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ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF STORE ATMOSPHERE ON CONSUMER SHOPPING BEHAVIOUR IN SELECTED MALLS, COIMBATORE

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates the influence of store atmosphere on consumer shopping behaviour in selected malls at Coimbatore, with a focus on understanding how various atmospheric elements affect purchase decisions. Conducted in a retail context, the research utilized structured questionnaires to collect responses from 125 participants. Key aspects such as store layout, lighting, music, scent, cleanliness, and employee behaviour were examined in relation to customer satisfaction, time spent in-store, and purchasing tendencies. The data was analysed using percentage analysis to determine general trends, while Chi-square tests were employed to explore associations between demographic variables (such as age, gender, and income) and consumer responses to store atmosphere. The findings indicate that elements like lighting and employee behaviour significantly impact shopping behaviour, with gender and age showing notable correlations with specific atmospheric preferences. The study highlights the importance of a well-designed store environment in shaping consumer experiences and urges retailers to adopt strategic atmospheric enhancements to boost customer engagement and sales.

KEYWORDS: *Store Atmosphere, Consumer Behaviour, Retail Environment, Chi-square Analysis, Shopping Experience, Customer Perception, Demographics, Purchase Decision*

INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive retail environment, the store atmosphere has emerged as a powerful tool to influence consumer perceptions and behaviour. Store atmosphere, often referred to as atmospherics, encompasses various sensory elements such as lighting, music, scent, layout, colour, and overall store design. These environmental cues are strategically designed to create a particular mood or emotional response, which can directly affect how customers interact with the retail space and make purchasing decisions. As modern consumers increasingly seek engaging and pleasant shopping experiences, understanding how atmospheric elements impact consumer behaviour particularly in encouraging unplanned or impulse purchases has become crucial for retailers. This study explores the extent to which store ambiance affects consumer shopping patterns and whether factors such as gender play a role in how shoppers respond to different atmospheric conditions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- **Priyanka Singh, Neha Katiyar, Gaurav Verma (2014)** The literature highlights that retail environments significantly influence shopper behaviour through elements like layout, design, and ambiance. These factors shape customer perceptions and impact purchase decisions. Recent studies emphasize the need for a unified framework to better understand and enhance store shoppability.
- **Geetha Mohan Bharadwaj Sivakumaran Piyush Sharma (2012)** The literature emphasizes that various elements of the store environment such as music, lighting, layout, and scent play a critical role in triggering impulse buying behavior. Studies have shown that a stimulating store atmosphere can evoke emotional responses, leading to unplanned purchases. Researchers also highlight the moderating role of individual traits and mood states in shaping these effects. Overall, the existing literature suggests a strong relationship between atmospheric cues and consumer impulse actions.
- **Eroglu, Machleit, and Davis (2001)** These researchers extended the S-O-R framework to the online retail environment. Their studies demonstrated that online atmospheric such as website design and layout affect shoppers' emotional and cognitive responses, which in turn influence satisfaction, attitudes, and behavioral outcomes. Their work is pivotal in adapting traditional retail models to digital contexts.
- **Riaz Hussain and Mazhar Ali (2015)** The literature review highlights the growing role of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in improving customer satisfaction and loyalty in the banking sector. It

emphasizes the importance of technology, service quality, and customer engagement in building strong relationships, leading to higher customer retention and a competitive advantage

- **Rahmat Madjid (2014)** Store atmosphere significantly influences consumer behavior through elements like lighting, music, and layout. Bitner's services cape theory supports this, linking environment to customer perception.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To examine how store environment factors influence customer shopping behaviour.
- To identify the relationship between store ambiance and unplanned or impulse purchasing among consumers.
- To find out if gender and how often people go to malls affect how store atmosphere influences their shopping and return visits.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive research design. Data was collected from 125 people using questionnaires in retail stores. The research focused on factors like lighting, music, layout, scent, and staff behaviour. Percentage analysis helped identify consumer trends, and Chi-square tests were used to see if demographics affected preferences for store atmosphere.

Study Area and Population

The research was conducted in Coimbatore, targeting consumers who shop at various retail outlets. Respondents included students, professionals, homemakers, and business owners, representing a diverse demographic to assess the influence of store atmosphere on their shopping behaviour.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A convenience sampling method was used to select respondents who were easily accessible and willing to participate. A total of 125 respondents were surveyed.

DATA COLLECTION

Primary Data was collected through a structured questionnaire that included questions on demographic details, shopping behaviour and perceptions related to various store atmospheric elements such as lighting, layout, music, scent and staff interaction.

Secondary Data was sourced from journals, article, retail industry reports and previous studies related to consumer behaviour and store atmospheric.

Tools for Analysis

Data was analysed using SPSS software with the following tools:

- Percentage Analysis – To assess frequency and distribution of responses.
- Chi-Square Test – To examine associations between categorical variables. The results were visually represented using charts and tables for clarity and better interpretation.

Hypothesis - I

Gender Differences in Unplanned Purchasing Triggered by Store Ambiance

- **Null Hypothesis ($H1_0$):** There is no association between gender and making unplanned purchases due to store ambiance.
- **Alternative Hypothesis ($H1_1$):** There is an association between gender and making unplanned purchases due to store ambiance.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	**df**	**Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)**
Pearson Chi-Square	1.990[a]	2	.070
Likelihood Ratio	2.380	2	.004
N of Valid Cases	125		

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Interpretation: The chi-square test shows mixed results. One test (statistic = 2.380) has a p-value of 0.004, which is less than 0.05, indicating a significant relationship between gender and unplanned purchases due to store ambiance. However, another test (statistic = 1.990) has a p-value of 0.070, which is higher than 0.05, meaning no significant relationship. Also, 33.3% of cells have expected counts less than five, affecting the reliability of the test. Therefore, while there is some evidence of a relationship, caution is needed, and a larger sample size or different method may provide more certainty.

Hypothesis – II
Relationship Between Mall Visit Frequency and Influence of Store Atmosphere on Return Intentions

$H2_0$ (Null Hypothesis): There is no association between frequency of mall visits and the impact of store atmosphere on return visits.

$H2_1$ (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant association between frequency of mall visits and the impact of store atmosphere on return visits.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	**df**	**Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)**
Pearson Chi-Square	7.867[a]	8	.047
Likelihood Ratio	8.054	8	.028
N of Valid Cases	125		

Interpretation: The chi-square test shows a significant relationship between how often people visit shopping malls and whether the store atmosphere encourages return visits. The Pearson Chi-Square value (7.867) has a p-value of 0.047, which is below 0.05, showing a significant link. The Likelihood Ratio (8.054) also supports this, with a p-value of 0.028. However, 40% of the cells have expected counts below 5, which affects the test's reliability. Despite this, the results suggest that store atmosphere influences repeat visits, but further analysis with a larger sample would be helpful for stronger conclusions.

FINDINGS

- A significant majority of 99 respondents reported that they have made unplanned purchases due to the store ambiance, indicating that store atmosphere has a noticeable impact on impulsive buying behaviour.
- Both male and female consumers were influenced by store ambiance, with 55 males and 45 females responding Yes to making unplanned purchases. Although more males reported being influenced, the Chi-Square test showed that the difference between genders is no statistically significant (p = 0.370), suggesting that ambiance affects both genders similarly.
- The statistical test showed that 33.3% of the cells had expected counts less than 5, which limits the reliability of the Chi-Square results. Despite this, the overall trend strongly supports the idea that an engaging store atmosphere positively influences consumer behaviour, particularly in encouraging spontaneous purchases.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study clearly demonstrate that store atmosphere significantly influences consumer shopping behavior, especially in encouraging unplanned or impulse purchases. Many respondents reported being affected by various atmospheric elements, including lighting, music, scent, and store layout, which collectively contribute to a more engaging shopping experience. Although the analysis did not reveal a statistically significant difference between male and female consumers in their responses, the overall pattern underscores the powerful impact of a well-crafted retail environment. These results suggest that retailers should thoughtfully design and invest in atmospheric cues as part of their marketing and store planning strategies to enhance customer satisfaction, increase dwell time, and ultimately drive higher sales. Further research with a broader demographic and varied retail settings could provide deeper insights into how specific atmospheric components interact with consumer profiles.

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