


Chapter 6

Future Research Directions in Sensory Marketing

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ABSTRACT

Although retail atmospherics has been an active field of study, further research is needed to address the role that sensory marketing plays in the retailing sector. This chapter presents a review of previous research and discusses the effect of visual, sound, and olfactory atmospherics on shopping outcomes. The interaction among these variables and their common impact on consumer behavior is also explored. The chapter expands and enriches the literature on retail atmospherics and discusses future research avenues. Further research will help retailers pay attention to the crucial role of sensory environment in shaping the customer experience and shopping behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Retailing is witnessing a thrilling period of change (Grewal, Roggeveen, & Nordfält, 2017). The stiff competition among different retailing formats is one side of this change (Chotipanich & Issarasak, 2017), and retailers are using different techniques to compete and entice shoppers. For example, while online retailers are trying to benefit from a bigger product assortment and a 24/7 service, offline retailers are

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designing their stores to provide a richer shopping experience (El Hedhli, Zourrig, & Chebat, 2016; Terblanche, 2018). Enhancing in-store shopping increases shopper satisfaction and other approach behaviors (Elmashhara & Soares, 2019b).

Providing a rich in-store shopping experience requires considering all the factors that could influence consumer behavior and their attitude towards the store. Some of these factors may have a bigger influence on the utilitarian shopping visits, while some others have a higher impact on hedonic shopping visit (Jones, Reynolds, & Arnold, 2006). Some of the factors that influence shopping utilitarian values and have been well-recognized in retailing research are convenience and accessibility (Guido, Belk, Rizzo, & Pino, 2018; Pauwels & Neslin, 2015; Reimers, 2014; Reimers & Clulow, 2014), merchandise and packaging factors (Miquel, Caplliure, Pérez, & Bigné, 2017; Newman, Howlett, & Burton, 2014), price, promotions, and return policies (Chatterjee & Kumar, 2017; Nakhata & Kuo, 2017; Shirai, 2017), product quality (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006; Vega-Vázquez, Castellanos-Verdugo, & Oviedo-Garcia, 2017), retail tenant mix (Teller, 2008; Wakefield & Baker, 1998), display and shelf-space (He & Oppewal, 2018; Ketron, 2018), layout and design (Iyer & Smith, 2015; Rosenbaum, Ramirez, & Camino, 2018), retail location (Dolega, Pavlis, & Singleton, 2016; Reigadinha, Godinho, & Dias, 2017), and parking (Mingardo & Meerkerk, 2012; Reimers, 2013). Another group of consumer behavior antecedents has been mostly studied in relation to hedonic shopping values (Abdul Karim, Kumar, & Abd Rahman, 2013). In this vein, the following factors are well-recognized in retailing literature: atmospherics and environmental factors (Bloch & Kamran-Disfani, 2018; El-Adly & Eid, 2016; Holmqvist & Lunardo, 2015), social factors (Hsu, Chen, & Kumar, 2018; Li, Lin, & Ho, 2017; Ramamoorthy, Gunasekaran, Roy, Rai, & Senthilkumar, 2018), and entertainment (Elmashhara & Soares, 2019b, 2019a; Elmashhara, Soares, & Mumel, 2019; Sadachar & Fiore, 2018; Triantafillidou, Siomkos, & Papafilippaki, 2017).

Atmospherics is one of the most active research areas in retailing studies. Several studies address the role of environmental cues on consumer behavior (Chang, Eckman, & Yan, 2011; Mohan, Sivakumaran, & Sharma, 2013). Turley and Milliman (2000) classify atmosphere factors to five main categories: external variables; general interior variables; layout and design variables; point-of-purchase, and decoration variables; and human variables. The most recognized category is the general interior variables which encompasses a number of environmental variables (Flooring and carpeting, color schemes, lighting, music, P.A. usage, scents, tobacco smoke, width of aisles, wall composition, paint and wallpaper, ceiling composition, merchandise, temperature, and cleanliness) surrounding consumers during most of their shopping time. This article discusses the visual, sound and olfactory variables (namely; color schemes, lighting, music, and scent) in order to, first, add to the body of knowledge by understanding the role these variables play in enhancing the shopping experience.

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