

STORE LAYOUT AND PURCHASE BEHAVIOR OF CONSUMERS IN SELECTED SUPERMARKETS IN UYO METROPOLIS

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Abstract: The study examined the influence of store layout on the purchase behavior of consumers in Uyo metropolis. Specifically the study examined the influence of store design and layout on purchase behavior. A total of two hundred and forty four shoppers were sampled from five supermarkets in Uyo using the questionnaire as a data collection technique. Data collected was analyzed using different statistical processes such as descriptive statistics, multiple regression and Pearson product moment correlation. The study findings revealed that store layout and design significantly influenced purchase behavior. Its power of influence is significantly higher than other atmospheric factors like:- background music, ambient scent and colour. The author recommended that retailers should focus their resources on improving the particularly weak aspect of their layout and interior décor. Store atmospherics and layout design should fall in line with the store image.

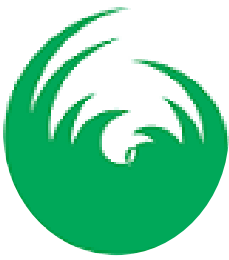
Key words: Store layout, Purchase behavior, Store atmospherics, Supermarkets

Introduction

Retail store layout has been found to have significant influence on retailer's overall productivity by influencing information processing, buying intentions and attitude towards the retail store. Retailers store layout results in exceptional consumer involvement and more favourable consumer experience (Griffith, 2005). Thus, store layouts that are inviting, logical and helpful generate more sales and repeat customers than less efficient competitors. Estelami and Bergstain (2006) opined that consumers typically form an overall impression of a retail establishment through various information processing mechanism such as: advertising, word of mouth or personal experience. The developed store image help to enhance consumer expectations which may later affect a consumer's assessment of the conduct and actions of the retailer in future transaction. As a result, consumer assessment of critical retailer's characteristics such as value perceptions, evaluation of employee behavior and satisfaction judgment may be affected by the appearance associated with the store.

Store appearance provides the consumer with a series of standards by which they can evaluate the retailer. Kim and Kim (2012) discovered that shopkeepers actively participate in managing the physical atmosphere of their establishments.

Retail layout is a major element influencing consumer behavior and a crucial determining factor regarding the creation of a store image. A well-planned layout is crucial because it has a big impact on the flow of customers around the store, the mood of the store, how people shop, and how efficiently operations run. Because they depend on both how services are given and the caliber of the services being offered, the elements used to determine a successful store layout are few. However, there are six dimensions that are considered when determining a good store appearance namely: personal interaction policy, physical appearance, premise, problem solving and the convenience of a store. Crawford and Melawar (2005) posits that marketers should actively encourage the use of a store layout to enhance the convenience of the consumer during



shopping. Store atmosphere is important to stimulate impulse purchase. Highly captivating and creatively designed store environment can lead to enhance unplanned shopping (Cheng, Wu and Yen, 2009), product appearance and background music are important external influences on the customer that leads to impulse buying: According to research, customers are more likely to spend more time shopping in a nice store atmosphere, want to connect with service providers more, and are more likely to make impulsive purchases.

Every aspect of store design is calculated to have a physical or psychological influence on consumer behaviour. Spices, Hesse and Loesch (1997) observed that irrespective of the merchandise being offered, some stores are more attractive than the other, various stores provide a feeling of happiness and wellbeing whereas other stores can easily provide a feeling of irritation. Numerous items were identified as decisive factors influencing store patronage in earlier studies to determine the factors influencing consumers' decision on where to shop (store layout, atmospherics, services offered, store location, merchandise assortment, pricing policies). Despite significant research progress, existing literature fall short in that it fails to directly explain the extent to which store patronage and buying behaviour is influence by each of the aforementioned factors. Many studies have focused on individual factors of store environment such lighting, music. Scents, store cleanliness but few has focus on the overall environment cues in supermarkets. Above all. Majority of these studies were conducted in diverse regions of the world especially India, South African, Pakistan with very few researches done in supermarkets in Nigeria. This study is therefore an attempts to fill this gap.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study was to investigate the impact of store layout on consumers purchase behavior. Selected supermarkets in Uyo metropolis

The specific objectives drawn from the overall aim of the study:-

1. To examine the relationship between store design and layout on consumers buying behaviour.

2. To examine the influence of store atmospherics (scent, color and music) on consumers buying behaviour.

Research Questions

i. What is the relationship between store design and layout on consumer buying behaviour?

ii. What influence does store atmospherics (scent, color and music) have on consumers buying behaviour?

Hypotheses

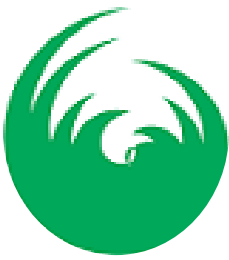
The following research hypotheses where formulated to guide the study:-

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between store design and layout on consumers buying behaviour.

Ho₂: Store atmospherics (scent, color and music) do not significantly influence consumers buying behaviour.

Literature Review

Retailing is a kind of business with high level of competition. The success of retailing is effected by its prompt response and ability to understand consumer behaviour, focus should be on consumers' preferences and factors influencing purchase decisions. Store atmospherics elements (store layout, colour, lighting, sales persons, scents etc) are used as a basis by shoppers in making decisions of store selection and patronage (Keller and Kotler, 2008). Store atmosphere places emphasis on emotions, which is made clear in Kotler's (1973) definition of atmospherics as "the effort to design shopping atmosphere to elicit particulars effects in the buyer that influence his purchase probability". Store atmosphere provide cues, which customers use to evolve on image about the retailer. Ghosh (1990) asserts that the store environment affects the overall service provided by retailers. Store atmospheric design can be a differential factor to the retailer when its competitive outlets are numerous or when product/price differences are little compared to that of competitors (Floor, 2007) In-store environments attributes influences the shoppers through the sensual outlets channels of sight, sound, scent and touch. Kotler advanced that "atmospheric factors are unique selling point" in the retail environment. Bitner



(1992) coined the term “servicecapes” while referring to the tangible environment created by retailers to enhance the service quality offered to consumers. The service environment is made up of both tangible (layout, merchandise display décor, signage & graphics and intangible factors (temperature, color, music and scent). The stimulus – Organism Response (S-O-R) framework is applied to explain the influence of atmospherics on consumer shopping behaviour.

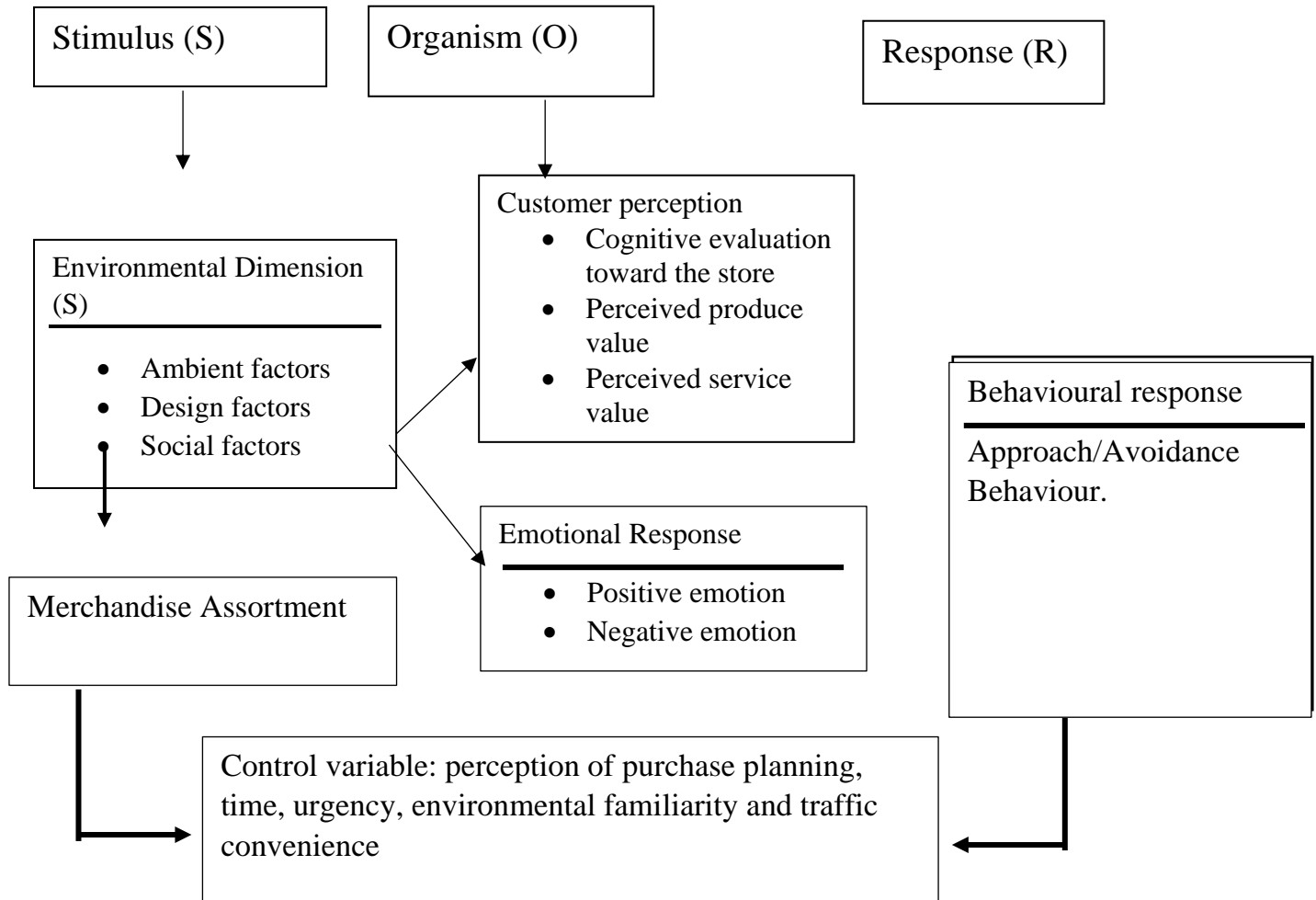
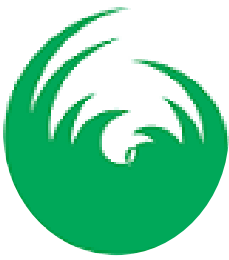
Environmental psychology model

A number of researches on store atmosphere involves around the Mehrabian – Russel model which is the pivot of a research stream called “environmental psychology” and was first used in a retail setting by Donovan and Rossiter (1982). The Mehrabian – Russel (M-R) model states that store atmosphere generates two major emotional states in the consumer mind: pleasure and arousal.

Pleasure and arousal act as mediators between store atmosphere and intended shopping behaviour within the store. Mehrabian and Russel (1974) evaluate the effects of ambient (lighting and music) and social cues (friendliness of employees) on respondents pleasure and arousal and their willingness to purchase. They found that individual react to any given environment with two contrasting form of behaviour, approach or avoidance. Approach behaviour is a willingness or desire to stay in or explore an environment; avoidance behaviour is represented by a desire not to stay in or explore an environment. A store atmosphere generating positive emotion encourages customers to stay longer in the retail establishment and interact with employees (Hui and Bateson, 2004) develop positive store image (Darden and Babin, 2004) and improve product assortment and quality of service perception.

Mehrabian and Russel’s environmental psychology model is built on the stimulus –organism –Response Paradigm (SOR). The model makes two assumptions. First, actions and behaviors are ultimately influenced by people's emotions. Second, different circumstances elicit varied emotional reactions from people (Tai and Fung,

1997). The SOR model relates the stimulating features of an environment (S) to approach – avoidance behaviour (R) through emotions generated within the consumer (O). In this model, emotional state acts as an intermediate variable in determining the approach – avoidance behaviour. As such Mehrabian and Russel’s (1974) stimulus – organism response model demonstrate the link between physical environment and its effects on an individual’s behaviour.

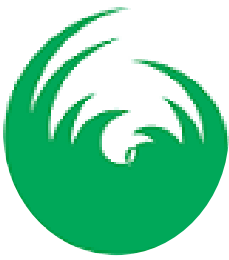


Adapted from the Mehrabian and Russels (1974) S-O-R model; Bitner, (1992)

retail setting, the atmospheric variables are the stimuli(S) that drive consumer’s internal emotional states (O) which then influence their behaviour responses (R). Dorovan and Rossiter (1982) apply the SOR framework to a retail store setting and test the link between organization and response variable. They come to the conclusion that external stimuli can directly affect a customer's approach or avoidance behavior while also influencing the consumer's emotional states in ways that the consumer may not be completely aware of. Approach

or avoidance behaviour can be observed in such behaviour as store patronage, store search and in store behaviour.

The S-O-R framework suggests that a specific atmosphere induces certain emotional reactions in an individual to approach or avoid the environment to a greater or lesser degree. Mehrabian and Russel added that in order to understand individual interactions with various environments, it is essential to identify those responses that are immediate results of simulation that take place in diverse proportion in all environment. By understanding consumers and their buying habits,



organizations have the capability to create effective things to satisfy the consumer's needs and wants. Organization that truly understand how the consumers might react toward different marketing stimuli have advantages over their competitors (Zainbooks, 2008). Since consumers make a number of buying decisions every day, whether it is to purchase a planned or unplanned product or to enter a store or not. It should be resounded that all these decisions are influenced by individual, as well as environmental and atmospheric elements.

Store Layout

Designing the layout of a retail store is a complex task. The fundamental objective is to maximise sales with customer satisfaction and minimize overall cost. Naturally, a good layout has other purpose as well. In accordance with the principle that first impression counts, the layout can either entice customers or confuse them, A layout can provide answers or it can screw up issues. Logical product layouts enable buyers to make a decision to buy, whilst an illogical layout creates chaos and dissatisfaction. Layout planning is influence by various factors such as: the arrival pattern of customers, building design, desired service level, product mix, and adjacency requirement among others. Store layout can affect consumer's viewpoint of a retail atmosphere and thus there is a likelihood of approaching or avoiding the store. The central norm in today's retailing environment is to create superior customers experience. The customer experience include; the entire encounter including the search, acquisition use and after sales phases of the experience. The totality of these is directly related to the store layout planning and has convincing effect on the customer experience management strategy of retail firms Stevens (1980) stated that, retailers have influenced customers buying behaviour by shaping the store environment via layout, colour, lighting and music's postal (2003) mentioned that shopping malls are pursuing aesthetic to attract consumers who seek an entertaining experience, Vrcchopolous, O'keefe, Doukidis, Siomkos (2004) found that store layout is a significant element

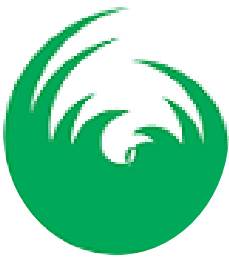
Influencing consumer behaviour and crucial determinants toward the formation of store image. They added that layouts that are well designed are extremely important because they convincingly affect in-store traffic patterns, shopping atmosphere, shopping behaviour and operational Tialana (2009) examine the effect of store layout on consumers buying behaviour in supermarkets and found a positive correlation between store layout and purchasing behaviour.

In current retailing, there are three common conventional types of layout that stores use; free, grid and race track form (Vrchopoulous, O'keefe, Doukidis, Siomkos, 2004) The type of layout chosen is of great importance regarding the image the store has created (Baker, 1997) and store image is a major determining element of in-store consumer behavior (Erdem, 1999), Furthermore, the internal traffic patterns and operational efficiency of the store are highly reliant on efficient layout designs (Lew,son, 1994), Store layout and designed also contributes to consumer satisfaction and can even create an alter the wants and preferences a consumer has (Simoson, 2000) But most in importantly, an efficient store layout design both contributes to product sales and store profitability.

Store atmospherics [scent, colour and music]

Retailers utilize background music to improve the ambiance of their stores. Due to the ease with which music may be manipulated and the fact that music is not offensive to the customer, marketers employ music as a motivator in the purchasing decisions of consumers shopping in various contexts (Morrison, Dubelar and Oppewa, 2011). Cognitive processes moderate the impact of music on attitudes regarding a store, a salesperson, and a store visit [amount of ideas and level of information processing].

When there is little to no other cognitive stimulus, soothing music can increase cognitive function (mainly when sales arguments are weak). Vida (2008) observed customers at the checkout counters of three specialty retail stores that sell sporting goods and apparel as well as two big hypermarkets in Ljubijana (Solvenia) to



examine the impact of in-store background music on customer behavior. He found out that when shoppers perceive the background as fit, they develop positive experiences that led them to browse store merchandise favourably hence spent more finances and time within the store.

In a review of empirical studies on the impact of environmental factors on consumer behavior published by Olahuf, El'murad, and Plaias (2012) found that music was an effective tool for influencing consumers' mental states, with louder music being associated with longer shopping periods than gentle music. Loud music triggered more memory traces, which improved the ability to approximate time retrospectively. The study also shown that when other cognitive stimulation was low, calming music was found to boost cognitive processes, which in turn affected how people's sentiments toward stores and salespeople were shaped by music. Modern-day merchants have also realized the value of utilizing music to set their stores apart from rivals and project a particular image.

Olahuf, El-murad and plaias (2012) further showed that music can dictate the pace at which shoppers move in a store, defined a store image and attract or direct the attentions of shoppers, Generally the music is supposed to be slow, comforting or classical, such music inspires customers to move slowly in the store, feel at ease and take a good look at the goods on sale. Anderson et al. (2012) used gender (male/female) as a moderator to examine if music performed in the store environment impacts consumer behavior. The findings indicated that male customers were more positive while present in an atmosphere with music and fast-paced songs, whereas female consumers were more positive in environments without music or slow songs.

Hui, Dube and Chebet (1997) using experimentation on respondent's psychological and behavioural responses to waiting time were measured, studied the effect music had on shopper's reaction while waiting for services and found that music directly and indirectly affected the perceived waiting duration by triggering an emotional

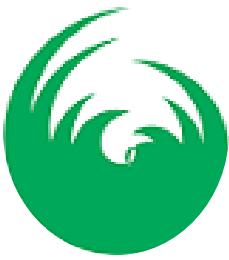
reaction. It affected perceived waiting time through shoppers' affection and cognition. Although positively valence music also increase the perceived waiting period, the latter has no significant effect on consumer's behavioural response to the service organization.

Scent

Scent refers to any particular or agreeable smell as pleasant fragrance or bad odour (Macmillian, 2019). Gobe (2009) mentioned that scent is the strong of all five senses, because it has the capability to evoke consumer emotion in its best. Scent can add to the sensory experiences in its bid to create a specific image or better awareness of products, brands or retail store on a short and long term basis. It can also influences consumer in a positive manner because pleasant fragrance such as coffee, Perfume and freshly baked bread have the capacity to make the consumer happier and more relaxed, which might lead to unselfish behaviour resulting in unplanned purchases. Scent and aroma as an interior variable have been extensively examined, albeit with varying outcomes. (Spangenberg, Crowley and Handerson, 1996; Maltila & Wirtz, 2001). These researches have established that the presence or absent of scent has a significant influence on consumer behaviour, irrespective of the odour. Bone and Ellen (1999) identified 34 studied showing statistically significant effects of scents presence on consumers' response. Generally speaking, it can be considered that pleasant scents encourage approach behavior whereas unpleasant scents encourage avoidance. The customer might not even be aware that this reaction is taking place when it happens (Braford and Descrocher, 2009).

Colour

Color is one of the first things that consumers notice, making it one of the fundamental design tools that businesses employ to communicate with their customers (Bell and Ternus, 2006) Because it may evoke sentiments and emotions in people, which can trigger memories, thoughts, and experiences, color has the power to influence how people perceive things visually. Consumers can be made to feel either warm, friendly,



big-hearted, and receptive or cold, unfriendly, unresponsive, moody, and impossible to reach by color. It is therefore important for retailers to know and understand the history and psychological meaning behind colour. This will help them to create a captivating in-store environment that will inspire positive feelings in shoppers thereby influencing them to make a purchasing decision (Pegler, 2010; Gobe, 2009).

Methodology

The survey research method was employed to address the pertinent issues in the study, primary data were collected using questionnaire. Given the infinite population as it is in the case in this study, a pilot survey was carried out and the result was used to determine a representative sample size for the study. 20 copies of the questionnaire was administrated out of which 15 were correctly filled and returned thus achieving a 75% positive response rate. The remaining 5 non- returned copies yielded a 25% negative or rejection rate. Thereafter the Topman’s formula was adopted to determine the sample size from the large and infinite population as the case in this study.

$$n_o = \frac{Z^2 Pq}{e^2}$$

- where n_o = Desired sample size
- Z^2 = Standard derivation of desired confidence
Level z (score) = 1.96
- p = Probability of positive response = 75%
- q = Probability of negative response = 25%
- e = Desired level of precision ie margin of error 5%

Thus:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times (0.75) (0.25)}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{3.842 \times 0.1875}{0.0025}$$

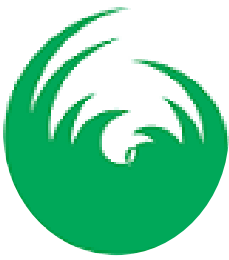
$$= \frac{0.7204}{0.0025}$$

$$= 288.16$$

$n = 288$

Table 3.1 Sampled supermarkets in Uyo metropolis

S/N	Name of Stores	Nos. Of Respondents
1.	Ntaps mall, oron Road	48
2.	Market square	75
3.	De-choice shopping mall	60
4.	Central market, Abak Road	50
5.	Eni stores	55
	Total	288



Results and Discussion

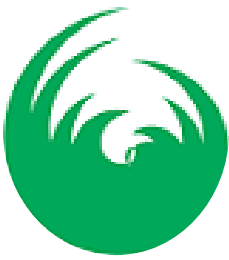
The section presents descriptive statistics based on questions and questionnaire item, test of hypotheses and summary of findings. The data were sourced through the administration of questionnaire to customers of the selected supermarkets in Uyo metropolis and the results

were interpreted and discussed accordingly from the 288 questionnaire forms sent out 244 (84.7%) were accurately completed. Thus further analysis and interpretation was based on the 244 copies of usable questionnaire.

Table 4.1.1 Store layout and design – Product display and physical Design (n=244).

	SA	A	D	SD	U	% of Agreement
Product display and Assortment						
1. I always find what i need.	60 (24.6)	103 (42.2)	21 (8.6)	45 (18.5)	15 (6.1)	66.8
2. Display of merchandise in this store is confusing	49 (20.1)	95 (38.9)	30 (12.3)	49 (20.1)	21 (8.6)	59.0
3. There is adequate directional signs to product location	68 (27.9)	121 (49.6)	21 (8.6)	25 (10.3)	9 (3.6)	77.5
4 All products has their price tag	42 (17.2)	64 (26.2)	30 (12.3)	49 (20.1)	59 (24.2)	43.4
5. Products are well arranged on the shelves	53 (21.7)	75 (30.7)	59 (24.2)	27 (11.1)	30 (12.3)	52.5
Physical Design						
1 Find the aisle width adequate	87 (35.7)	112 (45.9)	20 (8.2)	15 (6.1)	10 (4.1)	81.6
2 The store is well designed	60 (24.6)	76 (31.1)	31 (12.7)	43 (17.6)	34 (13.9)	55.7
3 The supermarket exit and entry point is adequate	74 (30.3)	89 (36.5)	34 (13.9)	23 (9.43)	24 (9.8)	66.8
4 The location of payment counter is convenient	58 (23.8)	34 (14.0)	13 (5.3)	87 (35.6)	52 (21.3)	37.7

Source: Field survey, 2022



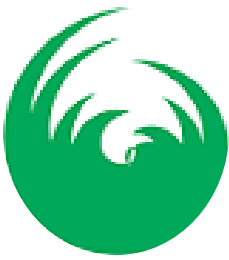
Data on Table 4.1.1, shows result on the evaluation of store design and layout. Most supermarkets under survey show significant performance in terms of product availability (66.8%), adequate directional sign (77.5%), well arranged products on shelves (52.5%), wide aisle

for easy flow of customer (81.6%) and wide entry and exit points (66.8) However, most supermarkets under investigation appear to have less- convenient location for payment (37.7%).

Table 4.1.2 Response on store Atmospheric – Ambient scent, Background music and interior colour (N=244)

	SA	A	D	SD	U	% of Agreement
Ambient scent						
The scent within the Store environment is pleasant	67 (27.5)	116 (47.5)	37 (15.2)	15 (6.1)	9 (3.7)	75.0
Fragrance of the retail Store make me to stay more	57 (23.4)	90 (36.9)	54 (22.1)	29 (11.9)	14 (5.7)	60.2
The vanilla scent in the shop arouse my mood.	60 (24.6)	103 (42.2)	21 (8.6)	45 (18.5)	15 (6.1)	66.8
The store scent is very stimulating	49 (20.1)	95 (38.9)	30 (12.3)	49 (20.0)	21 (8.6)	59.0
Interior Colour						
The store Interior is appealing	15 6.1	68 27.9	10 4.1	99 40.6	52 21.3	34.0
The colour image of the store is good	30 (12.3)	61 (25.0)	60 (24.6)	63 (25.8)	30 (12.3)	37.3
The shop color creates a positive	48 19.7	54 22.1	33 13.5	87 35.7	22 9.0	31.1
Image in my mood The store provides background music	30 12.3	61 25.0	60 24.6	63 25.8	30 12.3	37.3
Volume of in-store music is normally too loud	48 (19.7)	54 (22.1)	33 (13.5)	87 (35.7)	22 (9.0)	31.1
One each visit, the supermarket play low tempo (soft) music	43 17.6	81 (33.2)	34 (13.9)	54 (22.1)	32 (13.1)	50.8
Existence of Background Music increase My shopping Experience	34 (13.9)	79 (32.4)	91 (37.3)	27 (11.1)	13 (5.3)	46.3

Source: Field survey 2022



Data on Table 4.1.2 shows response on store atmospherics which include; ambient scent, background music and interior color. Most of the constructs measuring ambient scent were significant; scent were pleasant (66.8%), and stimulating (59.0%). Though low tempo background music (50.8%) while shopping is commendable by respondents, background music play

less role in increasing shopping experience (46.3%). In similar vein, interior wall colour appears not to play important role in supermarket design; wall colour in most supermarket investigated well not appealing to buyers (34.0%), had poor colour image (37.3%) and seem to create negative shopping experience (31.1%).

Table 4.1.3: Person correlation Analysis between store layout variables and shopping Behaviour

Variables	AS	IC	BM	PAD	PLD	CSB		
Store Atmospherics								
Ambient (AS)	0.52**	0.43**	0.21*	1.00				
Interior colour (IC)	0.47**	0.38*	0.20*	-0.31	1.00			
Background music (BM)	0.36**	0.26**	1.00	0.31*	0.18*	1.00		
Store Design layout								
Product Assortment and Display (PAD)	0.61**	0.42**	0.18**	-0.32	0.19*	0.34*	1.00	
Physical layout and Design (PLD)	0.63**	0.58**	-0.21	0.48**	-0.33	0.19*	0.63**	1.00
Consumer shopping Behaviour (CSB)	-0.21	-0.14	-0.11	0.52**	0.63**	1.00		

** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed i.e P<0.01)

On Table 4.1.3 Pearson’s moment correlation coefficient was calculated to estimate the relationship between store layout variables and consumer shopping behaviour. It demonstrates the association amongst all the independent variables (Background music, ambient scent, interior colour, product assortment, physical layout and design) and the dependent variable (consumer shopping behavior) it is observed that significant positive association exist between consumer shopping behavior and product assortment and display (r=0.52, p<0.01) and physical design and layout (r=0.63, p<0.01).

This means that the more available the store layout variables, the greater their positive effects on purchase behavior of customers in the metropolis. On the other

hand, ambient scent (r=0.21, p>0.01), interior colour (r=-0.14, p>0.01), and background music (r = - 0.11, , p>0.01) were not significantly related to consumer purchase. Based on the correlation coefficient, the hypothesis which tested the relationship between store design and layout and consumer purchase behaviour was rejected, while the hypothesis which tested the relationship between store atmospherics (ambient scent, music and colour) on consumer buying behaviour of supermarkets in Uyo metropolis is accepted. In order to confirm the significance of the above results, multiple regression analysis was carried out and summarized in Table 4.1.4.

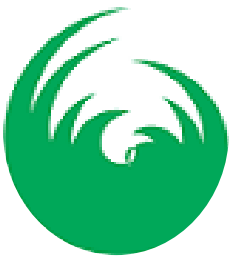


Table 4.1.4: Effects of store layout on consumer buying behaviour.

Multiple regression

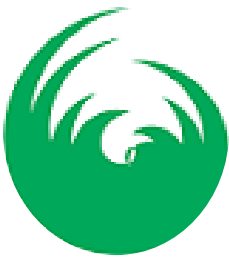
Variable	Beta Estimate	Std. Error	T	Sig.	Remark
Constant	24.480	5.378	4.552	.000	
Store atmospherics					Accept null hypothesis
Ambient scent	0.27	.219	-123	.422	Not significant
Background music	-.039	.228	-171	.552	Not significant
Interior colour	.016	.222	.071	.322	Not significant
Store layout and Design					Significant
Product assortment	.212	.032	2.120	.001	Reject Null hypothesis
Physical Design	.167	.024	2.260	.004	Significant
R	.867				
R ₂	.752				
Adjusted R ₂	.632				
Standard Error	6.57431				
D- Watson	1.688				
F value	43.742				

Dependent variable (consumer buying behaviour).

Table 4.1.4 shows a strong coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.867 while the adjusted R^2 is 0.752. This implies that 75.2% of the variation in customer buying behaviour in Uyo metropolis is explained by the overall store layout variable. The overall fit of the model is robust with F-statistic of 43.742 which is significant at 5% critical level. As shown by the regression results, Dimension of store layout: product assortment ($B=0.212$, $P<0.05$) and physical design ($B=0.167$, $P<0.05$) were significant predictors of shopping behaviour. By this result, hypothesis one is upheld while hypothesis two is rejected.

Discussion of findings

The study examined the influence of store layout on purchase behaviour of consumers in supermarkets in Uyo metropolis. Product assortment and display, physical design and layout of store was used as proxies to store design and layout. Both the result of descriptive and inferential analysis of data confirm the existence of relationship between store design and layout on buying (purchase) behaviour. In specific terms, product assortment and display scored high in terms of product availability, directional signs, display of price tag on products. In addition, results of Pearson’s correlation and multiple regression analysis confirmed that significant changes in consumer shopping behaviour is dependent on product display and assortment. Closely linked to the



study is Levy and Weitz (2007) study which found that a good merchandise assortment entices customers to move around the store to purchase more merchandise than they may have planned originally. The findings is also in agreement with Kumar and Karande (2000) which found significant relationship between product displays and volume of sales supermarket shoppers in Uyo seems to state that when product are correctly display on shelve with appropriate information and price tags, increase the search effort and time spend in evaluating the product. In similar manner, it was found that physical design and layout is positively significant to enhancing purchase behaviour among supermarket shoppers in the study area. Most supermarket under survey were designed with wide aisle, adequate entry and exit points. Wide aisle discourage overcrowding and ease pedestrian flow within the shop. This finding is supported by Kumar and Karande (2000) who suggested that having one entrance as mostly the case, is not suitable, at least two entrance should be provided to serve both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. However findings and personal observation by the researchers revealed that most Supermarkets investigated had narrow payment counter, this contributes to the convenience customer (shoppers) experience at the point of making payment.

On store atmospherics, three constructs were used: Background music, interior colour and ambient. In contrast to expectation, results showed that the three atmospheric variables had no significant relationship or influence on the purchase behavior of shoppers in supermarkets in Uyo. This findings refutes some studies on this aspects of atmospherics – customer behavior relationship. For instance, for instance in Slovenia, Morrison, Gan, Dube and Oppewa (2011) found that volume of music and the presence of Vanilla aroma both have significant impact on shopper’s emotions and satisfaction levels of fashion shoppers. Vida (2008) revealed that the arousal induced by music and aroma results in increased pleasure levels, which in turn positively influences shopper behavior, including time and money spend, approach behavior, and satisfaction

with the shopping experience. This study contradict Olahut, El-mured and Plaias (2012) study in Slovenia which established that music was an effective tool in influencing consumers’ moods, with louder music characterized by longer shopping times when compared to soft music. Differences in the outcome of current and prior studies could be explained. The current study differ in geographical context and methodology. Most of the studies cited were conducted in the Western and more advanced societies with different culture, religion and social perception which perhaps may have influenced the purchased behavior of buyers in Uyo differently.

CONCLUSION

Retail space must be designed to give customers a pleasant shopping experience. Every aspect of the store design and layout should have a physical or psychological influence on purchase behavior. Layout that are well designed are extremely important because they convincingly affect in – store traffic patterns, shopping atmosphere, shopping behavior and operational effectiveness. Good retail store layout should improve on two things: revenue and customer experience. In this current era of the “experience economy”, it becomes even more relevant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Retailers should focus their resources on improving the particularly weak aspect of their layout and décor. Store atmospherics and layout should go with the image of the store.
2. There is need for retailers to lengthen their store aisle in response to the pandemic as it will prevent customers from bumping into one another while also aiding exposure to products. Wide aisles supports brand identity and also helps a organization to tell their story.
3. Retailers should have the retail strategy in place. They should target the ideal customer, know what products they are buying and what form of promotion will be effective in reaching this target group.

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