



# The Conveyance of the Japanese Atmosphere to Visitors as a Performance at Marugame Udon, Solo Paragon Lifestyle Mall

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## Abstract

Marugame Udon is a Japanese fast-food restaurant chain with many branches in Indonesia. This study examines the conveyance of the Japanese atmosphere to visitors as a performance. Interior research based on performance theory has not been widely conducted. This study aims to determine the performative influence of Marugame Udon's interior on visitors by exploring Richard Schechner's performance aspects (action, interaction, relationship). This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to deeply explore data from visitors and interior elements. The data collection techniques used are observation, in-depth interviews, literature study, and company profile reading. Data analysis is done by reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions and recommendations. The findings of this study are: (1) the "action" exploration finds that the interior display is a manifestation of Marugame Udon's identity as a Japanese restaurant chain and its commitment to introducing Japanese culture, especially Sanuki; (2) the "interaction" exploration finds that the presence of interior elements is a mutually dependent system in displaying the atmosphere (Japanese), and visitors interact most with *noren* and the theater kitchen; (3) the "relationship" exploration reveals that Marugame Udon does not only act as a restaurant providing food and drinks but also as a stimulating agent that influences visitors' perceptions and evokes their memories and desires related to Japanese culture. These three findings indicate that Marugame Udon's interior is a static performative ecosystem that can interact and form relationships with visitors.

**Keywords:** performance studies, performative interior, Japanese restaurant, Marugame Udon

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## INTRODUCTION

Dining out has become an urban lifestyle due to industrialization and urbanization (Kowalczyk & Derek, 2020, p. 4). Looking at the current market, interior design has become an important consideration along with service and food. Visitors want to experience the spatial experience

when dining out that they cannot get at home. The desire to experience something different from everyday life encourages people to visit a place (J. Zhang & Walsh, 2021). Therefore, interior design plays a strong role in the growth of restaurant businesses (Wan, 2021).

One of the restaurants often visited is a restaurant in a mall, especially lifestyle-

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le center malls, which are integrated with apartments and have various kinds of services such as restaurants, health, and so on (Lauren Horwitz, 2015). The availability of various needs will attract people to visit for various purposes (Yan & Eckman, 2009) lifestyle centres, and traditional enclosed shopping malls.

In this study, the researchers are interested in examining the “actions” that occur in the event of “dining out” using the perspective of performance studies by Richard Schechner. In his book, Schechner (2006) explained that performance studies have a broad scope of objects. Performance does not only occur in events that are orthodoxly defined as performances. In performance studies, performativity is not only possessed by living beings. Indeed, not everything can be said to be a performance, but everything can be studied “as” a performance (Schechner, 2006).

Performance puts meaning into four things: being, doing, showing the doing, and explaining ‘showing the doing.’ Being is an entity that exists in the performance event. Doing can be interpreted as a role attached to the entity. Showing the doing is the act of presenting the entity and its role. Explaining ‘showing doing’ is the substance of performance studies. Schechner further states in his book that to study something as a performance, it must encompass three aspects: action, interaction, and relationship.

According to Goffman, performance can be defined as all forms of certain participants’ actions in certain opportunities, in various ways, to influence other participants (Goffman in Schechner, 2006). Schechner (2006) argues that all events, in the context of broader performance, can be considered performance, but not all are performances. Something is considered a performance only if, historically, in usage, convention, context, and culture, it is recognized as a performance, for example, theater performances, wayang, and music concerts. Schechner then divides performances into two categories in the academic field of performance studies: (1) ‘is perfor-

mance,’ which refers to orthodox performances, and (2) ‘as performance,’ which is Schechner’s perspective that everything is performative and has performance value.

The discourse of performativity in architecture talks about the transition from ‘what it is?’ to ‘what it does?’ (Leatherbarrow, 2004). Leatherbarrow refers to it as scripted and unscripted performances. Performative architecture is a discourse that describes architecture as an open concept and part of a dynamic environment that must be able to adapt to things that were not previously planned, both written and unwritten, intentional or not. The ability of spatial dimensions to perform other functions or unscripted performances is called architectural performativity by Kassem (2019). Performance in architecture can be interpreted as an action and the result or value of what is produced (Addison et al., 2009).

Several previous studies have been conducted in the realm of retail and restaurant design. Kim et al. (2020) found an indirect relationship between visitors and aesthetic aspects that influence purchasing decisions. Rahma et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between interior design and visitors’ nostalgic experiences. Wardono et al. (2012) demonstrated that color, lighting, and room decorations affect social, emotional, and behavioral perceptions. Aprilia et al. (2015) stated in their study that visual aspects in the interior are more easily recognizable because of humans’ pre-existing perception. Other studies in the field of restaurant interior design have been conducted to reveal the connection between lifestyle and the determination of interior elements (Rachmawati, 2017), the principles frequently used in modern Japanese restaurants (Grigorieva, 2012), and color as an identity formation (Tantanatewin & Inkarojrit, 2016). Interior studies using performance theory as a basis have been conducted by Georges-Etienne Carriere (2020) on the connection between the performance of Brooke Astor’s life as a socialite, writer, and philanthropist and the identity of her estate’s interior and by

Corrigan et al. (2018) on observations in the criminal court space using dramaturgical principles. However, no interior study has viewed space and everything that exists and happens inside it as a form of performance. Therefore, this study will investigate the performance value of Marugame Udon restaurant's interior, based on three research questions: (1) how do the interior elements of the restaurant 'act' to influence visitors' perceptions of the formation of Japanese cultural image; (2) how do the 'interactions' between interior elements and humans within it affect the formation of Japanese cultural image; (3) How do the 'relationships' between interior elements and humans within the Japanese-themed restaurant? The output of this research can be used as a guide for creating interiors that display traditional themes as an effort to respond to Sachari's (2007) concerns about the loss of cultural meaning in the next generation. The existence of facilities that contain elements of locality and culture can become an indirect-educational media that cultivates love and pride for the nation's culture (Budiman et al., 2020). This study can be a new discourse in interior research, and consideration for the government in making policies to display local cultural elements in interiors, especially in malls.

## METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is used to understand social phenomena that often require field observation because the problems are still unclear and tentative (Sugiyono 2018). The method used was a case study. A case study is a type of qualitative research in which the researcher explores a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals in-depth. A case study is used to investigate and explain a phenomenon in an explanatory and evaluative manner (Sumartono, 2017).

The research was conducted at a restaurant inside Solo Paragon Lifestyle Mall, namely Marugame Udon. Maruga-

me Udon is the only udon restaurant in Surakarta. The restaurant was purposively selected based on three considerations: Japanese theme, longest-standing, and most visited.

Data collection techniques were conducted using observation, interviews, questionnaire distribution, and literature review. Observations were carried out through moderate participation, with the researcher visiting the research location to directly experience the spatial and area aspects related to the physical and non-physical aspects that form the room's atmosphere. Through observation, the researcher will gain a deeper understanding of the context (Sugiyono, 2018).

Participants were obtained by distributing online questionnaires, and 15 participants who were Marugame Udon visitors were obtained. The data analysis process refers to the stages described by Miles and Huberman, including data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles, Huberman in Purwanto et al., 2021). Observation data was obtained by reading the interior elements that form the atmospherics, namely the floor, walls, ceiling, furniture, decorative elements, lighting, window's view, table setting, and shopfront (Heung & Gu, 2012; Kotler, 1973; Ryu & Shawn Jang, 2008).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

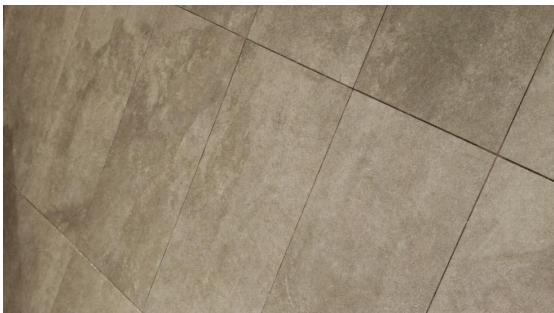
### Reading the Interior Elements of Marugame Udon

This study is based on the idea that interior design is a performance that is created to perform specific actions. Reading is the first step to understanding the values within it (Subiyantoro et al., 2020). The following are the results of reading Japanese cultural elements in the interior of Marugame Udon as a performative object.

### Transformation of the Zen Garden and Tatami Floor

The floor material in Marugame Udon is granite. Granite is widely used

in traditional Japanese buildings and gardens (Locher, 2010). The overall color of the floor is grey. Unlike Chinese Orientalism, which uses dominant natural colors like red, yellow, and green (D. Zhang & Zhang, 2019) and culture is often viewed as a system of symbols that arises from human interpretations of the world. The cultural codes of symbols and symbolism are imperative to be reexamined for any reinterpretation of a traditional culture. This article explores the origin and meaning of the Yin Yang symbol in Chinese culture, and its subsequent numerological and color applications in classical Chinese architecture, such as Sanqing (Three Pure Ones, Japanese architecture tends to use natural colors like white, grey, brown, or black (Locher, 2010). The stone element on the floor of Marugame Udon is also identical to Japanese gardens, Zen. Stone elements are considered important elements in the process of contemplation (Nakagawara, 2004). The floor in Japanese architecture is generally less decorated than other elements. The floor becomes the interior element that interacts the most with the human body. The floor covering material in traditional Japanese architecture uses *tatami* mats. *Tatami* is a modular mat with a size of 182x91 cm, or a ratio of 2:1, made of woven straw used as a floor covering, as well as a heat and cold absorber in traditional Japanese houses (Erickson & Schurch, 2011; Hein, 2016; Walther, 2021) with  $m < n$  monomers in which no four tiles meet at any point is  $m^2 m + (m + 1$ .



**Figure 1.** The stone philosophy floor of the Zen garden with proportion dimensions and arrangement adjusted to the *tatami*.

**Shoji screen idea**

Traditional Japanese buildings are supported by supporting poles and ornamental partition walls (Locher, 2010). The wall covering material is white paper (*washi*), then painted, colored, or left plain with a wooden lattice. *Shoji* is a sliding or solid wall that separates the exterior and interior, covered with translucent paper (David & Young, 2019, p. 152). Its translucent nature is intended to create a bright room by maximizing natural light from the outside. *Shoji* is rarely painted, but some are given a touch of different lattice arrangements as an aesthetic medium.



**Figure 2.** The philosophy of *shoji* applied to the shop front wall of Marugame Udon

Figure 2 shows the glass wall inside the shop front wall of Marugame Udon. In terms of shape and composition, this glass wall resembles *shoji*, consisting of several frames with constant dimensions, each frame is in the form of a rectangular plane, and the presence of the wall is a divider between the exterior and interior with the maximization of natural light entering. The top and bottom frames are not transparent planes, filled with *tatami*. In principle, the shop front in the mall unit is indeed required to use glass or no walls. For the mall management, this aims to allow visitors to access the interior aesthetics of each tenant unit. The wide glass wall also affects the reception and comfort of visitors with a wider impression (Ozdemir, 2010).

**Fusuma as an ornamental wall**

Similar to *shoji*, *fusuma* is a wall with

paper lining. The difference between *shoji* and *fusuma* is that the paper lining on *fusuma* is not translucent. While *shoji* separates the exterior from the interior, *fusuma* divides the space within it (David & Young, 2019, p. 274). *Fusuma* consists of a frame structure and wooden lattice filled with paper screens. The wall in the dining area of Marugame Udon takes on the basic form of *fusuma*, which is painted, and the *fusuma* lattice is transformed into a more abstract form from its original shape (Figure 3, 4).



**Figure 3.** The painting theme on *fusuma* often depicts kabuki scenes, such as the romance between a samurai and a geisha.

Unlike the floor, walls in Japanese architecture are often decorated. The nature of *washi* on *fusuma*, which is not translucent, often makes it painted. Paintings on *fusuma* commonly take themes from human life, animals, nature scenes, and abstract designs (David & Young, 2019, pp. 306–307). *Fusuma* acts as a canvas for painting natural scenery that also connects the space with nature (Locher, 2010, p. 30). One of the dining area walls in Marugame Udon is painted with a kabuki theme (Figure 3). Kabuki is a traditional Japanese theater performance involving many players and music, usually telling stories about history, moral problems, and love (David & Young, 2019, p. 284). Kabuki was originally a religious performance in Shin-

to shrines but later became more secular (Leiter, 2006, p. 374). Kabuki often tells stories of the romance between a samurai and a geisha (Halford & Halford, 1956). This character can also be seen in one of the *fusuma* in Marugame Udon (Figure 3).

On the other hand, *fusuma* is displayed with paintings depicting the beauty of clouds and the sun (figure 4). Japan is often associated with the sun. In Japan's oldest written record, *Kokiji* 712M, Japan is referred to as '*nihon*', a combination of the words '*nichi*' meaning 'sun' and '*hon*' meaning 'origin.' Japan even has a flag with a symbol of the sun. Japan also has a word and an ideogram for the sun. The symbol of the sun in Japan is interpreted as prosperity and new life (Schultz & Yamamoto, 1984).



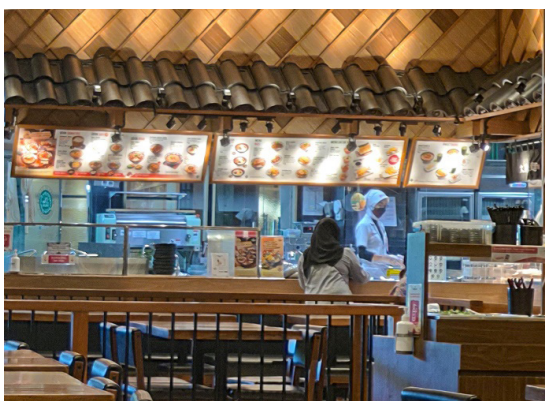
**Figure 4.** Shows how *fusuma* separates the kitchen area from the seating area with ornate paintings of the sun and clouds.

Above the *fusuma*, Marugame features multiple plywood paneling configurations that resemble traditional Japanese wall patterns, *namako*. *Namako* walls are commonly found in palace buildings, warehouses, and aristocratic houses (Cheung, 2022). Another ornamentation appears in the roofing arrangement that resembles a traditional Japanese awning (figure 4). In the middle of the awning is a signboard with the words 'Marugame Udon, Udon & Tempura.' On either side of the signboard, Marugame displays the names of the menu items written on 12 rectangular teak-wood boards with Hiragana letters.

### Theater Kitchen

Entering the main entrance of Marugame Udon, visitors are presented with an open kitchen. Marugame Udon calls this concept the theater kitchen. The theater kitchen concept allows all Marugame Udon visitors to witness the menu preparation show and experience the atmosphere of Sanuki-style udon restaurants (Tori-doll, 2022). Visitors can order by looking at the menu board and menu book while interacting directly with the cook (figure 5). Based on data from Marugame Udon's company profile, the spirit of this theater kitchen concept is a kitchen and performance space where visitors are expected to be entertained by watching the cook prepare their udon menu orders. The open kitchen concept provides a more interactive experience in enjoying udon.

History says that udon was first made in Sanuki, Kagawa. Until now, Sanuki residents consume udon at least once a day (Andoh, 2005, pp. 78-79). Initially, udon in Sanuki was sold only in simple kiosks until it gradually developed into restaurants (Konzak, 1995). The characteristic of Sanuki udon restaurants is the open kitchen. Marugame Udon wants to showcase Japanese culture through the uniqueness of Sanuki udon restaurants by featuring open kitchens in each of its outlets.



**Figure 5.** Open kitchen depicts the essence of human interaction as a way of enjoying udon in Sanuki.

### Noren curtain

Besides the seating area, there is a sink area and the kitchen entrance and exit

door (Figure 6). The wall covering uses 20x20 black ceramic tiles up to a height of 2 meters, while the rest is *namako* wall. At a height of 2 meters, there is a small black curtain, called *noren*. *Noren* is usually installed at the entrance of residential kitchens and traditional-style commercial buildings in Japan (Locher, 2010). *Noren* also functions as a barrier to prevent cold wind from entering and usually displays the name or menu of a restaurant.

The size and color of *noren* will differ depending on the location where it is used. The color will be more striking when it is in tourist areas, and the size will be longer if it separates private areas (Oktay, 2015). As time goes by, *noren* also becomes a sign of whether a sushi bar is frequently visited or not, because many visitors wipe their hands with the *noren* when leaving, so the dirtier a *noren* is, the more visitors it indicates (Geeraert, 2020). In its development in Indonesia, based on field observations, many Japanese culinary businesses involve *noren* as a statement of cultural identity.



**Figure 6.** *Noren* in Marugame Udon functions like in Japanese houses, located at the entrance to the kitchen

### Wood Materiality Projection

Wood is one of the main materials used in traditional Japanese architecture. Japan is even known for its sophisticated woodwork (Locher, 2010, p. 152). Wood elements always appear in the constructi-

on of traditional Japanese houses, both in the floors, walls, and ceilings. The ceiling is a part of traditional Japanese houses that are not decorated, making the exposed wooden beam roof construction visible (Locher, 2010). Marugame covers the ceiling with white-painted gypsum material and a series of elongated wooden panels with ornamental patterns extending to section C's wall (Figures 6 and 7). This configuration of wooden panels can be seen as a transformation of the ceiling of a traditional Japanese house that uses wooden panels and rafters (Locher, 2010, p. 326). However, this part deliberately displays an imbalance in the composition. The wooden lattice ornamentation is only applied to a part of the ceiling. The wooden panels are divided into two parts. One set is attached from the wall to the ceiling, the other set starts from the middle of the ceiling with a broken panel left exposed (figure 7).



**Figure 7.** Ceiling with Wooden Panel Ornamentation

The appearance of the ceiling seems unbalanced and does not blend with the overall interior. However, it should be noted that the Japanese philosophy of *wabi-sabi* believes in the beauty of imperfection, even in the form of asymmetry or things that do not match each other (Foyr, 2022). Furthermore, *Wabi-sabi* in Japanese aesthetics contains elements from nature, not man-made (Koren, 1994). Therefore, alt-

hough all the elements in Marugame Udon are man-made, the intention to display natural materials can be seen in the decision to maintain the wood color in all wooden materials and HPL (High-Pressure Laminated).



**Figure 8.** The dominance of wood materiality on the shop front as a statement of traditional Japanese architecture

Woodwork and brown wood colors are displayed even before visitors enter the room. The wall bulkhead ornamentation made of wood material with a *namako* motif on the shop front display can be seen (figure 8). The woodwork atmosphere is also displayed in the Marugame Udon tables and chairs (figure 9). Of all the woodwork in Marugame Udon, only the tables and chairs use solid wood.



**Figure 9.** The black color on the pillows (*makura*) adds an organic impression of the woodwork on the table and chairs.

Some etiquettes for eating Japanese noodles are to finish the noodles in 5 minutes and not to stay for more than 20 minutes (Zuleta, 2020). Visitors come, sit on stools, watch the chef prepare the dish behind the counter, eat, and then leave. The counter seating concept (*kauntaseki*) is wi-

dely used by fast-food chains in Japan, especially for ramen (Nihongo Master, 2021; Zuleta, 2020). However, Marugame Udon does not adopt counter seating. Marugame Udon uses the table seating concept. This table seating concept is applied in all Marugame Udon branches, including in Japan. This is because Marugame Udon specifically wants to showcase the udon restaurant atmosphere in Sanuki, Japan (Toridoll, 2022), which also uses the table seating concept.

### Warm white lighting

Lighting is a separate element of traditional Japanese houses. Lighting sources, such as candles, are only lit when needed and are made to illuminate only one person (Locher, 2010, p. 299). Creating such a situation is in line with Marugame Udon, which provides a dim impression through warm white colors and the dominance of brown colors on wood material (Figure 10). Lighting is one of the important factors in creating an atmosphere that supports the function and aesthetics of space. The color of lighting has a positive effect when selected according to the character of the environment (Özkul et al., 2020).



**Figure 10.** Warm white light intensifies the brown color of the wood and adds a natural impression.

The warm white lighting in Marugame Udon makes food more appetizing, as almost all food and drink menus have a dominant brown color. The closer the light's color is to the food's color, the more it increases appetite (Suk et al., 2012) observers selected the best and worst lighting colors by themselves using a "Mini Living Colors (PhilipsTM. On the other hand, warm white lighting can intensify the brown-colored

wood materials (figure 14). It can be said that the selection of warm white color reinforces the Japanese image that has been built, both from food and the interior materiality of Marugame Udon.



**Figure 11.** Warm white lighting intensifies the color of food.

In the reading section above, visual elements provide a strong cultural identity statement. This cultural identity becomes a distinguishing cultural character (Syakir et al., 2022) that sets Japan apart from other countries. In the interview session, visitors stated that the interior of Marugame Udon feels the most Japanese compared to other restaurants.

### Implementing Performance Value Investigation in Marugame Udon Interior

#### Action

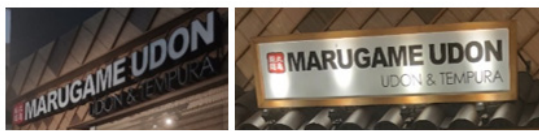
Performance is action. Schecner (2006) wrote that studying the action aspect of artwork means talking about repertoires or collections. In line with Schechner, Leatherbarrow (2004) stated that architectural performance lies in actions that are divided into two: (1) technically and productively-oriented action; (2) contextual and projective action. The researcher tried to read aspect 1 of the action subtitle above. Then, in this section, the researcher read aspect 2 of the action, which is reading the interior action aspect from the visitor's perspective.

Starting from looking at the shop front, visitors can already read that Marugame Udon is a Japanese restaurant. "You can already see it from the front," said one visitor. Not without reason, as explained



in the previous chapter, all units inside the mall are required to display their interior appearance from the outside. Visitors can access the room contents, at least the seating area, from the outside. In addition to being a mall commodity, the shop front appearance helps visitors make decisions. Visitors see signage or logo lights that are always installed on the shop front.

In the case of Marugame Udon, the logo consists of kanji letters with the pronunciation “Marugame Seimen,” and the alphabet writing “Marugame Udon, Udon & Tempura.” Visitors know where the kanji letters come from, what udon and tempura are, and where udon and tempura come from. From this knowledge, visitors not only see the Marugame logo but also unintentionally conclude that this Japanese restaurant sells udon and tempura. It should be noted that not all logos can describe the organization they display. The Marugame Udon logo is captured as an identity marker that goes far beyond the organization it carries. It is the trigger from the beginning of a sequence of perceptions about the Japanese atmosphere by ignoring its functional and aesthetic value as a logo (Figure 16).



**Figure 12.** Words in Marugame Udon’s Logos State Restaurant Identity

The word “udon” on the logo acts very specifically toward visitors, dictating “this is a Japanese restaurant.” Some visitors have had experiences in several other Japanese restaurants. They did not find the same menu, namely udon. Most Japanese restaurants or food stalls, even outside the mall, sell sushi, ramen, and rice menus. They did not find another restaurant that serves udon as the main menu. The word “udon” on the logo becomes a marker that Marugame has a different menu from other places. From the visitor’s side, the word “udon” is a reminder that visitors

have never eaten udon in Solo, and visitors have never eaten udon in Solo at a place that only serves udon.

On the other hand, practically, the statement of the logo only becomes one of many triggers for visitors’ visit decisions. Other more subjective factors will also be involved, such as the level of visitor crowds at that time. Some visitors decide not to visit during peak hours. What is typically planned by visitors like that is that they will not only eat to fulfill their biological needs but also as a healing medium or gather with friends or relatives.

When visitors decide to visit, the first thing they will do is go to the main entrance. There are two doors at Marugame Udon, the entrance and exit doors. Marugame applies a one-way system, where the entrance door is only for entering, and the exit door is only for exiting or re-entering but not for ordering. As explained in the previous section, every visitor who has made a reservation can enter and exit through the exit door. However, visitors who have not made a reservation, if they enter through the exit door, must go back out to the main entrance to make a reservation. Some first-time visitors to Marugame Udon often experience difficulties with the wrong door. Not all visitors understand the shop front concept, where the main entrance is always located in the area where the logo is placed. In the field, the logo is often located right above the main entrance area.

Visitors do self-service like in fast-food restaurants, ordering and then carrying their food to the table. Self-service is common here because Marugame Udon is a fast-food restaurant chain. However, Marugame Udon does not apply the principles of fast-food restaurant interiors in it. Look at the fast-food restaurants around it, KFC, McD, Yoshinoya, and Burger King; they have modern, minimally decorated interiors with striking, instant, and visually and tactilely fabricated colors. According to visitors, Marugame looks harder in presenting its interior than other fast-food or Japanese restaurants. The interior appe-

arance of Marugame Udon is more representative of Japanese visual values.

Visitors mostly talk about decorative elements or interior accessories as Japanese identity markers in Marugame Udon, such as Japanese characters, *noren*, paintings, tiles, and wooden nuances. Visitors consider these interior accessories to have a strong Japanese cultural image because they are not found in other restaurants. However, it does not mean that these accessories work alone. Reading the Japanese nuances in these accessories is influenced by factors, one of which is visitors' aesthetic experience and the presence of other interior elements.

The presence of all interior elements becomes an ecosystem that supports each other or can weaken each other. Japanese cultural hegemony in each witness will also influence its readability, such as the interpretation of paintings from their titles. This is also the subject of discussion between researchers and visitors when researchers ask, "Based on what, do you judge that the interior here is Japanese and not Korean or Chinese?" Visitors' answers are almost always the same; they get knowledge about Japan from anime in comics, TV shows, movies, and reality shows that they can access on cable TV and YouTube. It is interesting that from the many elements of Japanese culture, Marugame can present a visual appearance that then instantly makes visitors aware of its Japanese values. If reversed, Japanese people are not necessarily instantly aware of Javanese culture from its visual appearance if a Javanese restaurant exists. Of course, this study cannot prove this and requires further research. But what the researcher believes here is that static elements in the interior can act as agents that influence visitors in a broad context.

### Interaction

The interaction of visitors with the interior elements and contextual values generated has the same effect on visitors, namely triggering memories of the past about what they have witnessed that con-

tains Japanese content. This memory is aroused by symbolic displays and similar forms, which then make visitors feel the sensation of Japan when they are at Marugame Udon.

In interactive performances that involve symbolic forms, meaning is formed, and individual and cultural values are affirmed (Stern and Henderson in Schechner, 2006, p. 24). Considering a building as part of a performance means that it can be seen as an anticipation or response to an event, and ultimately what the building can do goes beyond its functional purpose (Leatherbarrow in Hensel, 2013, p. 11). The presence of Marugame Udon in Solo Paragon Mall is a response to economic phenomena. As a restaurant, its presence can serve as a venue for dining and drinking activities. Visitors come and enjoy their meals with satisfaction. However, the development of time and the spread of information have made these activities not just about eating and drinking. Therefore, there is an interaction that is formed in the process of negotiating adaptation to change. Performance occurs during this negotiation.

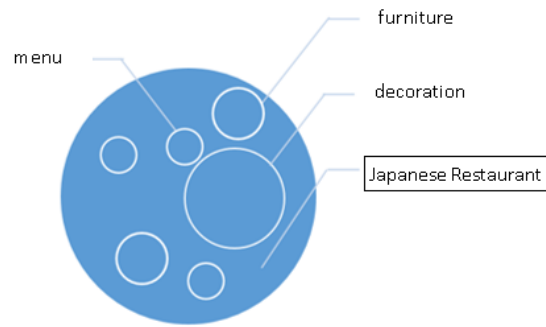
Although information excavation related to interaction does not focus on quality, the existence of such interaction needs to be proven. Researchers then asked questions about their opinions regarding their spatial experience while in Marugame Udon.

All visitors say that the atmosphere built in Marugame Udon is already very representative, "even though they have never been to Japan," says a visitor when giving their assessment. For visitors, the visual elements that they consider to be very representative are the *noren*, the theater kitchen, and the kanji lettering. In the previous reading of interior elements, at least nine elements were mentioned in observations and interviews. However, only these three substances bring visitors to memories of Japan, which are discussed in "relationship." According to visitors, *noren* and theater kitchens are always seen in Japanese ramen shops, and kanji letters are a

general signifier of Japanese identity.

Kanji characters and *noren* have a strong visual identity as representations of Japan, even without any interaction with other interior elements. It can also be said that only by interacting with one of these three substances can the impression of Japan be achieved. However, the configuration of the theater kitchen and roof exists in many other places, even outside the context of Japan. Visually, the kitchen does not display traditional Japanese elements. All equipment and utensils used are modern items. The lighting is also very bright and white. In terms of materiality, the theater kitchen looks more like a modern cultural product than traditional Japanese. The same goes for the roof; as a single entity, the roof does not characterize Japanese identity. Perhaps, if both configurations were placed in an environment outside the context of Japan, their readability value could change, and they would no longer have any Japanese identity. Then, why visitors perceive these elements as having a strong Japanese identity is a question that needs to be answered.

Researchers believe that the interactivity of interior elements becomes a system that supports each other in forming identity. The concept of a theater kitchen has a Japanese identity because it is supported by several physical elements and the context surrounding it. From the outside of the restaurant, visitors interact with Marugame Udon's logo and interior, then decide that what is served and displayed should be related to Japan. Once inside the room, visitors are presented with Japanese food menus, traditional Japanese chef uniforms, Japanese greetings, and representative decorative elements of Japan, such as *noren* and kanji characters. Gradually, the perception of a Japanese atmosphere begins to form from visitors' interactions with the environment. Therefore, entering the Marugame Udon restaurant can be likened to a Venn diagram where all elements are considered part of one set, in this case, Japanese cultural visual elements (figure 13).



**Figure 13.** Diagram of the Perception of a Japanese Atmosphere in Marugame Udon.

The interactivity between interior elements forms Japanese cultural values. The interaction of visitors with these Japanese values results in different relationships for each visitor. Some examples will be explained in the discussion of relationships.

### Relationship

The interpretation of performance is free and will always differ depending on the context (Schechner, 2006). The interior performativity of Marugame Udon as a static agent - in order to shape Japanese culture - is established through complex relationships among several community agents within a built interior ecosystem. At least from the above exposition, these relationships appear to involve several factors such as (1) Marugame Udon's commitment to tradition and udon, (2) ergonomic/functional aspects, (3) aesthetic aspects, (4) market share, and (5) visitor interaction with Japanese culture. Each factor acts like a stream that converges to influence the formation of Japanese cultural meanings. The researchers then classify these factors into three community agents: Marugame Udon, the mall, and visitors. Each community consists of diverse factors that interact with one another. Marugame Udon has a vision, mission, commitment, and cultural background that it wants to convey. The mall has a specific image and regulations that must be adhered to by all involved elements. Visitors have different senses, life experiences, and tastes. The interactiveness within each community then

produces performative effects as a flow of meaning toward the reception of each visitor, as in the following 2 examples.

### Visitors recall memories

“Do you have any specific memories that come to mind when you’re at Marugame Udon?” the researcher asked visitors. Although some visitors admitted that they didn’t specifically and intentionally observe the interior of Marugame Udon, all of them claimed to have surfed through memories related to Japan. One of these memories was their experience of watching videos and comics. The age range of the visitors in this interview is 20-50 years old. Most of them have been exposed to Japanese culture since childhood, starting with Japanese cartoon shows that were always aired on Sundays. Visitors’ interaction with the theater kitchen (figure 5) and decorative elements, for example, reminded them of ramen shops they saw in cartoons, such as *Naruto*. An interaction that occurs so quickly and instantly evokes memories of the shapes and atmosphere experienced in the past.



**Figure 14.** *Naruto* ramen shop as a form of past interaction (Ramen Ichiraku)

The appearance of the ramen shop in the *Naruto* series and what visitors witness in the theater kitchen concept at Marugame Udon have similarities. Both act to make visitors believe in the authenticity that they (Marugame Udon and the media) present as having a Japanese identity even though visitors have never been to Japan. Each visitor does not feel the performative influence on the interior elements and time at the same time. For visitors who have

been to Japan, interacting with the interior of Marugame Udon becomes a trigger for their fond memories of Japan. Visitors mention that they were still free, not thinking about responsibilities, and not yet married at that time. Being in Japan is a big event that will be celebrated for a lifetime. Meanwhile, the visitor is not in a state as beautiful as when they were in Japan – in terms of freedom – and does not know whether they will have the opportunity to go to Japan again. The emergence of memories from the interaction process with the interior indicates Marugame Udon’s success in presenting the image of Japanese culture.

Other visitors experience the same thing. Interaction with the decorative elements of Marugame Udon’s interior brings visitors surfing with memories of the past. “Because my wife often watches *WakuWaku*, I also watch it and become happy,” said a husband of a visitor who at that time recounted his experience of watching the cable TV program *WakuWaku*. *WakuWaku* Japan is a TV channel that features programs from Japan. This visitor’s interaction with Marugame Udon’s interior brings his memory back to the experience of watching one of the *WakuWaku* programs while at a traditional Japanese restaurant and house. “When we were still renting a place, we often watched *WakuWaku*,” said the female visitor. From these statements, it can be said that at least two memories emerge, namely memories that indicate physical form and memories that indicate time or events.

Schechner (2006) refers to entities that have similarities like this as simulations, which are highly performative replicas. Marugame Udon, a fast-food restaurant chain from Japan, tries to make visitors believe – in performance studies, this effort is called *make-believe* – in the authenticity of its interior so that visitors can capture Marugame Udon’s identity as a corporation and feel the atmosphere of Japan. Before being in Marugame Udon, in the context of the Japanese series visitors watch, visitors’ interaction with the visu-

al elements they have experienced before makes them believe that what they see in the Marugame Udon restaurant characterizes Japanese culture. The similarity in cultural objects forms acceptance (Casta et al., 2021). Thus, visitors' previous interactions and interactions with Marugame Udon's interior can shape their perception of Japan.

Not only in its visuals, but make-believe is also evident in Marugame Udon's cooking performance in the theater kitchen. The activities in the theater kitchen, performed by Japanese uniformed chefs, make visitors believe in Marugame Udon's loyalty to always serve customers with heart and maintain the quality of the menu served. Make-believe creates a social reality performed by actors (Schechner, 2006).

#### **Visitors Seek to Know and Possess**

The interaction between visitors and the interior of Marugame Udon also influences their activities both inside and outside the restaurant. Not all, but some visitors have been stimulated to search for information about Japanese culture after experiencing interaction with the interior of Marugame Udon. Some search for information about traditional Japanese food. Marugame provides menus that are not commonly found in Japanese restaurants. For some visitors, the variety of menus raises curiosity about other foods. Others search for information on traditional Japanese architecture. Visitors' curiosity in architecture arises because, according to them, the interior design of Marugame Udon is not entirely traditional. Other visitors may search for different things. One visitor admitted to wanting to have the same eating utensils as those used by Marugame Udon. Another visitor was inspired to have a home with a Japanese theme. This is a small matter that needs to be reconsidered, especially in preserving a culture's existence. This is not absolute among visitors, as there is always a possibility of dislike after exposure to the visuals.

However, the symbolic interaction

between visitors and the interior elements of Marugame Udon makes the physical substance of the interior not only act as an aesthetic symbol but also as a marker of specific events experienced by visitors at a specific time and place. Traditional-looking furniture seems to respond to an emotional longing for the re-creation of memories of the past (Dibbits, 2009). The examples above also explain Horst's statement that the investigation of the symbolic meaning of an entity is no more important than what the entity "does" (Horst in Dibbits, 2009). The discourse of functionality also needs to be set aside when a performance studies approach is applied (Leatherbarrow, 2004). Chairs are not discussed as seating. Tables are not discussed in their role as food containers. Walls are not observed as barriers between spaces. Ceilings are not identified as covers for the channels above them. However, orthodox functional aspects still function, only not as the main role. Chairs, tables, and other static agents are presented as places to sit and eat.

However, performance-based research delves deeper into what events occur when agents perform their functions and their ability to anticipate new possibilities. Applying performance as a telescope to view architecture means that buildings and spaces are seen as dynamic and open concepts (Leatherbarrow, 2004). From the relationships that arise, the interior of Marugame Udon as a restaurant not only serves its role as a provider of food and beverages but also becomes a commodity for the mall, an emotional tourist arena for visitors, and acts like a fertilizer that nourishes visitors' memories of pieces of Japanese culture. These three things are some of the things referred to by Leatherbarrow as unscripted performances and the manifestation of Marugame Udon's adaptation as an open concept.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

Through this research, the researchers were able to convey that the inclusi-

ve use of performance theory can embrace all aspects involved in this study, such as the identity of Marugame Udon, the mall, and the visitors. The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are as follows. This study proves the existence of performance value in the interior of Marugame Udon. The interior of Marugame Udon can act as an influencer, generate interactions, and create specific relationships with visitors. An exploration of action finds that the interior appearance is a manifestation of the identity and commitment of Marugame Udon. An exploration of interaction finds two findings, namely that interior elements are a system that mutually supports each other in presenting a Japanese atmosphere, and visitors interact most with decorative elements (*noren* and *kanji* characters) and the theater kitchen. An exploration of the relationship reveals that the Marugame Udon restaurant not only acts as a provider of food and drink but also as a stimulating agent that influences the perceptions of visitors and evokes their memories and desires related to Japan, especially through the theater kitchen. These three findings indicate that Marugame Udon's interior is a static performative ecosystem that can act, interact, and form relationships with visitors.

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