

# Retail Shoppability: The Impact Of Store Atmospherics & Store Layout On Consumer Buying Patterns

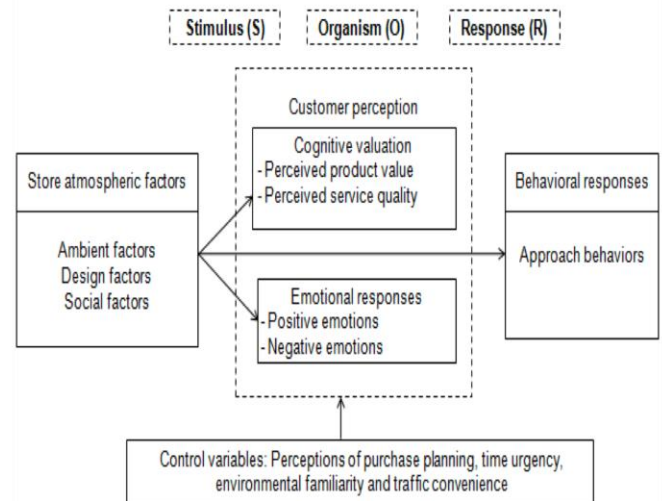
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**ABSTRACT:** Retail shoppability, defined as the ability of the retail environment to translate consumer demand into purchase. It is making consumers' needs salient in specific retail settings & turning shoppers into buyers. The primary motivation to study store image has been to investigate the store atmospherics & store layout as a predictor of consumer behaviour and store performance..This paper enhances previous conceptualizations of store image by introducing the concept referred to as retail shoppability. The quantitative research focused on identifying those store image attributes perceived as important by a selected group of consumers. The goals of this paper are (1) to argue that store image, as it has been previously developed by marketing academics, is a necessary but insufficient construct to understand store performance and consumer behavior and (2) to discuss the enhanced conceptual and operational benefits of store equity as compared with store image. To accomplish these goals, the paper discusses the conceptualization and operationalization of customer-based store equity by explicitly comparing the concept of store atmospherics & store layout and discusses the implications for marketing practitioners by identifying the considerations for building and managing customer-based store equity.

**Key Words:** Consumer Buying patterns, Retail Shoppability, Store Atmospherics, Store Layout and Visual Merchandising

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Retail industry is a kind of business with high level of competition. The success of retail business is influenced by its fast response and its ability in understanding consumers' behaviors. Retail business must focus to its consumer preferences and factors influence a customer's purchase decision. Store atmospheric attributes (including color, lighting, sales personnel, music and so on) form the overall context within which shoppers make decisions of store selection and patronage. Past research on retail environment suggests that such attributes affect the image of the store. Retailers realize the importance of such attributes and systematically try to avail of an ambience, including appropriate colors, music and so on that will attract their target customers. Further, purchase decision-making has become complex due to inseparability of product and services offered in retail outlets.



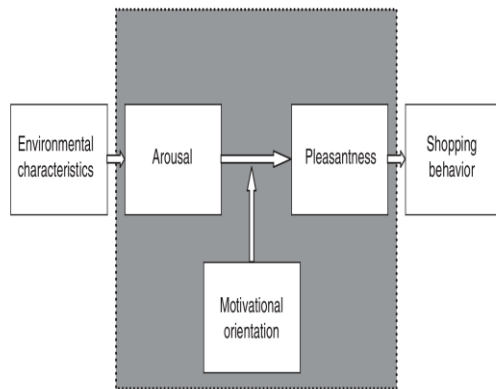
**Fig 1:** Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) S-O-R model

Retail store layout planning is a complex task. The fundamental objective is to maximize sales with customer satisfaction and minimize overall costs. Many factors affect the store layout planning like the arrival pattern of customers, building design, desired service level, merchandise-mix, adjacency requirements and many more. Store layout can affect consumer's perceptions of a retail environment and thus there is a likelihood of approaching or avoiding the product or store. Creating superior customer experience seems to be one of the central objectives in today's retailing environments. The customer experience encompasses the total experience including the search, purchase, consumption, and after-sales phases of the experiences. All these are closely related to the store layout planning and have significant impact on the customer experience management strategy of a retail firm.

Fig 2: Theoretical Framework

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## Theoretical Framework



**Fig 2:** Velitchka D. Kaltcheva is an assistant professor, Marketing Department, College of Business Administration, University of Miami these two variables (Russell 1978; Russell and Pratt 1980).

Recognizing the significant impact of store environment on consumer behavior, retailers devote considerable resources to store design and merchandise presentation activities. This study explores the effect of merchandise display modes and colored display shelf atmosphere on consumer's purchase behavior in retail store. The consumer's purchase decision-making processes focus on the level of attention, perceived value and the intention of purchase. Although considerable research has examined the impact of various store environment elements on shopping behavior, the existing research does not provide an explanation for the differential effectiveness of atmospherics in store or managerially relevant guidelines for selecting the appropriate atmospherics & layout for a specific store environment. The objective of this article is to present and provide empirical support for a theoretical framework that outlines the impact of arousal-inducing features in a store environment on consumer affective responses to the environment and subsequent shopping behaviors in the environment.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The research issues are included as follow.

1. To measure the impact of different store atmospherics on consumer's attention, perceived value and purchase intention.
2. To measure the impact of different visual communications used on consumer's attention, perceived value and purchase intention.
3. How environmental stimuli influence shopping behaviour.
4. To identify the influence made by the Lighting and design layout on consumer's store choice decisions.
5. To find out the influence made by Product Display to encourage customer's buying decisions

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW :

### 3.1 Retail Shoppability and Customer perception

Raymond R. Burke and Alex Leykin (2007) well explained the retail shoppability as the ability of the retail environment to translate consumer demand into purchase with the various determinants for it as store layout, navigation, product profiling and presentation, defining the shopping attitude i.e intentions for store entry and purchase but retailers (often mistakenly) believe stocking more products means selling more products. This has led to an explosion in the number of products available in many retail channels. Clarifying aforesaid Wysocki (1979); Stevens (1980) stated retailer have claimed that they have influenced customer's buying behavior by manipulating store atmospheric via layout, color, lighting and music. Store Environment: Postrel (2003) mentioned that shopping malls are pursuing aesthetic to attract consumer who seek an entertaining experience. Store environments is viewed as fantasy environment providing a range of entertainment: musical, visual and theatrical for today's consumer. Donovan, Rossiter, Marcolyn and Nesdale (1994) found that pleasant environments encouraged consumer to stay longer in the selling environment and to make unplanned purchase. Store atmospheric attributes such as color, lighting, interior decoration or music form the overall context within which shoppers make store selection and patronage decisions, and are likely to have a significant impact on store image. Selection of a specific retail outlet involves a comparison of the available alternative outlets on the evaluative criteria of a consumer. Literature suggests a range of such criteria, which makes it a challenging task from the retailers' point of view and makes store choice a matter of concern to retailers. According to Lindquist (1974), store image consists of a combination of tangible (or functional) and intangible (or psychological) factors that consumers perceive to be found in retail stores. Consumers use store image as an evaluative criterion in the decision-making process of selecting a retail outlet (Varley, 2005). Store attributes refer to the underlying components of a store image dimension (like merchandise, physical facilities, services, atmospherics and so on). Research on store image has yielded a large number of attributes (Martineau, 1958; James et al., 1976; Peter and Olson, 1990). Store image has been found to be linked to store loyalty and patronage decisions (Assael, 1992; Wong and Yu, 2003). Store Atmospheric as an important part of the overall merchandising strategy (Kotler 1973; Markin, et al 1976). Kotler defines atmospheric as "the effort to design buying environment to produce specific emotional effect in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability" Kotler (1973) suggest using atmospheric as a competitive tool in an attract and maintain a specific target market especially where product and price differences are nominal.

## 4. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

### 4.1 Research hypotheses

From the foregoing discussions on literature review, inference and research structure, this study intends to explore the relationship among every variable in practical context, so as to acknowledge the relationship among shopping environment of retail store, customers cognitive

valuation, customer emotional response and customer behavioral response.

#### 4.2 Questionnaire design and sampling survey

In the questionnaire design, all parts except basic personal data applied Likert's five-point scale, with a closed form of structured questionnaire. The contents included five parts: The first part was demographic data, including customer's gender, age, educational level, job category, monthly visits to hypermarkets and monthly income etc.; the second part was the store atmosphere measurement of chain store hypermarket.

### 5. EMPIRICAL ANALYSES

#### 5.1 Demographic analysis

A total 200 retail customers were surveyed taking twenty-five samples from each store format of randomly selected 08 retail stores. Only 185 customers were responded and returned the survey instrument. This is a ninety two percent response rate. Out of this, only 162 were usable, as rests were rendered unusable because of incomplete data. All respondents were adult male and female food & grocery retail customers consisted of 92 female (56.7 percent) and 70 male (43.3 percent) with an average age of 32 years (range 20-62), modal age group 30-40 years and median age was 35 years. The majority of the respondents (85.0 percent) were married and remaining 15.0 percent were unmarried. The major chunk of the respondents (58.5 percent) had graduation as their educational qualification and least 18.9 percent had SSC as their minimum qualification and the remaining 22.6 percent had PG as their academic qualification. The aggregated mean monthly household income was Rs. 18,000 with 50.2 percent respondents had paid employment as their occupation. The average family size of the respondents was 5.2. A major chunk (94 percent) of the respondents lived within 4 km from different retail store formats and about 64 percent had travelled up to 3 km for shopping food and grocery products. The majority of the respondents (53.8 percent) had owned two wheeler vehicles and 18.7 percent had owned four wheeler vehicles. The majority of the respondents (72.0 percent) had used their own vehicle (two wheeler/four wheeler) for shopping food and grocery products. The results of respondent's demographic, socio-economic and geographic variables were summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1: Respondents' demographic, socio-economic and geographic profile**

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent	Mean	S.D
Gender	Male	70	43.3	-	-
	Female	92	56.7		
Age	20-30years	53	32.5	32	8.56
	30-40	66	40.8		
	40-50	35	21.4		
	50 & above	8	5.3		
Marital Status	Married	138	85.0		
	Un-married	24	15.0		
Education	SSC/Diploma	31	18.9		
	Degree	94	58.5		
	PG & above	37	22.6		
Occupation	House wife	44	27.5		
	Employment	81	50.2		
	Business	24	14.5		
	Others	13	7.8		
Monthly Household Income	Rs 10000-15000	21	13.2	Rs 18000	Rs 4350
	Rs 15000-20000		35.2		
	Rs 20000-25000		28.3		
	Rs 25000 & above		23.3		
Family size	1-3	42	25.4	5.2	0.752
	3-5	62	38.6		
	5 & more	58	36.0		
Distance travelled to Store	1-2 Km	50	31.1	2.8	0.864
	2-3 Km	52	32.1		
	3-4 Km	36	22.7		
	4-5 Km	16	9.1		
	>5 Km	8	5.0		
Mode of Transport Used	Two wheeler	87	53.8		
	Four wheeler	30	18.7		
	Public/Private transport	18	11.2		
		27	16.3		
	None				

Source: Primary data

#### 5.2 Respondents shopping behaviour

Most of the respondents (61.53 percent) revealed that they had always shopped food and grocery products from various retail formats for their household consumption. 26.93 percent revealed that they had frequently shopped and the rest of 11.54 percent occasionally shopped food and grocery products from different retail formats. The findings implied that respondents have preferred retail stores for shopping food and grocery products. The respondents shopping behaviour for food and grocery products were presented in the Table 2.

**Table 2. Respondents shopping behavior**

Shopping behaviour	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Always	99	61.53	61.53
Frequently	44	26.93	88.46
Occasionally	19	11.54	100.00
Total	162	100.00	

Source: Primary data

## 6. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

### 6.1 FACTOR ANALYSIS

This study made use of the sampling adequacy of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity to measure and examine whether constructs of this study were fit for factor analysis. If KMO sampling adequacy value is bigger than 0.7 and the p-value of Bartlett test of sphericity is close to 0, factor analysis can be performed.

### 6.2 RELIABILITY ANALYSIS:

There were totally twenty-five questions in the questionnaire and seven factor dimensions were extracted after factor analysis. The attribute values of every factor dimension were all bigger than 1, with a cumulative total variance explained ratio of 62.763%.

### 6.3 VALIDITY ANALYSIS

In terms of validity analysis, it is usually explored in two aspects: Content validity and construct validity. In content validity, the scale of this study was formulated by archiving literature contents and research results of many experts and scholars. Therefore, the scale could cover the requirements of the research theme adequately, that is, to have corresponding adequacy to the representativeness of scale content or to the process of the content formation. In construct validity, this study adopted Kerlinger's (1986) measurement on construct validity, by examining the coefficient value of item to total. So long as the coefficient value is above 0.5, composite reliability (0.9 to 0.95) > 0.7, extraction variance (0.74 to 0.82) > 0.5, it can be a high validity. Therefore after factor analyses, this study showed that all items had high construct validity in general.

### 6.4 KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST

**Table 3 : KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.648
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square
	Df
	Sig.
	812.530
	300
	.000

- To test the sampling adequacy, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is computed, which is found to be 0.648. It is indicated that the sample is good enough for sampling
- The overall significance of correlation matrix is tested with Bartlett test of sphericity for choice of mobile phone (approx. chi square = 812.530 significant at 0.000) as well as support for the validity of the factor analysis of the data set.

Hence all these standards indicate that the data is suitable for factor analysis. For extracting factors we have employed principal components analysis and latent root criterion. Rotation methods, orthogonal rotation with Varimax were also applied. As per the latent root criterion, only the factors having latent roots or Eigen values greater than 1

are considered significant; and all the factors with latent roots less than 1 are considered insignificant & disregarded.

### 6.5 Factor Affecting retail shoppability

There are only seven factors each having Eigen values exceeding one for Consumer Buying pattern. The index for the present solution accounts for 62.763% of the total variations for the customer satisfaction. It is pretty good extraction because we are able to economize the number of choice factors. (i.e. from 25 statements to 7 underlying factor). The percentage of variation explained by factor one is 16.915% & that of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 are 10.188%, 9.706%, 7.782%, 7.342%, 5.842%, 4.987% respectively.

**Table 4 :Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.229	16.915	16.915	4.229	16.915	16.915	3.249	12.995	12.995
2	2.547	10.188	27.103	2.547	10.188	27.103	2.552	10.210	23.205
3	2.427	9.706	36.809	2.427	9.706	36.809	2.402	9.610	32.815
4	1.946	7.782	44.591	1.946	7.782	44.591	2.240	8.961	41.776
5	1.836	7.342	51.933	1.836	7.342	51.933	1.980	7.919	49.695
6	1.461	5.842	57.775	1.461	5.842	57.775	1.824	7.296	56.991
7	1.247	4.987	62.763	1.247	4.987	62.763	1.443	5.772	62.763
8	.998	3.994	66.757						
9	.885	3.538	70.295						
10	.832	3.330	73.625						
11	.794	3.178	76.803						
12	.730	2.919	79.722						
13	.683	2.731	82.453						
14	.593	2.371	84.824						
15	.543	2.173	86.997						
16	.490	1.960	88.957						
17	.481	1.925	90.882						
18	.400	1.601	92.483						
19	.358	1.431	93.915						
20	.344	1.374	95.289						
21	.309	1.234	96.523						
22	.270	1.082	97.605						
23	.235	.941	98.545						
24	.205	.820	99.365						
25	.159	.635	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.



**Table 5: Communalities**

	Initial	Extraction
Returns & Exchanges	1.000	.800
Grievance Handling	1.000	.765
Punctuality	1.000	.570
Employee Knowledge	1.000	.710
POS & POP	1.000	.617
Equipment & Fixture	1.000	.722
Merchandise Assortment	1.000	.514
Discounts	1.000	.636
Price Point	1.000	.560
Public Areas	1.000	.552
Brand	1.000	.730
Planned Planogram	1.000	.783
Prompt Service	1.000	.622
Physical Facilities	1.000	.556
Aisle between gondola	1.000	.725
Convenient Cash Counters	1.000	.575
Shopping Assisting Material	1.000	.432
Digital Signage	1.000	.585
Individual Attention	1.000	.606
Courteous on Telephone	1.000	.476
Interactive Suggestive Selling	1.000	.630
Category Navigation	1.000	.609
Window Display	1.000	.645
Ambient Factors	1.000	.573
Impulse Counters	1.000	.696

**Extraction Method:** Principal Component Analysis.

Large communalities in the Table indicate that a large number of variance has been accounted by the factor solution. They are bigger than 0.5 for all the questions. This is the indicator of suitability of the questions.

**Table 6 :Rotated Component Matrix**

	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Returns & Exchanges	-.237	.098	.015	-.104	-.102	.843	.050
Grievance Handling	-.041	-.090	-.003	-.181	.014	.846	-.075
Punctuality	.058	-.040	.124	-.166	.096	-.135	.703
Employee Knowledge	.096	-.265	-.678	-.282	.269	.121	-.070
POS & POP	-.105	-.110	.121	-.734	.077	.177	-.060
Equipment & Fixture	.673	-.171	-.242	.372	-.053	-.200	.023
Merchandise Assortment	.147	.091	-.262	.103	-.059	.094	.627
Discounts	.037	-.246	-.014	.411	.598	.004	.218
Price Point	-.021	-.025	.042	.307	-.646	-.104	.187
Public Areas	.659	.050	.112	-.223	-.199	.113	.034
Brand	.119	-.180	.165	.055	-.781	.160	-.135
Planned Planogram	.056	.862	.001	.094	.118	-.113	-.026
Prompt Service	.102	-.006	-.772	.076	.091	-.018	.046
Physical Facilities	.596	.045	-.344	.235	.145	-.070	.020
Aisle between gondola	.211	.798	.059	-.123	.014	.017	-.158
Convenient Cash Counters	-.086	.674	-.097	.123	-.103	.110	.257
Shopping Assisting Material	.592	.261	-.011	-.059	.025	-.089	.043
Digital Signage	.043	.447	.220	.496	.288	.048	-.067
Individual Attention	.471	-.158	.587	-.042	.065	.070	-.056
Courteous on Telephone	-.184	-.201	.391	-.329	.162	.003	.339
Interactive Suggestive Selling	.155	-.373	.423	.321	.278	.322	-.065
Category Navigation	.207	-.079	.066	.618	-.124	-.211	-.336
Window Display	.711	-.002	.021	.317	-.124	-.141	-.054
Ambient Factors	.583	.032	.061	.135	.416	-.146	.123
Impulse Counters	-.548	.033	.534	-.155	-.049	.018	-.288

**Extraction Method:** Principal Component Analysis.

**Rotation Method:** Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

**Rotation converged in 15 iterations.**

**Table7:Table represent division of 25 statements among the 7 factors derived.**

Factor Number s	Factors	Quality Dimension	Factor Loading
F1	STORE ATMOSPHERICS		.673
		Equipment & Fixture	.659
		Public Areas	
		Physical Facilities	.596
		Shopping Assisting Material	.592
		Ambient Factors	
		Window Display	.583
		Impulse Counters	.711
			.548
F2	STORE LAYOUT/STORE DESIGN	Planned Planogram	.862
		Aisle	
		Convenient Cash Counters	.798
			.674
F3	CUSTOMER SERVICE	Employee Knowledge	.678
		Prompt Service	.772
		Individual Attention	
		Courteous on Telephone	.587
		Interactive Suggestive Selling	.391
			.423
F4	VISUAL COMMUNICATION	POS & POP	.734
		Digital Signage	
		Category Navigating signage	.496
			.618
F5	PROMOTIONS/ VALUE FOR MONEY	Discounts	.598
		Price Point	.646
		Brand	.781
F6	PROBLEM SOLVING/ POLICY	Returns & Exchanges	.843
		Grievance Handling	.846
F7	RELIABILITY	Punctuality	.703
		Merchandise Assortment	.627

This table has extracted from spss output. 7 dominant factors has extracted from 25 attributes. Equipment & Fixture, Public Areas, Physical Facilities, Shopping Assisting Material, Ambient Factors, Window Display and Impulse Counters named as "STORE ATMOSPHERICS". Factor 2 includes Planned Planogram, Aisle, Convenient Cash Counters and this renamed as "STORE LAYOUT/STORE DESIGN". Factor 3 includes Employee Knowledge, Prompt Service, Individual Attention, Courteous on Telephone, Interactive Suggestive Selling and this renamed as "CUSTOMER SERVICE". Factor 4 includes POS & POP, Digital Signage, Category Navigation and this renamed as "VISUAL COMMUNICATION". Factor 5 includes Discounts, Price Point, Brand and this renamed as

"PROMOTIONS/ VALUE FOR MONEY". Factor 6 the most dominant factor includes Returns & Exchanges, Grievance Handling. As Indian customer want the flexibility of return & exchange. We renamed it as "PROBLEM SOLVING/ POLICY". Factor 7 includes Punctuality, Merchandise Assortment and this renamed ad "RELIABILITY".

## 7. FINDINGS

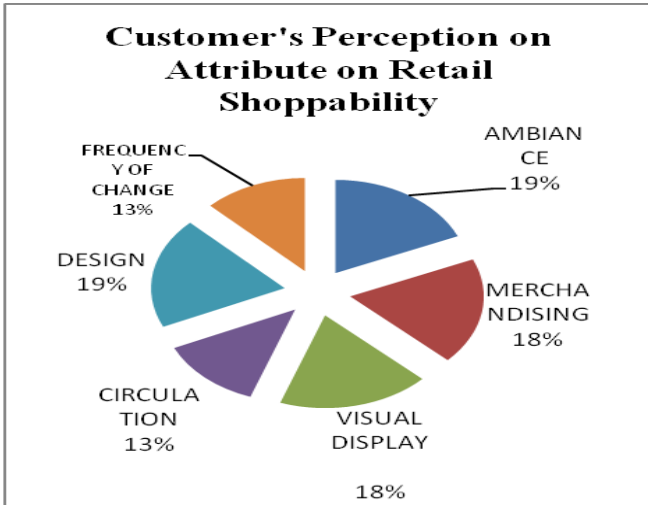
### 7.1 Factor Discussion

- 1. STORE ATMOSPHERICS:** This factor has emerged as a most important determinant of research with a total variance of 16.915. Major element of this factor includes window display (.711), equipment & fixture (.673) etc.
- 2. STORE LAYOUT/STORE DESIGN:** This factor has emerged as the second most important determinant of research with a total variance of 10.188. Major element of this factor includes planned planogram (.862).
- 3. CUSTOMER SERVICE:** This factor emerged as the important determinants of research with a variance of 9.706. Major elements consisting this factor include employee knowledge about the product (.678), prompt service (.772) and individual attention (.587). This study shows that prompt service & employee knowledge affects the customer's buying pattern.
- 4. VISUAL COMMUNICATION:** This factor has emerged as the effective determinants of research with a variance of 7.782. The elements consisting this factor include point of sale & point of purchase (.734) and category navigation (.618). This study reveals that proper signages on respective gondola and on merchandise category help customers as silent sales assistants.
- 5. PROMOTIONS/ VALUE FOR MONEY:** This factor has emerged as a relevant factor of research with a total variance of 7.342. Major elements of this factor includes brand (.781), price point (.646).
- 6. PROBLEM SOLVING/ POLICY:** This factor has also emerged as the effective factor of research with a total variance of 5.842. The elements consist in this factor such as returns & exchange(.843) and grievance handling (.846).
- 7. RELIABILITY:** This factor has also emerged as an important finding of research with a total variance of 4.987. Element of this factor is to provide service at the time promises (.703). It affects the purchase decision.

### 7.2 RETAILER PERSPECTIVE:

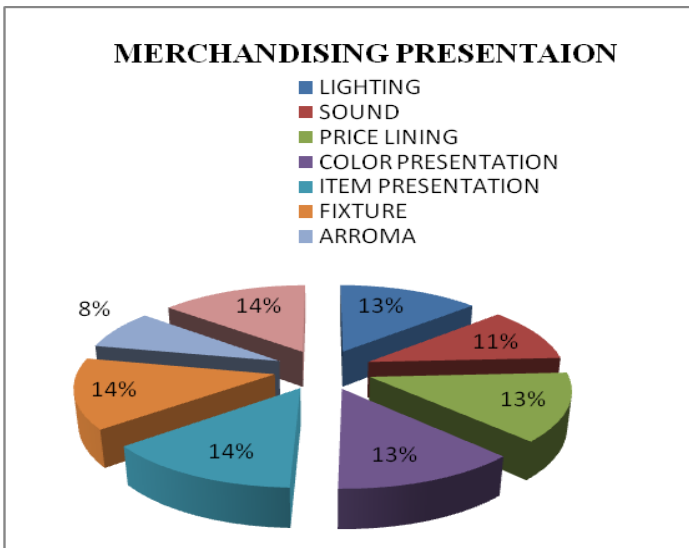
Analysing the retailer's perspective on consumer buying behaviour targeting various attributes of Retail Shoppability .Retailers opinion showed a blend ,giving equal weightage to Attributes as Ambience (19%) and Designing out the store , second attributes were positions as Merchandising (as product portfolio with 18%) and Visual Display (18%).

- Walking pattern considers as the movement of shoppers in the store termed as Circulation and Frequency of change of design pattern holds lower importance (13%)



**Fig 3 :** Customer's Perception towards Retail Shoppability attributes:

- Considerable attention is paid by retailer on the store Atmospheric components targeting eight component but highlighting major attributes as Lighting, Item Presentation , Fixture .
- Least focus was shown towards aroma and sound or music attributes.



**Fig 4:** Impact of Merchandising Presentation on shoppers perception

**8. CONCLUSION**

The findings from the study indicate:

- (1) All store atmospheric factors, have significant impact on customer approach behaviors. Ordering from high to low according to the extent of impact, the factors are design factors, intangible factors, image of service personnel, visual stimulus and image of other customers. This reveals that the design factor of a store is the biggest environment factor that impacts customer approach behaviors; its power of influence and interpretation are significantly higher than other

factors.

- (2) Customers pay special attention to the designing in a store, including whether the layout and overall structure is reasonable, how is the interior decoration, whether the signs and marks are clear, whether the display of commodities in corridor space, commodity information and classification is complete and convenient.
- (3) Intangible factors and image of service personnel, that is, music, noise, room temperature, clothing and attitude of service personnel etc. are also considered by customers as critical factors that will influence their behaviors. All the aforementioned factors have significantly positive correlation with customer approach behaviors, indicating that customer behaviors in hypermarkets are mainly affected by the environment factors that have biggest relevance with commodity. Finally, this study proposes specific suggestions and measures of how to create a pleasant store atmosphere and convenient store layout in retail store to promote retail shoppability according to results of empirical analyses.

**9 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION**

According to analytical conclusions, this study proposes the following suggestions that can be taken as references when enterprises in the industry make market strategies. This research has actually set out to validate the Retail Shoppability in the Indian retail stores, predominantly in the context of hypermarket stores. The findings obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis and reliability tests indicated that all the seven dimensions of store atmospherics, store layout & design, customer service, visual communication, promotion or value for money, problem solving & policy and reliability are highly suited for measuring retail shoppability. Retail store atmospherics & design is also highly associated with future consumption behaviour in terms of the customers' intention to visit, purchase and recommend the store to family and friends. All the underlying dimensions of retail shoppability play a role in stimulating repeated store patronage and the spread of good word-of-mouth. Being proven valid and reliable, the Retail Shoppability Scale presents many uses to both practitioners and academicians intending to examine retail shoppability seriously at a deeper level. The instrument is useful in collecting data that can be used for benchmarking current levels of retail atmospherics & layout as well as in carrying out periodic inspections to measure service performance and improvement. Using the instrument to analyse data at different levels (i.e. overall level and dimension level) allows the retailer to detect problematic areas of store ambient factors within the stores that are in need of attention. With this, the retailer is able to focus its resources on improving the particularly weak aspects of its layout & decor. Store atmospherics & layout should go with the brand image. Another crucial success factor for retailers is maintaining low employee turnover. Despite being goods retailers in their very essence, retailers still need to offer services that facilitate their sale of merchandise. This is achieved through their sales personnel who are responsible in assisting the customers in their shopping. Care should be taken to ensure that there are always adequate salespeople around in the store who have been thoroughly trained and



are professional enough in their dealings with customers. Satisfying customer needs through excellent service quality provided by customer-oriented salespeople will increase the likelihood of customers returning to shop and eventually recommending the stores to others, thus allowing the retailer to compete effectively in the marketplace.

[http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/news/research/mktg\\_consumerchoice.shtml](http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/news/research/mktg_consumerchoice.shtml)

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