

Experiential Retailing: Entertainment through Shopping

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Abstract—Retail is a highly dynamic sector that exists as a nexus between property, design, technology. Shopping is not always a rational experience. Customers make impulse decisions, which are influenced by stimuli like lighting, product positioning, imagery, sound and smell (Morrell, 2012). That is why retail environments are pushing consumers to appreciate the hedonic aspects of consumption. A mall may provide a pleasurable diversion from everyday activities and chores. Enjoyment itself has been reported as a motivation for “bricks” shopping. (Dennis, Newman and Marsland, 2005). Creating an experience for consumers is more important than ever (Rauen, 2006). Pine and Gilmore argue that businesses must orchestrate memorable events for their customers, and that memory itself becomes the product — the “experience”.

Retailers that are thriving now and will continue to thrive in the future are the ones that provide enjoyable shopping, recreation activities and educational opportunities for consumers. Getting people in the store is not enough. What consumers want is a memorable event that engages them. It is about what happens inside the space as well as the décor.

Entertainment retailing is about making an emotional connect with the customer. Research indicates that modern consumers no longer simply buy products and services, but rather the experience around what is being sold (Morrison and Crane 2007). More advanced experience businesses can begin charging for the value of the “transformation” that an experience offers.

Keywords: Experiential retailing, Shoppertainment, Customer buying behavior, Retail store design.

1. INTRODUCTION

Several researches have been conducted on shopper’s shopping motives and formed typologies based on these motives (e.g., Jin and Kim 2003). Usually customers buy products and/or services to fulfill their daily needs. According to Bitner, (1992) the motives for shopping are *personal motives*, e.g. -playing, diversion, self-gratification, learning about new trends, physical activity, and sensory stimulation; *social motives*, e.g., social experiences outside the home, communication with others having a similar interest, peer group attraction, and the *pleasure of bargaining*; and *impulse shopping* (Tauber, 1972). The shopping motive such as economic/ utilitarian involves consumers engaging in shopping out of necessity to obtain needed products, services,

or information with little or no inherent satisfaction derived from the shopping activity itself. In 1972, Tauber claimed there is more to shopping than shopping in a rational and utilitarian way. Utilitarian consumer behavior has traditionally portrayed consumers as rational and goal-oriented (Howard and Sheth 1969). It is related to necessity rather than recreation. Local markets, weekly bazaars, flea market, farmers market solve the purpose of buying day to day needs yet at the same time provide emotional trigger. Abott(1955) felt that “What people really desire are not products, but satisfying experiences.”. Williams 2006; Schmitt 1999, 53 feel that customers are driven by emotions and rationality and concerned with achieving pleasurable experiences. People seek entertainment and stimulation in act of purchasing goods (Kim, Y., Sullivan P., Forney, J., 2007, pg 12). It has been noted in this consumer driven market, satisfying consumer needs has less to do with gratifying wants or desires based upon emotional needs. Like, a farmers market too, stimulates the mind of consumers by providing a sensory experience- a sight of colorful fruits and vegetables and spices, aroma of freshly baked items and cheese, social interaction, a feeling of community. It connects the customer emotionally.

Dholakia (1999) stated three dimensions for shopping motivation that appeal more to the leisure aspect – 1.Interactions with family (social), 2.Utilitarian and; 3. Shopping for Pleasure (Hedonic shopping).These motives clearly show that shopping stimulates hedonic and experiential attributes, in addition to the product/environment attributes provided by Yavas (2001). Bloch et al. (1994) went on to further describe six motives of shoppers i.e. enjoying the aesthetics, escaping from routine and boredom, exploring new stores, engaging in a state of absorption, gaining new information about stores and products, and social interaction and affiliation. Cox, and Anderson (2005) identified several potential sources of shopping pleasure. These sources consisted of mingling with other shoppers, bargain hunting, browsing, sensory stimulation (e.g. store decorations and displays, pleasant smells), being pampered by retail salespeople, and kinesthetic experience (i.e., an opportunity to move about or walk for exercise). Clearly, the shopping motives motivate the customer to visit the retail stores/ mall

and they may have an impact on customer shopping experience. The presence of pleasurable retail attributes and surroundings that excite customers translate into a desire to continue shopping (Wakefield and Baker 1998) and increase the likelihood of cross-shopping and subsequent shopping trips (Shim and Eastlick, 1998).

Pine and Gilmore (1999) suggested that there is a linear progression through which undifferentiated commodities can be transformed to differentiated premium products with staged experiences that are relevant to the customer. For instance cold stone ice-cream is prepared by mixing an array of fresh colorful fruits and ingredients on a cold surface in front of the customers. The generic ice-cream is transformed to serve as a memorable experience for the customers who are attracted to sweet aroma of the ice-cream and view their ice-cream being mixed right in front of their eyes.

Research indicates that modern consumers no longer simply buy products and services, but rather the experience *around* what is being sold (Morrison and Crane 2007). **Zang, 2010** states that in experience economy, customers become an essential part of the companies' offerings and they want to participate (Poullsson and Kale, 2004). Customers perceive by Selecting, organizing and interpreting information in a way to produce a meaningful experience. There are three different perceptual processes which are selective attention, selective distortion and selective retention. In case of selective attention, marketers try to attract the customer attention. Whereas, in case of selective distortion, customers try to interpret the information in a way that will support what the customers already believe. Similarly, in case of selective retention, marketers try to retain information that supports their beliefs.

Floor (2006) states consumers enjoy being inspired by a unique range of *experiential* shopping environments. The experiences include cinemas (Bellenger et al 1977), special events and exhibitions (Frasquest 2001, Haynes & Talpade 1996, Nevin & Houston 1980). *Shoppertainment* unites shopping and entertainment in a single shopping site (**Fife 2004**). This strategy is used by brick-and-mortar stores to compete against online shopping and attract customers. Examples of mall Shoppertainment include puppet shows, music shows, fashion shows, performances by artists. Some retailers (e.g., Starbucks, Apple, Barnes & Noble) attempt to create engaging environments in their stores that encourage shopping. In contrast, other retail chains (e.g., Home Depot) are successful with their minimalist warehouse-style shopping environments (**Levy and Weitz 2004**). The function of store design is critical in creating a connection with the consumer and his experience (**Michael Morrison, 2007**). People are looking for an authentic experience—a shopping street, a real rain-or-shine experience that also involves buying stuff. The bottom line is to cater to the 'shoppertainment' philosophy of the customer i.e., enable him to combine shopping with entertainment (**Sreedhar G V S, 2006**).

Experiential Retailing: Framework

Experiential retailing is defined as a strategy that transforms products and services into a total consumption experience, including aspects that are both utilitarian and hedonic" (**Kim, Sullivan, Forney, 2007, pg 12**). Entertainment retailing is about making an emotional connection with the customer. People are looking for an authentic experience—a shopping street, a real rain-or-shine experience that also involves buying stuff. For example, Open concept malls or markets provide an outdoor shopping experience. The architecture doesn't really matter as much as the landscaping, flowers, paving, streets, places to sit, people spilling out of stores and restaurants.

Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) are believed to be the first ones to introduce the experiential perspective of consumer behavior and marketing. Traditional consumer research has tended to neglect such experiential aspects of behavior, resulting in limited understanding of the importance of hedonic benefits. This intuitively oriented type of behavior is predicted to afford escapism and intrinsic enjoyment.

Sensory consumption is associated with the intangible benefits pertaining to emotional and hedonic aspects of experiences. (**Hirschman and Holbrook 1982**) They identify hedonic consumption as involving product experiences that stimulate consumers' feelings and imaginations. Malls and shopping centres provide the customers with utilitarian needs as well as hedonic experiences.

Schmitt (1999) introduced the concept of experiential marketing, transforming the then-popular features-and-benefits approach into one that focused on sensory responses and emotions. He proposed that five different types of experiences can be created, or distinguished: **sensory experiences (Sense Experience), affective experiences (Feel experience), creative cognitive experiences (Think experience), physical experience- behaviors and lifestyle (Act experience), and social-identity experiences (Relate experience)** that result to relating to a reference group or culture **Schmitt (1999a, 1999b)**. The goal of experiential store design is to use a variety of emotional and cognitive stimuli to create a unique shopping experience for each customer. Customer buying behavior consists of three message strategies: cognitive (mental images, understanding, interpretations), affective (feelings, emotions), and conative (intentions, actions, behavior). Our emotional and cognitive responses are affected by our feelings from seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling (**Augustin, 2009**). The most common sequence that takes place when a buying decision is taken is cognitive → affective → conative" (**Clow, Baack 2007**).

Similarly, according to the researchers, (**Mossberg, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999; Walls, et al., 2011**) experiences trigger a multitude of **emotional, physical, cognitive and spiritual reactions**. In recent years, there has been a strong trend towards big retail brands selling consumers an "experience". This involves inviting the customer to test a

product or service in-store, or to interact with an exclusive, curated environment. Apple and Nike are well-known retailers that have taken a lead in this area, with the rationale that a positive in-store experience can help establish a stronger relationship between the customer and the brand.

In 1982 Holbrook and Hirschmann suggested 3 F's in terms of Consumer experience buying model i.e. Fantasy, Feelings during consumption and Fun. Later in 2002 Holbrook's experiential point of view of the customer has been broadened to 4 E's, which are **experience, entertainment, exhibitionism and evangelizing**. For instance, a customer experiences all of these at one place such as a fair. A customer is excited to shop, eat, entertained by activities and games, live shows, music, and rides at the fair which becomes a memorable and happy experience for the customer and he returns happy.

Pine & Gilmore define experiences through four realms of experience, which add value to the business is seen in the graph below. Pine and Gilmore (1999) termed these realms, the 4Es. The 4Es consist of adding **Educational (Edutainment), Esthetic** (including visual, aural, olfactory, and tactile aspects), **Escapist** (e.g., in retail and events contexts), and **Entertainment** experiences. See (fig1.1).

The four experiences vary based on the customer's active or passive participation and on absorption or immersion in the experience. Active – passive participation entails the level of customer involvement in creation of the experience. The customer typically “absorbs” Entertainment and Educational experiences and “immerses” in Esthetic and Escapist experiences (Jeong, Fiore, Niehm, Hausafus). Thus, it is impossible to escape from creating an experience on every occasion in which a company /brand (e.g., a retailer) interacts with a customer. Such events imply that a customer could have a single experience or a range of experiences as a consequence of these actions (Terblanche, 2009).

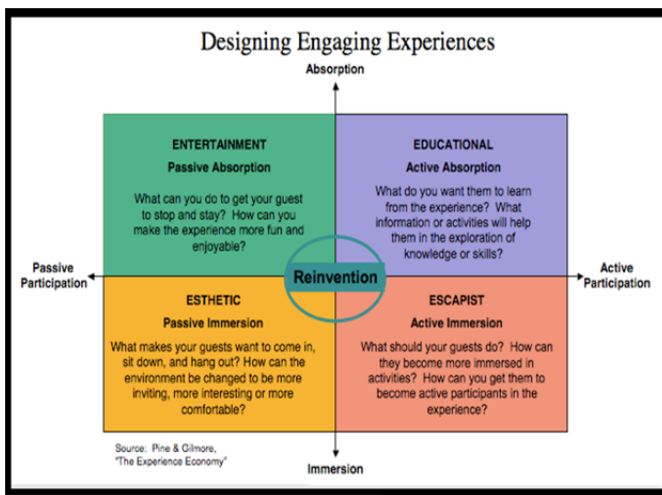


Fig. 1.1: Realms of Experience (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 30)

4E's of Experiential Retailing

i. **Edutainment**

It brings together education and entertainment. Retailers use in a variety of ways. For example, Home Depot offers home improvement classes so customers can learn how to do the home improvements themselves.

The retail stores not just display products for selling but also inform customers about the story of how the product was made- right from the raw-materials used for the product, to the artisan who created it, to the finishes/dyes applied, the inspiration behind the item etc. which emotionally connects to the customer purchasing the product at the retail store such as Fab India.

It is no longer enough for a retailer to provide such conventional enticements as broad merchandise selection, everyday low pricing, extended store hours and liberal return policies to attract customers (Buss 1997). In fact, the shopping experience itself rather than the procuring of products is becoming more important to consumers. Therefore, retailers are educating the customers about the brands, their products through videos, displays, packaging etc.

ii. **Entertainment**

Lunt & Livingstone (1992) described shopping as a ...spectacle in which one is both performer and spectators... it is seeing and being seen, meeting and being met, a way of interacting with others." P.189. Change from product performance to experiences, entertainment causes a shift in focus when markets enter into experiential marketing (Holbrook, 2000). To remain competitive and appeal to consumers in today's experiential retailing market, many retailers have discovered they must include *entertainment* or unique themes in the retail mix (Barbieri, 2005).

People are looking for products and services that evoke fun and reflect their individuality and lifestyles. People seek entertainment and emotional stimulation through the act of purchasing goods (Kim, Sullivan, Forney, 2007, pg 12). Larger complexes are beginning to allocate a much greater proportion of interior real estate to entertainment, food and beverage, which are key elements that enhance the customer's experience. Retailers set the stage for consumer experiences using products, services, and entertainment as supporting props in themed retail dramas. For this purpose, retailers ought to consider building stimulating, pleasing designs, appropriate color schemes, and captivating sound systems and signage into their themed retail dramas. *Thematic retailing* uses elements of *entertainment, education, and the consumers' experience* to attract customers (King 2000). It adds hedonic value to otherwise utilitarian shopping and helps differentiate one retail brand from other. If merchandise is themed, customers save time in selecting products that match or complement other items they are purchasing. Retailers who succeed in creating a differentiated theme connect with consumers who do not mind paying above market prices for the unique experience

(Meyers 2005). For example, Disney stores entertain their little customers by showing cartoons and videos on wall-size screens while their parents shop at the store for items and memorabilia matching the Disney theme and characters consistently. Ann Meyer states that, “Experiential retailing means making connections with consumers who come to interactive stores for more than merchandise. It’s a holistic approach that involves both emotional and rational triggers (Meyer, 2006, p. 1).

iii. Escapism

In order to be successful a retailer must offer an enhanced, truly memorable and distinctive shopping experience to its customers. (Danziger, 2006, 17). In Babin et al.’s (1994) study, respondents expressed a sense of escapism while shopping, often describing the shopping trip as an adventure. This intuitively oriented type of behavior is predicted to afford escapism and intrinsic enjoyment. Experiential shopping serves as a form of recreation for those motivated by the enjoyment of shopping rather than by any utilitarian purpose (Bellenger & Korgaonkar, 1980; Bloch & Richins, 1983; Bloch, Sherrell, & Ridgway, 1986; Rook, 1987). The shopping pleasures help the customer in escaping from his daily monotonous routine and the customer feels in another world or time, often relaxing him when he/ she is bored or stressed out.

Increasingly, success at retail is less about what the retailer has to sell and more about how they sell it. This is the new experiential paradigm shift in shopping. This will become even more critical in the future as success at retail will continue to shift towards how well retailers play to the emotions, psychology and feelings of the shopper. (Danziger, 2006, 17)

iv. Esthetic

Store design

There need to be street performers, fountains, wide sidewalks, cafes, coffee, food, wine. You want people to have lunch, have coffee, meet somebody, and walk no more than two or three blocks. Apart from making the outside appearance attractive, focus is on creating a unique design and aesthetic beauty of the outlet. The store layout, fixtures, lighting, and merchandising all converge to draw the customer’s attention to the products and their benefits, while reinforcing the retailer’s brand identity. Again, retailers channelize their energies to provide a convenient and enjoyable shopping experience. The store display plays an important role in influencing the buying decision of the customers. It is the display of the store which attracts passing individuals into the store. The store must have an attractive display to entice the customers. Shopping may be the last priority for an individual but a creative display encourages him to spend on shopping. As most shoppers enjoy the idea of ‘seeing-touching-feeling’ and then buying the product, the layout and design of the outlet should enable them to move around and enjoy the shopping experience (Gopal VV, 2006). Bezawada et al.

(2009) prove that by appropriately placing different categories in different aisles, retailers can improve overall sales.

Sensory experiences

Retailers are finding new ways to offer customers something unique or special in order to encourage traffic to physical stores. People like to touch, feel, smell, taste, inspect, test and try on. Merchandise that is kept in boxes or behind glass restricts such interaction. Furthermore, a retail experience that appeals to the senses differentiates the shop floor from the online platform.

Store Atmospherics refer to the general surrounding as created through the use of retail design features including tangible elements such as floor, wall, and ceiling surfaces (i.e., materials, colors, textures); lighting; fixtures and mannequins; product trial areas; customer seating areas; point of purchase and window displays; as well as intangible elements such as music temperature, and scent (Hyllegard, Paff Ogle, and Dunbar, 2006, p. 319).

McCole (2004) referred sense experience as the experience that customers gain from their sight, taste, scent, touch and sound which together create experiential Retailing. Consumers are looking for experiences that stimulate, elicit psychological excitement, and produce sensory pleasure. When the senses are stimulated, each sound, taste, smell, touch, and image sends sensory information to our brain, where the sources and causes of stimulation are processed and perceived (Augustin, 2009). These environments cause the senses to become stimulated and lead to purchases (Allen, 2000). Goldstein (1996) describes the process of perception as an interaction between the information stimulating the receptors and information from our past experiences that already exists.

Retailers can use music as an effective tool to extend brands, create a pleasant shopping experience and extend the length of time that customers shop in the store. (Korolishin 2004). Retailers can create events around music to generate excitement and can pull in customer. Consumers tend to shop quickly with louder and faster music and they tend to browse with calmer music (Bainbridge 1998). Shoppers who experienced slow music and high density or fast music or low density had the highest hedonic (i.e. pleasurable) and utilitarian (i.e. functional) evaluations of the retail environment.

Odors can create moods, influence the transference of hedonic states and become part of long term memory. (Ellen and Bone 1998). Scent can produce a powerful and evocative memory, which provides retailers the opportunity to develop a strong consumer-retailer bond. When the consumer is outside the store, the scent can make the consumer recall the retailer (Ward et al. 2003). The retail stores spray scents on the entrances and apparels to attract customers to their stores like Abercrombie & Fitch.

Listening to live music or watching craftsmen at work making clothes, chocolates or artisan breads can be an enjoyable,

stimulating experience, and one that the consumer cannot fully experience over the web. This is an important differentiator for retail outlets, especially when targeting younger consumers who typically spend a substantial amount of time online. For example, brands like Lego give kids a chance to have a multi-sensory experience in stores – something that children cannot enjoy online.

Lighting, color, music, ambient noise, odor, temperature, touch and crowding are all environmental stimuli that can meet the shoppers' psychological needs that include sensory stimulation, social interaction, security, and comfort (Ng 2003). Sensory cues create emotional reactions by stimulating consumers' feelings during interactions with goods, services and environment in which they are experienced. Store environments are important in creating pleasant consumer emotional reactions and attracting and retaining customers.

Shoppers respond favorably to well-designed innovations in store atmospherics and design (Baker et al. 2002). When the shopping experience appeals to multiple senses, there is a synergy of sensory feelings that can be leveraged to increase consumption (In – store Magazine 2005)

Experience has shown that customers will react positively to subtle changes in store environment, so retailers should use as many of the store design tools at their disposal as possible (Taverner, 2007). Retailers and retail developers are banking on the fact that given a more three-dimensional shopping experience replete with sights, colors, sounds, textures and movement, consumers will stay longer, shop more, and leave with lasting memories (Gester David, 2007).

2. CONCLUSION

Stores are no longer being seen as transactional places alone. In the future, e-commerce will take an even bigger share of total retail sales, and the physical shop will become an experience-based destination that engages customers on a physical and emotional level. No amount of advertising, marketing promotion, in-store advertising or window display can impact the customers, the need often drives them to the stores to shop, set them on a mission and moves them to action but there is not a thing that marketers or retailers can do about building a need. On the other hand **they can create desire, which is purely emotional response. (Danziger, 2006, 21).** Therefore, need whether utilitarian or hedonic carries them to the store but emotions make them stay and shop.

The emergence of experience economy is not accidental but rather an inevitable trend (Zhang,

2010). According to Knutson and Beck (2004), there are three converging factors in experience economy: technology, more demanding consumers, and increasing competition customers are looking for memorable experiences (Hudson, 2010).

Some study the effects of social, design and atmospherics aspects on shopping behavior (Wakefield and Baker 1998), and the effect other elements have on shopping behavior (Donovan et al., 1994). Turley & Milliman, 2000 identifies the other atmospheric variables that can affect shopping behavior, as external variables (e.g. exterior signs), general interior variables (e.g. lightning), layout and design variables (e.g. space allocation), POP and decoration variables (e.g. displays), and human variables.

Naylor et al. 2008 studied the impact of scents, music, tactile input and color and store atmospherics on customer's affective responses to a retailer.

Consumers use sensory cues as guides in consumption (Underhill 1999). The affects of store atmosphere on store image and/or purchase behavior were documented by Hu and Jasper (2006), Ann Schlosser (1998), Hyllegard, Paff Ogle, and Dunbar (2006) as well as Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, and Voss (2002). In the context of shopping, sensory cues are essential because “virtually all unplanned purchases – and many planned ones, too- touching, smelling, or tasting something that promises pleasure, if not total fulfillment”(Underhill 1999, 16). It has been well established that the amount of time a customer spends in the store depends on how comfortable they are in the store. The longer the retailer can keep a customer in their store, the more the customer will buy. Hence, the three-dimensional design of the retail environment plays a significant role in the retailers' success (Underhill. P, 1999). Retailers can generate positive returns by creating an exciting and stimulating shopping environment (Kaltcheva and Weitz 2006).

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