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# Experiencing ethical retail ideology in the servicescape

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## ABSTRACT

Studies of the ideological underpinnings of retail stores have improved our understanding of consumers' retail experiences in brand and national ideology contexts. In retailing, ideology is manifested in retail spatial settings through tangible and intangible cues in servicescapes. This study expands our knowledge on ethical retail ideology by exploring how servicescapes convey cues that shape consumption experiences and foster ethical consumption. Data from an ethnographic study highlight how consumption experiences in physical retail spaces embedding a particular ethical ideology can be thematised as aesthetics, nostalgia and care. We show that the material and discursive aspects in servicescapes conveying an ethical ideology influence embodied consumption experiences. This study thus contributes to the understanding of retail ideologies and the connections between sustainable consumption and the servicescape.

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Ethical consumption; servicescape; retail ideology; consumption experience; ethnography

## Introduction

Understanding consumers' experiences in retail spatial settings is acknowledged as a critical research area in marketing (Van Marrewijk & Broos, 2012). The notion of the servicescape (Bitner, 1992; Sherry, 1998) constitutes the dominant frame for studies of places and spaces where consumption experiences take place. A plethora of studies employing the 'servicescape', 'atmospherics' and 'ambience' concepts have shown that consumers' experiences are affected by design, ambient cues, and social cues, which may take tangible and intangible forms (Bitner, 1992; Kotler, 1974; Kozinets, 2002; Peñaloza, 1999; Sherry, 1998; Sherry et al., 2001). Recent studies have furthered the debate by exploring the ideological underpinnings and the ways in which retailers can enhance consumers' experiences. For instance, studies have investigated the role of brand ideology in managing retail experiences (Floor, 2006) and the role of brands in evoking aesthetic (Dion & Arnould, 2011) or national ideologies (Arnold et al., 2001; Borghini et al., 2009).

Increasing amounts of research on ethical consumption (see Andorfer & Liebe, 2012; Newholm & Shaw, 2007) have directed attention to the ways in which physical places and servicescapes shape the forms and ways in which consumers enact their ethical values in

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these places (Chatzidakis et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2008; Coles & Crang, 2011; Low & Davenport, 2007; Moraes et al., 2010; Papaoikonomou et al., 2012; Papaoikonomou & Alarcón, 2015; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007). However, little emphasis has been placed on theorising the experiential aspects that underpin ethical consumption in physical places and, specifically, the roles of ethical ideologies in consumption experiences in these places.

While the need to understand the role of the socio-material context where ethical consumers operate has been identified (Fuentes & Sörum, 2019), few studies have empirically explored embodied consumption experiences in stores that base their business ideas on social, ecological and moral values and thus convey an ethical ideology. Namely, The Body Shop has been a topic of several studies portraying a retailer that emphasises social responsibility and values through continuous investment in visual merchandising and a distinctive in-store design that expresses these values (Kent & Stone, 2007). These accounts have cogently highlighted the strategies and store design developments of the company, but consumers' experiences bounded in this type of servicescape remain largely unexplored. What kind of consumption experiences arise in these servicescapes? How is an ethical ideology enhanced and manifested in the socio-material aspects of a store, and how are these aspects translated into consumption experiences? Providing such knowledge has become even more urgent and important given the increasing interest in ethical issues in business and consumers' ethical spending across countries over recent decades (Ethical Consumer Markets Report, 2019; Statista, 2019).

To address this gap, we explore how an ethical ideology is embedded in the servicescape, both discursively and materially, and how this affects the embodied consumption experience. Adopting a cultural lens (Arnould & Thompson, 2005), we conceive of consumption experiences as characterised by multisensorial perceptions, emotions, cultural symbols, and imagination (Cooper-Martin & Holbrook, 1993; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). To us, ethical consumption includes an explicit consideration of the social, ecological and moral dispositions of consumption issues (Barnett et al., 2005). Ethical consumers here are socio-culturally bounded individuals rather than an isolated group of 'mainstream consumers' (Fuentes & Sörum, 2019). Specifically, we conceptualise retail stores as servicescapes (Kozinets, 2002; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004; Sherry, 1998) that convey an ethical ideology while fostering pleasurable consumption experiences (Schoolman, 2019). An ethical ideology is viewed as consisting of moral, social and ecological values. These servicescapes facilitate a form of experience that is embedded in and connected to the various physical, sensorial, temporal, and social elements entailed in it (e.g. Appadurai, 1986; Castilhos et al., 2016; Dion & Arnould, 2011; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004; Scott et al., 2014). Such a theoretical perspective allows us to better understand how consumers use various store elements to construct their consumption experiences and how servicescapes conveying an ethical ideology are intertwined in these experiences. We acknowledge the complexity of ethical consumption, which has multiple goals and values (Hiller & Woodall, 2019), and the changing conceptions of marketplaces, ethical products and ethical consumers in different sociocultural contexts (Shaw & Riach, 2011). A focus on specific types of servicescapes enables us to explore the contextual boundaries of these experiences.

We conducted multisite ethnographic research in three different independent retail stores in Finland. These stores represent traditional physical retail places that, despite the growth of digital commerce, still play a substantial role in brand building and communicating values.

This study provides an empirically grounded in-depth understanding of how retail places convey ethical ideologies through a range of discursive and material cues. Our findings illustrate how an ethical ideology is embedded in the servicescape in several different ways, and how consumption experiences are thematised around three themes: aesthetics, nostalgia, and care. Thus, we explain based on empirical data how an ethical retail ideology conveying moral, social and ecological values through servicescape cues influences consumption experiences. An ethical retail ideology, communicated by servicescape cues, encourages consumers to have experiences, and supports consumers in engaging in ethical debates and decision making. In what follows, we first discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the three themes that emerged from the data: aesthetics, nostalgia and care. Then, we describe the ethnographic method, data, and context of the research, after which we present the findings. To conclude, we discuss the theoretical contributions to the debates on ideological servicescapes and ethical consumption and delineate managerial implications of this study.

## Theoretical underpinnings

### *Servicescape: manifesting an ethical retail ideology*

Much of the extant literature on servicescapes framing consumption experiences has focused on exploring branded stores, particularly flagship brand stores (Kozinets, 2002; Peñaloza, 1999; Sherry, 1998). This body of research offers an apt conceptual package for thinking of retail stores as ideologically-laden servicescapes. In this context, ideology has been conceptualised in the following way: ‘brand ideology as retail branding initiative and experience based on a detailed representation of moral and social values, presented in an extensive and intensive manner through physical environment, and linked to actual moral action in the lives of involved consumers’ (Borghini et al., 2009, p. 365). Dion and Arnould (2011, p. 504) extend this definition by highlighting how ideologies encompass ‘any kind of normative values and ideals’ and ‘may be communicated through narrative as well through in-store physical features’. Adopting a Foucauldian lens (see Thompson & Tambayh, 1999), they conclude that retail brand ideology can be extended to any retail branding initiative based on the operationalisation of normative social ideals.

In our conception, an ethical ideology is a set of moral, social and ecological values (Lundblad & Davies, 2016) that are manifested through a range of tangible and nontangible cues in the retail space (Kozinets et al., 2009). We focus on specific types of servicescapes: retail stores that represent a distinctive set of ethical messages related to the physical place (Borghini et al., 2009). These stores convey ethical ideologies and meanings with certain types of ethical cues to address a group of consumers who are devoted to these causes. However, while the ethical cues are specific and resonate with these consumers, these cues may also carry more general ethical meanings (see McGrath et al., 2013). Such a conceptualisation of the servicescape highlights how retail stores create a designed set of messages conveying certain ideals to orchestrate consumption

experiences. Accordingly, a servicescape conveying an ethical ideology allows consumers to participate in ethical consumption not only by purchasing products but also by performing consumption acts and interacting with the material and discursive elements of the servicescape (Kozinets, 2002). We aim to understand how consumers experience and interpret the range of discursive and material cues (i.e. physical, symbolic, and narrative cues) conveyed by the store to create an ethical retail ideology. We conceptualise these cues as ethical cues that, according to our empirical analysis, inform consumption experiences that are thematically structured around aesthetics, nostalgia, and care.

### ***Aesthetics in servicescapes***

Retail stores that convey a distinct ideology involve an aesthetic dimension (Joy et al., 2014; see also Joy & Sherry, 2003), which is often discussed in terms of the notion of 'atmospherics' or 'ambience'. Aesthetic perceptions are formed in a multisensorial way, that is, by seeing, hearing, smelling, touching or tasting (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Strati, 1999). Studies have highlighted how store elements such as design, layout, outlook and the clothing of personnel; the variety of visual, olfactory, and haptic sensory cues; and the ways in which products and services are talked about and narrated all communicate messages of values constituting retail ideology and play a part in consumption experiences. The embodied and multisensorial nature of consumption experiences in retail places has been vividly theorised; for example, Kozinets's (2002) study of the ESPN Zone empirically portrays multisensoriality in consumers' experiences. In their study on museums, Joy and Sherry (2003) cogently demonstrate that bodily sensations – vision, touch, taste, smell and bodily movement – play an important role in the aesthetic appreciation of the space, in addition to practical reasoning and emotional functions. Furthermore, Yakhlef (2015) argues for the need for an embodied and spatial approach to the study of multisensorial customer experiences; Canniford et al. (2018) develop the notion of nosenography to highlight the importance of smell in the experience of spaces; Stevens et al. (2019) demonstrate how consumers experience the retail brandscape of Hollister in corporeal and sensual ways; and Valtonen et al. (2011) illustrate the multisensorial character of nature-based servicescapes. Additionally, the proliferation of practical sensory marketing (Lindstrom, 2005) accentuates the need to explore the interplay among senses, bodies and spaces. Building upon this vibrant literature, we address the aesthetic dimension of the servicescape and how it resonates in the multisensorial and embodied nature of consumption experiences facilitated by ethical cues conveying retail ideology.

### ***Nostalgia in servicescapes***

Nostalgia, which refers to any longing for another place or time (Kessous & Roux, 2008), is a powerful element of the servicescape. In addition to evoking a direct response, nostalgic images bring to mind many related sounds, smells and objects, which may be linked with expectation. Nostalgia involves a longing for the past, a positive attitude towards earlier times or simply a relationship with the past (Davis, 1979; Higson, 2014; Holbrook & Schindler, 2003). One can nostalgically identify with things, places or people from a bygone era. This feeling of nostalgia can be either connected to actually-lived personal

experiences or raised in the imagination through books, films or other narratives (Holbrook & Schindler, 2003). There are two broad conceptualisations of consumer nostalgia: a conceptualisation that concerns objects that can inspire it (e.g. Holbrook & Schindler, 2003; Rindfleisch & Sprott, 2000) and another conceptualisation that focuses on personal experiences and their outcomes (e.g. Braun-LaTour et al., 2007; Brocato et al., 2015; Holak & Havlena, 1998; Lasaleta et al., 2014). Goulding (2001) identifies two types of nostalgic experience: existential and aesthetic. Existential nostalgia refers to a relatively extreme feeling in which a person seeks meaning in life and in values and ideologies from a particular period in history. In turn, aesthetic nostalgia does not rely on personal experiences; rather, it is based on an interest in history, an admiration for the arts, romantic identification, and a sense of a loss of these things in contemporary society (Goulding, 2001).

Previous research has identified atmospheric cues such as scent (Orth & Bourrain, 2008), country-style décor (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2013), historic artefacts (Chen et al., 2014; Hamilton & Wagner, 2014), and the recreation of traditional rituals (Hamilton & Wagner, 2014) as potential triggers of nostalgic memories that positively influence consumer experiences in a retail environment. These studies highlight retailers' use of artificially created nostalgic products, promotions, services, or environmental elements to evoke vicarious nostalgia. Our study renders visible a range of in-store and out-store ethical cues in multisensory servicescapes that evoke both aesthetic and existential nostalgic sensations and thereby convey the retailer's ideology.

### ***Care in servicescapes***

Care refers to the empathetic understanding of other people's needs, actions, and practices that enable one to sustain and cherish the wellbeing of both other people and oneself. Hence, the issue of care highlights relationships and dependency, which are often discussed in terms of reciprocity (Gilligan, 1990; Tronto, 2013). Care is manifested in grocery shopping by loving and taking deep care of the household (Miller, 1998; Thompson, 1996) or in gift-giving (Arnold & Fischer, 1990). Shaw et al. (2017) extend care to environmental and societal issues across the chain of consumption. Recycling, practising veganism, and buying local products or products with fair-trade labels reflect care for the environment and animals. Being responsive and sensitive to environmental and societal issues in retail stores is a way to engage in experiencing care in ethical consumption.

Furthermore, trust, respect and emotion between people in retail stores constitute a form of communicating and embedding care. Customers may articulate care for other customers by providing them with product knowledge, and service providers may care for customers via emotional labour. Retailers may perform acts of care when choosing their employees in accordance with social criteria and thus embody the virtue of care in their own behaviour. This embodiment of care may also take place at the level of products, which refers to caring imagination as well as empathy towards those consumers who do not participate in the living interpersonal relationship. As Saito (2007, p. 95) remarks, the embodiment of the virtue of care is one of the most general aesthetic values expressed by sustainable products. Retail stores that provide product information and have personal narratives around products embody care and express the moral value of caring for other

people's wellbeing. The material expression of care is manifested in the physical design of the store, how it is decorated, the materials chosen, and the kind of sensory environment created. Next, we describe our empirical study, which explored how an ethical ideology crafted in specific types of stores shapes consumption experiences. We address how care is embodied and experienced in particular ways in these retail servicescapes.

## Empirical study

We employed an ethnographic approach to explore how an ethical retail ideology is manifested and experienced in servicescapes (Joy et al., 2014). The particular ideological nature of the servicescapes we explored sets the boundaries for this study. In the fragmented consumption culture, different types of lifestyles and tastes exist simultaneously, and instead of producing a general account of ethical consumption, there are multiple possibilities to construct not only an ethical ideology of stores but also the ideas of ethical consumers and ethical consumption (Fuentes & Sörum, 2019). Our approach involved observational work and interviews at three retail sites that are traditional small brick-and-mortar retail outlets whose owners are devoted to creating in-store environments that express moral, social and ecological values. The owners of all three sites display a belief in ethical ideology by committing themselves to moral, social and ecological values by, for example, acting out the ideals of localisation and regionalisation and devoting themselves to supporting sustainability in production and consumption. Therefore, while these retailers carry a specific type of ethical ideology, they are fruitful servicescapes for understanding how retail stores can transmit ideology through ethical cues and how consumers construct the possibilities of ethical consumption in these different places. Furthermore, ethical consumers and ethical consumption depicted here are bound in the context of a small Nordic city, the local cultural values, and the socio-demographics of consumers frequenting the type of stores included in this study.

The data collection period lasted 21 months and consisted of 14 observational sessions, which were recorded by writing field notes and taking approximately 200 photographs. The sessions involved participatory and nonparticipatory methods, including informal onsite interviews and everyday discussions with employees and with random customers visiting the stores. Immersing ourselves in the everyday life of the shops provided a foundation for understanding the practices, actions and patterns of the social interaction of the customers who visited the shops. Informed by the work of Geertz (1973), the participant observation was guided by a desire to understand activity in its everyday environment.

Since consumption experiences cannot be understood just by observing people's actions, we conducted interviews in which participants verbally expressed their own experiences and understandings of ethical cues and values in the servicescapes. Combining observations with interviews produces a more comprehensive and diverse representation of the research object and thus increases the credibility of the research (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006; Silverman, 2007). Accompanied shopping interviews (Lowrey et al., 2005) were conducted to obtain deeper insights into shoppers' behaviour, thoughts and feelings (Healy et al., 2007). Eleven interviews were conducted in a small entrepreneur-owned store called Kate's Boutique, 6 interviews were conducted in a small social enterprise-type Eco Market and 4 interviews in a small entrepreneur-owned Tea

Room. These actual store names used in this article are pseudonyms. All three stores are located in a small city in Finland. The interviewees were chosen randomly by means of chain-referral sampling. The participants comprised males and females between ages 13 and 63 with diverse professions and occupations (see [Table A1](#) in the [Appendix](#)). Each interview took place immediately after the store visit and lasted approximately one hour, during which the interviewees were asked open-ended thematic questions regarding their personal perceptions, feelings and experiences. The sessions were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. The first author performed all the observation sessions, and the interviews were conducted by the first author and two research assistants. Two other authors participated in the stages of analysis and interpretation.

We incorporated the retailers' voices in the data because the retail store provides a designated space for ethical consumption. Materials from the interviews, the observation sessions and the retailers' web pages helped us grasp the ethical ideologies and values that the entrepreneurs express in their businesses.

The data processing included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The observed and recorded data were subjected to a process of open coding, which allowed the data to be organised and then categorised in line with the theoretical framework to identify recurring themes. In this approach, described as an emphatic-logical approach (Strati, 1999, pp. 67–73, 189), the researcher acts in the twofold role of a seeker of both empathic and logico-analytical understanding. We scrutinised the three phases of the research – observation, interpretation and writing up of the results – separately and distinctly. In the first phase, we observed everyday shopping activities in the shops, and we also critically reflected on our own feelings and thoughts during the knowledge-gathering process. We interpreted the experiences and feelings of customers and participants and the meanings that they gave to the eco-shop and its environment. During the interpretation stage, emotion and reflection, as well as empathic knowledge and analytical detachment, balance each other. In accordance with Strati's (1999, p. 190) advice, the final report-writing stage involved abandoning empathic knowledge and emphasising analytical analysis so that we could 'rigorously follow logico-analytical methods'.

The analysis rests upon two foundations: discursive close reading and interpretive content analysis. The methods of discourse analysis were used to make sense of the interview data, while the field notes and photos were analysed by means of textual content analysis. The quotations from the interviews and field notes included in the Findings section have been translated from Finnish to English.

## Findings

The data collection was initially commenced in Kate's Boutique, a small store run by a private entrepreneur. It offers a wide range of ecological goods, colourful décor, attractive scents, and intriguing vintage furniture. The shop has two bright and spacious rooms connected by an open doorway. The larger room is filled with natural goods, environmentally-friendly cosmetics and detergents, jewellery, and handicrafts made from recycled materials. In the smaller room, there is an assortment of organic food supplies, natural health products and bulk foods such as peanuts, dried fruits and beans. Upon entering the shop, one's first impression is that the products sold there carry prospects of

environmental and human wellbeing. Kate's Boutique allows customers to immerse themselves in the world of organic food, handicrafts and ecological gifts. The concept of immersion is defined as a lived and temporally-embodied experience that radiates through a person's consciousness, is felt through the body and throws the person into a world that is wholly constituted by an emotional-aesthetic experience (Carù & Cova, 2006). The unique atmosphere in Kate's boutique created a holistic experience that evoked various reactions, feelings and thoughts among customers. Figure 1 illustrates the design of the shop, which is based on making the most of multiple senses.

Eco Market is a Finnish social enterprise owned by more than 50 investors, including NGOs, societies, unions, and private individuals. Its mission is to promote sustainable production and consumption, and thus it uses the surplus from the business to advance these aims. The store is located in the city centre inside a small shopping mall. It carries ecological, vegetarian, and local products. The interior is plain and functional, and the aisles are spacious enough to allow unhurried movement and inspection of merchandise. The following excerpt from the field notes and Figure 2 below illustrate the store design in Eco Market.

Products are placed in perfect lines on the shelves. The packages look deliberately streamlined and convey an idea of sustainability. The salespeople extend friendly greetings to customers who enter the shop. ... I notice a pleasant aroma, presumably from the sustainable products for sale. ... A young male salesperson greets me and asks if I needed help. I feel like I am respected, and I respect this calm personal service. (Field notes, Eco Market, 20 November 2018)



Figure 1. The interior of Kate's Boutique.



Figure 2. The interior of Eco Market.

Tea Room is a tearoom and shop that offers a wide range of tea blends developed ‘in house’ by the company, and pastries and cake baked on site. It is owned by an entrepreneur who describes her business as one adhering to ecological values by avoiding waste and recycling everything and to social values by employing people who have difficulties obtaining jobs or education. An Art Nouveau-style historical house, built in 1904, provides a unique location filled with sensual treasures. Respect for the history and tradition of the house is clearly visible, although the interior has been converted from a residence for municipal government officials into a tea house. The house is surrounded by a courtyard covered with lush vegetation. The trees are an essential part of the site, especially in summer, when the scent and gentle rustling of the leaves create tranquil, pleasant bodily sensations and experiences. Respect for the old furniture and décor creates an atmosphere and spirit that is viewed as an antithesis of resource wastefulness and ecological negligence. Figure 3 shows the unique house and its courtyard.

A quotation from the field notes depicts the servicescape in Tea Room as follows:

A female member of the staff waves and says, “Good morning” as I enter the Tea Room. The charming interior of the old house feels warm and welcoming. The scent of tea feels pleasant. I receive kind and respectful service and assistance when choosing among the flavoured tea. The polite waitress serves tea while I look at the scenery through a beautiful old window. At two other tables, two young women silently enjoy their tea and pastries, each at their own pace. All the customers who enter the shop are acknowledged, greeted and treated respectfully. (Field notes, Tea Room, 20 November 2018)



**Figure 3.** The historical house and courtyard of Tea Room.

In the following, we explore how these three retail contexts convey various ethical cues that translate ethical ideology into a consumption experience. Essentially, these servicescapes do so in terms of three major themes: a multisensory environment, nostalgic temporality and reciprocal care.

### ***A multisensorial environment – aesthetic cues in the retail space***

The consumption experiences in the three shops involved cues appealing to consumers' various senses. Despite the small sizes of the shops and the close proximity of the salespeople, the customers felt at ease to browse and explore products and shop without being irritated by pushy sales staff. Appealing products and packaging; organic, sustainable or recycled materials, and creative décor in the shop interiors stirred the imagination and generated interest and inspiration among the customers. Similar to Strati's (1999) findings, our data show how various bodily sensations arouse emotions and create human knowledge, which, in turn, inform consciousness. Thus, bodily and sensory realities have an eminent meaning for consumption experiences in these servicescapes.

The different retail spaces provided various socio-material solutions and stories that invited consumers to engage in ethical reflection. Ethical consumption in these stores was produced through the presence of ethical sensorial cues and the absence of cues antithetical to them. Ethical ideologies were manifested by the environmentally friendly and socially just products available on the shelves of the shops and the moral, social and ecological values communicated by product appearance, eco-labels, and package designs. Locally grown food, organic food, healthy products, and domestic products

adhered to these values and were contrasted with products imported from other countries or mass products that did not signal ethical qualities. A male participant described his experience in the following way:

There was somehow a peaceful atmosphere. I felt like it was a compassionate, small, modern shop where you can purchase fresh and local foods, including traditional sweets. I believe that the slogan displayed in the shop window, "Good for people and nature", suits this shop quite well given the eco-friendly products and organic food they sell here. I recognized that it was an eco-friendly shop on the basis of the environmentally friendly brands and products. I really respect this kind of shop. (Kate's Boutique, Male, 25 years old)

Visual cues and material substantiation such as extensive package information, including the country of origin and clearly marked price tags, gave an impression that this shop supports ethical consumption. Through their material and non-material characteristics, the products on the shelves communicated ethical ideology and indicated that the retailer stands for resistance to mass-produced commodities and pure economic efficiency (Thompson & Arsel, 2004). Sometimes, a lack of cues indicating ethical ideology led participants to ruminate about the sustainability of the products. The following conversation reflects confusion caused by the absence of cues communicating social and moral values:

I'm deciding on the various types of tea. I'm thinking whether this could be more visible, ... compared to that of Papu, ... another coffee shop. ... They very clearly show where the coffee is from, who collected the coffee beans and how they attempt to prepare the coffee ethically or as ethically as possible, or at least they try to achieve that. ... So, I believe that when people come here, they may believe that, say, they are doing something ethically good when purchasing tea. But, I do not know if this is so. ... I do not know where they are from; they are probably local products, these cakes and other stuff. ... I was left wondering whether this a kind of place that also emphasizes ethics. (Tea Room, Female, 63 years old)

In line with the common ideal of convenience in daily shopping, consumers' understanding of the possibilities of ethical consumption in Eco Market was constructed by the shop's plain décor and layout and with ranges of products featuring organic labels and brands displayed through visual cues on packages. A female participant expressed the power of materialistic simplicity in conveying ethical ideology in the following way:

I am sure about the products. There are definitely plenty of organics and such. So, perhaps because there were no brightly displayed ads, like those in many other places, like apparel stores, with everything extra. ... So, the simplicity probably means that the products are so good that they hardly need to be embellished. (Eco Market, Female, 24 years old)

In Eco Market, a neutral store design communicating an ethical ideology is materialised through unpainted wood and burlap, an absence of plastic, and colours that are close to nature, which create feelings that the products themselves meet high standards. The material environment convincingly communicates that Eco Market must be a store that adheres to ecological, social and moral values. Consumption experiences were nurtured by apparent cues such as the aesthetic appearance of packaging, vegetables, and fruit (with some, for example, described as 'truly pretty apples') and the natural materials and plain décor.

The aestheticization of servicescapes, created through sensorial atmospherics featuring an ethical ideology, is implemented in various ways in the three shops. Eco Market

represents a practical, functional and rational stage for consumption experiences; the natural materials, functional layout, plain décor and neutral scents were interpreted as 'nothing special', communicating moral values such as frugality. A pleasant scent reminded customers that 'natural things smell nice'. Tea Room, selling tea in a wooden Art Nouveau-style house, provided a genuine multisensorial consumption experience. Both the beautiful house full of tea scents and the entrance, garden and courtyard with outbuildings furnished as small tearooms formed a scene that appealed to all senses, as described by a participant:

Here, you can see various antique things, such as pretty furniture. ... This is a harmoniously coloured space, calmly coloured. ... And, there are soft colours and shapes. There are various shapes. ... Here, there is nothing angular, like in a high-tech, hyper-super cafe; this is quite the opposite. ... The windows also probably contribute to that. ... These are old windows and somewhat open. Somehow, light comes through these in a pleasant way. ... You can see a green colour through the windows, so you may not believe that we are in the middle of a city. ... I really enjoy this. Maybe you sort of descend to a place, like to some old place, or this house somehow glows with such an atmosphere. (Tea Room, Female, 63 years old)

In Kate's Boutique, the multisensory play of diverse scents, décor, materials, music, tastes, and handcrafted products combined to create a comprehensive experience. The mixture of different scents of fresh bread, chocolate, coffee, and tea turned the attention from sight to the sense of smell. In particular, scents and fragrances have the power to evoke emotionally charged memories of similar smells from long ago (Holbrook & Schindler, 2003, p. 112). Old-fashioned music played in the background, strengthening the feeling of a return to the past and distancing customers from the responsibilities of their everyday lives. In turn, bread and juice tastings stimulated the sense of taste. The sensually rich environment made people smell, hear, taste and touch the products, browse around the shop, and simply feel the environment. A female informant said the following:

There were a couple of small shelves displaying, for example, spice and herb jars, traditional sweets and that kind of stuff. Everything was interesting and sympathetic, so I stayed there browsing and fiddling with the products. Somehow, everything was packed so elegantly. I felt like browsing, fiddling, touching and trying everything. Everything was so aesthetically pleasing. Somehow, the whole spectrum of colours was present there. (Kate's Boutique, Female, 25 years old)

The interview quotation above describes how sensual perception generates embodied action along with multisensory images within customers. These internal images can be either historical imagery, recalling an event that actually occurred, or fantasy imagery, experienced as a mental phenomenon (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). The different sensual perceptions seemed to mix with each other in a holistic experience called the synaesthetic character of sensual perception, in which the act of seeing influences other senses, such as hearing and smelling (Joy & Sherry, 2003). Although different, the three retail servicescapes are all multisensory places that are close to nature and that resonate with personality and uniqueness. In these stores, the consumption experience is personal and embodied, and thus it is sometimes hard to articulate. Essentially, the multisensoriality, the visual images of the interiors, the presence of material objects signifying ethicality and the absence of materials such as plastic represented moral, social and ecological values that fostered embodied consumption experiences.

### ***Nostalgic-ethical cues in time***

The three shop servicescapes featured several references to past times advocating traditional values and moral norms, thus referring to consumption experiences that build on feelings mediated by the sensed connections to locality and history. Material artefacts such as traditional handicrafts, locally produced old-fashioned farm products and vintage furniture and décor communicated nostalgia that resonated with consumers' own memories, as exemplified in the following statement:

I really like the vegetable shelf because somehow it reminds me of my grandmother's place and the countryside. In my opinion, the shop resonates with a kind of freshness and local production. (Kate's Boutique, Female, 25 years old)

This bohemian servicescape, which appeared socially unconventional in an artistic way, created an experience steeped in nostalgia and a kind of historical stratification. The orchestration of vintage décor, antique furniture, and old-fashioned music and the profusion of handcrafted products of different forms, colours, textures and scents created a unique atmosphere that conveyed a feeling of going back in time. It brought back childhood memories from summer trips to the countryside and generated fantasy imagery related to old-fashioned village shops. The nostalgic experiences depicted the past times as genuine, filled with proper moral values. The interviewees made comparisons to home, the countryside and their grandmothers' homes when describing their experiences in the shops, for example, as follows:

In a way, it felt like returning to the past because of an old-fashioned hit playing in the background, in which a female vocalist was singing softly. The walls were covered with floral wallpaper, which was similar to wallpaper that my grandmother has in her place. ... Somehow, the shop conveys the feeling that you really are shopping in an old-fashioned general store. (Kate's Boutique, Female, 21 years old)

Small-scale production and retailing resonating with the past communicate trust and increase expectations in terms of environmental and social responsibility (Todd & Peloza, 2014). The theme of nostalgia in ethical consumption relates to a feeling of being connected to other important entities, such as a community, a place, a culture or society in general (Papaoikonomou et al., 2012). In the following conversation, a female informant describes the cultural and historical associations and her embodied experiences:

This is lovely, and somehow, the surroundings are Finnish. And, well, I'm not sure if it has to do with the place, but yes, it does connect to the place. I like the way in which [localness] is visible because it means a lot to me, ... because I am a native. ... It is all somehow such a glorious place. A street plan of [the city] in the 1880s or teas named after [neighbourhoods in the city] are on display. ... I like that an awful lot ... because the surroundings are so wonderful and historical. And, it is perhaps a similar feeling, like that when you are walking in a museum, in a mansion, or at some old sites anywhere in the world. ... So, you get a wonderful feeling of old times and maybe also a longing for the old times. (Tea Room, Female, 24 years old)

Referring to Goulding's (2001) existential and aesthetic types of nostalgia, the experiences in Tea Room and Kate's Boutique were characterised by romantic and aestheticised features of nostalgia based on an interest in history, an admiration for the arts, romantic

identification, and a sense of a loss of these things in contemporary society. Here, the feeling of nostalgia is related to an awareness of environmental destruction, the loss of aesthetics in contemporary life, and a search for a more meaningful and durable way of living and consuming.

Furthermore, the drive to consume differently by preferring recycled items to new commodities was tied to questions of pleasure and aesthetics. At times, customers described the 'thrill' of 'discovering' inspiring handicrafts and objects. Many of the participants talked about the authenticity and feeling of being connected to the past through old material objects and old-style food products. Based on its location in a historical building, Tea Room was viewed as holding on to traditional materials and furniture and thus manifesting ideals of recycling and the circular economy. Eco Market displayed a connection to the past through its simple wooden shelves and humble interior. The power of materiality was evident, as some informants felt that Kate's Boutique was reminiscent of an old-fashioned village store even though they had never visited such a shop before.

In the concept of nostalgia, history and past times are viewed adoringly through rose-tinted glasses. Conversely, consumers' preference for ethical consumption choices might be interpreted as a longing for roots. Vintage furniture, wooden décor and old-fashioned farm products signal the ethicality of past times, offering evidence of an appreciation for nature and respect for tradition. These short stories not only tell about the products for sale but also offer customers a sense of continuity and a means to construct their identity through their consumption choices (Goulding, 2001). However, the picture that is drawn from the past is more imagined than it is real. A nostalgic atmosphere constructs a historical stratification that evokes memories of past experiences from childhood that perhaps inspire customers. This striving for nostalgic consumption encourages consumers to engage with the producer or origin of the product, to demand more value and quality, and to push for healthier products accompanied by good and friendly service. Kate's Boutique is challenging the modern conditions of production and consumption by providing an alternative pattern of food distribution, and the connection with local producers conveys an experience of a more natural way of life. Tea Room is located in a house that carries stories that are at least partly familiar to many local residents: 'the mayor used to live in this house' and 'the owner of the tea house has performed an ethical act by reviving the interiors and opening the place to the public'.

I just remember the story of [the house], ... for example, that the mayor lived here, and all those stories about this house and what happened here. ... But, I am interested in the history of the whole house, who built it and what happened here earlier. ... I do not know the stories, but I believe that this house carries stories. ... Perhaps the atmosphere is part of the history.  
(Tea Room, Female, 63 years old)

Thus, in these places, ethical consumption can be interpreted as a way to revive lifestyles of the past by preferring old-fashioned food products and experiences in a quest for stories and history, all of which are viewed as a morally correct way of life (Papaoikonomou et al., 2012). This material environment disconnects consumers from the realities of their everyday life, producing nostalgic and authentic meanings of ethical consumption.

### ***Care – social relationships and reciprocity***

The closeness between customers and the proximity to the shop owner-entrepreneur aroused a spirit of cooperation among the customers in the servicescapes. In Kate's Boutique, for example, reciprocal care arose as the customers responded with understanding when the salesperson informed them that the store had run out of organic eggs or raw milk. In everyday moments such as this, reflecting moral values of empathy and respect, the emotional and moral attachment aspect of care is actualised. This was regarded as being in contrast to large supermarkets built on the principles of self-service and efficiency. Overall, the possibility for friendly and casual conversation led to cooperation and mutual trust between the customers and the staff. Random encounters and casual conversation respond to customers' intrinsic social needs and desire to belong, which are considered fundamental necessities for psychological and social wellbeing (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The following quotation shows how a female informant felt reciprocity:

I feel here a kind of atmosphere like that of relaxation, that you are not just coming in. Like, I just quickly have a cup of tea or coffee and walk away, and this means that this place allows the possibility for sociality and communality. By that I mean that I could have long conversations with people and chat with them or perhaps simply read a book. ... And, maybe, ... it is this place that allows for such activity. (Tea Room, Female, 63 years old)

Care was embedded in the way that each customer entering the doorway of Tea Room was personally greeted and familiarised with the shop and the products. Ordinary small talk between a customer and a salesperson frequently turned into a deeper discussion covering issues related to health, wellbeing or product origins. The customers were able to hear the discussions between the salespeople and other customers, which increased the feeling of trust and affinity between customers and staff even if there was no likelihood of more intimate conversations. The salespeople's physical appearance reinforced the social atmosphere, for example, in the following manner:

I really like that the sales staff didn't wear uniforms and that they were dressed in normal clothes. ... I got the impression that I could easily approach the sales assistants and ask for help and for information about the products they sell in the shop. ... I think that the salespeople are committed and stand behind the products they sell there. (Kate's Boutique, Male, 25 years old)

A sense of community characterised the ethical ideology of the store as the sales staff supported the same values as the shop owner did. Additionally, customers' sensation of being trusted strengthened the feeling that the entrepreneur was committed to promoting fair business and ethical consumption. The sales assistants and the way in which payments were handled in Tea Room embedded trust: table service and customers paying their bills when they left the tearoom. The physical appearance of the sales assistants and the conscientious style of service encounters embedded the ethical ideology and moral, ecological and social values adhered to by the entrepreneur.

The social values appeared to intertwine with the aesthetics in the notion of care. The servicescape atmosphere and aesthetics also conveyed moral values, trust, empathy, sensitivity, and a convivial attitude towards customers, which, in their narratives, the

interviewees connected to their consumption experiences. The shop's social and ecological agenda, expressed by aesthetic cues, may influence how customers live out social relationships there. Hence, the ethical ideology expressed in the shop influences how customers perceive social relationships there and how they experience social encounters.

Care was also manifested in terms of inclusiveness, which was embedded in the shops' ambience, products, and customers and in the social interactions taking place there. One interviewee expressed inclusiveness in terms of gender:

Concerning such details, I consider it important that the toilets are gender inclusive. ... It is not a big deal for many people, but for me, it symbolizes that the founder of the place or staff of the place care about things like this, and it is important that the staff of the shop are not in a way homogenous. In other words, ... like, if there is some electronics store, then there are always guys, and if it is a beauty shop, then there are always female staff members. (Tea Room, Female, 24 years old)

However, retail place aesthetics that manifest care can be restrictive and thus inhibit some customers from participating in the social encounters and relationships offered by the shop. Then, care is not fulfilled unless there is a fit between the person's sense of self or emotional state and the place: 'you have to look like a person who fits in this kind of place'. A feeling of exclusion can be caused by physical or social cues in the servicescape that connect the place to certain marginal groups: 'these ecological stores should look like shops for all, instead of appealing only to the greenies'. Then, a servicescape is seen as a place inviting only people possessing certain qualities, i.e. 'those who are better off and happy, not people like me'.

Consequently, ethical consumption intertwines with care and social relationships, as consumers want not only to access certain products but also to meet and chat with salespeople. In Eco Market, the employees were frequently described as discreet and modest, ready to give information on the products if requested and not plying customers with sales talk. While this aspect was interpreted as belonging to the plain and simple eco-store concept, one interviewee regarded this lack of social interaction as inconsistent with her desires and expectations. Although the lack of social interaction was conspicuous, the element of care resided in subtle cues that led customers to understand that advice was available when needed: 'the atmosphere is pleasant and calm; the salesperson's contact was unobtrusive and avoided imposing anything'.

Ethical ideology was embedded in the way that the polite and friendly salespeople enjoyed their work. This signalled that the entrepreneur cares for her employees and that her leadership style expresses social values. The owner-entrepreneur of Tea Room expressed love for her products and responsibility for her employees and customers as major values, thus embodying care:

Well, we have actually had this basic idea the entire time – that great tea should be available to everybody. And, this is why we aim to keep the threshold as low as possible, so that all kinds of customers may come here, including those who drink bagged tea and coffee. ... I do not see why it should be a sort of stimulant only for certain people.

I am personally deeply in love with this product, and this has been of immense importance to me for years; I have found a secret world of tea. This kind of love for the product and for the fact that the customers give us the opportunity to promote this message [are important]. ...

And, of course, such a responsibility is, too. . . . Sometimes, the responsibility feels really heavy when I think about the fact that 8 people are employed . . . and when I think about the fact that these people's lives are largely tied to this [work] . . . and that I'm able to ensure employment for these people and perhaps something more, giving employment to more people. (Tea Room, Entrepreneur)

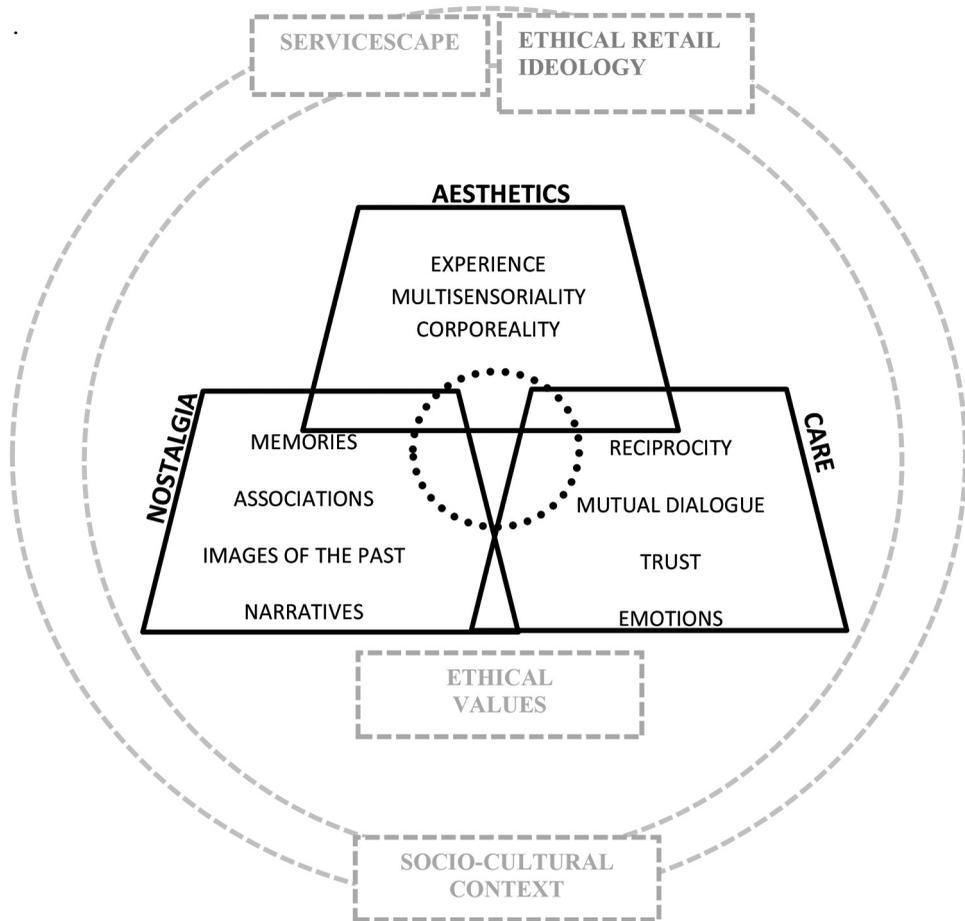
Overall, the sociable and caring atmosphere that manifested the ethical ideology of these retail servicescapes was related to a confluence of cooperation and trust. An experience in which consumers feel that they are caring for others and, simultaneously, are cared for themselves might encapsulate the core of ethical consumption. The notion of care extends beyond social relationships to esteem for nature and the planet. Accordingly, care is embodied in the ways in which a shop represents social, ecological and moral values, such as respect for natural and pure food products.

## Discussion

The analysis of the field data displays the potential of ethical cues in servicescapes to serve as key means of feeding consumption experiences and ethical consumption to consumers. Notably, our informants drew upon a wide array of multisensorial cues, expressed dynamism in the time frame through which these cues were contemplated, and touched on deep moral values in the form of reciprocal social relationships and care. Thus, we conclude that the transmission of ethical ideology through material and discursive cues into consumption experiences in the types of retail servicescapes explored here can be understood via three overlapping themes – aesthetics, nostalgia and care. Our study in three specific servicescapes shows how these themes function as sources of embodied consumption experiences in physical places and provide sources of meaning construction with regard to ethical consumption (Figure 4).

The analysis of these particular retail servicescapes highlights the close interconnectiveness of ethical ideology with consumption experiences encompassing themes of aesthetics, nostalgia and care. First, consumers shopping in a place adhering to an ethical ideology may gain pleasure and aesthetic gratification from the look, feel and taste of products that convey moral, social and ecological values. The mere awareness that products are sustainable can give customers aesthetic pleasure and joy (Gopaldas, 2014). Our ethnographic explorations in these stores revealed consumption experiences involving a multisensory dimension based on aesthetic sensations, corporeality and symbolic meanings, invoking a deepened understanding of ethical consumption. These findings resonate with the study by Low and Davenport (2007), who examined legal, voluntary, virtual and integrated ethical spaces and highlighted the importance of integrated ethical space, which refers to a place that reflects an organisation's ethical values involving concern for human and environmental wellbeing and where people encounter not only ethical products but also ideas and other people (Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011).

Second, consumption experiences and ethical reflection among our informants in the three retail servicescapes embodied a timeframe combining the past, present and future. While the premise of ethical consumption is to save the planet for future generations, the moral norms guiding ethical consumption debates are often deeply connected to past times. Accordingly, authenticity and aestheticised nostalgia (Goulding, 2001) in servicescapes function as a symbolic bridge between the past and the present and between



**Figure 4.** The embeddedness of ethical ideology in the servicescape and themes of consumption experiences.

consumption and production. In particular, ethical consumption seeks to cherish the connections between producers and consumers by striving for supply chain transparency (Barnett et al., 2005). This connection is functional in terms of ethical products, and culturally signified temporal dimensions play an important role. Nostalgia connects consumers to past times, creates historical roots, and builds bridges between people from different parts of the world. For instance, the atmosphere of an old village shop carrying local products created experiences that resonated with customers' nostalgic longing for better bygone days and evoked a desire to maintain traditions. Likewise, consumption experiences were built around the look and feel of organic products, traditional hand-crafts, locally produced old-fashioned farm products, and a historically layered retail environment. These findings are consistent with the observation that ethically oriented consumers participating in consumption communities are motivated by a willingness to revive and reproduce the past (Papaoikonomou et al., 2012). Thus, consumers recreate their own memories and use them to make their ethical consumption meaningful.

Third, care, defined as mutual dependency between people and the environment, is a prime component of ethical consumption in the retail servicescapes that we explored. Accordingly, while consumers consider taking care of other people and the environment in consumption situations, they also expect to be taken care of. The servicescape with its multiple material and discursive cues has an indispensable role in conveying the feeling that customers are genuinely cared for. In our study, embodied experiences of care were realised in customer service situations that mediated a feeling of the shops' dedication to consumer wellbeing. In these shops and for these consumers, ethical consumption is a matter of acting out moral, social and ecological values through consumption while simultaneously deriving pleasure from consuming products and shopping in servicescapes that adhere to ethical ideology. These pleasures not only relate to a new notion of self-interest suggested by Soper (2007, 2008) but also involve possibilities for consumers to sense that they can actively practise solidarity with and responsibility for distant others and for the environment through their consumption actions. These findings resonate with Kozinets and Handelman (2004), who aptly state that human nature entails, inseparably and simultaneously, both altruistic and egoistic inclinations. Furthermore, the findings portray care as a multidimensional and reciprocal construction involving care for other people and for the environment, nature and animals, providing a rich and detailed empirical elaboration of how care is articulated in the retail servicescape. Thus, this study complements previous efforts to capture the dynamic and multidimensional nature of care in consumption (Shaw et al., 2017).

### **Theoretical contributions on ethical retail ideology**

This study contributes to the understanding of ethical retail ideology by drawing on theoretical conversations on ethical consumption and ideological servicescapes. It challenges the assumption that ethical consumption consists of rational decisions made by consumers as isolated individuals, and thus it expands the culturally informed research tradition concerning ethical consumption as shaped by cultural and social systems and processes (Belk et al., 2005; Chatzidakis et al., 2012; Fuentes & Sörum, 2019). We showed how, in a particular cultural and social context, the various socio-material aspects of the retail servicescape nurture ethical consumption possibilities. In the three retail servicescapes explored, a pleasant, sensuously rich ambience in connection with ethical cues conveying moral, ecological and social values aroused ethical consumption meanings. Accordingly, while ethics concern values, physical places can manifest these values, and ethics can interconnect consumption experiences.

### ***Embeddedness of ethical ideology in the servicescape***

We suggest that a multisensorial environment, temporality and reciprocal care are essential dimensions in a retail servicescape because they allow consumers to negotiate and construct what ethical consumption means in everyday consumption contexts. Coles and Crang (2011) claimed that ethical consumption is enacted through places and that, consequently, the ethics of consumption is a matter of not only the relations between consumers and commodities but also the places where they come together. In particular, retail servicescapes, such as the small shops in our study, are important spaces because

they shape how ethical consumption is entangled with other commercial and consumer impulses. Thus, we expand the understanding of the servicescape as entailing physical and symbolic cues (Bitner, 1992) and social features (Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011) by highlighting the servicescape as an engaging sociomaterial context for ethical consumption. We propose that ethical consumption is accompanied by spatial, experiential, caring and hedonistic aspects in addition to features such as rationality, politics and awareness. This notion problematises the decontextualised nature of much research into ethical and green consumerism (Devinney et al., 2010) because consumers experience ethical ideology as conveyed through cues that particular consumer groups experience in particular retail formats (Megicks et al., 2012).

### ***Ethical retail ideology shapes embodied consumption experiences***

This study indicates that in certain servicescape types, a profound and dynamic relationship exists between ethical consumption and aesthetics, highlighting that these two spheres are intrinsically interlinked through consumers' embodied experiences. Szmigin and Carrigan (2005) proposed that the aesthetic dimension of ethical consumption is prevalent throughout the advertising of ethical goods (Szmigin et al., 2007). Our study sheds light on how ethical consumption and aesthetics combine in consumption experiences and ways of making sense of the things around them. The link between ethical consumption and aesthetics is not only disseminated through commercial messages but also deeply rooted in the shared cultural meanings of these two spheres. This supports the postmodern view that the connection between aesthetics and ethics is synchronic rather than causal and that aesthetics and ethics are related via their interwoven interdependence, with the interfaces between these two spheres manifesting in distinct ways in different real-world contexts (Low & Davenport, 2007). These findings indicate that aesthetic, emotional and perhaps hedonic aspects can be inherent in ethical consumption, highlighting a nuanced view of ethical consumption as it emerges in consumers' everyday lives.

Research on ethical consumer communities has revealed that social space is one of the key factors in creating and maintaining shared meanings and practices and for building communities with common goals (Clarke et al., 2008; Low & Davenport, 2007; Papaoikonomou et al., 2012; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007). A common space provides a moral foundation and a social context that supports individuals in collectively addressing shared ethical concerns. This study expands this view by showing that everyday shopping environments conveying an ethical ideology with material and discursive cues play a significant role in providing places for ethical consumption for those who are committed to the ideology in question. The provision of such a space is created in the dynamic interaction between consumption experiences and the surrounding visual, material, social and spatial environment, and these experiences include social interaction, sensations, corporeality, pleasure, and emotional experiences.

Nostalgia is defined as an emotion and attachment to a bygone era (Davis, 1979; Higson, 2014; Holbrook & Schindler, 2003) that allows consumers to feel a connection to important communities, places, cultures or societies (Papaoikonomou et al., 2012). Although nostalgia and the memories it evokes are often an important design theme in commercial environments, nostalgia has seldom been addressed in relation to ethical

retail ideology. Our study points out that aesthetic nostalgia (Goulding, 2001) in servicescapes can be connected to consumers' awareness of moral, ecological and social values and leads consumers to seek ethical solutions.

Social influences in servicescapes have been accounted for by the presence of other consumers and employees (Bitner, 1992) and their emotions (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003) or by a deep commitment to family and cultural values (Borghini et al., 2009). In accordance with previous research, our study shows that as a space embodying care, the servicescape allows reciprocal interaction and social relationships and makes it possible to nurture and attend to the needs of others. The social and the aesthetic intertwine, and care resides in sales assistants' appearance, gestures, and behaviours and in the values that become apparent in small aesthetic details in the servicescape. Our study highlights the role of entrepreneurs and the way they embody ethical values in supporting ethical consumption. The local, small-scale retail spaces in this study constituted servicescapes where ethical ideology is manifested through moral and social values such as trust, empathy, and sensitivity to the needs of others.

### ***Embodied consumption experiences as sources of meaning construction***

This study advances the existing literature on ideological servicescapes by introducing ethical ideology as a novel theme to studies that to date have focused on examining ideologies in brand retail contexts (Arnold et al., 2001; Borghini et al., 2009; Dion & Arnould, 2011). Focusing on ethical ideology is an important contribution as such because ethical values, conceived in a broad sense, have the potential to nurture sustainable societal, environmental and political development. In particular, our study highlights the significant role of the body in the creation of consumption experiences in such settings, detailing how embodied consumers make sense of the retail environment by immersing themselves in it through their bodies and interpreting the ethical cues through all their senses. Our study also points to the role of retailers and sales staff in embodying an ethical ideology; how they behave and communicate with customers embodies the ethical ideology and plays an important part in meaning-making processes. This insight enriches existing literature that has identified, for instance, how a charismatic creative director embodies luxury brand strategies (Dion & Arnould, 2011).

Tracking consumption experiences in these particular types of servicescapes manifesting ethical ideology thereby provides a novel understanding of the embodied nature of consumption experiences. Furthermore, instead of focusing on single elements, such as flyers (Arnold et al., 2001) or grand-scale physical spaces consisting of several sections (Borghini et al., 2009), we examine how a range of material and discursive cues play a role in communicating the ideological message. It seems that the provision of a rich, multi-dimensional, and intentionally moral and value-laden set of cues is a key element in successfully enacting an ethical ideology in these retail stores. The ethical cues provide 'anchoring points' that make values visible and comprehensible. Hence, by providing a place for embodied consumption experiences that demonstrate and enforce ideology (cf. Borghini et al., 2009), the retailer encourages a type of immersive experience that becomes meaningful and significant for the consumer, directing him/her towards sustainable consumption.

## Managerial implications

This study provides tools for designing servicescapes that embed an ethical ideology that enables consumers to engage in ethical consumption. Aesthetics, nostalgia, and care thematise consumption experiences in the servicescapes studied here (Borghini et al., 2009). We provide practical examples of how ethical ideology can be woven into servicescapes through moral, social and ecological values. A multisensorial environment appealing to all senses uses scents, colours, lights, and sounds; makes customers move in a certain way; and enables them to taste and otherwise experience the products. Such a servicescape can enforce and deepen the consumption experience and evoke ethical consumption.

In particular, our study emphasises the power of store design based on local tradition, customs, and history. Such an ideological servicescape approach can be viable for entrepreneurial retailers who base their businesses on sustainability or environmental and social values. Stories depicting the manufacture of products and local products from surrounding areas provide customers with a direct connection to producers and production, which is important for consumers pursuing ethical meanings. The comprehensive visibility of the company's values on many levels, that is, in the interior, in products and in customer service, strengthens the customer's commitment to the retailer.

Second, just like American Girl Place is a place where memories are created, revised, recovered and recycled (Borghini et al., 2009), our cases highlight the importance of nostalgia. Cues that allow people to memorialise and value the past might include images of previous generations or products and brands that were part of everyday life in a previous time. Care can take many forms and can be communicated socially and materially, for example, in how staff members greet and speak to others and by their appearance. Inclusive design can be manifested in cues welcoming everyone instead of cues signalling narrow inclusion.

Moreover, our cases illustrate how small retail shops owned by entrepreneurs devoted to certain values can play an important role in constructing ethical consumption possibilities. While ethical consumption also occurs in mass markets where it is about relying on strong, multinational branded images, we have illustrated how moral, social and ecological values can nurture ethical consumption in small, local and idiosyncratic retail places. These unique insights into how such servicescapes embed an ideological message that is not centred on a brand provide a novel view of the role of ideology and servicescapes.

## Limitations and further study

This study has portrayed how a multisensorial environment, temporality and reciprocal care in three specific servicescapes located in a particular cultural context are interwoven in embodied consumption experiences among consumers representing a certain social class and particular ethical norms and ideals. The three themes that emerged from the empirical data illustrate consumption experiences in retail contexts encompassing similar cultural features. Future studies should explore these themes in other types of retail spaces, such as supermarkets or branded chain stores, as well as in other cultural contexts and other consumer groups, and thus investigate the viability of aesthetics, nostalgia and care as dimensions of ethical consumption in various types of retail servicescapes.

Importantly, given the growth of online commerce, future studies should pay attention to how sensory cues manifesting ethics in physical retail places can be transferred to digital servicescapes (Nilsson & Ballantyne, 2014).

This study focused on ethical consumption experiences in physical places at the point of purchase. Future studies could examine the entire shopping process to tackle the question of how ethical retail ideology is connected to pre-purchase experiences on the one hand and product usage or post-purchase experiences on the other. Owing to its focus on consumption experiences, this study did not account for the agency and practical activities that consumers undertake. Thus, it is imperative for researchers to also examine how servicescape ethical retail ideologies, the cues manifesting them, and the three themes structuring the consumption experience relate to consumers' active participation and empowerment (Papaoikonomou & Alarcón, 2015) to enact ethical values.

To conclude, this paper highlights a new and intriguing aspect of ethical retail ideologies and servicescapes that provide stages of ethical consumption. In translating the discussion of ethical consumption into efficient large-scale action for a sustainable future (Devinney et al., 2010), perspectives of ethical consumption such as aesthetics, nostalgia, and care could serve as drivers of action and change.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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## Appendix

**Table A1.** List of interviewees.

Gender	Age	Profession	Shop visited
Male	21	University student	Kate's Boutique
Female	21	University student	Kate's Boutique
Female	22	University student	Kate's Boutique
Male	24	University student	Kate's Boutique
Male	24	Musician	Kate's Boutique
Male	25	Unemployed	Kate's Boutique
Female	25	Unemployed	Kate's Boutique
Male	26	Graphic designer	Kate's Boutique
Male	33	Programmer	Kate's Boutique
Female	54	Nurse	Kate's Boutique
Female	23	Student	Eco Market
Female	24	Student	Eco Market
Female	52	Public relations officer	Eco Market
Male	50	Development manager	Eco Market
Female	49	Landlady, investor	Eco Market
Female	27	Financial administration specialist	Eco Market
Female	28	University student	Tea Room
Female	63	Nursery school teacher	Tea Room
Female	24	Student	Tea Room
Male	38	Music teacher	Tea Room
Female		Entrepreneur, owner of Tea Room	Tea Room