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A Study on the Impact of Experience on the Customer Purchase Intentions in Offline Clothing Stores

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ABSTRACT

Clothing stores have always been a part and parcel of life, since clothing is one of the basic necessities to survive. It is surprising how the clothing industry has revolutionized, and has become a lifestyle element, rather than just a basic necessity. In the present day, clothing industry is one of the major industries in the market, and people look at it as more than just buying clothes- They look at it as a buying experience. This research paper has studied the relationship between the shopping experience, and the buying intentions of the customers. The main focus here is on the aspect of shopping which relates to experiences, and seeing how this factor impacts the buying intention of the customers. Some of the main factors which have been considered include cleanliness, ambience, staff interaction, etc. Understanding the impact of experience is important because in today's time, experience is something which customers look for in any outing- be it to the malls, movies, or restaurants. This study defines "experience" using multiple factors, and performs multiple linear regression on them using SPSS software, with the data which was obtained from 120 respondents. The study concludes that experience impacts the buying behaviour of the customers to a great extent, and that it is very important for the stores to provide a great shopping experience to the customers.

Keywords: Experience, Purchase intention, Shopping Experience, Clothing.

INTRODUCTION

Buying experience refers to the process of the buyers perceiving the experience of buying a product. In other words, it is what the customer experiences while shopping for a product or a service. It is important for a company to understand buying experience from the perspective of the buyer. This includes examining the whole process which the buyer goes through in the store, i.e., before entering the stores, till the purchase. Buying experience is something which differs from buyer to buyer, because of the human nature of the customers.

Theoretically, Providing a good experience to the consumers is important for various reasons. Firstly, it improves the brand awareness of the company, because it helps in creating a memorable and shareable experience for the customer, which will be spread through word of mouth. When the customer is satisfied with the buying experience, it also improves the brand loyalty, because then, the customers will tend to go back to the store.

Having a great shopping experience associated with the store also gives the customer a sense of emotional connection towards the store, because it would remind the customer of the memories they have had in the shop, while shopping. When a shop provides great experiences to their customers, the customers start turning into promoters. They start spreading positive word about the company, and more people start turning up in the stores.

Buying experience is something which came up during the 19th century, from the time Departmental stores came into picture. Till then, it was all utility and transactional based. After this phase, people started appreciating novel shopping environments, and started counting shopping as an overall experience. This revolutionized even more in the 20th century, with the rise of Supermarkets, which gave rise to more convenience, and made shopping a more enjoyable experience for the shoppers. In the present day, shopping in stores is all about experiences. It is about how people perceive the process of shopping at a particular outlet.

It is very important for stores to give the customers a great shopping experience, because of all the advantages like brand loyalty, brand image, etc. Plus, customers nowadays are not just looking to buy a product, but also at the experience of buying a product. That is why shops give a lot more importance to the experience of the customers who shop with them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In **"A conceptual study on experiential marketing: importance, strategic issues and its impact"(2017)**, by **Dr. Veto Datta**, they have brought in a contrast between traditional marketing and experiential marketing. The paper talks about how Experiential marketing has made an influence on the customer behaviour. They have also briefed upon the importance of experiential marketing, an-+d how it will slowly replace traditional marketing.

"Revisiting experiential marketing: a Delphi study"(2023) by **Andrew Davey et. al.**, they have stated that there is lack of literature about experiential marketing, and about the scope which this field holds. In this paper, they have used Delphi method to validate the findings from the literature by far, and have established a conclusion about the concept of experiential marketing

Hu Chen et. al., in **"Research on the Relationship of Consumption Emotion, Experiential Marketing, and Revisit Intention in Cultural Tourism Cities: A Case Study"(2022),** examines the relationship which consumer emotions have with experiential marketing. They have looked at four dimensions, i.e., Emotion, Action, Sensory and Intellectual experience. They have used correlation analysis to find out whether the experience has an effect on the consumer behaviour or not.

In the paper **"The Influence of Experiential Marketing on Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty"(2022)** by **Inês Santos do Carmo Et. Al**., they compare customer satisfaction and loyalty with experiential marketing, and talking about how experiences are a differentiating factor in the market, and makes them stand out. They have used PLS-SEM based on data collected from survey. They have concluded that the satisfaction is positively influenced by experience.

The paper **"Impact of experiential marketing on customer purchase intention: a study of the Indian apparel retail industry"(2019)** by **Dr. Sushil Raturi**, talks about how variety amongst brands are creating a huge amount of competition amongst the retailers. They have attempted to fill the knowledge gap, and have looked at how much experience matters to the customers when they buy apparel. They have used standard deviation and t-test to find out the same, and have concluded that there is a clear relationship between the two variables.

Bernd Schmitt, in their paper **"Experience Marketing: Concepts, Frameworks and Consumer Insights"(2010)**, mainly explains the overall concept of Experiential marketing as a field, and how marketing nowadays is about the experience and not the product or service alone. They also talk about how experience is related to the happiness of the customers.

In **"Experiential Marketing: Effects on Brand, Customer and Market Experience, and Industrial Applications with Perspectives from Nigeria"(2021)**, by **Oluwaseyi Philip Fatoki, Toluwase H. Fatoki**, they talk about how experimental marketing is applied industrially, and how it has an immense effect on the industry. Experiential marketing has a huge impact on the brand experience of the customer, and their brand image. They have used secondary data to form an opinion about the topic.

The paper **"The impact of experiential marketing on the intention to revisit the brand: comparing large and small fast-food restaurant chains"(2022)**, by **Miriam Salomão, Mariana Alves Santos,** investigated how experiential marketing had an impact on customers re-visiting the brand, and evaluated all the stages of their perception process, with regard to the experiences of consuming burgers in fast food restaurants. They conducted a survey and used the Structural Equation modelling to make the analysis.

"Factors Influencing Clothing Interest and Purchase Intention: A Study of Generation Y Consumers in Malaysia" by **Cham T. H et al.**, talks about how factors like brand image, need for uniqueness, word of mouth, etc. affect clothing choices made by people. They have also spoken about price sensitivity in clothing industry, and how the perceived quality plays a role in people deciding their clothing choices. The whole paper is based on secondary research.

Sunday C Eze and **Bello Adenike O Bello**, in their paper **"Factors Influencing Consumers Buying Behaviour Within The Clothing Industry"(2016)**, talk about the sociological factors which influence the consumer purchasing behaviour with regard to the clothing industry. They have concluded that marketers should always study the customer behaviour. They have used a questionnaire to form opinions about the topic.

Manasi Chandra Nayak and **Dr. Sasmita Behera**, in their paper **"Factors influencing clothing preferences and fashion interest among tribal youths in Odisha"(2023)**, talk about the factors which influence the preference of brands in youth. They also talk about the impact of digital marketing on the purchasing decision. They have used percentage analysis to analyse the information they had collected in the questionnaire.

The paper **"The affecting factors on online clothing purchase: a conceptual model"(2021)**, by **Annisa Purwaningtyas**, and **Raden Aswin Rahadi**, talks about the factors which affect the clothing choices of people on online platforms. The results of the studies showed that the factors which affected the same were price, brand image, quality, service quality, etc.

G. Hari Shankar Prasad, in the research paper **"Factors Influencing Buying Behaviour of a Selected Apparel Retailer's Customers"(2014)**, talks about retail in India, the apparel industry, and how this industry has developed through the years. They also talked about the buying behaviour of the customer. For this, they have used factor analysis, and found out that the customers are influenced by pricing, convenience, trust, quality, etc.

RESEARCH GAP

There has been a lot of pre-existing literature with regard to the apparel industry. However, the study has been restricted to factors such as Quality, Pricing, durability, etc. There are no studies about the topic with respect to the influence of experiential marketing on apparel industry. Hence, this paper aims to study how experiential marketing affects the purchase intention of customers towards apparel.

OBJECTIVES

1.   Defining and understanding buying experience

2. Examining and defining the elements of an in-store experience

3. To find out the impact of experience on the customer buying behaviour in offline clothing stores.

METHODOLOGY

Experience in the apparel industry can depend on many factors. The customers usually go to the physical stores because of the shopping experience and the ambience. If the customers don't have a good experience with the store, they would most probably not come back the next time. However, there are many things which determine whether or not a customer has had a good experience in the store.

Following are the factors which determine the buying experience of a shopper, in a physical clothing store.

1. Store's Physical Ambience:

The physical ambience of the store would include lighting, aroma, the interiors, and other things which enhance the surrounding of the store. This has a huge impact on the minds of the customers, since ambience is the first impression of the store which the customers get. Usually, the customers are drawn to a store after looking at how the store physically looks. It is important for the stores to have a warm and welcoming ambience, to attract customers, and keep them loyal.

2. Personalized Customer interaction:

It is very important for the staff to interact with the customers as per their requirement. This is important because it is not always necessary for the customer to know what they want or where they can find what they want. This doesn't mean that the staff bothers the customers without any need. This is a subjective matter, and one should take a decision about when a customer needs help, and when they don't.

3. Convenience

Convenience deals with how the products are arranged, the number of staff to help out the customers, and the whole blueprint of all the customer interactions in the store. This is important because the customer looks for convenience when they are shopping, and it accounts for great experience.

4. Wayfinding Signage:

This is important because not always will a customer know where they will find what they are looking for. Having signages to guide the customers around the stores would make it easier for them without having to ask the staff, making the experience much better and smoother.

5. Cleanliness:

The cleanliness of the store matters a lot because it would obviously set off the customers if the store is unhygienic. This has got to do with regular dusting and cleaning of the stores so that it does not get dirty and contaminated.

6. Product availability

When the products which the customers are looking for are easily available, it makes their experience much better because they will have to compromise a lot lesser. It makes their experience much more seamless, because of which they would want to come to the store repeatedly, making them purchase more from the store because of how it adds on to their smooth experience.

7. Knowledgeable staff

It is important that the staff have some level of knowledge about the products that they are trying to sell to the customers. When the staff don't possess the required knowledge, the customers might go to another store where the staff have the necessary knowledge about the store and the products. This would also help the customers when they need something, making them purchase more from the store.

8. Product quality and design:

Great quality and design of the products make the customers happy, which makes the customers visit the ship more. When the customers have a notion that the quality of the products are good, the customers would want to purchase them even more.

9. Trial rooms:

Trial rooms are a must in any clothing store. A lot of customers don't purchase clothes if they cannot try it on first. When the trial rooms are intact, and sufficient, the customers prefer to buy from the store more often, because this adds on to their buying experience.

10. Public reviews about the store:

A pre-conceived notion about the store always sets an impression in the minds of the customers who have come to the store. Positive public reviews could always leave the customer with an open mind, giving them a great experience, making them want to buy from the store.

11. Sustainable practices followed by the store:

In the present era, people care more about the environment than they previously used to. This is why, a store following sustainable practices would have more customers, and the customers would have a better experience at these stores. Knowing they practice sustainability makes them ethical, and caring towards the planet.

12. The crowd:

This factor is pretty subjective, because this directly deals with people. The crowd of a particular shop definitely determines the experience which the customers have at the store. The decency of the crowd, the number of people, their attitude, their behaviours, etc. this means that co-customers do impact the experience of a particular customer.

This study deals with studying the impact of experience on the overall purchase intention of the customers. It is important to study about this topic because the pre-existent literature about this topic only deals with factors like price, quality, etc. This would bring in a new aspect to shopping centre experiences, and help in understanding the need for marketing the experience in a shopping eco system.

For the study, a questionnaire was circulated among 120 respondents, which asked them questions relating to the factors we used for defining experience in a clothing store.

Given below are the null and the alternative hypothesis:

H_o: There is no impact of experience on the buying intention of customers

H_1: There is an impact of experience on the buying intention of customers

Given below is the questionnaire which was sent to the respondents:

	Factors	Questions
1	Ambience	The physical ambience of the store increases my will to buy products.
2	Interactive Staff	I prefer to buy from the store when the staff interact and help me out while I shop.
3	Convenient	I buy more products when they are more convenient for me to find.
4	Wayfinding Signage	If I am clear about where to go, I will go to the store more often.
5	Product availability	If what I look for is available at the store, I will tend to buy more from the shop
6	Knowledgeable staff	The more knowledgeable the staff are, the more I buy from the store.
7	Quality and Design	The quality and design of the products determine whether I will buy from the shop again.
8	Trial rooms	The availability of trial rooms in the store makes me want to buy from the store.
9	Public review	How the public talks about the store, determines my buying decisions about the store
10	Sustainable practices	If the store practices sustainable habits, I am more drawn towards buying their items.
11	The crowd	If the store is spacious and less crowded, I will buy from the store more.
12	Purchase Intention	The overall in-store experience is one of the factors which determine whether or not I purchase from the store

Age group
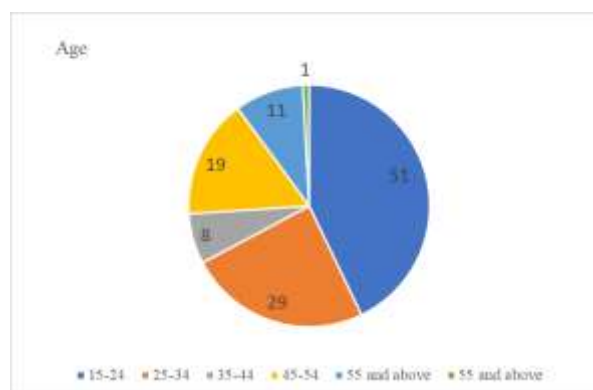
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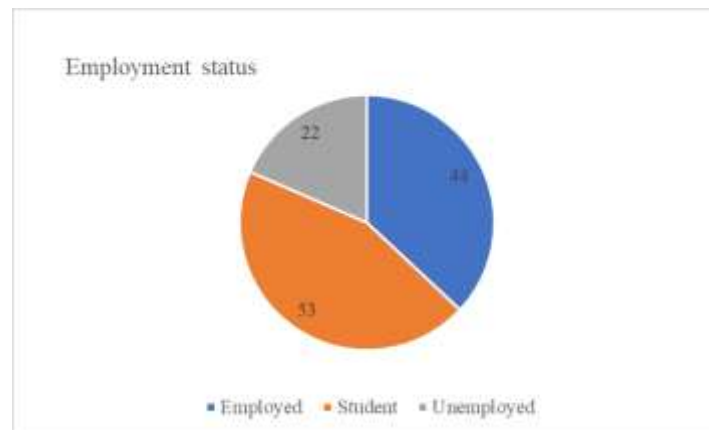
ANALYSIS:

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Purchase Intention	3.59	.915	119
Ambience	3.67	.749	119
Interactive Staff	3.67	.814	119
Convenience	3.63	.901	119
Wayfinding Signage	3.64	1.155	119
Product availability	3.64	1.162	119
Knowledgeable staff	3.66	1.116	119
Product quality/Design	3.84	.833	119
Trial Rooms	3.70	.808	119
Public Reviews	3.51	.852	119
Sustainable practices	2.82	1.022	119
The crowd	2.91	.965	119

Variables Entered/Removed[a]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	The crowd, Trial Rooms, Interactive Staff, Sustainable practices, Convenience, Public Reviews, Knowledgeable staff, Product quality/Design, Ambience, Wayfinding Signage, Product availability[b]	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.749[a]	.561	.516	.637	1.789

a. Predictors: (Constant), The crowd, Trial Rooms, Interactive Staff, Sustainable practices, Convenience, Public Reviews, Knowledgeable staff, Product quality/Design, Ambience, Wayfinding Signage, Product availability

b. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

The R value depicts the correlation between the two variables. Any value above 0.4 is considered to be good. Here, the correlation is 0.74, which is good. Hence, there is a good relationship between the variables.

The R² here is 0.561. This means that 56.1% of the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables. In other words, experience as a factor determines the buying behaviour of around half the customers. As mentioned earlier, there are many other variables Like quality, Price and Store location, which influence whether the customers buy from the store or not. Experience is one of the factors, and it impacts the purchase intention by 56.1%

The Durbin Watson test shows the presence of autocorrelation in the residuals. Usually, these values range from 0 to 4. 1.50 to 2.50 is an acceptable range, since it means that there are lesser errors. Here, the value is 1.789. This means that the autocorrelation is neutral.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	55.431	11	5.039	12.426	<.001[b]
	Residual	43.392	107	.406		
	Total	98.824	118			

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), The crowd, Trial Rooms, Interactive Staff, Sustainable practices, Convenience, Public Reviews, Knowledgeable staff, Product quality/Design, Ambience, Wayfinding Signage, Product availability

It is important for the significance value to be less than 0.05. In this case, the significance value is <0.001. This means that the result is significant.

Therefore, we can say that experience has an impact on the buying intention of the customers up to 56.1%. This means that apart from experience, there are also other factors which influence the customer's will to buy products from a store.

CONCLUSION

Though a lot of factors play a role on the purchase intention of the customers, one of the most important factors is the buying experience which is provided by the shop to the customers. There could be many possible reasons because of which the R² value was 0.561. It might be because after the rise of online shopping, people prefer to shop from the convenience of their homes, or because of other factors which play a more important role in deciding purchase behaviour such as price, or quality. There are other things which hinder people from going to offline stores, such as time constraints, and specific shopping goals. However, a lot of people still prefer to shop in malls, and apparel stores, because they want to touch and feel the products, which in itself is a good experience. The study has concluded that all the factors which define experience in a physical offline store, impact the overall buying decision of the customer. This could imply that stores should focus on giving customers a good shopping experience, so that they would want to come back to the store for more purchases.

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