

Exterior atmospherics and consumer behavior: Influence of landscaping and window display

Jennifer Mower

Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management

Cite this paper

Downloaded from [Academia.edu](#) 

[Get the citation in MLA, APA, or Chicago styles](#)

Related papers

[Download a PDF Pack](#) of the best related papers 



[An integrative framework capturing experiential and utilitarian shopping experience](#)

Jihyun Kim

[The mediating effects of perception and emotion: Digital signage in mall atmospherics](#)

Richard Michon

[International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management A conceptual model of the holistic effects ...](#)

Awais Chaudhary



Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal

Exterior atmospherics and consumer behavior: Influence of landscaping and window display

Jennifer M. Mower, Minjeong Kim, Michelle L. Childs,

Article information:

To cite this document:

Jennifer M. Mower, Minjeong Kim, Michelle L. Childs, (2012) "Exterior atmospherics and consumer behavior: Influence of landscaping and window display", Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal, Vol. 16 Issue: 4, pp.442-453, <https://doi.org/10.1108/13612021211265836>

Permanent link to this document:

<https://doi.org/10.1108/13612021211265836>

Downloaded on: 12 May 2018, At: 08:21 (PT)

References: this document contains references to 33 other documents.

To copy this document: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

The fulltext of this document has been downloaded 6949 times since 2012*

Users who downloaded this article also downloaded:

(2012), "The sensory retail environment of small fashion boutiques", Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal, Vol. 16 Iss 4 pp. 492-510 https://doi.org/10.1108/13612021211265872

(2012), "How does visual merchandising affect consumer affective response?: An intimate apparel experience", European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 46 Iss 1/2 pp. 112-133 https://doi.org/10.1108/03090561211189266

Access to this document was granted through an Emerald subscription provided by emerald-srm:123705 []

For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

*Related content and download information correct at time of download.



JFMM
16,4

442

Received 8 July 2011
Revised 8 January 2012
Accepted 18 January 2012

Exterior atmospherics and consumer behavior

Influence of landscaping and window display

Jennifer M. Mower and Minjeong Kim

*School of Design and Human Environment,
Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, USA, and*
Michelle L. Childs

*Department of Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies,
University of North Carolina – Greensboro,
Greensboro, North Carolina, USA*

Abstract

Purpose – To fill a gap in external atmospheric literature and provide useful information for small store retailers, this study aims to investigate the influence of external atmospheric variables, specifically window displays and landscaping (i.e., accessory vegetation), on customers' responses towards an apparel boutique.

Design/methodology/approach – The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model proposed by Mehrabian and Russell provided the theoretical framework. Data were collected from students enrolled at an American university. Univariate analyses and simple regression analyses were used to evaluate the influence of two external variables (window display and landscaping) on consumer responses in terms of liking, mood, and patronage intentions.

Findings – Results indicated that window display and landscaping had no main effects on pleasure or arousal. However, the presence of window display and landscaping influenced respondents' liking of the store exterior and patronage intentions. Additionally, consumers' liking of the store exterior and mood positively influenced patronage intentions.

Practical implications – Store retailers, especially small apparel boutiques, would benefit from landscaping the external portion of their store and pay special attention to their window displays.

Originality/value – Turley and Milliman stressed the pressing need for further empirical research on external atmospheric variables because of lack of research on exterior atmospheric variables. This study focused on external atmospheric variables and their impact on shopper behaviors and thus adds to the existing literature.

Keywords Atmospherics, Landscaping, Window display, Retailers, Consumer behaviour

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In today's competitive retail industry it is harder than ever to reach a target segment and sell them on a particular brand or product. Retailers need to pay special attention to all elements of their retail mix which includes store design and atmospherics. According to Berman and Evans (1998), atmospheric variables are divided into four categories: the exterior, the interior, layout and design, and point-of-purchase and decoration variables. The store exterior includes the storefront, entrances, display windows, physical characteristics of the building (e.g. height and size), surrounding area, and parking (Berman and Evans, 1998). The store interior includes flooring, colors, lighting, scents, sounds, fixtures, temperature, merchandise, and cleanliness (Berman and Evans, 1998). Layout and design variables describe the allocation of floor



space (Berman and Evans, 1998). Point-of-purchase and decoration variables includes point-of-purchase displays, signs, wall decorations, certifications, pictures and artwork, price and product displays, and so forth (Turley and Milliman, 2000). Store atmospherics have received much scholarly attention in terms of their effects on shoppers' behaviors. Turley and Milliman (2000) conducted a comprehensive review of the extant atmospheric studies. Their review suggests that store atmospherics, especially interiors of the store have substantial impact on shopper behaviors. Turley and Milliman also stressed the pressing need for further empirical research on external atmospheric variables because of lack of research on exterior atmospheric variables.

Store exteriors are what customers first encounter as they engage in shopping behavior and thus are an important opportunity for stores to build positive impressions. Perhaps for big box retailers store exterior matters less, because they have already built a reputation based on the brands they carry, convenient locations, and competitive prices. But for smaller retailers without strong brands or store names, store exterior may play a critical role in building a first impression of a store and attracting customers into a store. When deciding to shop at smaller boutique stores customers rely on external cues such as window displays to help form an impression of the store and its merchandise even before stepping foot inside the store. Given that small retailers with fewer than ten employees make up over 65 percent of all retailers in the USA (US Census Bureau, 2007), more research is warranted on store exteriors.

The current study focussed on the store exterior of a small apparel boutique because of the potential importance of store exteriors on positive shopper behaviors. Additionally, apparel boutiques and other specialty retailers are important components of central business districts (CBDs), and add to the unique nature of downtown shopping areas (Padilla and Eastlick, 2009). To fill a gap in external atmospheric literature and provide useful information for small store retailers, the purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of external atmospheric variables, specifically window displays and landscaping (i.e. accessory vegetation), on customers responses toward an apparel boutique. The findings of the study are expected to provide useful information for small store retailers to develop effective store exteriors that lead to positive shopper responses.

Conceptual background

Atmospherics research falls under the broad discipline of environmental psychology, which often employs the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model (Babin *et al.*, 2003). The S-O-R model assumes that consumers' emotional responses to a physical environment mediate the influence of the environment on their behaviors. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) presented a model within the S-O-R framework suggesting that exposure to environmental stimuli influences consumer's emotions. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) identified three dimensions of emotion that influence consumer's responses to an environment: pleasantness, arousal, and dominance. The pleasantness dimension relates to the degree that consumer's feel happy, pleased, satisfied, or content. The arousal dimension identifies feelings of stimulation, excited, frenzied, and relaxed. Dominance relates to customers feeling of being in control or lacking control (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974).

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) also discuss the interaction between the pleasure and arousal dimensions as a determining factor in consumer's approach or avoidance

behavior. Approach behaviors involves the desire to enter and stay in the environment, a desire to explore the environment, interact with other customers and sales personnel, and be satisfied in the environment. Avoidance behaviors involve the desire to leave the environment, to avoid interacting with others in the environment, and lowered satisfaction in the environment. If customers enjoy their experience, they are more likely to have favorable associations to the retailer, make purchases, and become loyal customers.

Applying the S-O-R model to a retail environment for the first time, Donovan and Rossiter (1982) found that pleasure obtained from the store is a strong indicator of customers' approach-avoidance behavior. Likewise arousal obtained from the store can increase the amount of time customers' spend in a store and willingness to interact with salespeople. Donovan and Rossiter (1982) determined that dominance did not fit with a retail environment. Since then, many empirical studies have supported the influence of retail environments on human behaviors mediated by emotional responses (Baker *et al.*, 1992; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Ferreira and Oliveira-Castro, 2011; Fiore *et al.*, 2000; Morrison *et al.*, 2011; Yalch and Spangenberg, 2000). Following the S-O-R model, this study posits that the exterior of the retail store as the environmental stimulus influences consumers' affective responses in terms of liking and mood and subsequently, consumers' affective responses influence their behaviors, operationalized as patronage intentions in this study.

Hypotheses development

Effects of exterior of the environment

In today's competitive retail environment many independent retailers need to develop strategies to compete with chain stores. McGee and Finney (1997) found that merchandising strategies were one of the ways independent retailers competed with chain stores. Merchandising can refer to how products are packaged, promoted, and displayed but it can also refer to how the store looks. Atmospherics are the environmental elements that help create the retail image of a store and set the mood to stimulate sales. Berman and Evans (1998) categorized atmospheric variables into four categories: the exterior, interior, layout and design, and point-of-purchase and decoration variables (Turley and Milliman, 2000). For small independent retailers without strong brand names like chain stores, the store exterior can play a critical role in attracting customers into a store especially because the store exterior is what the customer sees first. Yet extant research on retail environment has been limited to the interiors of the environment, largely overlooking the exterior of the environment (Turley and Milliman, 2000). In their review of atmospheric research, Turley and Milliman (2000) stressed the need for more research on store exteriors for successful retail and service businesses. Thus this study focussed on the store exteriors as atmospheric cues affecting consumer behaviors.

The store exterior includes the storefront, parking, entrances, display windows, physical characteristics of the building (height, size, and color of buildings), location (congestion and traffic), surrounding area including landscaping and vegetation and nearby stores. For this study, landscaping (i.e. accessory vegetation) and window displays were selected as key elements of store exteriors because of their high visibility and key role in attracting customers into a store (Sen *et al.*, 2002) and ease of control for retailers to improve their exteriors.

Landscaping

Research from forestry has demonstrated that landscaping generates positive emotional reactions and evaluations of urban settings (Sheets and Manzer, 1991; Ulrich, 1986; Wolf, 2005a, b, 2009). Ulrich (1986) found that people preferred nature scenes over pictures of urban environments. Sheets and Manzer (1991) further found that the presence of vegetation positively influenced respondent's moods and evaluation of the quality of life in an urban setting. Wolf (2005b, 2009) found that consumers reacted positively to the presence of trees in CBDs and at mini-malls. When stores were landscaped, consumers were more likely to patronize stores and were even willing to travel greater distances. Wolf (2005b, 2009) also found that customers shopped longer, were more likely to return to the store, and paid more for products. Research by Chebat and Morrin (2007) suggest potential influences of landscaping on consumer behaviors. In their research on mall décor, Chebat and Morrin used plants and flowers to manipulate mall décor in terms of color and found a substantial impact of mall décor on shoppers' perceptions of the environment and the quality of products sold by mall retailers. Shoppers liked the environment more when plants, flowers, and trees were used to manipulate the decor than when these elements were not used. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that a retail exterior with landscaping will have a positive impact on consumer's mood and consumer's liking of the retail exterior. Landscaping in this study was operationalized as the presence of vegetation in front of a store because retailers have a direct control over having vegetation and it is a relatively inexpensive way to enhance the exterior of the store:

- H1. Landscaping has a positive influence on consumers' mood (a: pleasure, b: arousal).
- H2. Landscaping has a positive influence on consumers' liking of the external environment.
- H3. Landscaping has a positive influence on consumers' patronage intentions.

Window displays

"The windows are the first look a customer gets before she comes into a store" (Klokis, 1986, p. 108). As an important component of the retail mix (Edwards and Shackley, 1992), window displays are used to communicate information about the store, its products, and services (Sen *et al.*, 2002). From window displays, potential customers gather information used to help make decisions about whether to shop at a particular store. Window displays help identify the type of store and its offerings to customers who may be unfamiliar with the retailer (Berman and Evans, 1998) and thus are expected to be an important store atmospheric cue for small independent retailers. Window displays are also one of the exterior elements that retailers have direct control over what they display.

Window displays congruent with the consumers' self-image were found to be more successful in attracting customers; window displays were less successful when they only contained promotional or style information (Sen *et al.*, 2002). After conducting interviews with shoppers Edwards and Shackley (1992) found that larger window displays were more successful in attracting consumers' attention compared to smaller windows since there were more design elements to take in. They also found that sales increased when stores used window displays compared to no window display.

Successful window displays were found to be aesthetically pleasing, contained a theme, used warm colors, drew customers into the scene with the use of perspective, used lighting to highlight key areas of the display, and incorporated accessories associated with the products. Their findings further showed that when new products were displayed in windows sales increased. Based on review of literature, the following hypotheses were developed:

- H4. Window displays have a positive influence on consumers' mood (a: pleasure, b: arousal).
- H5. Window displays have a positive influence on consumers' liking of the external environment.
- H6. Window displays have a positive influence on consumers' patronage intentions.

Relationships among affective responses and patronage intentions

Several studies have established the mediating role of mood on consumer behavior (Baker *et al.*, 1992; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Fiore *et al.*, 2000; Moody *et al.*, 2010; Teng *et al.*, 2007; Yalch and Spangenberg, 2000). Donovan and Rossiter (1982) found that customers' who found the store environment to be pleasing and positively arousing were more likely to spend time in the store, spend money and interact with sales associates. Baker *et al.* (1992) also found that store environment do influence shopper response in such a way that pleasure evoked by lighting and music increased consumer's willingness to buy. The study by Fiore *et al.* (2000) provided additional support for the relationship between cognitive and affective responses and behavioral intent. In their study of the effects of product displays and ambient scent on purchase intention, Fiore *et al.* (2000) found that sensory, cognitive, and affective pleasure induced by a pleasant and appropriate fragrance positively influenced attitude toward the product and purchase intention. Yalch and Spangenberg (2000) looked at the influence of music on shopping times and found that listening to unfamiliar music while shopping heightened perceptions of pleasure and lengthened shopping times than when shoppers listened to familiar music. However, shoppers were more aroused when listening to familiar music, which adversely affected feelings of pleasure. Pleasure and arousal experienced as a result of music familiarity influenced the perception of shopping time and actual shopping time. Based on the S-O-R model and review of literature the following hypotheses were developed:

- H7. Liking of the exterior of the retail environment is positively related to mood (a: pleasure, b: arousal).
- H8. Liking of the exterior of the retail environment is positively related to patronage intentions.

Method

An online survey was conducted with a convenience sample of college students from a large American university. College students are a significant market segment for apparel boutiques (Esposito, 2007), and generation Y consumers do represent "a dominant future market" for independent retailers (Let's Talk Business, 2006). Thus the research participants used in the study were deemed appropriate. The design of the

study was 2 (landscaping: presence vs absence) $\times$ 2 (window displays: presence vs absence) between-subjects factorial design. When participants logged onto a research web site, they read one of the four experimental stimuli depicting external environment of an apparel boutique and then answered a set of dependent measures and demographic questions. In order to enhance relevant of experimental stimuli for the research participants used in the study, the items described in the environmental stimuli (apparel and accessories) were targeted toward college students.

Stimulus and instrument development

Written descriptions of external environment were used to manipulate the two independent variables. Written descriptions have been successfully used as experimental stimuli in prior atmospheric research (Sands *et al.*, 2008; Schlosser, 1998). Students were asked to imagine they needed to buy a new pair of jeans for back-to-school, so they had a general idea about the type of merchandise the retailer sold. All scenarios contained information about the physical structure and color of the building. The descriptions differed in whether they contained information about the landscaping (i.e. accessory vegetation) and window displays. For landscaping, concrete descriptions of vegetations (e.g. oversized glazed terra cotta planters with tiny purple and yellow flowers with ivy draping over the edge of the pot) were used. For window displays, concrete descriptions a female mannequin wearing a fashion-forward ensemble set among a modern backdrop were used.

All dependent measures except liking of the exterior of the environment were adopted from prior studies with appropriate reliabilities. Pleasure and arousal were measured using six items, respectively, from Mehrabian and Russell (1974). Liking of the exterior were measured using two items; one item measuring liking of landscaping and liking of window displays, respectively, were developed. Patronage intentions were measured with the three items (i.e. likelihood respondents would shop at the store, purchase likelihood, recommendation likelihood, and return likelihood) adopted from Baker *et al.* (1992).

Results

Sample characteristics

A total of 180 college students completed the online survey (mean age = 20.4). About 94 percent of the respondents were female. Most respondents were juniors (35 percent) and seniors (39 percent), followed by freshman (16 percent), sophomores (9 percent), and graduate students (1 percent). Over half of respondents were employed part-time (51 percent), while 45 percent were not employed, and 4 percent of respondents had full-time employment.

Manipulation check

To ensure window displays used in the scenarios were relevant and appealing to the research participants, a manipulation check was conducted in terms of fashionability and perceived quality of products displayed on windows. Mean score for fashionability was 5.0 (SD = 1.63) and 4.73 (SD = 1.73) for perceived quality based on a seven-point rating scale. Thus, window displays were deemed appropriate for the study.

Factor analysis and reliability analysis

Multi-item measures were subjected to exploratory factor analysis and reliability analyses. The objective of exploratory factor analysis is to find a set of underlying

latent constructs, which might be represented by a set of items. An exploratory factor analysis using maximum likelihood estimation was first conducted to assess the dimensionality of the mood scales. The minimum eigenvalue of 1.0 was used as a criterion to control the number of factors extracted. Only items loading >0.40 on a single factor and cross-loading at <0.40 on the other factors were included. Consistent with prior research, exploratory factor analysis on the mood scales yielded two factors containing 11 items, accounting for 69.20 percent of the variance, and representing pleasure and arousal dimensions. Pleasure included five items and arousal included six items. Consistencies of each dimension were reliable (Cronbach's α 's 0.92 for pleasure and 0.89 for arousal). For reliability, Cronbach's α 's were calculated to examine internal consistency of multi-item measures. Cronbach's α represents how closely related a set of measurement items are as a group by examining the relationship of responses on each item to responses on every other item and to the entire scale as a whole. A high Cronbach's coefficient suggests that the multi-items measure an underlying construct. For the two-item measure of liking of external environment was 0.83 and for the three-item measure of patronage intentions was 0.92. Based on the reliabilities, composite scores were developed and used as dependent measures.

Hypothesis testing

To test *H1-H6*, univariate analyses of variance were conducted. Results showed no main effects of landscaping ($p=0.36$) and window displays ($p=0.13$) on pleasure. Both landscaping ($p=0.80$) and window displays ($p=0.10$) also had no effects on arousal. The results further showed that both landscaping, $F(1, 0.175)=6.68$, $p<0.05$, and window display, $F(1, 0.175)=3.88$, $p<0.05$, had a positive impact on liking of external environment. Additionally, both landscaping, $F(1, 0.174)=5.19$, $p<0.05$, and window display, $F(1, 0.174)=5.40$, $p<0.05$, were found to have a positive impact on patronage intentions. No interaction effects were found. Cell comparisons showed that when landscaping was present, respondents like the external environment more ($M=4.36$, $SD=1.27$) and had higher patronage intentions ($M=4.4$, $SD=1.44$) than when no landscaping was available ($M=3.76$, $SD=1.68$) for liking and ($M=3.92$, $SD=1.62$) for patronage intentions). Also when window displays were present, respondents liked the external environment more ($M=4.29$, $SD=1.61$) and had higher patronage intentions ($M=4.42$, $SD=1.58$) compared to no window displays ($M=3.83$, $SD=1.54$) for liking and ($M=3.92$, $SD=1.33$) for patronage intentions).

Simple regression analyses were used to assess the relationship between mood and patronage intentions and also the relationship between liking and patronage intentions. Both the pleasure and arousal dimensions were positively related to patronage intentions; for pleasure, $F(1, 0.170)=60.26$, $p<0.0001$, $R^2=0.262$, $b=0.51$, and for arousal, $F(1, 0.171)=44.44$, $p<0.0001$, $R^2=0.206$, $b=0.45$. Liking was also positively related to patronage intentions, $F(1, 0.175)=70.92$, $p<0.0001$, $R^2=0.288$, $b=0.54$.

Post hoc mediating analysis

The findings of the study showed that exteriors of store environment operationalized as landscaping and window displays increased liking and patronage intentions, and liking also increased patronage intentions. While store exteriors had no direct impact on mood, mood was positively related to both liking and patronage intentions. Thus, it

was posited that mood may mediate the relationship between liking and patronage intentions.

To determine if mood mediates the relationship between liking of store exteriors and patronage intentions, mediating analyses were conducted using Baron and Kenny's (1986) three-step procedure. The three steps are: (a) regressing mood (pleasure and arousal respectively) on liking, (b) regressing patronage intentions on liking, and (c) regressing patronage intentions on mood (pleasure and arousal, respectively) and liking. Results of simple regression analyses showed that (a) both pleasure and arousal were significantly related to liking, $F(1, 0.172) = 100.49$, $p < 0.0001$, $b = 0.61$; $F(1, 0.172) = 33.62$, $p < 0.0001$, $b = 0.41$, and (b) patronage intentions were positively related to liking, $F(1, 0.175) = 70.92$, $p < 0.0001$, $b = 0.54$. Results of multiple regression analyses for pleasure as a mediator showed that (c) pleasure ($b = 0.29$) and liking ($b = 0.36$) had positive effects on patronage intentions. Note that the standardized coefficient for liking (0.36) from the multiple regression analysis was less than the one from the simple regression (0.54), but still remained significant. Result of another multiple regression analysis for arousal as a mediator showed that (c) arousal ($b = 0.29$) and liking ($b = 0.41$) had positive effects on patronage intentions. Note that the standardized coefficient for liking (0.41) from the multiple regression analysis was less than the one from the simple regression (0.54), but still remained significant. This demonstrates that both pleasure and arousal were the partial mediators of the effects of liking of store exteriors on patronage intentions. In this case, liking of store exteriors increased pleasure and arousal shoppers experienced, which led to increased patronage intentions, in addition to affecting patronage intentions directly.

Discussion and managerial implications

These findings provide empirical evidence to support the importance of landscaping and window displays to elicit positive consumer responses. When customers liked the exterior retail environment, they exhibited higher patronage intentions. Additionally, the presence of landscaping and window displays had direct positive impacts on patronage intentions. Interestingly, the presence of external environmental stimuli had no direct effect on customer's mood. However, the findings further illustrate the mediating role of mood on the relationship between liking of external atmospherics and patronage intentions. When customers liked the exterior retail environment, they experienced higher pleasure and arousal, which increased patronage intentions. Results provided empirical evidence to add to the existing atmospherics literature and also practical implications for store retailers to improve the exterior of retail environments.

Apparel boutiques are small, often single store establishments that may not have the visual merchandising departments that corporate retailers have, and thus can benefit from the findings of the study. Adding accessory vegetations is a fairly inexpensive way of enhancing the exterior of small stores. Therefore, apparel boutiques would want to consider adding such accessory vegetation to make shoppers like their store exteriors. Supporting prior research on window displays (Sen *et al.*, 2002), the findings of the study also support that attractive window displays enhances shoppers' liking of the store exterior and increased patronage intentions. Attractive store window displays communicate information about the retailer to consumers, and for smaller stores this information is important to attract customers.

Apparel boutiques and a variety of other retailers (e.g. hardware, furniture, jewelry, pharmacies, restaurants, and so forth) are often located in CBDs, which until recently,

have declined in popularity (Levy and Weitz, 2009; Padilla and Eastlick, 2009). City planners have turned their attention to these areas in an attempt to develop revitalization strategies to bring tourists and local residents back to these areas. These downtown areas are particularly important in smaller towns because they are tied to the local economy and vital to the sense of community (Lee *et al.*, 2008). In addition to community building other advantages of independent retailers include better customer service and product knowledge of sales associates, and personalization (McGee *et al.*, 1999). Despite these advantages smaller retailers are facing several challenges and threats mostly from large chain retailers. Independent retailers who compete in this environment are those who develop strategies that enable them to attract customers, and landscaping is one way a retailer can dramatically improve their exteriors, making it more attractive to shoppers and pedestrians. Likewise retailers benefit from creating window displays that are aesthetically interesting and inform consumers about the products it sells and the retailer's image. It is important that these small retailers understand their target market and design window displays that fit with the customer they are trying to attract. Where landscaping is particularly important for restaurants and service retailers, attractive window displays are important for apparel retailers but it is also beneficial for retailers that sell hardware and other products where brand name and quality are important.

Window displays congruent with the consumers' self-image were more successful in attracting customers (Sen *et al.*, 2002). In their review of literature of CBD revitalization strategies Padilla and Eastlick (2009) recommend promoting "downtown shopping [...] as an integrated unit" (Padilla and Eastlick, 2009, p. 9). Therefore, if retailers tailor their windows to the "city's individual personality" consumers may like the window display more because they identify with the image, which may increase their purchase intentions (Padilla and Eastlick, 2009, p. 20). Similarly, using regional vegetation to landscape the exterior of the store may be another way to expand on this local theme.

Small retailers have an opportunity to differentiate themselves from corporate retailers by focussing on the fact that they can give shoppers a unique shopping experience that starts with the store exterior. In a 2004 study focussed on small store success strategies, researchers found that the most successful retailers paid close attention to both the inside and outside of their store (Nelson, 2006). Store retailers would benefit from landscaping the external portion of their store and pay special attention to their window displays. Given lack of research in this area, further research is warranted to fill a gap in atmospherics literature. Field studies would also lead to valuable insights into the effects of store exterior on consumer behavior. Future research also needs to include other external atmospheric variables such as entrances, building materials, surrounding area, and parking to improve the knowledge of external atmospherics. Additional research may want to include other types of retailers (e.g. stand-alone retailers, shopping centers, and so forth) and retailers selling different product categories to expand the findings of the current study.

Limitations

College students are not necessarily representative of consumers of small stores and boutiques, and more research is needed that includes a more diverse sample of consumers to enhance the understanding of the effect of store exteriors on consumer responses.

The use of written scenarios as the experimental stimuli could be considered a limitation since participants have limited sensory experiences. Every type of research strategy has its advantages and disadvantages (Schlosser, 1998; Sands *et al.*, 2008).

Future research using a different research such as field experiment will provide additional insights to enhance the understanding of roles of the store exterior on consumer behaviors.

Suggestions for retailers

Window display

- (1) Window displays should reflect the retailer's image.
- (2) Window displays should fit with the target market they are trying to attract.
- (3) Window displays should illustrate the type of merchandise or brands the retailer offers.
- (4) Window displays should be unique and aesthetically pleasing.
- (5) Retailers should try to incorporate themes into their window displays including local themes and holiday or special event themes.

451

Landscaping

- (1) Boutiques and other small retailers should use accessory vegetation to improve the store exterior. The amount and scale of the vegetation will depend on space and pedestrian traffic.
- (2) Retailers may want to invest in more expensive evergreen trees or shrubs and use seasonal flowers to add color and variety to their store exterior.
- (3) The retailer has an opportunity to incorporate local/regional vegetation, expanding on a local theme.

References

- Babin, B.J., Hardesty, D.M. and Suter, T.A. (2003), "Color and shopping intentions: the intervening effect of price fairness and perceived affect", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 56 No. 7, pp. 541-551.
- Baker, J., Levy, M. and Grewal, D. (1992), "An experimental approach to making retail store environment decisions", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 68 No. 4, pp. 445-59.
- Berman, B. and Evans, J.R. (1998), *Retail Management: A Strategic Approach*, Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Chebat, J.C. and Morrin, M. (2007), "Colors and cultures: exploring the effects of mall décor on consumer response", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 60 No. 3, pp. 189-96.
- Donovan, R.J. and Rossiter, J.R. (1982), "Store atmosphere: an environmental psychology approach", *Psychology of Store Atmosphere*, Vol. 58 No. 1, pp. 34-57.
- Edwards, S. and Shackley, M. (1992), "Measuring the effectiveness of retail window display as an element of the marketing mix", *International Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 193-202.
- Esposito, J.C. (2007), "Details of retail", *University Business*, Vol. 10 No. 3, pp. 72-6.
- Ferreira, D. and Oliveira-Castro, J. (2011), "Effects of background music on consumer behaviour: behavioural account of the consumer setting", *Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 31 No. 15, pp. 2571-85.
- Fiore, A.M., Yah, X. and Yoh, E. (2000), "Effects of a product display and environmental fragrancing on approach responses and pleasurable experiences", *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 27-54.

- Klokis, H. (1986), "Store windows: dynamic first impressions", *Chain Store Age Executive*, Vol. 62, pp. 108-9.
- Lee, J., Johnson, K.K.P., Gahring, S. and Lee, S.E. (2008), "Business strategies of independent retailers: effects of environmental hostility", *Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 277-91.
- Let's Talk Business (2006), "Trends facing small independent retailers", University of Wisconsin – Extension, Let's Talk Business, issue 113, January.
- Levy, M. and Weitz, B.A. (2009), *Retailing Management*, McGraw-Hill Education, Dubuque, IA.
- McGee, J.E. and Finney, B.J. (1997), "Competing against retailing giants: a look at the importance of distinctive marketing competencies", *Journal of Business and Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 59-70.
- McGee, J.E., Love, L.G. and Rubach, M.J. (1999), "Sources of competitive advantage for small independent retailers: lessons from the neighborhood drugstore", *Proceedings of Association of Small Business & Entrepreneurship, SWFAD, Houston, TX*, pp. 119-29.
- Mehrabian, A. and Russell, J.A. (1974), *An Approach to Environmental Psychology*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Moody, W., Kinderman, P. and Sinha, P. (2010), "An exploratory study: relationships between trying on clothing, mood, emotion, personality and clothing preference", *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 161-79.
- Morrison, M., Gan, S., Dubelaar, C. and Oppewal, H. (2011), "In-store music and aroma influences on shopper behavior and satisfaction", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 64 No. 6, pp. 558-64.
- Nelson, D.A. (2006), *Small Store Success Strategies*, University of Minnesota, Extension Service, Benton County, MN.
- Padilla, C. and Eastlick, M.A. (2009), "Exploring urban retailing and CBD revitalization strategies", *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 7-23.
- Sands, S., Oppewal, H. and Beverland, M. (2008), "Influence of in-store experiential events on shopping value perceptions and shopping behavior", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 35, pp. 298-303.
- Schlosser, A.E. (1998), "Applying the functional theory of attitudes to understanding the influence of store atmosphere on store inferences", *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 7 No. 4, pp. 345-69.
- Sen, S., Block, L.G. and Chandran, S. (2002), "Window displays and consumer shopping decisions", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 9 No. 5, pp. 277-90.
- Sheets, V.L. and Manzer, C.D. (1991), "Affect, cognition, and urban vegetation: some effects of adding trees along city streets", *Environment and Behavior*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 285-304.
- Teng, C., Tseng, H. and Wu, H. (2007), "Positive mood as a mediator of the relations among musical preference, post consumption product evaluation, and consumer satisfaction", *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 100 No. 3, pp. 927-38.
- Turley, L. and Milliman, R.E. (2000), "Atmospheric effects on shopping behavior: a review of the experimental evidence", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 49 No. 2, pp. 193-211.
- Ulrich, R.S. (1986), "Human responses to vegetation and landscapes", *Landscape and Urban Planning*, Vol. 13, pp. 29-44.
- US Census Bureau (2007), "Statistics about business size (including small business) from the US Census Bureau", available at: <http://www.census.gov/econ/smallbus.html> (accessed 4 August 2012).

- Wolf, K.L. (2005a), "Trees in the small city retail business district: comparing resident and visitor perceptions", *Journal of Forestry*, Vol. 103 No. 8, pp. 390-5.
- Wolf, K.L. (2005b), "Business district streetscapes, trees, and consumer response", *Journal of Forestry*, Vol. 103 No. 8, pp. 396-400.
- Wolf, K.L. (2009), "Strip malls, city trees, and community values", *Arboriculture and Urban Forestry*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 33-40.
- Yalch, R.F. and Spangenberg, E.R. (2000), "The effects of music in a retail setting on real and perceived shopping times", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 49, pp. 137-47.

Further reading

- Donovan, R.J., Rossiter, J.R., Marcoolyn, G. and Nesdale, A. (1994), "Store atmosphere and purchasing behavior", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 70 No. 3, pp. 283-94.

About the authors

Jennifer M. Mower obtained a PhD from Oregon State University, USA. Her dissertation is focused on consumer behavior during the Second World War. Her research interests include historic and contemporary consumer behavior. This paper was based on a term project for a course in trends and issues in merchandising management.

Minjeong Kim is an Associate Professor in the School of Design and Human Environment in the College of Business at Oregon State University. Dr Kim received her PhD from The Ohio State University and has published in *Psychology & Marketing*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Services Industries Journal*, *Managing Service Quality*, *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, *Direct Marketing*, and *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*. Her research interests include consumer behaviors in multi-channel retailing and sustainability in the retail industry. Minjeong Kim is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: Minjeong.Kim@oregonstate.edu

Michelle L. Childs completed an MA at Oregon State University in Merchandising Management and is currently attending University of North Carolina – Greensboro studying Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies. Her research interests include consumer behavior, social-psychological aspects of dress, and brand management.

This article has been cited by:

1. Peter H. Bloch, Omid Kamran-Disfani. 2018. A framework for studying the impact of outdoor atmospherics in retailing. *AMS Review* 20. . [[Crossref](#)]
2. Mei-Teh Goi, Vigneswari Kalidas, Norzita Yunus. 2018. Mediating roles of emotion and experience in the stimulus-organism-response framework in higher education institutions. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* 75, 1-23. [[Crossref](#)]
3. Mark S. Rosenbaum, Germán Contreras Ramirez, Jaime Rivera Camino. 2018. A dose of nature and shopping: The restorative potential of biophilic lifestyle center designs. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 40, 66-73. [[Crossref](#)]
4. VarshneyaGeetika, Geetika Varshneya, DasGopal, Gopal Das, KhareArpita, Arpita Khare. 2017. Experiential value: a review and future research directions. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 35:3, 339-357. [[Abstract](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[PDF](#)]
5. Geetika Varshneya, Gopal Das. 2017. Experiential value: Multi-item scale development and validation. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 34, 48-57. [[Crossref](#)]
6. Karen H. Hyllegard, Jennifer Paff Ogle, Ruoh-Nan Yan, Kevin Kissell. 2016. Consumer response to exterior atmospherics at a university-branded merchandise store. *Fashion and Textiles* 3:1. . [[Crossref](#)]
7. Hyo Jung Julie Chang, Michael O'Boyle, Ronald C. Anderson, Chompoonut Suttikun. 2016. An fMRI study of advertising appeals and their relationship to product attractiveness and buying intentions. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* 15:6, 538-548. [[Crossref](#)]
8. Jaratchwahn Jantararat, Randall Shannon. 2016. The moderating effects of in-store marketing on the relationships between shopping motivations and loyalty intentions. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research* 26:5, 566-588. [[Crossref](#)]
9. TandonAnushree, Anushree Tandon, GuptaAshish, Ashish Gupta, TripathiVibhuti, Vibhuti Tripathi. 2016. Managing shopping experience through mall attractiveness dimensions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics* 28:4, 634-649. [[Abstract](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[PDF](#)]
10. Mark S. Rosenbaum, Mauricio Losada Otalora, Germán Contreras Ramírez. 2016. The restorative potential of shopping malls. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 31, 157-165. [[Crossref](#)]
11. Michelle L. Childs, ByoungHo Jin. 2016. Do Status Symbols in Marketing Increase Product Evaluations? An Experimental Analysis of Group Differences on Product Evaluations for Scarce and Brand-Presence Products. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing* 28:3, 154-168. [[Crossref](#)]
12. Fredrik Lange, Sara Rosengren, Angelica Blom. 2016. Store-window creativity's impact on shopper behavior. *Journal of Business Research* 69:3, 1014-1021. [[Crossref](#)]
13. Paul W Ballantine, Andrew Parsons, Katrina Comeskey. 2015. A conceptual model of the holistic effects of atmospheric cues in fashion retailing. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management* 43:6, 503-517. [[Abstract](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[PDF](#)]
14. Eunjoo Cho, Ann Marie Fiore. 2015. Conceptualization of a holistic brand image measure for fashion-related brands. *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 32:4, 255-265. [[Abstract](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[PDF](#)]
15. Tun-Min Catherine Jai, Michael W. O'Boyle, Dan Fang. 2014. Neural correlates of sensory-enabling presentation: An fMRI study of image zooming and rotation video effects on online apparel shopping. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* 13:5, 342-350. [[Crossref](#)]
16. Eric Viardot. Managing and Influencing Consumer Behavior to Become a Worldwide Leader in the Apparel Industry 99-120. [[Crossref](#)]

17. Sanda Renko, Tomislav Gregur. The Aural Nature of Atmosphere in a Retail Setting 290-311. [[Crossref](#)]
18. Eric Viardot. Managing and Influencing Consumer Behavior to Become a Worldwide Leader in the Apparel Industry 98-118. [[Crossref](#)]
19. Sanda Renko. Atmosphere as a Store Communication Tool 239-257. [[Crossref](#)]