Chapter 2
An Eye Tracking Study of the Effect of Sensory and Price In-Store Displays

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ABSTRACT

Using eye tracking, this chapter investigates if the visual attention varies according to the in-store displays message content (price, sensory, and price-sensory). Results show that participants are more responsive to cognitive content messages (price) than affective messages (sensory) alone. Nevertheless, it is demonstrated that participants are prone to devote more time processing in-store displays messages if prices (cognitive stimuli) are combined with sensory messages (affective stimuli), which increases the likelihood of choosing low involvement products. Finally, it was demonstrated that total fixation duration is predictive of low involvement product choice for all home décor products. This study suggests that shoppers might spend more time and effort searching for low involvement products if in-store displays captivate their visual attention and elicit their sensory imagery. Sensory messages can be used by retailers to highlight product intrinsic characteristics. At the same time, they are inducing positive feelings towards low-involvement products.

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INTRODUCTION

Vision has been recognized as one of the most prominent senses in sensory marketing (Krishna, 2012), and is commonly considered as the first channel to obtain information and directly impact on consumer behaviour (Hultén, 2015). A great body of sensory marketing research has been conducted on how brands embed visual cues to influence consumer's evaluation and judgement of brands and products (e.g. Spence, Puccinelli, Grewal & Roggeveen, 2014; Krishna & Aydınoğlu, 2017; Helmefalk & Hultén, 2017; Biswas, Szocs, Chacko & Wansink, 2017). Similarly, visual cues have been studied in advertising and digital signage context (Krishna, Cian, & Sokolova, 2016; Dennis, Brakus & Alamanos, 2014). Nevertheless, research on the impact of visual cues in in-store merchandise displays is still very scarce and focused mainly on product and price cues (Huddleston, Behe, Minahan & Fernandez, 2015).

Since most of product decisions are made at the point-of-purchase, capturing consumers´ visual attention is relevant to engage consumers emotionally and boost sales (Behe, Bae, Huddelston & Sage, 2015; Breugelmans & Campo, 2011). In this regard, it is claimed that retailers use in-store displays to attract consumers´attention to merchandise and that their design and placement decision is based on the notion that visual attention will lead to product choice (Huddleston, Behe, Minahan & Fernandez, 2015). Interestingly, marketing scholars are shifting their interest towards how selective visual attention can be captured by affect-as-information heuristics (Pham, 2004; Wang & Lang, 2015) and how in-store signage is used during navigation and decision making process (Otterbring, Wästund, Gustafsson, & Shams, 2014; Otterbring, Wästlund, & Gustafsson, 2016) instead of focusing merely on concepts such as involvement and price sensitivity (Chevalier, 1975; McKinnon, Kelly & Doyle, 1981; Woodside & Waddle, 1975). Notably, it was demonstrated that affective-content digital signage messages, in contrast to cognitive-content messages, result in a positive attitude towards the ad (Dennis, Brakus & Alamanos, 2014).

It is worth noting that most of the research conducted on in-store displays has neglected the relevance of low-involvement products. This category of products is associated with low levels of cognitive processing (Hoyer, 1984; Hoyer & MacInnis, 2010), in which price is the key driver of product choice. More specifically, consumers are price-goal oriented in utilitarian shopping situations and tend to focus on their cognitive processing shopping activities instead of environmental stimuli such as in-store displays (Breugelmans & Campo, 2011). Home décor products, such as towels, mugs, spice jars and candlesticks are low-cost products and compete essentially on price. Anecdotal evidence shows that retailers use price labels to drive consumers' attention to products with low levels of differentiation. Moreover, it can be argued that consumers show low levels of commitment in the purchase process and their motivation to cognitively process information is generally low.

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