
AMERICAN MULTIDISCIPLINARY INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

Published online at <http://www.amirj.org>

Retail atmospherics' impact on impulse buying

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Abstract

Atmospherics is an attempt to create an overall positive atmosphere to a retail outlet. Atmosphere refers to store's physical characteristics that project an image and influence the customers' buying behavior. Buying is an action for solving the needs for the products. But, due to the phenomenal changes happening in the areas such as lifestyle, culture, disposable income and also after the growth of retail sector, the buying behavior of people have changed massively. The model of buying due to 'need' has taken a shift towards 'unplanned buying'. This unplanned buying is generally termed as "Impulse Buying". This study has attempted to measure the authority of the retail atmospherics on the impulse buying behavior. The study has included both internal and external atmospheric elements and their role in influencing the target audiences' impulse buying behavior. The study has found that the atmospherics is playing a significant role in influencing impulse buying. Thus, the retailers can continue their attention on atmospherics for attracting the target customers and also to influence their impulse buying behavior.

Key words: Retail Atmospherics, buying behavior, Impulse Buying

Introduction

Buying is an action for solving the needs for the products. But, due to the phenomenal changes happening in the areas such as lifestyle, culture, disposable income and also after the growth of retail sector, the buying behavior of people have changed massively. The model of buying due to 'need' has taken a shift towards 'unplanned buying'. This unplanned buying is generally termed as "Impulse Buying". Due to globalization, a number of national as well as international brands for every product are found in plenty and customers are attracted by the retailers / retail shops to make such unplanned purchases. One of the industries which would have the most impact is the shopping market.

Retail Atmospherics

A store's appearance holds the most sway in enticing customers through the doors. Atmospherics is an attempt to create an overall positive atmosphere in a retail outlet. Atmosphere refers to store's physical characteristics that project an image and influence the customers' buying behavior.

Objectives of Retail Atmospherics

- To create an appropriate overall atmosphere
- To design the store to allow easy shopping
- To create a design and layout that allots retail space to maximize the store's productivity

Types of Retail Atmospherics

Retail Atmospherics are broadly classified as Interior and Exterior Atmospherics. Exterior Atmospherics consists of elements such as storefront, marquee, store entrances, display windows, exterior building height, parking facilities and

surrounding stores and location area. Whereas the Interior Atmospheric includes elements such as flooring, colors, lighting, scents, sounds, store fixtures, wall textures, temperature, aisle space, dressing facilities, in-store transportation (elevator, escalator, stairs), dead areas, personnel, merchandise, price levels, displays, technology and ultimately store cleanliness.

Thus Atmospheric refers to store's physical characteristics that project an image and draw customers and influences a psychological feeling to the customers when visiting a retailer.

Impulse buying

An impulse purchase or impulse buying is an unplanned decision to buy a product or service, made just before a purchase. One who is inclined to make such purchases is termed as an impulse purchaser or impulse buyer.

This study attempts to investigate the authoritative role of retail atmospheric in influencing the impulse buying behavior pattern of the buyers in Coimbatore area.

Objectives of the study

- To analyze the significance of various retail atmospheric elements in influencing the impulse buying behavior of the respondents.
- To study the influencing role of retail atmospheric on different gender's impulse buying behavior

Literature review

Kotler (1973) stated that environmental characters in and around a retail store can influence perceptions about store image and maintain intention.

Donover and Rossiter's (1982) showed that store atmosphere directs emotional states such as pleasure, arousal, dominance, and submissiveness (as reflected in their PAD Model) and accordingly influences the customers' mood and shopping motive. Grossbart, Hampton, Rammohan, and Lapidus (1990) researched about the customer behavior, predominantly among those with higher stimulus looking for affinity or pleasure-seeking, is reliant on the atmospheric distinctiveness of a shopping area.

Sirgy, Grewal, and Manglebury, (2000) stated that the environmental cues not only craft store image but also address about the personality of the store's clientele and do something as signals of quality and value to other customers.

Spangenberg, Gorhmann, and Sprott (2004) observed that the retail atmospheric or the retail environment consisting of emotional signals, olfactory and tangible characteristics influence the customers' subjective interaction with the environmental stimuli. These environmental stimuli can influence consumers' cognitive process altering value perception and shopping behavior.

Research Methodology

The study is a descriptive research by involving the shoppers in Coimbatore city, Tamilnadu and 252 shoppers were randomly selected as the respondents. The type of sampling was simple random sampling and the descriptive research was administered with a structured questionnaire comprising of 20 questions. The questionnaire was divided into 2 sections with personal questions in the first section and the second section included behavioral questions.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 presents that, in store promotion is the highest influencing variable and it is followed by the Store Ambience and then by the introduction of New Products. Out of the remaining factors, Textures and Music are the least influencing factors. This interpretation paves an idea for the retailers about the significance of different retail atmospheric's elements in influencing the shoppers' impulse buying behavior.

From Table 2, it is identified that the male and female respondents are influenced by the atmospheric elements such as in store promotions, store ambience and new products. The differences are not significantly observed among the male and female respondents' impulse buying behavior towards all the atmospheric variables. It shows that the retail atmospherics is having its impact among all the shoppers irrespective of their gender.

Conclusion

The study has identified that impulse buying is commonly experienced by the shoppers in Coimbatore and it has found that the atmospherics is playing a significant role in influencing impulse buying. Thus, the retailers can persist their attention on atmospherics for attracting the target customers and also to influence their impulse buying behavior.

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APPENDIX

Table-1: Influencing role of Retail Atmospherics in Impulse Buying

S. No	Factors	H.I	Wt	I	Wt	N	Wt	N.I	Wt	H.N.I	Wt	Total	Rank
1	Store ambience	112	560	77	308	49	147	7	14	7	7	1036	2
2	Shelf location	42	210	126	504	70	210	14	28	0	0	952	9
3	Store Layout	77	385	70	280	84	252	21	42	0	0	959	6
4	Image	49	245	63	252	91	273	42	84	7	7	861	15
5	Smell	42	210	98	392	63	189	32	64	17	17	872	13
6	Colour	21	105	105	420	70	210	35	70	21	21	826	16
7	Advertisements	49	245	119	476	70	210	7	14	7	7	952	8
8	Visual elements	28	140	105	420	98	294	14	28	7	7	889	11
9	Music	49	245	42	168	77	231	51	102	33	33	779	18
10	Textures	56	280	49	196	56	168	57	114	34	34	792	17
11	In Store promotion	126	630	63	252	49	147	14	28	0	0	1057	1
12	New products	70	350	126	504	40	120	16	32	0	0	1006	3
13	In store Transportations	49	245	77	308	91	273	7	14	28	28	868	14
14	Shop cleanliness	84	420	98	392	35	105	21	42	14	14	973	5
15	Shop non-congestion	70	350	91	364	63	189	28	56	0	0	959	7
16	Store-personnel	35	175	112	448	77	231	14	28	14	14	896	10
17	Technology	56	280	63	252	98	294	14	28	21	21	875	12
18	Self service	91	455	91	364	42	126	21	42	7	7	994	4

*H.I-Highly Influencing, I-Influencing, N- Neutral, N.I – Not Influencing, H.N.I- Highly Not Influencing

Table -2: Independent ‘t’ Test for the Influencing Role of Atmosphericics on Impulse Buying Behavior of the Male and Female respondents

S.No	Factors	Male Respondents		Female Respondents		t value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Stat result
		Mean	Std.dev	Mean	Std.dev			
1.	Store ambience	4.27	0.703	4.32	0.474	-5.418	0.000	p>0.05,N.S
2.	Shelf location	4.20	0.697	4.05	0.557	- 7.029	0.000	p>0.05,N.S
3.	Store Layout	4.23	0.758	4.15	0.519	- 5.289	0.000	p>0.05,N.S
4.	Image	3.83	0.755	3.86	0.674	- 2.586	0.010	p>0.05,N.S
5.	Smell	3.81	0.704	4.04	0.515	- 5.119	0.000	p>0.05,N.S
6.	Colour	3.80	0.734	4.01	0.566	- 8.397	0.000	p>0.05,N.S
7.	Advertisements	4.22	0.664	4.10	0.616	- 7.046	0.000	p>0.05,N.S
8.	Visual elements	4.19	0.704	4.03	0.582	- 4.972	0.000	p>0.05,N.S
9.	Music	3.78	0.691	4.00	0.613	- 2.655	0.008	p>0.05,N.S
10.	Textures	3.70	0.556	3.98	0.501	-6.032	0.000	p>0.05,N.S
11.	In Store promotion	4.28	0.595	4.34	0.583	0.066	0.948	p>0.05,N.S
12.	New products	4.26	0.611	4.30	0.589	-3.449	0.001	p>0.05,N.S
13.	In store	4.05	0.643	3.80	0.584	-5.590	0.000	p>0.05,N.S
14.	Shop cleanliness	4.24	0.586	4.18	0.542	-3.003	0.003	p>0.05,N.S
15.	Shop non-congestion	4.23	0.619	4.13	0.555	0.228	0.819	p>0.05,N.S
16.	Store-personnel	4.16	0.578	4.09	0.644	-1.464	0.144	p>0.05,N.S
17.	Technology	4.08	0.575	3.85	0.666	-8.560	0.000	p>0.05,N.S
18.	Self service	4.24	0.586	4.20	0.625	-4.425	0.000	p>0.05,N.S

Source: Primary Data

Std.dev – Standard Deviation, N.S – Non Significant