

# A Review of the Merits and Demerits of Silent Restaurants

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## keywords

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## Abstract

Restaurants can be jolly service settings in which customers enjoy eating and drinking with some music and conversations. Thus, a soundscape is an essential element of such conventional restaurants. However, in recent years, silent restaurants have facilitated a new dining concept in Japan. This concept aligns well with the solo dining trend in this country and is suitable for deaf and hard-of-hearing (sensory-disabled) customers. Nonetheless, the potential of silent restaurants for other customers (the mass market), regardless of the cultural and physiological conditions, remains to be determined. The sustainability of this concept is also questionable. Therefore, this paper reviews the relevant literature to advocate the merits of silent restaurants and debate the demerits of these establishments from the customer satisfaction perspective to assess the suitability of silent restaurants for a mass customer market. Specifically, this paper conceptualizes the silent restaurant concept based on the soundscape theory (i.e., sound typologies and sources). It also discusses the merits and demerits of silent restaurants and the suitability of this concept for relevant niche customer markets. Finally, this review identifies several directions for future research. Addressing these topics will help further enrich the literature and provide more implications for managing concept restaurants.



## Appealing point

- Silent or conversation-less restaurants are most suitable for niches of customers: those who do not want to or cannot participate in verbal communication. Individuals with psychological or physiological issues concerning human-to-human conversations may be regular customers of this concept restaurant category, sustaining its operation in the long term.
- Silent restaurants (conversation-less and audio-less) can also attract sensation- or novelty-seeking customers. Nonetheless, a novel trend or concept will decline after its peak. The focal point for silent restaurant owners or managers to thoroughly consider is deciding the place and time to enter and exit the market.