



Marketing

Understanding consumer's responses to negative emotions related
to crowding on satisfaction and impulse purchase in retail:
the mediating role of coping

*Entendendo respostas às emoções negativas de crowding na satisfação
e compra por impulso no varejo: o papel mediador do Coping*

*Respuestas a las emociones negativas de crowding en la satisfacción y compra por impulso
en el comercio minorista: el papel mediador del coping*

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Abstract

The perception of crowding, understood as an individual's response to crowds, can be observed in retail environments and influences positive and negative emotions. In this research we test the mediating effect of coping – rational strategies adopted to deal with negative emotions – in the relationship between negative emotions (resulting from crowding perception) and consumer behavior (measured by impulse purchase and satisfaction). The findings related to coping explain to what extent there is a positive response to human density in the retail environment. For this, a theoretical model was developed which includes the relationships among perception of crowding, positive and negative emotions, and consumer behavior. The model enhances the understanding of the crowding phenomenon by including relationships mediated by an oppositional strategy (coping dimension) between negative emotions and consumer behaviors. To test the theoretical model, a survey was conducted with 456 respondents and hypothesis tests using structural equation modeling. It was evidenced that crowding perception has more robust effects on negative emotions than positive emotions. It is emphasized that with the inclusion of opposition mediation, the weak direct relationship between negative emotions and behaviors, becomes a positive relationship between negative emotion and impulse purchase, and negative emotion and satisfaction. In addition to the theoretical contributions of the tested model, future research and managerial implications are proposed at the end of the article.

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Keywords: Crowding and coping perception; Positive and negative emotion; Impulse purchase and satisfaction; Consumer behavior; Human density in retail

Resumo

A percepção de *crowding*, entendida como a resposta individual à aglomeração pode ser observada em um ambiente de varejo e influenciar as emoções positivas e negativas. Nesta pesquisa propõe-se testar o efeito mediador do *coping* - estratégias racionais adotadas para lidar com emoções negativas - na relação entre emoções negativas, consequentes da percepção de *crowding*, e comportamento de consumidores (mensurados por compra por impulso e satisfação). Os achados referentes ao efeito de *coping* contribuem para explicar em que medida há resposta positiva à densidade

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humana em ambiente de varejo. Para isso, foi desenvolvido um modelo teórico com a relação da percepção de *crowding*, emoções positivas e negativas e comportamento do consumidor. O modelo incrementa o entendimento do fenômeno de *crowding* quando inclui relações mediadas pela oposição (dimensão de *coping*) entre emoção negativa e comportamento do consumidor. Para testar o modelo teórico foi realizado um *survey* com 456 respondentes e os testes de hipótese com a utilização de modelagem de equações estruturais. Foi evidenciado que percepção de *crowding* tem efeitos mais robustos nas emoções negativas que nas emoções positivas. Destaca-se que com a inclusão da mediação de oposição, a relação fraca entre a emoção negativa e comportamentos, na relação direta torna-se positiva entre emoção negativa e compra por impulso, e emoção negativa e satisfação. Além das contribuições teóricas do modelo testado, futuras pesquisas e implicações gerenciais são propostas no final do artigo.

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Palavras-chave: Percepção de *crowding* e *coping*; Emoção positiva e negativa; Compra por impulso e satisfação; Comportamento do consumidor; Densidade humana no varejo

Resumen

La percepción de hacinamiento, entendida como la respuesta individual a la aglomeración puede ser observada en un entorno de comercio minorista e influir en las emociones positivas y negativas. En este estudio se analiza el efecto mediador del afrontamiento – estrategias racionales adoptadas para hacer frente a las emociones negativas – en la relación entre las emociones negativas, oriundas de la percepción de *crowding*, y el comportamiento de consumidores (medidos por la compra por impulso y satisfacción). Los hallazgos sobre el efecto de *coping* contribuyen para explicar en qué medida existe una respuesta positiva a la densidad humana en el ambiente de venta al por menor. Se ha desarrollado un modelo teórico con enfoque en la relación de la percepción de *crowding*, emociones positivas y negativas y comportamiento del consumidor. El modelo incrementa la comprensión del fenómeno de *crowding* al incluir relaciones mediadas por la oposición (dimensión de *coping*) entre emoción negativa y comportamiento del consumidor. Para probar el modelo teórico y la hipótesis, se ha llevado a cabo un *survey* con 456 encuestados y se han aplicado los modelos de ecuaciones estructurales. Se ha demostrado que la percepción de *crowding* tiene efectos más sólidos sobre las emociones negativas que en las emociones positivas. Es de destacar que, con la inclusión de la mediación de oposición, la relación débil entre la emoción negativa y el comportamiento, en la relación directa, se convierte en positiva entre emoción negativa y la compra por impulso, y emoción negativa y satisfacción. Además de las contribuciones teóricas del modelo puesto a prueba, se proponen al final del artículo sugerencias para futuras investigaciones e implicaciones de gestión.

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Q2 *Palabras clave:* Percepción de *crowding* y *coping*; Emoción positiva y negativa; Compra por impulso y satisfacción; Comportamiento del consumidor; Densidad humana en el comercio al por menor

Introduction

One of the first published works on the purchase and social relation environment was that of Jonassen (1959). Since then, the quantity and composition of human or social density has been treated as one of the store environmental factors. Turley and Milliman (2000) classified the crowding of people at the point of sale as a factor that contributes to the store environment, and specifically as one of the human factors. This research focuses on the crowding of consumers and the consequences in the store environment, since, according to Eroglu, Machleit, and Barr (2005), human density influences the perception of other factors of the store environment, such as layout and ambience.

According to Mcclelland and Auslander (1978), the determinants of crowding can be physical, informative, and even social, such as type of activity and whether the large number of people are “jostling” in the retail environment. The perception of crowding can be observed or not, under crowded conditions. When crowding is perceived, discomfort may occur in the environment, which can be triggered by personal, situational, and cultural variables (Mehta, 2013; Quezado, Costa, Peñalosa, Matos, & Ferraz, 2015). What can be perceived as crowding for some people may be normal for others, i.e., just a group of people.

Harrel, Hunt, and Anderson (1980) argue that the perception of crowding can be influenced by personality traits such as

impatience and aggressiveness. For the authors, the consumer who does not have prior experience within a crowded environment may be more sensitive to density and thus react negatively. Similarly, buyers with personality traits such as impatience and aggressiveness may also be more susceptible to human density. In this research, we address the negative effect of human density, which will be treated as perception of crowding.

Just as some personality traits may exacerbate the perception of crowding, tolerance to it has been presented as a trait that minimizes the negative effect. Pan and Siemens (2011) state that crowding tolerance is significantly correlated with the intention to explore the store. In the study by Machleit, Eroglu, and Mantel (2000), crowding tolerance was treated as moderating the relationship between crowding perception and satisfaction with purchase, reducing the negative effect of crowding perception on satisfaction (Baker & Wakefield, 2012).

Baterson and Hui (1982) argue that the perception of crowding can influence emotion, causing consumer exhaustion. The perception of crowding may be accompanied by symptomatic behaviors of stress similar to a reaction of personal injury or threat that appears in unfavorable relationships between the person and the environment (Lazarus, 1993). Such reactions may manifest with discomfort, aggression, and motivation to eliminate the causes of discomfort or reduce their importance (Stokols, 1972). The negative reaction to the perception of **Q3**

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