Store Atmospherics and Customer Satisfaction: An Empirical Study

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Abstract

All over world marketers are spending their maximum time, money and efforts to convince customers that they are producing products which are fit for their needs and wants. In present scenario where retail marketing is gaining dominance, multibrand retail giants in India such as D-mart, reliance, Wal-Mart and single brand retailers too are striving to make specific strategies for their retail outlets to please more customers. Kotler (1973), Yalch and Spangenberg (1990) have researched the importance and impact of atmospherics as a marketing tool. As per Levy, Weitz and Pandit (2008) store atmospherics comprises of elements like lighting, colour, music sense and scent which stimulates a customer to take action. Globally marketers are trying to create a favourable impact of atmospheric elements on buying intention of customers. So that by gaining their attention, develop interest towards products and services, stimulates their desire and as a result customer take action of purchase. In this paper researchers have tried to study the impact of elements of store atmospherics on satisfaction of customers. The data was collected empirically with interview and tested using appropriate statistical techniques.

Key Words

Store Atmospherics, Customer Satisfaction, Buying Behaviour.

Introduction

Nowadays customers are highly demanding and they want to be treated in a good manner so marketers doing efforts to grab chances of repeat purchases which can be converted into loyalty in the long run. The decision making related with purchases is influenced by many factors which can be related to the bundle of benefit offered by store related to purchase experience. The purchase experience is usually shaped by behaviour of staff or the environment of the store which is studied in detail as store atmospherics.

Researchers and marketing practitioners have emphasised on importance and impact of atmospherics as a marketing tool. Kotler (1973) introduced the term atmospherics and defined as "design of an environment through visual communication, lighting, colour, music, scent to stimulate

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customers' perceptual and emotional responses and ultimately to affect their purchase behaviour." Levy, Weitz and Pandit (2008) opined that atmospherics comprises of elements like lighting, colour, music and scent which stimulates a customer to take action. Yalch and Spangenberg (1990) opined that the elements of atmospherics namely visual communication, lighting, colour, music, scent should work in unity to facilitate and influence purchase decision. Kalchteva and Weitz (2006) analysed the importance of atmospherics on purchase decision from a specific store. Their study indicated that store atmospherics have a positive impact on gaining attention, kindling desire, inducing actions related with purchase and repurchase. Burke (1996) analysed the role of sensory organs on the buying behaviour of customers.

Franke (2002) investigated the impact of store design on the foot fall of customers. It was understood that the ambience of a store can be used to exercise pull strategy by marketers. The design of the store along with its positive ambience creates a shopping experience which the consumers prefer to relieve if they are satisfied by the experience.

Evolution of Store Atmospherics Typology

Authors	Store Atmospherics Dimensions
Kotler (1973-1974)	Four dimensions – i) visual ii) aural iii) tactile, olfactory
Baker (1986, 1994)	Three dimensions – i) ambient ii) design iii) social
Bitner (1992)	Three dimensions – i) ambient conditions ii) spatial layout and functionality iii) signs, symbols and artefact
Berman and Evans (1995)	Four dimensions – i) exterior ii) general interior iii) store layout iv) interior displays
D'Astous (2000)	Three dimensions – i) irritant ambient factors ii) irritant design factors iii) irritant social factors
Turley and Milliman (2000)	Five dimensions – i) general exterior ii) general interior iii) layout and design iv) point of purchase and decoration v) human variables

Research Objectives and Methodology

This study is an attempt to understand the following issues:

1. Presence of selected store atmospherics elements at D-Mart in Raipur City.
2. Customers' satisfaction with the selected elements of store atmospherics at D-Mart in Raipur City.

The researchers have collected data from 100 sampled respondents from the city of Raipur who visited the D-Mart for shopping. The responses were collected with the help of a schedule studied the customer responses regarding the elements of store atmospherics and their respective impact on purchase decision and satisfaction.
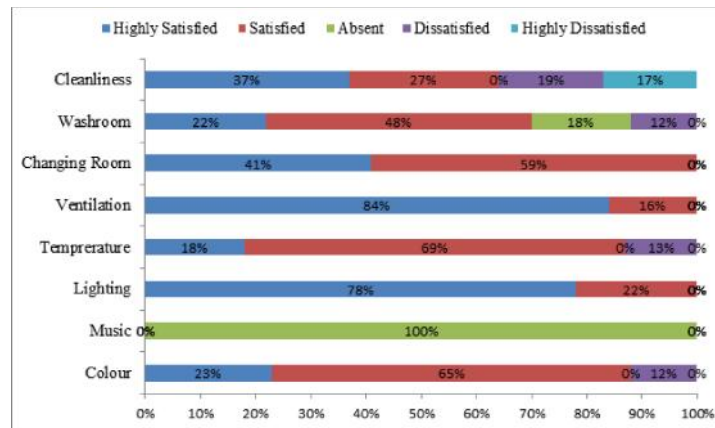
Data Analysis and Findings

Table 1 Shows respoonces of customers over basic atmospherics elements of reatil store , here basic elements means the elements which needed to create a favourable environment for shopping.

Elements	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Absent	Dissatisfied	Highly Dissatisfied
Colour	23%	65%	0%	12%	0%
Music	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
Lighting	78%	22%	0%	0%	0%
Temperature	18%	69%	0%	13%	0%
Ventilation	84%	16%	0%	0%	0%
Changing Room	41%	59%	0%	0%	0%

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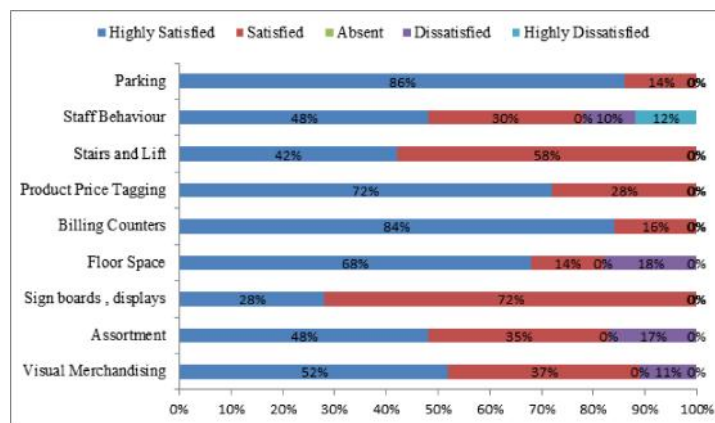|					
Washroom	22%	48%	18%	12%	0%
Cleanliness	37%	27%	0%	19%	17%

(Source – Primary Data)

It was found that most of the respondents were satisfied with washroom, changing room, ventilation, temperature, lighting and colour of store. The music element was found absent. 18% of the respondents were not aware about presence of washroom inside of store. 12% of the respondents were dissatisfied with colour and washroom, 13% of the respondents were dissatisfied with temperature. 19% were dissatisfied and 17% were highly dissatisfied with cleanliness.

Table 2 Shows responces of customers over comfort atmospherics elements of reatil store, here comfort elements means the elements which needed to do hassle free shopping and enhance shopping experience.

Elements	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Absent	Dissatisfied	Highly Dissatisfied
Visual Merchandising	52%	37%	0%	11%	0%
Assortment	48%	35%	0%	17%	0%
Sign boards , displays	28%	72%	0%	0%	0%
Floor Space	68%	14%	0%	18%	0%
Billing Counters	84%	16%	0%	0%	0%
Product Price Tagging	72%	28%	0%	0%	0%
Stairs and Lift	42%	58%	0%	0%	0%
Staff Behaviour	48%	30%	0%	10%	12%
Parking	86%	14%	0%	0%	0%

(Source – Primary Data)

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It was found that most of the respondents were satisfied with visual merchandising, assortment, sign boards & display, billing counters, product price tagging, stairs & lift, Staff behaviour and parking. 17% of the respondents were dissatisfied with assortment, 11% of the respondents were visual merchandising and 18% of the respondents were dissatisfied with floor space. 10 % of respondents were dissatisfied and 12% were highly dissatisfied with staff behaviour.

Conclusion

In today' market attraction of customers is an important strategic issue. It has become essential for marketers to understand the psychological process of decision making of customers in order to attract and retain them. The use of elements of store atmospherics by departmental stores has become an important tool for marketers. If the marketers are able to provide a proper combination of right Visual merchandising, cleanliness, billing counters, Lighting, Colour, Music and Fragrance and other atmospherics elements it will surely have a positive impact on the process of buying decision making that will be further resulting into future actions of repeat visit and purchase.

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