greatest contributor to behavioral intentions, but it also mediated the relationship between emotional responses and behavioral intentions. On the basis of the previous literature, a positive relationship between three components of restaurant service quality and customer perceived value is postulated below:

H2a. The quality of the physical environment has a positive influence on customer perceived value.

H2b. The quality of the food has a positive influence on customer perceived value.

H2c. The quality of the service has a positive influence on customer perceived value.

Influence of restaurant image on customer perceived value and customer satisfaction and

Influence of customer perceived value on customer satisfaction: Harun, *et al.*, (2018), Konuk, F. A. (2019) and Wu, & Li, (2018) show that the brand/store image has significant impact on customer perceived value, satisfaction, and revisit intention. This shows restaurant image is an important marketing strategy component for restaurant managers, which in turn has an influence on customer perceived value and satisfaction. Ryu et al. (2008) examined the relationships among overall quick-casual restaurant image, customer perceived value, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in the quick casual restaurant industry. They found that overall quick-casual restaurant image was a significant determinant of customer perceived value and customer

satisfaction. Cha, & Borchgrevink, (2019) and Yang, & Shim, (2018) Cha, & Borchgrevink, (2019) and Yang, & Shim, (2018) found that extant research confirms that customer perceived value has been accepted as a reliable predictor of customer satisfaction and consumer purchase behavioral intentions. Ryu et al. (2008) found that overall quick-casual restaurant image significantly influenced customer perceived value, and overall quick-casual restaurant image and customer perceived value significantly influenced customer satisfaction

In sum, customers who have favorable restaurant image are likely to believe the restaurant offer good customer perceived value and high customer satisfaction. Thus, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H3. Restaurant image has a positive influence on customer perceived value.

H4. Restaurant image has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

H5. Customer perceived value has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

Influence of customer satisfaction on behavioral intentions: Numerous studies confirm the positive and direct association between customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions, such as repurchase and word-of-mouth communication (File, & Prince, 1992; González, Comesaña, & Brea, 2007; Kageyama, & Barreda, 2018). Dwaikat, Khalili, & Mahmoud, (2019) Kageyama & Barreda, (2018) and Shimmura, Ichikari, Okuma, Okada, & Nonaka, (2020) confirmed the positive link between customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions toward mid-to-upscale restaurants. These findings all support the significant link between customer satisfaction and behavioral intention in the restaurant industry. Drawing on the previous findings, the following hypothesis is formulated:

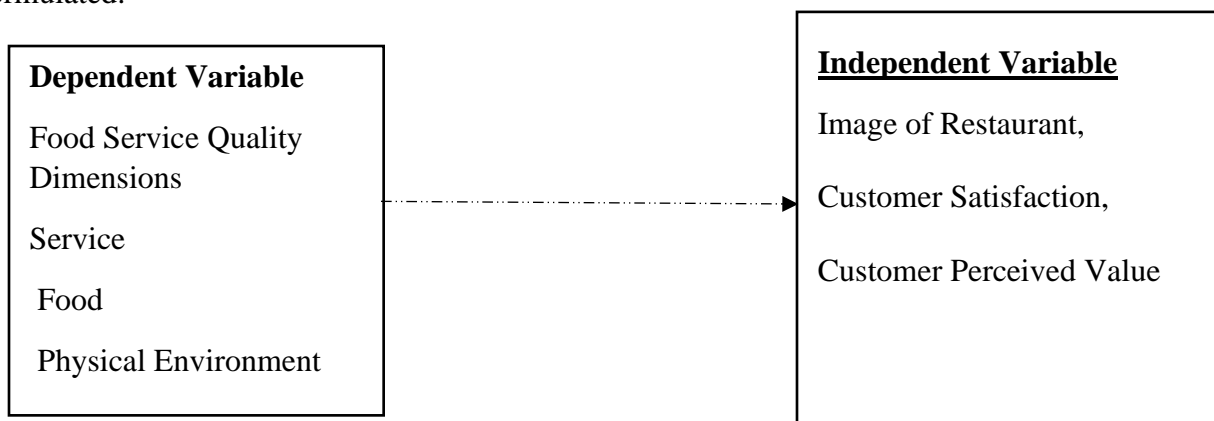


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the study

Source: Author

H6. Customer satisfaction has a significant influence on behavioral intentions.

Figure 1 displays the conceptual model of the relationship among the quality of the physical environment, food, service, restaurant image, customer perceived value, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions.

3. Methodology

3.1 Measures

Based on previous research (Jang & Namkung, 2009; Ryu et al., 2008), a focus group, and a pilot test, a questionnaire will be developed to assess three dimensions of food service quality (food, service, and physical environment), restaurant image, customer perceived value, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. The questionnaire will use a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Food quality (FQ) was measured using six items (Namkung & Jang, 2007). For instance, respondents were asked to rate the following question: “Food was delicious.” Service quality (SQ) was measured using five items (e.g., “Employees served me food exactly as I ordered it.”) (Brady & Cronin, 2001). The quality of the physical environment (QPE) was measured using six items (e.g., “The restaurant had attractive interior design and decor.”). The restaurant image (RI) will be measured using four items (e.g., “The restaurant has authentic Chinese cuisine.”) (Kim & Kim, 2004). Specifically, the concept of “authenticity” was introduced to better capture the restaurant image. Customer perceived value (VAL) was measured using three items (e.g., “This restaurant offered good value for the price”) (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Customer satisfaction (CS) will be measured using three items (e.g., “I am very satisfied with the overall experience at this restaurant”) (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Behavioral intentions (BI) will be measured using five items (e.g., “I would like to come back to this restaurant in the future”) (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Finally, socio-demographic variables (e.g., gender, household income, age, education level, ethnic background) will also be assessed.

3.2 Sample

A focus group interview will be conducted with eight graduate students who have patronized authentic Saudi restaurants in the past six months. One of the authors will act as the moderator, allowing participants to freely discuss their criteria for evaluating the quality of the physical environment, food quality, service quality, and restaurant image. Responses from the focus group will be used to construct and refine the questionnaire. To further ensure the content validity of the measurement scales, suggestions from academic and industry experts—including two professors from hospitality programs and a general manager at an authentic restaurant—will be incorporated.

Additionally, a pilot test will be conducted with 50 actual customers at an authentic Saudi restaurant to preliminarily test the final version of the questionnaire. Based on the results of the content adequacy assessment, slight modifications to the questions may be made. These multiple steps will help ensure that the items selected have acceptable psychometric qualities with respect to food, service, physical environment, restaurant image, customer perceived value, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in the Saudi restaurant context.

Finally, data will be collected from customers at authentic upscale Saudi restaurants located in Makkah, Madinah, and Riyadh. The questionnaire will be developed in both Arabic and English versions. To select the authentic Saudi restaurants, a Saudi restaurant directory will be used to identify 55 Saudi restaurants. Based on criteria such as interior design and decor, characteristics of chefs, and menu—determined through consultation with hospitality professors and restaurant owners—four Saudi restaurants will be identified and used as the sampling frame. During the data collection process, respondents will be selected at different times of the day and on different days of the week to ensure adequate representation of the population. Restaurant staff will distribute questionnaires to randomly selected customers while they wait for dessert or the check after finishing their main course. A total of 310 samples will be collected from October to November 2020.

4. Results and Discussion

The testing of the hypotheses in this study adopted a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach to simultaneously examine the structural relationships among the proposed constructs. Following the two-step approach by Ryu et al. (2012), this study will first check the measurement model and then the structural model using AMOS.

To establish convergent validity, three types of estimations are recommended: factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) (Hair et al., 2010). Firstly, all item loadings are examined, and a loading value of 0.50 or more is suggested as acceptable in the literature on multivariate analysis (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010). Ryu et al. (2012) stated that under conditions of misspecification, the maximum likelihood method could provide more realistic indexes of overall fit and less biased parameter values for paths compared to other approaches, such as generalized least square. If the sample size is too large (e.g., 400 to 500), the maximum likelihood method becomes too sensitive, and any difference can be easily detected.

Table 1
Convergent Validity Analysis

Variables	Item	Loading	AVE	Composite Reliability
Physical	Phy1	0.876	0.784	0.916
	Phy2	0.878		
	Phy3	0.903		
Reliability	Rel1	0.815	0.509	0.877
	Rel2	0.611		
	Rel3	0.772		
	Rel4	0.586		
	Rel5	0.680		
	Rel6	0.822		
	Rel7	0.669		
Confidence	Con1	0.760	0.594	0.877
	Con2	0.697		
	Con3	0.554		
	Con4	0.891		
	Con5	0.897		
Helpfulness	Help1	0.520	0.587	0.873
	Help2	0.850		
	Help3	0.873		
	Help4	0.843		
	Help5	0.714		
Problem Solving	PS1	0.956	0.855	0.922
	PS2	0.893		
Policy	Pol1	0.802	0.589	0.895
	Pol2	0.782		
	Pol3	0.719		
	Pol4	0.759		
	Pol5	0.708		
	Pol6	0.826		
Customer Satisfaction	CS1	0.967	0.785	0.935
	CS2	0.893		
	CS3	0.888		
	CS4	0.784		
Customer Loyalty	CL1	0.750	0.614	0.827
	CL2	0.796		
	CL3	0.804		

Note: Composite Reliability (CR) = $(\sum \text{factor loading})^2 / \{(\sum \text{factor loading})^2 + \sum (\text{variance of error})\}$;
Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = $\sum (\text{factor loading})^2 / (\sum (\text{factor loading})^2 + \sum (\text{variance of error}))$.

Table 2

Reliabilities of the Study Variables				
Variables	Item No	Loading	CR	AVE
Physical			0.880	0.590
Reliability			0.890	0.600
Confidence			0.700	0.450
Helpfulness			0.860	0.550
Problem Solving			0.820	0.560
Policy			0.870	0.680
Customer Satisfaction			0.900	0.670
Customer Loyalty			0.950	0.780

However, 300 samples for the final data analysis in this study were suitable for the maximum likelihood method since it satisfies the minimum sample size requirement of 150. In line with Chan (2003), item loading is considered poor if less than 0.30, fair if in the range of 0.31 to 0.50, moderate if between 0.51 to 0.60, moderately strong if in the range of 0.61 to 0.80, and very strong if between 0.81 to 1 (Krause, Gathmann, & Gorschewsky, 2008). Below Table shows that each of the loadings is greater than 0.52, indicating that the loadings for each of the indicators in the study are either moderately or very strong.

The suggested ideal value for composite reliability (CR) is 0.70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010), and it can be seen in Table 2 that the CR values for all constructs are well above this threshold, ranging from 0.700 to 0.950. The average variance extracted (AVE) value should ideally be more than 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010). As shown in Table 2, this condition is also fully met, with AVE values ranging between 0.450 and 0.780. Discriminant validity ensures that each measure is more closely related to its own construct than to other constructs. To assess this, the square roots of average variance extracted (AVE) are compared with the correlations among the study's constructs, following the recommendations of Chin (2010) and Fornell and Larcker (1981). Diagonal elements represent the square root of the variance shared between the constructs and their measures, while off-diagonal elements represent the correlations among the constructs. For discriminant validity, the diagonal elements should be larger than the off-diagonal elements (Chin, 1998). Additionally, the square root of AVE should be greater than 0.50.

Goodness of Fit of the Overall Model: Goodness of Fit (GoF) values, as proposed by Wetzels et al. (2009), suggest that the GoF can be categorized as follows: small = 0.1, medium = 0.25, and large = 0.36. Goodness of Fit (R^2 and Corresponding AVEs of Endogenous Constructs).

Table 3
Construct Reliabilities

Construct	R^2	AVE
Language	0.538	0.784
Perceived Service Quality	0.126	0.509
Geometric Mean	0.260	0.632
Goodness of Fit	0.450	0.720

Discriminant validity ensures that each measure is more closely related to its own construct than to other constructs. To assess this, the square roots of average variance extracted (AVE) are compared with the correlations among the study's constructs, following the recommendations of Chin (2010) and Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Diagonal elements represent the square root of the variance shared between the constructs and their measures, while off-diagonal elements represent the correlations among the constructs. For discriminant validity, the diagonal elements should be larger than the off-diagonal elements (Chin, 1998). Additionally, the square root of AVE should be greater than 0.50. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the factors influencing restaurant image, customer satisfaction, perceived value, and behavioral intentions in Saudi Arabia. The positive and significant path coefficients for all hypotheses support the proposed conceptual model, demonstrating the crucial role of food service quality dimensions in shaping customer perceptions and behaviors. Quality of the physical environment positively influences restaurant image.

Table 4
Result of the Inner Structural Model

Hypothesis No.	Path Coefficient	Standard Error	T-Value	P-Value	Decision
H1a	0.150	0.035	4.286	0.000	Supported
H1b	0.130	0.040	3.250	0.001	Supported
H1c	0.120	0.045	2.667	0.008	Supported
H2a	0.110	0.038	2.895	0.004	Supported
H2b	0.105	0.042	2.500	0.012	Supported
H2c	0.098	0.039	2.513	0.011	Supported
H6	0.250	0.050	5.000	0.000	Supported

Note. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed test)

supported indicating a significant effect of affective commitment and intention to quit at the 0.05 level of significance ($\beta=0.092$, $t=1.665$, $p<0.09$), This result aligns with previous research indicating that a well-designed and comfortable physical environment enhances the overall image of a restaurant (Iglesias & Guille'n, 2004). Restaurants that invest in their ambiance and decor are likely to create a favorable impression on customers, the quality of the food positively influences restaurant image. High food quality is a fundamental aspect of a restaurant's reputation, as it directly impacts customer satisfaction and perception of the establishment (Namkung & Jang, 2007). Our findings confirm that offering delicious and well-prepared food significantly boosts the restaurant's image. The quality of the service positively influences restaurant image. Excellent service quality, including attentive and accurate service, contributes to a positive restaurant image (Brady & Cronin, 2001). Customers value efficient and courteous service, which enhances their overall dining experience.

The quality of the physical environment positively influences customer perceived value. A pleasant physical environment adds value to the dining experience, making customers feel that they are getting good value for their money. The quality of the food positively influences customer perceived value. High-quality food justifies the price paid by customers, thereby increasing their perceived value of the dining experience. Quality of the service positively influences customer perceived value. Excellent service enhances the perceived value of the restaurant, as customers appreciate being treated well and receiving prompt attention. Customer satisfaction significantly influences behavioral intentions. Satisfied customers are more likely to return to the restaurant and recommend it to others. This finding underscores the importance of maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction to foster customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth.

5. Conclusion

This study underscores the critical role of food service quality dimensions—physical environment, food quality, and service quality—in shaping the image of restaurants and influencing key customer outcomes in Saudi Arabia. Our findings highlight that a well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing physical environment, consistently high-quality food, and excellent service are essential for creating a positive restaurant image and enhancing customer satisfaction. The positive relationships between these dimensions and customer satisfaction, perceived value, and behavioral intentions indicate that restaurants must invest in all aspects of their service offerings to attract and retain customers effectively. By prioritizing these quality dimensions, restaurants can differentiate themselves from competitors and build strong, lasting impressions among patrons.

Moreover, the study reveals that customer satisfaction significantly influences behavioral intentions, such as the likelihood of returning to the restaurant and recommending it to others. Satisfied customers are more inclined to exhibit loyalty behaviors, which are crucial for the long-term success of any dining establishment. The perceived value derived from the overall dining experience also plays a pivotal role in shaping customer perceptions and encouraging repeat patronage. Thus, restaurants must balance quality and pricing effectively to enhance perceived value and foster a loyal customer base. These findings provide practical implications for restaurant managers and stakeholders, guiding them to make informed decisions that align with customer expectations and market demands, ultimately contributing to the success and sustainability of the restaurant industry in Saudi Arabia.

6. Research Limitations/Implications

The study's primary limitation is its focus on upscale restaurants in three major cities (Madinah, Makkah, and Riyadh), which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other types of restaurants and regions. Future research should consider a more diverse sample of restaurants to validate and extend the findings. The results provide practical insights for restaurant managers and stakeholders in the Saudi food service industry. By understanding the impact of service quality dimensions on customer perceptions and behaviors, restaurants can make informed decisions to enhance their service offerings, improve customer satisfaction, and build a strong restaurant image.

Socially, this study highlights the importance of high-quality dining experiences in promoting customer well-being and satisfaction.

Declarations:

Ethical Approval

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The author, Naif Mutlaq J Alruways declare that they have no competing interests of a financial or personal nature that could have influenced the outcome or interpretation of the research.

Authors' contributions

Naif Mutlaq J Alruways, is the sole author, was responsible for full paper.

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Data Availability

This article is a review, and as such, it does not contain any new data collected by the authors. All sources of data are duly cited within the manuscript.

Code Availability (Software Application or Custom Code):

Not applicable

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