

Adaptations through Physical Environment Design - Impact on Retail Marketers and Consumers' Emotional Well-Being

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OVERVIEW: *In today's world any way to reduce stress is greatly appreciated, even if it is a shopping destination. Retail store is a drop zone which help to deal with anxiety and stress, and physical environment design is immensely powerful to create the overwhelming feelings in an individual. The aim of this paper is to impart the understanding of physical environment design and its interactive dimensions such as ambience, artefacts and spatial layout. Physical environment design has a psychological impact on consumers' moods and perceptions (Berman et al., 2011). Charisma of physical environment design has the ability to stimulate human senses which can create a space for seeking relaxation, and thus promote emotional well-being. However, the appeal to physical environment design is clear as it is responsible to create psychological effects on consumers in commercial establishments.*

Keywords: *physical environment design, emotional well-being, consumer perceptions, retail stores*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In this research, the authors propose a novel approach to facilitate an understanding about the elements of physical environment design in retail set-ups through the perceptions of consumers' emotional well-being. The physical environment design tend to perform the role of the pivot in the retail arrangements, for instance retail shopping stores (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). Structural correlations between elements of physical environment design has a great potential for adaptive use of retail marketers in the retail spaces for more accessibility and attractiveness (Darden and Dorsch, 1990). The noticeable design trends in retail spaces generate spatial cognition and a rocking shopping experience that provides new values for consumers (Mathwick et al., 2001). The current study addresses the gap identifying a set of dimensions that are relevant for consumers for a distinguished experience. This paper is among the few works done on understanding physical environment design process in UK's retail format and consumers' emotional level that improves well-being and consequently accelerates the business performance.

Central to this article is the notion that the physical environment design act as a source of sensorial experience for consumers in the modern marketing arena. Previous studies have shown that the store's physical environment design that build consumer experiences (Lanier and Rader, 2015) and plays a crucial role in consumers' perception within the shopping arcade (Martineau, 1958; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Sherry et al., 2001). This paper attempts to find answers to following research questions: 1) What is the role of visual identity, communication and cultural heritage in enhancing physical environment design?, 2) What is the contribution of ambience, artefacts and spatial layout to consumers' emotional well-being?, and 3) How can a physical environment design enrich emotional well being and thus increase the organisation's performance?

Retail marketers can prioritise the value of circulation of products as much as the circulation of people by accessorising the interior spaces to create positive energy and promote emotional well-being (El Hedhli et al., 2013). The physical environment design gives prominence to a company's services; it enables customers to distinguish and identify a brand or a company (Bennett, 1995; Leitch and Motion, 1999). Designers and consultants regard the concept of the PED as the interior structural presentation of elements; decorative or symbolic that specifically create a pattern to establish an environment in which the space communicates with the consumers (Balmer, 1998).

This research aims to investigate theoretically; physical environment design and its influence on emotional well-being at a corporate level that significantly affects organisation's performance which is the ultimate goal of any retail store. Researchers (Bitner, 1992; Kotler and Armstrong, 2000; Kozinets et al., 2002) from a wide array of disciplines have debated the way in which retail stores utilise the interior space as a

marketing device for the embodiment of displayed products. Such consistent and strategic configurations generate customers' experiences which are helpful in building up their emotional well-being. The essence of dynamics within the retail stores effects the functional dispersal of buying behaviour of consumers. The main objective of this study is: 1) to study the antecedents and consequences of physical environment design, 2) to understand the key elements of physical environment design, 3) to test the physical environment design and its effectiveness at the consumer's level, and 4) to test the theoretical framework and operational model that incorporate the antecedents and outcomes of physical environment design.

This article contributes to the growing research on consumer behaviour by extending the notion of PED as the primary psychological element for the deep relationships that retail marketers are increasingly seeking to build with their customers. The unique features of an organisation influences consumers' perception associated with the identity of a product or brand (Dennis et al., 2014) that transforms a retail store into an escapade. In broad terms, retail settings are destinations to interact with the product which encourages and engages consumers and compels them to visit repeatedly.

Retailers can achieve this goal by making the total shopping experience an exciting one, by making creative use of stimulus cues such as creative merchandising, proper lighting, relaxing music and appropriate aromas; a platform where consumers can be provided engaging experience. Physical environment design is essential in attracting and keeping the consumers excited and happy about the shopping experience. Tangible and intangible dimensions of the retail environment that offer insights into the consumers' mind and enhance emotional well-being, triggers the organisation's performance (Kotler et al., 2006).

II. METHODOLOGY

To collect more comprehensive data and understand the concept of 'physical environment design' and its relationship with emotional well-being, a mixed method research design is employed. A model of the physical environment design antecedents and its effect on emotional well-being and its consequences was tested in a survey conducted among consumers in London-based retail stores. A series of interviews (face to face) and then a quantitative survey with a larger group is used to do multidimensional studies (Churchill, 1979), following a positivist research design that involved collecting and analysing the data.

III. FINDINGS

The several components of physical environment design of retail stores have a magical effect on consumer's emotional well-being that may positively influence the business performance of retail stores. Therefore, it becomes mandatory for the retailers and managers to re-evaluate their store designs to catch the attention of the consumers. The identified themes have design implications for both education and practice that can inform the process of creating dynamic, engaging retail environments for modern consumers. Results reveal the importance of the physical environment in enhancing the consumers' emotional well-being and thus making the store successful. The research puts forth few specific implications and recommendations for researchers and retail managers in the future, which will help them to seek multiple benefits, such as brand performance.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The focus is on the role of design and how the physical environment design may be structured to enrich consumers' emotional well-being. The aim was achieved by identifying similarities amongst respondents' (consumers) experiences as they unfolded their views in specific contexts. Finally, the paper concludes that retail store planning and space allocation is essential as the customers are more inclined to seek well-being services which can make their visit a memorable one.

This study can offer valuable insight to the existing and forthcoming retailer marketers. Also, the study suggests some important strategic guidelines for service positioning and market segmentation of retail services as per customer requirements.

Paper: Research type

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