

Chapter 6

The In–Store Shopping Experience: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a systematic literature review on the in-store shopping experience, as presented in retail management studies, to reveal potential gaps in the existing literature and suggest directions for future research. This is a conceptual paper with an analytical approach that draws heavily on theoretical evidence published in the retail management literature. A total of 90 journal articles published between 1992 and 2019 were analysed in a five-step process: obtaining a basic understanding, coding, categorisation, comparison, and further analysis. More precisely, the chapter depicts the period of publication of the articles, the journals in which they were published, the origin of the authors, the research methods, definitions, and the measurement of the in-store shopping experience. Finally, main research gaps and directions for future research are proposed. Scholars can use this paper as a reference point to identify specific research areas that can be theoretically and empirically investigated to further advance knowledge on this topic.

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INTRODUCTION

Customers can usually shop to find a desired or preferred product or service, namely hunting shopping (Bäckström, 2011). However, shopping is not a simple acquisition task (Brunetti and Bonfanti, 2015; Foster and McLelland, 2015). More and more frequently, customers expect a multisensory, interactive, and holistic shopping experience that entertains, stimulate, emotionally affects and creatively challenge them (Schmitt, 1999a,b; Foster and McLelland, 2015). Accordingly, many retailers are incorporating the creation of a unique shopping experience in their offerings to customers (e.g., Sachdeva and Goel, 2015) in order to differentiate themselves from competitors and to improve their competitive advantage (e.g., Arnold et al., 2005; Terblanche and Boshoff, 2006a,b; Bagdare and Jain, 2013; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). In literature, the three following experiential types of shopping have been identified (Gilboa and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2013): a) seductive shopping, when customers are moved by impulse-buying and pursue pleasant emotions, b) interactive museum, when they explore and acquire new knowledge in the store, and c) social shopping, when they enjoy shared experiences with friends and family (Bäckström, 2011).

In order to create unique shopping experiences, retailers design retail environments that will create memorable customer experiences (Petermans et al., 2013) by, for example, adding elements of entertainment and interactivity to their store environments (Foster and McLelland, 2015). In order to move in this direction, retailers try to create experiential shopping by establishing stores with a strong cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, physical, sensory and emotional impact (Verhoef et al., 2009). The customer's in-store shopping experience is created by their interactions with all the elements of the store (Castaldo and Botti, 1999; Bäckström and Johansson, 2006). As a result, retailers act at three levels of their sales environment (Baker, 1986): a) environmental factors, which are based on the consumers' senses (sight, sound, smell and touch); b) design elements, which include functional and aesthetic aspects such as the layout, design and furnishings of the store; and c) social characteristics. Numerous studies underline the importance of creating conditions to ensure that customers experience in-store fun (Jones, 1999), socialising (Borges et al., 2010), feelings of evasion (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003), immersion and absorption (Wang and Hsiao, 2012), the acquisition of new knowledge linked to the shopping process (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003), as well as interaction and involvement (Russo Spena et al., 2012).

The in-store shopping experience is a topic that has been widely debated in the retail management literature. The first studies conducted on this topic date back to the experiential dimension of customer behaviour (Holbrook and Hirschmann, 1982), experiential marketing (O'Sullivan and Spangler, 1998; Schmitt, 1999a,b; 2003) and the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Gilmore and Pine, 2002). However, the development of online shopping and immersive technology highlight how 'a new change in the experiential paradigm' is underway (Sachdeva and Goel, 2015, p. 292). A number of touchpoints can stimulate customers' senses (Jones et al., 2010), changing the way we understand the in-store shopping experience. Accordingly, more detailed knowledge of this topic is needed (Bagdare, 2013; Petermans et al., 2013; Spence et al., 2014; Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016).

This chapter aims to analyse the concept of the in-store shopping experience in the retail management literature by conducting a systematic literature review, given that a review of previous studies is important for any academic research project and serves to create a solid basis for advancing knowledge, facilitating the development of a relevant theory, resizing the areas where there is an overabundance of research and uncovering areas where further studies are needed (Webster and Watson, 2002). To the best of our knowledge, only one recent study has provided a literature review on this topic. More specifically, scholars have focused on the consumption experience in retail environments by examining the anteced-

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