



A STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF STORE AMBIENCE FOR RETAINING CUSTOMERS

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ABSTRACT

The Store Ambience is an environment that is created to generate a stimulus among the customer's perceptions and emotions that will affect their purchasing behavior. The retail industry is the activity of sale of good and services to final consumers, and the retailer as the economic agent that puts in practice such sales. This means that the retail industry is composed not only by the sale of products at the stores but also through the commercial concepts of non- store as well as services. Thus the retail industry either in products or in services is the last stage of the distribution circuit, where the retailers assume an important role of intermediary between producers, wholesalers or other suppliers and the final consumers.

Keywords: Ambience, Consumer behavior, Purchasing behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Today when our country is orienting by imbibing the globalization trends, there are lot of things that are changing. One key to successful in this changing era is innovation. This is no different for organized retailing. The shopping experience of the customer, which is considered the most important aspect for the success of a retail store, is completely dependent on innovation. The idea is simple - enhance the customer satisfaction, to add value to the entire shopping experience. The three elements which complete the Shopping Experience are:

1. Merchandise
2. Customer support
3. Store Ambience

The store atmosphere more commonly known as store ambience plays a very vital role in enhancing Customer's Shopping Experience. It supplements the other two elements mentioned above.

People like to be in good atmosphere, which in retail is the store ambience. The store ambience is an Environment that is created by visual communications, lighting, music, colors etc., to generate a stimulus among the customer's perceptions & emotions that will affect their purchasing behavior. The store atmosphere is about having a look and an environment that suits the target market & invites consumer for purchase. The Indian consumers generally shop from markets and areas which are tacky, filthy, stinking. They buy goods at bargained

prices. But this trend is changing. Instead of moving into weekly haats, melas, mandis or any other traditional form of retail, consumers prefer walking into an air conditioned store to buy the products. Not only had this, but clean & tidy stores, high speed escalators, scented environment, arresting displays draw their, attention making it more comfortable and fun to shop.

Today the stores have become hotspots of entertainment for a major chunk of the population i.e., The Youth. The consumer expectation for modern Retailing environment is accelerating at a very fast pace. In order to create an unparalleled experience with the retail store understanding the customer preferences is of prime importance. The store ambience is to be designed to make shopping easy and also give a comfortable feeling. It enhances the shopping experience by assisting the shoppers what they want from an assortment of products in the store. To create favourable mindset of the consumer towards the store image and store position it is important to have an ambience that has the potential to make the shopping pleasurable by forgetting the bitterness of heavy prices to be paid for expensive products in the stores. With the growing trend of modernization, architects are designing stimulating storefronts and interiors that create an, impression of distinctiveness. It helps satisfying the Customers and to create a warm welcoming feeling which will certainly enhance a customer's mood and improve the chances of turning a single sale into a long- term relationship. It is incredible to make a sale but it is so much more profitable to keep the customer satisfied thus making developing customer loyalty. Store Ambience also assists in enhancing the brand value of the various products. It helps to increase consumer footfalls and provokes them for repeated purchases. It is possible to attract the customers using the right mix of elements of store ambience. It is very simple a poor ambience negatively affects the representation of the product.

A good ambience is also required to facilitate the browsing process for products, which need to be touched & felt before being chosen. Store ambience acts as a promotion tool used to communicate the store's image. An attractive store ambience is just like an icing with cherries on the cake'. A striking store ambience draws the attention of the customer & enables him to take purchase decision within shortest possible time, and thus enhancing the selling process. The shoppers which comprise mostly of the youth desire a comfortable store, so that they can stay for longer on each visit. Shoppers would tend to buy at a leisurely pace in such stores. In many cases, these stores are also utilized for spending waiting or spare time or meeting up with friends. The store ambience is responsible to create a difference between a forgetful transaction and a memorable retail experience.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the modern day retailing the customers are giving more importance to the store ambience. It is becoming necessary for the retailers to give customer experience to the customers, in order to get large number of walk-ins inside the store. The customer will become loyal to the store only if the retail gives them a good shopping experience.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the most influencing factors on ambience of the store.

- To find the relationship between factors on the store ambience and the motivational factors driving the customers towards the store.
- To find the significant difference between the experience on the store ambience of the existing or new customer of the imagine store.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The data are only collected from the customers who are visiting the different stores. The Store ambience is measured through the factors like Music, Odour, Cleanliness, Lighting, Temperature and Layout and Store Displays. The type of research design used here is the descriptive research. Descriptive research is carried out to describe the characteristics of consumer segment viz., demographic, socioeconomic, geographic, psychographic and benefits sought.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The sampling technique used in this research is Proportionate random sampling. Sample size of this study is 220. Survey is conducted with customers who are visiting the stores.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The study depends on primary data. A structured questionnaire is used for collection of data. The questionnaire was given to the customer to record their experience related to store ambience. The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part deals with the demographic factors and the second part deals with the factors related to store ambience and the final part deals with the recommendation.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Variables	Particulars	Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	176	80
	Female	44	20
visiting the store first time	Yes	108	49.1
	No	112	50.9

Perception of customers based on the reasons and motivation forgoing to the store

Variables	Very Important		Quite Important		Important	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Pleasant Environment	187	85	29	13	4	2
Pleasant Music	148	67	64	29	8	4
Pleasant Lighting	192	87	21	10	7	3
Pleasant Temperature	163	74	44	20	13	6
Pleasant Cleanliness & Hygiene	172	78	36	16	12	6
Layout and displays easy to read	171	78	37	17	12	5
Easiness of parking	176	80	37	17	7	3
Adequate waiting timing	186	85	12	10	12	5
Variety of Products	181	82	31	14	8	4

FINDING

- Most (85 %) of the respondents have perceived that the pleasant environment is very important and it motivates them for going to the store.

- Most (67 %) of the respondents have perceived that the fact that the pleasant music is very important and it motivates them for going to the store.
 - Most (87 %) of the respondents have perceived that the pleasant lighting is very important and it motivates them for going to the store.
 - Most (75 %) of the respondents have perceived that the pleasant temperature is very important and it motivates them for going to the store.
 - Most (78 %) of the respondents have perceived that the fact that the pleasant cleanliness and hygiene is very important and it motivates them for going to the store.
 - Most (78 %) of the respondents have perceived that the layout and displays which is easy to read is very important and it motivates them for going to the store.
 - Most (74 %) of the respondents have perceived that the Design / Beauty of the store is very important and it motivates them for going to the store.
- Most (74 %) of the respondents have perceived that the fact that the Easiness on finding the product is very important and it motivates them for going to the store.
 - Most (79 %) of the respondents have perceived that the Employees friendliness is very important and it motivates them for going to the store.
 - Most (82%) of the respondents have perceived that the Good location of the store is very important and it motivates them for going to the store.
 - Most (80%) of the respondents have perceived that the fact that the Easiness of parking is very important and it motivates them for going to the store.
 - Most (85%) of the respondents have perceived that the adequate waiting time is very important and it motivates them for going to the store.
 - Most (82%) of the respondents have perceived that the Variety of products that I can find in the store is very important and it motivates them for going to the store.

CONCLUSION

The study was made to find the strategic importance of store ambience for all stores. The store atmosphere more commonly known as store ambience plays a very vital role in enhancing Customer's Shopping Experience. The questionnaire was collected from the customer and the result shows that the aroma and the lighting was the most influencing factor of the store ambience and also there is a relationship between the factors of the store ambience and the motivational factors. Hence the study will help the store in improving the performance in various factors like music, odour, cleanliness, lighting, temperature and layout and store displays.

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