



Consumer emotions: Determinants and outcomes in a shopping mall



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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to provide a deeper understanding of consumers' emotions in a shopping mall by taking into account its two dimensions i.e. pleasure and arousal. The conceptual model is developed by considering a few unexamined determinants (namely perceived human and spatial mall crowding, promotional events, and co-visitors) and outcomes (namely repatronage and positive word-of-mouth) of arousal and pleasure. The responses (n = 346) are collected by using a mall-intercept technique. Results of structural equation modeling reveal positive linkages between determinants and outcomes of pleasure and arousal. Overall, the work extends and complements the extant literature by delineating the role of various social cues and promotional cues on consumers' pleasure and arousal in a shopping mall setting. Theoretical and managerial implications are further discussed.

1. Introduction

People buy so they can shop, not shop so they can buy

- (Falk and Campbell, 1997)

The above assertion indicates a shift in the consumers' orientation towards shopping. Now, consumers not only seek utilitarian benefits, but also search for emotional benefits like enjoyment and recreation while shopping (Arnold and Reynolds, 2009). To understand the psychology of consumers, it is imperative to appreciate the role of consumers' emotions. Consumers' emotion gets influenced as soon as he/she moves in a shopping space (Albrecht et al., 2017; Kwon et al., 2016). Several scholars have studied how consumers' emotions get influenced when consumers enters in a retail store (e.g. Albrecht et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2016a, 2016b; Rayburn and Voss, 2013). Now let us imagine a customer walking into a shopping mall and gets mesmerized by its interior designs, lightings, people roaming around, and on-going promotional events before entering into a retail store. How would these mall atmospherics influence his shopping mall behaviour? The present work is an attempt to answer this question.

Over the years, researchers have given much attention to retail store atmospherics (e.g., Herrmann et al., 2013; Grewal et al., 2014; Foster and McLelland, 2015; Varshneya and Das, 2017). However, malls also forms an important part of a customer's hedonic consumption process. Malls are considered as the places where people enjoy their time and satisfy their recreational and social needs (Haeski, 2013) rather than simply fulfilling their functional needs (Nsairi, 2012). In a few cases,

people just go to the mall for relaxation without having any shopping intention in a retail store. Therefore, in addition to retail atmospherics, it is also vital to understand mall atmospherics. However, only a few studies captured mall atmospherics (e.g. Michon et al., 2005; Teller and Reutterer, 2008; Dennis et al., 2010; Chebat et al., 2014a, 2014b). The glimpse of the relevant studies is provided in the Table 1. These studies captured the influence of various mall environment cues on consumers' excitement and value perceptions. However, no study so far has captured consumers' emotions in a shopping mall by taking into account its two dimensions i.e. pleasure and arousal. The present work is an attempt to fill up this void. Based on the aforementioned discussion, this study examines the determinants and effects of consumer affective states such as arousal and pleasure in a mall setting. In particular, we tested the influence of four relevant and unexplored determinants of consumers' emotion, namely perceived human mall crowding, perceived spatial mall crowding, promotional events held in a mall, and co-visitor influence on arousal and pleasure. Further, we examined the influence of arousal and pleasure on two outcomes, namely repatronage intention and positive word-of-mouth.

This research extends the existing literature in several important ways. First, it provided an integrated conceptual framework considering mall atmospherics, consumer emotions, and responses. Second, the study explored the role of mall atmospherics by considering two affective dimensions i.e. pleasure and arousal. Third, the work provided an empirical evidence for the unexplored determinants and outcomes of consumers' emotions in a mall setting. Although some antecedents and consequences are examined in a retail setting, they remained

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Table 1
Summary of prominent studies in the literature capturing mall atmospherics.

| Reference | Antecedents/moderators/mediators | Outcomes | Findings |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------------------------|--|
| Wakefield and Baker (1998), JOR | Mall tenant variety; Mall physical environment; Involvement; Excitement, Desire to stay in mall | Repatronage; Outshopping | The three factors influence consumers' excitement and desire to stay in the mall. This further impact repatronage and outshopping. |
| Michon et al. (2005), JBR | Consumer density; Ambient scents; Arousal; Congruity level | Product-quality perception | Ambient odors have a positive influence on shoppers' perceptions only under the medium retail density condition. High density enhances consumers' arousal which tends to mediate the effects of scents. A moderate incongruity level leads to positive product-quality perception. |
| Michon et al. (2005), JFMM | Mall perception; product perception; hedonic and utilitarian value | Approach behaviour | Mall environment has a positive influence on hedonic value which leads to approach behaviour. |
| Chebat and Michon (2003), JBR | Ambient scent; Mall atmosphere; Product quality, emotion | Shoppers' spending | Shopping environment and product quality perceptions mediate the influence of ambient scent cues on emotions and shoppers' spending behaviours. |
| Teller and Reutterer (2008), JRCS | Mall perceptions; attractiveness | Behavioural responses | Tenant mix and the mall atmosphere has an impact on perceived attractiveness in mall. |
| Dennis et al. (2010), JRCS | Digital signage; Mall perception; Positive affect | Approach behaviour | Digital signage has a positive effect on approach behaviors, mediated by positive affect and mall environment perception. |
| Massicotte et al. (2011), JRCS | Mall atmosphere; Functional-congruity; Self-congruity; | Mall evaluation | Mall atmosphere positively affects functional congruity. This further leads to positive mall evaluation. |

unexamined in a mall setting. Since mall atmospherics are impendent from retail atmospherics, this study contributes to the mall management and consumer behaviour literature. The study also provided several managerial initiatives for shopping mall managers.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. We first provide a theoretical background for the study, followed by hypotheses development. We then describe the research method, discuss findings, suggest theoretical and managerial implications, and conclude the paper with its limitations, and directions for future research.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1. Shopping mall atmospherics

Atmospherics are conceptualized as “the conscious designing of space to create certain buyer effects, specifically, the designing of buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance purchase probability” (Kotler, 1973, p. 50). According to Milliman and Fugate (1993), atmospheric cues (i.e. design cues, ambient cues and social cues) are the elements within an individual's perceptual field that arouses one's senses. In-store atmospherics has been studied widely in the literature (e.g. Herrmann et al., 2013; Grewal et al., 2014; Foster and McLelland, 2015), as compared to mall atmospherics. Mall environment plays an important role in attracting and retaining customers. The shopping mall is an establishment comprising of a wide variety of stores, restaurants and merchandise available in a single location. Over the years, malls have become bigger in size as various other sources of entertainment like movie theatres and gaming places have also been included. Nowadays mall developers are trying to create exciting mall environments that result in customer attraction and retention (Kesari and Atulkar, 2016). The mall atmospherics not only attract traffic but, in turn, also promote sales of the retail stores.

Given the role and importance of mall atmospherics, only a few studies captured influences of mall atmospherics. These studies highlighted the role of mall atmospherics on consumers' perceptions. For instance, Chebat and Michon (2003) reported a positive impact of aroma on the perception of mall environment, positive affect and spending. Michon et al. (2005) found that mall environment perception encourages product quality perceptions. Mall atmospherics encourage consumers to stay longer in the mall and spend more time (Dennis et al., 2010). The studies also found that atmospherics have major impacts on perceived attractiveness (Teller and Reutterer, 2008), image and sales performance (Dennis et al., 2002). Chebat et al. (2006) highlighted that retail stores benefit from improvements in malls' image which includes

a better atmosphere. Nowadays, one-stop shopping conveniences and astounding atmospherics primarily tend to attract customers (Arentze et al., 2005; Ballantine et al., 2010; Dion and Arnould, 2011). Therefore, it is imperative to study mall atmospherics in addition to retail atmospherics while looking at the complete basket of shopping environment cues.

2.2. Consumer emotions and environmental cues

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) framework links the environment, emotional responses and behavioural responses. The model primarily depicted that people would like to spend more time and money in a setting where atmospherics induces high pleasure and medium to high level of arousal. Donovan and Rossiter (1982) applied this framework in a retail setting while studying the role of atmospherics on consumers' shopping behavior. The authors also highlighted that Mehrabian and Russell's model has a merit over the previous approaches by providing a comprehensive structure to study the consumers' emotional responses with respect to various environmental stimuli. In line with this school of thought, several other studies (e.g. Loureiro and Roschk, 2014; Garau and Wagner, 2016; Kim et al., 2016a, 2016b) also applied this model to understand the in-store consumer behaviour. Mehrabian and Russell's framework provides a basis to understand the desire of the consumers' to affiliate with others or to stay/escape in a particular setting (e.g. Foxall and Yani-de-Soriano, 2005; Yani-de-Soriano et al., 2013). The aforementioned discussion helps us to understand that Mehrabian and Russell's framework can also be applied in a mall setting to study consumer emotional responses. The present study aims to explore consumer emotional outcomes in the presence of atmospheric cues, specifically, promotional and social cues in a shopping mall. Therefore, considering the relevance, the present work is based on the theoretical underpinnings of this popular environmental psychological theory proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). Mehrabian and Russell (1974) also proposed PAD typology which is considered as a popular framework to study emotional responses in the form of three dimensions i.e. pleasure, arousal and dominance. A few researchers (e.g. Russell, 1979; Eroglu et al., 2001) argued that pleasure and arousal can adequately capture the range of emotions unveiled in response to various environmental cues. Thus, in the present study, we have taken the two popularly used and relevant emotional dimensions i.e. pleasure and arousal for this study (e.g. Koo and Lee, 2011; Vieira and Torres, 2014). Arousal is considered as an affective state, ranging from sleep to frantic excitement (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Arousal depicts the extent to which person feels stimulated or alert when subject to a stimuli. Pleasure is considered as the hedonic valence (pleasant or unpleasant)

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