

IMPACT OF RETAIL ATMOSPHERICS AND HUMAN-RELATED RETAIL FACTORS ON THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SHOPPING ENGAGEMENT

Junsang Lim, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia, U.S.A.

[dx.doi.org/10.18374/RBR-20-2.1](https://doi.org/10.18374/RBR-20-2.1)

ABSTRACT

Academic research on retail atmospherics has explored the influence of specific retail external factors on an individual consumer's shopping behaviors while paying little attention to consumers who shop with others. This paper investigates how companions, one of the human-related retail factors, and external retail factors affect consumers' shopping behaviors. Previous retail studies have considered the positive aspects of shopping behaviors as outcomes of shopping experiences, even though consumers may negatively react toward retail external factors and companions. This study found that retail external factors, other customers, and companions influence how consumers positively and negatively involve in shopping processes. Among the three influence factors, companions have the most substantial impact on both the positive and negative shopping engagement of consumers.

Keywords: *Positive shopping engagement, Negative shopping engagement, Human-related retail factors, Goal-directed behaviors of Companions, Shopping with others*

1. INTRODUCTION

Retailers have strategically developed and managed retail environmental cues since retail external factors appealing to consumers enhance their shopping experiences, which, in turn, positively influence their purchase behaviors. Academic studies on retail environmental cues have examined how physical atmospherics of retail stores and shopping centers influence consumers' store perception (Zielke and Schielke, 2016), shopping intension (Areni and Kim 1993), shopping tempo (Milliman, 1982), and product sales (Knoferle, Spangenberg, Herrmann and Landwehr, 2012). The influence of specific retail external factors, such as ambient music, scent, and in-store illumination, on shopping behaviors, has been empirically tested by researchers. Retail environment research has also proposed human factors as one of the critical retail external factors and explored how a human factor, that is other customers present in retail stores, affects store images, merchandise perception and purchase behaviors (Machleit, Eroglu, and Mantel, 2000; Pan and Siemens, 2011).

However, little retail environmental studies pays attention to companions even though consumers shop with others (e.g., friends and family members), and companions influence consumers' purchase decision-making (Haytko and Baker, 2004).

This study attempts to apply a retail environment framework to a group shopping situation. More specifically, this study incorporates shopping companions into a retail environment framework as one of the human-related retail factors. It explores how the retail external factors (retail atmospherics, other customers, and companions) influence consumers' shopping engagement during a group shopping trip. This study also tries to expand shopping engagement into a two-dimensional construct – how consumers positively and negatively involve in the shopping process.

This paper reviews the retail environment literature to understand how the retail external factors influence shopping behaviors when a consumer shops with a companion(s) in brick-and-mortar retail settings and develops hypotheses on how perceived retail atmospherics, other customers and companions influence positive and negative shopping engagement with a two-factor theory of achievement motivation and role theory. Then this study presents the research method and the analysis and results to verify the proposed hypotheses and finally addresses the findings and limitations of the research.