

A STUDY ON THE STORE AMBIENCE FACTORS AND ITS EFFECT ON THE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE OF CONSUMERS AT SHOPPERS STOP IN PUNE CITY

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ABSTRACT

Indian retail market has observed tremendous potential growth in the recent decades, being one of major contributors in the GDP. The present study attempts to identify and analyse the store ambience factors which have considerable influence on the consumer's shopping experience. The responses were collected using convenience sampling method of 100 consumers at Shoppers Stop in Pune city and was analysed on the factors viz. lighting, music, scent, colour scheme, temperature, merchandise and width of aisles to detect their relationship with the shopping experience. Analysis was done using factor analysis and later on multiple regressions with the help of IBM SPSS 21 Version. The results of the hypothesis testing suggest that four out of the seven ambient factors viz. Colours scheme, lighting, temperature and merchandise factors significantly influences shopping experience of consumers. Lastly study discusses limitations and scope for future research.

Keywords: Organised Retail, Store Ambience, Merchandise, Consumers, Shopping Experience.

Introduction

A recent report of Urban Development, retailers are very well aware of the fact that the past few years have seen amplified Indian retail growth graph led largely by consumers in *Tier II* and *Tier III* cities instead of the metros. Organised retailing in these smaller towns and cities are estimated to grow at a staggering 50-60 % a year compared to 35-40 % in the large cities. These cities are fast emerging as India's new growth centres. Consumers of small towns are more involved in shopping from malls as they have more leisure time to spend. With the booming expansion of organised retail and mall culture over small towns, consumers buying behaviour and consumption pattern has changed drastically (Crushman & Wakefield, 2010). A growing middle class increasing disposable income as well as large and young consumer population led to rapid growth in the Indian Retail Market. According to a report by Price Water House Cooper (2011) customer experience is one of the critical success factors help define the winners in India's apparel market. From the time a customer enters the store till he/she leaves, he/she must have a pleasurable and worthy shopping experience across several touch points that include: Store ambience, merchandise, trial room, interaction with staff, billing at the point of sale (POS), after-sales experience.

The small town consumers are now becoming brand conscious. While searching for a quality branded product, consumer seeks enjoyable shopping experiences at retail store. Shopping malls have emerged as a prominent option for consumers to spend their spare time and disposable income during weekends with their family and friends. Many studies with respect to store environment has been done in context of shopping behaviour like purchase intention (Hussain & Ali, 2015); store image (Baker et al., 1994); store patronage (Kumar et al., 2010); consumer perception (Chen & Hsieh, 2011); impulse buying (Tendai & Crispin, 2009; Maymand & Ahmadinejad, 2011) and variety seeking (Mohan et al., 2012). But the dimension of store ambience and shopping experience was not yet explored and analysed by the researchers. So, the present study focuses on extending dimensions of the store ambience (Baker et al., 1986) cues like width of aisles and temperature and how these factors enhances shopping experience of the consumers.

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Shopping experience and store environment is an emerging research area in India but very limited to small towns specific studies in this area. Studies conducted (Hussian & Ali, 2015) in which they explained how retail store environment influences consumer's purchase intention; effects of store environment on customers' mood, on satisfaction, and purchase behavior are investigated (Spies, Hesse and Loesh, 1997).

While, (Sharma & Stafford, 1997) analysed the influence of store atmospherics on the level of persuasion induced by retail salespeople. Xu (2007) discussed the relationship between store environment and adult Generation Y consumers' emotional states leading to impulse buying. One more interesting study was conducted (Tendai & Crispen, 2009) to investigate the influence of instore shopping environment on impulsive buying among consumers. Another study (Kumar et. al, 2010) was conducted for correlating customer value with retail environment. (Chen and Hsieh, 2011) tried to find the effect of store atmosphere on customer behaviour response where they tried to analyse how store atmosphere viz. ambient, design and social factors influences consumers approach behavior and customer perception. Later on they analysed impact of perception on consumers shopping behaviour and lastly impact of customer characteristics on perception and behaviour was analysed. Maymand & Ahmadinejad (2011) examined the role of environmentally induced stimulation in influencing impulse buying.

(Mohan et. al 2012) explored the influence of store environment on variety seeking behaviour. Research that is most relevant to the present study is done by (Joshi and Kulkarni, 2012) in Pune city of western India. The study attempts to identify the factors which are perceived by consumers as important element of retail store ambience. However, the researcher did not establish the influence of these factors on shopping experience. So the above studies suggest that there is a gap exploring how these store ambience factors enhances consumers shopping experience in central India.

Conceptual Framework & Hypothesis

This portion presents hypothesis related to store ambience and consumers shopping experience. Further a model is proposed which investigates the influence of various store ambience factors like colour schemes, lighting, music, scent, temperature, merchandise, width of aisles etc. on shopping experience.

- **Store Ambience**

Research in the area of store environment has received great attention among academicians and practitioners as it has widely implemented by the retailers to attract more and more consumers in India.

Store Environment, as a noticeable factor, had been discussed by so many researchers who had focussed on basic concept about environment and psychology (Kotler, 1973; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Donovan & Rositer, 1982). However, later on researcher had analysed the relation and effect of various environmental factors with consumer buying behaviour.

Atmospherics in the retailing context refers to all the physical and non-physical elements of a store, which are within the retailer's control to enhance customers shopping experience in the store (Eroglu & Machleit, 1990).

Several researchers studied and analysed the environmental psychology by applying M-R Model (Anderson, 1986; Buckley, 1987; Dawson, Bloch, & Ridgway, 1990; Sherman & Smith, 1997).

Later on detailed body of knowledge and literature consisting of atmospheric cues were explained (Turley & Milliman, 2000). He classified Store environment into Exterior, General Interior, Store layout, Interior displays and Human variables.

While (Baker, 1987) classified store environmental cues into three viz. Ambient, Design and Social factors, which are further classified into temperature, noise, scent, cleanliness, colour, decoration, layout, traffic flow, music, lighting, service personnel, crowding etc.

- **Colour Schemes**

General psychology of an individual is to get interacted with the environment of the store, where he gets attracted by the colour scheme used in the store. As suggested in a research, colour may stimulate emotional response, affect persuasiveness, reflects prestige, and colour can certainly affect a consumer's overall perception of a product (Paul & Okan, 2011). Thus, colour is an integral element of corporate and marketing communications. It induces moods and emotions, influences perception and helps companies position or differentiate themselves from the competition (Aslam, 2006).

H₁: Colour schemes in the store positively influence the consumer's shopping experience.

▪ **Store Lighting**

Lighting is another important component of store ambience increasing the shopping experiences which needs to be addressed by the researchers. Lighting highlights and adds magnificence to the product which is displayed in the store.

Elton Mayo in his Hawthorne Experiment examined the relation between lighting and productivity. However, researchers explained the three aspects of lighting. First dimension of lighting is related to consumer behaviour; second dimension of lighting is product based which influences consumer behaviour. Under 'bright lighting' conditions products are more often examined and touched than under 'dim lighting' conditions (Areni & Kim, 1994; Summers & Hebert, 2001). So products which are displayed under bright lightings are more appealing than dim lighting. Another Important dimension of retail lighting is environment psychology model i. e S-O-R model (Mehrabain and Russell, 1974).

H₂: Lighting in the store positively influences the consumer's shopping experience.

▪ **Music**

Music is yet another powerful stimulus which acts as a trigger for retailers to attract and retain consumers in retail store.

Music is one important atmospheric ariable (and the most commonly examined; Garlin and Owen, in press) in creating an in-store experience and connecting directly with customers' emotions (Morrison and Beverland, 2003). Music if not properly played or not according to the taste of the consumer can create negative shopping experience of consumers. Bruner (1990) suggests that any musical composition is composed of at least three primary dimensions: a physical dimension (volume, pitch, tempo, and rhythm), an emotional tone, and a preferential dimension (the degree to which a shopper likes the music).

Although several researches in the area of music had been analysed (Milliman, 1982, 1986; Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990). These research had focussed on analysing the impact of music on consumer behavior. Mattila and wirtz (2001) found that when the arousal levels of ambient scent and background music matched, consumers' evaluations of the shopping experience were enhanced.

H₃: Music played in store positively influences consumer's shopping experience.

▪ **Scent**

Spangenberg, Crowley and Henderson (1996) defined ambient scent as "scent that is not emanating from a particular object but is present in the environment". Many researches has been done in the light of ambient scent in different ways. Some researcher focussed on analysing the scent in terms of product and brand evaluation (Bone and Jantrania, 1992; Mitchell, Kahn and Knasko, 1995; Morrin and Ratneshwar, 2000), whereas, some had focused in terms of stores evaluation (Spangenberg, Crowley and Henderson, 1996).

(Spangenberg et al., 1996) differentiated scent into three dimensions viz. quality of the scent, its arousing nature and its intensity. Gulas and Bloch (1995) framed a conceptual model on ambient scent and its relationship with approach avoidance behaviour of consumer.

Another study suggests the effect of scent on customer's evaluation of store environment (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001). They analysed the effect on three situations (no music/scent, pleasant low arousal music/scent and high arousal music/scent). The results of the study reveal that when ambient scent (low and high arousal) and ambient music (low and high arousal) were congruent with each other a positive interaction effects on approach behavior, pleasure, satisfaction and store evaluations were found.

H₄: Ambient scent in store positively influences consumer's shopping experience.

▪ **Temperature**

Temperature is a variable of atmosphere which creates desire to stay in a store. Generally, during summer season consumers prefer to visit and stay longer in that store which provides cool and comfortable ambience. Wakefield & Baker (1998) found insignificant influence of temperature levels on consumer stay time.

Whereas, many researches signifies that this factor increases the consumers stay time in a store resulting in more product evaluation and influenced buying decision. Very few researches have been done to evaluate the influence of temperature on summer impulse buying behaviour.

H₅: Temperature of the store positively influences consumer's shopping experience.

- **Merchandise**

Merchandise as a variable also contributes to influence consumer impulse buying decision while buying any product. A retailer can use merchandise as a creative tool to increase sales. The way the retailer present their merchandise converts the prospects into the buyer. Visual merchandising can be described as “everything the customer sees, both exterior and interior, that creates a positive image of a business and in attention, interest, desire and action on the part of the customer” (Bastow- Shoop et al., 1991).

Recently, a research has been done on finding the impact of visual merchandising on buying decision (Jain, Sharma and Narwal, 2012).

H₆: Merchandise of the store influences consumer’s shopping experience.

- **Width of Aisles**

An aisle is, in general, a space for walking with rows of seats on both sides or with rows of seats on one side and a wall on the other. Aisles can be seen in airplanes, certain types of buildings, and in certain types of passenger vehicles. Aisles can also be seen in shops, warehouses, and factories, where rather than seats, they have shelving to either side. Here, we are talking about the space for walking between the shelves in the retail stores. In retail stores, aisles containing products would be referred to either generically as merchandise aisles. This space is important factor while designing the store layout as it will ensure the proper and convenient flow of both, shoppers and light. A shopper feels uneasy while shopping where this space is less and he keeps on bumping another shopper. Moreover, a little more space between the shelves lets shopper to have easy and quick access to the products. Aisles width also makes sure the easy flow of light so as to make the product effectively visible.

- **Shopping Experience**

“The customer experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer’s involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, and spiritual)” (Gentile, Spiller, and Noci 2007,).

Shopping experience is influenced not only by controllable factors but also by factors which are beyond the control of retail. Creating a ‘wow’ shopping experience is the biggest challenge for the marketers. Backstrom & Johansson (2006); Das & Kumar (2009); Goswami (2008); had conducted research on shopping experience.

- **Research Objective**

The objective for the study is to identify and analyse the ambience factors which have influence on the shopping experience of the consumer.

Methodology

- **Research Methodology**

This study was conducted in Shoppers Stop in Pune City in India. The convenience sampling method was used to collect data from the 110 respondents (walk-in consumers) out of which 100 were found to be completely filled questionnaires and considered for further study. To ensure data collection only from genuine respondents it was decided to contact shoppers carrying minimum of one shopping bag while coming out of a retail store. The self-administered structured questionnaire was distributed among the respondents during the period of 30 days.

The responses were collected on 5-point likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree and 5 = Strongly Disagree. Questionnaire was divided into two sections in which first section was related to demographics of respondents while statements related to dependent and independent variables were included in second sections of the instrument. The research study is based on the descriptive research design. The data was analysed through statistical analysis as the data was found normal so parametric test with the help of IBM SPSS 21 version has been applied. The factor analysis on the principal component method is applied to check the loadings of the variable components. Finally, the regression analysis has been conducted to determine the causal relationship among the predictor and criterion variables.

- **Research Framework (Figure- 1)**

Data Analysis & Interpretations

- **Demographic Profile of Respondents**

As described in the table, majority of the respondent belongs to the age group of 15-25 years (43%) due to their tendency to visit more often. 63% of them are female shoppers at the store. Student, households and service class form the majority of respondents (73%). (Ref Table- 1)

- **Research Instrument**
 - **Measures**

For conducting the survey structured questionnaire with 5 point likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used. It was divided into two parts in the first part demographic information of the respondent like age, gender etc. were collected. In the second part of questionnaire statements related to impulse buying, social and situational factors were given to the respondents.

- **Reliability**

The study uses internal consistency with Cronbach alpha to measure the reliability of the research instrument with Cronbach alpha. Alpha coefficient ranges in value from 0 to 1 and is used to explain the reliability of the factors which are used in questionnaire. Although there is no lower limit but it is generally seen that closer the value of alpha coefficient towards 1, more will be the reliability of the instrument. This study's questionnaire had an acceptable Cronbach's alpha which ranges from .745 - .880 (Ref Table- 2)

- **KMO and Bartlett's Test**

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy for store ambience factor showed a value of 0.719 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (approx. Chi square = 1278.540) also found at acceptable level. (Ref Table- 3)

- **Factor Analysis**

Special care was taken in the present study to formulate a content valid instrument. So, Factor analysis with principle component method was applied to test the loadings of various factors. The Factor Analysis results obtained advocates that all the components are valid as they have been properly loaded on identified factors.

In the factor analysis 0.6000 values have been taken for a proper loading of components. It dictates of a proper and clear instrument and validity of an instrument. The data reflects that all the factors and their components are valid and hence, considered for further analysis. All the factors of store ambience and shopping experience are properly loaded on individual component. (Table- 4)

- **Regression Analysis**

All the variables were made to undergo through linear regression analysis at 5% level of significance. The outcomes illustrates that the factors Colour Scheme (X1), Lighting (X2), Temperature (X5) and merchandise (X6) are significant (sig. < 0.05) and have direct influence on the consumer's shopping experience.

Whereas, the other factors considered namely Music (X3), Scent (X4) and Width of Aisles (X7) failed to show significant influence on shopping experience of a consumer (sig. p. > 0.05) and shows indirect relationship with the dependent variable.

Result & Discussion

The results of the hypothesis testing suggest that four out of the seven ambient factors viz. Colours scheme, lighting, temperature and merchandise factors significantly influences shopping experience of consumers. Colour scheme applied in the retail store enhances positive shopping experience of consumers. Our result contradicts the study of (Hussain & Ali, 2015) where the color of the retail chain outlets does not impact consumers while shopping. The contradiction may be due to difference in sample location and sample size as (Hussain & Ali, 2015) conducted study at Pakistan considering 300 sample size.

Colours used in the store should be pleasant to the eyes of the consumers. It increases the footfalls of the stores leading to increasing the sales. Another factor which is found significant in this study is lighting. Interestingly, our findings are similar to the study of Hussain & Ali, 2015. Sometimes retailers use different lights to enhance the product displayed. Lighting affects shopping experience by enhancing beauty of the product displayed in the store.

Temperature is another factor that plays significant role in consumers shopping experience. Results are not in line with Hussain & Ali, 2015 study suggesting that temperature has almost no impact on the consumer purchase intention. Extreme temperature i.e. too high or too low may create negative feelings among consumers' mind and leads to consumer dissatisfaction. Consumers prefer to visit that retail store where they get comfortable store temperature.

Lastly, it was found that merchandise also plays significant role in enhancing consumers' shopping experience.

Our findings are similar to the findings of Khandai et al., 2012 study, where they found that visual merchandising practices certainly influences respondents' impulse buying behavior. While, factors like music, scent and width of aisle does not play significant role in enhancing consumers' shopping experience. Our study is partially contradicting with Hussain and Ali (2015) findings, that shows scent, lighting, and display/layout have a positive influence on consumers' purchase intention; whereas music and colour have insignificant impact on consumers' purchase intention. They also found that temperature has almost no impact on the purchase intention of the consumers. **(Ref Table- 5)**

Conclusion

The Retail industry has been continuously fascinating and urging the consumers to shift from the unorganised to organized retail outlets. This is merely because of the fact that shopping in these organised retail outlets is more delightful and mind relaxing. The marketers put struggles to encompass such factors in the outlet that provides a better shopping experience to the consumers. The purpose of this research paper is to identify the store ambience factor responsible for the shopping experience of the consumers and to examine the most influential factors.

The results obtained through various analysis performed on the collected data clearly induces that store ambience does have influential effect on the shopping experience. On visiting a store, a consumer unconsciously interacts with the store characteristics which direct there in-store emotions like pleasure, excitement, contentment, pride, and satisfaction. Evident from the study, interestingly, colour scheme, lighting, temperature and merchandise in the store provides positive stimulus to enhance consumer's shopping experience, while music, scent & width of aisles do not have considerable influence. The possible reason for this may be that while shopping, the background music played and the scent becomes secondary because other factors like lighting and merchandise becomes dominant while choosing a product. Temperature itself is dominant as it effects the duration of time spent by consumer in the store.

Limitations and Scope for Future Research

Apart from numerous contributions, study suffers from some limitations too. Firstly, Study was conducted at Pune city of Maharashtra State only that is one of the limitations. Study at different geographical location may give different outcome, so future studies can be conducted at other locations. The current study illustrates the direct relationship among the store ambience factors and shopping experience, while making no consideration on the mediated factors like individual effect of ambient factors on emotional response and its influence on shopping experience. Further studies may be conducted to identify which factor leads to positive or negative emotions and thus, good or bad shopping experience. Study adopted survey method to collect data; future research can be done by conducting experiments on real live settings on other products.

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Table 1: Distribution of Respondents

Item	Description	Frequency	Per Cent
Age (in Years)	15 – 25	43	43
	26 – 35	21	21
	36 – 45	18	18
	46 – 55	3	3
	56 – 65	15	15
	66 above	0	0
	Total	100	100
Item	Description	Frequency	Per Cent
Gender	Male	35	35
	Female	65	65
	Total	100	100
Item	Description	Frequency	Per Cent
Occupation	Businessman	15	15
	Service Class	18	18
	Professional	11	11
	House Hold	22	22
	Students	34	34
	Total	100	100

Table 2: Instrument and Reliability

Items	Cronbach'sAlpha	
Shopping Experience	My shopping experience was very good in this store.	.782
I had an excellent shopping experience in this store.		
I am pleased with my shopping experience in this store.		
Colour Scheme	Colour Scheme of the store stimulated my shopping experience.	.767
My shopping experience was pleasing due the colour scheme of the store.		
I feel that colour scheme affected my shopping experience in the store.		
Lighting		.832
My shopping experience was stimulated by the lighting effect in the store.		
Appropriate store lighting affected my shopping experience.		
Music	Music played in the store was stimulating my shopping experience.	.774
I had good shopping experience because of music played in the store.		
My shopping experience was improved by the music played in the store.		
Scent	Scent/ in the store improved my shopping experience.	
My shopping experience was motivated by the scent in the store.	.866	
I had a good shopping experience because of scent in the store.		
Temperature	Comfortable temperature in the store affected my shopping experience.	.880
Temperature in the store played important role in my shopping experience.		
Temperature of the store is very much significant for good shopping experience.		
Merchandise	Merchandise affected my shopping experience.	.841
My shopping experience was stimulated by the merchandise available in the store.		
Merchandise plays prominent role in shopping experience.		
Width	Width of aisles played important role in enhancing my shopping experience.	.745
My shopping experience was stimulated by the width of aisles.		
Width of aisles affected my shopping experience.		

Table 5: Factor Analysis

Rotated Component Matrixa								
Component	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Shop. Exp.	-.058	.095	.200	.029	.830	.143	-.058	.079
Shop. Exp.2	.091	.101	.131	.064	.803	.066	.027	.131
Shop. Exp.3	.340	.188	-.008	-.008	.770	-.188	.040	-.003
Colour1	.096	.414	.223	.022	.140	.025	-.094	.618
Colour2	-.080	.089	.070	.126	.044	.176	.142	.825
Colour3	.113	.054	.012	.133	.083	-.006	.123	.877
Lgtn1	.048	.824	.040	.112	.177	.086	.081	.182
Lgtn2	.185	.787	.097	.208	.105	.102	-.149	.130
Lgtn3	-.022	.859	-.012	.068	.073	.111	.122	.022
Mus1	.063	.075	-.088	.251	.238	.730	.053	-.034
Mus2	.007	.043	.086	.072	-.118	.856	.133	.115
Mus3	.149	.184	.053	.072	.002	.817	-.135	.097
Snt1	.081	.145	.092	.850	.008	.179	.103	.189
Snt2	.377	.074	.156	.795	-.025	.116	.007	.178
Snt3	.171	.159	-.027	.833	.104	.107	.088	-.011
Temp.1	.833	.100	.086	.217	.101	.107	.126	.075
Temp.2	.833	.071	.299	.181	.063	.047	.094	.061
Temp.3	.769	.031	.275	.171	.154	.086	.243	-.039

Table 4: KMO & Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.719
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	1278.540
Approx. Chi-Square	
Df	
Sig.	
276	
.000	

Table 5: Result**Hypothesis Statement Results**

H₁: Colour scheme plays a significant role in enhancing consumer's shopping experience.

Accepted

H₂: Lighting plays a significant role in enhancing consumer's shopping experience.

Accepted

H₃: Music plays a significant role in enhancing consumer's shopping experience.

Rejected

H₄: Scent plays a significant role in enhancing consumer's shopping experience.

Rejected

H₅: Temperature plays a significant role in enhancing consumer's shopping experience.

Accepted

H₆: Merchandise plays a significant role in enhancing consumer's shopping experience.

Accepted

H₇: Width of aisles plays a significant role in enhancing consumer's shopping experience.

Rejected

