

Persuading Effect of Store Aesthetics on Shoppers' Purchase Intentions : The Gender Difference

* *Pallabi Mishra*

Abstract

The spending capacity and willingness of customers has increased in India. Keeping this in mind, marketers have come up with organized retail outlets to attract and cater to the customers' needs. A well-designed and finely maintained store not only attracts more footfalls, but also increases the sales. Apart from that, beautification, which is known as aesthetics of the store, is also important for the marketers. Gender differences have been found to play a major role in buying behaviour. This paper focused on studying the most preferred aesthetic element of the store (both exterior and interior) by both the genders. Furthermore, the effect of these elements on the purchase intentions of the customers was also analyzed by regression. The study was conducted at a leading apparel store in the city of Cuttack, Odisha. The results showed that product display was the most preferred factor by both genders, having the maximum effect on their purchase intentions. A major difference was found in the preference of both genders with respect to the external appearance of the store and music played in the store. This research will help managers to understand the preferences of the customers in a store and design the store aesthetically to attract more footfalls and generate purchases.

Keywords : store aesthetics, purchase intention, consumer preference, retail management

Paper Submission Date : December 1, 2013 ; **Paper sent back for Revision :** March 1, 2014 ; **Paper Acceptance Date :** April 3, 2014

The retail sector in India is emerging as one of the largest sectors in the economy, marking a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.9% since 1998. The total market size of the sector globally is expected to grow from US\$ 450 billion in 2012 to reach US\$ 574 billion by 2015. The organized retail segment in India is expected to be 9% of the total retail market by 2015 and 20% by 2020. Among emerging and developed nations, the country is ranked third after China and Brazil based on net retail sales.

This immense growth of the retail sector has also increased the competitiveness amongst the players in the industry. Why would one visit a particular store and not others in the neighbourhood with the same merchandise? The store which will give more value to the shoppers will attract more traffic. To attract customers, one has to position its USPs not only in terms of products/brands but also the physical aspects, atmosphere, and ambience of the store. Retailers spend a huge sum on maintenance and beautification of a store to catch the fancy of the prospects. Research has shown that an attractive store influences shoppers' behavior positively, whereas an unattractive one has a withdrawal effect on the shoppers (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001 ; Turley & Milliman, 2000). The physical environment has an effect on human behavior as found from various studies (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Two dimensions of effect, namely pleasure and arousal, could predict customer behavior in retail settings (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). The pleasure-displeasure dimension reflects the degree to which a person feels happy, joyful, good, or satisfied with the milieu, whereas the arousal-nonarousal dimension taps the degree to which a person feels alert, excited, stimulated, or active in the shopping environment.

Pleasant environments contribute to extra time spent in the store and unplanned shopping (Donovan, Rossiter, Marcoolyn, & Nesdale, 1994). The results from Wakefield and Baker's (1998) field study of shopping malls indicated that environmental factors like design, music, mall layout, and decor are positively related to excitement and/or desire to stay at the mall. The aesthetics of the store symbolize the environmental stimuli. Aesthetics has a

* Assistant Professor, ABIT-JRD Tata Institute of Management, Cuttack - 753 014, Odisha.
E-mail : pallabi.iitkgp@gmail.com

similar meaning as artistic and beautification. A store with pleasing aesthetics would be one that is modern, with good lighting, intelligently laid out, and visually appealing, whereas a less attractive store might be poorly maintained and haphazardly laid out with narrow, poorly lit aisles, old fixtures, peeling paint, and so forth (Richardson, Jain, & Dick, 1996). The clean, modern store may yield positive halo effects toward the products sold and attract the customers to purchase. Shoppers may opine that an unattractive retail outlet would store low quality products and may not buy from it. Store aesthetics has an influence on the shopper judgement and decision making (Sharma, 1996; Sharma & Stafford, 2000).

There has been a lot of research on the physical environment or the atmosphere of a retail store, but there is a dearth of research studies on the concept of store aesthetics. Moreover, the difference between the choice and preference of the shoppers based on their gender has not been dealt in previous literature. Gender has its own influence in shopping behavior. A man and a woman shopping in the same retail outlet would have differences in their choices and preferences. As women are more emotional and men rational, the influence of aesthetics would vary on both. The present paper is a research on the difference in the preference of the aesthetic variables of the store by the shoppers based on their gender. Furthermore, the differentiating persuading influence of store aesthetics variables on purchase intention of male and female customers was also studied.

Literature Review

➤ **Store Aesthetics and its Variables :** Research has revealed that an aesthetically pleasing web store has a positive effect on the purchase influence of its customers (Wang, Hong, & Lou, 2010). Making an investment in store aesthetics provides a big “bang for the buck” because the effect is holistic and not product specific (Richardson et al., 1996). There has been a growing importance in the beautification of the interior and exterior of a store to lure customers. It has been recognized that creative interiors and exteriors influence and reinforce shoppers' buying behavior (Kotler, 1973). Two factors were considered for the present study- store aesthetics and purchase intention. To study store aesthetics, 17 variables were taken from Berman and Evans (2013).

The variables taken for the study have been classified under exterior and interior of the store. The exterior of the store denotes the outside of the store and its external environment which is visible to the outer world. The exterior of the store includes the following variables : External appearance [O], store building [SB], marquee [M], parking facilities [PF], display window [DW], and location [L]. The *external appearance* of a store is its identity. It deserves the maximum attention on the part of the store manager. If the external appearance is attractive and approachable, it will induce positive stimuli within the customers and lead to purchase intention (Turley & Milliman, 2000). The store building includes the whole building of the store which may be part of a bigger complex or a standalone building. It can be disguised as a small one merging with others or non - disguised as a huge building standing out from the crowd. The store building should be attractive to draw customers' attention.

The second most important variable which matters is the marquee. A marquee is a sign board that displays the store's name. The marquee can be painted or can be a neon light, printed, or script and set alone or attached by a slogan and other information (Berman & Evans, 2013). An attractive and attention drawing marquee is one which is well visible and eye catching. This can be done by not adding too much text as a passerby riding a bike or any vehicle cannot read too many words while moving. The marquee is generally above the entrance of the store. Since it carries the name of the store, the persuading effect on the shoppers starts with it.

The most neglected but the most crucial variable is parking facilities. Parking facilities can add to or detract from the store atmosphere. Plentiful, free, nearby parking creates a more positive image than scarce, costly, distant parking. A difficult or congested way to the parking area dissuades shoppers from shopping. Atmospherics are diminished if the parking lots, sidewalks, and entrances are jammed (Berman & Evans, 2013).

The appearance of the store also includes the display window. Display windows flaunt the samples of the products available in the store. The purpose of a display window is to identify the store and its offerings and induce potential customers to enter the store (Berman & Evans, 2013). A display window has to be planned very carefully in context to its size, number, shape, colour and themes, and the frequency of changes per year. Research has found

an increase in purchase intention and sales in stores with a display window, especially with new products (Edwards & Shakley, 1992).

The last but perhaps the most important variable is the location of the store. A store located in a poor neighborhood signals to shoppers that the store may be for the poor or working class consumers. Similarly, a store located in an upscale residential community may signify that its customers are upscale. A store located in a certain ethnic neighborhood may make a statement too - that it caters to that ethnic population (Sirgy et al., 2000). If the location of the store is in the central business district, the traffic flow is generally high. A store which is located in the central business district would attract more traffic, and shoppers will have more intention to purchase.

The *interior* of the store is the inside of the brick and mortar. As the beautification of the exterior is important, similarly, the interior of the store needs to be attractive and well maintained. The research of Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, and Voss (2002) suggested that a good store interior positively influences customers' perceptions of merchandise quality. The interior includes atmosphere [A], layout [LO], product display [PD], colour combination and lighting [CL], music [MU], flooring [F], trial rooms [TR], merchandise assortment [MA], price [P], sales personnel [SP], and customer service [CS]. The atmosphere is the environment of the store. In this study, the internal environment of the store is considered under atmosphere. Research has shown that atmosphere has a persuading effect on the shoppers' buying decision (Sharma & Stafford, 2000). It stimulates the emotions of the shoppers, which has an effect on the buying behaviour (Ghosh, Tripathy, & Kumar, 2010 ; Jin, Hoong, Kit, Mun, & Selvarajan, 2012 ; Kusumowidagdo, Sachari, & Widodo , 2012). The store atmospherics convey a cue about the quality, ambience, identity, and image of the store to its customers. Literature has shown that store atmosphere has a positive relationship with purchase intention (Gillani, 2012).

The layout of the store is ease of user movement through the store to provide maximum exposure of goods and attractive display. Well designed layouts are extremely important because they strongly influence in-store traffic patterns, shopping atmosphere, shopping behaviour, and operational efficiency (Vrechopoulos, O' Keefe, Doukidis, & Siomkos, 2004). A well-designed store layout encourages shoppers to visit stores regularly and creates a shopping atmosphere that contributes towards shopping efficiency (Lewison, 1997).

One of the important parts of the interior is the display of products. Products can be displayed in several ways to attract customers. A well organized and aesthetically pleasing product display draws attention of the shoppers. Studies have shown that the display of products is directly proportional to the increase in sales (Curhan, 1974; Chevalier, 1975; Gagnon & Osterhaus, 1985 ; Wilkinson, Mason, & Paksoy, 1982). Prominent display of products significantly influences purchase intention of the customers. Attractive colour combination and lighting of the store draw customers' attention towards the store and thereby increase profitability (Areni & Kim, 1994; Sirgy, Grewal, & Mangleburg, 2000).

Color appears to influence simulated purchases (Bellizzi & Hite, 1992), purchasing rates (Bellizzi & Hite, 1992), time spent in the store (Bellizzi & Hite, 1992), pleasant feelings (Bellizzi & Hite, 1992; Crowley, 1993), arousal (Crowley, 1993), store and merchandise image (Bellizzi, Crowley, & Hasty, 1983; Crowley, 1993), and the ability to attract a consumer toward a retail display (Bellizzi et al., 1983). Blue environment has an increased positive significant effect on purchase intention in comparison to other colours. Lighting contributes to the identity, comfort level, and visual quality of the store. Brightly lit stores are more captivating than dimly lit ones (Kouчекian & Gharibpoor, 2012). It was found that shoppers spend more time in shopping and observed more number of items in a store with bright lights than in dim ones. Lights have a positive and negative effect on the purchase intention of the customers. In dim light, customers do not intend to purchase due to poor visibility of the products' labels.

The flooring of the store is also an imperative variable which has to be aesthetically perfect to influence purchase intention. Dark colour flooring gives a gloomy effect, whereas light coloured ones reflect light and give an inviting aura to the shoppers. A slippery floor dissuades shoppers from moving around.

Universally, music is the most studied general interior cue (Areni & Kim, 1993 ; Baker, Levy, & Grewal, 1992 ; Chebat, Chebat, & Filiatrault , 1993 ; Gulas & Schewe, 1994; Herrington, 1996 ; Hui, Dube, & Chebat, 1997; Milliman, 1982, 1986; Smith & Curnow, 1966; Yalch & Spangenberg, 1988, 1990, 1993). It appears that the music played in a store can have a significant impact on a variety of behaviors, including sales, arousal of intention to

purchase (Alpert, Alpert, & Maltz, 2005), perceptions of and actual time spent in the environment, in-store traffic flow, and the perception of visual stimuli in the retail store (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001). However, the impact of music can be mediated by the age of the shopper (Gulas & Schewe, 1994 ; Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990), music tempo (Milliman, 1982, 1986), music volume (Smith & Curnow, 1966), music preference (Herrington, 1996), and by the use of background or foreground music (Areni & Kim, 1993 ; Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990, 1993). Music influences behavior even when consumers are not consciously aware of it (Gulas & Schewe, 1994 ; Milliman, 1982). Young shoppers spent more time in shopping when background music was played whereas older shoppers preferred spending more time with foreground music (Yalch & Spangenberg, 1988). Research shows that various types of music have an impact on shoppers' behavior. In a wine shop, shoppers spent more time and bought expensive wines when the music played was classical in nature (Areni & Kim, 1993).

The trial room is the most inconspicuous part of a store, but perhaps is one of the most important elements. It is a small closed cabin with mirrors and hangers where a customer can wear a dress to check its fit and match with his/her personality. The trial room should be airy, well lighted, and comfortable. An aesthetically pleasing trial room would invite customers to try out new attires and generates an intention to purchase.

The merchandise that a store contains is assorted in various patterns. The assortment may be on a theme base, occasion base, formal and casual. Assortment can be broad and deep in variety, colours, sizes, and so forth. If a shopper gets the merchandise of his/her size and choice, then he/she may have an intention to purchase. A well and systematically assorted merchandise increases the time spent in shopping by a shopper as he/ she can find merchandise at ease. The price levels of the merchandise are also likely to have an important role on shoppers' purchase decisions. Higher prices are likely to be associated with higher quality merchandise, which is displayed and sold at upscale stores and bought by affluent or status-conscious consumers (Sirgy et al., 2000). Discounts and sales promotion offers have a positive effect on purchase intention of customers (Chevalier, 1975). Studies have revealed that price reductions result in increase in sales (Woodside & Waddle, 1975).

Apart from the physical attributes of a store, the sales personnel and the service provided by the store are also important aspects of the interior store aesthetics. Previous research has shown that the credibility of the sales personnel has a persuading influence on the shoppers and their purchase intention (Sharma & Stafford, 2000). The sales personnel play with the cognitive aspect of the shoppers. The cognitive model shows that when the message conveyed by the sales personnel overrules the shoppers' own thoughts, they have less counter arguments and get convinced by the sales personnel. A sales personnel who is well groomed, polite, and presentable aesthetically attracts shoppers. The customers listen to their advice and may be convinced by the personnel (Chang, Chang, & Yeh, 2013). The service offered by the store to its customers is customer service. It includes the service provided by the sales personnel at POP and POD and after sales services, if any, offered by the store. A store offering free home delivery will definitely attract more footfalls and increased sales.

➡ **Store Aesthetics and Purchase Intention :** Previous research has proven that store atmospherics has an influence on the buying decision making of customers. The retailers design store environment in a manner that will enhance customers' positive feelings, assuming that this will lead to desired consumers' behaviour like higher willingness to purchase (Mano, 1999). The physical atmosphere of the store creates consistent purchase behaviour by operational arousal and pleasure to purchase (Babin & Attaway, 2000). It enhances the purchase intention of customers by increasing the store brand image (Sharma & Stafford, 2000). It has been found that the purchase intention of a customer depends on two factors - the thoughts of the customer and the atmosphere of the store (Sharma & Stafford, 2000). Both the factors should be made beautiful and pleasing to attract more shoppers and increase their purchase intention. Aesthetics can influence purchase behaviour in three ways - attention creating medium, message creating medium, and affect creating medium (Kotler, 1973). Attention is created by the colours, layout, product display, marquee, and other elements of the store which deliver certain stimuli, which help in communicating the message to the customers about their importance in the store. The elements of store aesthetics arouse and motivate the shoppers' senses and visceral reactions to create an affect. Purchase intention forecasts future consumer behaviour (Gillani, 2012). Purchase intention would lead to development of brand loyalty by loyal customers (Gogoi, 2013).

Table 1. Demographics of the Sample

Age	In percentage
18-25	29
25-35	24
35-45	25
45-55	13
55 >	9
Gender	
Male	49.6
Female	50.4
Profession	
Student	20.7
Service holder	34.9
Housewife	35.6
Business men/women	8.7

Objectives of the Study

- To find out the most preferred elements of the store aesthetics by shoppers belonging to both the genders.
- To study the differentiating effect of the elements of store aesthetics on the purchase intention of male and female shoppers.

Research Methodology

The study was both exploratory as well as causal in nature. Two factors – store aesthetics with 17 variables and purchase intention were taken for the study. The variables under store aesthetics were taken as the independent variables, whereas purchase intention was taken as the dependent variable. A structured questionnaire was framed with 28 questions for the survey. Likert scale was used for framing the questionnaire (5= *strongly agree*, 4= *agree*, 3= *neither agree nor disagree*, 2= *disagree*, 1= *strongly disagree*). The retail store chosen for the survey was a leading apparel branded store in the city of Cuttack, Odisha. The store was chosen because being a leading brand located in the shopping hub of the city with all the necessities, the store was not able to meet the estimated sales. Five hundred and fifty respondents (550) who visited the store were asked to participate in the study as respondents. The study was conducted for a period of two months from the beginning of May 2013 until the end of June 2013. The sampling procedure used was quota sampling.

Analysis and Results

The data collected was put to analysis, which revealed the following results. The demographics of the respondents have been shown in the Table 1. As shown in the Table 1, the minimum age of the respondents was 18 years. The maximum percentage of the respondents were between the age group of 18-25 years (29%) followed by respondents in the age group of 35-45 years (25%). The minimum percentage of the respondents were above the age of 55 years. The gender ratio taken was almost 1:1. As the study was conducted to ascertain the gender differences, almost equal number of respondents from both the genders were surveyed (Male= 49.6%, Female= 50.4%). Housewives outnumbered other shoppers with 35.6% followed by professionals or service holders (34.9%), students (20.7%), and business men/women (8.7%).

Table 2. Factor Analysis Based on Gender

Aesthetics	Variables	Male (FL)	Female (FL)
Exterior	External Appearance [O]	0.69	0.45
	Store building [SB]	0.76	0.56
	Marquee [M]	0.45	0.38
	Parking facilities [PF]	0.74	0.57
	Display window [DW]	0.42	0.73
	Location [L]	0.46	0.58
Interior	Atmosphere [A]	0.77	0.71
	Layout [LO]	0.85	0.88
	Product display [PD]	0.93	0.88
	Colour and lighting [CL]	0.58	0.64
	Music [MU]	0.34	0.67
	Flooring [F]	0.27	0.15
	Trial room [TR]	0.64	0.67
	Merchandise assortment [MA]	0.74	0.5
	Price [P]	0.84	0.82
	Sales personnel [SP]	0.81	0.76
	Customer service [CS]	0.84	0.87

The data was checked for its reliability and validity after dealing with the outliers and missing data. The reliability coefficient, that is, Chronbach's alpha value for the data collected was found to be $\alpha = 0.78$ by conducting the reliability analysis by using SPSS. Validity analysis was performed to measure the accuracy of what it was intended to measure. Convergent and discriminant validity was checked and the data was found authenticated. Factor analysis was used for calculating the convergent validity. As a thumb rule, the factor loading has to be greater than 0.5 for it to be convergent (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2007; Mishra & Datta, 2011). All the variables loaded more than 0.5 except M \rightarrow 0.44. As a loading of only 0.3 is required with a sample size of more than 350, therefore, the variable was kept for the research (Hair et al., 2007). The average variance extracted (AVE) of the variables was greater than the square of the correlations between the variables, which showed that the variables were discriminant (Hair et al., 2007; Mishra & Datta, 2011).

The most preferred variables of store aesthetics by both the genders were assessed by analyzing the data using factor analysis as shown in the Table 2. The Table 2 shows that for both the genders, the most important factors were product display [PD] (M \rightarrow 0.93, F \rightarrow 0.88), followed by layout of the store (M \rightarrow 0.85, F \rightarrow 0.88), customer service [CS] (M \rightarrow 0.84, F \rightarrow 0.87), price [P] (M \rightarrow 0.84, F \rightarrow 0.82) of the merchandise, and parking facilities [PF] (M \rightarrow 0.74, F \rightarrow 0.57). The least preferred factor was flooring [F] (M \rightarrow 0.27, F \rightarrow 0.15) of the store.

The difference between the preferences for the factors between the genders can also be ascertained from the Table 2. It was found that display window was less attractive for men (DW \rightarrow 0.42) as compared to the women respondents (DW \rightarrow 0.73). The outside of the store was not liked by women (O \rightarrow 0.45) in comparison to men (O \rightarrow 0.69). The marquee of the store was not distinctly noticeable to both men (M \rightarrow 0.45) and women (M \rightarrow 0.38). Both men (F \rightarrow 0.27) and women (F \rightarrow 0.15) respondents did not find the floor non slippery and matching with the interiors. The music played was not soothing and encouraging for men (MU \rightarrow 0.34) in comparison to the women (MU \rightarrow 0.67) respondents. The location was not very important for men (L \rightarrow 0.46), but it needed to be easily approachable and in the central business area for women respondents (L \rightarrow 0.58). The above findings depict the differences between the men and women respondents with regards to their preferences for the variables for both the exterior and interior factors of the store.

Table 3. Persuading Effect of Aesthetics Variables on Purchase Intentions of Male and Female Shoppers

Aesthetics	Variables	Male (β)	p - value	Female (β)	p - value
Exterior	O→PI4	-0.32	0.00	-0.37	0.00
	SB → PI6	0.21	0.001	0.54	0.00
	M → PI5	0.19	0.001	0.21	0.001
	PF → PI7	0.61	0.001	0.67	0.00
	DW → PI2	0.45	0.00	0.32	0.00
	L→ PI15	0.56	0.001	0.71	0.001
Interior	A → PI1	0.6	0.001	0.48	0.001
	LO→ PI16	-0.04	0.001	0.52	0.001
	PD→PI3	0.89	0.00	0.84	0.00
	CL→PI10	0.38	0.00	0.49	0.040
	MU→PI9	-0.07	0.001	0.14	0.00
	F→PI8	-0.27	0.00	-0.16	0.00
	TR→PI11	0.05	0.030	0.64	0.009
	MA→P13	0.71	0.001	0.75	0.213
	P→PI14	0.04	0.001	0.04	0.001
	SP → PI12	-0.07	0.209	-0.03	0.201
	CS → PI17	0.46	0.00	0.42	0.001

After the findings of the most preferred variables of the store for both the genders, the data was further analyzed to chalk out the effect of these variables on the purchase intention of the shoppers based on their gender. Regression analysis was performed using SPSS, and the results of the same are given in the Table 3.

The Table 3 shows that the persuading effect of the aesthetics of the chosen store had a differential persuading effect on the purchase intention of the customers. The most significant effect was of product display on the intention to purchase for both genders (M→ 0.89, F→ 0.84) followed by lighting of the interiors of the store (M→ 0.71, F→ 0.56), parking facilities provided by the retail outlet (M → 0.61, F→ 0.67), and the location of the store (M→ 0.56, F→ 0.71). The marquee (M → 0.71, F→ 0.75), also known as the signboard, also had a persuading influence on the purchase intention of the customers. The effect of the outside (M→ -0.32, F→ -0.37) of the store building and the flooring of the store (M→ -0.27, F→ -0.16) both had a negative effect on the purchase intention of both the genders. The existence of the sales personnel did not have a positive effect on the buying behavior of the customers (M→ -0.07, F→ -0.03).

The effects of different variables were different for both the genders. The effect of store building on the purchase intention of men was quite less as compared to its effect on women shoppers (M→ 0.21, F→ 0.54). The music played inside the store had a negative effect on the purchase intention of men (MU→ -0.07), but had a positive persuading influence on the purchase intention of women (MU→ 0.14). Similarly, the price of the merchandise displayed did not influence the purchase intention of men (P→ 0.04), whereas women respondents (P→ 0.04) found it to be slightly worthy.

Discussion

The Tables 2 and 3 lead to the following discussion. The display of the products was the most preferred variable by the respondents, and its persuading effect had the greatest impact on the purchase intention of the shoppers of the chosen store. It is because the products were displayed in a systematic and aesthetic manner, which was liked by the shoppers and made their shopping experience easier. The layout was aesthetically pleasing to the shoppers, but

it did not have any role in persuading the purchase intention of the customers. This shows that it is not necessary that a store with a good layout will increase the purchase intention of the customers. The customer service provided by the surveyed store was liked by the shoppers, and it also influenced their purchase intention in a positive way. The price of the merchandise was worth its value for both the genders, but the effect on their purchase intention was different. For men, price had an insignificant effect on their purchase intentions, which was slightly more significant for women customers. Flooring ranked the least in the priority list of the shoppers, and it also had a minimum influence on their purchase intention. This shows that it is natural that the flooring of the store should be properly made. The display window was more important for women than for men, but its influence on purchase intention was less for women. This proves that display windows were not attractive enough to persuade the women shoppers.

The external appearance of the store ranked negative in exterior store aesthetics for both the genders and its effect was also insignificant. The marquee of the store was also not significantly beautiful for the shoppers, but it had a highly significant effect on the purchase intention as it carried the name of the store. Music played inside the store was soothing for women shoppers than it was for the men, but it had a very low persuading effect on the purchase intentions of the shoppers. The parking facilities provided by the outlet were preferred more by men than by women as they required convenience and safety in parking their vehicles, but its effect was more on the women customers. This is because women shoppers spend more time in shopping and if their vehicle is safe, they will look for more merchandise, thereby ending up with more purchases. The location of the store influenced the buying intention of both the genders, but the importance of this variable was more for women as the outlet is located in the central business area of Cuttack, which made it approachable for the women shoppers.

Managerial Implications

The main purpose of this study was to find out if beautification and proper maintenance, that is, aesthetics of a retail store persuade the shoppers' intention to purchase. As discussed above, the respondents gave their opinion by ranking the variables under exterior and interior of the store in order of their preference. Furthermore, the effect of these variables in persuading the buying intention of the customers was also found out. This study would be useful for managers as it provides the guidelines as to which are the most preferred variables for a customer (according to their gender) and the effect of the same on the purchase intentions of the customers. Product display was given the cadre of the most preferred variable with utmost persuading influence on the shoppers. The managers should aim at making the display of products more aesthetic - may be by using different themes, colours, or sizes. The layout has to be in a systematic pattern in accordance to the products the store stocks. The flooring should be non slippery and match with the interiors. Although it does not have any direct influence on the purchase intention, but indirectly, it affects the psychology of the shoppers. Similarly, the colours and the lighting of the store have to be aesthetically pleasing and soothing for the shoppers. It should make their shopping experience obstacle free.

The flooring, lighting, and colour of the interiors are more of the maintenance factors than the persuading factors, but if these factors are not taken care of, it would lead to customer dissatisfaction. The service provided by the store is directly proportional to the purchase intention of the shoppers, and the managers need to focus on it. The store may have all the aesthetics, but if the human aesthetic is lacking, the sales would definitely dip. The prices of the products have to be fixed keeping in mind the lifestyle and income level of the shoppers in the region where the store is located. Since the brand considered for the present study has its stores in tier I, II, and even tier III cities, it has to cater to a variety of customers. Accordingly, the price of the products should be fixed. Women shoppers were found to be more price conscious than men, and this factor needs to be taken care of by the managers while setting the prices of the merchandise. As found from the survey, most of the shoppers visited the store because of its brand name, and not due to its exterior, display window, or marquee. These factors may not be important for shoppers who are aware of the brand. However, for prospects who are attracted to visit a store by its attractive display window, an appealing exterior, and an aesthetically designed and legible marquee, the managers have to take care of the above. Location and parking facilities also need to be taken care of to increase the footfalls to the store.

Conclusion

This research concludes that store aesthetics play a major role in influencing the buying behaviour and purchase intention of the shoppers belonging to both the genders. For men, some aspects were more important whereas for women shoppers, some others were significant. Apart from proper maintenance of the store, the store atmospherics - exterior and interior of the store - need beautification. It should appeal to the shoppers so that they spend more time in the store leading to increase in purchases.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The study was limited to the city of Cuttack and a single retail outlet. In the future, the present study can be extended by conducting a survey in different retail outlets located in different states of India. A comparative study can also be conducted with two brands of the same retail format, that is, two hypermarkets, supermarkets, or other formats to check the similarities and differences in the results. Moreover, retail brands of various types, like a specialty store and a category killer store, can be compared to check the preferences of the customers on store aesthetics and the effect on their intention to purchase.

References

- Alpert, M.I., Alpert, J.I., & Maltz, E.N. (2005). Purchase occasion influence on the role of music in advertising. *Journal of Business Research*, 58 (3), 369-376. DOI: 10.1016/S0148-2963(03)00101-2
- Areni, C. S., & Kim, D. (1993). The influence of background music on shopping behavior: Classical versus top-forty music in a wine store. In L. McAlister & M. L. Rothschild (eds.) *NA - Advances in consumer research* (Volume 20, pp. 336 - 340). Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.
- Areni, C. S., & Kim, D. (1994). The influence of in-store lighting on consumers' examination of merchandise in a wine store. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 11 (2), 117- 125. DOI: 10.1016/0167-8116(94)90023-X
- Babin, B. J., & Attaway, J. S. (2000). Atmospheric affect as a tool for creating value and gaining share of customer. *Journal of Business Research*, 49 (2), 91- 99. DOI: 10.1016/S0148-2963(99)00011-9
- Baker, J., Levy, M., & Grewal, D. (1992). An experimental approach to making retail store environmental decisions. *Journal of Retailing*, 68 (4), 445 - 460.
- Baker, J., Parasuraman, A., Grewal, D., & Voss, G. B. (2002). The influence of multiple store environment cues on perceived merchandise value and patronage intentions. *Journal of Marketing*, 66 (2), 120 - 141. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.66.2.120.18470>
- Bellizzi, J. A., Crowley, A. E., & Hasty, R. W. (1983). The effects of color in store design. *Journal of Retailing*, 59 (1), 21 - 45.
- Bellizzi, J. A., & Hite, R. E. (1992). Environmental color, consumer feelings, and purchase likelihood. *Psychology and Marketing*, 9 (5), 347- 363. DOI: 10.1002/mar.4220090502
- Berman, B. R., & Evans, J. R. (2013). *Retail management: A strategic approach* (12th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Chang, W. - C., Chang, L. - H., & Yeh, S. - S. (2013). Customers' perceived experiences of restaurant environment. In J. S. Chen (ed.). *Advances in hospitality and leisure* (Volume 9, pp. 185 - 205). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. DOI: 10.1108/S1745-3542(2013)0000009013
- Chebat, J. C., Chebat, G. C., & Filiatrault, P. (1993). Interactive effects of music and visual cues on time perception: An application to waiting lines in banks. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 77 (3), 995 - 1020.

- Chevalier, M. (1975). Increase in sales due to in-store display. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 12, 426 - 431.
- Crowley, A. E. (1993). The two dimensional impact of color on shopping. *Marketing Letters*, 4 (1), 59 - 69. DOI : 10.1007/BF00994188
- Curhan, R. C. (1974). The effects of merchandising and temporary promotional activities on the sales of fresh fruits and vegetables in supermarkets. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 11 (3), 286 - 294.
- Donovan, R. J., & Rossiter, J. R. (1982). Store atmosphere: An environment psychology approach. *Journal of Retailing*, 58 (1), 34 - 57.
- Donovan, R. J., Rossiter, J. R., Marcolyn, G., & Nesdale, A. (1994). Store atmosphere and purchasing behavior. *Journal of Retailing*, 70 (3), 283 - 294. DOI: 10.1016/0022-4359(94)90037-X
- Edwards, S., & Shakley, M., (1992). Measuring the effectiveness of retail window display as an element of the marketing mix. *International Journal of Advertising*, 11 (3), 1-16.
- Gagnon, J. P., & Osterhaus, J., T. (1985). Effectiveness of floor displays on the sales of retail products. *Journal of Retailing*, 61 (1), 104 - 116.
- Ghosh, P., Tripathy, V., & Kumar, A. (2010). Customer expectations of store attributes: A study of organized retail outlets in India. *Journal of Retail & Leisure Property*, 9 (1), 75-87. DOI:10.1057/rlp.2009.27
- Gillani, F. (2012). Impact of peer pressure and store atmosphere on purchase intention: An empirical study on the youngsters in Pakistan. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 2 (7), 323-332.
- Gogoi, B. J. (2013). Study of antecedents of purchase intention and its effect on brand loyalty of private level brand of apparel. *International Journal of Sales & Marketing Management Research and Development (IJSMMRD)*, 3 (2), 75-86.
- Gulas, C. S., & Schewe, C. D. (1994). Atmospherics segmentation: Managing store image with background music. In R. Acrol & A. Mitchell (eds). *Enhancing knowledge development in marketing* (pp. 325 - 330). Chicago, IL: American Marketing Association.
- Hair, J. F. Jr., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., Anderson, R. E., & Tatham, R. L. (2007). *Multivariate data analysis*. India: Pearson Education.
- Herrington, J. D. (1996). Effects of music in service environments: A field study. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 10 (2), 26 - 41. DOI:10.1108/08876049610114249
- Hui, M. K., Dube, L., & Chebat, J. C. (1997). The impact of music on consumers' reaction to waiting for services. *Journal of Retailing*, 73 (1), 87 - 104.
- Jin, C. W., Hoong, L. C., Kit, L. W., Mun, L. K., & Selvarajan, Y. (2012). *Antecedents of store image influencing young adults purchase intention in Malaysia* (Unpublished BIB thesis), Tunku Abdul Rehman University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Kotler, P. (1973). Atmospherics as a marketing tool. *Journal of Retailing*, 49 (4), 48-64.
- Kouчекian, M., & Gharibpoor, M. (2012). Investigating the relationship between visual merchandising and customer buying decision case study: Isfahan Hypermarkets. *International Journal of Academic Research in Economics and Management Sciences*, 1 (2), 2226-3624.
- Kusumowidagdo, A., Sachari, A., & Widodo, P. (2012). The impact of atmospheric stimuli of stores on human behavior. *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 35, 564-571. DOI: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.02.123
- Lewison, D. M. (1997). *Retailing* (6th ed.). USA: Prentice Hall International.
- Mano, H. (1999). The influence of pre-existing negative effect on store purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing*, 75 (2), 149- 183.

- Mattila, A.S., & Wirtz, J. (2001). Congruency of scent and music as a driver of in-store evaluations and behavior. *Journal of Retailing*, 77 (2), 273-289.
- Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). *An approach to environmental psychology* (p. 96). Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Milliman, R. E. (1982). Using background music to affect the behavior of supermarket shoppers. *Journal of Marketing*, 46 (3), 86 - 91.
- Milliman, R. E. (1986). The influence of background music on the behavior of restaurant patrons. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13 (September), 286 - 289.
- Mishra, P., & Datta, B. (2011). Brand name: The impact factor. *Research Journal of Business Management*, 5 (3), 109-116.
- Richardson, P., Jain, A. K., & Dick, A. (1996). The influence of store aesthetics on evaluation of private label brands. *Journal of Brand Management*, 5 (1), 19-28. DOI: 10.1108/10610429610113384
- Sharma, A. (1996). The effect of priming cues in sales interactions: Additional perspectives. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 16 (2), 49-52. DOI:10.1080/08853134.1996.10754054
- Sharma, A., & Stafford, T. F. (2000). The effect of retail atmospherics on customers' perceptions of salespeople and customer persuasion: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Business Research*, 49 (2), 183 - 191. DOI: 10.1016/S0148-2963(99)00004-1
- Sirgy, M. J., Grewal, D., & Mangleburg, T. (2000). Retail environment, self congruity, and retail patronage: An integrative model and a research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 49, 127-138.
- Smith, P. C., & Curnow, R. (1966). "Arousal hypothesis" and the effects of music on purchasing behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 50 (3), 255 - 256.
- Turley, L. W., & Milliman, R. E. (2000). Atmospheric effects on shopping behaviour: A review of experimental evidence. *Journal of Business Research*, 49 (2), 193-211. DOI: 10.1016/S0148-2963(99)00010-7
- Vrechopoulos, A. P., O' Keefe, R. M., Doukidis, G.I., & Siomkos, G.J. (2004). Virtual store layout: An experimental comparison in the context of grocery retail. *Journal of Retailing*, 80 (1), 13-22. DOI: 10.1016/j.jretai.2004.01.006
- Wakefield, K. L., & Baker, J. (1998). Excitement at the mall: Determinants and effects on shopping response. *Journal of Retailing*, 74 (4), 515-539. DOI: 10.1016/S0022-4359(99)80106-7
- Wang, Y. J., Hong, S., & Lou, H. (2010). Beautiful beyond useful? The role of web aesthetics. *The Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 50 (3), 121-129.
- Wilkinson, J. B., Mason, J. B., & Paksoy, C. H. (1982). Assessing the impact of short-term supermarket strategy variables. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 19 (1), 72- 86.
- Woodside, A. G., & Waddle, G. L. (1975). Sales effects of in-store advertising. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 15 (June), 29 - 33.
- Yalch, R. F., & Spangenberg, E. (1988). An environmental psychological study of foreground and background music as retail atmospheric factors. In *AMA Educator's Conference Proceedings*, A.W. Walle (ed.) (pp. 106-110). Chicago, IL: American Marketing Association.
- Yalch, R. F., & Spangenberg, E. (1990). Effects of store music on shopping behavior. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 7 (2), 55 - 63.
- Yalch, R. F., & Spangenberg, E. (1993). Using store music for retail zoning: A field experiment. In L. McAlister & M. L. Rothschild (eds.), *NA- Advances in consumer research* (pp. 632 - 636). Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.