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## *Store Environment Factors and Shoppers' Impulse Buying Behaviour: An Empirical Study in Retail Sector*

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*Abstract: The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of store-environment on shoppers' impulse buying behaviour in India. Store environment factors i.e. store ambience, background music and lighting, and salesperson behaviour were used to achieve this objective. Data was collected from Delhi and Haryana by using the convenient sampling method through online and offline mode. Multiple regression analysis was run on 422 respondents from retail store. The findings of this study suggest that store ambience significantly influences the shoppers' impulse buying behaviour. But background music and lighting and salesperson behaviour did not influence their buying behaviour. The results of this study would help the marketers and store managers to attract more shoppers and prospects in the future. Further research can be conducted with a large sample to overcome the limitations of the present study.*

*Keywords: impulse buying behaviour, store ambience, background music and lighting, salesperson behaviour.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Impulse buying is an extensively prevalent phenomenon across the world. The accelerated increment in impulse buying could also be a chunk of the cultural transformation related to shoppers' innovative buying habits, like increasing orientation on present needs rather than on future orientation and impulse buying (Wood, 1998). A widespread approach to shoppers' behaviour is popularly known as impulse buying and one of the foremost deliberations for marketing activities because of the diversity and universal prevalence of impulse buying of different kinds of products (Sharma et al. 2010). Rook and Gardner (1991) define impulse buying as an unintentional buying behaviour that includes a sudden decision and inclination for unintended product purchase. Peck and Childers (2006) defined impulse buying as a "consumer's tendency to buy spontaneously, unreflectively, immediately and kinetically". Impulse buying occurs when a sudden urge is created in the shoppers' minds to buy a specific product. Beatty and Ferrell (1998) expressed impulsive buying as "the state of desire that is experienced upon encountering an object in the environment". Engel and Blackwell (1982) explain impulse buying as "a buying action undertaken without a problem previously having been consciously recognised or a buying intention formed before entering the store". Dittmar et al. (1995) categorised impulse buying as arising not only to enjoy their unanticipated and physical needs but also to define the self-identity.

Previous researches found the different antecedents of impulse buying including internal characteristics such as impulse buying tendency (Weun et al., 1998), product involvement (Jones et al., 2003), situational characteristics like time and money availability (Beatty and Farrel, 1998), in-store experience (Stilly et al., 2010). On the other hand, a growing stream of research on store environment which also influences the shoppers' impulse buying behaviour. For example, visual merchandising stimulates shoppers' impulsive buying (Hitt 1996; Burner 1990). Visual merchandising includes lighting, music, colour, aroma and location of the store (Hitt 1996 and Burner 1990). Yalch and Spangenberg (1990) studied that music is a non-verbal source and

plays a vital role in shoppers' psychological behaviour. Bruner (1990) described that store music attracts shoppers' emotional states and creates positive states in shoppers' minds. Similarly, Milliman (1982) reported that good music stimulates shoppers to spend more time in-store, which motivates shoppers for more impulse buying. In addition, Foxall and Greenley (2000) found that a positive store atmosphere also leads to spending more time and money, which becomes the main cause of impulse buying. Shoppers' affective response is associated with the store atmosphere and motivates them for impulse purchases through sensing, feeling, touch and trying. These store amenities transformed the emotional perceptions of shoppers (Beatty and Ferrell 1988).

Furthermore, the perception about the salesperson behaviour also influence the shoppers' attitude towards merchandising and services provided (Hu and Jasper, 2006). (Simonson and Winer (1992) reported that proper display of products is also a big reason for shoppers' impulse buying behaviour. In other words, the way to arrange the products on shelves also influenced the shoppers to purchase instantly. It is easy for the shoppers to get products by looking at displays which creates a feeling to urge to buy (Bitner 1990). Proper layout of the products persuade positive feeling in shoppers' mind and helps them to find what they want (Spies et al. 1997).

From the previous and present literature review, it is clear that store environment influence the shoppers' buying behaviour but most of them were conducted outside the India. There is no one study that shows the effect of store environment of shoppers' impulse buying behaviour in Indian context. Thus, the main objective of this present study is to examine the influence of store-environment on shoppers' impulse buying behaviour in India.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

From the retailer's point of view, impulse buying is important to increase business revenue. It comprises a point of purchase, advertising, display and strategic product placement (Wood, 1998). Impulse buying is a spontaneous buying decision or sudden urge to buy a product after entering the store. Shoppers influence diverse facets such as in-store experience, interaction among shoppers' and salesperson behaviour. For example, while entering the store, shoppers come into contact with different in-store experiences that enhance their shopping experiences, such as floor merchandising, interior, lighting, aroma, display and music. Such experience arises in the emotional sense, i.e. joy, delight and excitement. Thus, this interactive nature of the in-store experience calls for shoppers' behaviour reflects not only rational aspects but also sensory aspects of the in-store experience and stimulate their impulsive buying. Foxall and Greenley (2000) stated that a good store environment stimulates shoppers to spend more time inside the store, leading to impulse buying.

## III. AMBIENT CHARACTERISTICS AND IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Baker et al. (1994) defined non-visual characteristics of the store environment as ambient characteristics, such as lighting, cleanliness etc. Areni and Kim (1994) explored the effect of lighting and found it can influence store image and merchandising characteristics. Clean stores and painted ceilings also have a positive impact on shoppers, which encourages impulse buying. Further, Tai and Fung (1997) stated that ambient characteristics arise emotional responses of shoppers, and their cognitive, affective and psychological states may be influenced by the ambient conditions of a retail environment. In-store stimuli and physical attractiveness positively impact merchandising quality (Baker et al., 1994) and shoppers' buying behaviour which will increase shoppers' pleasure level (Kim and Kim, 2012). Moreover, Mohan et al. (2013) also suggested the positive impact of lighting and music on impulse buying behaviour. Nishanov and Ahunjonov (2016) explored the impact of ambient characteristics (window display, background music, scent and promotional signage) and found a positive correlation between these characteristics with impulse buying behaviour. Thus, based on the previous studies it has been hypothesised that  $H_{01}$ : Ambient characteristics will not significantly influence the impulse buying behaviour.

## IV. BACKGROUND MUSIC, LIGHTING AND IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Background music in any store positively influences the shoppers' impulse buying. Milliman worked very hard in this area, and in 1982 they conducted a study to show the effect of background music on shoppers' buying behaviour. In this study, the

researcher checked the effect of no music, slow-tempo music and fast-tempo music on the pace of the in-store environment and daily gross sales volume and found that slow-tempo music significantly impacts shoppers' buying behaviour compared to fast-tempo music. Slow-tempo music stimulates shoppers to spend more time and money on their shopping. Further, Millman conducted another study in 1986 on restaurants and suggested that slow-tempo music inspired shoppers to take more time to eat their meals and beverage rather than the case of fast-tempo music. Millman 1982; 1986 explored music makes people happy and spend more time in the store than normal, which may result in unplanned buying.

After that, North and Hargreaves (2000) also found a similar result background music uplifts the person's behaviour and positively affects the person's mind. Eroglu and Machleit (1993) defined music and lighting as important triggers of impulse buying. Similarly, Smith (1989) studied good lighting inside the store creates an attractive ambience, which makes a good experience for shoppers and creates a sudden urge to purchase a product. Well-designed lighting systems play a vital role in a different dimension of the interior, are eye-catching, and create excitement which may positively influence the shoppers' buying.

Turley and Milliman (2000) defined the importance of background music as non-verbal communication, which makes the atmosphere more attractive and often enhances the chances of unplanned buying. Mattila and Wirtz (2001) stated that background music provokes the behavioural and affective aspects of shoppers and also noted the combined effect of scent and music on shoppers' buying behaviour. The researchers found that the shopping experience can be enhanced by better matching scent and background music. After studied the past researches it has been hypothesised that  $H_{02}$ : Background music and lighting will not significantly influence the impulse buying behaviour.

## V. SALESPERSON BEHAVIOUR AND IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Several previous studies have shown the importance of a salesperson in a store environment that encourages shoppers to buy impulsively (Baker et al., 1994; Crawford and Melewar, 2003; Mattila and Wirtz, 2008). Salesperson directly contacts shoppers and can easily identify the shoppers' demands and helps avoid their confusion through useful information. Salespeople either create a positive feeling in shoppers' minds, or even they can create negative mind states for buying decisions. John (1999) stated the importance of the salesperson and suggested shopping experience can be increased many times if shoppers meet a supportive, helpful and friendly nature salesperson. The salesperson makes their shopping experience more enjoyable, grateful and eagerly by providing amazing services. Though, sometimes shoppers enjoy their shopping without a dominating salesperson and are praised if sales assistant help when needed.

Mattila and Wirtz (2008) investigated the importance of social factors influencing shoppers' impulse buying behaviour. They enlightened the two types of social factors, the first is store employees, and the second is the company of others. For example, the friendly nature of store employees directly influences the impulsive decision of shoppers. Even store managers can avoid the negative states in shoppers' minds in extra crowding. Store managers trained their employees to behave more friendly with shoppers when over-crowding. Furthermore, the researchers explored if the shoppers are familiar with the store, they spend more time and are encouraged to purchase impulsively, whereas, if they are not familiar, they feel hesitant and avoid such stores, which will decrease their impulse buying behaviour.

Tendai and Crispen (2009) also stated the importance and significant role of the salesperson in shoppers' impulsive decisions. Turley and Milliman (2000) suggested that salesperson interaction with shoppers' was measured as an influential factor. Shoppers feel favoured when they meet a salesperson whose taste matches their taste and feels trustworthy. Similarly, Hu and Jasper 2006 found a good friendship relation between salespersons and shoppers and arise the feeling of affection, intimacy, supporting, being like a friend, gift-giving etc. all these characteristics of the salesperson enhance the satisfaction level of shoppers and create good word of mouth. Zhuang et al., 2006 found the mixed effect of companionship on shoppers' buying behaviour. According to the researcher, if accompanied by others helps to suggest purchasing the new product simultaneously;

they also help to suggest not to buy the product. Thus, the accompany of other people encourages them to buy the product and discourages not from buying the product. Crawford and Melewar, 2003 concluded that a good salesperson suggests to shoppers what to purchase and boosts impulse buying. Thus, the based on the prior researches it has been hypothesised that  $H_{03}$ : Salesperson behaviour will not significantly influence the impulse buying behaviour.

## VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Using the convenient sampling approach, a list of 1800 retail shoppers belonging to Delhi and Haryana prepared and presented online a self-administered questionnaire in the form of Google Docs. Some respondents not friendly enough with the online mode were approached at their doorsteps to fill up the questionnaire and also interviewed based on the survey questions. Out of 480 respondents who responded to the survey, 25 were rejected for incompleteness and 43 because of invariability in marking their responses. Overall, 422 subjects were finalized for analysis with a response rate of 23.44.

## VII. MEASUREMENT

For instrument measurement, six items of store ambience, four items of store layout and four items of salesperson behaviour were adapted from (Cho et al., 2014) study to collect the data on buyers store environment experience. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using the SPSS Ver. 21.0. The Cronbach's alpha value recorded was over 0.8, which is acceptable (Konting et al., 2009).

**Table 1.1 shows the Cronbach's alpha values**

Particular	No. of statements	$\alpha$ -value
Store Ambience	6	.884
Store Layout	4	.874
Salesperson Behaviour	4	.916

## VIII. DATA ANALYSIS

Multiple regression analysis was run to check store-based shopping environment factors (store ambience, store layout, and salesperson behaviour) on shoppers' impulse buying behaviour.

Table 1.2 shows the result of multiple regression with impulse buying, where impulse buying is entered as a 'dependent variable' and store environment as an 'independent variable'. The overall model is significant at  $p < 0.05$ . This model disclosed a significant impact of one variable ('store ambience') out of three. More specifically, 'store ambience' accounted for 24.2 per cent ( $R^2 = .242$ ) of 'impulsive behaviour', variance,  $F = 44.431$ , partially rejecting the null hypothesis  $H_{01}$ , which is the store ambience has no significant influence on impulse buying behaviour, whereas  $H_{02}$  and  $H_{03}$  failed to affect overall impulsive decisions significantly. Hence, this study anticipated an attractive store ambience leading to more impulse buying. In contrast, store layout and salesperson behaviour did not significantly affect the shoppers' impulse buying behaviour.

**Table 1.2: Regression Analysis of the Store-based Shopping Environment and Impulse Buying Tendency**

Predictors	Impulse Buying Tendency	
	N= 422	
	R	$\beta$
Store Environment	.492	
Store Ambience		.454**
Store Layout		N.S.
Salesperson Behaviour		N.S.
$R^2$		.242
Adjusted $R^2$		.236
Overall model F-ratio	44.431	
Overall model p-value	.000	

Annotations: the dependent variable is Impulse Buying Tendency; the independent variable is Store-based Shopping Environment; \*\* $p < 0.001$

## IX. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

This section examined the influence of store environment factors like store ambience, store layout and salespersons' behaviour on shoppers' impulse buying behaviour. Shoppers often want a pleasant store ambience. They enjoy shopping if stores have good lighting, background music and scent smell (Kim and Kim, 2012) and spend more time overview more isles, increasing impulse buying. The result of the present study also supports the extant literature review that shoppers' impulsive intentions are greatly influenced by store ambience.

Although, the many previous studies suggest the importance of store layout in impulse buying behaviour. Ohta and Higuchi, 2013 stated a well-designed layout provides ease for shoppers to search for their items. Shoppers scan more items if the store layout is well-arranged, enhancing the shopping experience and increasing the chances of impulsive buying (Faizal and Radha 2014). But the present study contradicts the previous one, according to this study store layout does not influence the shoppers' impulsive intentions. There is no significant relationship between store layout and impulse buying behaviour.

Some other studies also considered that shows the effect of salesperson behaviour. Jones (1991), stated the importance of salespersons' behaviour in impulsive buying. Shoppers enjoy their shopping if salespersons' behaviour is supportive and friendly. Salesperson behaviour makes the shopping experience good by providing their services. Shoppers enjoy their shopping without boredom if the salesperson is helpful. But the present study does not support the previous study. The present study suggest an insignificant relationship between salesperson behaviour and impulse buying behaviour. According to the present study salesperson behaviour did not influence the shoppers' impulsive buying.

In the end, the present study shows store display, lighting, music, and ambience enhance the curiosity of shoppers' to purchase something. For this purpose, many studies have been taken as a base and this study supports the results of previous one (Foxall and Greenley, 2000; Lee and Kacen, 2008; Doyle and Broadbridge, 1999; Dawson and Kim, 2010).

## X. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE IMPLICATION

While the present research has considerable contribution, it also has some limitations. As we always see in marketing research, the cross-sectional method is generally used to collect data. The same method was applied in this study, and important views have been missed out, which may be possible in longitudinal or time series data. Despite the different benefits of using non-probability sampling, there are some limitations, like small sample data limitations. The large sample may help boost this study's results (Cohen 1992, Mattila and Wirtz 2008). The data was collected only from Delhi and Haryana, which is relatively small, and the small sample size created some difficulty analyzing the results. The respondents give information on their particular product choice and get an influence on the types of retail outlets. Because this research was completely based on a relatively small sample that may not efficiently represent the extensive outcomes, the large sample may give different outcomes because the different marketing strategy used in different retail outlets. The findings of this study should prove helpful for retail managers in better understanding the shoppers' buying behaviour belongs from different backgrounds. By understanding and examining the in-store experience factors used in this study, the managers can investigate and attract the prospective shoppers in better way.

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