

**Retail Store Atmospheric – A review**

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**Introduction**

The modern customers visit the stores not just to buy the products. They expect a lot more than that. They wish to have better environment, atmosphere and other services to have a pleasant shopping experience. The retailers embrace different strategies to increase the sales, attract the customers and to retain them. According to Baker et al (1992), retailers provide attractive shopping experiences to improve consumer patronage and to get an edge over their competitors. The retail outlet that provides the customers with a memorable shopping experience would have a lasting impression and invariably attracts more sales. The customers do not visit the store for making purchases alone. The satisfaction experienced and the feel-good factor during the visit would also count. The shopping habits have changed a lot in modern India. In the past, shopping was mostly determined by needs whereas in the modern era shopping is influenced by many other factors such as hobby, entertainment, life style, hangout etc. Furthermore, the shoppers wish to utilize shopping for managing their stress (Sinha, 2003). Shopping has become an inseparable part of modern life style. Therefore, it becomes mandatory for the retailers to satisfy the various expectations of the customers to withstand stiff competition. The managers have shifted their focus from product to the customer experience (Puccinelli et al., 2009). The store atmospheric are the physical characteristics of a store. This can effectively be used as a strategy to attract consumers (Berman & Evans, 2010). Atmospheric refers to the conscious designing of the space to create certain effects in buyers (Kotler, 1974). The pleasant store environments induce the consumers to spend more time and money (Donovan et al., 1994). The term atmospheric refers to aesthetics and ambiance of the store and includes the in-store elements These atmospheric elements play an important role in influencing the customers to stay longer in the retail store and thus create the intended opportunity to increase the sales (Bell & Ternus, 2006). The store atmospheric became an effective strategy in modern retailing. Hence, many researchers have been conducted to identify the influence of atmospheric on the consumer purchasing behavior.

**Review of literature**

Music is considered as an important entertainment activity of human beings right from the beginning of civilization. It is described as one of the wonderful tools that touch the souls of human beings. Music is capable of changing the mindset and thus impacts the customers' purchasing decision also. Hynes & Manson (2016) say that 'retailers use music in the service environment to try to change consumer behaviour with a view to increasing spend, or improving consumer mood'. Banat & Wandebori (2012) emphasize that the pleasant music impacts the conscious and unconscious decision of the customer. Morrin & Chebat (2005) have pointed out that playing slow tempo music in a North American mall could increase the sales by half. Ruchi et al. (2010) reported that using appropriate music in retail store stimulates the customers to make emotional purchase.

Lighting in the retail store is the essential factor that instantly attracts the customers' attention. Better lighting environment not only provides the appealing effects on the products but also lures the customers to come nearer and to have a close look at it at least. Ruchi et al. have noted that bright lights in the retail stores enable the consumers to see the products clearly. It is a known fact that the consumers want to see the products clearly before purchasing them. The bright store environment facilitates the customers' desire to notice and touch the products (Vaccaro et al., 2008). Furthermore, the lighting effects may also facilitate the impulse purchasing. Therefore, lighting certainly acts as an important factor in purchase decision-making process. Consumers' attentions are drawn towards the products when appropriate colour of lighting is used in the retail stores (Areni & Kim, 1994).

A pleasant scent in the retail stores usually acts as a point of attraction for the customers and makes them feel comfortable and thus causes them to spend more time in the stores (Banat & Wandebori, 2012). In retail stores, scents can also influence consumer behavior through sensory stimulation (Pacelle, 1992). Scent makes and keeps the customer in a happy mood at the in-store environment and thus would invariably impacts on the purchase intention. The retailers should use appropriate scents in the stores by considering the profile of the target customers, type and nature of the products offered, weather condition, culture etc. Morrin & Ratneshwar (2000) pointed out that the use of right scents motivates the customers to consider buying the unfamiliar products also.

In visual merchandising, the products are displayed in an attractive way to the customers. Retail stores use this to draw the attention of the customers who in turn would like to know more about the product. Visual merchandising is used as a technique to increase impulse purchasing decision. According to Ghani& Kamal (2010) the display of the merchandise on the shelves and counters was mainly to influence the impulse purchasing behaviour of a customer. This is mainly due to the fact that the properly displayed merchandise has more chances of getting easily identified by the customers and the possibility of its purchase also increases manifold. The arrangement of merchandise in a retail store can modify the purchase behavior of customers (Simonson &Winer, 1992). Further, retailers classify the merchandise into different categories like frequently and infrequently purchased merchandise to make display decision of the products accordingly to attract the customers.

In the retail store, store decor is related to the decoration of the entire store which includes wall, floor and ceiling. Appropriate distinction is made in the variables used to study the store décor by excluding the variables that are related to other atmospherics factors. The decor elements creates positive image about the retail store and about the products too. The store décor is also done based on the culture and tradition of the society. Thus the effect of store decor on the customers' shopping behavior depends on the matching of store decor with the cultural preferences (Lam, 2001).

### **Conclusion**

Customer satisfaction and enjoyable experience inside the retail store positively impact the consumer behavior. Providing conducive shopping environment to the customers is the main motto of every retailer. To achieve this, the retailers adopt different atmospherics factors. The review shows that the customers give utmost importance to the lighting, scent and music, merchandise visibility and store decor aspects in the retail stores.