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Emotional, Sensory, and Social Dimensions of Consumer Buying Behavior

Ana Maria Soares and Maher Georges Elmashhara

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Detailed Table of Contents

Cheap prices are the central positioning criterion of discount stores and the key variable explaining the intention to shop in discounters. Accordingly, discounters design their stores to maximize their efficiency. However, price may explain only a part of customer satisfaction. The purpose of this study is to delve into the environmental factors affecting discount retail store satisfaction. A conceptual model is empirically tested on the influence of discount store environmental attributes of customer satisfaction. Data are analyzed through partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) on a sample of 381 customers. Findings show that factors, different from low prices, influence satisfaction with discount stores. Despite customers seek for low prices, the store personnel positively influences customer satisfaction, followed by a convenient product assortment and an attractive product layout and a convenient store location. Discount store managers may use the store personnel as a way to differentiate from other retail competitors in a cost-service tradeoff.

Using eye tracking, this chapter investigates if the visual attention varies according to the in-store displays message content (price, sensory, and price-sensory). Results show that participants are more responsive to cognitive content messages (price) than affective messages (sensory) alone. Nevertheless, it is demonstrated that participants are prone to devote more time processing in-store displays messages if prices (cognitive stimuli) are combined with sensory messages (affective stimuli), which increases the likelihood of choosing low involvement products. Finally, it was demonstrated that total fixation duration is predictive of low involvement product choice for all home décor products. This study suggests that shoppers might spend more time and effort searching for low involvement products if in-store displays captivate their visual attention and elicit their sensory imagery. Sensory messages can be used by retailers to highlight product intrinsic characteristics. At the same time, they are inducing positive feelings towards low-involvement products.

The chapter contributes to recent debate on retailing and sustainability, addressing the role of atmospherics in affecting consumer perceptions. First, after reviewing the relevant literature about sustainable retailing, this research addresses some practices oriented towards sustainability that can be implemented by a retailer, and how they can be communicated to consumers. Then, using an experimental design, the authors test the impact of sustainability-oriented visual atmospherics on consumer perceptions and intentions. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of past and current sustainability research in retailing, with a particular emphasis on store atmospherics. Future research should try to integrate the findings by investigating other sensory stimuli, such as tactile or auditory ones.

Previous literature has examined the significance of emotional consumer experiences increasingly pursued by consumers. However, the current knowledge of emotional responses in real-time and real-world consumption settings is still limited. Emotions have previously been measured with observation, self-report, and physiological methods. Digitalization and technological development have, however, advanced these methods as individuals now engage in various self-tracking practices. The chapter introduces emotion tracking as an additional means for measuring emotions. One application, the Emotion Tracker®, was tested by students (n=19) who tracked their emotions (n=617) related to various consumer experiences and reported their user experiences in research diaries. Emotion tracking facilitated real-time and real-world emotion measurement by partly combining the strengths and diminishing the weaknesses of traditional methods. The future of emotion measurement is likely to lie in the combination of subjective and objective self-tracking practices embedded in individuals' everyday lives.

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of experiential marketing on experiential values of young customers and respectively on their satisfaction and word of mouth, intention to pay more and revisit. Primary data were gathered through questionnaires conducted with 489 respondents to examine young customers' experiences in well-known grocery retails in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Structural equation modelling using partial least square (PLS) method results were adequate in terms of reliability and validity. Empirical results revealed that some of strategic experiential modules and service quality perceptions of young customers have positive influences on customer experiences (functional and emotional). This research contributes to shed light on the role of shopping experiences of young retail consumers on experiential values, customer satisfaction, and post-purchase attitudes. It is anticipated that by filling this knowledge gap, strengthening retail-shopping strategies, which require an adjustment in the current business environment, can be developed.

two experimental studies that, when a description of the tactile characteristics of the product is provided, the information given by the users of a web-community increases consumer's willingness to buy the product.

Section 3
Other Experiences

Certain industries have developed segments in which both consumers and businesses have attitudes, expectations, and behaviors that differ significantly from those of the industries they are part of. Some of these new dynamics include a heightened interest in quality and the concomitant development of entities and mechanisms designed to ensure certain standards, as well as an increased level of involvement of the consumer with the product. Consumers who show the various characteristics mentioned above are part of what may be considered sophisticated segments of the market. This chapter analyses the relevance of perception of quality, the importance of educating consumers, and the changes in levels of consumer engagement in these segments. The chapter also suggests theoretical and practical implications regarding marketing strategies, as well as some gaps of knowledge that further research might address.

Using a mixed-method approach, the author documents processes of decline in food retail on the spatial meso-scale of a northern German federal state and investigates the attitudes and patterns of demand of households dealing with the loss of local retail. Cluster and discriminant analysis are used to identify five relevant sub-groups, all of which are characterised by an ongoing discourse concerning the local retail structures. The five sub-groups define their (dis)interest in local retail using very different spatial, temporal, and substantial criteria. These criteria are drawn upon by local retailers to develop strength and weakness profiles and identify learning potential in an attempt to use innovative forms of niche marketing to better attract non-users or minimal users. Expert interviews with village shopkeepers and local producers of fresh goods indicate which solutions are being implemented to secure the commercial success of rural local retail in the long term and to distinguish such retail from the offerings of ubiquitous chains of supermarkets and discounters.

The main objective of this chapter is to focus on the emotional experience in luxury contexts in emerging economies. Consumer research literature currently lacks studies of consumer emotions in emerging economies, except for some relevant studies of emerging consumption in China. This chapter reports a systematic literature review of luxury and consumer emotions aiming at mapping the main trends of research on this topic. The results show that the predominant type of methodology in these studies is mainly quantitative versus qualitative and mixed. The studies consider various antecedents of emotions, environmental stimuli, such as familiarity with the brand, the physical aspect of the product, among others, and non-environmental stimuli such as quality of service, product quality, among others. The contexts of studies of consumer emotions are presented. Finally, the authors also identify the studies undertaken in emerging economies.

The concept of cause-related marketing (CRM) has been in vogue since the past few decades and involves marketing activities carried out with the purpose ‘to be successful in addressing worthwhile social causes’, through collaboration with charitable organizations that help to increase profitability along with bettering the society, in mutually beneficial ways. This implies a social dimension in this cause-related buying. While this is a good social initiative with many factors that influence consumer choice and purchase of cause-related products, there are also many challenges such as consumer skepticism, etc., which mar CRM’s success and effectiveness. Through review of extant literature, this study purposes to examine factors and variables influencing CRM and the challenges impeding its effectiveness and suggests ways to overcome these. Furthermore, to gauge an understanding on its practical application, two case studies on CRM campaigns conducted in two different (developing and developed) markets are also discussed.

Preface

A LOOK AT THE CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

Consumer shopping habits and the retail landscape are undergoing unprecedented changes that pose major challenges and opportunities for retailers. In order to meet the changing nature of shopping, both offline and online retailers need to consider the multidimensional nature of shopping in order to design and provide engaging consumer experiences.

In this context, understanding the determinants of both offline and online shopping behavior is key. For in-store shopping, retailers need to attract and encourage traffic to physical stores, get consumers to spend more time, make purchases and share a positive word of mouth about their brick and mortar shopping encounters. Hence, there is a need to comprehend how environmental and sensory dimensions, leisure and entertainment, and social interaction influence shopper emotions and positively enhance the shopping experience. It is also crucial to consider the role of emerging technologies in allowing retailers to engage consumers in new and exciting ways and changing the future of in-store shopping. On the other hand, for e-commerce, we need to understand how to enrich consumers' shopping experiences online. This calls for improvements in the quality of website design and navigation, providing interactive features in order to mimic, to some extent, the personalized, social and emotionally-driven retail offline encounters. In addition, the increasing popularity of social media online is revolutionizing not only interpersonal communications but also e-commerce, leading to the emergence and growing importance of social commerce. Thus, understanding how the consumer decision process, from the need recognition to the post-purchase evaluation, will be impacted by the specificities, features, and components of social media.

This project was motivated by these challenges. We envisioned a book that would bring together state of the art contributions about the importance of the emotional, sensorial and social dimensions of consumer buying behavior and discuss shopping experience against the backdrop of emerging technological developments in in-store and online settings in the highly competitive, fast-changing, and challenging retail sector. Our call for chapters was met with a substantial number of contributions addressing different facets of the buying experience. We received a number of exciting contributions from a diverse range of research contexts (both emerging and developed markets), referring to different types of products and retail sectors (from retail discounters to luxury products), set in online and in-store buying behavior and challenges. The selected chapters reflect the diverse geographic origin of our contributors and provide a fairly global perspective of retail challenges and developments.

This book is now ready and we are proud of this project that brings together a number of empirical and conceptual chapters; best practices and case studies; theories and insights in retailing, e-commerce and consumer behavior. The included chapters cover a variety of topics related to shopping experiences' influences such as atmospherics, emotions and social interaction; how to enhance the shopping experience in an era of competition among shopping offline- and online-destinations and new technologies and methods in retailing.

We have grouped these chapters under three main sections: in-store experience, online experience, and other experiences to encompass some related topics, specifically about changes in consumer dynamics and behaviors, namely product engagement and segmentation in specific product, challenges that face rural local retailers and how to help them overcome them, consumer emotions research in luxury in emerging economies and cause-related marketing review and practice.

SECTION 1: IN-STORE EXPERIENCE

Enhancing the shopping experience is critical for retailers, and constitutes a fertile ground for research. Retailers try to improve consumer surrounding space as a tool to enhance shopping trips. Improving the quality of the shopping atmosphere has a high effect on consumer emotions and several shopping outcomes and behavioral responses. In this section, a number of contributions focusing on in-store experiences and the role of in-store atmospherics and displays are included.

In Chapter 1, "Ambient Encounters in Retail 'Discounters': How Store Environment Drives Customer Satisfaction", Cristina Calvo-Porral discusses how price explains only a part of customer satisfaction at the level of discount stores and investigates how the environmental factors would also produce higher levels of satisfaction. An empirical study with data collected from 381 customers and analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is reported. Other from cheap prices, the results reveal the significant effect of several other environmental factors, specifically store personnel, convenient product assortment and attractive product layout, and convenient store location.

Chapter 2, "An Eye Tracking Study of the Effect of Sensory and Price In-Store Displays", written by Clarinda Rodrigues, Amélia Maria Pinto da Cunha Brandão, António Filipe Teixeira Macedo, and Karthikeyan Baskaran, discusses the impact in visual attention of different in-store displays message content, and how this influences the choice of low-involvement products. The experiment carried out with home décor products indicates that higher likelihood of choosing low involvement products occurs when prices are combined with sensory messages. This is a very interesting result as it suggests that if in-store displays captivate shoppers' attention, they may spend more time and effort searching for products.

Chapter 3, "The Sensory Dimension of Sustainable Retailing: Analysing In-Store Green Atmospherics", written by Diletta Acuti, Virginia Vannucci, and Gabriele Pizzi, provides a comprehensive review of sustainability research in retailing, then tests how sustainability-oriented visual atmospherics influence consumer perceptions and patronage intention. A survey with a sample size of 138 respondents was carried out, and results show that green atmospherics impact positively consumers' green perceived value, and contribute to positive store attitude and patronage intention. These findings suggest relevant managerial practices that can be used by retailers to convey perceptions of store sustainability through atmospherics.

In Chapter 4, "Emotion Tracking: Possibilities for Measuring Emotional Consumer Experiences", Juulia Räikkönen and Miia Grénman discuss the limitations of the current knowledge about consumer emotions, and how most previous studies used observation, self-report, and physiological methods in measuring the emotional states of shoppers. After that, the authors argue how self-tracking technologies could enhance these methods. Based on that, the application "Emotion Tracker®" was tested by 19 students who reported 617 emotions during several shopping experiences. The results of the empirical study are discussed and demonstrate how such an application, comparing to traditional methods, facilitates consumers' emotion measurement in real-time and real-world.

Chapter 5, "Experiential Marketing: Understanding the Nature of Experiences in Emerging Markets' Grocery Retailing" written by Ali Ihtiyar and Osman Nuri Aras, aims to investigate the effect of experiential marketing on experiential values of young customers and their satisfaction, word of mouth, intention to pay more and revisit. Data was collected from 489 respondents using a questionnaire and analyzed using the partial least square (PLS) method. Results shed light on some strategic experiential modules and service quality perceptions as antecedents that positively affect functional and emotional customer experiences.

At the end of this section, Chapter 6, "Future Research Directions in Sensory Marketing", written by Maher Georges Elmashhara and Nada Elbishbishy, reviews previous literature related to sensory marketing. The effect of visual, sound and olfactory atmospherics on consumer behavior is discussed, and several directions for future research avenues are offered. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the importance of enhancing the shopping environment in order to enrich the customer experience.

SECTION 2: ONLINE EXPERIENCE

The drivers of consumers' purchase behavior on the internet have been an object of extensive research, still, it has been argued that the detached and computer-mediated characteristics of the internet fall short in replicating the richness of in-store buying experiences. Practitioners and researchers have been looking at ways to mimic the social, emotional and sensorial nature on in-store purchases. In this section, different contributions pertaining to online shopping experiences are presented.

Chapter 7, "Can Virtual Customer Service Agents Improve Consumers' Online Experiences? The Role of Hedonic Dimensions", written by Ana Maria Soares, José Carlos Pinho, Teresa Heath, and António Alves, discusses the impact of perceived visual attractiveness, perceived enjoyment and sociability on trust, satisfaction, and website loyalty. The results of a survey with 132 airline users indicate the need to enhance consumers' online visits and make them social, aesthetic and enjoyable experiences.

At online level as well, Chapter 8, "Did You Read the Customer Reviews before Shopping? The Effect of Online Customer Reviews About Online Retail Platforms on Consumer Behavioral Responses", written by Ayşegül Sağkaya Güngör and Çiğdem Tütüncü Özgen, experiments how online customer reviews influence emotional attachment, trust, and repurchase intention. The results indicate that both positive and negative reviews impact on emotional attachment, while only positive reviews influence trust. Moreover, this chapter shows that online reviews have a higher effect on strongly attached consumers' purchase intention, while that effect is weaker when considering weakly attached consumers.

Chapter 9, "The Role of Social Commerce Components on the Consumer Decision-Making Process", written by Saleh Mohammed Kutabish and Ana Maria Soares, discusses how consumers interact by sharing their experiences and learning from others' experiences, and investigate how this interaction process influences consumer decision-making. Social commerce is shifting how consumers gather information, evaluate, buy and evaluate their purchases.

Chapter 10, "Tactile Sensations in E-Retailing: The Role of Web-Communities", written by Carmela Donato and Maria Antonietta Raimondo, discusses also digital market environments. Using two experiments about the level of online sources of information, this chapter explains how the description of a product's tactile characteristics impacts on willingness to buy. Results indicate higher levels of willingness to buy when a description of the tactile characteristics of the product is provided.

SECTION 3: OTHER EXPERIENCES

In this section, we include contribution focusing on other realms of consumer behavior, including segmentation, cases of luxury in emerging markets and cause-related marketing.

In the first chapter of this section, Chapter 11, “Sophisticated Segments of the Market: Changes in Consumer Dynamics and Behaviors”, Sidney Ornelas and Jorge Vera-Martínez analyze the relevance of perception of quality, the importance of educating consumers and the changes in levels of consumer engagement in what may be considered sophisticated segments of the market. This chapter concludes with discussing theoretical and practical implications regarding marketing strategies and indicates some gaps to be studied in future research.

Chapter 12, “Food Retail in the Rural Periphery Using the Example of Germany: Identifying Success Factors”, written by Ulrich Juergens, uses a mixed-method approach to shed light on the decline in food retail formats on the spatial meso-scale of a northern German federal state and researches the attitudes and patterns of demand of households dealing with the decline of local retail. The empirical study on village shopkeepers and local producers results several implications on how to help rural local retailers to differentiate their offerings from big retail companies and achieve success in the long term.

In the vein of consumer emotions, and at the level of emerging economies, Chapter 13, “Consumer Emotions Research in Luxury Contexts in Emerging Economies”, written by Cláudio Félix Canguende-Valentim and Vera Teixeira Vale, discusses the luxury contexts’ emotional experience. Basically, this chapter reviews various background emotions, such as environmental and non-environmental stimuli, and the results indicate how quantitative methods dominate research in this context. Moreover, this chapter, also, reviews research conducted at the emerging economies’ level.

Finally, in Chapter 14, “Cause-Related Marketing and Consumer Buying Behavior: Opportunities and Challenges”, Suja Ravindran Nair reviews the literature about marketing activities aiming at contributing to the society at large. The chapter sets to determine the factors that negatively influence and challenge the implementation of effective cause-related marketing. For that, two case studies from two different campaigns are presented to illustrate the implementation of cause-related marketing. The author argues that marketing strategies supporting social causes meet the expectations and psychology of societal-oriented contemporary customers and fosters the purchase of cause-related products.

These contributions highlight the multidimensional nature of the shopping experience and consumer behavior. Regardless of the shopping venue or platform where shopping, or any of the stages of the decision-making process, take place, eliciting emotions to engage consumers and enhance the shopping experience is crucial. Understanding the Emotional, Sensory, and Social Dimensions of Consumer Buying Behavior remains a fertile field of research. We hope that the contributions compiled in this book add some value to this purpose.

Finally, we would like to thank all the authors that contributed to this project and wish all a stimulating reading!

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Section 1

In–Store Experience

Chapter 1
Ambient Encounters in Retail "Discounters":
How Store Environment Drives Customer Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Cheap prices are the central positioning criterion of discount stores and the key variable explaining the intention to shop in discounters. Accordingly, discounters design their stores to maximize their efficiency. However, price may explain only a part of customer satisfaction. The purpose of this study is to delve into the environmental factors affecting discount retail store satisfaction. A conceptual model is empirically tested on the influence of discount store environmental attributes of customer satisfaction. Data are analyzed through partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) on a sample of 381 customers. Findings show that factors, different from low prices, influence satisfaction with discount stores. Despite customers seek for low prices, the store personnel positively influences customer satisfaction, followed by a convenient product assortment and an attractive product layout and a convenient store location. Discount store managers may use the store personnel as a way to differentiate from other retail competitors in a cost-service tradeoff.

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INTRODUCTION

In a context of overabundance of retail choices, discount stores have emerged as an important type of retailer and nowadays could be considered the prevailing retail format. For this reason, the understanding of the discounter phenomenon is quite important and marketing researchers have mostly examined the success of retail discounters from a strategic and positioning perspective (Morschett et al., 2006), but only few of them focus on the motivations for shopping at discounters (Schmitz, 2009). Further, academics and practitioners have traditionally characterized discount store customers as individuals who seek low-cost products, since the core of the discount retail format selling proposition are cheap prices. In fact, price image of discounters is the key variable explaining the intention to shop in discounters, and an increased number of consumers have come to patronized discounters to save on their grocery budget. However, one question that remains unanswered is whether low prices explain only a part of customer satisfaction with these retailers.

Retailers acknowledge the importance of store environment as a tool for consumer satisfaction and for market differentiation; and for this reason, retailers design store environment in a manner that will enhance customers' pleasant feelings, assuming that it will lead to a higher willingness to purchase and to longer stays inside the store (Mano, 1999). More precisely, customers may experience store shopping as favorable or unfavorable -or even delightful or terrible-, depending on both the enduring aspects of the store environment such as store ambience or design, and more transient aspects like merchandise layout and interactions with the store personnel (Esbjerg et al., 2012). However little is known about the environmental cues that influence customers' satisfaction with discount stores.

In this context, the present research examines the influence of the environmental attributes of discount stores on customer satisfaction. More precisely, the objective of this study is to analyze the influence of the external and internal store environment, merchandise layout and assortment and store personnel on customers' satisfaction, in order to answer the following question: "*Does price explain only a part of customer satisfaction with discounters?*". Further, in the present study it is hypothesized that customers expect benefits from the discount shopping experience beyond the strictly utilitarian benefit of low prices. Therefore, the major contribution of the present research is the empirical research on the influence of the discount store environmental attributes on customer satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Discounters: A Focus on Low Prices

Discounters expanded in terms of market coverage during the 70s and the 80s and nowadays hold a considerable market share in many European countries, due to their rapid evolution with the opening of superstores that combined food items and soft-goods that easily eclipsed supermarkets and department stores (Gable et al., 2008), due to their price-aggressive strategies (Zielke, 2010). A discount store is a retailer that offers a limited assortment of products with limited service at very low prices (Levy & Weitz, 2009); and for this reason they are also called "*limited assortment supermarkets*". Usually, discount stores offer products with a high inventory turnover and only a small number brands are available for the product categories. Regarding their size, discounters are not larger than 1,500 square meters. Examples of discount stores are Aldi, Dia or Lidl in the EU; and Target, Wal-Mart and Kmart in the US (Levy & Weitz, 2009).

Discounters are primarily recognized for selling low-cost goods to consumers driven by the desire to pay low prices (Moore & Carpenter, 2008) and price-conscious customers are the traditional target group of discount stores (Zielke, 2014). Further, discounters offer lower prices than other retail formats, since prior research supports that some discount stores offer prices which are 40 to 50 percent lower compared to most supermarket stores (Zielke, 2014). More precisely, discount stores are "*Every-Day Low Price*" (EDLP) stores, meaning that they tend to set constantly lower everyday prices with no or very infrequent temporary price promotions; as opposed to "High–Low Pricing" (HILO) which means frequent temporary price promotions in order to stimulate short-term demand for their products (Schmitz, 2009). So, it can be stated that discounters offer continuously low prices and many products are cheaper than in other retail formats (Zielke, 2010). Prior research reports that consumers rate the low price as the most important discount store characteristic, followed by continuity of supply, variety of merchandise categories and convenient location. Conversely, consumers consider the personal service as the least important variable when shopping at discounters (Gable et al., 2008).

The S-O-R Model

The present research is based on the stimuli-organism-response (S-O-R) framework to explain how store environmental cues influence consumers' responses and behavior in the retail setting.

The S-O-R model is the seminal work of Mehrabian and Russell (1974) who proposed that the sensory variables in the environment and the individual emotional experience influence the responses to the environment. More precisely, the S-O-R model assumes that the environment contains stimuli (S) that cause changes to the individual's internal states (O); that in turn, cause avoidance or approach responses (R) to a specific environment (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In addition, this theoretical model claims that three dimensions underlay any affective responses to any environment: pleasantness, arousal and dominance (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). The pleasantness/unpleasantness dimension relates to the degree that individuals feel happy, pleased or content; the high arousal/low arousal dimension distinguishes between feelings of stimulated, excited or aroused and relaxed, bored or sleepy; and the dominance/submissiveness relates to the extent by which a person feels in control or submissive, passive and lacking of control. Prior studies have found that the pleasantness and arousal dimensions describe well the affective space evoked by environments, while dominance was not found to have a significant effect (Russell et al., 1981).

This theoretical framework has been widely applied to Marketing research in order to examine the impact of internal store environment on shopping and consumption behavior. Therefore, the S-O-R model has been applied to a number of store atmospheric studies (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Baker et al. 1992; Wirtz et al. 2000), reporting that the stimuli of the store atmospheric cues affect the internal state of customers (Vieira, 2013). More precisely, when the S-O-R model is applied in the retail context, stimuli (S) are the store environmental cues that affect the internal states (O) of the customer, which then have an effect on avoidance-approach response behavior (R). Finally, response (R) is associated with behavioral reactions of customers such as satisfaction, patronage intention, number of products purchased, and amount of money spent in the store. Therefore, this environmental theory suggests that retailers could manage and manipulate store stimuli to create different emotional responses (Vieira, 2013).

Donovan and Rossiter (1982) were the first authors that explained the emotional reactions that occur from exposure to the stimuli of a retail environment based on this theoretical framework. More precisely, these authors adopted the S-O-R framework to find that customers' in-store emotions influence the likelihood of future store patronage through the customers' psychological responses. Further, Donovan and Rossiter (1982) state that the desire to enter or to leave a particular environment includes three relevant aspects: the desire to explore the environment, the desire to communicate or interact with others in the environment and satisfaction with the surroundings. Accordingly, those consumers who find an environment pleasant will want to explore it and interact with other consumers in the atmosphere, reporting greater satisfaction (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). The effect of store atmosphere on customer behavior has been demonstrated by several researchers who indicate that the physical and service environment play a key role in creating a retailer's image and generating customers' behavioral responses (Bitner, 1992).

In the present study, the focus is only on the approach tendency towards the store retail setting. So, based on this theoretical framework, it can be proposed that customers' satisfaction is positively related to the environment variables of discounters.

Discounters' Environment and Customer Satisfaction

The term store atmospherics or store environment describes the effort to design environments in order to produce specific emotional effects in the customer that enhance his/her purchase probability (Kotler, 1974). Accordingly, previous research provides different classifications of store environment. In this context, Baker (1987) classified retail environmental components into social, design, and ambient factors. Social factors refer to employees and other customers within the store. In addition, design factors refer to the visual elements of the store that exist at the forefront of customers' awareness such as architecture, colors, materials, and accessories. Finally, the ambient dimension of the store refers to the non-visual elements of the space, such as temperature, music and lighting. Later, authors like Lam (2003) classified store environmental factors into internal and external elements, being some of the internal environment attributes the store lighting, music, merchandise layout and store signposting. Finally, authors such as Kumar and Kim (2014) highlight as attributes of the internal stimuli of a retail store setting the number of employees present, ambience music, color scheme of the store, temperature within the store and the layout of the store.

On the other hand, satisfaction has been identified as one of the key outcomes of the shopping experience; thus, being a research focus among marketers. Some authors have conceptualized satisfaction as a post-consumption evaluation or result of service quality (Anderson et al., 1994). Oliver (1980) in his seminal proposal of the disconfirmation paradigm states that satisfaction occurs through a matching of expectations that the consumer elaborates when evaluating a store. In line with Oliver's proposal, authors such as Bloemer and De Ruyter (1998) highlight that satisfaction could be considered as the outcome of a subjective evaluation that a chosen product or service meets or exceeds customer expectations. Finally, authors such as Correia-Loureiro et al. (2014) report that satisfaction has traditionally been analyzed from either a transactional or a cumulative perspective: the transactional perspective means that customers evaluate a given consumption situation or service encounter; while, the satisfaction refers to the overall evaluation of the purchase and consumption experiences over time.

Prior research also reports the main factors influencing customer satisfaction with retailers which include the product assortment (Hoch et al., 1999; Semeijn et al., 2004; Pan & Zinkhan, 2006; Nesset et al., 2011), the store service (Semeijn et al., 2004; Nesset et al., 2011), the store environment or atmosphere (Grewal et al., 2003; Pan & Zinkhan, 2006) and the products' price (Lichtenstein et al., 1990; Biswass et al., 2002). More precisely, and regarding discount stores, low prices, convenience and product assortment could be considered as the most important factors influencing customer satisfaction (Wagner & Rudolph, 2010).

Research Hypotheses Development

External Environment

The exterior is the first set of cues consumers see at the retail outlet, and for this reason, when external stimuli are poorly managed, the rest of the store atmosphere may not matter (Turley & Milliman, 2000; Eroglu & Machleit, 2008). Prior research on retail emphasizes location as the most important factor in attracting customers (Nevin & Houston, 1980; Craig et al., 1984). Accordingly, most of the large chain discount stores located in prime retail locations, offering consumers convenience in terms of physical access such as a good location (Gable et al., 2008). In addition, the decision to enter a store relates to consumers' acquisition of store-related information from the window displays and the store exterior (Ward et al., 1992); so, the outside of the store influences store image and consumer behavior.

According to Ward et al. (1992) the external environment is the part of the store visible prior to entry into the sales or service area. Further, some authors report that the external environment of the retail store comprises elements related to symbolism and aesthetics including not only the window displays and store advertising, but also the building architecture, building signposting or even merchandise presentation (Cornelius et al., 2010), and that generally functions to increase attention to the store or generate unplanned store visits. In this vein, prior research highlights that discount stores minimize investments in store external environment striving for cost leadership (Morschett et al., 2006). So, considering all the explained above, the following research hypothesis is posed:

H_1: The attractive and convenient discount store external environment has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

Internal Environment/Atmosphere

The internal retail store environment offers multitude of stimuli that are informational cues that customers use to evaluate store products and service, influencing their behavior and the likelihood of approaching or avoiding a store (Bitner, 1992; Baker et al., 2002), store expectations and store patronage intentions (Grewal et al., 2003). These internal ambient cues can be visual, acoustic –music or noise- or olfactory (Kumar & Kim, 2014). Regarding the visual cues, the internal store environment includes both the decoration and in-store physical facilities and amenities, such as check-out counters, island displays, display shelves or floor graphics. In addition, the floor layout of the store, product locations, as well as shelf space allocation also form part of the internal store environment (Terblanche, 2018).

An attractive and effective store internal environment leads to higher customer satisfaction (Morales et al., 2015) influencing the customers' emotional states (Lichtlé & Plichon, 2014) and stimulates customer in-store exploration (Marques et al., 2013). Conversely, a disorganized store environment may suggest incompetence, inefficiency or poor service, influencing customers' expectations; and in turn, customer satisfaction. Interestingly, discounters have a more functional store environment and some studies support that a disorganized store environment might be expected; and in turn, have no negative effect on satisfaction (Esbjerg et al., 2012). Thus, in the present research the following hypothesis is presented:

H_2: The attractive internal environment of the discount store has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

Merchandise Layout and Assortment

Store internal environment includes merchandise assortment and product presentation and layout (Kumar & Kim, 2014). Previous studies indicate that consumers most value a convenient and attractive layout with store aisles that contribute to easy in-store movements, as well as eye-catching product displays that expose customers all merchandise. Regarding the store product assortment, prior research reports that consumers' attitude and the probability of shopping at a specific retailer are positively related to the merchandise and product variety available in the store (Morales et al., 2015). Consequently, in order to meet consumer needs, retail stores often provide a wider array of goods and services (Hsu et al., 2010). Similarly, product variety and assortment is the factor with the greatest influence on customer satisfaction (Marques et al., 2013), influencing store patronage (Hoch et al., 1999), and helping retailers to attract consumers (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006).

It is widely known that discounters offer a back-to-basics or a limited product assortment, offering only a small number of package sizes and brands for product categories (Levy & Weitz, 2009). Accordingly, consumers visiting the largest discount stores find well-known brands in some sections, but may not find certain mainstream popular brands in soft goods; however, if a greater variety of brands were to be offered at discount stores, consumers would be delighted (Gable et al., 2008). The reason is that some major discounters have not been able to offer the more well-respected brands for their stores, because their discount image is considered as negative to manufacturers of the well-known brands (Gable et al., 2008). Further, some previous studies regarding discounters report that more important than product assortment is the continuity of product supply, meaning the ability of a retail store to provide its customers with the merchandise they want, when they want it –having the right product at the right time- (Gable et al., 2008). Interestingly, some discount stores have changed the traditional grocery section in order to include more private label brand products to appeal to value-seeking customers (Terblanche, 2018). On the other hand, prior research states that discounters' product assortment could stimulate a more utilitarian goal-oriented shopping attitude. That is, the limited product assortment of discounters places the emphasis on the ease of shopping and enables consumers to do their shopping quickly and efficiently (Schmitz, 2009). In fact, some consumers –i.e. consumers running short of time- may appreciate the limited assortment of discount stores as an advantage of this retail format (Schmitz, 2009). So, considering all the above it can be assumed that a convenient merchandise selection and an attractive merchandise layout will influence customer satisfaction. So, the following hypothesis is presented:

H_3: The store attractive merchandise layout and convenient assortment of the discount store has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

Store Personnel

Store employees play a major role in creating a positive shopping experience because they are responsible for satisfying customers' needs and expectations (Esbjerg et al., 2012) and that the human interaction with in-store sales staff leads to a greater customer psychological pleasure (Baker et al., 2002). More specifically, the store employees and sales-people responsiveness, friendliness and expertise positively influence customers' future store patronage (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006), and customers most value the competent and friendly staff who are willing to attend to customers' requests (Terblanche, 2018). For this reason, retailers must consider the need to provide an adequate level of personal service, since consumers may require help shopping at the store (Gable et al., 2008); and in addition, it is essential that store staff members are trained in product knowledge and in communicating with customers (Terblanche, 2018).

Discount stores offer a basic store service, which could be described as a limited form of primary customer service, including only what is needed to complete a purchase transaction (Herstein & Vilnai-Yazetz, 2007). Likewise, it is widely known that discount stores scramble to reduce costs by eliminating in-store staff and by introducing self-service technologies, such as self-checkout counters (Gable et al., 2008). Considering that limited service level is a stable characteristic of discounters (Lévy & Weitz, 2007), customers probably do not expect to be given a high-quality service at these stores, do not have expectations from the staff and do not seek for personal communication (Schmitz, 2009). Hence, the lack of sales staff interaction may not affect customers' convenience perceptions and satisfaction. Interestingly, discount store customers appear to have made a conscious price-service tradeoff, meaning that they are willing to sacrifice personal service in order to get good prices; and accordingly, store personal service is the least important and least expected store attribute at discounters (Gable et al., 2008). This is in line with Gable et al. (2008) who proposed that well-trained, knowledgeable and competent service personnel become crucial when consumers seek for *high-involvement* products; but for merchandise categories that are *low-involvement* products personal service is not essential, and maybe the price is the only element that drives consumer satisfaction.

Further, prior research states that customer satisfaction with store retail outlets is strongly influenced by the interpersonal interaction between the customer and store employees (Bitner et al., 1994; Puccinelli et al., 2009); and that a courteous, helpful and knowledgeable staff, personal attention and prompt service by store personal contributes to customer satisfaction (Marques et al., 2013; Terblanche, 2018). Similarly, the speed and accuracy of the staff is also related with customer satisfaction (Grewal et al., 2003). Hence, the following research hypothesis is presented:

H_4: The kind and competent discount store personnel has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

Variables and Scale Development

Previous research on the topic was examined in order to select variables and indicators (Table 1). First, the discount store *external environment* was measured adopting a two-item scale adopted from Burt and Carralero-Encinas (2000) and Baker et al. (2002).

Table 1. Measurement scale and indicators

Variables	Indicators
External ambient/elements Burt & Carralero-Encinas (2000); Baker et al. (2002)	Ext1: Discount stores located in attractive and convenient retail location Ext2: Discount stores have an attractive and appealing architecture and external design
Internal environment Burt & Carralero-Encincas (2000); Semeijn et al. (2004)	Int1: Pleasant and attractive atmosphere Int2: Decoration, furniture and displays of the discount store Int3: In-store pleasant aroma and smell Int4: Pleasant in-store music
Merchandise layout and assortment Bauer et al. (2012); Marques et al. (2013)	Lay1: Attractive and convenient product organization and layout Lay2: It is easy to find the products that I want Lay3: Offers a good selection of products
Store personnel Baker et al. (2002); Marques et al. (2013)	Pers1: Staff is kind, competent and willing to help you Pers2: Staff has wide knowledge about the products commercialized Pers3: Staff provides a speed, prompt and accurate service
Customer satisfaction Marques et al. (2013)	Sat1: Overall satisfaction with the discount store Sat2: I am satisfied with the experience of shopping at the discount store Sat3: The discount store provides me with the service and products that I need

Then, the discount store *internal environment* was examined using four measures adopted from Burt and Carralero-Encinas (2000) and from Semeijn et al. (2004). The discounter *merchandise layout and assortment* was gauged with a three-item scale adopted from Bauer et al. (2012) and Marques et al. (2013). For measuring the *store personnel*, three items proposed by Baker et al. (2002) and Marques et al. (2013) were adopted. Finally, customer satisfaction with discounters was examined as a three-item scale adapted from Marques et al. (2013). Variables were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1="*strongly disagree*"; 5="*strongly agree*").

Sampling and Fieldwork

A structured questionnaire was developed based on an extensive literature review on environmental attributes of retail stores. Data were collected in March 2018 through a self-administered web-based questionnaire using Qualtrics software among consumers residing in Spain on a random basis. Research participants were first asked whether they shop in discount stores, and if so, they were asked about a specific discounter –DIA- which is a widely popular discounter among consumers residing in Spain. The selection of DIA as the retail store under evaluation was necessary in order to ensure an acceptable degree of familiarity of consumers with the retailer. Then, participants were asked to rate the variables related to their satisfaction with the discounter. The last section of the questionnaire gathered information regarding purchasing habits and socio-demographic characteristics. A total amount of 512 questionnaires were sent out, gathering 381 valid questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 74.4% with a sampling error of 5.1% at a confidence level of 95%.

Regarding the sample profile, the 71.3% of the participants are female, while the 28.7% are men. A percentage of 43.6% of the participants are between the ages of 31 to 40, while the 25.7% were between 41 and 50; and a 23% were between 21-30 years old. Regarding their education level 18% of participants have primary education, while the 31% have secondary education and the 36% of the participants have university studies. Regarding the household income, the greater percentage of participants (32%) has an income of 24.000-36.000€. Finally, data indicated some characteristics of the participants' purchasing behavior, since the majority of the respondents (63%) make grocery shopping two times per week.

RESULTS DISCUSSION

Analysis of the Measurement Model

The research data were analyzed using partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) through the Smart PLS 3.2.7 software. PLS-SEM analysis is research technique for estimating path models involving latent constructs indirectly observed by multiple indicators. In addition, this is a nonparametric method which minimizes the unexplained variance (Ringle et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2017).

The model is considered a reflective model, and in order to validate a reflective measurement model, it is necessary to examine the internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). In the first place, the internal consistency and the reliability of the measurement model is examined through Cronbach's alpha and through composite reliability (CR). Results indicate that all Cronbach's alpha values are higher than 0.70; and all of the composite reliability values of the constructs are between 0.70 and 0.90, which could be deemed satisfactory (Hair et al., 2017); thus ensuring adequate internal consistency (Table 2). Secondly, the convergent validity was examined through the analysis of the factor item loadings to ensure that all variables are above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981); and that all values of the average variance extracted (AVE) are higher than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2017). The obtained results indicate that convergent validity is achieved, indicating that a large portion of the variance was explained by the constructs. The discriminant validity is the extent to which a construct is distinct from other constructs (Hair et al., 2017). Finally, the discriminant validity was examined by evaluating all possible paired combinations

Table 2. Factor loadings and indicators of internal consistency and reliability

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Standardized loadings	CR	AVE
External environment	Ext1 Ext2	0.744	0.901 0.879	0.887	0.796
Internal environment	Int1 Int2 Int3 Int4	0.870	0.888 0.876 0.890 0.872	0.911	0.719
Merchandise layout & assortment	Lay1 Lay2 Lay3	0.747	0.927 0.896 0.824	0.718	0.531
Store personnel	Pers1 Pers2 Pers3	0.758	0.879 0.896 0.872	0.820	0.618
Satisfaction	Sat1 Sat2 Sat3	0.910	0.960 0.949 0.901	0.944	0.849

Table 3. Correlations and discriminant validity values.

	EXT	INT	LAY	PERS	sat
External environment	**0.892**				
Internal environment	0.542	**0.848**			
Merchandise layout / assortment	0.502	0.552	**0.729**		
Store personnel	0.420	0.610	0.556	**0.786**	
Satisfaction	0.599	0.622	0.586	0.552	**0.921**

Note: correlations between different constructs are in the off-diagonal and bold numbers in the diagonal correspond to the square roots of AVE for each construct

of the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results show that the AVE values were greater than the squared correlations between any pair of constructs; thus, indicating discriminant validity (Table 3).

Analysis of the Structural Model

The structural model and the relationship between the constructs are examined through the coefficients of determination R^2 (explained variance) and f^2 (effect size) according to Hair et al. (2017), and results are shown in Table 4. The coefficient of determination (R^2 value) represents a measure of in-sample predictive power (Hair

Table 4. Structural model evaluation

Construct	VIF Collinearity assessment	Significance of path coefficients	Level of R^2	f^2 effect size
External environment	2.071	0.001		0.113
Internal environment	3.983	0.191		0.218
Merchandise layout & assortment	2.576	0.009		0.100
Store personnel	1.920	0.000		0.184
Satisfaction			0.712	0.849

et al., 2017). Our results indicate a R^2 value of 0.712, meaning that the 71% of the customer satisfaction with discounters is explained by the store environmental variables. Similarly, the f^2 effect size measures the strength of each variable in explaining endogenous variables, and effect size values below 0.02 represent weak effect or even indicate the lack of effect (Hair et al., 2017). The f^2 effect size of the constructs are above the 0.02 accepted threshold, thus, indicating the adequacy of the structural model. Finally, the collinearity analysis tests for variance inflation factor (VIF) values are below 5, as commonly accepted (Hair et al. 2017).

Analysis of Relationships

Our results support the proposed conceptual model, since research findings provide support for most of the research proposed hypotheses (Table 5). More precisely, the obtained findings provide support for hypotheses H_1, H_3, and H_4; while only H_2 could not be supported. Regarding customer satisfaction with the discount store, the store personnel was found to have the higher impact on customer satisfaction (β_4=0.319**; p=0.000). Similarly, a positive significant impact was found for the store external environment (β_1=0.260**; p=0.001) and store merchandise layout and assortment (β_1=0.272**; p=0.009) on customer satisfaction. However, the discounter merchandise layout and product assortment exert a slightly greater influence on customer satisfaction than the external environment of the retail outlet. Therefore, the store personnel followed by store merchandise layout and assortment, and the external store environment is the stepwise order of the discounter influence on customer satisfaction. So, it can be stated that the better store service personnel –understood as kind, competent personnel providing a speed accurate service-, the more attractive and appealing store external environment, and the more attractive and convenient product offering, the higher customer satisfaction.

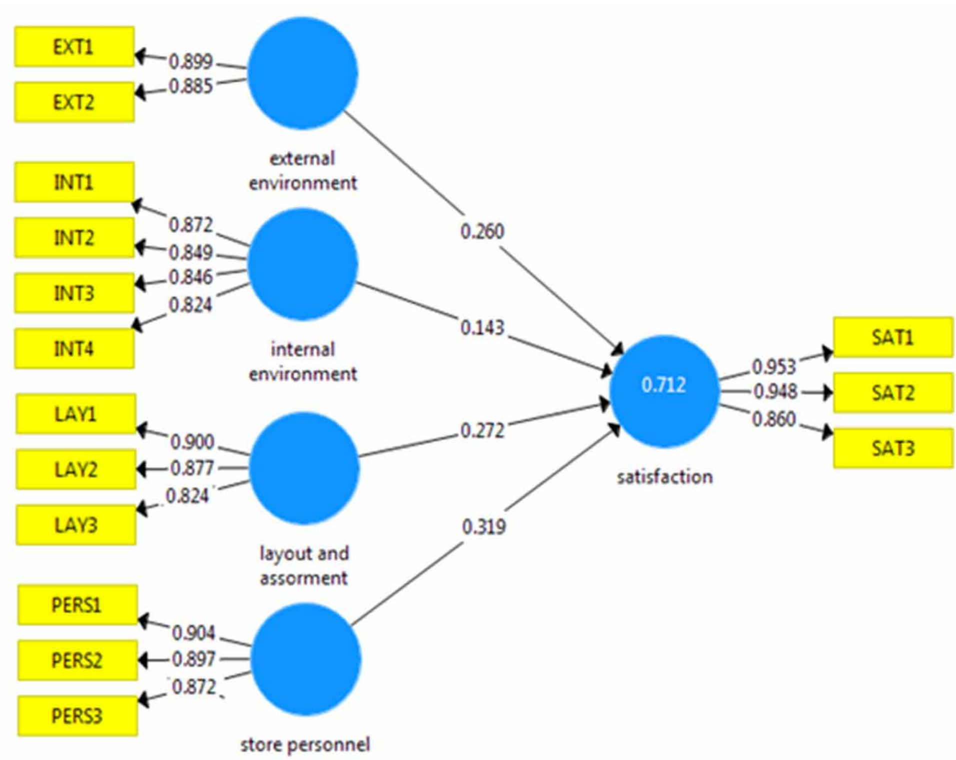
Table 5. Model resolution using PLS algorithm and bootstrapping.

Relationships	Path coefficient	t-value	p-value	Confidence intervals	Hypotheses test
External environment→ Satisfaction	B_1= 0.260**	3.364	0.001	0.103-0.440	H_1: Supported
Internal environment/ atmosphere → Satisfaction	$ß_2$= 0.143^{ns}	1.309	0.191	0.079-0.345	H_2: Not Supported
Merchandise layout and assortment → Satisfaction	$ß_3$= 0.272**	2.642	0.009	0.055-0.474	H_3: Supported
Store personnel → Satisfaction	$ß_4$= 0.319**	4.139	0.000	0.160-0.482	H_4: Supported
ns=no significant; *** significant (p<0.05)*	R^2 (Satisfaction)= 0.712				

Conversely, our findings do not support a significant influence of the discount store internal environment or atmosphere on customer satisfaction (β_2=0.143^{ns}; p=0.191), as depicted in Figure 1. This result was initially expected, since discounters do not provide a pleasant attractive store environment for their customers, and discount stores neither incorporate nice decoration or furniture, nor in-store pleasant aromas and ambience music. The obtained findings suggest that as long as customers find kind, competent store personnel providing a fast and accurate service, as well as a convenient and attractive product assortment and a convenient store location, customers will be satisfied with the discount retail outlet. Another potential explanation for this result might be a function of the real expectations of customers who perceive discounters as offering very low prices, meaning that they truly do not expect to make their shopping in nice and appealing store environment.

Interestingly, a convenient and fast service as well as a convenient product assortment, and a convenient store location seem to positively influence customer satisfaction with discounters. One possible explanation could be that in the cost-service tradeoff, discount store retail managers consider that a poor –o even unpleasant- store internal environment contributes to the low-price store image; and in turn, they focus on retail attributes that provide convenience to customers. That is, discount store managers do not consider that the poor store decoration, the lack of furniture, store aroma and ambience music would not decrease customer satisfaction, as long as the customer is offered a convenient service, a convenient store location and a convenient product assortment. Finally, research findings are in line with Schmitz (2009) who reported that discount stores use simplified, standardized store environments, that customers seem to be used to; and that customers value the high-speed purchases provided by discount stores.

Figure 1. Final relationships



CONCLUSIONS

Due to the low price positioning of discount stores, previous studies have not analyzed the impact of the different store environmental elements on customers' satisfaction. More precisely, price image of discounters could be considered as the key variable explaining the intention to shop in discounters and their satisfaction with the retail outlet. However, this research aims to examine whether low prices explain only a part of customer satisfaction with retail discounters. Thus, the research goal is to examine the influence of the environmental elements of the discounter on customer satisfaction. For this purpose a conceptual model is proposed and empirically tested, comprising the potential influence of the store external environment, internal environment, merchandise layout and assortment and store personnel on customer satisfaction.

Research findings show that the store-based environmental attributes have different influence on customer satisfaction with discount stores, being the store personnel the most important variable, followed by the store external environment and the merchandise layout and product assortment. Thus, first conclusion is that other factors, different from low prices, influence satisfaction with discount stores. This finding is coherent with Zielke (2010) who reported that price-level perception alone at discounters does not explain discount buying, since customers relate prices to all what they get in return. So, customers who find a kind, competent, knowledgeable store employees, as well as an appealing store external environment, a convenient location, as well as an attractive store layout and convenient assortment will be satisfied; regardless the store price image. This finding is in line with Gable et al. (2008) who reported that large discount stores that located in prime retail locations, offering convenience in terms of good location, convenient opening hours or free parking positively influence customers' satisfaction.

In addition, research findings highlight the store personnel –understood as kind, competent, helpful, knowledgeable personnel, who also provide speed and accurate service- as the most important variable influencing customers' satisfaction. Interestingly, these findings are not in line with Gable et al. (2008), since these authors propose that well-trained, knowledgeable and competent service personnel are not essential factors when consumers purchase "*low-involvement*" product categories; and further, they suggest that price is the only element that drives consumer satisfaction with discounters.

Conversely, research findings do not support a significant influence of the discount store internal environment on customers' satisfaction. That is, the pleasant store atmosphere, the decoration, furniture and store displays, along with store aroma and ambience music do not influence customer satisfaction. One potential explanation for this result is that in fact discounters do not develop any of these environmental cues, in order to offer a coherent low-price store image. Further, another possible reason for this result may be the real expectations of customers regarding discount stores, because customers do not expect to find an attractive and appealing store environment when shopping at discounters. Likewise, customer of discount stores could be trying to avoid any mental stress and trying to increase pleasure while shopping due to a kind of *hedonistic bias* (Schmitz, 2009), meaning that customers would take primarily a positive view of discount store and neglect the perceived relative disadvantages of these retail outlets. Finally, the major contribution of the present research consists showing that other factors, different from low prices, influence customer satisfaction with discount stores, being the store personnel the factor with the greater influence.

This research may help retailers and retail managers to better understand how environmental store attributes can contribute to customer satisfaction. Previous studies on retailing show that offering a pleasant and attractive in-store customer experience ensures that customers patronize the retailer in the future and increases customer satisfaction. However, this is not the case for discount stores. In fact, discount store managers do not need to improve the store internal environment or atmosphere –i.e. through remodeling store layout or establishing a store design to make customers move easily around the store- in order to increase satisfaction, since these environmental attributes seem to have no influence on customers' satisfaction. Accordingly, discount store managers should keep in mind that customers may patronize the retailer in future as long as it provides a kind and competent store personnel, with convenient product assortment and a convenient store location. Therefore, improving the training and product communication of the store personnel would be a better way to increase customers' satisfaction with the retail outlet.

This research nonetheless has limitations that represent avenues for future research. In first place, to further broaden the findings of this research, replication should be undertaken in different geographic areas and in different markets. The second limitation of the study is that participants only evaluated one discount store. Finally, another limitation of this study was the selection of four store environmental attributes out of many possible store attributes. Therefore, addressing these limitations in further research would provide a deeper view of customer satisfaction with retail discounters.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Customer Satisfaction: It is a measure of how products and services supplied by a company meet or exceed customers' expectations. In addition, customer satisfaction could be understood as the overall happiness that the customer feels when using a company's products or services.

Discounter: A discount store could be defined as a retailer that offers a limited assortment of products, with limited service at very low prices (Levy & Weitz, 2009).

Merchandise Assortment: The store merchandise or product assortment is the different types of product lines and products that the retailer offers for sale.

S-O-R Model: The S-O-R (stimulus-organism-response) theoretical framework explains how store environmental cues influence consumers' responses and behavior in the retail setting.

Store Environment: The store environment (or store atmospherics) describes the effort to design environments in order to produce specific emotional effects in the customer that enhance his/her purchase probability (Kotler, 1974).

Store Layout: The store layout is the strategic use of space and the placement of items within the store to influence the customer experience.

Store Personnel: The store personnel are the individuals ultimately responsible for the daily management and operations of a retail store. Further, the store employees play a major role in creating a positive shopping experience for customers, because they are responsible for satisfying customers' needs and expectations.

Chapter 2
An Eye Tracking Study of the Effect of Sensory and Price In-Store Displays

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ABSTRACT

Using eye tracking, this chapter investigates if the visual attention varies according to the in-store displays message content (price, sensory, and price-sensory). Results show that participants are more responsive to cognitive content messages (price) than affective messages (sensory) alone. Nevertheless, it is demonstrated that participants are prone to devote more time processing in-store displays messages if prices (cognitive stimuli) are combined with sensory messages (affective stimuli), which increases the likelihood of choosing low involvement products. Finally, it was demonstrated that total fixation duration is predictive of low involvement product choice for all home décor products. This study suggests that shoppers might spend more time and effort searching for low involvement products if in-store displays captivate their visual attention and elicit their sensory imagery. Sensory messages can be used by retailers to highlight product intrinsic characteristics. At the same time, they are inducing positive feelings towards low-involvement products.

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INTRODUCTION

Vision has been recognized as one of the most prominent senses in sensory marketing (Krishna, 2012), and is commonly considered as the first channel to obtain information and directly impact on consumer behaviour (Hultén, 2015). A great body of sensory marketing research has been conducted on how brands embed visual cues to influence consumer's evaluation and judgement of brands and products (e.g. Spence, Puccinelli, Grewal & Roggeveen, 2014; Krishna & Aydınoğlu, 2017; Helmefalk & Hultén, 2017; Biswas, Szocs, Chacko & Wansink, 2017). Similarly, visual cues have been studied in advertising and digital signage context (Krishna, Cian, & Sokolova, 2016; Dennis, Brakus & Alamanos, 2014). Nevertheless, research on the impact of visual cues in in-store merchandise displays is still very scarce and focused mainly on product and price cues (Huddleston, Behe, Minahan & Fernandez, 2015).

Since most of product decisions are made at the point-of-purchase, capturing consumers´ visual attention is relevant to engage consumers emotionally and boost sales (Behe, Bae, Huddelston & Sage, 2015; Breugelmans & Campo, 2011). In this regard, it is claimed that retailers use in-store displays to attract consumers´attention to merchandise and that their design and placement decision is based on the notion that visual attention will lead to product choice (Huddleston, Behe, Minahan & Fernandez, 2015). Interestingly, marketing scholars are shifting their interest towards how selective visual attention can be captured by affect-as-information heuristics (Pham, 2004; Wang & Lang, 2015) and how in-store signage is used during navigation and decision making process (Otterbring, Wästund, Gustafsson, & Shams, 2014; Otterbring, Wästlund, & Gustafsson, 2016) instead of focusing merely on concepts such as involvement and price sensitivity (Chevalier, 1975; McKinnon, Kelly & Doyle, 1981; Woodside & Waddle, 1975). Notably, it was demonstrated that affective-content digital signage messages, in contrast to cognitive-content messages, result in a positive attitude towards the ad (Dennis, Brakus & Alamanos, 2014).

It is worth noting that most of the research conducted on in-store displays has neglected the relevance of low-involvement products. This category of products is associated with low levels of cognitive processing (Hoyer, 1984; Hoyer & MacInnis, 2010), in which price is the key driver of product choice. More specifically, consumers are price-goal oriented in utilitarian shopping situations and tend to focus on their cognitive processing shopping activities instead of environmental stimuli such as in-store displays (Breugelmans & Campo, 2011). Home décor products, such as towels, mugs, spice jars and candlesticks are low-cost products and compete essentially on price. Anecdotal evidence shows that retailers use price labels to drive consumers' attention to products with low levels of differentiation. Moreover, it can be argued that consumers show low levels of commitment in the purchase process and their motivation to cognitively process information is generally low.

Departing on previous studies that demonstrate that consumers are mainly driven by price goal-driven stimuli of low-involvement products, the authors consider that it is crucial to investigate if in-store displays with sensory messages can increase consumers´ visual attention and impact on product choice, through sensory imagery activation of sensory in-store displays.

A growing body of research has used neuromarketing to understand and model consumer behaviour (Karmarkar & Yoon, 2016; Carrasco, 2011). In this regard, eye-tracking is considered one of the most useful consumer neuroscience tools to investigate how consumers allocate their visual attention and allow researchers to monitor cognitive and affective processes in decision-making (for a review see Hayhoe & Ballard, 2005; Rayner, 1998). Nevertheless, less attention has been given to analysing the relationship between eye movements and consumer visual attention in the point-of-purchase (see as exceptions Behe, Bae, Huddleston, & Sage, 2015; Clement, Kristensen & Grønhaug., 2013; Chandon, Hutchinson, Bradlow & Young, 2009; Nordfält, 2011; Seva, Go, Garcia & Grindulo, 2011). Drawing on Behe et al´s (2015, pp. 7) assumption that "eye movements may be a better indication of the underlying search for information in the buying process compared to self-reports", the authors of this study employ eye tracking technologies to gain a better understanding of consumers´ perception of real-time reaction to in-store merchandise displays for low involvement products.

In this regard, the purpose of this study is twofold: firstly, the authors aim to analyse if the visual attention vary according to the in-store displays message content (price, sensory and price-sensory); and secondly the authors intend to investigate if in-store displays with price, sensory and price-sensory messages increase the likelihood of choosing low-involvement products. The structure of the paper is a follows. First, section 2 reviews the relevant literature on product category involvement and visual attention, as well as the impact of in-store displays on product choice. Section 3 and 4 presents the methodology and findings. Section 5 and 6 conclude the paper with a discussion on academic and managerial implications, directions for future research and limitations.

BACKGROUND

Theoretical Framework and Research Hypothesis

Low Involvement Products and Visual Attention

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) advocates that the level of involvement a consumer has with a product is based mainly on the relevance of that product to the consumer´s inherent needs, values and interest. The level of involvement influences the amount of mental and physical effort a consumer puts into the buying process (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In this regard, it is claimed that individuals with high product involvement will process information through a central route, by examining information that they believe is relevant to a meaningful and logical evaluation of the product. By contrast, it is stated that low product involvement will induce processing through a peripheral route in which consumers will evaluate products based on superficial and salient cues regardless of whether those cues are meaningfully related to the product (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Indeed, most of the researchers agree that highly involved consumers will search for more information before they buy, will process meaningful information in great deal and use more buying decision criteria than other consumers (e.g. Breugelmans & Campo, 2011). Moreover, researchers seem to agree that involvement is a strong predictor of consumers´ product choice (Mitchell, 1986; Shamsher & Chowdhury, 2012) and that involvement influences the amount of mental and physical effort a consumer puts into the buying process. Research conducted in the field of advertising also stressed that high involvement consumers process displayed arguments in an advertisement, whereas less involved consumers process emotional appeals instead, such as a beautiful scenery (Huang & Chou, 2016).

Another stream of research has shown that highly committed consumers are less price-sensitive than non-committed consumers (Robertson, 1976). For instance, Zaichkowsky (1988) has demonstrated that consumers who were highly involved with a specific product category (e.g. red wine) were less sensitive to price when compared to consumers who manifested low involvement with this product category. This argument is consistent with Chang & Wildt (1994) and Erdem, Mayhew & Sun (2001), who also suggested that less involved consumers were more sensitive to price. Moreover, empirical studies conducted by Ramirez & Goldsmith (2009) and Goldsmith, Flynn & Kim (2010) found a negative relationship between involvement and price sensitivity that was mediated by innovativeness. These findings shed light on the importance of understanding consumer research in terms of low-involvement products and how other stimuli besides goal-driven stimuli such as price impact on the product choice and buying behaviour. In our study the researchers focus on low involvement products such as home décor products (towels, mugs, spice jars and candlesticks), to which consumers are expected to show low levels of commitment and price-sensitivity during the purchase process.

Visual attention has been described as a mental ability that allows consumers to select among behavioural stimuli (Corbetta, 1998) when they are searching for low or high involvement products. Several decades of experimental research, based on physiological and brain imaging studies, stress that visual attention supports decision-making processes and significantly influences product choices (Behe, Bac, Hudleston & Sage, 2015; Gidlöf, Anikin, Lingonblad, & Wallin, 2017). In this regard, the theory of visual attention to visual marketing posits that selective visual attention can be captured by bottom-up and top-down factors (Wedel & Pieters, 2006). Whereas bottom-up attention is caused by stimuli with visual salience (e.g. colour, contrast), top-down attention refers to voluntary action that is allocated to certain objects and inherent to consumers´ goals or tasks such as the product involvement or familiarity with a brand (Chun & Wolfe, 2001; Rayner, Binder, Ashby & Pollatsek, 2001; Behe, Bac, Hudleston & Sage, 2015). Both top-down and bottom-up factors determine the objects informative capability and the visual stimuli salience to consumers and impact on their visual attention (Wedel & Pieters, 2006). In our study, the authors have focused on the perceptual salience of bottom-up factors (i.e. in-store displays messages) to investigate the impact of visual attention on product choice, since top-down factors (i.e. brand and product design) were eliminated to avoid bias in the experiment.

In-Store Displays: Price and Sensory Messages

In-store displays play a relevant role as silent salesperson in drawing the attention of consumers to particular products (Huddleston, Behe, Minahan and Fernandez, 2015). Research conducted on the underlying effects of in-store displays have provided strong evidence that drawing attention to specific products in a store can increase visual attention (Chandon, Hutchison, Bradlow & Young, 2009) and sales (Breugelmans & Campo, 2011; Bemmaor & Mouchoux, 1991; Dhar, Hoch, & Kumar, 2001; East, Eftichiadou, & Williamson, 2003; McKinnon, Kelly, & Doyle, 1981; Wilkinson, Barry, Mason, & Paksoy, 1982). Moreover, research demonstrate that consumers interpret in-store displays as signalling good deals (Inman, McAlister, & Hoyer, 1990), especially for low-involvement products in which consumers´ motivations to cognitively process information has been shown to be generally low (Hoyer, 1984; Hoyer & MacInnis, 2010). Indeed, in utilitarian shopping situations, consumers tend to focus their cognitive processing activities on the shopping instead of environmental stimuli such as in-store displays (Breugelmans & Campo, 2011).

As Orquin & Loose (2013) note consumers tend to gaze at information with greater importance to their product choice. In purchasing situations, the first sensory contact is mostly done through the eyes and thereby associations are elicited by visual stimuli (Gere, Danner, de Antoni, Kovács, Durrschmid, & Sipos, 2016) either cognitive or affective (Dennis, Brakus & Alamanos, 2014). In this context, consumers´ eye movements are regarded informative physiological measures about processes such as perceived attractiveness, attention and product choice (Behe, Bae, Huddleston & Sage, 2015). A great body of research demonstrates that increased visual attention will increase the likelihood of choice (Busemeyer & Diederich, 2002; Armel & Rangel, 2008) and that the probability that an item will be chosen depends on the relative amount of time that consumers fixate on a specific area of interest during the decision-making process (Armel &Rangel, 2008). In a recent field study conducted by Gidlöf, Anikin, Lingonblad, & Wallin (2017) it was demonstrated the act of looking longer or repeatedly at a package makes it more likely that a specific product will be bought. Moreover, the study has shown that both external (e.g. visual saliency, number of facings, and the placement of each product) and internal factors (e.g. brand preferences, price sensitivity, and dietary inclinations) influenced what products consumers looked at and that there was a strong positive interaction between visual saliency and consumer preferences.

In visual attention literature there is a consensus that the amount of time is a predictor of the actual purchase (Behe, Bae, Huddleston & Sage, 2015). Indeed, those authors demonstrated that highly involved consumers processed price information as a central rather than a peripheral route and that total visit duration on an information sign was found to be the strongest predictor of product choice. This argument is consistent with the notion that when consumers fixates on a particular area, the individuals are processing information. As Huang (2018) notes a longer fixation time indicates that the information is more complex thereby requiring deeper processing. It might also mean that consumers are more immersed and involved in the information provided by a specific area of interest (Huang & Chou 2016). Furthermore, several studies have investigated task-specific effects on attention (Glaholt, Wu, & Reingold, 2010; Glöckner, Fiedler, Hochman, Ayal & Hilbig, 2012; Toubia, de Jong, Stieger, & Füller, 2012) and provided evidence that consumers pay increased attention to goal-driven stimuli such as price. Hence this study assumes that there is a positive relationship between visual attention and total fixation duration and that fixations are a measure of the amount of attention devoted to a specific area of interest. Additionally, this study assumes that price salience in in-store displays is a crucial factor that affects both visual attention and low involvement product decision choice. Since price sensitivity has been found to be correlated to low involvement products, the authors hypothesized that proving price information in in-store displays (cognitive content) increases consumers' visual attention and affects product decision choice. Hence:

Hypothesis One*:* In-store displays with a price message increase choices of low-involvement products.

The cognitive load theory states that consumers have finite cognitive resources at a given time in order to encode, process or retrieve information (Sweller, 1988). Thus, the amount of cognitive capacity may vary according to how much cognitive resources consumers are willing to allocate to a particular information-gathering task and how much cognitive capacity are consumers willing to process (Gilbert, Pelham, & Krull, 1988; Gwizdka, 2010). Consequently, for limited perceptual capacity and huge information exposed consumers will extract the information that is relevant to them and pay their visual attention to selective features of a given stimulus (Clement, Kristensen & Grønhaug, 2013), either cognitive or affective. According to Dennis and Halberstadt (2013) affective cues may guide visual attention and demand enhanced processing at conscious and preconcious levels. In this regard, affect conveys information relevant to consumers and motivate prioritised processing of affect-relevant information. Moreover, affective tags are described a memory trace that is linked to a holistic experience (Compeau, Grewal & Monroe, 1998). As a visual salient stimuli it might be looked at longer and be easy to be fixated on first (Pinto, van der Leij, Sligte, Lamme & Scholte, 2013; Orquin and Loose, 2013; Van der Laan, Hooge, Rider, Viergever & Smeets, 2015). In a recent study by Vetter and Newen (2014) it was suggested that sensory stimuli have a greater level of processing when compared to other cognitive stimuli. This argument is consistent with research conducted in the field of sensory marketing that shows that ad visuals lead to spontaneous generation of imagery and that perceived movement and stimulus orientation affects the type and amount of imagery that is generated (Krishna, Cian & Sokolova, 2016).

Prior research on advertising and shopping mall environmental psychology views cognition-emotion and emotion-cognition as two separate processes (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Chebat & Michon, 2003). Nevertheless, the Epstein´s Cognitive-Experiential Self-Theory (1993) is presented in support of cognition and emotion to work in parallel in product choice decision which accounts for an unconscious emotional response (basic, rapid processing system) and a more deliberate, sophisticated cognitive process (Dennis, Brakus & Alamanos, 2014). Since sensory imagery can be elicited as a result of sight-related elements, the authors hypothesize that sensory content messages used separately or combined with price content messages affects low involvement product choice when consumers are exposed to in-store displays. Hence:

Hypothesis Two: In-store displays with sensory content increase choices of low-involvement products.

Hypothesis Three: In-store displays with price-sensory content increase choices of low- involvement products.

METHODOLOGY

The major goal of this study was to examine how consumers´ attention, assessed by visual response to three types of in-store displays (price, sensory and price-sensory content messages), affects low-involvement product decision choice. In that regard, the experiment was performed in a research lab using an eye tracking device. Moreover, eye-movement data were analysed using ANOVA and independent t-tests.

Participants, Setting and Product

The study uses home décor products such as candlesticks, spice jars, towels and mugs which were bought at an IKEA store. These products are trendy and sold at low prices. Being basic home décor products, the authors argue that they can be classified as low involvement products due to its low level of relevance to the consumer´s needs, values and interest (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). Departing from the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), the authors of this study did not find it relevant to measure and pretest the level of involvement according to the participants´ perception, since the selected home décor products fit into the classification of low involvement products. The study selected participants randomly in a Swedish town in exchange for a gift card. The sample consisted of 60 Swedish consumers (29 men and 31 women). The mean age of participants in the study was (M= 30.33). To be part of the study, participants should speak English, have normal vision and have completed high school studies.

Design and Procedure

Prior to the lab experiment, a survey was conducted in the streets of a Swedish city (N = 114) to evaluate the preferences of consumers in relation to three sensory tags for each of the four categories of low-involvement products selected for the lab experiment (candlestick, mugs, spice jars and towels). The sensory tags chosen were as follows: “Winter delights” (candlesticks), “Enjoy your fika” (mugs), “Bring colour to your Kitchen” (spice jars) and “feel the softness” (towels).

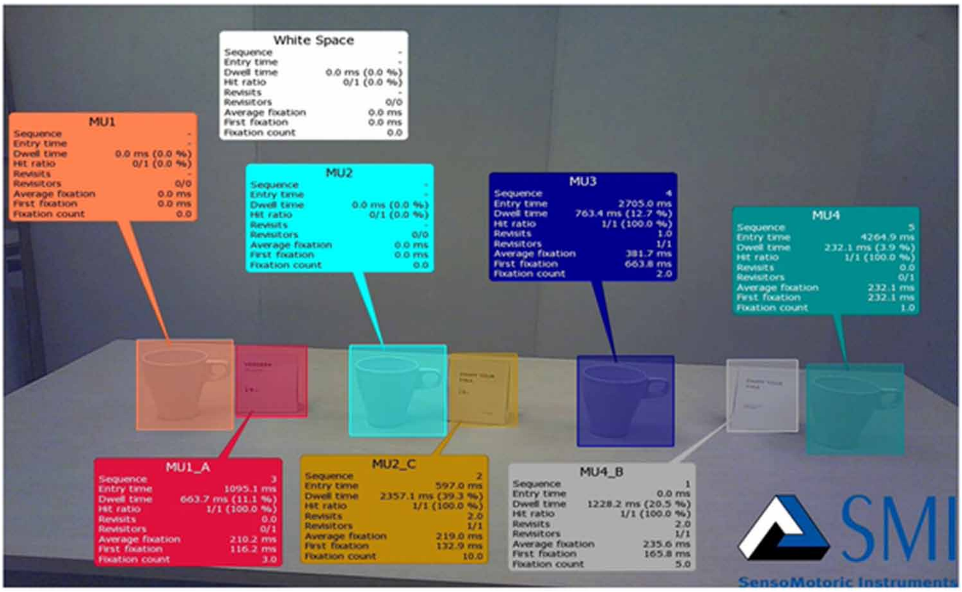
A pre-test lab experiment took place in June 2017, followed by the final experiment which occurred between July and August 2017 using an SMI Eye Tracking Glasses 2 Wireless (ETG 2w) eye tracker (60Hz) from SensoMotoric Instruments (SMI) GmbH (Germany) and the gaze behaviour of the participants was analysed using the SMI BeGaze™ 2.3 analysis software (version 2.3). All the lab experiments took place under controlled environment (illumination, temperature etc.) in the sensory laboratory of a Swedish university.

Each participant signed up for a 30-min lab session. Once each participant arrived at the lab, the research assistant explained the overall procedure of the experiment and informed participants that a device-mounted eye tracker would unobtrusively record their eye movements. After participants provided informed consent, they were asked to put on the eye tracking glasses. The eye tracking glasses were calibrated for each participant and the participant was later guided to the place of the experiment. More specifically, the eye-tracker was calibrated using 3 circular points (or landmarks) forming triangle at 1.5m from the participant. After calibration, a validation procedure was applied. During validation participants were asked to look at the calibration points again, points were visible in the smart recorder through the scene camera, whilst the experimenter analysed the overlap of the gaze direction (given by the eye-tracker) with the calibration points in the scenery. Moreover, calibration was repeated if the overlap was poor.

Stimulus Materials

The design of the lab experiment consisted of four tables containing low-involvement products (table 1: candlesticks; table 2: mugs; table 3: spice jars and table 4: towels). All the products were non-branded to eliminate any confounding effect from participants´ previous experiences or exposure to the brand IKEA. Additionally, the products used in the experiment were (a) exactly the same for each of the categories and (b) white (towels, mugs) or transparent (spice jars and candlesticks) in order to avoid bias resulting from the influence of external stimulus such as brand, colour, shape or size. A pilot test was conducted before the final experiment by showing sequentially the presence (vs. absence) of in-store displays, the in-store display with (vs. without) price content, and the in-store displays with (vs. without) sensory content. The results did not reveal significant differences in terms of visual attention and product choice, and participants reported that the process was very exhausting. In order to address the experiment bias, the authors redesigned the lab experiment by providing the stimulus materials at the same time to participants. The main aim was to provide a higher realistic setting in which consumers would be exposed to products placed horizontally with the in-store display slightly upfront. Hence, next to three home décor products in each product category was placed an in-store display conceived by a designer with the same format, size, colour and lettering. One product per category was placed in the table without any in-store display. Additionally, the prices were exactly the same in each categories of low-involvement products. As an example, table 1 contained (a) a candlestick without display as a control experiment

Figure 1. Example from the lab experiment



variable, (b) a candlestick with the designed in-store display with price content, (c) a candlestick with the designed in-store display with sensory content and a (d) a candlestick with the designed in-store display with price-sensory content. Hence, in table 1 participants were shown at the same time four equal candelsticks and three in-store displays (price, sensory and price-sensory content). The same procedure was repeated for the towels, spice jars and mugs categories in table 2, 3 and 4 respectively (figure 1).

Manipulation

The message content was manipulated by the presence or absence of price information (cognitive content) or sensory information (affective content) used in the display (figure 2). More specifically, in the price condition participants visualized a price information (e.g. “16”: candlesticks; “17 Kr”: towels; “18 Kr”: spice jars and “19 Kr”: mugs). In the sensory condition, participants visualized a sensory tag according to the low-involvement product (e.g. “Winter delights” (candlesticks), “Enjoy your fika” (mugs), “Bring color to your Kitchen” (spice jars) and “feel the softness” (towels). After eye-tracking calibration, participants were guided by the research assistant to one specific table, were asked to sit comfortably and were asked to maintain their body posture during inspection of all the objects on the table. As task one, they were given 20 seconds to freely browse the products and respective displays as they were

Figure 2. Example of in-store display (candelsticks)
Note: "Galej" is the name of the product and "Winter Delights" is the sensory message

shopping in a store. Participants were not allowed to touch the products in order not to create bias coming from haptic sensations, which might influence the level of visual attention to the products instead of the in-store displays. During the experiment, displays location in the table was randomized and participants were assigned to different tables as a starting point of the lab experience. In the end, participants were asked to rate their purchase likelihood for each low-involvement product category. This procedure was repeated for all the tables displaying both products and displays. As task two, participants were given a questionnaire in which they were instructed to complete a word association task on a separate sheet of paper for each tag ("Winter delights" – candlesticks; "Enjoy your fika" – mugs: "Bring colour to your Kitchen - spice jars; and "feel the softness" - towels). Written instructions were provided as follows: "Please write down 4 words, associations, thoughts or feelings that come to your mind after having read the following messages". After the questionnaire the participants were debriefed and given a gift card for their participation.

Measurements

In order to measure the relationship between the dependent variable (consumer´ product choice as categorical variable) and independent variables (eye-tracking data as continuous and frequency variables), four separate areas of interest (AOIs) were drawn to produce the data for the visual attention measures: one for the display with the price content message (AOI1), one for the display with sensory content message (AOI2), one for the display with price-sensory content display (AOI3) and other for the absence of a display (AO4). An area of interest is *a user-defined area in a stimulus that allows the researcher to measure looking behaviour, e.g. how often a subject fixated on price* (BeGaze 2.3Manual). Moreover, the length of a fixation is considered to be an indication of information processing leading to product choice

(Behe, Bae, Huddleston & Sage, 2015). To calculate the amount of visual attention, three eye-tracking measures were used in this experimental study, namely total fixation duration, fixation count and visit count.

Total Fixation Duration

Visual attention to the in-store displays was measured by eye tracking software as the total amount of time in milliseconds that participants spent looking at the four specified AOIs. Moreover, fixations to the absence of in-store displays were measured as the white space left free by the display that should have been placed next to the low involvement product. The eye tracker recorded participants´ fixations at a sampling rate of 60 Hz, or 60 samples per second. Time spent visualizing the in-store displays was recorded based on these samples, and samples were counted if they were within a region of interest containing the in-store displays (M = 2121 milliseconds, SD = 1933).

Fixation Count

The fixation count of in-store displays was measured as the number of fixations within a specific area of interest. This measure indicates how many times the participant looks at the area of interest (M = 6.024 times SD = 5.069).

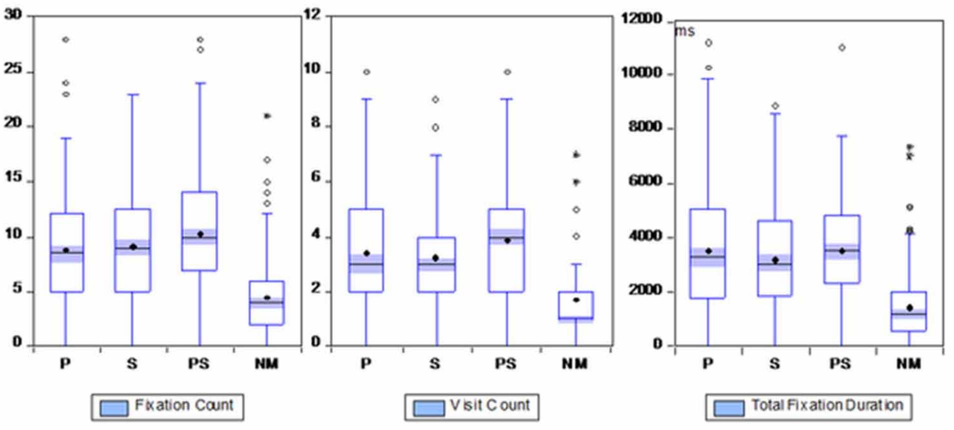
Visit Count

Visit count of in-store displays was measured as the number of times that participants revisit a specific area of interest. (M = 3.52, SD = 2.05).

Qualitative Analysis of the Words Elicited

According to Krishna (2012), consumers interpret and perceive sensations which later will result in emotional and cognitive responses. In this context, the authors assume that in-store displays will lead to a cognitive response, whereas sensory messages will lead to an emotional response. Hence, in task two a qualitative analysis of the words elicited was performed in order to determine how sensory imagery was activated as a result of the in-store affective message. This type of analysis is relevant to analyse how sensory imagery affects consumers´ perceptions in terms of grounded emotion and thus understand consumers' mental process after being exposed to sensory cues (Krishna, 2012). In this regard, terms referring to the same concept or with a similar meaning (e.g., softness, light, etc.) were grouped into the

Figure 3.
Notes: P = Price; S = Sensory; PS = Price-Sensory; NM = No Message



same categories in order to avoid disregarding synonyms that might have been elicited with a lower frequency, which would have biased the results (Guerrero et al., 2010).

RESULTS

As shown in table 1, participants made in average more fixations (M=10.2 times) and for a longer period of time (M= 3545 ms) on displays with price-sensory content in comparison to displays with price or sensory content, suggesting that the combination of cognitive (price) with affective (sensory) content affect participant visual processing of in-store displays in terms of immersion into the in-store display content message. Additionally, our findings also demonstrate that participants revisited more times the price-sensory in-store displays (M=3.85 times), which suggests a potential interest towards the message content (table 1). Moreover, the results of successive t tests indicated that there are significant statistical differences between price vs. price-sensory in-store displays and between sensory and price-sensory displays at a significance level of 5%. The eye-tracking visual attention measures also show statistical differences ($p < 0.001$) among all in-store displays regarding the visit count, fixation count and total fixation duration. Additionally, a representation of the displays visual attention measures was performed (Figure 3)

The effect of the visual attention measures of in-store displays on the low-involvement product choice (or its likelihood to buy) were obtained by EVIEWS 10, and eye-tracking data was processed by within-subject repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA). More specifically, analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were

Table 1. Eye-Tracking Visual Attention Measures

Display Message Content	Eye-Tracking Visual Attention Measures		
	Visit Count *(times)*	Fixation Count *(times)*	Total Fixation Duration *(ms)*
	Means		
Price	3.37 (28%)	8.75 (27%)	3517 (30%)
Sensory	3.25 (27%)	9.08 (28%)	3217 (27%)
Price-sensory	3.85(31%)	10.2 (31%)	3545 (30%)
No message (control variable)	1.69 (14%)	4.42 (14%)	1444 (13%)
F- values	50.12*	70.06 *	73.75*

Notes: * Indicates significant effect at a significance level of $P<0.001$

performed on the total fixation duration data for each of the three defined AOIs (price, sensory and price-sensory in-store displays) to determine which variations had a significant impact on the attention captured by each AOI. Further, successive mean equality tests were performed, cross-selling the total AOIs fixation duration with the final product choice.

To test H1-H3 we have analysed the relationship between the total fixation duration on the three types of in-store displays (price, sensory and price-sensory) and the final product decision choice for each category of low-involvement products using independent t tests. Notably, we aimed to analyse if the amount of time spent by each individual browsing each AOI increased the likelihood of low-involvement product choices. Findings show that there is a positive relationship between the time spent by participants looking to in-store displays and the likelihood to buy the low-involvement product containing the respective message as discussed below for each of the three hypotheses.

H1 predicted that in-store displays with price content increase choices of low-involvement products. To test H1 a null hypothesis was postulated stating that, in average, the time that participants spend looking at the price in-store display content is the same, independently of choosing the low-involvement product associated with the price message or any other type of message. The results of the t-tests indicate that the product decision choice on low-involvement products is dependent on the average time spent looking at the price in-store displays message. Indeed, the product choice decisions on low-involvement products placed by a price in-store display are associated, in average, to a higher time spent looking at price mesage content (4336 *ms),* when compared to all the other products (M= 3017 *ms)* (see table 2). Thus, H1 was supported.

Table 2. The relevance of in-store price displays on low-involvement product choice

Product Choice	Total Fixation Duration Price In-Store Displays		
	Mean (ms)	Std. Dev. (ms)	
Product with price in-store display	4336	2394	t=4.73, $p \leq 0.001$
Products with other types of in-store display	3017	1890	

Notes: one-tailed t test for the equality of means

Table 3. The influence of visual attention on the likelihood of choosing the low-involvement product with in-store price display

In-Store Displays	Coefficient	p-value
Price	0.000106	0.000
Sensory	-0.000341	0.017
Price-sensory	-0.00000108	0.945
No message	0.00005084	0.005

Moreover, a linear probability regression analysis was conducted regarding the influence of the time spend looking to the displays messages on the product choice made by participants, who have chosen the product with a price in-store display. The results revealed that the price and sensorial in-store displays have a significant impact on the low-involvement product choice. Hence, the price in-store display is the most predictive in-store display ($p < 0,001$). Moreover, findings demonstrate that the more time participants spend looking at the price message, the higher is the probability of choosing the low-involvement product placed next to an in-store price display. In particular, each *ms* spend looking at the price message, increases the likelihood of chosing the product associated with that message in 0.000106 percentage points, caeteris paribus ($p < 0.01$). Moreover, the findings also demonstrate that the effect of the sensory message is statistically significant, since the more time participants spend looking at a sensory message, the lower is the probability of choosing the product with a price message (see table 3).

H2 predicted that in-store displays with sensory content increase choices of low-involvement products. As in H1, the results of the t-tests reveal that are significant interactions between the average time spend looking at the price in-store displays message and the low-involvement product decision choice. Hence, the choices of products placed next to a sensory in-store display are, in average, associated with

Table 4. The relevance of sensory in-store display on low involvement product choice

Product Choice	Total Fixation Duration Sensory In-Store Displays		
	Mean (ms)	Std. Dev. (ms)	
Product with sensory in-store display	3917	1927	t=4.69, $p \leq 0.01$
Products with other types of in-store display	3073	1807	

Notes: one-tailed t test for the equality of means

Table 5. The influence of visual attention on the likelihood of choosing the low-involvement product with price sensory in-store display

In-Store Displays	Coefficient	p-value
Price	-0.0000209	0.014
Sensory	0.0000770	0.000
Price-sensory	-0.0000225	0.024
No message	0.0000356	0.009

Table 6. The relevance of price-sensory in-store displays on low-involvement product choice

Product Choice	Total Fixation Duration Sensory In-Store Displays		
	Mean (ms)	Std. Dev. (ms)	
Product with price sensory in-store display	4402	1827	t=5.93, $p \leq 0.01$
Products with other types of in-store display	3030	1675	

Notes: one-tailed t test for the equality of means

Table 7. The influence of visual attention on the likelihood of choosing the low-involvement product with price sensory in-store display

In-Store Displays	Coefficient	p-value
Price	-0.0000427	0.001
Sensory	0.0000285	0.059
Price-sensory	-0.000119	0.000
No message	0.00000440	0.822

a longer fixation duration (3917 *ms*) when compared to other products (M= 3073 *ms)* (see table 4). Consequently, H2 was supported.

Additionally, results from the linear probability regression analysis demonstrate that all in-store displays have a significant impact on the product choice. Hence, the sensory in-store display is the most predictive display ($p < 0{,}001$). Notably, results show that the more time participants spend looking at the sensory in-store display, the higher is the probability of choosing the product with a sensory message. Indeed, each *ms* spend looking at the sensory message increases the probability of product choice in 0.0000770 percentage points, caeteris paribus ($p< 0.001$). Moreover, it is shown that the effect of the price and price-sensory message is statistically significant, since the more time participants spend looking at those messages the lower is the probability of choosing the product associated with those in-store displays (see table 5).

Finally, H3 predicted that in-store displays with price-sensory content increase choices of low-involvement products. Similarly to H1 and H2, the results of the t-tests reveal that are significant interactions between the average time spend looking at the price-sensory in-store displays and the low-involvement product decision choice. Hence, the choices of products placed next to a price-sensory in-store display are, in average, associated with a longer fixation duration (4402 *ms*) when compared to other products (M= 3030 *ms)* (see table 6). Consequently, H3 was supported.

Additionally, results from the linear probability regression analysis demonstrate that the more time participants spend looking at the price-sensory in-store display, the higher is the probability of choosing the product with a price-sensory message. Indeed, each *ms* spend looking at the price-sensory message increases the likelihood of product choice in 0.000119 percentage points, caeteris paribus ($p< 0.001$). Furthermore, it is demonstrated that the effect of the price and sensory message alone is statistically significant. Thus, the more time participants spend looking at price messages, the lower is the probability of choosing the product associated with price-sensory messages ($p< 0.01$). Conversely, the more time participants spend looking at sensory messages, the higher is the probability of choosing a product with a price-sensory message ($p< 0.10$) (see Table 7).

To conclude, the qualitative analysis of the words elicited by affective and cognitive-affective displays has shown that all sensory tags generated associations to positive emotions, feelings or scenarios where participants saw themselves using the home décor products. Indeed, the results demonstrate that the majority of participants associate “winter delights” (candlesticks in-store displays) to warmth (15%) and cozyness (14%). Moreover, the majority of participants associate “enjoy your fika” (mugs in-store displays) to coffee and tea (25%), socializing (12%), and enjoyment. Regarding the message “feel the softness” the results show that the majority of participants associate its content to usage situations (24%), softness

(19%) and purity (5%). Finally, the quantitative analysis of words elicited by the message "bring colour to your kitchen" reveal that the majority of participants make strong associations to food (21%), storage (13%), and spices (11%).

DISCUSSION

This research aims to analyse if the visual attention vary according to the in-store displays message content (price, sensory and price-sensory). More specifically, it investigates if in-store displays with price, sensory and price-sensory messages increase the likelihood of choosing low-involvement products. Our eye-tracking experiment show that the total fixation duration is a predictive of low involvement product choice for all home décor products. Importantly, the eye-tracking experiment´s results suggest that participants who have chosen the product placed near price, sensory, price-sensory in-store displays are those who spent more time looking at those areas of interest. The findings of the eye-tracking experiment validate previous studies that demonstrated that looking at a particular area of interest increase the likelihood of buying products (e.g. Krajbich, Armel & Rangel, 2010; Behe, Bae, Huddleston & Sage, 2015; Clement, Kristensen & Grønhaug (2013). The impact of the degree of visual attention on product choice is particularly valuable since it may allow retailers to manipulate the perceptual salience of bottom-up factors (e.g. in-store messages) in order to attract consumers´ visual attention to low involvement products and influence their product choice. This stresses the importance of designing merchandising plans that strategically include in-store displays according to the level of required selective visual attention and typology of low involvement products.

Another interesting finding is that participants are more responsive to cognitive content messages (price) than affective messages (sensory) alone. This stresses the relevance of cognitive stimuli, such as price, in the context of low involvement products considered as a whole and consequently on the product choice decision. Nevertheless, as our study demonstrates participants are prone to devote more time processing in-store displays messages if prices (cognitive stimuli) are combined with sensory messages (affective stimuli), which increases the likelihood of choosing those low involvement products. Our research on the visual salience of price-sensory content message is broadly consistent with a prior study conducted by Dennis, Brakus & Alamanos (2014), who demonstrated that affective-content digital signage messages result in more positive attitudes than cognitive-content messages, when consumers search for or buy products. Our research is also consistent with previous studies that shed light on the relevance of affect-as-information heuristic cues to capture selective visual attention during the in-store navigation and decision making (Otterbring, Wästlung, Gustafsson, & Shams, 2014; Otterbring, Wästlung

& Gustafsson, 2016). These findings are extremely relevant in the context of low involvement products since consumers are usually categorized as price-sensitive and tend to evaluate products based on superficial and salient cues (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Hence, our research support the conclusions from prior sensory marketing studies which consider that sensory stimuli have a greater level of processing when compared to cognitive stimuli and led to spontaneous generation of imagery (Vetter & Newen, 2014; Krishna, Cian & Sokolova, 2016). In this context, we conclude that price-sensory content in-store displays increase the likelihood of choosing low-involvement products by capturing a higher degree of visual attention and immersion in the message content. Indeed, whereas the price content messages create conscious triggers targeting price-sensititive consumers´ needs, the sensory content messages create unconscious triggers which lead to spontaneous generation of imagery in consumers´ mind. By activating sponteanous imagery, the sensory content messages deviate consumers from the price goal-driven stimuli, by calling their attention to the sensory characteristics of the low-involvement products from an holistic perspective. In that regard, it can be claimed that price-sensory in-store displays generate associations to positive emotions, feelings or scenarios where participants may see themselves using the home décor products.

To conclude, merchandising strategies are crucial to boost sales in an ever increasing competitive market. Creating traffic towards a product category or launching a new brand or product line require innovative and customized merchandising strategies to attract shoppers´ attention. In-store displays might work as an effective means to motivate shoppers to take action especially when they are searching for low-involvement products. Our study shows that scholars can analyse the relevance of in-store displays apart from their traditional role of signalling good deals in utilitarian shopping situations. In this research, the authors demonstrated empirically for the first time that different types of in-store displays have different effects on visual attention and the likelihood of choosing low-involvement products. More specifically, our study shows the importance of extending research in the field of in-store communication since most of the previous research in retailing has surprisingly neglected the importance of sensory imagery in capturing selective attention. Moreover, future knowledge on how shoppers fixate their attention on different types of in-store displays with respect to specific merchandising strategies can provide useful insights to retailers in order to boost sales.

The present study provides some important managerial implications in the field of the merchandising management for low involvement products. Firstly, it suggests that shoppers might spent more time and effort searching for low involvement products if in-store displays captivate their visual attention and elicit their sensory imagery. These findings are very useful for category management since it allows to allocate cognitive, affective and cognitive-affective displays to products according to their sales rotation or product launch. Secondly, sensory messages can be used by retailers to highlight product intrinsic characteristics at the same time they are inducing positive feelings towards low-involvement products (for example: "Feel the softness" and "Winter delights").

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study is not without limitations, which are mainly due to its preliminary nature in the context of an eye tracking lab. Additional research is needed in a real store environment to analyse the impact of different types of in-store displays in visual attention and product choice by considering other retail stimuli at the same time. Although our research design has proved to be effective by combining eye-tracking with a qualitative analysis of the words elicited in order to access what areas of interest the participants were looking at and the feelings and emotions that emerged as a result of sensory imagery, other visual methods might be of interest to explore in future research (e.g. visual ethnography, visual semiotics and visual rhetoric – see Husić-Mehmedović, Omeragić, Batagelj & Kolar, 2017). Other important limitation is that our study focus only at some types of home décor products (mugs, towels, candelsticks and spice jars). In this regard, replications are needed by considering several categories of low-involvement products in order to generalize our findings.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Bottom-Up Factors: Stimuli with visual salience (e.g., colour, contrast) that impact on consumers' visual attention.

Consumers' Eye Movements: Voluntary or involuntary movement of the eyes, that assists consumers in tracking or fixating at visual stimuli.

Eye-Tracking: A consumer neuroscience tool to investigate and quantify gaze patterns and eye movements towards a particular area of interest.

In-Store Displays: Merchandise material with promotional messages that draws the attention of consumers to particular products.

In-Store Displays With Sensory Content: Merchandise material containing affective messages that elicit sensory imagery.

Low-Involvement Products: Products with low levels of cognitive processing in which price is the key driver of product choice.

Visual Attention: A mental ability that allows consumers to select stimuli, supports decision-making processes and significantly influences product choices.

Chapter 3
The Sensory Dimension of Sustainable Retailing:
Analysing In-Store Green Atmospherics

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ABSTRACT

The chapter contributes to recent debate on retailing and sustainability, addressing the role of atmospherics in affecting consumer perceptions. First, after reviewing the relevant literature about sustainable retailing, this research addresses some practices oriented towards sustainability that can be implemented by a retailer, and how they can be communicated to consumers. Then, using an experimental design, the authors test the impact of sustainability-oriented visual atmospherics on consumer perceptions and intentions. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of past and current sustainability research in retailing, with a particular emphasis on store atmospherics. Future research should try to integrate the findings by investigating other sensory stimuli, such as tactile or auditory ones.

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INTRODUCTION

Challenges and concerns related to environmental sustainability issues are assuming a central role in both academic research and practice. Recent literature has analysed environmental sustainability issues from various angles, and focusing on multiple contexts including retailing. Indeed, retailers play a central role in communicating sustainable practices to consumers, given their close relationship with end consumers.

Environmental concerns are increasingly receiving scholarly attention, in response to the relevance of the topic from the perspective of both firms and consumers (Newton et al., 2015). To align themselves with this trend, retailers are facing the need to communicate their sustainable orientation effectively to consumers, in both offline (Tjärnemo & Södahl, 2015) and online (Kang & Kim, 2017) settings. Notably, a store assumes the role of a "central node" between retailers and consumers (Lehner, 2015) where sustainability-related elements can be effectively communicated to consumers. This is the reason why the majority of sustainability-related marketing activities are carried out in store and exploit the multiple cognitive and sensory stimuli to which consumers can be exposed in a store (Kumar & Polonsky, 2019). The previous literature has addressed atmospherics as the controllable characteristics of retail space which entice customers to enter the store, shop, and purchase (Foster & McLelland, 2015). Although prior research has thoroughly discussed the relevant effects of store atmospherics in general, no research has addressed their role in conveying sustainability-related associations. This is not a trivial issue, since research has shown that environmental concern is a multi-faceted construct (Magnier & Schooermans, 2015) that builds on both inferences drawn from situational elements (Ertz, Karakas &Sarigollu,, 2016) and individual dispositional attitudes (Brick & Lewis, 2016; Kim et al., 2017). Attitude is explained as the amount of feeling for or against a stimulus or, in other words, an affect or a general evaluative reaction (Bagozzi, 1978).

Although research in the field of retailing has highlighted the fact that retailers' actions are capable of shaping the sustainability-related perceptions, choices and consumption practices of consumers, the analysis of the specific tools that can be adopted by retailers to convey sustainability-related messages has received scant academic attention in the past (Fuentes & Fredriksson, 2016). In this vein, store atmospherics play a pivotal role, in that they might both contribute to creating a consistent overall store image (Baker, Grewal & Parasuraman,1994) and spill over into the evaluation of the products on the shelves of the retailer (Turley & Milliman, 2000). However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, the effect of sustainability-related store atmospherics on consumers' evaluations is still an underexplored topic in the literature.

This chapter aims to fill this research gap by advancing the theory that sustainability-related store atmospherics exert a positive effect on consumer perceptions. The present research focuses on visual atmospherics.

To fulfil this purpose, the present research focuses on sustainability-related atmospheric cues, and then develops a theoretical model that is tested in an experimental study conducted in the personal care industry setting.

In doing this, the present research takes the original step of combining the literature on store atmospherics with the literature on green consumption, focusing on the "silent" communication role played by store atmospherics in transferring and reinforcing consumers' perceptions of the sustainability of products. In a context where the importance of sustainable green products is growing, it is relevant to understand whether store atmospherics play an active role in informing and shaping the sustainability of the retailer's offer as a whole.

LITERATURE BACKGROUND

The Concept of Sustainable Retailing

Consumer consumption of goods and services has strongly increased worldwide, leading to a depletion of natural resources, and serious damage to the environment (Chen & Chai, 2010). Consumers have informed companies of their need for green products, and companies have started to produce their products in a more sustainable way (Acuti et al., 2019; Bellucci et al., 2019; Schmeltz, 2012). Marketing academics gave some attention to sustainability issues in the 1970s, but it was only in the late 1980s that the idea of green marketing emerged; from this starting point, sustainability became the subject of a great deal of market research (Peattie & Crane, 2005).

In the last decade, the concept of sustainability has been contextualized in the retail field by the literature, which has addressed all the practices that could be implemented by retailers in order to be sustainable and to communicate their sustainable activities – such as CO2 reduction, improvements in store energy performance, and human resources health policies. A clear definition of a sustainable retailer does not yet exist; however, authors interpret the term "sustainable retailer", according to the definition given by the Commission of the European Communities (2001), as a retailer who integrates environmental and social concerns in its business operations and in its interactions with stakeholders, on a voluntary basis.

The literature on sustainable retailing refers to other similar concepts such as greenness, responsibility and ethics in relation to retailers' activity. Despite the differences among these frameworks, evidence of confusion among the constructs is readily apparent. Often, researchers adopt the terms "green", "responsible", "ethical" and "sustainable" interchangeably, and definitional uncertainty continues to cloud the conception of sustainability within the retailing literature. According to Schwartz and Carroll (2007), sustainability originally focused on protecting the natural environment, but over time the construct has been broadened to take into account societal impacts in general, including concern for future generations. In addition, the CSR literature suggests that companies aiming for sustainability need to perform not against a single, financial bottom line but against a triple bottom line (Rugimbana, Quazi & Keating, 2008). Retailers' motivations to engage in sustainable initiatives are not solely rooted in the law or ethical motives. Retailers are also aware that their stakeholders are increasingly evaluating them according to their socially and environmentally responsible behaviour (Roman, 2007; Schramm-Klein, Morschett & Swoboda, 2015). Despite the growing role of the social and economic dimensions of sustainability, environmental issues are now the most commonly reported reasons for initiatives amongst top retailers (Jones, Comfort & Hillier, 2005). Indeed, retailers are seen as vital actors in environmental sustainability, because of their size and their strategic placement between different supply chain actors (Chkanikova & Mont, 2015).

Sustainable Practices Implemented by Retailers

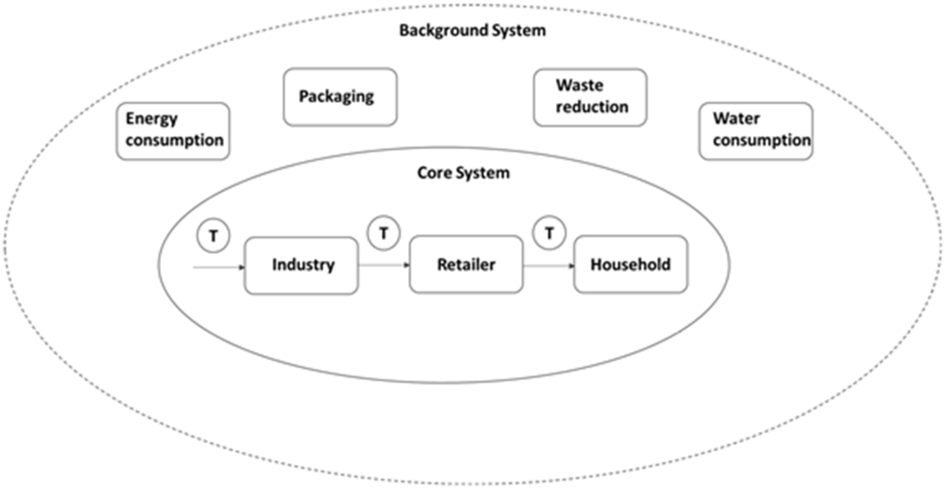
To be consistent with its core principle, sustainability should be applied to the entire supply chain, rather than to just one part of it (Vasileiou & Morris, 2006). Thus, the responsibility of the retailer is not merely to behave in a sustainable way, but also to be aware of the activities of the actors in the supply chain. In order to broaden the idea of the practices that can be implemented by sustainable retailers, the authors refer to the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), which represents a key analytical approach used by the international scientific community in the assessment of the sustainability of economic activities (Benedetto, 2013). In particular, in order to review the literature about sustainable retailing practices authors were inspired by the framework proposed by Davis and Sonesson (2008) related to the food supply chain, and the authors adapted this to the purpose of analysing retailers within various industries. The framework can be seen in Figure 1. The Core system refers to sustainable practices implemented for the transfer of products from the bottom of the chain to the top. Within the Core system, the transport of products represents the main activity on which actors have to focus in order to be more sustainable. The Background system refers to the main areas that suppliers – and retailers – should make more sustainable.

Core system. The literature highlights the responsibility of supply chain managers for supplier selection and logistics decisions, and their role in operationalizing the sustainability of their companies' activities in terms of their impact on environment and society (Perry & Towers, 2013). Since retailers are no more sustainable than their supply chain (Krause, Vachon &Klassen, 2009), addressing the supply chain perspective is key in implementing sustainability. Logistics decisions are even more relevant, because delays and inefficiencies in distribution and transportation by retailers result in high costs and also contribute to waste (Fikar, 2018). Retailers must also invest in their transport systems during the selection process for suppliers. In fact, in some cases the suppliers' compliance is required, in terms of reverse logistics and the design of logistics networks, to allow the management of product returns at end of life (Linton, Klassen & Jayaraman, 2007). Finally, to increase flexibility, distributors can also develop joint initiatives with suppliers, in terms of product design and development processes, thus ensuring competitive advantage spread over the entire supply chain.

Energy consumption. All industries are deeply influenced by the world energy consumption. Even if there is a strong focus on energy efficiency and increasing the conversion to renewable energy, it is still fundamental that great efforts are made to reduce global energy needs in order to promote sustainability (Ascione et al., 2019). In this dynamic, retailers should first reduce their emissions. For instance, retailers have many options when it comes to the efficient use of energy in conditioning their retail space. Geothermal heat pumps, advanced variable air volume systems, and new automated control systems are all examples of ways in which retailers can recoup significant monies in the greening of their environments (Bieak & Joseph-Mathews, 2009). Coop – the biggest grocery retailer in Italy – reduces energy consumption by adopting remote control and regulation systems, condensing boilers, free cooling and heat recovery from expelled air, heat recovery from food fridges, energy-saving lamps, the use of natural light inverters on pumps, freezer covers, systems to save water and collect rainwater, and the use of energy from renewable sources (Coop, 2019). Coop suppliers are asked to reduce their energy consumption too.

Packaging. The traditional function of packaging is to protect products so as to avoid generating losses along the supply chain to the final consumer (Williams, Wikstrom & Lofgren, 2008). However, packaging also constitutes a means to differentiate a product, by providing characteristics that consumers can value positively (Garcia-Arca, Prado-Prado & Gonzalez-Portela Garrido,, 2014). Companies can decide to maintain the efficiency of the packaging function, to implement sustainable practices, to facilitate recycling and reuse, and to use sustainable raw materials (Monnot et al., 2015). There are examples of companies that have eliminated all packaging, collaborating with suppliers that do not use plastic for packaging. Indeed, a growing number of supermarkets sell food without packaging in an effort to reduce the toll of plastic on the environment. The first zero-waste shop, Unpackaged, opened in London in 2007. Today, there are around 150 packaging-free markets around the world (Bepakt, 2019).

*Figure 1. Sustainable retailing practices from a supply chain perspective**



Waste reduction. Companies are under increasing pressure to reduce their waste footprints. Indeed, companies are producing a tremendous amount of waste, and the way it is managed and disposed of is likely to have a critical impact on the future of our planet (Cicatiello et al., 2016). According to the holistic approach of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), systems should be designed so that some or all of the waste management options (i.e. source reduction, recycling, combustion and landfill) are used as complements to one another in order to efficiently manage solid waste (Revilla, Dodd & Hoover, 2001). A particular environmental issue for grocery retailers is food waste. The world has become more aware of this issue – with reference to both to producers and retailers – because wasting food means wasting resources such as water, cropland and energy throughout the whole supply chain (Garrone et al., 2016). For this reason, Tesco (2019) has introduced a series of industry-leading initiatives to reduce waste, including offering surplus food that is safe for human consumption to local charities and community groups. Moreover, the company works with its suppliers to broaden their product specifications and help to manage bumper crops. Other companies are trying to eliminate plastic from their services, reducing the amount of non-reusable waste. For example, by 2020, Starbucks aims to be completely “strawless”. To do this, the company has designed, developed and manufactured a strawless lid that will become the standard for all iced coffee, tea and espresso beverages (Hong et al, 2019). This new design is already in use throughout the US and Canada, and is now being piloted in China, Japan, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Water consumption. Companies are the world's largest water users, with nearly two-thirds of all water consumption being for the production of ingredients for corporate supply chains (Jefferies et al., 2012). Fortunately, many companies are adopting sustainable water use practices to manage water-related business risks and to strengthen their brand reputations. Moreover, because of the increasing cost of fresh and waste water, the treatment and reuse of low-contaminated processed water from producers is gaining ever more importance (Mavrov & Bélières, 2000). Carrefour, for example, is working upstream with its suppliers to reduce water consumption in the supply chain and the water use of its stores (Sinha, 2011). On the one hand, suppliers are encouraged to reduce their water consumption by installing drip irrigation systems, and are provided with tools for self-assessing their compliance with the principles of sustainable development and the Carrefour quality specifications for their products. On the other hand, rainwater is recovered and used to clean certain areas (such as car parks and floors).

In-Store Communication of Sustainability to Consumers

A store is the last step in the retailer supply chain. Thus, its role is central in communicating the sustainability of products in the assortment. According to Grant (2007), if there is to be a real change in consumption behaviour, it is necessary for consumers to be sure that, when they buy ecological products, they are effectively contributing to improvements in environmental sustainability, and that the quality of such goods (as regards their functionality and aesthetic dimensions) is comparable to that of the conventional offers, with the price not being excessive. In fact, if a product is to be sustainable, competitiveness in terms of quality or price is not enough: the consumer must be definitively convinced of the real usefulness of his commitment. This aim can be achieved through in-store communication. There are many tools that retailers can adopt in order to communicate their green offer; these range from paper to online advertising (including advertising in traditional media such as television or radio), and include sustainability reports (Wilson, 2015). The store itself can be a relevant location for the communication of sustainability to consumers. First, eco-labelling is a way to encourage consumers to adopt more sustainable consumption patterns through the purchase of sustainable products (Horne, 2009). Without such labels, it is still possible to take sustainability factors into account – for example, by preferring locally produced products because of a belief that the transportation of goods over long distances is not good for the environment – but this rests on uncertain ground and requires more indirect inferences to be drawn from other product characteristics (Grunert, Hieke & Wills, 2014). Secondly, the literature underlines the role of the shop assistant in driving sustainable product choices. Shop assistants can work towards promoting sustainable consumption by showing the various forms of green shopping that are possible, by educating consumers in sustainability issues, and by motivating consumers via positive feedback and dialogue (Fuentes & Fredriksson, 2016). Retailers can also improve their sustainability commitment communication by developing a private green label that integrates their sustainable offers, or through a green brands assortment. By adopting green brands and fostering their green brand image, retailers can improve their green brand equity and consumer satisfaction (Chen, 2010). Finally, in addition to the adoption of a sustainable assortment, a retailer can use the design of their store in order to communicate sustainability to consumers. In particular, they can change the atmosphere, as discussed in depth in the next paragraph.

Sustainability-Oriented Atmospherics

Environmental psychology research has produced a wide range of studies examining the interactions between the physical environment and human behaviour, in many different settings (like houses, offices and schools). In order to understand the impact that the store environment can have on people's attitudes, the literature often refers to a model developed in this field of research by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), which proposed that the sensory variables of the environment, the rate of information (the amount of information in the environment) and individual differences in emotional responses to the environment, can induce people to approach or leave a particular place (de Farias et al., 2014). Mehrabian and Russell based their work on the SOR paradigm, according to which external stimuli (S) are processed by an organism (O) and give rise to different acceptance or rejection (R) behaviour by the individual, in relation to the environment (Donovan et al., 1994). In the retail context, the stimuli considered are the store's environmental signals (atmospheric cues) (S), which influence the inner aspects of consumers (O) and which then have an effect on the approach / avoidance behaviour (R) towards the store (Kumar & Kim, 2014).

Since 1973, when Kotler defined the term "atmospherics", the world of retailing has recognized that the atmosphere of the place where products are bought has an important influence in the purchase decision process and can be captured through the five human senses: sight, sound, smell, touch and taste (Jalil et al., 2016). Although the latter sense was not included by Kotler (1973), since – according to him – the atmosphere is seen, listened to, felt and smelt, but not savoured, recent studies on sensory marketing have highlighted the potential of this sense to influence consumers' purchasing behaviour. Sensory marketing research tends to focus separately on the various atmospherics. More recent studies have also advanced the literature by considering the interaction among different atmospherics (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001; Summers & Hebert, 2001).

Newman and Patel (2004) underlined the importance of store atmospherics, conceptualizing them as one of the crucial factors and determinants of store choice. Store atmospherics play a fundamental role in the consumer's experience, because they serve as "silent language" in the communication to consumers and may influence the perception of the product in the store (Hasan & Mishra, 2015). In this vein, atmospherics can affect consumers' perceptions and enhance the sustainable value of products.

Visual atmospherics include the colour, brightness, size and shape of the retail environment. Recent research in the psychological field has confirmed that the colour and brightness of a space are the visual cues that influence consumers most strongly (Biswas et al., 2017). Indeed, studies suggest that modifying the visual atmospherics, in terms of lighting, the shades of light colours and the internal colour scheme of the store (that is, changing the colour of the walls), can influence purchase intentions and sales (Spence et al., 2014). Among others, Naz and Epps (2004) investigated the emotional reactions to five different colours: red, yellow, green, blue and purple, confirming that green as the input colour produces the greatest number of positive responses in terms of perceptions. Emotional reactions to the colour green include feelings of relaxation and calm, followed by happiness, comfort, peace and hope. Green is also associated with the environment (forests, trees and nature), and therefore also arouses feelings of comfort, and soothing emotions (Barli et al., 2012). From a sustainability standpoint, the use of daylight can be a green factor because it reduces reliance on artificial illumination and therefore reduces energy use (Bieak Kreidler & Joseph-Mathews, 2009). For instance, The Body Shop – one of the leading retailers in the beauty and cosmetics industry – carefully manages its store atmospherics to ensure that they successfully convey sustainability-related perceptions of the products: led lights are installed in the store as well as wood walls and shelves combined with light beige and green dominant colours inside the store to enhance consumers' perceptions of sustainability.

Auditory atmospherics can be used by retailers in communicating their attention to the environment and can affect consumers' sensory perceptions and behaviour. Many retailers play a specific genre of music within their stores. Victoria's Secret, for example, plays classical music, creating an atmosphere that evokes luxury and elegance, in line with the image of the brand. Banana Republic uses a musical genre that consists of a fusion between classical jazz and hip hop, to reinforce its brand image. Indeed, when a consumer comes across a stimulus in a store, s/he processes it and begins to form a first mental image of the store. This element of the store atmosphere can influence a wide range of behaviour: it can increase the number of products sold (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001), influence purchase intentions (Baker et al., 2002), and decrease the perception of the time spent purchasing and waiting (Eroglu, Machleit & Chebat, 2005). Furthermore, on a cognitive level, it can also allow emotional ties to be created with the client, and reduce feelings of anxiety (Oakes, 2000). An acoustic stimulus may therefore have positive effects on emotional, perceptual, temporal and behavioural variables (Garlin & Owen, 2006). Some studies (Oakes, 2000; Yalch & Spangenberg, 2000) have shown that the feeling of pleasure derived from a musical recording can improve customer's assessment of the store and its elements, including the products and the assortment, while other authors have found that the musical element only has an effect if it is in harmony with the other store atmospherics (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001; Morrison & Beverland, 2003). According to Vida and colleagues (2007), the perception of coherence between the music and the store environment and its retail mix has a positive effect on the consumer experience, so that the consumer evaluates the products inside the store more favourably and, consequently, spends more time and money in the store. In this vein, the authors suggest that music that is coherent with the green offer and green atmospherics of a retailer can have a positive influence on the consumer's value perception and attitude towards the store. There are no studies about sustainability-related auditory stimuli, but authors can hypothesize that these vary depending on their level of gentleness, which the previous literature has proposed is a driver of the perception of sustainability (Luchs et al., 2010). Specifically, classical music would convey a perception of naturalness, whilst a techno melody would be associated with a more artificial environment. For example, Naturasi – an Italian retailer that provides over 4000 biological and natural products - carefully selects the store music, using a natural sound to enhance the perceived naturalness of the store and the products. Music and images can be distinguished on the basis of their essential characteristics (tone, rhythm, shape and colour), and, in the same way, an olfactory stimulus can be measured according to its quality and intensity. Quality refers to whether an odour is perceived as pleasant or unpleasant, while intensity relates to the degree of concentration of the odour (Spangenberg, Crowley & Henderson, 1996). For example, the literature has found that evaluations of people and products are enhanced when the people or products are scented. These effects appear to be moderated, for both advertisements and products, by the congruency of the scent with the object (Ellen & Bone, 1998). According to Mitchell (1994), scents that match the environment can lead to emotions and memories associated with the store and the product sold, encouraging a purchase, while an incongruous smell can trigger emotions and recall irrelevant memories that are not compatible with the store and its products, and negatively affect the purchase context. In this regard, de Farias and colleagues asserted that smell in a retail environment leads to differences in consumers' valuations and behaviour (de Farias, 2014, p. 91); however, there is no evidence about olfactory atmospherics related to sustainability. Sustainability can be conveyed if air fresheners adopt eco-friendly elements. According to Bieak Kreidler and Joseph-Mathews (2009), air quality is typically expressed through temperature, humidity, air circulation and ventilation. "Increasing air quality results in a more comfortable and noticeably healthier interior through monitoring air exchange with the outdoor environment and controlling the level of humidity in an interior environment" (Bieak Kreidler & Joseph-Mathews, 2009, p. 236).

Only a few researchers have investigated the effects of tactile and gustatory atmospherics on consumers. Tactile atmospherics can be described in terms of softness, smoothness and temperature (Kotler, 1973), and are among the most crucial elements for the evaluation of products by consumers. Often, sight and smell alone are not sufficient to evaluate products or make purchasing decisions, as they omit important information such as the shape, strength, weight and consistency of a product, which can instead be communicated through physical contact. Gustatory cues are strictly linked to products – and not to the store, as is intuitively clear – so they will be not considered in this chapter.

This research focuses on visual atmospherics, which often attract the most attention and resources from retailers and brands (Spence et al., 2014). Indeed, according with Calvert et al. (2004), within cognitive neuroscience, it was long thought that visual cues dominated over the other sensory cues in terms of perception.

Specifically, this research considers store materials and colours. Store materials, which have the potential of embracing certain personal values or identities (e.g., environmentalists) can positively influence perceptions and attitudes of consumers, that often prefer store attributes congruent with these their values (Hu & Jasper, 2006). Color is the most predominant visual stimulus in store design and is widely suggested to have an effective symbolic appeal in retailing (Cho & Lee, 2017).

Visual Sustainability-Oriented Atmospherics

Store Atmospherics and Green Perceived Value

Marketing literature abounds with studies on the importance of environmental and atmospherics variables for determining and improving the consumer shopping experience (Poncin & Mimoun, 2014). Kotler published the first research that noted the importance of the retail atmosphere for purchase decision almost 50 years ago (Kotler, 1973). Since that publication, marketing literature has affirmed the importance of a range of environmental and atmospherics variables. Indeed, atmospherics can induce an environment that attracts customers to a particular location and enhance their purchase behaviors, showing a strong relationship between store atmospherics and consumer behavior (Poncin & Mimoun, 2014). Furthermore, store atmospherics impact on the consumer's perceived value which, in turn, affect the overall consumer behavior (Jalil, Fikry & Zainuddin, 2016; Chang & Tseng, 2013).

In line with the current increase in environmental concern, the discipline of marketing is carving out new ways to satisfy the green needs of consumers and enhance the green value perception of products (Chen & Chang, 2012). Many marketing activities aimed to stimulating and sustaining consumers' green attitudes and behaviour emerged in the 1980s, and literature has consistently underlined that marketing tools can significantly affect consumers' green perceptions about product attributes, ultimately affecting their purchase intentions (Jain & Kaur, 2004). In this vein, store atmospherics affect purchasing behaviour in three ways: by creating attention, creating a message and creating affect. Indeed, Liu and Jang (2009) discovered that there is a relationship between store atmospherics and the perceived value of the product in the store. Similarly, Schielke and Leudesdorff (2014) demonstrated that lighting – as part of store atmospherics – contribute to consumers' perceptions of naturalness of the store. To the authors' knowledge, however, there is still a gap in the literature on how naturalness perceptions stemming from store atmospherics translate into considerations about the store's green perceived value. Green perceived value can be defined as a consumer's overall appraisal of the net benefit of a product or service between what is received and what is given based on the consumer's environmental desires, sustainable expectations, and green needs (Chen & Chang 2012). The literature does not deny that consumers tend to draw inferences on green perceived value of a product starting from the perceived naturalness of some cues related to the product itself. For instance, consumers have been found to infer the green value of a product from the design elements of the product, such as the perceived naturalness of its packaging (Magnier, Schoormans, & Mugge 2016). Since the literature has demonstrated that design elements of a store can trigger inferences about the value of the store itself (Bonnin & Goudey 2012), authors argue that a similar effect should hold for inferences of a store green perceived value from the perceived naturalness of design elements of a store such as atmospherics.

Therefore, the authors hypothesize that:

H1: Perceived naturalness of store atmospherics has a positive impact on the green perceived value of products.

Green Perceived Value and Store Attitude

Attitude is a well-researched construct in consumer behaviour research. This concept is useful for understanding how consumers combine all of their particular considerations about a store in their minds (Keller, 2003; Morschett, Swoboda & Foscht, 2005).

Understanding the concept of attitude and the elements that affect attitude formation is important for researchers and managers interested in affecting consumers' evaluation of marketing objects, so that they can influence their preferences and tendencies to engage in particular behaviour (Argyriou & Melewar, 2011). In line with the constructive view of attitude, consumers evaluate objects by using their perceptions and the decision context as an information source (Bettman, Luce & Payne, 1998). Thus, consumer attitude is a strong criterion construct in understanding consumers' summative evaluations of a product or store and of their behavioral intentions (Kwun, 2011). According to the retailing literature (Yoo, Park & McInnis, 1998), store evaluations and attitudes can be affected by the specific characteristics of stores, most notably product assortment, price/quality, location, service quality and store atmospherics. Perceived value might have an influence on customer attitude, as the literature widely reports (Swait and Sweeney, 2000: Jin and Gu Suh, 2005). Since attitudes are learned, they are affected by information and experiences (Ruiz-Molina and Gil-Saura, 2008). On the other hand, the fact that attitudes are predispositions to respond leads to their relationship with actual consumer behaviour.

Given the growing attention paid by consumers to sustainability issues (Parsa et al., 2015; Paul, Modi & Patel, 2016), a consumer's perception of a store's environmental responsibility and of a product's sustainability can lead to positive impacts in terms of store attitude and attendance (Kessous, Boncori & Paché, 2016; Thang & Tan, 2003). Thus, retailers enhance the green perceived value of their offer in order to improve the attitude of consumers.

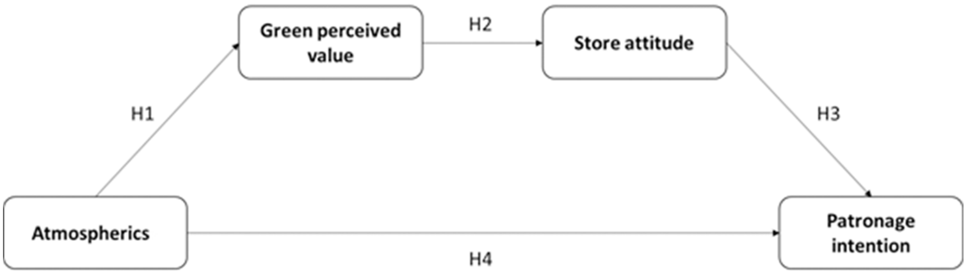
Based on these studies and the call in the literature for further investigation in this area (Joshi & Rahman, 2015), the following hypothesis is framed:

H2: The green perceived value of products has a positive effect on store attitude.

Store Attitude and Patronage Intention

Several studies have suggested that the overall attitude towards a store influences store-related behaviour (Pan & Zinkhan 2006). Indeed, most attitudes studies in the past have empirically verified that attitudes towards an object have an impact on behavioural measures (Koo, 2003; Mackenzie & Lutz, 1989). In particular, store attitude, interpreted as the overall store image, can affect the patronage intention of consumers (Wu, Yeh & Hsiao, 2011). For example, Macintosh and Lockshin (1997) in their retail relationship study reported that store attitude has a positive effect on patronage intention for different types of retail stores. The store patronage intention includes such key concepts as store choice and frequency of visit. An understanding of patronage behavior is a critical issue for retail managers because

Figure 2. Conceptual model



it enables them to identify and target those consumers most likely to purchase (Pan, and Zinkhan, 2006).

Consistently with this stream of research, the authors hypothesize as follows:

H3: Store attitude positively affects consumers' patronage intention.

Since the seminal work by Kotler (1973) that defined atmospherics as "the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability" (Kotler, 1973 p. 50), the literature has expanded to include the notion that atmospherics can also exert a direct impact on consumers' intention to patronize a store and/or to complete their purchases from the store. For instance, Thang and Tan (2003), based on Donovan and Rossiter's (1982) stimulus–organism–response model, found that store atmospherics influence shopping behaviour and the preference for a store.

Atmospherics – interpreted as non-visual store attributes – can be used by companies in order to positively affect consumers' patronage intention. Indeed, store attributes play a vital role in forming consumer attitudes towards a store, and consequently influence consumer behaviour (Nikhashemi et al., 2016), including patronage intention (Wu, Yeh & Hsiao, 2011). According to the literature review of Joshi and Rahman (2015) green store attributes positively affect the consumption of green products and patronage intention, including eco-fashion and food products (Connell, 2010). At the same time, negative store attributes act as constraints on green purchasing (Connell, 2010). Moreover, a positive store experience enhances satisfaction and will lead to increased shopping frequency and, therefore, to increased sales (Koo, 2003). Accordingly, the authors hypothesize that:

H4: Green atmospherics positively affect consumers' patronage intention.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of the empirical study was to test whether and, if so, how visual store atmospherics that convey a higher sense of environmental sustainability lead consumers to have a greater intention to purchase a product from the store via higher green value perceptions and more positive attitudes toward the store. Accordingly, an experimental study was conducted by manipulating store atmospherics (minimally vs. largely sustainability-oriented) in a one-factor between-subject experimental design. Store atmospherics were manipulated by asking individuals to evaluate a picture of a store selling cosmetics and beauty products, where the store materials and colours were more related either to a higher or to a lower sense of sustainability.

Building on the results of previous studies and backed by the results of a pre-test, the minimally sustainability-oriented store atmospherics were implemented by showing iron shelves and wall colours within the red spectrum (dark red), whilst the largely sustainability-oriented store atmospherics consisted of wooden shelves and wall colours within the green spectrum (forest green). The pre-test involved 31 participants (55% were female) and measured the effectiveness of the manipulation through the 3-items scale of Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2012). Cronbach's alpha confirmed the reliability of the scale. The results from the pre-test showed that the high perceived naturalness scenario was perceived as more natural than the low perceived naturalness version (MhighPN= 4.51 vs. MlowPN= 2.60; $F(1,28)=$ 10.150; $p = .004$; $\eta2 =.27$).

No other store feature varied between the two experimental conditions, in order to rule out potential confounding variables that could be ascribed to the products in the assortment or to the store layout. The pictures used as experimental stimuli can be found in the Appendix.

A total of 138 respondents were gathered using social media (median age 27; 70% females) and asked to participate in a survey implemented on Qualtrics. The authors sent surveys to members of social media groups devoted to shopping habits. This choice enabled us to have a more homogeneous group of respondents, according to Geuens and De Pelsmacker (2017). Data were collected in Italy, and the questionnaires were written in English, translated to Italian, and then back- translated into English. The final questionnaire has been revised by two English mother tongue marketing experts. The back-translation method was conducted in order to ensure that the Italian version of the questionnaire had the same content as the English version (Sekaran, 1983). The groups that the authors focused on were not open to the general public (membership requests needed to be approved in advance) and had more than 20,000 members.

Table 1. Scales items

Constructs	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Green perceived value (Chen and Chang, 2012)	This product's environmental functions provide very good value for you	.81
	This product's environmental performance meets your expectations	
	You purchase this product because it has more environmental concern than other products	
	You purchase this product because it is environmental friendly	
	You purchase this product because it has more environmental benefit than other products	
Green skepticism (Goh and Balaji, 2016)	Because environmental claims are exaggerated consumers would be better off if such claims were eliminated	.76
	Most environmental claims are intended to mislead rather than to inform consumers	
	I do not believe in most of the environmental claims made by companies	
Store attitude (Lunardo and Mbengue, 2013)	Favorable/Unfavorable	.91
	Positive/Negative	
Patronage intention (Baker et al. 2002)	I would be willing to buy a product at this store	.91
	I would recommend buying a product in this store to my friends and relatives	
	I would not expect any problems with a product bought in this store	

The participants were first shown the picture of the store. and asked – as in the pre-test – about the perceived naturalness of the store atmospherics serving as experimental stimuli (3-items scale by Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012; Cronbach's Alpha = .86). The particular picture that appeared to each respondent was randomized by the software. Participants were then asked to rate their perceptions of the green value conveyed by the store (Chen & Chang, 2012), their attitude toward the store (Lunardo & Mbengue, 2013), and their patronage intention (Baker et al., 2002). In addition, in order to control for characteristics related to the participants' general beliefs and attitudes towards sustainability-related activities, the respondents were asked to assess and their green scepticism (Goh & Balaji, 2016). After they had provided some socio-demographic information, the participants were thanked and debriefed. Scale items and Cronbach's Alphas are reported in Table 1 below.

Results from the manipulation check support the effectiveness of our manipulation of perceived naturalness: similarly to the pre-test, authors found that the high perceived naturalness scenario was perceived as more natural than the low perceived naturalness version (MhighPN= 4.76 vs. MlowPN= 2.25; $F(1,137)= 135.80$; $p < .001$; $\eta 2 =.50$). The authors predicted that the effect of store atmospherics on an individual's intention to purchase a product from the store would be serially mediated by the perceptions of green value conveyed by the store and attitude towards the store. Accordingly, the authors conducted a sequential mediation analysis with two mediators (Model 6; see Hayes (2013)), plus two covariates (Green Attitude and Green Scepticism) to evaluate the causal sequence: Perceived Naturalness → Green Perceived Value→ Store Attitude →Patronage Intention, yielding a partial mediation (Figure 2). The pathway from Perceived Naturalness to Patronage Intention through Green Perceived Value and Store Attitude was significant and did not include zero (indirect effect = .14, 95% CI: .02 to .32). The authors found also a direct impact of Perceived Naturalness on Patronage Intention (β= .36, 95% CI: .05 to .68), supporting H4 and thereby qualifying as a partial mediation effect. More specifically, Perceived Naturalness was found to exert a significant a positive effect on Green Perceived Value (β= .32, 95% CI: .02 to .63), providing support in favour of H1, and suggesting that store atmospherics that convey higher perceptions of naturalness lead consumers to associate higher levels of green perceived value to the store. In turn, Green Perceived Value was found to significantly and positively affect Store Attitude (β= .58, 95% CI: .37 to .79), thus supporting H2 and suggesting that the higher the green perceived value the higher the overall attitude toward the store. Finally, Store Attitude was found to significantly and positively affect Patronage Intention (β= .76, 95% CI: .62 to .91), consistently with what hypothesized in H3. In other words, the better consumers' attitudes toward the store, the higher their intention to patronize it. It might be worth noting that the two covariates for which the model is controlling exert a significant effect only on Green Perceived Value (respectively, β= .52, 95% CI: .41 to .64 for Green Attitude and β= .15, 95% CI: .02 to .28 for Green Scepticism), but their effect is not significant on any of the other constructs in the model. In other words, individuals' general attitudes and beliefs about sustainability-related activities affect only how they react to the specific green value conveyed by the pictures of the store, and do not affect their attitude towards the store nor their intention to buy a product from the store. Table 2 below summarizes the path coefficients and the indirect effects for the aforementioned mediation model.

Table 2. Path coefficients and indirect effects

	Indirect Effects				
	to Green Perceived Value	**to Store Attitude**	**to Patronage Intention**	**Estimate**	**Simmetric 95% CI**
Perceived Naturalness (PN)	.32* (.15)	.00 (.19)	.36* (.16)		
Green Perceived Value (GPV)		.58** (.11)	-.01 (.10)		
Store Attitude (SA)			.76** (.07)		
Purchase Intention (PI)					
Total				.14 (.17)	-.19, .50
PN → GPV → PI				.00 (.04)	-.09, .18
PN → GPV → SA → PI				.14 (.07)	.02, .32
PN → SA → PI				.00 (.14)	-.29, .28

Note: Standard error in parentheses. N = 138. Direct Effect PN → PI = .36 (.16), 95%CI: .05 to .68.
* = p < .05; ** = p < .001.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Many retailers are working to become more sensitive to environmental issues, as has been shown in many research articles and in corporate non-financial disclosure reports (e.g. Kessous et al., 2016). Indeed, consumers have become more environmentally conscious, and they expect businesses to be more respectful towards the environment. Many retailers have therefore started to manage their stores accordingly.

The results from the empirical analysis clearly show that sustainability-related store atmospherics exert both a direct and an indirect impact on consumers' intentions to patronize the store. The more sustainable the atmospherics, the greater the consumers' intention to visit the store. Interestingly, results from the present research show a mediation path through which this patronage intention unfolds: sustainability-related atmospherics positively affect consumer perceptions about the green value of the store, which, in turn, positively influence general attitudes towards the store, which, ultimately, lead to stronger intentions to visit the store. These results clearly show that there is a spill-over from sustainability-related considerations about the store to more general attitudes and intentions about the store itself. Such a spill-over effect was found to be robust enough to go beyond consumers' general attitudes toward sustainable consumption: indeed, the two covariates measuring individuals' general green attitudes and green scepticism affect only the green perceived value of the store, but do not directly affect store attitudes or patronage intention. This means that retailers should be very careful about the sustainability-related image they convey through their store atmospherics, since these perceptions are incorporated by consumers into their more general perceptions of, and intentions towards, the store.

The present research contributes to the literature in several ways.

First, reviewing the literature on sustainable retailing and sustainable consumption, the authors advance knowledge on sustainable retailing literature, by shedding light on the main features of this field and showing sustainable practices that retailers can adopt. Inspired by the framework proposed by Davis and Sonesson (2008) related to the food supply chain, the authors adapted this to analyse sustainable retailers within various industries.

Second, this research contribute to sustainable consumption literature explaining the mechanisms that underlines the transfer of a sustainability-related image from store atmospherics to consumer perceptions. Specifically, the chapter focuses on green atmospherics - one of the key factors and determinants of store choice and suggests how companies that are committed to sustainability can use sustainable atmospherics to reinforce a positive consumers' association with quality and a consciousness of the environment, as well as stimulating their intention to patronize the store. The importance of research on this topic lies in this fact: retailers need to communicate their sustainability credentials, and atmospherics are an efficient instrument for achieving this goal. This chapter addresses this issue and tests the effect on consumer perceptions and intentions.

To our knowledge, this is the first study that empirically tests the impact of sustainability-related store atmospherics on consumers' intentions, thus offering a novel theoretical explanation on this issue.

This research also presents clear managerial implications. Modern consumers expect companies to be environmentally responsible (Paul et al., 2016). Accordingly, retailers have significantly strengthened their commitment toward a more sustainable production. As sustainability becomes an ever more important part of retailers' strategies (Yang, Song & Tong, 2017), an effective communication of sustainability to consumers is of paramount importance to create positive consumer-brand relationships (Keller, 2003). The research reveals that green atmospherics positively affect consumers' green perceived value, thus creating positive store attitude and patronage intention. In this way, the research helps both practitioners and managers, because it extends scholarly knowledge about the drivers of store sustainability from a consumer perspective, and supports managers' decision about the optimal adoption of atmospherics to convey perceptions of store sustainability.

This study is not without limitations that may provide avenues for future research. On the basis of the results of the present study, it is not possible to say whether consumers are able to distinguish properly between true sustainability-oriented atmospherics and greenwashing activities (Chen & Chang, 2013). Therefore, the results of the present analysis might be taken into careful consideration by retailers who are adopting sustainability-oriented atmospherics with the main purpose of improving their brand image. More research is needed to understand whether and to what extent consumers' green scepticism would change if they were able to detect a greenwashing attempt, and whether this attempt would backfire by changing consumers' overall attitudes and intentions towards the store.

From the results provided in this chapter, future research can be encouraged in the analysis of in-store sustainable practices and communication methods other than atmospherics. As a central issue for retailers, the communication of sustainability to end consumers is a crucial tool in the definition of a retailer's overall image. Future research should seek new evidence about the positive effect of green atmospherics, referring to the other four senses, including touch and hearing. The literature suggests that, in general, atmospherics are useful for improving the perception of store value and the positive intentions of consumers, but does not address how this refers to sustainable consumption. Thus, although the potential of sustainability-related atmospherics has been thoroughly investigated by scholars, their impact has not.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Experiment: Scientific research method which use manipulation and controlled testing to understand causal processes. Generally, one or more variables are manipulated to determine their effect on a dependent variable.

Green Atmospherics: All the stimuli that can be adopted in store to transfer to the consumer an overall image of green store.

Green Marketing: Strategies designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment.

In-Store Communication: Strategies implemented by retailers in the point of sale aiming at activating a sale within the retail environment.

Store Atmospherics: All the stimuli that immerge the consumer while is in the store and influence the purchase decision process. These stimuli can be captured through the five human senses: sight, sound, smell, touch and taste.

Sustainable Practices: Activities implemented by companies in order to reduce or eliminate their negative impact on the environment.

Sustainable Retailing: Combination of promotion of a competitive sector with evaluation of the retail workforce and local communities and the improvement of environmental performance and prudent use of natural resources.

APPENDIX 1

Table 3. Variables Measurement Scales

Constructs	Items	Cronbach's alpha
Green perceived value (Chen & Chang, 2012)	This product's environmental functions provide very good value for you	.81
	This product's environmental performance meets your expectations	
	You purchase this product because it has more environmental concern than other products	
	You purchase this product because it is environmentally friendly	
	You purchase this product because it has more environmental benefit than other products	
Store attitude (Lunardo & Mbengue, 2013)	Favourable/Unfavourable	.91
	Positive/Negative	
Patronage intention (Baker et al., 2002)	I would be willing to buy a product at this store	.91
	I would recommend buying a product in this store to my friends and relatives	
	I would not expect any problems with a product bought in this store	

Figure 3. Stimuli Image 1

Figure 4. Stimuli Image 2

Chapter 4
Emotion Tracking:
Possibilities for Measuring Emotional Consumer Experiences

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ABSTRACT

Previous literature has examined the significance of emotional consumer experiences increasingly pursued by consumers. However, the current knowledge of emotional responses in real-time and real-world consumption settings is still limited. Emotions have previously been measured with observation, self-report, and physiological methods. Digitalization and technological development have, however, advanced these methods as individuals now engage in various self-tracking practices. The chapter introduces emotion tracking as an additional means for measuring emotions. One application, the Emotion Tracker®, was tested by students (n=19) who tracked their emotions (n=617) related to various consumer experiences and reported their user experiences in research diaries. Emotion tracking facilitated real-time and real-world emotion measurement by partly combining the strengths and diminishing the weaknesses of traditional methods. The future of emotion measurement is likely to lie in the combination of subjective and objective self-tracking practices embedded in individuals' everyday lives.

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INTRODUCTION

The interest in self-tracking and self-measurement practices is on the rise. Digitalization and a wide range of new technologies, such as apps, digital media platforms, mobile and wearable digital devices, and smart objects, have enabled individuals to engage in detailed monitoring of various aspects of their lives—their bodies, minds, and emotions (e.g., Grénman, 2019; Lupton, 2014, 2016; Ruckenstein & Pantzar, 2017). Encouraged by the phenomenon of the quantified self (QS), a growing number of people worldwide are now embracing this "metric culture." The QS movement refers to a cultural and social phenomenon of self-tracking using digital technology and a community of people collecting, recording, and sharing personal information and experiences (Lupton, 2014, 2017). The QS supports the notion that numerous self-tracking tools and applications, including fitness, food, and emotion trackers, offer an effective opportunity for individuals to understand their bodies, minds, and daily lives as a series of quantifications that can be examined and acted upon (e.g., Lupton, 2014, 2016; Ruckenstein & Pantzar, 2017).

The current chapter examines the potential of emotion tracking, as a form of self-tracking, in measuring emotional responses in various consumption settings. Here, the particular focus is on hedonic consumption (also referred to as experiential consumption or experiential purchase) and emotional consumer experiences, as they tend to evoke more emotional responses than utilitarian consumption and cultivate consumers' well-being and happiness (e.g., Gilovich, Kumar, & Jampol, 2014; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Mogilner, Aaker, & Kamvar, 2011; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Emotions play an important role in shaping consumer experiences. Emotions have attracted the interest of marketing and consumer researchers for a long time (e.g., Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Richins, 1997), and a rich body of research investigates the role of emotions in various aspects of consumption. Whereas early research focused mainly on emotional responses to advertising (e.g., Edell & Burke, 1987), since then emotions have been addressed in a variety of discussions related to, for example, customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction (e.g., Petzer, De Meyer, Svari, & Svensson 2012), value and value co-creation (e.g., Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008), and more recently emerged topics relating emotions to consumer well-being and happiness (e.g., Gilovich et al., 2014; Mogilner et al., 2011) as well as neuromarketing (e.g., Lee, Brandes, Chamberlain, & Senior, 2017; Plassmann & Weber, 2015).

Research on emotions has evolved through three stages (Watson & Spence, 2007). The *categorical approach* conceptualizes emotions as discrete or "basic" emotions such as joy, interest, sadness, regret, and disappointment (e.g., Izard, 1977; Plutchik, 1980). The *dimensional approach*, in turn, describes qualities that feelings have, such as pleasure, arousal, and dominance (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In addition, the *cognitive appraisal approach* offers an alternative way to explain the nuances of emotions and uses emotions' underlying motivational and evaluative roots to explain their influences on consumer behavior (Watson & Spence, 2007). Often emotion scales from psychology have been applied directly to a consumer context (e.g., Izard, 1977; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Plutchik, 1980; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Yet this has been criticized by several scholars, as scales relevant for psychology may not resemble the emotions felt by individuals in a consumption context (e.g., Richins, 1997).

Instead of concentrating solely on identifying and classifying emotions *per se* or discussing their prevalence in different consumption settings, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss the potential and appropriateness of emotion tracking *as an additional means* for measuring consumers' emotional responses. The measurement of emotional responses is considered a crucial yet complex task (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Li, Scott, & Walters, 2015; Mauss & Robinson, 2009; Thoring, Bellermann, Mueller, Badke-Schaub, & Desmet, 2016; Shoval, Schvimer, & Tamir, 2018). As observing emotional responses has proved to be challenging, consumers' emotions have previously been measured mainly with traditional self-report methods (e.g., interviews and surveys) or physiological methods (e.g., heartbeat and skin conductivity). Nevertheless, both methods have received substantial critique, as they fail to measure consumers' emotional responses in real-time or real-world settings (e.g., Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Li et al., 2015). Despite the increasing interest in emotions and their influence on consumer experiences, measuring consumers' emotional responses in real-time and real-world settings has, thus far, received scant attention within marketing and consumer research. Consequently, there is a need for more research discussing and adopting alternative methods for the purpose (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Li et al., 2015; Mauss & Robinson, 2009; Thoring et al., 2016; Shoval et al., 2018).

The current study addresses this research gap by examining how emotion tracking can facilitate the real-time self-reporting of emotional responses in real-world environments and whether it can diminish certain limitations of the traditional self-report and physiological methods. The study contributes to the existing literature by empirically investigating the suitability of one self-tracking application—the Emotion Tracker®. The application was tested by 19 students who tracked their emotions related to various consumer experiences. In addition to emotion tracking, the students wrote research diaries in which they evaluated user experiences and analyzed the suitability of the Emotion Tracker® for measuring emotional responses in the context of consumption.

LITERATURE REVIEW

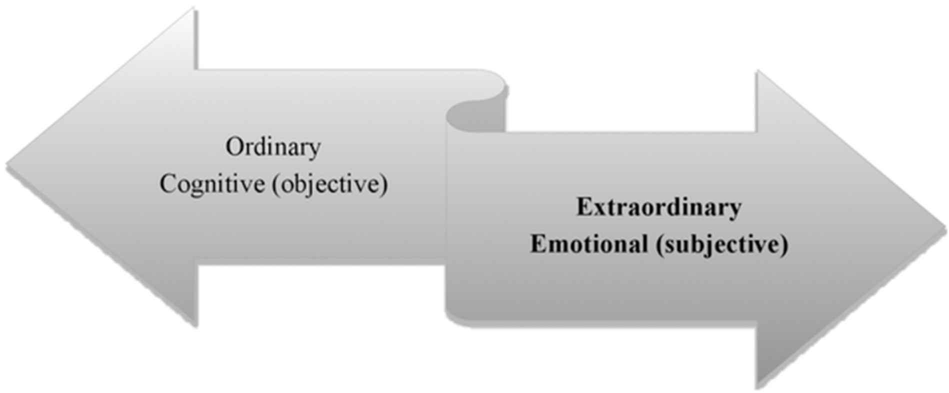
Emotional Consumer Experiences

Consumer experiences have long been among the most powerful and disrupting concept in the field of marketing and consumer research (Chaney, Lunardo, & Mencarelli, 2018; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Consumer experiences are sometimes used synonymously with consumption experiences, which has resulted in difficulty in reaching an unambiguous definition for the concepts (e.g., Chaney et al., 2018; Knutson & Beck, 2004; Walls, Okumus, Wang, & Kwun, 2011). In the current study, the term "consumer experience" is used as it involves a product or service exchange, while a "consumption experience" can also take place outside or beyond the market setting (Carù & Cova, 2003; Konu, 2016). The definition of "consumer experience" centers on the consumer him/herself and is often understood as the outcome of a service encounter (Björk & Sfandla, 2009; Knutson & Beck, 2004). Here, the definition by Walls et al. (2011, p. 17) is applied, according to which a consumer experience is a "multidimensional takeaway impression or outcome, based on the consumer's willingness and capacity to be affected and influenced by physical and/or human interaction dimensions and formed by people's encounters with products, services, and business influencing consumption values (emotive and cognitive), satisfaction, and repeat patronage."

Researchers have endeavored to understand consumer experiences through integrative models (e.g., Kwortnik & Ross, 2007; Williams, 2009), which typically illustrate what consumers think, feel, and do before, during, and after the consumer experience (Chaney et al., 2018). Another means of structuring consumer experiences is to identify various dichotomies, such as positive–negative, active–passive, and extrinsic–intrinsic (see Knutson & Beck, 2004). Most researchers seem to support the notion of consumer experiences as a combination of cognitive and emotive processes (Björk & Sfandla, 2009; Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007; Walls et al., 2011). For instance, Walls et al. (2011) have suggested two continuums that range from ordinary to extraordinary and from cognitive (objective) to affective or emotional (subjective) consumer experiences (Figure 1).

In the current study, the focus is on emotional experiences, which represent the extraordinary and emotional rather than the ordinary and cognitive consumer experiences. The dichotomy of ordinary versus extraordinary consumer experiences has been suggested by various researchers. The origins of extraordinary experiences date back to Maslow's (1964) *peak experience,* Csíkszentmihályi's (1975) *flow,* and Abraham's (1986) *extraordinary experience.* Within marketing and consumer research, the emotional aspects of consumer experiences have been addressed by, for instance, Arnould and Price (1993), who discussed *extraordinary experiences,* and

Figure 1. The nature of consumer experiences



by Schouten, McAlexander, and Koenig (2007), who applied the term *transcendent customer experiences,* both of which involve a clear separation from the mundane. Recently, Carù and Cova (2018) also discussed separation from everyday life and highlighted two types of escape—*escape from* and *escape into*—as particularly important concepts in understanding emotional consumer experiences.

During the past decades, the emotional characteristics of consumer experiences have received increasing attention (e.g., Chaney et al., 2018; Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Lugosi & Walls, 2013). It was Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) who were the first to truly highlight the significance of the hedonic aspects of consumption. By arguing that, at that particular time, the cognitive approach had neglected the important aspects of consumption—fantasies, feelings, and fun—Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) reinstated emotional consumer experiences on the theoretical agenda of marketing and consumer research (Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Alba & Williams, 2013; Carù & Cova, 2003; Gilovich et al., 2014; Mogilner et al., 2011; Tung & Ritchie, 2011).

In marketing and management literature, which often highlight the managerial implications, an experience still possesses a rather objective connotation and is mainly viewed as a type of offering to be added to existing products and/or services (Carù & Cova, 2003; Chaney et al., 2018). In this stream of literature, an experience has generally been considered to be positive and memorable, as well as staged and/or designed by the service provider following the principal ideas of the experience economy suggested by Pine and Gilmore (1999). Especially in retailing, consumer experience is mainly considered as an addition to products/services, and retailers have widely applied the principles of staging or designing extraordinary experiences in order to get consumers to enter stores (e.g., flagship stores and brand museums), which can create emotional experiences (Chaney et al., 2018; Kozinets et al., 2002).

In consumer research, on the other hand, the approach has tended to be more social science–based. An experience has been considered as a personal occurrence, which, thereby, subjectively emphasizes emotions and senses, potentially leading to the transformation of an individual (Carù & Cova, 2003). Notably, creating emotional consumer experiences is seen as somewhat challenging, as they are subjective and internal in nature; they take place in the mind of the consumer and thus cannot be produced or sold by service providers (Räikkönen, 2014; Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Uriely, 2005; Walls et al., 2011).

Currently, hedonic consumption and emotional consumer experiences have increasingly been discussed in relation to consumer well-being and happiness (e.g., Gilovich et al., 2014; Mogilner et al., 2011). Hedonic consumption has been said to lead to higher levels of happiness, such as feelings of excitement, peacefulness, and calm, than mere material consumption (Gilovich et al., 2014; Mogilner et al., 2011; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Furthermore, it is argued that individuals' lives can be enriched by focusing on things that provide more substantial and lasting contributions to individual well-being, instead of only focusing on things that provide the fleeting (material) joy of happiness (Gilovich et al., 2014). The mounting interest in consumer well-being and happiness has also affected businesses, as they are now exploring new, alternative ways to resonate with consumers' values and cultivate their well-being and happiness (e.g., Mogilner et al., 2011).

Measuring Emotions in Marketing and Consumer Research

Emotion is generally understood as an experiential, physiological, and behavioral response to personally meaningful stimuli (Mauss & Robinson, 2009). Yet emotion lacks a universal definition and has thus been understood and defined rather differently within different domains (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Richins, 1997). The diversity in understandings of emotion has also affected marketing and consumer research, in which the definition of emotion has been somewhat unclear; emotion has often been used interchangeably with the terms *feeling*, *affect*, *mood*, and *attitude* (e.g., Bagozzi et al., 1999; Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Richins, 1997). Due to this complexity, there are several definitions of emotions in marketing and consumer research literature. Richins (1997, p. 127), for example, has proposed that an emotion "is a valenced affective reaction to perceptions of situations," while Bagozzi et al. (1999, p. 184) hold the view that emotions are "mental states of readiness that arise from appraisal of events or one's own thoughts."

Also, a wide divergence in the content of emotions has been discussed. Studies have used different scales to measure emotions and have tended to focus on certain emotions. The classification of positive and negative emotions has been the most commonly used (Bogazzi et al., 1999; Laros & Steenkamp, 2005). Often, emotion scales from psychology have been directly applied to a consumer context. Four commonly used scales for measuring consumer emotional responses can be identified: Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance scale; Izard's (1977) Differential Emotion scale; Plutchik's (1980) Emotion Profile Index; and Watson, Clark, and Tellegen's (1988) Positive Affect and Negative Affect scales. Although these scales have proved useful in the contexts for which they were originally developed (i.e., mainly for psychological use), several limitations have been addressed in their direct application to the consumption context (e.g., Richins, 1997).

Richins (1997) has criticized the existing scales for several reasons, for instance due to their lack of some central emotions in individuals' lives (e.g., love), the use of emotions unfamiliar to consumers (e.g., melancholy), and the use of somewhat confusing opposite emotions (e.g., bored and relaxed), as well as for the appropriateness of using existing measures to assess emotions elicited in consumption settings, as emotions are context-specific. As a result, Richins (1997) has suggested a scale to better fit the consumption context—the Consumption Emotion Set—with 47 emotion descriptors classified into 17 dimensions: anger *(frustrated, angry, irritated),* discontent *(unfulfilled, discontented),* worry *(nervous, worried, tense),* sadness *(depressed, sad, miserable),* fear *(scared, afraid, panicky),* shame *(embarrassed, ashamed, humiliated),* envy *(envious, jealous),* loneliness *(lonely, homesick),* romantic love *(sexy, romantic, passionate),* love *(loving, sentimental, warmhearted),* peacefulness *(calm, peaceful),* contentment *(contented, fulfilled),* optimism *(optimistic, encouraged, hopeful),* joy *(happy, pleased, joyful),* excitement *(exited, thrilled, enthusiastic),* surprise *(surprised, amazed, astonished),* and other items *(guilty, proud, eager, relieved).*

Traditional Methods for Measuring Emotions

The key approaches for measuring consumers' emotional responses have traditionally included self-report, observation, and physiological methods (also called neuro-physiological methods), of which the self-report ones have been the most commonly used. Self-reporting is based on respondents' subjective experiences which are realized through diaries, interviews, and questionnaires with specific scales (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Li et al., 2015). It is characterized as a simple, straightforward, and unobtrusive method that usually involves relatively small expense and is fairly easy for consumer researchers to apply without external assistance (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Li et al., 2015; Poels & Dewitte, 2006). Yet the method has some disadvantages. One of the main challenges is that respondents may not be aware of their emotions because emotions are often unconscious or simply hard to define, causing bias in the reported emotions (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Mauss & Robinson, 2009). Using self-reporting also raises the challenge of choosing or developing a valid and reliable scale; already-existing emotion scales, most commonly originated from psychology, may not be suitable for a consumer context (e.g., Mauss & Robinson, 2009; Richins, 1997).

Observation is based on respondents' behavior, with interest most often in facial expressions, gestures, and speech (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015). It applies unobtrusive techniques for measuring emotions and can be realized in various situations and different settings. However, observation has several drawbacks: it cannot perform context-dependent interpretation of sensory data, it is highly dependent on environmental conditions, and some responses may be faked (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015).

As emotions are accompanied by bodily and/or physiological responses, alternative approaches for measuring emotional responses are based on physiological observations, such as facial expressions, eye tracking, and skin conductance (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Li et al., 2015; Mauss & Robison, 2009; Wilhelm & Grossman, 2010). Neuro-physiological methods have been used in consumer research since the 1920s to measure advertising responses (e.g., Bagozzi et al., 1999). They are based on automatic bodily reactions that are largely beyond an individual's control when encountering an environmental stimulus (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Li et al., 2015). The last decade has also witnessed an increasing interest toward neuromarketing, which uses methodologies drawn from cognitive neuroscience to measure brain activity with techniques like electroencephalography (EEG), magnetoencephalography (MEG), positron emission tomography (PET), and (by far the most popular in this field) functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) (Lee et al., 2017; Mauss & Robinson, 2009; Plassmann & Weber, 2015).

The neuro-physiological measurements complement self-report methods, as they provide systematic and real-time information on useful relations between particular stimuli (e.g., place, event, or food) and elicited reactions in varying aspects of emotion on different time scales (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Wilhelm & Grossman, 2010). Yet, as physiological methods require special equipment, they are often conducted in laboratory settings, which may hinder the capture of the continuous movement and dynamic interaction between emotions, places, and people in a natural environment (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015). The strengths and weaknesses of these traditional methods are summarized in Table 1 based on previous literature (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Lee et al., 2017; Li et al., 2015; Mauss & Robinson, 2009; Poels & Dewitte, 2006; Wilhelm & Grossman, 2010).

Table 1. Strengths and weaknesses of self-report, observation, and neuro-physiological methods

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Self-report methods	● simple and inexpensive ● do not require special equipment ● guarantee anonymity ● diminish researcher bias ● easily adaptable to diverse contexts and reactions ● enable large-scale studies and wide samples ● can be used to measure both valence and content of past, current, or anticipated emotions	● unable to measure participants' emotional experience in real-time -> inability to remember emotional responses ● respondents' limited ability to explain emotional responses ● not able to capture unprompted and unconscious emotional responses ● may involve cognitive intervention and socially desirable responses ● instead of emotions, self-report measurements often describe feelings about the emotions ● fail to capture respondents' emotions as an on-going process ● rating process can be complex and result in fatigue in the participants
Observation	● applies unobtrusive techniques for measuring emotions ● can be realized in various situations and different settings	● cannot perform context-dependent interpretations of sensory data ● highly dependent on environmental conditions ● some responses may be faked
Neuro-physiological methods	● provide systematic and moment-to-moment information on useful relations between particular stimuli and the elicited reactions in varying aspects of emotion on different time scales ● enable the study of even spontaneous and unprompted emotional responses in real-time ● avoid the cognitive bias caused by mental processing or social desirability constraints ● enable continuous measurement and provide a vast number of data points, and without dependency on language, ability to recall, or interference with message processing	● one single autonomic response can be the result of different aspects of emotion (e.g., arousal or attention), and, thus, it is challenging to prove a direct correlation between specific emotions and a physiological reaction ● a combination of traditional self-report scales with autonomic measures is often still required ● the special equipment and possible laboratory settings hinder the continuous movement and dynamic interaction between emotions, places, and people in a natural environment

Technology-Supported Emotion Measurement

Nowadays, neuro-physiological methods are no longer only limited to laboratory settings. Digitalization and technological development have enabled individuals to engage in a more detailed monitoring and measuring of their bodies, minds, and daily lives in real-time and real-world settings (e.g., Grénman, 2019; Lupton, 2014, 2016; Ruckenstein & Pantzar, 2017). Contemporary self-tracking practices and technologies are based on the early days of lifelogging techniques and wearable computing devices

(Lupton, 2014, 2016). While in the past, the methods of quantitative assessments were laborious and somewhat arcane (cf. neuro-psychological methods), they are now made easier by new analytical tools and tracking systems that are popping up at an impressive rate (e.g., Lupton, 2014).

Today, an ever increasing range of digital devices and smart objects with associated apps are available for self-tracking. These include, for example, smartphones; tablet computers; watches; digital cameras; wireless weight scales; digitized gadgets; shoes, jewelry, clothing, or furniture embedded with sensors; and small wearable cameras (Lupton, 2014). The ubiquity and widespread use of an array of apps, ranging from those related to health and fitness to diet and weight control and from sleep and emotions to sexuality and reproduction, also constitute an important genre of novel, digital technologies (Grénman, 2019; Lupton, 2017).

Thoring et al. (2016) divided available technologies into four categories based on whether they measure (i) behavioral actions, (ii) expressive reactions, (iii) physiological reactions, and (iv) subjective experiences and verbalized feelings. *Behavioral actions* refers to conscious activities, such as running as a reaction to fear, that can be measured through technologies observing individuals' movements visually (video cameras, drones), via data-driven means (GPS, indoor positioning), or through motion sensors and fitness trackers. *Expressive reactions* refers to unconscious reactions to emotions that can be inferred from facial expressions, tone and volume of voice, and gestures, which can be measured through tools that deliver photo, video, or audio data or through self-published data on social media (e.g., YouTube videos). Measuring *physiological reactions*, in turn, requires sophisticated sensor-based equipment, such as EEG scanners and related software that turn brainwaves into meaningful data or other sensors that are used by self-trackers to measure bodily functions. Finally, *subjective experiences or feelings*, which are at the center of the current study, are usually verbalized and self-reported by the participants through specific experience sampling applications that enable sending real-time questionnaires to people or tracking their emotions via smartphones.

In current self-tracking practices, there seems to be a shift away from monitoring and measuring the body's visible and physical aspects (e.g., weight and heart rate) toward more invisible and mental processes. Emotion tracking is an example of this shift. It is one of the fastest-growing means of identifying and understanding emotions—of quantifying mental health—and has become a key element in increasing individuals' well-being (cf. Lupton, 2017).

CASE: MEASURING EMOTIONS WITH THE EMOTION TRACKER ®

Data Collection and Analysis

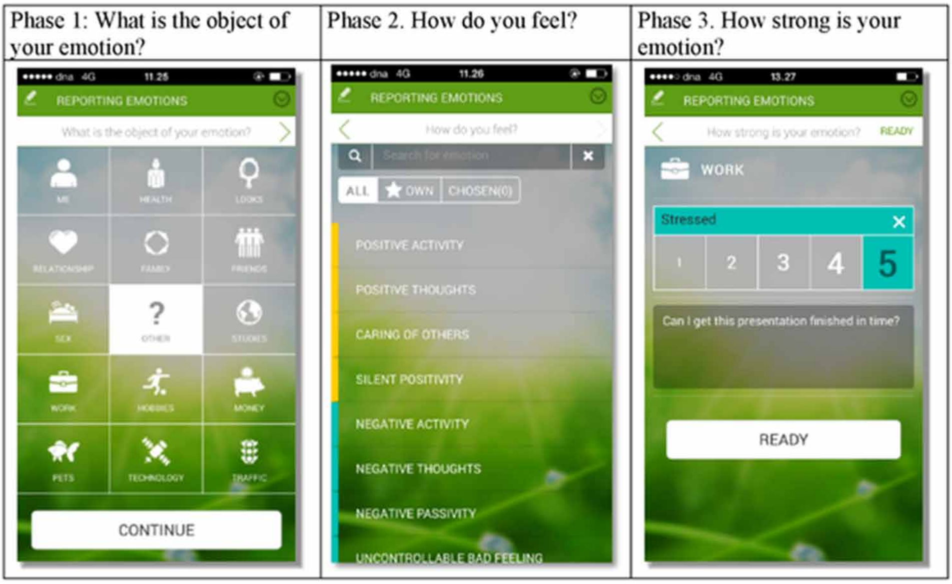
In the current study, the Emotion Tracker® was tested to measure emotional responses to consumer experiences. The Emotion Tracker® is a self-tracking tool for identifying and analyzing emotions through a web browser on a computer or mobile device, reflecting subjective experiences and verbalized feelings. The Emotion Tracker® was established in 2012 by a Finnish start-up company whose mission was to enhance the awareness and understanding of emotions and, thus, also enable better interpersonal communication. After operating for seven years in facilitating emotion management among not only private users but also those in various social realms, such as workplaces, higher education, and healthcare (see Janasik-Honkela, 2018), the Emotion Tracker® was sold to another company at the beginning of 2019.

In line with the company vision, the Emotion Tracker® was not limited by existing psychological emotion classifications (cf. categorical and dimensional approach). Instead of measuring mere emotions, it took into account a variety of bodily states, emotion-like feelings, and behaviors that form the heart of self-tracking practices, yet are not often touched upon in traditional emotion scales (cf. Richins, 1997). The application contained 160 words for describing a variety of emotional states and feelings for users to choose from in order to get acquainted with their emotional responses in everyday life. Thus, in this study, an emotion is understood in a wide perspective as the words that describe emotions are directly derived from and translated by the application itself.

The Emotion Tracker® was tested with university students ($n = 19$) attending an advanced-level course on "retail research methodology." During the self-tracking period (September 4th–21st, 2015), altogether the students tracked 617 emotions related to 202 consumer experiences, such as shopping, eating in restaurants, visiting attractions, going to different events, and participating in fitness activities.

The self-tracking process is illustrated in Figure 2. In the first phase, the students defined the object of an emotion, then named the emotion (Phase 2) and, finally, determined the intensity of the emotion with a scale from one to five (Phase 3). Each consumer experience contained one or more emotions or feelings. The emotions could be identified either by searching for a specific emotion or using a three-level classification designed to facilitate the process. At the end of self-tracking, the students briefly described their consumer experiences in a specific notes section. After the tracking period, the data were received from the service provider on an Excel form. A descriptive analysis was conducted on emotional consumer experiences (i) by examining both positive and negative emotions related to emotional consumer

Figure 2. The three phases of emotion tracking



experiences and (ii) by classifying emotions according to various product and service categories, using SPSS Statistics 25.

In addition to tracking their emotions, the students wrote research diaries in which they evaluated their user experiences, discussed possible challenges they encountered, and suggested ideas for improving the application. This qualitative data set consisted of 26 pages of text (7,815 words) on their tracking experiences. The data were analyzed with NVivo11, a software solution for facilitating qualitative research. In order to analyze the textual data, conventional content analysis was employed. Content analysis (see Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) is a widely used qualitative research method that focuses on the characteristics of language as communication by interpreting the content or contextual meaning. Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278) have defined it as a “research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes and patterns.” In conventional content analysis, codes are derived from data during data analysis. The researcher is usually able to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon by applying this approach.

Insights from Emotion Tracking

Out of the 617 tracked emotions, 226 were related to emotional consumer experiences, representing 37% of all emotions. The emotional experiences were identified by the authors based on the application's notes section. These consumer experiences were interpreted as holding an emotional association for the participants, as they were described as being somehow meaningful and/or as breaking the routine of mundane consumption. In most cases, the emotionality of experiences was easy to identify and differentiate from ordinary experiences (e.g., everyday lunches in the student cafeteria versus special dinners or drinks with friends or significant others). In some cases, however, the task was more challenging; going to the hairdresser and fitness activities, in particular, were frequent everyday practices for some, while for others they represented clear highlights of the tracking period.

As illustrated in Table 2, a clear majority—195 emotions (86%)—were positive, while only 31 emotions (14%) were negative. The most frequently tracked positive emotions were *excited, joyful, satisfied, energetic, hopeful, lively*, and *relaxed*. The most common negative emotions, in turn, were *confused, skeptical, bored, disappointed,* and *frustrated*.

Regarding emotions *per se* (i.e., meeting the criteria of traditional emotion scales), various discrete emotions were identified. In line with the Consumption Emotions Set presented by Richins (1997), the consumption-related emotions fell into the following emotion dimensions: excitement (*excited*), joy (*joyful, happy*), optimism (*hopeful, optimistic*), surprise (*astonished, surprised*), peacefulness (*calm*), love (*warmhearted*), romantic love (*passionate*), anger (*frustrated*), sadness (*sad*), envy (*envious*), and other items (*guilty*). In addition, certain similar emotions outside this scale, such as *delighted, cheerful, caring*, and *annoyed*, were mentioned. In addition, the data consisted of a wide range of different bodily states, emotion-like feelings, and behaviors, of which the most frequently mentioned were *satisfied, energetic, lively*, *relaxed, cohesive, interested,* and *productive*.

In a more detailed analysis (Table 3), the emotions were classified according to the product and service categories that emerged from the data. The majority of emotions, 211 of them (93%), were connected to services, while only 15 emotions (7%) were related to material products. This is also in line with the previous literature, suggesting that emotional consumer experiences rely mainly on services (e.g., Gilovich et al., 2014; Kwortnik & Ross, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), yet it denotes that purchasing traditional products can also evoke strong emotions. In the data set, for example, purchasing household appliances and gifts for oneself or a significant other resulted in emotions like *excitement*, *joy,* and *delight.* Moreover, even grocery shopping aroused *inspiration, excitement,* and *joy.*

Table 2. Positive and negative emotions related to emotional consumer experiences

	Frequency	Emotion
Positive emotions	19	excited
	15	joyful
	13	satisfied
	9	energetic
	7	hopeful, lively, relaxed
	6	cohesive
	5	close, happy, interested, productive
	4	delighted, efficient, independent, inspired, motivated, optimistic, strong
	3	astonished, calm, curious, expecting, focused, relieved
	2	amazing, assured, cheerful, courageous, funny, open minded, surprised, warmhearted, wonderful
	1	accepting, alert, amused, balanced, capable, caring, competent, competitive, considerate, desired, determined to win, dreaming, ecstatic, fantastic, free, gritty, harmonious, loved, lovely, lucky, passionate, present, privileged, reassured, responsible, safe, serene, trusting
Negative emotions	4	confused, skeptical
	3	bored, disappointed, frustrated
	2	anxious, dissatisfied, pissed
	1	annoyed, distrustful, envious, guilty, hideous, overwhelmed, sad, sorry

The largest subcategory of services was hospitality services (54 emotions), mainly including consumer experiences at restaurants, cafes, and bars. The participants used terms like *joyful, cohesive,* and *close* to describe their emotions. However, hospitality services also created more negative emotions than any other service category. Some participants felt *dissatisfied* and *disappointed*; one was *sorry* for taking his/her friends to a restaurant that did not fulfill their expectations, and another felt *guilty* for eating unhealthy food. Nearly as many emotions (53) were related to fitness services and other physical activities, such as bowling and SUP (stand-up paddleboarding). Quite expectedly, terms like *energetic, excited,* and *motivated* were mentioned. Interestingly, fitness services and physical activities did not create any negative emotions whatsoever.

Movies, concerts, and stand-up comedy shows (31 emotions) were indeed considered as highlights that broke the patterns of everyday consumption, evoking positive emotions like *hope, excitement,* and *happiness*. Negative emotions like

Table 3. Emotions classified according to product and service categories

Product/ service	Category	Positive emotions	Negative emotions
Products (15 emotions)	Clothes and accessories (6 emotions)	delighted, dreaming, excited, fantastic, joyful	envious
	Household appliances (5 emotions)	excited (2), curious, joyful, satisfied	
	Groceries (4 emotions)	inspired, excited, joyful, productive	
Services (211 emotions)	Hospitality (54 emotions)	joyful (6), cohesive (4), close (3), cheerful (2), excited (2), happy (3), hopeful (3), lively (2), optimistic (2), satisfied (2), accepting, amazing, astonished, assured, courageous, delighted, efficient, energetic, funny, interested, loved, open-minded, passionate, relaxed, serene, warmhearted	dissatisfied (2), anxious, confused, disappointed, frustrated, guilty, overwhelmed, sorry
	Fitness and physical activities (53 emotions)	energetic (8), excited (6), motivated (4), strong (4), lively (4), efficient (3), satisfied (3), independent (2), joyful (2), productive (2), alert, amazing, assured, astonished, balanced, capable, competitive, courageous, curious, determined to win, focused, free, gritty, interested, wonderful	
	Movies, concerts and stand-up comedies (31 emotions)	hopeful (3), excited (2), happy (2), satisfied (2), amused, cohesive, desired, ecstatic, expecting, funny, focused, independent, inspired, joyful, lovely, optimistic, present, surprised, warmhearted	confused (2), annoyed, bored, distrustful, sad, skeptical
	Tourism and travel (26 emotions)	relaxed (3), astonished, competent, delighted, excited, focused, joyful, independent, inspired, interested, open-minded, productive, relieved, satisfied, surprised, trusting	pissed (2), anxious, bored, confused, disappointed, frustrated, hideous
	Special events (25 emotions)	excited (3), calm (2), close (2), expecting (2), relaxed (2), satisfied (2), caring, cohesive, considerate, curious, harmonious, interested, lucky, privileged, productive, responsible, safe	skeptical
	Beauty and wellness (11 emotions)	relieved, satisfied, relaxed, calm, joyful, hopeful, optimistic, wonderful, delighted	disappointed, skeptical
	Education and consulting (11 emotions)	relieved, reassured, satisfied, excited, lively, interested, joyful, inspired	bored, frustrated, skeptical

sadness, confusion, and *skepticism* were also caused by these cultural events. Tourism and travel services (26 emotions), in turn, included booking as well as using transportation services (e.g., flights, coaches, and trains). Interestingly, the most frequently used word was *relaxed,* as many respondents compared public transportation to driving a car. Most negative emotions were due to problems related to online booking systems and delayed or crowded vehicles. Attending special events, such as a local apple festival with family and friends, provoked 25 emotions. The tracked emotions were nearly all positive and included, for example, *excited, calm,* and *close,* while the only negative emotion was *skepticism*.

In addition, 11 emotions were related to beauty and wellness services, such as hairdressing and massage, and another 11 emotions related to education and consulting services. Both involved positive as well as negative emotions: *relief* and *satisfaction* but also *skepticism, disappointment*, and *frustration*.

User Experiences in Emotion Tracking

The content analysis of students' research diaries revealed more profound information about user experiences of the Emotion Tracker®. The results are first summarized into some general remarks that emerged from the data, after which some suggestions on how to improve the application to better suit the consumer experience context are presented.

Most students stated that emotion tracking was an interesting and eye-opening exercise that made them understand the strong influence of emotions on consumer experiences. Identifying and naming their emotions was considered a difficult task, but many felt that during the tracking period, they learned to pay attention to their emotions. The process of emotion tracking also became easier over time, even though the tracking period was quite short.

Notably, some students described how their mood had a strong influence on their emotions. If the participant was in a bad mood, it was very difficult to have positive emotions even if the consumer experience was satisfactory. Moreover, many noted that most emotions emerged as a result of interaction with the service personnel and some, thus, discussed the difficulty of customer service, as employees cannot be fully aware of their customers' moods and emotions.

Most students considered the Emotion Tracker® to be an easy-to-use and logical application for tracking emotions. The real-time tracking feature was seen as a great advantage. Due to technical problems, some participants were not always able to track their emotions in real time and they stated that remembering and identifying emotions afterward was nearly impossible.

In general, university students are used to using different digital devices and applications for various purposes. Accordingly, the students were willing to try emotion tracking and did not feel substantial stress during the process. Notably, however, they seemed to have zero tolerance for the hassle caused by technical problems in, for example, the registration and log-in process. If the application was not working properly, they immediately lost patience with emotion tracking.

The students understood that the application had not originally been designed for tracking consumer experiences. To better serve this purpose, they suggested some ideas for improvement. First, the participants felt that there was not enough space for the written notes that were needed to describe the incidents in detail. This is an important issue not only for research but also for the process of learning to identify and understand one's emotions and feelings.

Moreover, many students noted that the application needed an "other emotion" category for emotions that did not fall into the listed emotions and feelings. This is quite interesting, as the application had 160 listed options. In particular, the students called for more neutral and indifferent emotions. Some stated that it is also an important piece of information if a consumer experience does not evoke any emotions or feelings. Accordingly, this is also an important issue in a wider sense of individual well-being. In general, a lack of emotions or their low intensity may be significant information for enhancing one's mental health.

In addition, many students brought up an issue that is related to the ongoing nature of consumer experiences: the question of when an experience begins and ends. In order to fully capture the holistic nature of consumer experiences, they suggested that emotions should be measured before, during, and after the actual consumer experience.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The current chapter discussed the potential and appropriateness of emotion tracking in measuring emotional responses in various consumption settings. The aim was to examine how emotion tracking can facilitate the real-time self-reporting of emotional responses in real-world environments and whether it can diminish certain limitations of the traditional self-report and physiological methods. To address these challenges, a specific self-tracking application—the Emotion Tracker®—was tested by 19 students who used the application for identifying their emotions related to various consumer experiences. In addition, the students evaluated their emotion tracking experiences in research diaries, which were also analyzed in the study.

Tracking emotions through the Emotion Tracker® provided relevant information regarding various emotions that were evoked by emotional consumer experiences. Many emotions, especially positive emotions, covered in the Consumption Emotions Set presented by Richins (1997) were present in the data set. The emotion tracking also shed light on a wider range of emotional responses, including bodily states, emotion-like feelings, and behaviors, which are at the core of self-tracking. Emotion tracking is not limited by the strict boundaries of traditional psychological emotion scales but, instead, *empowers* the user to use his/her voice and express his/her own emotions in a wider sense. This empowerment and richness of emotions related to consumer experiences needs to be further explored in order to uncover the more profound meanings of consumption in the current consumer culture and their connection to individuals' well-being and happiness.

Research diaries, in turn, offered interesting information regarding the potential role of emotion tracking in diminishing the weaknesses of the traditional self-report and physiological methods. Emotion tracking, undoubtedly, has the ability to diminish the time lag between the emergence and reporting of emotions. In real-time emotion tracking, the emotions will not be forgotten. The analysis also indicated that the participants learned to identify and name their emotions during the course of emotion tracking. Even though emotion tracking seemed to increase the students' ability to explain their emotional responses, the unconscious emotional responses are still not captured. Mobile technology could, however, combine self-report and physiological methods, as devices are becoming smaller and cheaper. Moreover, it is possible to draw data from various sources and combine information by, for example, time or geographical location, which would likely draw a more holistic picture of the emotional responses to consumer experiences.

It cannot be argued that real-time emotion tracking decreases the social bias related to self-tracked emotions. It can be speculated, though, that if emotion tracking is considered first and foremost as a tool for increasing holistic well-being, the social bias would be decreased, at least if the emotion tracking is conducted for a long period of time. More research on the social bias aspect is needed in order to provide more insights into this important issue. Furthermore, it is suggested that real-time emotion tracking can better address the ongoing nature of emotions than traditional self-report methods. However, the students still suggested that the emotions should be measured before, during, and after the actual experience, indicating that this aspect also needs to be studied in more detail in the future.

Finally, the real-time emotion tracking can either increase or decrease the complexity of the rating process and the fatigue of the respondents. Emotion tracking takes place throughout the experience, while traditional self-reporting is done at the end of the assessed experience. Even though the total workload probably increases, the reporting is divided into smaller tasks. Moreover, if the respondents understand emotion tracking as a tool for enhancing their well-being, they may not consider it a burden.

Based on the current study, it is suggested that real-time and real-world emotion tracking has the potential to advance traditional self-report methods by bringing them closer to physiological methods. Self-tracking has the power to combine the subjective nature of self-reporting with the objectivity of physiological methods, both of which are needed to achieve a better understanding of one's emotions and, ultimately, a better understanding of oneself.

As an increasing number of people continuously measure and quantify various aspects of their lives, it would be unwise not to engage these individuals to serve as informants in research, and also in the context of measuring emotions during consumer experiences. The future of measuring emotions is likely to lie in the combination of subjective and objective self-tracking practices that are enabled by the digital technologies embedded in individuals' everyday lives.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Emotion Measurement: Emotions play a key role in shaping consumer experiences, and they have been examined in various consumption settings with various emotion scales. The main techniques for measuring emotions include self-report, observation, and neuro-physiological methods.

Emotion Tracking: Emotion tracking is a form of self-tracking, which focuses on identifying and understanding one's emotions (i.e., quantifying mental health).

Emotional Consumer Experience: Emotional consumer experience centers on the consumer him/herself and is understood as the outcome of a service encounter, highlighting the extraordinary and emotional nature of consumption.

Hedonic Consumption: Consumption that focuses on consumers' hedonic preferences and appetites, highlighting the importance of consumer experiences, which represent the extraordinary and emotional rather than the ordinary and cognitive utilitarian consumer experiences.

Quantified Self: The Quantified Self movement refers to a cultural and social phenomenon of self-tracking using digital technology and a community of people collecting, recording, and sharing personal information and experiences.

Self-Tracking: Self-tracking refers to the practice of gathering data about oneself on a regular basis and then recording and analyzing it to produce statistics associated with one's bodily functions and everyday habits.

Chapter 5
Experiential Marketing:
Understanding the Nature of Experiences in Emerging Markets' Grocery Retailing

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of experiential marketing on experiential values of young customers and respectively on their satisfaction and word of mouth, intention to pay more and revisit. Primary data were gathered through questionnaires conducted with 489 respondents to examine young customers' experiences in well-known grocery retails in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Structural equation modelling using partial least square (PLS) method results were adequate in terms of reliability and validity. Empirical results revealed that some of strategic experiential modules and service quality perceptions of young customers have positive influences on customer experiences (functional and emotional). This research contributes to shed light on the role of shopping experiences of young retail consumers on experiential values, customer satisfaction, and post-purchase attitudes. It is anticipated that by filling this knowledge gap, strengthening retail-shopping strategies, which require an adjustment in the current business environment, can be developed.

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INTRODUCTION

Globalisation and integration in the emerging economies, together with the rising interdependence of national economies driven by the reduction in mobilisation, elimination of trade barriers and increasing innovations in technology, have both facilitated and compelled companies to learn to rapidly adapt to changes in the business world (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). Despite the well-known definition of consumption, which refers to production in general in global economy, modern capitalist societies differentiate consumption and consumerism, which include the stages of 'having', 'being' and 'using' goods and services. Though customers' wants, needs and use/disposal attitudes indicate differentiation, consumer products/services create inevitable negative/positive experiences as outcomes, and these experiences are the key modules of experiential marketing. Organisations consistently create various distinct stages for their customers to become involved in these experiences through special incentives, including goods/services, environments, and so on (Fuentes-Blasco et al., 2017). When customers participate in or observe these experiences, they develop various perceptions and reactions to the stages. In other words, customers' perceptions may be evaluated as the result of organisations' marketing efforts and traditional perspectives on goods/services are not adequate for global competition; therefore, experiential marketing concentrates more on process of creating customer experiences, which includes all purchasing stages (Schmitt, 1999). Therefore, creating a memorable consumption experience is becoming a critical indicator for existing customers as well as for attracting new customers in certain industries, including retailing, due to the combination of tangible and intangible natures of these experiences (Varshneya and Das, 2017; Wu and Tseng, 2014).

Industries that primarily concentrate on use and disposal of goods/service and experiences, such as retailing, are among the fastest growing industries in global economy. According to Kim et al (2014), the industry is defined as retailing primarily sells a holistic shopping experience to their customers and retailers' central productive activity is creation of a value for their customers. Although experience has a solid foundation in this industry, application of strategic experiential marketing modules in this industry has not yet been successfully harmonised (Varshneya and Das, 2017; Fuentes-Blasco et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2014). Consumers' fundamental impulse is desire to authentically experience gratification associated with a product or service as they have imagined it, and each 'new' services and/or product is seen as offering an opportunity for this motivation (Storey, 2017). From this perspective, one of the key arguments for business success is 'holistic experience'. Therefore, the aim of this study is to contribute to the literature on this industry and its applications in different destinations by examining strategic experiential marketing in grocery retails in Cambodia.

Moreover, youth market is defined in various ways. Goldenberg (2005) categorised young customers as *'the consumers of the future'*, while Spero and Stone (2004) defined young people as *'agents of change'*. In other words, in order to establish long-term relationships with youth market, young peoples' behaviour needs to be understood to guarantee that service providers meet desires of this sensitive and powerful group. Therefore, this study specifically concentrates on young consumers (17–23 years) as categorised by Schewe and Meredith (2004), who come from various sociocultural environments.

Increased consideration of young customers by service providers may allow them to create successful marketing strategies to obtain and attract more customers (Mummalaneni and Meng, 2009). Having been conducted in Phnom Penh, which is the social, political and economic capital of Cambodia, this study aims to establish fundamental relationships among variables mentioned above (Saunders, 2011). In addition, examining the factors influencing young consumers' intention to purchase products and services has important managerial and theoretical contributions (Wu and Tseng, 2014; Nadiri and Gunay, 2013), particularly in Cambodia. As demand for goods and services offered in the stores has increased considerably in Cambodia, service providers wishing to remain competitive in this market will appreciate investigating effects of consumer purchases. Hence, the focus of this study is to examine the impact of strategic experiential marketing modules and perceived service quality (PSQ) on experiential values and its effect on customer satisfaction (CS) and post-purchase intentions, based on assessment of word of mouth (WoM), intention to pay more (IPM) and intention to revisit (IRV). Schmitt (1999) bases development of the study framework for how strategic experiential modules and PSQ influence their experiential value in a study. In addition, as highlighted in the study by Parasuraman et al. (1988), consumers' perceptions of service quality influence their overall shopping experience. Accordingly, the primary purpose of this paper is to evaluate experiential value through assessing perceived service quality and a secondary purpose is to examine the strategic experiential marketing modules to obtain uncover experiential value and customer satisfaction. As the marketing paradigm has altered towards creating persuasive customer shopping experiences (Nguyen et al., 2016), examining such issues would further strengthen our understanding of the theme and postulate creative insights into the nature of the relationships between such variables.

Therefore, this paper is structured as follows. It begins with a discussion on significance and rationale of the study and research objectives and background. Next, an inclusive literature review provides a description of the potential relationships between the variables. Following this, statistical analysis, results and a discussion are presented. Finally, the paper closes with conclusions, suggestions for further research and a discussion of limitations of the study.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

The concept of marketing management is essential in development of an organisation's competitive strategies (Drucker, 1954). The fundamental intention is to provide value for customers creates competitive advantages, as well as new challenges, at both customer and firm levels (Ihtiyar et al. 2018). The intense competition within service industries has not only led organisations to adopt transformed economic value originating from goods and services but also, from experiences, particularly over recent decades. Thus, organisations must create an efficient, innovative, competitive and steady marketing orientation for national and/or international markets (Ihtiyar et al. 2018). The idea that modern consumers have a voracious desire to acquire objects represents a misapprehension of mechanism underlying consumption, which requires individuals to want services and/or goods. Pine and Gilmore (1998) claim that pioneering organisations will eventually discover that success on competitive battlefield involves providing experiences. To further elaborate the concept of experience, Pine and Gilmore (1998) propose five different types of experience: "sense", "feel", "think", "act" and "relate". While 'sense' describes aesthetics and sensory qualities, 'feel' reflects moods and emotions. The 'think' experience is about imaginative and analytical thinking, while 'act' refers to behavioural experiences and motor actions. Lastly, 'relate' refers to social experiences. These experiences also fit with the categorisations of Dewey (1922, 1925), the mental modules of Pinker (1997) and the pleasure constructs of Dube and LeBel (2003), which are referred to as social, physical, emotional and intellectual pleasures.

Customer Experiential Value

A variety of definitions of customer and experiential value have been reported in the literature. For instance, customer value was defined by Monroe (1991) as a comparison between acknowledged advantages and disadvantages, while others have stated that it is an amalgamation of customers' attitudes, beliefs, values, norms and experiences of products (Strauss and Frost 2002). Among these and other definitions, this study has considered Blattberg's (1998) concept of value. Geometrically, the intersection of the themes of experience economy and creating customer value is positioned within harmonised zone of benefits and sacrifices (Nadiri and Gunay, 2013). In other words, customer value is characterised by relative preferences of customers (Kim, 2002).

As highlighted in the study by Yuan and Wu (2008), customer value consists of two elements: emotional values and functional values. Emotional values refer to consumers' emotional reactions during and/or post-purchase the experience, whereas consumers' functional values are defined as basic value delivered to customers in terms of utilitarian, mental or financial rewards obtained from goods and/or services (Yuan and Wu, 2008). Therefore, measuring functional values requires solid and assessable indicators (Yuan and Wu, 2008).

Recently, experiential marketing with interdisciplinary perspectives has become a concept applicable to allow a better understanding of complicated nature of consumers' desires, needs and motivations. Although there is considerable debate among scholars from various disciplines on consumption and its physical and metaphysical aspects, the fact remains that in order to develop a comprehensive and interdisciplinary literature on consumption, experience cannot be ignored, particularly in today's markets. According to Campbell (1983), 'the shift from seeking pleasure in what is known to provide pleasure to seeking it in what has yet to be experienced as pleasurable had a dramatic effect on consumption' (cit in Storey, 2017, p. 14). In other words, the established traditional hedonism (Webers' perspective), which is based on sensation, has shifted to modern hedonism (Campbells' perspective), which is based on emotions. However, today's customer profile requires evaluation of consumption as a complete experience, with emotional and traditional drivers of consumption.

Schmitt (1999) introduced experiential marketing based on five distinct categories of experience; namely, act, feel, relate, sense and think. Schmitt's (1999) 'act' category focuses on the physical experience of consumers, and the aim of concept is achieved by providing enriched alternative lifestyles, role models (such as NBA or music stars), or emotional, inspirational and motivational experiences to customers. The second category is 'feel', and refers to consumers' emotions and inner feelings. This notion concentrates on understanding which stimuli (irrespective of cultural indicators) can activate specific emotions, as well as the willingness of the customers, be empathetic and take another perspective. A further category is 'relate', which refers to positively perceived indicators that are outside of individual's personal feelings, such as those of family members, friends and colleagues. The fourth category, 'sense', is based on basic human senses, with objective of creating sensory experiences such as sound, touch, taste and smell. The aim of this concept is that goods and/or services may be differentiated and gain added value via cognitive consistency or sensory variety, such as through their aesthetics. The ideal strategy is clearly perceivable and continuously fresh. The last category is 'think', which is related to amazement, conspiracy, exhortation and excitement. According to Schmitt (1999), campaigns for goods and/or services should contain amazement, exhortation and excitement to engage the target customers cognitively. For instance, these might include advertisements for high-tech products, initial discounts in retail stores or new car designs, and so on. Hence, the following hypotheses were proposed to examine the relationships between experiential value and experiential marketing.

H1 a, b: Sense perception has a positive impact on emotional and functional values.
H2 a, b: Feel perception has a positive impact on emotional and functional values.
H3 a, b: Think perception has a positive impact on emotional and functional values.
H4 a, b: Act perception has a positive impact on emotional and functional values.
H5 a, b: Relate perception has a positive impact on emotional and functional values.

Quality and Experiential Value

The impact of perceived value on CS cannot be disregarded. Instead of concentrating on expectations (Parasuraman et al., 1988), this study focuses on the definition of perceived value given by Zeithaml (1996), who stated that perceived value is the 'consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given'. Due to the complex methods for calculating expected and perceived value scores and focus on each individual customer's experience, this study adopts Zeithaml's (1996) definition. However, as highlighted in studies of Choi et al. (2004); Oh (1999) and Sheth et al. (1991), perceived value cannot be limited to the relationship between quality and price; it is a broader concept that also involves social judgement, functional, emotional, conditional and epistemic values. Hence, the influence of PSQ on functional and emotional values is examined in this study, with two hypotheses proposed for perceived quality.

H6a, b: Perceived service quality has a positive impact on emotional and functional values.

Experiential Value and Customer Satisfaction

The literature review revealed that expectations reflect an anticipated performance made by the customer about levels of performance during a transaction' (Churchill and Suprenant, 1982). Satisfaction is expressed by an enthusiastic post-utilisation reaction, which emerges as a result of an agreement between foreseen and genuine authorisation (disconfirmation). This may be an outcome of selective examination of desires (Oliver, 1989). Moreover, 'satisfaction is based on extent to which customers perceive service episode to have met, fallen short, or exceeded their expectations' (Nicholls et al., 1998, p. 249). When execution falls short of desire, the organisation weakens its corporate image. Therefore, customers must be satisfied, so that execution fulfils or even exceeds their desires and the organisation will be seen as. Satisfied customers become loyal customers, and are an organisation's most important promotion source (Nicholls et al., 1998). Satisfaction is fundamental to achieving loyalty and profitability (Ihtiyar, 2018). Thus, it is imperative to understand how satisfaction can be measured. Several organisations have measured loyalty and have gathered many outcome measurements. Despite the fact that the literature hypothesises several perspectives for exploring experiential and customer value, their influence on satisfaction is rarely addressed (Wu and Liang, 2009). A common misinterpretation is that evaluating satisfaction does not stipulate information required to accomplish this. Fundamentally, satisfaction is the conclusion of a sequence of customer experiences or the outcome of worthwhile experiences minus worthless ones. Success occurs when the gap between consumer’s experience and their expectations is closed (Meyer and Schwager, 2007). Thus, this study investigates the influence of experiential estimations of young consumers’ satisfaction with stores.

Lee and Bang (2004) proposed that customers’ online shopping value (utilitarian and experiential) unquestionably affects their satisfaction. Gallarza and Gil-Saura (2006) claim that perceived value is a direct precursor of satisfaction. Further, Shieh and Ming-Sung (2007) introduced a model of consumer (young and immature adult online gamers) behaviour and found that experiential values strongly influence satisfaction. Additionally, Sparks et al. (2007) claim that customer value significantly influences satisfaction with timeshare goods. As highlighted in studies of Varshneya and Das (2017) and Varshneya et al. (2017) suggested that in retail industry customers’ experiential value strongly affects customers’ purchasing and post purchasing stages. As supported by earlier research outcomes, there is a correlation between satisfaction and perceived customer value (Cronin *et al.* 2000). Therefore, to examine the relationship between experiential value and satisfaction, two additional hypotheses are proposed:

H7: Experiential value has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.
H8: Functional value has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction and Post-Purchase Intentions

WoM has received a great deal of interest by marketers and scholars. WoM is a major characteristic of the post-purchase stage (Fuentes-Blasco et al., 2017). Although several brands have suggested WoM as a feasible alternative to old-fashioned marketing communication tools, some practitioners are specifically interested in WoM as a traditional form of communication, which appears to be losing effectiveness (Forrester, 2005). This study attempts to predict how customers’ service experiences in stores influence their satisfaction and WoM. Customers will enthusiastically encourage those in their social circles to adopt behaviour when their service experience was beneficial and/or enjoyable. WoM relates to both positive and negative evaluations of service encounters and it affects other individuals’ (re)purchase and/or behaviour. Hence, we propose another hypothesis that investigates correlation between CS and WoM, stated below.

Moreover, purchase intention indicates the degree of perceptual persuasion required for an individual to repurchase a particular good and/or service and/or to repurchase from the particular service provider, and thus this behaviour reflects future transaction behaviours. Armstrong et al. (2000) associated buying intentions and sales forecasting tools. These researchers found that purchase intentions provide a precise measure of future sales and offer better predictions than previous sales trends. The significance of retaining a base of long-term customers is beyond argument, and maintaining customer loyalty is cheaper than attracting new customers (Jin et al, 2013). Thus, we propose another hypothesis to test correlation between CS and IRV.

An alternative way to examine customers' behavioural intentions is to concentrate on their IPM as a post-purchase pathway. Customer IPM is defined as the maximum price a customer is intending to pay (Byrd et al., 2016). Furthermore, it is also related to an organisation's profitability. For instance, according to study of Anderson and Sullivan (1993), which was based on Swedish Customer Satisfaction Index, 'firms that actually achieve high customer satisfaction also enjoy superior economic returns' (p. 63). In other words, IPM relates both to positive and negative evaluations of service encounters and it affects an organisation's profitability. Although recent research supports the notion that there is a positive relationship between CS and willingness to pay more (e.g., Byrd et al., 2016; Hultman et al., 2015) have been only limited studies in specific markets and industries, such as the Cambodian industry. Therefore, this study hypothesis:

H9a, b, c: Customer satisfaction has a positive impact on intention to pay more, intention to revisit and WoM.

Methods

In this study, a mono-quantitative technique was used to collect the data and conduct statistical analysis. The study used purposive sampling, a non-probability method, to gather primary data. This method is preferred when sample volume is large and it is not feasible to make an empirical interpretation of characteristics of the population (Bryman, 2015). In order to obtain consistent outcomes from structural model assessment, a minimum sample size of 384 valid responses was required (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). However, this was largely exceeded, as 489 valid questionnaires were collected and analysed. In order to predict a suitable sample size and identify any faults in the questionnaire, small-scale pilot studies were conducted before running the full-scale research project. Respondents were selected for pre-test (N=24) and pilot test (N=89) before distributing actual questionnaires. Cronbach's alpha values were used to test reliability of scales, where cut-off point was 0.6 for pre-test. The results revealed that there was internal consistency within the scales for experiential dimensions, PSQ, CS and purchase intention (Cronbach's alpha > 0.7). Once satisfactory results had been achieved from pre-test, pilot study was performed (*N*=89) and the PLS-SEM results were interpreted based on measurements and structural criteria. The responses from pre-test (*N*=24) and pilot test (*N*=89) were not included in actual data analysis (*N*=489).

Measurement

The questionnaires were distributed to university students as young customers who enjoyed visiting well-known grocery retails in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The 63% of participants were female and 72% of participants have regular income as $500. Furthermore, 58% of participants' ages were between 17-20. The items in the questionnaire were adapted from relevant literature. The questionnaire was divided into two main parts. The questions in Part 1 gathered the demographic profile of respondents, while those in Part 2 reflected the endogenous and exogenous constructs. Due to intertwined nature of experiential and customer value as concepts of value in the literature, this study employs concepts of Yuan and Wu (2008) to evaluate the main components of experiential value. These are supported by studies of Mathwick et al. (2001), which refers to direct use or indirect observation; Babin and Darden (1995), Mano and Oliver (1993), and Batra and Ahtola (1991), which refers to intrinsic/extrinsic benefits for consumers. Therefore, measurement of experiential value employed in this study is established on basis of Yuan and Wu's (2008) study, where it is conceptualised as 'emotional and functional values are the main components of customer value'. This commitment to experiential value is also evident in Campbell's concept of romanticism, which refers to a powerful experience that provides an intellectual justification for the customer's consumptive mode (Storey, 2017). Hence, targeted customer group can be attracted via provoking convergent and divergent thinking. In this study, Schmitt's (1999) concept of experiential marketing and Yuan and Wu's (2008) concept of experiential value are employed to evaluate customers' perceptions.

Common Method Variance and Non-Response Bias

Common method variance (CMV) is potentially a problem in this study due to the use of self-reported measures (Spector, 2006) and single survey method (Podsakoff et al., 2003), and could affect validity of the research findings (Reio, 2010). Furthermore, potential covariance within latent constructs (MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012) and their relative structural relationships (Kline et al., 2015) may also produce CMV. In order to ensure that CMV was not a problem in this study, the recommendations of Podsakoff et al. (2003) were followed and Harman's one-factor test and partial correlation procedures were conducted during the questionnaire design and data analysis stages. In addition to CMV, with regard to the continuum of resistance theory (Lin and Schaeffer, 1995), analysis of known characteristics and wave analysis were used to clarify concerns about non-response bias. This included analysing the study population to determine whether differences between the entire population and the respondents were present only in the respondents or in the entire population (Lewis et al., 2013). These statistical test results suggest that CMV (%23.75) and non-response bias were not a concern in this study.

Structural Equation Modelling

SEM is an all-inclusive method that combines numerous procedures and different approaches; namely covariance-based, latent variable and PLS path analyses (Chin, 2010). As highlighted in study of Richter et al. (2016), which is based on methodological reviews, PLS-SEM has contributed widely to behavioural studies (Henseler, 2015). It encourages an enhanced understanding of the interrelationships between observed constructs (Henseler, 2015), and has been applied in several management disciplines, including marketing (Hair et al., 2012). In order to analyse young consumers' perceptions of experiential marketing, PSQ, CS and purchase intention, a two-stage approach, namely, measurement and structural modelling was adopted (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The first stage of analysis is the measurement model, which estimates, selects and obtains the appropriate groups of items to best represent each scale, then assesses how observed variables simulate measurement of latent variables (Soh et al., 2017). Additionally, in order to measure appropriateness of the model, or 'model fit criterion', the analysis employs the goodness of model fit (GoF) and standardised root means square residual (SRMR) measurement criteria (Hu and Bentler, 1999). The second stage of analysis uses structural model to investigate the relationships between latent variables and their effects. ADANCO was used to evaluate SEM statistics for both models.

RESULTS

Assessment of the Measurement Model

Prior to the final SEM analysis, it is important to ensure that measurement model satisfies GoF criterion, which tests reliability and validity of the model. According to Byrne (2013), a value of '0' for SRMR indicates a perfect fit, while a value less than 0.05 suggests a satisfactory fit. However, according to Henseler et al. (2016), even models that are identified correctly may produce values of .06 and/or greater.

Furthermore, Hu and Bentler (1999) also revealed that a cut-off value of .08 is more appropriate for PLS path modelling in new technology research. Thus, calculated HI95 SRMR value of .02 for the model (lower than .06 and .08) met GoF criterion for estimated model fit (saturated model). Thus, PLS goodness-of-fit shows were satisfactory on a number of fit indices. In addition to the model fit criterion, the results of Fornell–Larcker, HTMT and cross-loading criterion indicated that the constructs had discriminant validity, and SEM analysis could proceed.

Assessment of the Structural Model

The structural model (see Figure 1) was assessed by adopting SEM for hypothesis testing. Overall, the results indicated that the model explains 49.34% and 58.16% of the variances to predict young consumers' satisfaction via emotional value and functional value, respectively. Furthermore, the model explained 44.15% of the variance to predict consumers' post-purchase behaviour via customer satisfaction. The SEM analysis results are presented in Tables 2 showing the structural path analysis results. By adopting a bootstrap resampling procedure, direct effects were examined using a two-tailed test (5% and 1% significance level). The endogenous variables were significant at values less than 0.05 (P<0.05).

The majority of all experiential modules (except H_{4a} ACT -> EV; H_{4b} ACT -> FV and H_{5b} RLT -> FV) of relationship between emotional value and functional value were supported. Additionally, the relationships between PSQ (H_{6a} and H_{6b}) and emotional and functional value were supported, while relationship between emotional (H_7) and functional value (H_8) and customer satisfaction, and customer satisfaction with IPM (H_{9a}), intention to revisit (H_{9b}) and WoM (H_{9c}) were also supported. In contrast, in earlier studies, the majority of all experiential modules (except $H_{4a,}$ H_{4b} and H_{5b}) of the relationships between emotional value and functional value were supported.

Further, R^2 of the coefficient of determination, which is 0.44 for customer satisfaction, whereas emotional and functional values are 0.49 and 0.58, respectively. The R^2 value (relatively high) shows that 49.34% and 58.16% of the variance of customer satisfaction are explained by emotional and functional value, respectively.

Table 1. Measurement Items and Loadings

Indicator	Loading	AVE	Cronbach's alpha(α)
CS1	.88	.77	.91
CS2	.91		
CS3	.84		
WoM1	.66	.71	.87
WoM2	.95		
WoM3	.88		
IPM1	.83	.78	.87
IPM2	.93		
IRV1	.85	.76	.86
IRV2	.89		
EV1	.87	.73	.93
EV2	.85		
EV3	.83		
EV4	.86		
EV5	.85		
FV1	.86	.83	.93
FV2	.90		
FV3	.96		
ACT1	.91	.86	.95
ACT2	.92		
ACT3	.95		
FL1	.90	.82	.93
FL2	.91		
FL3	.91		
THNK1	.87	.73	.91
THNK2	.86		
THNK3	.84		
THNK4	.84		
RLT1	.95	.82	.92
RLT2	.94		
RLT4	.81		
SNS1	.90	.74	.95
SNS2	.88		
SNS3	.85		
SNS5	.90		
SNS6	.89		
SNS7	.77		
SNS8	.81		
PSQ1	.95	.92	.98
PSQ2	.96		
PSQ3	.96		
PSQ4	.96		
PSQ5	.96		

Table 2. Structural relationships and hypotheses decisions

Effect	ß	S. Error	Total effect	t-value	p-value (2-sided)	Cohen's f^2	Decision
CS -> WoM	.70	.03	.70	21.00	.00	.15	Supported
CS -> IPM	.69	.03	.69	18.77	.00	.29	Supported
CS -> IRV	.51	.04	.51	11.62	.00	.35	Supported
EV -> CS	.40	.05	.40	7.93	.00	.16	Supported
FV -> CS	.32	.04	.32	7.19	.00	.10	Supported
ACT -> EV	.01	.03	.01	.34	.72	.06	*Not Supported*
ACT -> FV	.10	.05	.10	1.84	.06	.01	*Not Supported*
FL -> EV	.48	.04	.48	10.98	.00	.70	Supported
FL -> FV	.18	.05	.18	3.07	.00	.03	Supported
THNK -> EV	.06	.04	.06	2.25	.00	.01	Supported
THNK -> FV	.01	.06	.01	2.44	.00	.02	Supported
RLT -> EV	-.21	.04	-.21	5. 02	.00	.13	Supported
RLT -> FV	.08	.06	.08	1.19	.23	.06	*Not Supported*
SNS -> EV	.07	.05	.07	2.51	.00	.01	Supported
SNS -> FV	.78	.08	.78	9.35	.00	.48	Supported
PSQ -> EV	.56	.04	.56	12.07	.00	.36	Supported
PSQ -> FV	.10	.05	.10	2.75	.00	.08	Supported

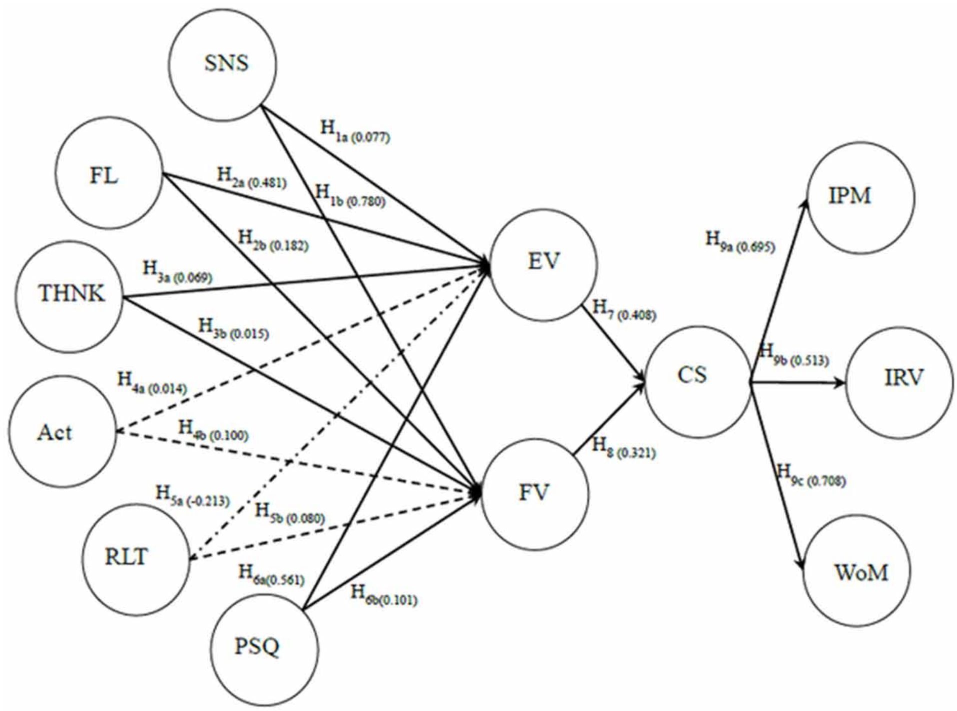
DISCUSSION

This study examines the structural relationships between strategic experiential modules, emotional value, functional value, PSQ, CS and post-purchase behaviour towards the store's products and services. A questionnaire was developed to investigate young Cambodian consumers' purchase intentions and behaviour towards the stores' products and services. The results revealed that emotional value, functional value and PSQ influence young consumers' satisfaction, and that satisfaction is related to their post-purchase behaviour.

The results of this study support the findings of previous studies and provide a deeper understanding of the impact of relationship between the constructs of experiencing, PSQ, emotional value, functional value, CS and purchase behaviour towards the stores' products and services.

Based on findings of this study, the tests for all hypotheses and overall findings are in line with previous studies (Varshneya and Das, 2017; Fuentes Blasco et al 2017; Kim et al., 2014; Wu and Tseng, 2014; Lang and Hooker, 2013; Nigam, 2012;

Figure 1. Structural Model



Yuan and Wu, 2008), where there is a positive relationship between perceptions, emotional and functional values for the store products and services. In others words, young consumers who enjoy spending time in the stores have greater IPM, revisit the stores and share positive WoM within their social environment. Furthermore, the hypothesis of a relationship between 'sense' and emotional and functional values ($H_{1a,\,b}$) was supported, in similar to the results of Nadiri and Gunay (2013), although this finding is not in agreement with that of Yuan and Wu (2008). This shows that Cambodian young consumers may consider the 'sense' module, which refers to aesthetics and sensory qualities, in terms of emotional and functional value as much as they consider other perceptions. A possible explanation is that young customers may enjoy their initial experiences; however, repeat customers may pay attention to the physical appearance, music or layout of the shop due to their familiarity with the establishment (Nadiri and Gunay, 2013).

With regard to emotional value, while 'think', 'feel' 'sense' and PSQ have a significant positive effect, while 'act' was not significant and 'relate' had a negative effect on emotional value. The results of this study are generally consistent with those of previous studies as far as functional value is concerned. The reasons why 'relate' module had a negative effect, while 'act' module did not affect emotional value, might be due to the fact that these stores offer customers a relaxing and warm ambience, distinctive decoration and services that are good value in terms of individual satisfaction. Enjoying goods in an appropriate atmosphere and being treated well by staff may be benefits that encourage customers to visit the store regularly and to spread positive WoM within their social environments. Customers may also intend to pay slightly more than in other shops due to these benefits. This might explain why the majority of strategic experiential modules have a positive and significant relationship with functional value. Even though these findings do not completely replicate those of Wu and Tseng (2014) and Nadiri and Gunay (2013), they are in agreement with those of Varshneya and Das (2017) and Yuan and Wu (2008); however, it is not possible to generalise these findings to other industries or markets.

Overall, strategic experiential modules have more than moderately positive effects on functional and emotional values (except act and relate), which indirectly affect customer satisfaction. The PSQ also has a significant direct positive effect on both emotional and functional values. These results are supported by earlier studies (Varshneya and Das, 2017; Fuentes Blasco et al 2017; Kim et al., 2014; Wu and Tseng, 2014; Lang and Hooker, 2013; Nigam, 2012). The results also reveal that young customers' PSQ has a significant positive effect on experiential value perceptions, specifically, on emotional value.

These findings, which are also consistent with the literature, also indicate that customer satisfaction positively affects their WoM about the store, their intentions to revisit a particular store and to pay more at that store. As highlighted by the path coefficients, CS has a strong positive impact on post-purchase behaviour of young consumers. These consequences of experiential marketing efforts should be considered by service providers in the retail industry. As highlighted in Table 2, several of the paths within the model were supported by the data. 'Feel', 'sense', 'relate' and 'think', as well as PSQ affect customer satisfaction by means of emotional value, and 'sense', 'relate', 'relate', 'think' and PSQ affect customer satisfaction via functional value.

Similar to the studies by Varshneya and Das (2017), Wu and Tseng (2014) and Lang and Hooker, (2013), this study examines the relationships of CS through PSQ by assessing the experiential value and the strategic experiential modules. The findings (except for post purchasing stage) agree with those of Varshneya and Das (2017); Wu and Tseng (2014); Lang and Hooker, (2013); Nigam (2012) and Su (2011). However, in addition to these studies, this study examines the relationship of post-purchase stage as an aspect of post-purchase behaviour in an emerging country and finds that CS has a positive effect on IPM, IRV and WoM. In the light of these findings, we conclude that to strategically implement experiential marketing to increase young consumers' satisfaction and positive post-purchase behaviour; 'think', 'sense', 'relate' and 'feel' modules are important in terms of delivering emotional value, while all the strategic experiential modules deliver functional value and PSQ.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study used PLS-SEM to investigate the impact of experiential marketing modules and experiential value on young consumers' satisfaction and its impact on their post-purchase behaviour. Overall, reliability and validity scores in measurement stage were acceptable, and all relationships in the analysis were tested simultaneously. The results of this analysis showed that 14 of the 17 hypotheses tested were statistically significant and thus are supported. All experiential marketing modules and PSQ contribute to positive customer experiences, which lead to CS, which in turn leads to positive post-purchase behaviour among young customers. In other words, service providers should create an ambience with a physically and psychologically relaxing environment that distances customers from negative factors, such as anxiety and stress. Furthermore, they may consider providing a wide range of quality goods, and so on, which will undoubtedly add to customer satisfaction and create a strong image in the mind of young consumers. This will encourage customers to revisit their stores, spread positive WoM and pay more for their goods and services.

Thus, this study makes two significant contributions to the literature, which helps to improve service providers' understanding of customers' shopping experiences. First, the impact of experiential marketing modules and PSQ on customers' experiential values were examined, and their total impact on the post-purchase stage was investigated empirically. The hypotheses were examined using a partial least square-structural equation model (PLS-SEM), and majority hypotheses were supported. The second contribution of this study is that it was conducted in Cambodia, an emerging market. Cambodia's distinctive business culture and its sociocultural and geographical conditions mean that there is a great potential in the industry. From a practical perspective, the results of this study could be used by service providers to improve their understanding of the relationship between customer experience and the post-purchase stage, then implement appropriate marketing strategies.

Even though there is a positive relationship between satisfaction and IPM, this may not mean that store should increase their prices regularly; rather, it means that consumers will continuously compare a pleasant environment with reasonable prices with the value they gain. Therefore, in order to achieve higher satisfaction and positive WoM, stores should consider this mechanism and control their prices carefully.

Service providers should also ensure that their staffs are trained to deliver the level of service expected by customers. In order to fulfil customers' needs and wants, inter-/intra-cultural communication styles, common communication rules and the introduction of goods and services and other marketing tools should be monitored by supervisors and managers. The Cambodian market is becoming competitive and there are several national and international service providers. All brands need to maintain and improve their competitive advantage if they hope to survive in this market. To achieve this, service providers could measure their young consumers' experiences and develop applicable strategies to meet their expectations; service providers should acknowledge that experiential marketing is an essential tool.

The results of this study support the theory that PSQ and experiential marketing modules contribute to customer satisfaction through experiential value. Post-purchase behaviour, including IPM, is positively influenced by these relationships. Even though there are similar studies in the literature (e.g. Varshneya and Das, 2017), this study has examined the direct relationship between PSQ and the experiential value modules found that its hypotheses are supported. Moreover, in addition to the earlier studies, this study has also examined the relationship between customer satisfaction and post-purchase intentions and again found that the hypothesis proposed was supported. The majority of earlier studies related to experiential marketing have been conducted in more developed countries. However, this study was conducted in Cambodia, as an emerging market. Therefore, this study can be considered as a basis for further studies on strategic experiential modules and post-purchase behaviours in Cambodian service industries. This study also provides an essential marketing tool for Cambodian service providers, with empirically proven results to help them design future marketing strategies.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study was affected by several limitations, which may limit its generalizability to larger populations or other markets. The first limitation relates to the definition of the constructs for the model. In line with previous studies, such as those of Ringle et al. (2012) and Becker et al. (2012), there is limited information on reflective hierarchical latent variable models. Regarding the selection of a first-order or second-order model, the study examined constructs in a first-order reflective model. The second limitation is that data used in this research were collected from young consumers and thus may not be generalised to all customer types. A further limitation of the study is related to the studied context. This study only focuses on grocery retails, and it would be interesting to extend theoretical model to other industries such as the fashion, hospitality and healthcare industries. Furthermore, the study is limited to a Cambodian perspective and may be extended to other ASEAN countries to obtain results that are more comprehensive. Finally, future studies could concentrate on additional antecedents or consequences of the constructs in the model, such as personality, cultural background of service encounters. Consequently, it may be difficult to adapt these findings to other countries, businesses, sub-sectors or segments. The proposed SEM does not consider the moderating role of demographic variables, which should be the subject of further studies.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Emerging Market: An economy that has some characteristics of a developed market but does not satisfy standards to be termed a developed market.

Experiential Marketing: A kind of marketing technique that creates experiences between brands and consumers.

Experiential Value: A perceived, relativistic preference for product attributes or service performances arising from interaction within a consumption setting that facilitates or blocks achievement of customer goals or purposes.

Perceived Service Quality: The customer's assessment of the overall superiority or excellence of the service.

PLS-SEM: A method of structural equation modelling which allows estimating complex cause-effect relationship models with latent variables.

Post-Purchase Behaviour: The stage of the buyer decision process when a consumer will take additional action, based purely on their satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Young Customers: A young person who buys goods or services from a shop or business.

Chapter 6
Future Research Directions in Sensory Marketing

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ABSTRACT

Although retail atmospherics has been an active field of study, further research is needed to address the role that sensory marketing plays in the retailing sector. This chapter presents a review of previous research and discusses the effect of visual, sound, and olfactory atmospherics on shopping outcomes. The interaction among these variables and their common impact on consumer behavior is also explored. The chapter expands and enriches the literature on retail atmospherics and discusses future research avenues. Further research will help retailers pay attention to the crucial role of sensory environment in shaping the customer experience and shopping behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Retailing is witnessing a thrilling period of change (Grewal, Roggeveen, & Nordfält, 2017). The stiff competition among different retailing formats is one side of this change (Chotipanich & Issarasak, 2017), and retailers are using different techniques to compete and entice shoppers. For example, while online retailers are trying to benefit from a bigger product assortment and a 24/7 service, offline retailers are

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designing their stores to provide a richer shopping experience (El Hedhli, Zourrig, & Chebat, 2016; Terblanche, 2018). Enhancing in-store shopping increases shopper satisfaction and other approach behaviors (Elmashhara & Soares, 2019b).

Providing a rich in-store shopping experience requires considering all the factors that could influence consumer behavior and their attitude towards the store. Some of these factors may have a bigger influence on the utilitarian shopping visits, while some others have a higher impact on hedonic shopping visit (Jones, Reynolds, & Arnold, 2006). Some of the factors that influence shopping utilitarian values and have been well-recognized in retailing research are convenience and accessibility (Guido, Belk, Rizzo, & Pino, 2018; Pauwels & Neslin, 2015; Reimers, 2014; Reimers & Clulow, 2014), merchandise and packaging factors (Miquel, Caplliure, Pérez, & Bigné, 2017; Newman, Howlett, & Burton, 2014), price, promotions, and return policies (Chatterjee & Kumar, 2017; Nakhata & Kuo, 2017; Shirai, 2017), product quality (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006; Vega-Vázquez, Castellanos-Verdugo, & Oviedo-Garcia, 2017), retail tenant mix (Teller, 2008; Wakefield & Baker, 1998), display and shelf-space (He & Oppewal, 2018; Ketron, 2018), layout and design (Iyer & Smith, 2015; Rosenbaum, Ramirez, & Camino, 2018), retail location (Dolega, Pavlis, & Singleton, 2016; Reigadinha, Godinho, & Dias, 2017), and parking (Mingardo & Meerkerk, 2012; Reimers, 2013). Another group of consumer behavior antecedents has been mostly studied in relation to hedonic shopping values (Abdul Karim, Kumar, & Abd Rahman, 2013). In this vein, the following factors are well-recognized in retailing literature: atmospherics and environmental factors (Bloch & Kamran-Disfani, 2018; El-Adly & Eid, 2016; Holmqvist & Lunardo, 2015), social factors (Hsu, Chen, & Kumar, 2018; Li, Lin, & Ho, 2017; Ramamoorthy, Gunasekaran, Roy, Rai, & Senthilkumar, 2018), and entertainment (Elmashhara & Soares, 2019b, 2019a; Elmashhara, Soares, & Mumel, 2019; Sadachar & Fiore, 2018; Triantafillidou, Siomkos, & Papafilippaki, 2017).

Atmospherics is one of the most active research areas in retailing studies. Several studies address the role of environmental cues on consumer behavior (Chang, Eckman, & Yan, 2011; Mohan, Sivakumaran, & Sharma, 2013). Turley and Milliman (2000) classify atmosphere factors to five main categories: external variables; general interior variables; layout and design variables; point-of-purchase, and decoration variables; and human variables. The most recognized category is the general interior variables which encompasses a number of environmental variables (Flooring and carpeting, color schemes, lighting, music, P.A. usage, scents, tobacco smoke, width of aisles, wall composition, paint and wallpaper, ceiling composition, merchandise, temperature, and cleanliness) surrounding consumers during most of their shopping time. This article discusses the visual, sound and olfactory variables (namely; color schemes, lighting, music, and scent) in order to, first, add to the body of knowledge by understanding the role these variables play in enhancing the shopping experience.

Second, to indicate research gaps and potential relations, hence, providing directions for future research.

BACKGROUND

Color Schemes

Different aspects of how color is relevant in retail contexts have been studied. Color schemes can be used to differentiate products from competitors, as well as, a technique to influence consumers' expectations about the store's characteristics (Lowrey, 2012). Bellizzi, Crowley, and Hasty (1983) indicate that color has been used by retailers to project an image or to create an atmosphere, it is used to attract customers in retail store design, as well as in package design. In retail settings, early research has privileged the role of color in advertising and packing (Gorn, Chattopadhyay, Yi, & Dahl, 1997; Hattwick, 1950; Luckiesh, 1923; McNeal, 1973; Starch, 1923; Warden & Flynn, 1926). Thereafter, marketing research looked at color as an atmospheric variable influencing consumers' moods, feelings (e.g., Helmefalk & Hultén, 2017), attitude and loyalty (e.g., Murray, Elms, & Teller, 2017).

Extant research reports human behavior in response to color on the physiological and psychological level. Generally, warm colors (red and yellow) produce different physiological and psychological effects comparing to cool/cold colors (blue and green), which are opposite on the color spectrum (Bellizzi & Hite, 1992). Physically, warm colors are stimulating, while cool colors are more relaxing (Bellizzi et al., 1983), whereas, psychologically, despite some individual and cultural differences, the emotional response to color have been found to be quite consistent. "Many psychologists believe that people are either warm-color-dominant (for example, red, and yellow) or cold-color-dominant (for example, blue, and green)" (Bellizzi et al., 1983, p. 24). Schaie and Heiss (1964) report the high wavelength colors (red, orange, and yellow) induce elated mood states. However, further studies discuss the emotional characteristics of colors, mainly, short wavelength versus the long wavelength colors (Bellizzi et al., 1983; Chebat & Morrin, 2007; Singh, 2006; Varely, 1980). Roschk, Loureiro, and Breitsohl (2017, p. 230) state "Psychologically, warm colors (especially red) are seen as emotionally arousing, exciting, and distracting, while cool colors (especially blue) are linked to feelings of relaxation, peacefulness, calmness, and pleasantness". In addition, different colors like red and blue have been studied to see how they could differently influence a number of outcomes. Results show that positive retail outcomes such as simulated purchases, fewer purchase postponements, and a stronger inclination to shop and browse occurred in blue rather than red environments (Bellizzi & Hite, 1992; Crowley, 1993). Similarly, Babin, Hardesty, and Suter (2003) examine the effect of various color, lighting, and price point combinations on consumer behavior in fashion-oriented stores. Comparing to orange interiors, results indicate blue interiors are associated with more favorable evaluations, higher store patronage intentions, and higher purchase intentions, however, the authors indicate that orange color might produce favorable results in conjunction with lighting. Considering cultural differences, Chebat and Morrin (2007) find that consumers have different perceptions of product quality when the shopping area exhibited a warm color or a cool color décor. Moreover, Yildirim, Akalin-Baskaya, and Hidayetoglu (2007) examine the impact of indoor color use, gender, and age on mood and cognitive performance. Findings indicate violet interiors are more positively perceived when compared to yellow. Also, compared to older customers, young customers had a more positive tendency towards the perception of atmospheric attributes, including the color of store interiors. Finally, Singh (2006) suggests that sales can be directly affected by packaging and store wall colors, moreover, the author advices retailers to choose colors for products and interior decoration depending upon their target audience (gender-specific stores, kids store, etc.).

Lighting

The impact of lighting has been studied in different disciplines, including for example organizational behavior studies (e.g., Baron, Rea, & Daniels, 1992; Gifford, 1988). This factor has been also well-recognized in consumer behavior literature, and many authors study this variable in retailing settings (e.g., Custers, de Kort, IJsselsteijn, & de Kruiff, 2010; Webber, Sausen, Basso, & Laimer, 2018). Lighting in some shopping formats like malls includes outdoor as well as indoor lighting. Outdoor lighting gives a good impression about malls at night; Narisada and Schreuder (2004, p. 55) state “if the outdoor areas of the shopping mall at night are well-lit, the general atmosphere of the mall will become much more fascinating and enjoyable than in daytime”. However, indoor lighting is more related to the atmosphere.

Several retailing studies investigate the common effect of color and lighting. Lowrey (2012, p. 92) states “At the store level, the colors and the lighting used are crucial to forming the consumer’s expectations about the store’s characteristics because light affects how color is perceived”. In this vein, Babin et al. (2003) suggest that lighting and color combinations affect consumers’ cognitive representation and effective reaction; the authors indicate the use of soft lights decreases ill effects of an orange interior and produces the highest level of perceived price fairness. It has also been argued that lighting may improve self-image of older consumers: “Retail environments frequented by those aging boomers better have great lighting and brighter colors to make their customers feel younger or at least not be reminded of their aging eyes" (Lowrey, 2012, p. 92). Findings also suggest that the effects of lights on behavioral intentions are mediated by the cognitive and affective reactions they create. Furthermore, Tantanatewin and Inkarojrit (2016) discuss the use of the combination of lights and colors as an important technique in retail design. Findings emphasize that spaces with warm color tones and colored-light receive a higher positive score of impression and identity. On the other hand, Baker, Levy, and Grewal (1992) discuss how ambient cues, represented by lighting and music integrate with the social cues to impact arousal in the store environment.

Another stream of retailing research has isolated lighting from other environmental cues and studied it independently. Wardono, Hibino, and Koyama (2012) explore the impact of colors, lighting, and décor on customers' perceived sociability, emotion and behavioral intention on social dining occasions. Results indicate the positive effects of dim lighting on romantic dining. In two independently-owned stores, Summers and Hebert (2001) find consumer behavior to be positively affected by supplemental lighting treatments, also results show a significant relationship between lighting and display. Another field study involving 57 clothing stores reveals that lighting attributes (e.g., brightness, contrast, glare, and sparkle) are related to the perceived atmosphere. Authors also emphasize the important role played by lighting in evoking atmosphere (Custers et al., 2010). In the same context of fashion retail stores, Schielke and Leudesdorff (2015) discuss the impact of lighting on the brand classification with regard to the factors of social status. In grocery and supermarket context, Nagyová, Berčík, and Horská (2014) indicate the effect of lighting on drawing customer's attention to a specific part of the sales area and achieving the overall harmonization in the store, and Quartier, Vanrie, and Van Cleempoel (2014) discuss the impact of realistic lighting settings on the perceived atmosphere and experienced emotions. Finally, in a mall context, Wakefield and Baker (1998) find that lighting and temperature are the only ambient factors that are not associated either to excitement or to the desire to stay at the mall. The authors justify this based on the finding of Baker's (1986) study which indicates that lighting and temperature are environmental elements which are not noticed by the consumer unless they are insufficient, i.e. are present with unsatisfactory levels. The presence of those two factors in a negative way may cause negative outcomes.

Music

Music may be one of the least expensive techniques to enhance shopper perceptions: Grewal, Baker, Levy, and Voss (2003, p. 265) state "It is less expensive to pipe appropriate music into a store to entertain and distract than it is to hire more service people". Hence, "music offers a flexible tool that easily can be tailored to the shopping context" (Roschk et al., 2017, p. 236).

The effect of music has been studied in an early stage of retailing research. An early article focuses on the effects of music on purchasing behavior. Findings suggest that although time in the store would be reduced, sales and reported satisfaction would be unaffected by loud music (Smith & Curnow, 1966). Burleson (1979) surveyed 52 managers of diverse retail stores and found that music has a positive effect on customers' mood and purchase. The same study, surveyed 560 customers also, and results indicate a positive effect of music on purchase and possible purchase. Linsen (1975) found that people prefer music playing in the background of the supermarkets while they are shopping, and they think playing music is a sign that the store's management cares about customers. The 200 surveyed customers in this study believed that they would spend more time in a store with background music. Similarly, while comparing background and foreground music effects on clothing store shoppers, Yalch and Spangenberg (1990) demonstrate that customers' perceptions of their shopping time varied with the type of music, depending on their age. Also, Milliman (1982) found that music tempo variations can significantly affect the pace of in-store traffic flow and dollar sales volume. In restaurants setting, Milliman (1986) demonstrated also that background music can significantly affect the behavior of restaurant customers like purchases, as well as the length of stay.

Moreover, retailing literature shows increasing attention being given to the role of music over the last two decades; a 2x2 factorial experiment with 72 participants reveals that individuals reported themselves as shopping longer when exposed to familiar music but actually shopped longer when exposed to unfamiliar music. Shorter actual shopping times in the familiar music condition were related to increased arousal (Yalch & Spangenberg, 2000). Another experimental study found that consumers rated the environment more positively, exhibited higher levels of approach and impulse buying behaviors, and experienced enhanced satisfaction when ambient scent and music were congruent with each other in terms of their arousing qualities (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001). Another double atmospheric variables' evaluation revealed that the volume of music and the presence of a vanilla aroma impacted shoppers' emotions and satisfaction levels. Findings also show that the arousal induced by music and aroma increased pleasure levels, which in turn influenced positively shopper behaviors, including time and money spent, approach behavior, and satisfaction with the shopping experience (Morrison, Gan, Dubelaar,

Table 1. Examples of the impact of different scents

Scent	Impact
Citrus	Can improve mood and cognitive performance
Mint	Reduces stress and increase mental concentration
Vanilla	One of the most attractive scents for increasing comfort and reducing stress
Lavender	Has a relaxing effect and eases anxiety and insomnia

Source: (Hultén, 2015, p. 287).

& Oppewal, 2011). Furthermore, Cameron, Baker, Peterson, and Braunsberger (2003) discuss the influence of music on mood, which, in turn, influences overall experience' evaluation. In the same vein, Roschk et al. (2017) discuss the positive effects of music on pleasure, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, and Grewal et al. (2003) demonstrate the effect of classical music on store atmosphere evaluations. Research has also revealed other outcomes of consumer behavior influenced by music such as the intention to return and total amount spent (Harrington, Ottenbacher, & Treuter, 2015), product choice (North, Sheridan, & Areni, 2016), and impulsive buying (Boutsouki, 2019; Chebat & Morrin, 2005). Michel, Baumann, and Gayer (2017) provide a systematic literature review of in-store music and its impact on customers' behaviors. Although the study finds some conflicting results, the authors conclude music to be a worthwhile technique if used properly, and they encouraged more research to reach a better understanding of this factor.

Scent

The ambient scent is another inexpensive tool that could be used by retailers to attract shoppers (Chebat & Michon, 2003). In the last century, retailing research has devoted considerable attention to this factor (Bone & Ellen, 1999; Bone & Jantrania, 1992; Lorig & Schwartz, 1988; Lorig, Schwartz, Herman, & Lane, 1988; Milliman, 1986; Mitchell, Kahn, & Knasko, 1995; Spangenberg, Crowley, & Henderson, 1996), and several recent studies indicate the importance of the olfactory dimension of the atmosphere as a tool that enhances shoppers' perceptions and experience, and positively influences their in-store behavior (Büttner, 2017; Doucé & Janssens, 2013; Doucé, Poels, Janssens, & De Backer, 2013; Rajagopal & Castano, 2015). However, Hultén (2015, p. 287) states "for marketers, scent should not be introduced without a correlation with the experience that the actual service environment will give to customers", and he provides a table showing how different scents are believed to stimulate people's moods and actual behaviors (Table 1).

Several studies focus on the impact of scent on brands. Morrin and Ratneshwar (2000) find the presence of a pleasant ambient scent to improve brand evaluations, especially for unfamiliar brands. A pleasant ambient scent also improved recalling unfamiliar, but not familiar, brand names. Another study indicated that ambient scent did not influence self-assessed mood or arousal levels, but it increased the attention in terms of longer stimulus viewing times (Morrin & Ratneshwar, 2003). Another group of studies investigated the joint effect of ambient scent and music; using stimuli associated with the Christmas holiday season. Spangenberg, Grohmann, and Sprott (2005) explored the joint effects of ambient scent and music on consumers' evaluations of a store, its environment and offered merchandise. Findings indicate consumers' evaluations were more favorable when Christmas scent concurred with Christmas music. In the same vein, Mattila and Wirtz (2001) indicate that when ambient scent and music are congruent with each other in terms of their arousing qualities, consumers rate the environment significantly more positively, exhibit higher levels of approach and impulse buying behaviors, and experience enhanced satisfaction. Further, Morrison et al. (2011) demonstrate that the volume of music and the presence of a vanilla aroma has significant effects on shoppers' emotions and satisfaction levels.

More scent-related research has been done at store setting, and several studies indicate the effect of the olfactory cues on consumers' mood (Chebat & Michon, 2003; Goldkuhl & Styvén, 2007; Michon, Chebat, & Turley, 2005; Roschk et al., 2017). Lunardo (2012) suggests that environmental characteristics represented by ambient odors can influence consumer skepticism, and in turn, emotional and attitudinal responses. In the same vein, a field experiment showed that the presence of a pleasant ambient scent in the store positively influenced all of the studied variables: pleasure, arousal, evaluation of the store environment, evaluation of the products, and intention to revisit the store (Doucé & Janssens, 2013).

In addition to mood and emotions, research reveals the effect of scent on several behavioral responses. It should be noted that the impact of scent seems to be contingent on scent congruity. An experimental study demonstrated scent congruity to influence perceptions of the store, its merchandise, and actual sales (Spangenberg, Sprott, Grohmann, & Tracy, 2006). Parsons (2009) warns about using pleasant but non-associated scent which can lead to negative affective or behavioral responses. This study shows that the scent needs to be perceived as associated with the store-type in order to lead to positive responses. Similarly, another study indicates the importance of the association between ambient scent and neatness of the store; when diffused in a messy store, a pleasant ambient scent has a negative effect on consumers' product evaluation because of a mismatch between the pleasant scent and the unpleasant messy layout (Doucé, Janssens, Swinnen, & Van Cleempoel, 2014). A field study on 201 participants showed that a chocolate scent positively influenced general approach behavior in a bookstore (Doucé et al., 2013). Finally, Leenders, Smidts, and El Haji (2019) found that scent had a significant positive effect on shopper's store evaluations, time spent at the store and store-level sales.

CONCLUSION

The atmosphere of a shopping area is a powerful tool that influences consumer behavior to the benefit of the retailer (Lunardo & Mbengue, 2013). Prior research investigated the effect of color schemes, lighting, music, and scent on shoppers' behavior. The big number of studies that deal with these atmospheric variables indicates their importance in the retailing industry. The aim of this study is to discuss previous literature and provide some directions for future research in the following sections.

The Common Effect of Atmospherics

Although there are many studies that consider the joint effect of two atmospherics on consumer behavior (For examples, see Table 2). There are still many combinations of atmospherics to be investigated for their potentially important role in enhancing the shopping experience. Whilst today's shoppers are expecting more multi-sensory, interactive, and holistic shopping experience, still many retailers follow the standard design and make individual decisions regarding the environmental elements (Foster & Mclelland, 2015). Each shopping context requires a specific combination of atmospherics to create more interactive and authentic environment that helps in magnifying retailer earnings to best levels. For example, Tantanatewin and Inkarojrit (2016) discuss the use of combinations of cool and warm colors in different light settings. Replication with additional comparison pairs could bear new findings. Also, conducting comparisons among several pairs of other atmospheric elements could contribute to improving shopping area designs. Moreover, although it is more difficult to control, considering more than two atmospherics could produce very interesting results and provide great practical implications about the best environmental cues' combination to be used in a specific retailing context. For example, lighting, color, and music are key components of clothing stores' atmosphere; examining different combinations of these three variables might generate insights for improving store experiences leading in turn to better earnings.

Table 2. Examples of studies consider the common effect of atmospherics

Study	Atmospherics discussed
Lowrey (2012)	Color - Lighting
Babin et al. (2003)	Color - Lighting
Tantanatewin and Inkarojrit (2016)	Color - Lighting
Baker et al. (1992)	Lighting - Music
Mattila and Wirtz (2001)	Music - Scent
Morrison et al. (2011)	Music - Scent
Spangenberg et al. (2005)	Music - Scent

The Indirect Effect of Atmospherics

Several studies demonstrate that atmospherics have direct effect on final outcomes and behavioral responses (e.g., Harrington et al., 2015; North et al., 2016). However, other researchers indicate that atmospherics influence final shopping outcomes like purchase intentions and loyalty via several mediators. Research reveals many potential mediating variables like negative and positive emotions (e.g., Allard, Babin, & Chebat, 2009), pleasure (e.g., Tantanatewin & Inkarojrit, 2018), arousal (e.g., Lecointre-Erickson, Daucé, & Legohérel, 2018), perception of time (e.g., Michel et al., 2017), perceived quality of servicescape and satisfaction (e.g., Siu, Wan, & Dong, 2012). Other factors could also play a mediating role between atmospherics and shopping outcomes. Several emotions could mediate the path from some atmospherics to outcomes such as re-patronage intentions (cf. De Nisco & Warnaby, 2013). Moreover, visual, sound, and olfactory cues could have an influence on shoppers' desire to spend more time at the shopping area, which in turn, could influence other behavioral responses like loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and patronage intentions. Identifying the mediators between atmospherics and shopping outcomes help researchers to provide more adequate and creative managerial directions and recommendations.

The Effect of Culture

There is a lack of cross-cultural retailing studies that consider the different perception of atmospherics based on the cultural background. For example, Chebat and Morrin (2007) compared the behavior of French-Canadians and Anglo-Canadians and found out that the second group has higher perceptions of product quality in cool color mall's décor. Moreover, Lee, Noble, and Biswas (2018) discuss how golden color impact on tipping behavior of restaurant customers, and indicate that consumers' atmospherics preference varies across cultures, and refer to the need for implementing more cross-cultural studies at atmospherics level. Future research has to take into consideration the effect of cultural differences when studying the atmospherics influences on consumer behavior, this will provide crucial implications in case of retailers targeting different countries, or aiming to enter new markets. For example, an environmental combination of store colors and music could be adequate for one culture but not for the other. This also applies to other atmospherics such as scent.

The Role of Gender and Age

The effect of gender and age should be considered when studying the effect of each environmental role. Each shopping area must be designed based on the targeted demographic segment. For example, kids' zone in a shopping area should be designed based on kids' preferences, and a women's clothing store must be designed based on women's preferences of atmospherics. Recommendations to practitioners should be given based on the demographic segment they are targeting. Therefore, further research is required to investigate the effect of demographics. When having a mixed sample, investigating the moderating effect of gender and age could provide further adequate recommendations.

Hence, there are several fruitful directions for future research addressing the role that atmospherics play in the retailing sector.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Color Schemes in Retailing: One of the cues in atmospherics that can be used in retailing to differentiate products, as well as to influence consumers' expectations about the store's characteristics.

Lighting in Retailing: The use of lights in stores as a crucial tool to forming the consumer's expectations about the store and shopping areas' characteristics.

Music in Retailing: One of the least expensive techniques to improve ambient sound and enhance shopper perceptions.

Retail Atmospherics: The physical and environmental characteristics of a retail store used to create an image to attract customers. Retailers may use atmospherics to enhance the customer experience.

Scent in Retailing: The ambient scent is another inexpensive tool that could be used by retailers to refresh the environment and attract shoppers.

Sensory Marketing: The process of attracting consumers and win their attention, trust, and loyalty by appealing to their senses.

Section 2

Online Experience

Chapter 7
Can Virtual Customer Service Agents Improve Consumers' Online Experiences?
The Role of Hedonic Dimensions

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the navigation experience in ecommerce. The authors address the impact of a number of hedonic dimensions, specifically perceived visual attractiveness, perceived enjoyment, and sociability, in consumers' online experiences. They develop and test a research model explaining how these factors affect trust, satisfaction, and ultimately, website loyalty. Findings from a survey carried out with 132 users of an airline's website, which displays a virtual customer service agent, support the model proposed. Specifically, results confirm that enriching consumers' sensory experiences online through aesthetics, an enjoyable experience, and a social interaction interface positively affects trust, satisfaction, and subsequently, loyalty.

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INTRODUCTION

Companies continuously search for strategies to improve their online interfaces and websites (Pappas *et al.*, 2017), hence improving the quality of online navigation for users. Interface design improvement, in particular through web personalization, has an enormous potential for making online commerce more like real world shopping, enriching consumers' shopping experiences online (Cyr *et al.*, 2006; Papadopoulou, 2007; Pappas *et al.*, 2017) as well as increasing trust, satisfaction, and loyalty (Pengnate & Sarathy, 2017).

Whilst in real life the shopping process can be considered a social event, ecommerce applications need to be able to replicate and integrate elements from the social context into their online context (Papadopoulou, 2007). Childers *et al.* (2002) argued that an important motivation for engaging in online retail shopping is the hedonic function of the website. In fact, the perceived sensory experience, derived from the aesthetics of the site which can render the navigating experience more enjoyable, has been pointed as an important strategy to enrich and facilitate navigation (Childers *et al.*, 2002; Lavie & Tractinsky 2004; Van der Heijden 2003; Robins & Holmes 2008; Cyr *et al.*, 2006).

The use of virtual customer-service agents has been noted to allow consumers to personalize their experience online (Alves & Soares, 2014; Moon *et al.*, 2013; Verhagen *et al.*, 2014) by improving the perceived sociability and by rendering navigation experience more enjoyable for consumers (Wang & Fodness, 2010). Verhagen *et al.* (2014) argued that virtual customer service agents contribute to improve the quality of online service encounters, combining elements of both 'high tech' and 'high touch' and overcoming the detached and computer-mediated characteristics of internet.

Virtual customer-service agents are software systems that can be used in online settings to act as recommendation agents. They can combine multiple graphic options with high levels of interactivity encouraging two-way conversation and offering recommendations in an intuitive manner, thus enriching traditional websites' functions (Alves & Soares, 2014). These virtual customer service agents, act as recommendation agent and can take the form of human-like avatars offering a sort of social presence that can create feeling of warmth, and the perception that there is a personal, sociable and sensitive human contact (Etemad-Sajadi & Ghachem, 2015).

Earlier approaches to understand technology use have focused on utilitarian factors, in particular the Technology Adoption Model (TAM) which posits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are the two beliefs relevant for determining attitudes toward technologies (Davis, 1989). However, hedonic factors have also been pointed as important not only to explain the decision to buy online but also to improve the quality and emotional pleasure of the user experience (Fiore *et al.*, 2005; Bilgihan, 2016). Our paper contributes to this stream of research by focusing on perceived visual attractiveness, perceived enjoyment and sociability. We set our study in a large airline's website with a virtual customer service agent represented by a human-like avatar. We posit that the aforementioned hedonic factors improve trust in the website given enhanced confidence in making good choices allowed by the presence of a virtual customer service agent which can take the functions of a seller. Previous studies establish the relevance of trust in an online firm as a set of beliefs that the other party will refrain from opportunistic behavior and will not take advantage of a specific situation. There is, however, insufficient knowledge about the factors that lead to trust development in online settings, especially because extant work shows inconsistent results (Kim & Peterson, 2017).

Moreover, online shopping-behavior studies aimed at understanding the consumer's adoption behaviors have focused either on different outcomes, such as loyalty (Forgas *et al.*, 2012), purchase/patronage intention (Van Der Heijden *et al.,* 2003; Kim *et al.,* 2008; Wang & Fodness, 2010; Dabholkar & Sheng, 2012; Alves & Soares, 2014) or purchase (Kim *et al.*, 2008). However, studies focusing on loyalty are scarce. Loyalty is obviously an important outcome as, ultimately, the success of a business can be measured by the number of returning customers. In online transactions, loyalty, also referred to as e-loyalty, has been defined as the intention to visit and make purchases in the future (Forgas *et al.,* 2012). In parallel, it is also important to assess the satisfaction experienced with the decision to visit and shop online. Despite the fact that satisfaction and loyalty have an asymmetric relationship (Oliver, 1999), a satisfied customer is more likely to return (Pappas *et al.*, 2014). Thus, this paper probes on these two outcomes: satisfaction and loyalty.

Hence, this study focuses on the impact perceived visual attractiveness, perceived enjoyment and sociability of trust, satisfaction and subsequently, loyalty. This is particularly relevant in the sense that we know little about the role of the hedonic factors as antecedents of trust and satisfaction and their effect on e-loyalty in websites displaying a virtual customer service agents.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows: first, we present the conceptual background on the impact of hedonic factors in using online interfaces, leading to the proposed model and hypotheses. Then, the methodology and empirical study are discussed. The final section addresses the conclusion, limitations as well as makes suggestions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

Hedonic Factors in Online Use

Earlier approaches to understand technology adoption have focused mainly on utilitarian factors. However, hedonic dimensions have also been pointed as relevant not only to explaining the decision to buy online but also to improving the enjoyment of the consumption experience (Bilgihan, 2016). Before the advent of online shopping, Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) had long discussed how consumption experiences can offer satisfaction or enjoyment, independently of the instrumental (utilitarian) value (see also, Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). This is linked to the hedonic value provided by these experiences translated in their potential to arouse fantasy, as well as emotions and entertainment (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Positive interpersonal engagement offered by retail shopping can render delight to such experiences (Elmashhara & Soares, 2019). However, establishing a social connection with a potential buyer is far more difficult in the virtual context rather than in the real world (Etemad-Sajadi & Ghachem, 2015). Yet, in line with several authors, when potential buyers experience an inspiring, involving and fun-creative online experience, they are more likely to be involved (Kohler *et al.*, 2011). Social cues intrinsic in avatars taking the role of virtual customer service agents induce perceptions of website socialness, leading to increased pleasure and arousal (Wang & Fodness, 2007; Etemad-Sajadi & Ghachem, 2015).

Trust

The body of literature on trust is extensive, since it has been object of study of multiple disciplines given its centrality for interpersonal and intergroup behavior and its eclectic nature (Van Der Heijden *et al.*, 2003; Corritore *et al.*, 2003; Kim *et al.*, 2008). Exchange theories and relationship marketing posit that trust is a key condition for dyadic relationships (Schurr & Ozanne, 1985; Moorman *et al.*,1993). In short, trust refers to the confidence that one's partner is reliable and has integrity (Rotter, 1967; Moorman *et al.*, 1993). Trust has been defined as "the belief that a party's word or promise is reliable and a party will fulfill his/her obligations in an exchange relationship" (Schurr & Ozanne, 1985, p. 940). However, research in trust in online contexts produced inconsistent results (Kim & Peterson, 2017).

In online contexts, the role of trust is a prerequisite for exchanges as in other transaction contexts (Corritore *et al.*, 2003; Kim *et al.*, 2008; Pengnate & Sarathy, 2017), and has been studied often in the ecommerce literature (Kim & Peterson, 2017). Trust is essentially a belief that "the selling party or entity will fulfil its transactional obligations as the consumers understands them" (Kim *et al*., 2008, p. 545). Trust, thus, refers to the willingness to depend on the goodwill of the trader and act in accordance with the recommendations of the seller and/or website (McKnight *et al.*, 2002).

Studies on online trust have initially looked at technical aspects, such as privacy and security and perceived web quality (Kim *et al.*, 2008; Al-Debei *et al.*, 2015). For example, a substantial body of research focuses on the connections between trust and perceived risk (Jarvenpaa *et al.*, 2000; Van Der Heijden *et al.*, 2003; Chang & Chen, 2008). However, studies focusing on other behavioral determinants of trust in ecommerce and online settings are scarcer. Bart *et al.* (2005) looked at website and consumer characteristics antecedents of online trust. Website characteristics included factors such as navigation and presentation features while consumer characteristics, included factors such as familiarity, expertise with the website and online entertainment. Kim *et al.* (2008) have developed a model of the antecedents of trust and proposed the following typology of antecedents: Cognition (observation)-based: e.g., protection issues; Affect-based, such as reputation or word-of-mouth; Experience-based: e.g., familiarity, previous experience, etc. and Personality-oriented. Wang and Fodness (2010) argue that the emotional element of experience is important online and that virtual customer service agents can contribute to mimic the interaction with a salesperson thus eliciting positive emotions.

Below, we discuss the perceived visual attractiveness, perceived enjoyment, and sociability, as relevant dimensions for online use. We posit that these factors are relevant because they have an impact on trust followed by satisfaction with the online experience which, in turn, impacts on loyalty.

Perceived Visual Attractiveness

Perceived visual attractiveness refers to ''the degree to which a person believes that the website is aesthetically pleasing to the eye''(Van der Heijden, 2003, p. 544). Robins and Holmes (2008) found that page aesthetics affected users' decision to remain or leave the website. Other studies have shown that the interface visual aesthetics contributes to not only to users' satisfaction (Lavie & Tractinsky, 2004; Tractinsky *et al*., 2004) but also to online trust (Pengnate & Sarathy, 2017).

A meta-analysis of online trust relationships in e-commerce showed that design quality, referring to the "the perception of the balance, emotional appeal, aesthetics, and uniformity of the website's overall visual look" (Kim & Peterson 2017, p. 46) impacts online trust. This impact is due to the fact that a visually appealing website indicates the vendor's ability and professionalism, which tends to generate trust (Bart et al. 2005; Kim & Peterson 2017). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. The higher the perceived visual attractiveness, the greater online trust.

Perceived Enjoyment

The Perceived Enjoyment dimension, that is, the perception that using the computer was "enjoyable in its own right, apart from any performance consequences that may be anticipated'' (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1992, p. 1113) was also pointed as an important factor. This factor was shown to impact positively both on the attitude towards use and the intention to use (Dickinger *et al.*, 2008; Teo & Noyes, 2011; Van der Heijden, 2003).

Hedonic consumption experiences are by definition enjoyable or pleasurable. Enjoyment of technology has been found to be related to online initial trust in e-commerce (Chen & Barnes, 2007), and, in general, a positive experience online can lead to trust in the company (Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa, 2002; see also Bilgihan, 2016). Indeed, enjoyment creates positive associations in one's minds that should nurture trust.

H2. The higher the perceived enjoyment, the greater online trust.

Sociability

With regard to the sociability dimension, it refers to the perception of social presence and sensitive human contact through the medium (Wang & Fodness, 2010). This perception of social stimuli as courtesy, kindness, empathy and sympathy has been deemed important to overcome the consequences of the lack of face-to-face interactions between the consumer and the seller in online settings (Alves & Soares, 2014). Verhagen *et al.* (2014) argued that virtual customer service agents contribute to improve the quality of online service encounters, combining elements of both 'high tech' and 'high touch' to form a new type of service encounter: the 'social online service encounter'. In the same line, a study by Wang and Fodness (2010) revealed that consumers' perceptions of sociability, emotional answers, and trust toward the online seller are more positive when the online store contains an avatar with the capacity to be likeable and to empathize with the consumer.

Using a virtual customer service agent has also been identified as an important factor to offer consumers a more personalized experience (Alves & Soares, 2014;

Moon *et al.*, 2013). In particular, extant research has posited that avatar-like virtual customer service agents can contribute to mitigate one of the main limitations of ecommerce: the lack of personalization and possibility of interaction with a sales person. Avatars offer a degree of humanness and socialization, allowing consumers to engage in conversations with sellers. This interaction and dialogue contributes to reduce ambiguity, reduce risk and increase trust. Hence, some studies found social presence to positively impact trust (Gefen & Straub, 2003). Thus, we propose:

H3. The higher the sociability, the greater the online trust.

Satisfaction

Consumer satisfaction has been defined as pleasurable fulfilment (Oliver, 1999), referring to the consumer perception that the purchase/consumption positively fulfils some needs, desires or goals. Satisfaction is key for customer retention and loyalty (Pappas *et al.*, 2014). In fact, a satisfied customer is more likely to return (Lee *et al.*, 2009), making satisfaction not only a key factor that affects customers' online purchase behaviour but also an important factor of customer loyalty. In their seminal study, Szymanski and Hise (2000) developed and tested a model of the determinants of e-satisfaction, and found that convenience, site design, and financial security were the most relevant factors for e-satisfaction (see also, Lin & Sun, 2009).

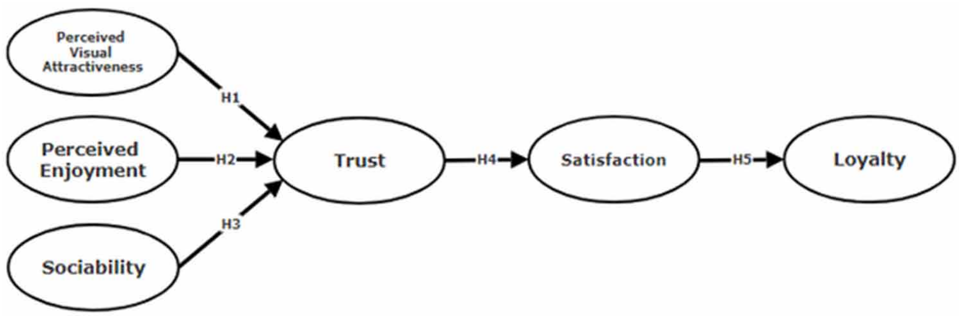
Several studies have proposed a link between trust and satisfaction (Kim *et al.*, 2008; Wu, 2013; Pappas *et al.*, 2014; Kim & Peterson, 2017). For example, Pappas et al. (2014) found that trust impacts positively satisfaction, regardless the level of consumer experience with online shopping. A meta-analysis study of antecedents of outcome of online trust in e-commerce found that out of six consequences of trust studied, satisfaction was the most strongly related (Kim & Peterson, 2017). Hence:

H4. The higher the trust, the higher the satisfaction.

Loyalty

Gaining the loyalty of customers is arguably the ultimate goal of businesses. Loyalty has been defined as "a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior" (Oliver, 1999, p. 34).

Figure 1. Research model



Previous research has shown that satisfaction has a positive relationship with online shopping tendency (Zhou *et al.,* 2007). The link between trust and loyalty has been investigates by several studies, including in the online context (Forgas *et al.,* 2012; Yüksel *et al.*, 2007; Lin & Sun, 2009). Thus, the following is proposed:

H5. The higher satisfaction, the higher loyalty.

Figure 1 displays the research model and the proposed hypotheses.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to assess the antecedents of satisfaction and their implications after the introduction of an avatar in the website of a large airline company. This website is used for making reservations and buying flights. We will henceforth refer to this site as unidentifiedairline.com (for anonymity reasons). With such purpose in mind, we used a quantitative methodological approach as it seems to fit our research objectives. Our sample comprises 132 website users.

Profile of the Sample

The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1. The vast majority of respondents are male and middle-aged. Equally, most of them have a degree (86.4%) and around 60% belong to top management. Because we wanted to understand hedonic online experiences amongst those that are not new to the process, all of our participants are frequent flyers.

Table 1. Respondent profile

Variable		Frequency	% valid (Total)
Gender	Female	34	25.8%
	Male	98	74.2%
Age	73-55	61	46.6%
	54-39	61	46.6%
	38-24	8	6.1%
	>23	1	0.8%
Level of Education	Primary school	2	1.5%
	Secondary school	16	12.1%
	Higher education	114	86.4%
Occupation	Top Management	80	60.6%
	Middle Management	17	12.9%
	Qualified Workers	35	26.5%
Frequency of use the site unidentifiedairline.com	Sporadically	80	60.6%
	One time per week	30	22.7%
	More than one time per week	22	16.7%

Data revealed that on a scale of 1 (disagree totally) to 7 (agree totally) the sample of respondents recommend the site unidentifiedairline.com (M=5.5; SD=1.2), if the respondents need to travel, they do not hesitate to book their travel through unidentifiedairline.com (M=5.6; SD=1.4). Also, they think the unidentifiedairline.com is a good site (M=5.10; SD=1.35) and in general they are very satisfied with unidentifiedairline.com (M=5.15; SD=1.20).

Measurement Scales

Validated scales for the constructs of interest were sourced from the literature (van der Heijden, 2003 & 2004; Wang & Fodness, 2010; Alves & Soares, 2013; Forgas *et al.*, 2012).

In what concerns *perceived visual attractiveness* the items that tap into the construct are: "Overall, I find that unidentifiedairline.com looks attractive"; "The layout of unidentifiedairline.com is attractive" and "The colors, images and dynamic elements that are used on unidentifiedairline.com are attractive". All these items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale. For *sociability*, we used six items adapted from Wang and Fodness (2010) and Alves and Soares (2013). Specifically, respondents were asked to rate the company website for each of the following attributes: Friendly; Warm; Helpful; Polite; Informative and Intelligent. A seven-point rating scale (1 = describes poorly/ 7 = describes perfectly) was used to measure these items. Regarding *perceived enjoyment*, we resorted to prior work from van der Heijden (2003). Four seven-point semantic differential scaled items were used to classify the website navigation, specifically: Enjoyable/disgusting; Pleasant/unpleasant; Exciting/dull and Interesting/boring.

With regard to *Trust*, we used four items which were adapted from Bart, Shankar, Sultan and Urban (2005) and Alves and Soares (2014) and include the following items: "The unidentifiedairline.com website appears to be more trustworthy than other similar websites I have visited"; "The unidentifiedairline.com website represents a company or organization that will deliver on promises made"; "The information set out in the unidentifiedairline.com website deserves my trust"; "I trust the recommendations of the unidentifiedairline.com website". For *Satisfaction,* we used three items adapted from Forgas et al. (2012). Specifically, respondents were asked to classify the company website for each of the following items: "The website meet my expectations"; "All the contacts with the unidentifiedairline.com website are satisfactory" and "In general, I am satisfied with the unidentifiedairline.com website".

Finally, the items that tap into *Loyalty* were adapted from Forgas et al. (2012). Specifically, the following items measured on a seven-point Likert scale were used: "I like the unidentifiedairline.com website"; "I think unidentifiedairline.com is a good website"; "If I need it, I shall continue to book a flight on the unidentifiedairline.com website" and "I shall continue to recommend unidentifiedairline.com website".

DATA ANALYSIS

In order to test our research hypotheses, we used the PLS with SmartPLS v.3.2 (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015), which is a SEM tool that focuses on the prediction of dependent variables, is not so demanding with regard to multivariate normal data and uses both formative and reflective constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Before testing the research hypotheses an assessment of the constructs' psychometric properties (convergent validity, reliability and discriminant validity) was performed. Furthermore, despite the measurement and structural parameters are estimated together, the PLS algorithm is computed in two stages: 1) the assessment of the measurement model and 2) the assessment of the structural model. This sequence ensures that the constructs' measures are valid and reliable before attempting to draw conclusions regarding the major relationships among constructs (Barclay *et al.,* 1995).

Assessment of the Measurement Model

In line with Mackenzie *et al.* (2005) recommendations, only the sociability construct was conceptualized as formative whereas the remaining constructs were considered as reflective. When examining the formative model, it is crucial to evaluate both the potential multicollinearity between items and the analysis of their weights (Róldan & Sanchez-Franco, 2012). High Collinearity between items cause unstable estimates and make difficult to isolate the distinct effect of an individual item on its intended construct. Frequently, the maximum variance inflation factor (VIF) value for each variable indicates the presence of multicollinearity, i.e., a VIF above 3.3 indicates a multicollinearity problem (Róldan & Sanchez-Franco, 2012). At the present study all items are below the VIF cut-off point (Table 2).

The next step requires the assessment of weights, which measures the contribution of each items to the variance of the construct. A significant level of at least 0.05 suggests that a formative indicator is relevant for building a composite construct (Róldan & Sanchez-Franco, 2012). In order to test the significance of weights a bootstrapping resampling procedure of 5000 resamples was computed. Along this process only two of six formative items measuring sociability were identified as having a t-value below 1.96. Yet, in line with several authors, we decided to keep these items because deleting an item would imply to remove a part of the composite construct (Roberts & Tatcher, 2009).

The measurement model for reflective constructs is assessed in terms of individual item reliability, construct reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. In other words, we have examined the Composite Reliability (ρc), Cronbach's Alpha and rho_A, all of which present values above 0.70 (Henseler *et al.,* 2016). Convergent validity is evidenced by the large and significant standardized loadings ($t > 1.96$) and the average variance extracted (AVE), which ranged from 0.65 to 0.87. This indicates that the items are above the recommended cut-off point and share (on average) at least half of their variance with the construct (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Chin, 1998). Table 2 indicates that all reflective latent constructs satisfy this condition.

This study follows two approaches to assess discriminant validity, which indicates the extent to which a given construct differs from other constructs. First, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was used, thereby we compare the square root of the AVE for each construct with the correlations between the focal construct and other constructs. For adequate discriminant validity, the diagonal elements should be significantly greater than the off-diagonal elements in the corresponding rows and columns (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012). Relying on this criterion, the data suggests acceptable discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Second, we adopted the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) as another criteria. Here we compared the obtained values with a predefined threshold (Henseler *et al.,* 2015). Table 3 shows that only one

Table 2. Measurement scales (Factor Loadings, Weights and Reliabilities)

Items for each construct (Reflective Constructs)		Factor Loading	t-value
Trust (CR=0.88;CA= 0.82; Rho=0.84; AVE= 0.65)			
The website appears to be more trustworthy than other similar websites.		0.72	13.4
The website represents a company that will deliver on promises made.		0.76	12.9
The information set out in the website deserves my trust.		0.89	40.0
I trust the recommendations of the unidentifiedairline.com website.		0.85	26.8
Satisfaction (CR=0.95;CA= 0.92; Rho=0.93; AVE= 0.87)			
The website meets my expectations		0.94	89.5
All the contacts with the unidentifiedairline.com website are satisfactory.		0.89	26.7
In general, I am satisfied with the unidentifiedairline.com website		0.95	127
Perceived Attractiveness (CR=0.94;CA= 0.91; Rho=0.91; AVE= 0.85)			
Overall, I find that unidentifiedairline.com looks attractive.		0.92	30.0
The layout of unidentifiedairline.com is attractive.		0.94	46.2
The colors, images and dynamic elements on the website are attractive		0.91	44.0
Perceived Enjoyment (PE) (CR=0.94;CA=0.91; Rho=0.92; AVE= 0.80)			
Enjoyable / Disgusting (1)		0.90	45.5
Pleasant / Unpleasant (2)		0.91	45.9
Exciting / dull (3)		0.84	25.7
Interesting / boring (4)		0.92	49.6
Loyalty- affective + conative (CR=0.95;CA=0.93; Rho=0.95; AVE= 0.83)			
I like the unidentifiedairline.com website		0.95	146
I think unidentifiedairline.com is a good website		0.94	115
If I need it, I shall continue to book a flight from the airline website.		0.80	15.2
I shall continue to recommend unidentifiedairline.com website		0.95	89.7
Formative Construct - Sociability	**VIF**	**Weight**	**t-value**
1.Friendly	2.78	0.10	0.70
2.Warm	2.98	0.08	0.60
3.Helpful	3.28	0.59	3.51
4.Polite	2.24	0.07	0.50
5.Informative	2.47	0.45	2.44
6.Intelligent	3.32	0.04	0.50

Table 3. Pearson Correlations, Means and Standard Deviations

Fornell-Larcker	1	2	3	4	5	6	HTMT	1	2	3	4
Loyalty	(0.91)						(1)				
Perceived Attractiveness	0.77	(0.92)					(2)	0.82			
Perceived Enjoyment	0.79	0.73	(0.89)				(3)	0.84	0.79		
Satisfaction	0.88	0.71	0.76	(0.93)			(4)	0.85	0.77	0.81	
Sociability	0.79	0.67	0.76	0.72	(-)		(5)	0.79	0.77	0.76	0.74
Trust	0.71	0.67	0.67	0.66	0.71	(0.81)	(6)				
Mean	5.27	4.94	5.00	4.93	5.04	5.20					
Standard Deviation	1.30	1.12	1.09	1.29	1.11	1.04					

Notes: The diagonal (in brackets) shows the square roots of the AVE;

HTMT value equals the 0.85 threshold, so there are reasons to believe that there is no problem associated with discriminant validity.

Based on previous analyses, we concluded that the proposed measurement scales shows unidimensionality and conceptual consistency.

Assessment of the Structural Model

Based on a satisfactory assessment of the measurement model, the proposed hypotheses of the conceptual model can be estimated throughout the statistical significance of path coefficients. In order to generate the path coefficients, t-statistics and standard errors, the bootstrap procedure (5,000 resamples) was used. This technique generates a large number of sub-samples from the original sample through the systematic deletion of observations. The t-values and 95 percent bootstrap confidence intervals were computed to provide additional information on the stability of the coefficient estimates. As Castro and Roldán (2013) observed, the percentile approach is recommended because it has the advantage of being completely distribution free. Results are depicted in Table 4.

The predictive power of the model was also examined by assessing the cross-validated communality, the cross-validated redundancy index (Q2) and the coefficient of determination (R2) (Table 5). As acknowledged by Chin (1998), goodness-of-fit in a PLS estimation is demonstrated by strong factor loadings, significant path coefficients, high R2 values and Q2 values above zero. For instance, the proportions of the total variance in each endogenous construct explained by the model are: 78% for loyalty, 58% for trust and 43% for satisfaction. These values are largely above the minimum of 10% set for R2 of the endogenous variables. After analyzing the results it was concluded that the model showed predictive relevance.

Table 4 shows that all proposed hypotheses are positively and statistically significant. It is relevant to emphasize that the larger impact relates to the Hypothesis 5 that maintains that the higher the Satisfaction, the greater the loyalty ($\beta=0.88$; $p<0.001$). This is followed by the impact of Trust on Satisfaction ($\beta=0.66$; $p<0.001$) confirming H4.

The third larger impact relates to H3, which refers to the impact of Sociability on Trust ($\beta=0.39$; $p<0.001$).This is followed by H1 ($\beta=0.29$; $p<0.001$), which predicts that Perceived Visual Attractiveness (PVA) has a positive impact on Trust. Finally, it was also confirmed that Perceived Enjoyment has a positive and significant impact on Trust ($\beta=0.16$; $p<0.05$), confirming H2.

This study also applies several control variables, such as age, education and gender, however, results show that these do not affect significantly loyalty.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effect of hedonic factors in the navigation experience in satisfaction, trust and website loyalty. The primary theoretical contribution of this study

Table 4. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Paths Coefficients	Direct Effects	t-Value (bootstrap)	Conf. Interval	Supported
H1: Perceived Visual Attractiveness → Trust	0.29***	3.61	[0.179-0.443]	Yes
H2: Perceived Enjoyment → Trust	0.16*	1.90	[0.003-0.312]	Yes
H3: Sociability → Trust	0.39***	4.35	[0.178-0.504]	Yes
H4: Trust → Satisfaction	0.66***	10.95	[0.542-0.748]	Yes
H5: Satisfaction → Loyalty	0.88***	28.1	[0.812-0.922]	Yes
Controls				
Age → Loyalty	-0.07	1.62	[-0.140-0.001]	-
Education → Loyalty	-0.03	0.72	[-0.110-0.330]	-
Gender → Loyalty	0.04	0.99	[-0.025-0.116]	-

Based on t (4999); *p<0.05; t (0.05; 4999) = 1.645; ***p<0.001; t(0.001;4999) = 3.092; †bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) BCI; one-tailed.

lies in investigating the joint effects of hedonic and emotional functions embedded in a website featuring a virtual customer service agent of a large airline. This study

Table 5. Effect size of the endogenous variables

Latent Variables	R^2	CV-C Q^2	CV-R Q^2
Loyalty	0.78	0.70	0.60
Perceived Visual Attractiveness	-	0.61	-
Perceived Enjoyment	-	0.61	-
Satisfaction	0.43	0.64	0.35
Sociability	-	0.45	-
Trust	0.58	0.41	0.34

CV-C (Cross-validated communality); CV-R (Cross-validated redundancy).

focused on three major factors, namely, perceived visual attractiveness, sociability and perceived enjoyment. Taken as a whole, the results of our study confirm that these hedonic dimensions affect positively trust, which in turn affects satisfaction. Thus, pleasant online shopping environments seem to predispose consumers to trust more the e-seller, which impacts positively on the overall satisfaction with the online experience. This later subsequently impacts significantly and positively on loyalty. This is important since creating hedonic experiences online can be complex, where there is no real physical setting or store atmosphere to persuade consumers, as well as no one to physically interact with consumers. As this study suggests, virtual customer service agents, and other forms of immersive environments can facilitate such engagement with positive effects on the whole customer experience.

In particular, our study suggests that improving the aesthetics of the website improves the quality of the navigation and the quality of the consumer experience online, specifically by improving the trust on the site and this leads to satisfaction with the website. This corroborates Pengnate and Sarathy's (2017) findings that visual appeal helps to create a positive user experience and develop online trust. This, in turn, leads to higher loyalty.

Finally, certain shortcomings of the study need to be kept in mind. First, these results are not generalizable, though we believe this study may be a relevant contribution to the understanding of online behavior of consumers of airline companies. Second, this study did not focus on the utilitarian dimension of the consumer's online experience as our main goal was to understand the hedonic dimension and the former may affect the latter. Given the rapid advances of the graphical user interface technologies, it would be expected that in a near future the tasks assigned to this functionality will be more complex and interactive. Understanding how these developments affect consumer encounters online, for different types of tasks with varying levels of complexity, will remain a fertile area for further research.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Avatars: Similar to virtual customer service agents. Computer-generated characters with whom consumers can interact with when navigating an online platforms.

Perceived Enjoyment: Refers to the perception that using the website is enjoyable, pleasant and interesting.

Perceived Visual Attractiveness: Refers to the perception that the website is aesthetically pleasing.

Recommendation Agents: Similar to virtual customer service agents; Electronic screening tools that act as decision and recommendation aids to customize online shopping experiences.

Satisfaction: The perception by the consumer that the purchase/consumption positively fulfils some needs, desires or goals.

Sociability: Refers to the perception of personal, sociable, and sensitive human contact in the website navigation.

Trust (Online Trust): The confidence that the website is reliable, has integrity and will fulfil his/her part.

Virtual Customer Service Agents: Computer-generated characters with whom consumers can interact with when navigating an online platforms.

Chapter 8
Did You Read the Customer Reviews Before Shopping?
The Effect of Customer Reviews About Online Retail Platforms on Consumer Behavioral Responses

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ABSTRACT

Online customer reviews are the most trustworthy source of information of consumers while determining the value of online retail platforms. They act to convince customers and serve the purpose of formation of trust and emotional attachment with the platform. This study reports the results of an experiment investigating the effects of online customer reviews on emotional attachment, trust, and repurchase intention while taking the previous emotional attachment strength into consideration. Results revealed that, depending on the previous attachment strength, both positive and negative reviews strongly affect emotional attachment. However, trust is only influenced by positive reviews. Besides, trust is a more durable construct compared to emotional attachment and is not subject to change easily. When the repurchase intention is investigated, only strongly attached consumers are affected by customer reviews.

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional retailing was once fundamental for the sustainability of the economies. However, with the rise of e-commerce, diffusion of connected devices, this long-standing dominancy has almost come to an end. In the value chain of the economy, online retail platforms emerged as one new entity (Reinartz, Wiegand & Imschloss, 2019).

Online platform economy (OPE) is changing the nature of the workforce, it provides an opportunity for traditional retailers to directly connect to their customers (Farrel & Greig, 2017). Online retail platforms are distinguished from the online retailers in the sense that they have no products of their own to sell (e.g., Alibaba, eBay, n11). Their sole business is to provide the platform for buyers and sellers and enable transactions. They themselves do not have any brand name that belongs to a product. In these platforms both buyers (individuals or business customers) and sellers (retailers, wholesalers) act as the customers of the platform owner (Zhang, Pang, Shi, & Wang, 2014).

Introduced as a new entity, online retail platforms change the way traditional retailers do their businesses. Platforms enable them to have immediate, ready-made and robust digital shops and become a part of the OPE in the Internet world. Being so attractive both to the customers and the retailers, it takes the attention of the marketing scholars to understand the dynamics of the platforms. Most marketing studies concerning online platforms emphasize the business model, especially the social media (Ab Hamid, Akhir, & Cheng, 2013; Zhao, Chi, Zhou, & Jiang, 2018; Bhattachary & Anand, 2017), pricing (Chen, Nan, & Li, 2018; Chan, Liu, & Zhang, 2018; Liu & Zhang, 2014) and customer experiences (Petermans, Janssens, & Van Cleempoel, 2013; Chan et al., 2018; Morosan & Bowen, 2018).

The retailers' wish for customers to have good experiences on the platform calls for more researches on the subject. The main concern of the retailers who give the similar kind of services for similar products is attracting customers to the site first, and make them return eventually for repurchase, while increasing trust, loyalty and emotional attachment (Li, Patel, & Wolfe, 2019).

According to the attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979), if a consumer creates intense attitudes toward a brand, it leads to an establishment of a psychological bond (Kotler & Keller, 2006). This bond, along with emotional bonding, creates true loyalty (Oliver, 1999). A trusting and emotionally bonded consumer is the one that will return to the site for repurchase, recommend the site to the others, and become the advocate of the retail platform. In order to have these really strong bonds with the platform, which is in question in the current study, consumers need evidence. Here come the current customer experiences/views/opinions in the form of online customer reviews while assessing the value of the platform by potential and current customers and deciding whether to grow the relationship with the platform.

Since the subject has been taken the attention of the retailers recently, there are still many gaps that have to be fulfilled. The current research is trying to narrow the research gap in the OPE by answering the question of the effectiveness of customer opinions (positive or negative) in consumers' emotional attachment, trust, and repurchase intentions.

Aim of the Research

The current research aims to understand the customer side on the sustainability of online platforms and aims to figure out how customers can contribute to the OPE. The research fulfills a gap by specifically focusing on the online retail platform brands (a part of the service economy), unlike other research which focused on the brands that are sold on the platforms (Chan et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2018; Bhandari & Rodgers, 2018). Combining the OPE with the customers' decision making by considering the reviews made by other customers, the following research questions form the basis of the study:

RQ1. Is there any effect of positive and/or negative online customer reviews about online retail platforms on customers who have a *weak* emotional attachment with online retail platforms on (a) emotional attachment and (b) trust of the customers?

RQ2. Is there any effect of negative and/or positive online customer reviews about online retail platforms on customers who have a *strong* emotional attachment with online retail platforms on (a) emotional attachment and (b) trust the customers?

RQ3. Is there any effect of positive and/or negative online customer reviews about online retail platforms on consumers who have a strong/weak emotional attachment on repurchase intention?

To answer these research questions, hypotheses are developed in the following sections based on the literature review.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTESES DEVELOPMENT

eWOM in the Form of Online Consumer Reviews

Basically, eWOM is a type of viral marketing. It is the sharing of information through digital channels. It may include negative and positive comments about a product, brand, or service (Jalilvand, Esfahani, & Samiei, 2011). The information-sharing may be on the online social networks, blogs, customer forums, in the chat rooms, or on the retail platforms, while the content may be the review of the platform itself or the products sold on the platform. In this study, eWOM is referred to any negative or positive customer reviews created by users based on personal usage experience of the "online retail platform", which is available to all the other customers via the platform itself (Chen and Xie, 2008, p. 477 and Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler, 2004, p.39).

The emergence of different type of platforms (e.g., blogs, chat rooms, social media, etc.) enables consumers to express their opinions/experiences in the form of eWOM effortlessly. One of these media is online retail platforms. In the digital world, customer reviews about the efficiency and effectiveness of online platforms assume the role of marketing messages from one customer to the others. The image of the platform could be strengthened or harmed by these unplanned, unpredictable, and uncontrolled messages (Craig, Greene, & Versaci, 2015). Moreover, they are so powerful on other consumers that they may be the sole determinant of continuing to purchase on a platform or not.

In addition to the impact on purchase intentions, eWOM contributes to raising trust. Customers need evidence during their search for trust and safety from online retail platforms. When the evidence comes from the other customers, the information is found to be much more trustworthy compared to the evidence that is coming from the company itself (Lin & Xu, 2017). When customers collaboratively share their experiences and their acknowledged information with others through digital platforms, or on the retailer platform, it turns into a social proof which is signalling the value of shopping from this platform (Premazzi et al., 2010). This is the electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in the form of online customer reviews (Cheng, Rhodes, & Lok, 2015; López & Sicilia, 2014).

Independent of the platform shared, the focus of eWOM is the sharing of customer experiences, information, and/or thoughts (Steffes & Burgee, 2009). This collaborative sharing is done both for the current customers, to present them the value of their platform, and for the potential customers, to enable them to form their opinions based on the opinions of others who have previously experienced the site. Since eWOM acts as a piece of advice from experienced customers, it is crucial to others' online shopping experience (Gershoff & Johar, 2006). If the shared information is mostly positive, then it is expected to have a positive effect on the use of the platform. It has been proven that the favourable opinions of others are the most influential tool that positively affects sales (Keller, 2007; Floyd, Freling, Alhoqail, Cho, & Freling, 2014). Conversely, when the reviews are negative, the affected one is not only the customer writing the review, but the review has the potential to affect the other customers' trust, emotional attachment and repurchase intention in an unfavuorable way (Bhandari & Rodgers, 2018; Bachleda & Berrada-Fathi, 2016). Thus, it can be argued that online trust and emotional attachment are strongly influenced by online customer reviews (eWOM) about the digital retail platforms (Ha, 2004) and that they, in turn, affect the repurchase intention of the digital customer.

Emotional Attachment to the Brands and Behavioral Outcomes

Researches carried out over a long period of time acknowledged a mechanism that is not only driving repurchase to the site but also creates brand loyalty. It is to create intense attitudes toward the brand (Dick & Basu, 1994; Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978), and establish a psychological bond with the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2006). The theorists working on the attachment theory define that state as "emotional attachment" (Bowlby, 1969). It is the one that creates true loyalty, which is different from the other types of loyalties (Oliver, 1999) (e.g., spurious loyalty: loyalty attained due to switching costs). In the context of brands, the emotional attachment means the desire for connection with a deep feeling of security, avoidance of separation and leading an emotionally attached repurchase, and it is not the rationality but the emotions that hinder the customer switching to other brands (Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011). In their seminal work, Thomson, MacInnis and Park (2005) describe emotional attachment to the brands as the ties characterized by deep feelings of passion, affection, and connection between a brand and a person. Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin (2014) demonstrated that a strong brand attachment is an antecedent to buy, recommend, revisit, and the cause of ignorance of the negative information about the brand.

Although the emotional attachment seems very similar to other brand-related constructs (e.g, brand love, romance, commitment, and involvement), scholars differentiate between them. While emotional attachment is a psychological construct, others include cognition (involvement) (Zaichkowski, 1986), realm of affect (brand romance and love) (Ahuvia, Batra, & Bagozzi, 2009; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), moral obligations (brand commitment), or can be considered as an outcome of emotional attachment (brand commitment) (Patwardhan & Balasubramanian, 2011).

The effect of emotional attachment on behavioral outcomes. Attachment theory states that as the level of commitment to a person (or to a brand) increases, the level of sacrifices involved in the relationship increases (Bowlby, 1979). The level of commitment or emotional bonding increases only with the consistent experience with the person or the brand (Perry, 1998) and it results in increased comfort perception in the relationship (Perry, 1998).

In the context of brands, emotional attachment to a brand is the feeling of closeness of the person to a brand in terms of affective and cognitive perceptions (Fournier, 1998; Park, MacInnis, & Priester, 2008). It is the strength of the emotional bond/ tie between the product and its owner (Cho, Lee, & Yang, 2019). According to the study of Roy, Eshghi and Sarkar (2013) strong emotional attachment results in brand loyalty, positive word of mouth and it acts as a mediator between satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, strong attachment reduces the effects of the brand's negative publicity as the attached consumer tend to resist negative comments made by other consumers (Pullig, Netemeyer, & Biswas, 2006).

Emotional attachment forms an enduring psychological bond between the brand and the consumer (McEwen, 2005). According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), emotional attachment is the cause of an ongoing relationship which requires the maximum effort to maintain. It is so important that it drives both a stable brand-consumer relationship (Breivik & Thorbjørnsen, 2008) and loyalty, in addition to repeated purchases (Amine, 1998). Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) demonstrated that emotionally attached consumers have high commitment to repurchase. As pointed out by Song, Bae and Han (2019) emotional loyalty drives brand loyalty and purchase intentions. The lovemarks theory, introduced by Roberts (2005), states that the emotional connection with the brand is "beyond reason" (pg.66) and the result is positive emotions and/or repeat purchases. So, strong emotional attachment leads to consumer engagement, commitment, and, finally, repurchases. Therefore:

Hypothesis 1. The valence of online customer reviews about online retail platforms significantly affects consumer emotional attachment.

Hypothesis 2. When the consumer's previous emotional attachment with the online retail platform is strong, negative customer reviews do not affect the emotional attachment strength of the consumer.

Hypothesis 3. When the consumer's previous emotional attachment with the online retail platform is strong, positive customer reviews strengthen the emotional attachment of the consumer.

Hypothesis 4. When the consumer's previous emotional attachment with the online retail platform is weak, positive customer reviews increase the emotional attachment strength of the consumer.

Hypothesis 5. When the consumer's previous emotional attachment with the online retail platform is weak, negative customer reviews worsened the emotional attachment of the consumer.

Hypothesis 6. When consumer's previous emotional attachment with the online retail platform is strong, positive customer reviews will cause a significant difference in repurchase intention of the consumer.

Hypothesis 7. When the consumer's previous emotional attachment with the online retail platform is weak, positive customer reviews increase the repurchase intention of the consumer.

Consumer Trust and Repurchase Intention

Trust is defined as a general tendency to believe that the brand will never functionally or emotionally disappoint the users (Chiu, Hsu, Lai, & Chang, 2012). It is the one that is used to reduce uncertainty by the individuals, and this leads to the individual to predict something accurately (Morrison & Firmstone, 2000).

In economic and social exchanges, the psychological safety needs of customers are being addressed by the mechanism of trust (James, 2002). Hazan and Shaver (2000) suggest that only an emotional attachment supporting the feelings of safety and trust can be considered as an emotional relationship. And a trusting customer can engage in a shopping activity which she/he would not engage otherwise (Vlachos, Theotokis, Pramatari, & Vrechopoulos, 2010).

The effect of trust on behavioral outcomes. As Yim, Tse and Chan (2008) predict, satisfaction leads to trust, and trust leads to loyalty and emotional bonding. Lin and Xu (2017) found that satisfaction impacts the repurchase intention of the consumers, and it leads to customer retention (Larivière et al., 2014). When the behavior is repeated and the outcome of the repeated behavior turns out to be positive, the level of trust increases gradually (Chiu et al., 2012). When it is the first experience of the consumer with an online retailer, consumers seek evidence of trust. If the experiences of the other consumers are positive, the confidence of the first-time consumer is developed. Therefore, the consumer believes that he or she is not being taken advantage of and the platform owner is concerned about the welfare of the consumer as well (Lankton, Wilson & Mao, 2010).

As expressed by Song, Bae and Han (2019), there are two major pillars of the brands that are loved: Brand love and brand respect which includes trust to the brand. Individuals who trust the brand show an affective commitment (Yang et al., 2014). Keiningham et al. (2015) pointed out that if a consumer has a high level of trust, the consumer is guided by the emotions, not the cognition when making a purchase decision. Translated into the context of the online retailer platforms, consumers who have positive experiences with the platform develop favorable emotions toward the platform, want to stay further in the relationship and, moreover, want other consumers to live the same good experience. Therefore, they engage in writing positive reviews about the platform. Vice versa is also true. If a consumer lives a negative experience in the online retail platform, trust decreases, and the consumer wants to share his/her negative experiences with the others in the form of reviews to warn them.

As can be understood from the previous literature, trust and emotional attachment are interrelated variables. Based on the aforementioned discussions, the following hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 8. The valence of online customer reviews about online retail platforms significantly affects consumer level of trust.

Hypothesis 9. When the consumer's previous emotional attachment with the online retail platform is strong, negative customer reviews decrease consumer trust in the online retail platform.

Hypothesis 10. When the consumer's previous emotional attachment with the online retail platform is strong, positive customer reviews increase consumer trust in the online retail platform.

Hypothesis 11. When the consumer's previous emotional attachment with the online retail platform is weak, positive customer reviews do not make any difference in the level of consumer trust to the online retail platform.

Hypothesis 12. When the consumer's previous emotional attachment with the online retail platform is weak, negative customer reviews decrease consumer trust in the online retail platform.

Branding of Online Retail Platforms

An online platform is defined by De Groen, Lenaerts, Bosc, and Paquier (2017) as a digital provider of the peer-to-peer intermediation that is central to the "on-demand economy". When it is applied to the concept of retailing, it is a digital platform operated by a digital entity for retailer-customer interaction, central to the OPE. In the literature, there are anticipated new business models that can be considered as new trends in purchasing on online retail platforms (Dedeke, 2016). This new way of purchasing also defines new views on customer loyalty (Morosan & Bowen, 2018).

Online retail platforms offer special promise to customers since they have a variety of products and display different prices for the same product. They also hold the promise for the retailers, since they enable them to sell their products in a platform which already has a massive number of buyers. Additionally, the platform supplier has the payment integration, and liable for the technical security. They are the point of attractions for online customers, retailers, and wholesalers. There are a lot of online retail platforms selling similar products, giving the same kind of services. In such an environment, attracting customers back to the site is the most challenging job of today. To make the customer loyal to the site and to turn them into patrons require more than loyalty programs (O'Brien & Jones, 1995), or constant promotions.

Online retail platforms are a different category of brands. They can be defined as service suppliers. In the previous studies, it was not the platform's name identified as the brand name, but the certain category of brand that is sold on the site or a special kind of a focused retail platform (e.g. hotel sites) were under investigation (ex. Morosan & Bowen, 2018; Cantallops & Salvi, 2014, Hu & Kim, 2018; Litvin & Dowling, 2018). Although some of them, e.g. eBay, Alibaba, Amazon, Uber have established brand names, others are still trying to get some share from the heart of the customers and trying to be identified with their brand names.

The current study is combining the OPE with the customers' decision making by considering the reviews made by other customers about the online retail platform. The study is trying to document the fit between the platform and the consumers' behavioral outcomes depending on the other customers' experiences/thoughts/opinions, while it's trying to understand the OPE in more detail.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

The viability of online retail platforms depends on the customers' and the retailers' interest in the platform. As can be understood from the literature, the customers' continuity to the site requires customer satisfaction which will result in trust, emotional attachment, and finally loyalty.

Although, there is an extant research focused on the key features of customer-generated online brand reviews, an in-depth analysis of the literature shows that the studies are mainly focused on the reviews about brands (to give some examples, Le (2018) researched customers willingness to write online reviews about brands, Cheng, Rhodes and Lok (2015) wrote about the relationship between online reviews, brand trust and purchase intention, Bhandari and Rodgers (2018) studied the effect of negative eWOM on brand trust and purchase intentions, Li and Zhan (2011) worked on the comprehensiveness of the online product reviews, Filieri (2015) and Ayeh, Au and Law (2013) studied the influence of perceived source credibility of online brand reviews, etc.). Unlike these studies, the current research examines the effect of online customer reviews on online retail platforms specifically to capture the impact of the valence of reviews on consumers' behavioral outcomes while taking the previous emotional attachment strength of the consumer to the platform into account. The specific objective of the current chapter is to identify the change in the consumers' emotional attachment, and trust, based on other consumers' written previous experiences with the platform and thoughts about the platform considering the consumer's previous emotional attachment. At the same time, the effect of positive and negative customer reviews on repurchase intention is investigated.

METHODOLOGY

Development of Experimental Stimuli

To understand the effect of customer reviews on the dependent variables (i.e., customer trust, emotional attachment, and repurchase intention of the customers), a 2 x 2 (previous emotional attachment of the customers through online retailer platform: strong vs. weak x valence of online customer reviews: positive vs. negative) with-in subjects laboratory experiment was conducted.

The platforms were selected in a way that they were the most used, the most popular platforms, and have the highest transactional volume (See Table 2 for the details of the platforms).

In developing the online customer reviews, it was important that the reviews were about online retail platforms, not about the products sold on the platform. For this purpose, 80 online customer reviews (40 positive reviews, 40 negative reviews) were collected both from the platforms and from two popular complaint/review sites (sikayetvar.com, eksisozluk.com). The reviews were listed randomly (name of the platform was redacted) and they were rated by 10 colleagues. They were asked to indicate whether each comment they read was negative or positive, as well as to determine the degree of negativity/positivity from 1-5 (5 being very positive, on the positive case, and very negative, on the negative case). Then, the comments were separated as positive and negative based on the evaluations. The mean for each comment was calculated. Finally, the eight negative and eight positive comments that were reported to be the most negative/positive were chosen to be used in the study (Online customer reviews used in the study are available upon request).

Participants and Procedure

839 participants in total participated in the study. However, 174 of them stated they never shopped from online retail platforms. This left us with 665 participants to measure emotional attachments and trust.

The participants were recruited from a diverse set of samples, including university students, academicians, and private company workers. Participants were gathered in computer laboratories and told that this is a study for online retail platforms, aims to understand the platform effectiveness. Each participant was randomly assigned to any of the experimental condition. In the questionnaire, the participants were first asked about their online shopping behavior and their most preferred online retail platform. Then they will be asked about their purchase frequency from the online platform that they selected as they shop most, as well as their emotional attachment and trust to this specific online platform. Then they were exposed to

Table 1. Sample sizes for each experimental condition

Strong Prior Emotional Attachment (n=486)		Weak Prior Emotional Attachment (n=179)	
Positive Review Display	Negative Review Display	Positive Review Display	Negative Review Display
222	264	106	73
No prior purchase	n=174		

either positive or negative online customer reviews. - the questionnaire was coded in such a way that each participant only saw the name of the online retail platform which s/he has chosen as his/her most-preferred platform to shop, in the customer reviews. And also, the coding enabled participants to read positive or negative customer reviews depending on their emotional attachment being strong or weak-. After reading the reviews, their emotional attachment and trust to the same online platform were re-asked as the post investigation. Additionally, their repurchase intention after customer reviews (positive or negative) was also asked. There were also the demographic questions at the end of the questionnaire. The sample size was checked simultaneously for each condition in order to get a balanced sample.

Sample sizes for each experimental condition are displayed in Table 1. Sample characteristics can be observed in Table 2.

Measures

While prior emotional attachment and trust were measured variable, positive and negative customer reviews were manipulated variables. The emotional attachment was measured using the scale adopted from Thomson, Maclnnis and Park (2005) consisting 7 items. Trust was measured by a scale adapted from Delgado-Ballester and Luis Munuera-Alemán (2005) with 3 items. Both emotional attachment and trust were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1=totally disagree to 5=totally agree) (For measurement items see Table 3). Repurchase intention was measured by asking the participants if they would still consider making a purchase from the platform that they selected before as their favorite after they read positive/negative online customer reviews.

To determine the strength of the emotional attachment of the participants, the responses of the participants on the emotional attachment scale were ranked and split into two. The ones that were ranked above 3 were selected as strongly attached customers, and the ones ranked below 2.5 were selected as weakly attached customers (the ones between 2.5 and 3 were eliminated from the study since the aim is to get

Table 2. Sample characteristics for the participants with prior purchase

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender			*Avg int use/day*		
Male	301	45.3	Less than 1 hr.	55	8.3
Female	364	54.7	1-3 hr.	278	41.8
Age			4-6 hr.	222	33.4
18-25	130	19.5	6 hr. +	110	16.5
26-29	117	17.6	*Years to shop online*		
30-39	214	32.2	Less than 1 yr.	44	6.6
40-49	133	20.0	1-2 yr.	96	14.4
50-59	58	8.7	3-4 yr.	136	20.5
60+	13	2.0	4 yr. +	389	58.5
Educational Level			*Avg. spending/month*		
College	54	7.8	Less than 100 TL	192	28.9
University	446	67.1	101-250 TL	240	36.1
Graduate school	165	24.8	251-500 TL	142	21.4
Income Level (TL/mount)			5001-1000 TL	53	8.0
0-2000	91	13.7	1000 TL +	38	5.7
2001-4000	129	19.4	*The most used online platform*		
4001-6000	178	26.8	Hepsiburada	375	56.4
6000+	267	40.2	n11	176	26.5
			Gittigidiyor	83	12.5
			Amazon Türkiye	31	4.7

strong and weak attachments), a method adopted from Cacioppo, Petty and Morris (1983).

The KMO measure for the data before manipulation was 0.728 (p=0.000), and after manipulation the measure was 0.810 (p=0.000), indicating the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The loadings of factors above 0.50 were accepted as statistically significant (Hair et al., 2006). The exploratory factor analysis resulted in two-factor solution both before and after manipulation, and the item loadings were in the range of 0.680 and 0.894, before manipulation; 0.681 and 0.890, after manipulation. All the loadings were statistically significant, indicating unidimensionality. For the results of the factor analysis, reliability, composite reliability, and average variance extracted see Table 3.

Table 3. Results of the measurement model

Construct Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α (>0.7) [a]	CR (>0.7) [a]	AVE (>0.5) [a]
Before Manipulation				
Emotional Attachment (EA1)		0.945	0.937	0.680
Affectioned (EA11)	.824			
Friendly (EA12)	.864			
Loved (EA13)	.893			
Peaceful (EA14)	.894			
Passionate (EA15)	.859			
Delighted (EA16)	.737			
Captivated (EA17)	.680			
Trust (TRUST1)		0.821	0.748	0.671
(name of the platform) meets my expectations (TRUST11)	.815			
(name of the platform) never disappoints me (TRUST12)	.824			
(name of the platform) guarantees my satisfaction (TRUST13)	.818			
After Manipulation				
Emotional Attachment (EA2)		0.964	0.922	0.631
Affectioned (EA21)	.842			
Friendly (EA22)	.855			
Loved (EA23)	.890			
Peaceful (EA24)	.868			
Passionate (EA25)	.862			
Delighted (EA26)	.732			
Captivated (EA27)	.681			
Trust (TRUST2)		0.896	0.901	0.742
(name of the platform) meets my expectations (TRUST21)	.844			
(name of the platform) never disappoints me (TRUST22)	.803			
(name of the platform) guarantees my satisfaction (TRUST23)	.849			

CR: Composite reliability; AVE: Average variance extracted.

[a] *Indicates the minimum acceptable level of reliability and validity*

Discriminant validity was checked by comparing the square root of AVEs against absolute values of squared correlations for EA and TRUST (Fornell & Larker, 1981) before and after manipulation. The absolute correlation value between EA and TRUST before manipulation was 0.117, which is lower than both 0.825 and 0.819 (square root of 0.680 and 0.671, which are AVE for EA1 and TRUST1). After manipulation, the absolute correlation value between EA and TRUST was 0.355, which is lower than both 0.794 and 0.861 (square root of 0.631 and 0.742, which are AVE for EA2 and TRUST2). Therefore, discriminant validity, regarding constructs, was found to be satisfactory.

RESULTS

Manipulation Checks

The online customer reviews were aimed to be understood either positive or negative by the participants. To examine the valence of online customer reviews, a manipulation check was conducted. After participants read the reviews, they were asked to indicate the level of positivity or negativity in a 5-point Likert scale; 5=strongly positive, 1=strongly negative. The results suggested a mean score for positive reviews as 4.04 (sd=0.749), and for negative reviews as 1.96 (sd=0.857), and indicated a statistically significant difference ($t(702)=34.272$ ($p=0.000$)). Therefore, the results suggested that the customer reviews used in the study served their purpose, perceived either as positive or negative, in the way they aimed to be.

Hypotheses Testing

As the first test, to investigate the effect of the valence of online customer reviews on the customer's emotional attachment strength and trust, an ANOVA analysis with the full data was applied. Results showed that online customer reviews being positive or negative caused a significant difference both on emotional attachment level ($F(1, 664)_{EA} = 4.693$, $p = 0.031$, $\eta^2 = 0.07$) and trust ($F(1, 664)_{TRUST} = 31.334$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta^2 = 0.45$). Thus, hypotheses H1 and H8 were supported.

Having proved the effect of online customer reviews on the customers' behavioral outcomes, the hypotheses were tested as follows.

1. The effect of <u>negative</u> online customer reviews on consumer responses when the previous emotional attachment is strong

To test the hypotheses regarding emotional attachment and trust, one-way ANOVA analysis was applied to investigate the effect of negative online customer reviews on dependent variables separately. As the results suggested, there was a significant interaction effect regarding emotional attachment ($F(1, 263)_{EA} = 2.264$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta^2 = 0.826$) - Eta squared shows a strong effect size which is above 0.36 (Pierce, Block, & Aguinis,. 2004) -, but not about trust ($F(1, 263)_{TRUST} = 1.179$, $p = 0.198$). The data analysis revealed that when the consumers read the negative online customer reviews that were written by the other consumers, their emotional attachment decreased significantly (even though it was still strong, above 3) ($M_{previous(EA)}= 3.428$, $sd = 0.631$; $M_{post(EA)}= 3.083$, $sd = 0.859$). Since it was hypothesized as no effect, H2 is not supported. On the other hand, trust is not affected by negative reviews, causing the refusal of H9.

2. The effect of <u>positive</u> online customer reviews on consumer responses when the previous emotional attachment is strong

One-way ANOVA analysis was conducted with the emotional attachment and trust as the within subjects factors. As the first result, positive customer reviews had a strong and significant effect both on emotional attachment ($F(1, 221)_{EA} = 5.010$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta^2 = 0.854$) and trust ($F(1, 221)_{TRUST} = 4.829$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta^2 = 0.849$). Previously strongly attached consumers had even stronger emotional attachment after they read positive customer reviews ($M_{previous(EA)}= 3.486$, $sd = 0.659$; $M_{post(EA)}= 3.631$, $sd = 0.711$). It is also true for trust. Consumers trust level increased after they were exposed to positive reviews ($M_{previous(TRUST)}= 3.642$, $sd = 0.747$; $M_{post(TRUST)}= 3.843$, $sd = 0.762$). The results supported both H3 and H10.

3. The effect of <u>positive</u> online customer reviews on consumer responses when the previous emotional attachment is weak

To test the third hypothesis, another ANOVA analysis was conducted with emotional attachment and trust acting as the dependent variables, separately. As the results suggested, previously weakly attached consumers' strength of attachment were significantly affected from the positive online reviews ($F(1, 105)_{EA} = 4.704$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta^2 = 0.955$). After the manipulation with the positive reviews, strength of attachment of the participants increased considerably ($M_{previous(EA)}=2.094$, $sd=0.625$; $M_{post(EA)}= 2.226$, $sd = 0.808$), supporting H4. The same result was observed for the brand trust which was beyond expectations ($F(1, 105)_{TRUST} = 2.442$, $p = 0.015$, η^2

= 0.917). Consumer trust was affected by positive reviews for the consumers who had a weak previous emotional attachment. There was a significant increase in the trust level of the previously weakly attached consumers ($M_{previous(TRUST)}$= 2.867, sd = 0.691; $M_{post(TRUST)}$= 3.028, sd = 0.723), not giving support to H11.

4. The effect of negative online customer reviews on consumer responses when the previous emotional attachment is weak

The fourth hypothesis took the negative online customer reviews and weakly attached consumers into consideration. ANOVA analysis for the consumers' prior and post emotional attachment strength showed a significant difference ($F(1, 72)_{EA} = 3.116$, $p = 0.009$, $\eta^2 = 0.922$). After the manipulation with negative customer reviews about online retail platforms, emotional attachment of the customers with online retail platforms were even more impaired ($M_{previous(EA)}$= 2.134, sd = 0.732; $M_{post(EA)}$= 1.959, sd = 0.753). H5 found support with this finding. On the other hand, trust was not influenced by negative customer reviews for the consumers who had previously weakly attached ($F(1, 72)_{TRUST} = 1.902$, $p = 0.085$). The result does not support H12.

5. The effect of positive and negative customer reviews on strongly attached and weakly attached consumers' repurchase intention

Before the analysis of the repurchase intention, since the different groups were compared with each other, first the similarity of the groups were assured based on the years they have been shopping online, average monthly spending online, shopping frequency and the retailer platform they shop most. The analysis used for comparing the groups with strong emotional attachment revealed no significant difference between groups regarding the years of shopping (t=1.906, df=207, p=0.058), monthly spending (t=1.393, df=207, p=0.165), shopping frequency (t=1.184, df=207, p=0.237) and the platform used most (t=0.074, df=207, p=0.941). The same was true for the weakly attached groups. The years of shopping (t=1.412, df=484, p=0.101), monthly spending (t=1.118, df=484, p=0.265), their shopping frequency (t=1.154, p=0.313) and the most used platform (t=0.074, p=0.941) did not differ.

To test the hypothesis, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied since the dependent variable (repurchase intention) is a binary variable. The first analysis exposed a result within expectations. For the consumers who had a previously strong emotional attachment with online retail platforms, positive and negative customer reviews significantly differed from each other (Mann-Whitney U=26,169, p=0.000). Positive customer reviews strengthened the repurchase intention of the consumers who already had the tendency to buy from these platforms ($M_{positive}$= 0.982, sd = 0.133; $M_{negative}$= 0.735, sd = 0.373), supporting H6.

Considering the repurchase intention of the consumers who have weak emotional attachment before manipulation, the hypothesis was suggesting an increase in repurchase intention with the positive reviews. However, the results pointed out a no-difference situation. For the consumers who had weak previous emotional attachment through online retail platforms, the valence of online customer reviews did not cause any difference on repurchase intention (Mann-Whitney U= 3,671, p=0.325), causing the rejection of H7.

Results were summarized in Table 4. The implications of the results are discussed in the discussion section.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the current study was to examine the impact of the valence of customer reviews on responses of the online retail platform customers while taking the strength of previous emotional attachment of consumers into consideration. To be more specific, customer responses were defined in the study as emotional attachment strength, trust to the platform, and repurchase intention of the consumers from the platform. The study proves that customer reviews, being positive and negative, have a strong effect, especially on emotional attachment, followed by trust and repurchase intention.

The first finding of the study is; the valence of customer reviews caused significant differences in both emotional attachment and trust levels of the consumers. To understand the differences, the proposed hypotheses were analyzed. It was found out that although a consumer's previous emotional attachment is strong, reading negative online reviews cause a considerable and significant decrease in the emotional attachment strength of the consumer (by the way; even though it decreases, it is still above 3). On the other hand, consumer trust is not influenced by the negative reviews. From the point of the literature, it was expected that the trust would be interrelated with the attachment, and they correlated positively (Teo, 2016). The findings on trust somehow contradict the previous findings. In the context of online retail platforms, it seems that trust is a stable and durable variable and is not subject to change easily. It may be concluded that online negative reviews, by themselves, are not enough to destroy the trust to the platform, since trusting a platform/brand/service takes time and is not easy to break down (Riegelsberger, Sasse, & McCarthy, 2005).

When strongly attached consumers were exposed to positive online reviews, all three variables, emotional attachment, trust, and repurchase intention, were positively influenced. According to Mikulincer (1998), if a person is emotionally attached to an object, positive memories are more resistant and prominent compared to the person who is weakly attached. The findings of the study support this argument as the emotional attachment is highly influenced by the positive reviews. However, combining the results with the other findings of the study, it indicates that strongly attached customers are careful about both positive and negative reviews. Although they have the tendency to interpret positive reviews in a more favorable way, a finding in line with the statement of the attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979), they still value the negative opinions of others. Although the consumer is strongly attached to the platform, negative reviews cause a significant decrease in the attachment strength of the consumers. However, when the trust level is investigated; the findings suggested that, unlike emotional attachment, trust is not influenced by negative reviews.

Another facet of the study was the impact of positive and negative online customer reviews on weakly attached consumers. It was proved that while negative reviews were only effective on the emotional attachment strength, positive reviews affected both emotional attachment and trust level of the weakly attached consumers. This finding shows the strength of positive information. It was suggested by the previous research that people try to develop positive feelings about the attached object (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010). Those participants were the previous customers of the platform. Moreover, considering the level of attachment of these consumers, it is not possible to say that these consumers hate the platform. Although it is weak, they still have a certain level of attachment with the platform. Most probably they're looking for positive evidence to grow the relationship with the platform. The positive customer reviews enhance the relationship of these customers with the platform, as increasing the level of attachment. It's not only the emotional attachment but also trust is affected by the positive customer reviews.

When the repurchase intention is questioned, the findings of the study verified that positive and negative online customer reviews about digital retail platforms change the repurchase intention of the emotionally attached customers of the platform. The finding adds a new dimension to the study by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), who pointed out that emotional attachment creates high commitment to repurchase. With the current study, it was proved that attachment is influenced by the valence of reviews, which in turn influences the repurchase intention. On the other hand, if a consumer is not strongly attached to the platform, positive, or negative reviews do not make any difference in the consumer's repurchase intention. As the results of the analysis suggested, consumers who have weak ties with the platform does not consider positive or negative reviews significantly when the repurchase intention is in question. Therefore, it can be concluded that online customer reviews could not be the only way to convince these weakly attached customers to come back to the platform and repurchase from the platform.

Table 4. Summary of the results

	Variables		Emotional Attachment (EA)					Trust					Repurchase Intention					
			Mean	sd	F	p	η^2	Mean	sd	F	p	η^2			Mean	sd	MW-U	p
Online customer reviews (OCR)	Positive		3378	0.938	4.693	0.031*[a]	0.07	3664	0.770	31.334	0.000[a]	0.45						
	Negative		3066	0.916				3289	0.829									
(OCR) x Previous Emotional Attachment (PEA)	High PEA x Positive OCR	Before	3.486	0.659	5.010	0.000[a]	0.854	3.642	0.747	4.829	0.000[a]	0.849	High PEA	Positive OCR	0.982	0.133	26,169	0.000[a]
		After	3.631	0.711				3.843	0.762									
	High PEA x Negative OCR	Before	3.428	0.631	2.264	0.000[b]	0.826	-	-	1.179	0.198*[b]	-		Negative OCR	0.735	0.373		
		After	3.083	0.859				-	-									
	Low PEA x Positive OCR	Before	2.094	0.625	4.704	0.000[a]	0.955	2.867	0.691	2.442	0.015[b]	0.917	Low PEA	Positive OCR	-	-	3,671	0.325*[b]
		After	2.226	0.808				3.028	0.723						-	-		
	Low PEA x Negative OCR	Before	2.134	0.732	3.116	0.009[a]	0.922	-	-	1.902	0.085*[b]	-		Negative OCR	-	-		
		After	1.959	0.753				-	-						-	-		

* Not significant
a Hypothesis supported
b Hypothesis not supported

Theoretical Implications. The current study makes various theoretical contributions pertinent to consumer responses in digital channels. Previous studies have pointed out that when compared to the traditional marketing, eWOM is more effective in persuading the customers (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004), and changing the consumer attitudes about brands (Lee et al., 2008). The study specifically fulfills the gap by proving the effect of eWOM, in the form of customer reviews, on consumers' emotional attachment, trust and repurchase intention.

The first contribution of the study is to investigate the online retail platforms as part of the service economy. It also developed and contributed to the concept of the OPE. Second, consumer behavior on online retail platforms was investigated with the variables of emotional attachment and trust. It was proved that these two constructs have distinct properties and are influenced by different processes. Third, the results of the study implied that trust is a more durable and stable variable compared to emotional attachment. It is difficult to change the trust then to change the emotional attachment. This distinction was validated empirically in the study. Trust level of consumers is not influenced by negative customer reviews but significantly influenced by positive customer reviews. Consumers are more inclined to search for positive information if they are looking for a trustworthy relationship. Forth, it was argued in the literature that repurchase intention is one of the most appropriate variables to determine the continuity of the relationship (Srivastava & Sharma, 2013). The study took the repurchase intention into account while investigating the effect of previous emotional attachment along with customer reviews on the variables. Fifth and the most significant finding of the study, it was empirically demonstrated that online customer reviews (a form of eWOM) are effective variables in determining the strength of emotional attachment, trust and repurchase intention of current customers of online retail platforms. Moreover, it was demonstrated that there is a relationship between previous emotions and consumer responses to online reviews. It was observed that previous emotions are one of the determinants of post-consumer behavior when the consumers are exposed to external stimulus. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate the set of behavioral outcomes in the concept of online retail platforms, and the study is the first to demonstrate the behavior in relation to online customer reviews.

Managerial Implications. Emotional attachment is a variable stronger than commitment and attitude (Patwardhan & Balasubramanian, 2011). It is a psychological bond, which should be approached very carefully, between a person and a brand. That's why understanding the dynamics of emotional attachment is important for marketing managers. Although it is a strong tie, it can be subject to change under certain conditions. Thinking that customers trust other customers more than any other entity, eWOM is considered to be one of these effective items to change both emotional attachment and trust of the consumers. Moreover, those two variables direct the revisit and repurchase intention of the consumers to online retail platforms.

According to Roberts (2005), if the consumer is attached to a brand, one can talk about successful marketing of the products/services. When the emotional attachment is taken one step further, there is loyalty (Song et al., 2019). That is the marketers work to make consumers to be attached and to trust to the brands. As confirmed by the results of the study, trust is a more durable variable compared to emotional attachment. The results implied that for digital marketers, it's better to shape their marketing strategies to raise the trust level of the consumers. Trusting a platform is not easy for the consumers, and establishing trust requires the commitment of the platform owners as well as supplying the best service to the customer. Supplying the correct information about the products, giving an effective after-sale service, helping and informing the customers at every stage of the purchase process could be the first steps to be taken to raise trust to the platform by the platform owner. All these hard works will result in customer satisfaction and satisfaction leads to trust (Chiu et al., 2012). Trusting customers write their opinions in a positive way and this will enhance the purchase and repurchase intention of the potential and current customers.

It is good news for the marketers to know that trust is affected only by positive customer reviews, but not from negative ones. It is very important for the platform owners to raise the trust level of consumers for an ongoing relationship. The opinions of others are core information for consumers because it reflects the value of the platform.

The negative reviews should be carefully investigated and must be replied. If the unfavorable opinion is caused by an actual problem, this problem must be addressed, and the consumer must be informed on the platform for others to see the way how the platform owner handles the unfavorable situations.

As all the findings of the study point out, a general conclusion is derived: Digital retail platform owners should encourage customers to write their positive opinions since they are very effective on both current and potential customers. In order to encourage customers to write their opinions, there may be some applications/ promotions provided by the platform owners. An example can be given as giving points for the ones who write their opinions.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Just like every other study, current research has some limitations. However, each limitation of the study is an opportunity for future research.

First, participants were immediately asked about their emotional attachment and trust level after they read customer reviews. However, customer reviews may be subject to memory decay. Longitudinal research may be applied as the method of another study.

Second, there may be some limitations derived from experimental settings. Since the experiment was conducted in the laboratory, participants were completely focused on the experimental stimuli. However, if the experiment was applied as a field experiment, there would be much destruction. Repeating the same scenario in the field may be the subject of future research.

Generation Y is very affluent in using digital applications, and they have the highest presence in the digital environment. The greatest percentage of the age of the participants in the study was above 30. It may be a good idea to explore the responses of different cohorts, especially to do younger generations, to the same stimuli. With such research, it may be reached different results and conclusions, especially useful for marketing practitioners.

The current study is limited to three dependent variables. Experimental setting of the current study could be applied with the introduction of new variables as customer engagement to the platform, the attitude of the customer toward the platform, use behavior (e.g., trial, seek out), etc.

Despite all the limitations of the study, it is a fact that the study expanded our understanding of the online retail platforms emerging as a new entity and the new authority of the service economy (Reinartz et al., 2019), as well as it elaborates our understanding of consumer contribution, which is online customer reviews, to the OPE.

CONCLUSION

Traditionally made decisions of the consumers at brick-and-mortar retailers are shifting to digital platforms. It is due to the rise of e-commerce, increasing use of smart devices and mobile shopping, and their increasing share in the consumers' lives. Moreover, there is an increasing diffusion of online retail platforms, introduced as new competitors to both digital and traditional retailers (Reinartz, Wiegand & Imschloss, 2019). They are announced as the new authorities of the service economy (Reinartz et al., 2019). However, in the stiff competition, it is crucial for the involved parties to acknowledge the dynamics of the new economic system, consumers' responses to this system, consequently, proactively take their position in this economy.

One of the best ways to do it is doing it with the customers. As a strategy, it is best to ask for the contribution of the customers. As the customers become a part of the system, not only the success but also consumers' emotional attachment is achieved. Customer contribution to the OPE mainly depends on the experience of the customers on the platform. And, as stated by many researchers, the potential customers depend on the information coming from the current customers when determining the value of making a purchase from the site and forming a relationship. This study contributes to the literature by empirically investigating the effects of online customer reviews on consumer responses while it sheds a light for the marketing specialists to form their strategies about online retail platforms. We wish this study will be a guide for the following researches.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM): A form of viral marketing in which consumers share their positive or negative opinions, comments and/or experiences via the internet.

Emotional Attachment: Having intense attitudes through a brand, characterized by trust, avoidance of separation, and a great sense of passion.

Online Customer Reviews: An online review of a service, product and/or brand made by the customer who has used the product or experienced the service.

Online Platform Economy (OPE): Any economic or social activity facilitated by online platforms.

Online Retail Platform: A digital platform enabling retailer-to-customer and consumer-to-consumer interactions and transactions.

Online Trust: Confidence that an online customer's vulnerabilities will not be exploited during an online experience.

Repurchase Intention: Customer's intention to engage in a future purchase activity with an online platform that the consumer has previously purchased.

Chapter 9
The Role of Social Commerce Components on the Consumer Decision-Making Process

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ABSTRACT

Rapid changes in commerce, technology, and consumer behaviour are leading businesses to shift their online activities. The popularity of social media pushed online merchants to integrate these platforms into their online presence, leading to the rise of social commerce. Consumers' interaction and participation online create a massive amount of information. The use of social commerce components facilitates the interaction of consumers by sharing their experiences and learning from others' experiences. In this chapter, the authors look at how this process has impacts throughout the consumer decision-making process when making a purchase and suggests directions for future research.

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INTRODUCTION

The increase of social media popularity is leading to the rise of social commerce (Lin, Li, & Wang, 2017; Wang & Yu, 2017). Social commerce is a subset of e-commerce based on social networks platforms. The possibility of interaction, the hallmark of social networks, is central to social commerce, allowing consumers to behave collaboratively by sharing information, recommending options and advising alternatives (Huang & Benyoucef, 2015). Research shows that consumers enjoy sharing their purchase information with their friends and contacts online and that they are receptive to following others' online recommendations when making purchase decisions (Chen & Shen, 2015). Often this type of information is considered more reliable because it refers to an experienced user who has experience with the product (Kim & Park, 2013). Different factors impact on the willingness to be active online by providing recommendations and reviews. Website design in general, and social commerce features, in particular, have a high influence on consumers' participation online.

Despite the growing importance of social commerce, the impact of social commerce factors on consumers' purchase decision-making is under-researched (Chen, Lu, & Wang, 2017). In this vein, social commerce components are gaining scholars' and practitioners' interest. To the authors' best knowledge, although a few studies have researched the impact of social commerce components on consumer purchase decision process, there is a dearth of studies focusing on how consumers process the information acquired from the social commerce components and how this information impacts the purchase decision process (Chen, Lu, & Gupta, 2017).

In general, consumers share their opinion online about uncommon purchase experiences which they think may be helpful for others. For example, consumers may not share a "cigarette" purchase online with others unless they experienced an abnormal or a special situation in purchasing or in utilizing the product. In some cases, consumers share information about a purchase which have a high level of complexity. Other consumers will share purchases with a high-level of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction). Also, in the case of new products, early buyers may share their purchase experience since it is their first experience with this product. Thus, the information generated by consumers which will facilitate the purchase decision-making process of other consumers (Huang & Benyoucef, 2017), contributing to more accurate, faster decisions and, less effort.

Hence, this work aims at understanding both what drives consumers to share information online and the impact of such information in the buying decision process. We look at purchase decisions as cognitive behaviour. The chapter focuses on social commerce components to understand their impact on consumer purchase decision-making process. Chen and Gupta (2017) addressed the significance of ratings and reviews, recommendations, and communities and forums in improving the purchase decision. Ratings and reviews play a high role in minimizing consumers' uncertainty and consequently performing a high-quality decision by learning more about products' quality and attributes that other consumers had shared. The chapter aims to review the literature and propose directions for further research.

BACKGROUND

Social Commerce

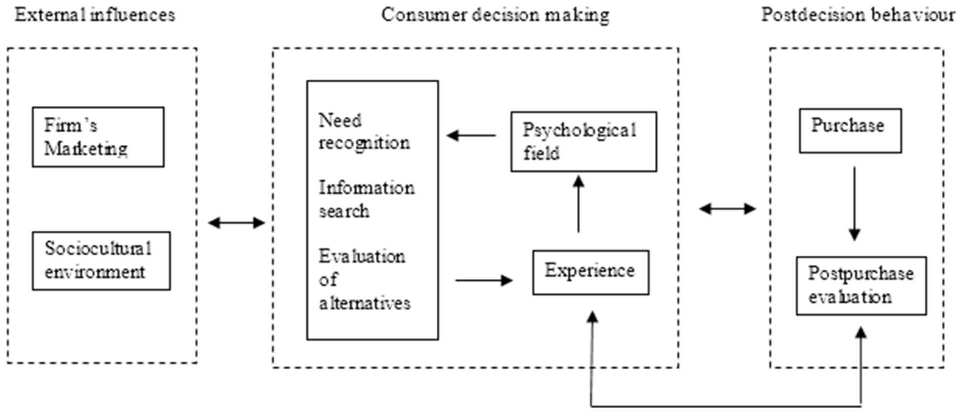
Social commerce is a subset of e-commerce which may include two main types: a social network website that integrates commercial features enabling transactions and advertisement, or a traditional e-commerce website that includes social tools to enable social interactions. Central to social commerce are social networks and web technologies which allow users to acquire and share information and enable social commerce platforms to become an important learning platform. Social posts and information shared by earlier experienced consumers are learning sources for potential consumers; consumers are continuously learning from what other users are posting and sharing.

In the social media context, consumers' purchase decision-making processes are impacted by several factors such as website design, flow of experience, ease of technology, trust, and enjoyment (Lin et al., 2012; Parboteeah et al., 2009; Wu et al., 2016). The ease of use and learning facilitated by providing suitable designed interfaces will result in easier acquisition of information by the user, which consequently leads users to execute a successful transaction (Lin & Lo, 2016).

Several studies use the flow of experience to capture the emotional motivation/reaction of users toward online shopping (Lu, Zhou, & Wang, 2009; Lin, Fernandez, & Gregor, 2012). Users will be more likely to sense enjoyment when they feel comfortable and confident during their shopping, and it may occur if consumers feel comfortable navigating and browsing online. Consequently, the enjoyment of consumers in their shopping experience and confidence using their online skills to overcome challenges during the shopping journey will raise positive feelings toward the task which will lead them to further interactions (Wu et al., 2016).

Social commerce provides consumers with an environment rich with information and experiences which enables them to learn and get knowledge on different interests. Consumers attempt to make an accurate purchase decision by relying on social commerce components and learning from others' experiences (Chen & Gupta, 2017).

Figure 1. A model of consumer decision making
Source: Soares and Malota (2008), p. 14



Consumer Decision Making Process Model

Consumer behaviour models provide an overview of the influences and processes involved in a given phenomena. Although they have limitations and should not be seen as aiming at providing an exhaustive picture of the complexities of consumer behaviour, models allow for a systematization of how and why consumers behave as they do.

Several models have been proposed to illustrate consumer decision making. Schiffman and Kanuk model of consumer decision making (Fig 1) has been used as a comprehensive frame of reference of the process and influences relevant for the understanding of the inputs, process, and output of consumer behaviour (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). The model includes three components: the input, the process, and the output.

The input component covers the external influences that impact consumers' behaviour, decisions, attitudes and values. These include marketing strategies and activities of companies (i. e. all the marketing mix decisions) and sociocultural influences.

The process component refers to how consumers make decisions. Psychological influences such as values, motivation and attitudes play a dominant role at this stage. There are three stages in this process: need recognition, pre-purchase search and evaluation of alternatives.

Finally, the output component of this model is concerned with post-decision behaviour, namely the purchase and post-purchase evaluation.

Extant research discussed different models explaining the online purchase decision-making process (for example Rad & Benyoucef, 2011; Chen *et al.*, 2015; Karimi, Papamichail & Holland, 2015; Karimi, Holland & Papamichail, 2018).

However, in general, the five-stage decision-making process model has also been considered useful to understand consumer behaviour online: need recognition, pre-purchase (information search and evaluation of alternatives), purchase, and post-purchase evaluation. Visual attention analysis has also shown that the decision-making process consists of stages (Zuschke, 2019).

Social Commerce and the Consumer Decision Making Process

With no prior aim of purchasing a product, consumers may recognize their need for a product while navigating online through social websites (Chen & Gupta, 2017). When a need is recognised, consumers may search for information and possible solutions for their problem. Consumers collect product-related information even when they are not planning to buy a product immediately.

Consumers go through several cycles during the information search stage (Karimi et al., 2018, 2015), these cycles are a result of formulation, evaluation, and appraise of information (Chen et al., 2015; Karimi et al., 2018, 2015). According to Zuschke (2019), consumers were found to switch between processing patterns depending on the task's complexity.

The information search process depends on the importance of satisfying the need, familiarity with available solutions and the amount of time available for the search. According to Beresford and Sloper (2008), decision strategies with high cognitive effort are more likely to be used when decision accuracy is prioritized over saving cognitive effort. Information search can be internal or external. Internal search is based on existing information in memory (quality, quantity, accuracy, relevance). External search is the information search beyond one's memory and comprises not only personal sources (friends, experts, salespeople) but also impersonal sources (advertising, internet). External search occurs when internal search is not perceived as sufficient for a confident decision and whenever the benefits of the additional information prevail over its costs. After the process of information search, the consumer should have a set of possible alternatives for satisfying his/her needs.

From a consumer perspective, the journey of gathering and evaluating information is a cycle aiming at making an adequate choice. According to Chen and Gupta (2017), consumers gather and evaluate information by learning from the social commerce components. During this stage, product alternatives are identified and evaluating criteria are determined (Karimi et al., 2015).

Choice/purchase is the stage of the buying decision process where consumers decide what to purchase in order to fulfil their needs and solve their problems. Payne, Bettman and Johnson (1993) concluded that decision-makers select a choice strategy as a result of a trade-off between accuracy and effort. Allen (2002) cited that Russo and Dosher developed the compensatory 'majority of confirming dimension' strategy (MCD). This strategy assumes that consumers who are confronted with multiple options consistently process all the available information in an attribute-wise and paired-comparison manner. According to Allen (2002 p.517), the rational choice theory depicted choice experience to be divided into two steps.

"First, a chooser must anticipate future consequences associated with an array of current choice alternatives. Second, the chooser must consider or imagine what his or her future preferences will be for the currently anticipated consequences associated with the choice alternatives."

Finally, the last stage refers to the evaluation of the received product by consumers in light of their expectations, for example, in terms of quality, performance, delivery, etc. (Chen & Gupta, 2017). The post-purchase is considered as an influential stage in the social commerce mode, in which consumers may turn from being influenced to becoming a potential influencer (Rad & Benyoucef, 2011).

Hence, social commerce may have implications of all stages of the decision-making process.

Decision-Making Styles and Knowledge of Product

Research has shown that decision-making style and prior knowledge of the product are important for the pre-purchase stage. Karimi, Holland and Papamichail (2018) confirm that the whole purchase process duration varies and is correlated to the decision-making style of the consumer and the level of knowledge of the product. Earlier studies classified online consumer based on their decision-making style and knowledge of product (Karimi et al., 2015). Karimi et al. (2015) hold that each type consumers processes purchase decisions in a different manner. Consumers are classified into satisficers and maximisers based on their decision-making style. Satisficers are consumers who look for alternatives that are good enough (Karimi et al., 2015), rather than try to achieve an ideal outcome. Satisficers are critically selective when it comes to using and processing of information (Chang & Burke, 2007). On the contrary, maximisers are consumers who carry out an intensive search for information and browsing (Chowdhury, Ratneshwar, & Mohanty, 2009). They conduct an exhaustive search for all possibilities and analyse thoroughly the available information (Schwartz et al., 2002). Maximisers try to identify the best alternative.

Schwartz et al., (2002) found that maximisers tend to rely on information about how others are doing as a way of assessing whether their chosen outcomes were indeed the best. It was also reported that maximisers engaged in more comparisons regarding their purchase decision (Schwartz et al., 2002).

The prior knowledge of the product was also found to have an impact on consumer online purchase behaviour (Karimi et al., 2015). The information search and information processing are influenced by prior knowledge of the product (Karimi et al., 2015). Prior knowledge of product make consumers more conscious of what they prefer, consider less information, and raise self-confidence (Karimi et al., 2015).

Social Commerce Components (SCCs)

Social commerce components include social media, social shopping, ratings and reviews, recommendation and referrals, and online social communities and forums in which information is produced and shared (Hajli, 2012a; Hajli, 2012b; Rad & Benyoucef, 2011; Hajli, 2013; Friedrich, 2015; Chen & Gupta, 2017; Chen et al., 2017).

Recommendations

Shadkam and O'Hara (2013) indicate that social recommendation refers to the use of social media to have and make recommendations on what to read, eat, see, buy and do. A social recommendation can be text, location, or a combination of photos and text (Chen et al., 2017). The customer tends to recommend a product if s/he is satisfied (Andronikidis, 2009). Chang and Hsiao (2013) reported that the availability of the recommendation feature in social networks apps helps users to choose between alternatives. Consumers' recommendations and suggestions are important sources of information on social websites (Wang & Yu, 2017). Social media users and shoppers who had the real purchase experience are the main contributors to social recommendations on social media. Consequently, social commerce websites display such recommendations to potential analogous shoppers in characteristics of recommenders such as preference and social relations (Li, Wu, & Lai, 2013). According to Chen and Gupta (2017), consumers tend to share their experience in online community platforms and like to describe the experience more thoroughly. Thus, other consumers will have an advantage from the described experience and learn from it.

Virtual Communities and Forums

Consumers acquire various information using social commerce components to support their purchase decisions. Communities and forums are considered as product experience platforms that assist merchants and retailers in creating user-generated content that drives possible sale (Hajli et al., 2014). Communities and forums' members provide support for each other. Chen et al. (2013) argued that users' interaction and the mutual support between them will lead, in return, to trust in the network itself. Moreover, Hajli (2012b) found that such social commerce components increase consumer purchase intention by increasing trust and perceived ease of use. Online communities and forums constitute a rich source of information. Contributors and participants in communities and forums use text, photos, and even videos to share their experience and educate others. Thus, users can learn different dimensions of the product/service, such as attributes or practical use, easier in communities and forums (Chen & Gupta, 2017). Indeed, users' participation in communities and forum is related to their target product and interests. According to Chen and Gupta (2017), learning from communities and forums reduces consumers' demand uncertainty.

There is a wide variety of virtual communities and forums, hence it is necessary to differentiate between online communities. Online communities differ from each other in their structure, objectives, models and type of members/users. Therefore, it is more relevant for future research to study each type of online communities individually.

Ratings and Reviews

Ratings and reviews are original social commerce tools for both consumers and online merchants (Shadkam & O'Hara, 2013). Often, reviews have a short text format with some photos attached. Ratings typically are numerical ranging from low to high. In general, ratings and reviews are associated. Ratings and reviews enable consumers to exchange feedback regarding goods and services and recommend choices based on their personal experience and point of view. From a business perspective, social media tools assist them to integrate users' feedback into their websites directly. From the consumers' perspective, information provided by real shoppers and independent users has high credibility and is very useful for purchase decisions (Kim & Park, 2013). Such information provided in reviews will enable users to learn about product quality and increase users' confidence regarding produce performance/characteristics (Chen & Gupta, 2017) and reduce consumers' uncertainty. According to Chen and Gupta (2017), learning from ratings and reviews increase consumers' interest and increase the capacity of information processing.

Unlike recommendations and referrals which have only one direction (positive) of influence on consumers, ratings and reviews are characterized by two directions, negative and positive.

Understanding Information and Knowledge Sharing Processes in Social Commerce

Different theories have been used as underlying frameworks to understand consumer behaviour in social commerce. In this section, we present these theories and also identify approaches that can be useful to this endeavour.

Previous studies have mostly used the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as two main theoretical backgrounds to studies in this area (Hajli, 2012b). TRA and TAM explain that the actual use of the system is predicted by the behavioural intention of the user to use the system. Moreover, the user's intention to use the system depends on the user's attitude towards the use of the system, which is determined by the user's perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness regarding the system (Friedrich, 2015). These models are useful to understand the adoption of social commerce but do not emphasize the process underlying the information sharing process.

The Trust Transfer Theory (TTT) has also been used in recent studies to understand the intention in social commerce, namely the role of trust towards members in social shopping intention and social sharing intention (Chen, Shen, & Chen, 2014). Trust transfer takes place when trust is transmitted from a known entity/person to another unknown in an association environment (Chen et al., 2014). The transfer process includes three parties, namely trustor, trustee and a trusted (third party). If a trustor has a strong belief in the trustworthiness of the trusted third party, such trust can be transferred to the trustee when there is a close relationship between the trustee and the third party (Chen et al., 2014). In particular, the trustee is called the target and the third party called the source of trust transfer, and trust can be transferred from different kinds of sources, such as individuals or a context, using communication or cognitive processes.

Finally, the social learning theory is a significant theory of learning and development, it is also linked to various concepts of conventional learning (Bandura, 1971). The theory includes some social elements. It highlights that humans can acquire knowledge of new behaviours and information by observation. In social commerce, buyers get social knowledge about the goods and services which interest them through browsing the information created by other buyers, this is known as the social learning process (Huang & Benyoucef, 2015). Social commerce components provide a good setting for shoppers to perceive others' behaviour. Consumers have access to social experiences and knowledge by participating in communities and forums, browsing reviews and ratings done by others, or bearing in mind recommendations in social networks (Huang & Benyoucef, 2015). For social learning to occur, social interaction between learners and role models is required (Chen & Gupta, 2017). Learning implies two different interaction processes, an external interaction when individuals interact with the surrounding environments (social, cultural and material), and an internal psychological process. According to Chen and Gupta (2017), consumer interaction behaviours with social commerce components are an external interaction process.

The constructive consumer choice process framework developed by Bettman, Luce and Payne (1998) considers that consumers are attempting to accomplish goals, what influences the information they attend to and how it is perceived or encoded, and what factors affect the heuristics consumers utilize to combine information and make a decision. A consumer making a decision has a goal hierarchy, often developed constructively on the spot, specifying the goals and sub-goals he or she must achieve. Consumers' goals for choice processing are maximizing the accuracy of a decision, minimizing the cognitive effort required for the decision, minimizing the experience of negative emotion while making the decision, or maximizing the ease with which a decision can be justified.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Understanding how consumers collect and acquire information is of extreme importance both from a micro-level and macro-level perspective. This process of searching for, learning and sharing information has implications throughout the five stages of consumer decision making.

Our review suggests a number of research questions for further research, such as: How do consumers process information during the pre-purchase process and prior to making their choice? How do ratings and reviews affect consumers' pre-purchase decision-making process outcomes? Since ratings and reviews are not structured or in an organized format, does the order and tidiness of information affect the acquisition of information and evaluation?

Merchants are considering different dimensions before investing in their online activities. It is essential to understand consumers' behaviour and factors facilitating the process of information acquisition and use. In addition, acknowledging the role of ratings and reviews is highly recommended due to the value of this type of information on different social commerce platforms. Therefore, focusing on these aspects by scholars may provide a clearer picture to improve the understanding of social commerce phenomenon. Our review suggests a number of research questions for further research, such as: How do consumers process information during the pre-purchase process and prior to making their choice? How do ratings and reviews affect consumers pre-purchase decision-making process outcomes? Since ratings and reviews are not structured or in an organized format, does the order and tidiness of information affect the acquisition of information and evaluation?

Research also shows that recommendations increase trust on members and consequently consumers trust on the network. In addition, it was reported that ratings and reviews increase trust in product and platforms. Thus, the process of learning from social commerce components has a link to consumers' trust. Therefore, future researches can be directed to study how learning can build consumer trust. Do rating and ratings and reviews impact consumers' decisions in the same manner regardless of consumers' decision-making style and prior knowledge of the product? Do consumers acquire information from ratings and review process the information in the same way? Do consumers follow different choice strategies when making their purchase choice on social commerce?

Consumers are learning from ratings and reviews, and these posts are valued because they are posted by consumers who had the purchase experience. It is very interesting to study if consumers will assess all posted ratings and reviews without taking into consideration the variety of different consumers' preferences? In regard to communities, it would be more applicable to studying the different types of online communities individually to understand better consumers' behaviour. Finally, future studies may focus on the motivation behind consumers' participation by sharing their experience through rating, reviewing or recommending a product they had purchased.

CONCLUSION

Social commerce components are tools for consumers' online interaction which impact the consumers' decision process. It is essential to study the impact of social commerce components for online commercial activities development. Online merchants and retailers attempt to influence consumers to share their purchase experience. The interaction of consumers impacts the purchase decision of other consumers. The pre-purchase stage of the decision-making process is the phase in which consumers gather and process information. Consumers behaviour during the purchase decision-making process varies based on their decision-making style and prior knowledge of the product. That variation impacts the purchase process outcomes. In addition, the information acquired and processed has an impact on the process in general. A consumer can learn about the product and get knowledge to perform the best decision. Consumers always seek to reduce the effort and time spent to make a purchase decision. Thus, purchase experience shared socially will help consumers on their purchase task. Information gathered from ratings and reviews may assist consumers in building the product criteria, limits the number of alternatives, reduce the number of cycles needed to evaluate between products, and speed up the whole decision process.

Furthermore, studies highlight that relational ties are the main core of social media and the base for social commerce to expand. Thus, studies on social commerce have the social view of relationships that need to sustainable and transparent for the success of the business. Therefore, social information provides a supportive and rich content in which people are more likely to interact with each other for mutual benefits and further build strong relationships. The aim of this chapter is to contribute to the consumer behaviour literature in particular, and further contribute to information systems literature, by illustrating the information creation and sharing process and consumers' use of that information in social commerce platforms.

The managerial contribution of the study will be in providing insights for online merchants and practitioners on best online practices regarding website design and interaction tools, specifically what tools could be used and how such tools could help to achieve the required objectives. On the other hand, the study will provide a better understanding of distinctive online consumer archetypes and how these consumers behave on social commerce. Based on that, identifying each group may facilitate the targeting and online activities tasks to simplify consumers' decision-making process. From a marketing management point of view, it may contribute to designing more effective navigation and information sharing platforms.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Consumer Decision-Making Model: Graphic representation of the cross interaction between market, social, environment, and individual factors affecting the flow of decisions of consumers.

Online Social Interaction: The online exchange of ideas and preferences between two or more individuals which can take the form of a comment, like, or by sharing what others had posted.

Purchase Experience: The different dimensions in feeling, knowledge, and satisfaction that a shopper gains during and after performing a purchase.

Ratings and Reviews: The reflection of users' experience regarding goods and services. Ratings are usually presented in a scale from 1 to 5, and reviews are expressed in a text in which photos can be included.

Social Learning: Refers to acquiring new behaviour and knowledge by observing others, in particular individuals with high influence.

Social Recommendations: Raising attention on product, place, or person to other users who intersect the social relation, characteristics, or interests of the recommender.

User-Generated Content: Information created by users of different online mediums to introduce their ideas and/or experiences aiming to educated or entertain others and shared publicly. This information could be in a text, photo, audio, or video format.

Chapter 10
Tactile Sensations in E-Retailing:
The Role of Web Communities

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ABSTRACT

Previous research universally recognized the pivotal role of touch in consumer behavior and considered it as one of the critical factors limiting the adoption of online shopping. In fact, in digital environments, consumers can rely only on the product visual representation and/or written descriptions of its characteristics. Starting from this evidence, several authors have underlined how the provision of a description of a product's tactile characteristics may positively affect consumer behavior. However, previous contributions have devoted little attention to the differential influence of online sources of information on consumers' willingness to buy when a description of a product's tactile characteristics is provided. The research presented in this chapter aims to cover this gap, by demonstrating through two experimental studies that, when a description of the tactile characteristics of the product is provided, the information given by the users of a web-community increases consumer's willingness to buy the product.

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INTRODUCTION

Product touch, as direct tactile experience with a product, is very important in determining consumers' evaluations and purchasing decisions (McCabe and Nowlis, 2003). Indeed, touching a product prior to purchase allows consumers to acquire information on its material properties (i.e., texture, weight, temperature, and hardness – Lederman and Klatzky, 1987) that cannot be obtained through visual inspection (Lindauer, Stergiou and Penn, 1986), thus enhancing confidence in their evaluations and choices. This is a highly relevant issue if considering that the inability to physically examine products on the computer screen is still a key deterrent to online shopping (Lee and Park, 2014). Such inability can generate uncertainty about product performance that, in turn, can produce a delay in purchasing decisions (Greenleaf and Lehmann, 1995). Consumers may hesitate to shop online and finally buy the product in a physical store (Cho, Kang and Cheon, 2006).

Despite being unable to experience the tactile contact with products in digital environments, consumers can rely on visual representations and/or written descriptions of products characteristics (Mooy and Robben, 2002). As a consequence, several studies have underlined how providing vivid information is crucial when presenting a product online (Coyle and Thorson, 2001), because it has the potential to bring consumers closer to the direct experience (Nowlis, Mandel and McCabe, 2004), thus improving their understanding of products and their attitudes (Li, Daugherty and Biocca, 2003). Previous literature shows that, when direct contact with a product is absent, the provision of a description of a product's tactile characteristics may positively affect consumer behavior (e.g., McCabe and Nowlis, 2003; Peck and Childers, 2003a). However, earlier contributions have devoted little attention to the differential influence of online sources of information on consumers' willingness to buy when a description of a product's tactile characteristics is provided (such as material properties and haptic sensations) and consumers do not have previous knowledge with the product or brand.

The research reported in this chapter aims to cover this gap by analyzing the effects of different online sources of tactile information on consumers' willingness to buy a product sold in the digital environment. In so doing, the authors distinguish between two kinds of digital sources (Bickart and Schindler, 2001): company websites, that offer visual and/or verbal descriptions of products, and third-party platforms hosting virtual communities (e.g., forums, blogs, social networks), where consumers share opinions and experiences about products. In fact, an important feature of online environments is the availability of both firm- and user-generated information in the form of descriptions provided by a company or reviews, opinions and comments given by users, respectively. As a consequence, consumers may acquire tactile information about products before purchasing by accessing directly the company website or web-communities and evaluate products based on such information without any direct tactile experience (McCabe and Nowlis, 2003).

Previous literature demonstrates that web-communities, as a form of user-generated content, are more influential in shaping consumer evaluations and product sales than firm-generated content provided through company websites (e.g., Dhar and Chang 2009; Ghose and Ipeirotis, 2010). Indeed, several studies converge on the idea that information provided by users is able to influence consumers buying decisions (e.g., Mudambi and Schuff, 2010; Punj, 2013) more than information provided by companies. A recent survey by Statista (2017) underlined that in the USA product review is one of the major factors that influences internet users when deciding where to shop online, showing that 68% of respondents stated that trustworthy reviews was their strongest influencing factor[1].

Since online reviews, opinions and comments mainly represent evaluations and experiences provided by peers through the form of online word-of-mouth (eWOM), that has been extensively shown to affect consumers' purchasing decisions (Godes et al., 2005), the authors propose and demonstrate in two experimental studies that the tactile information provided by a web-community is a more effective means of compensating for the absence of a direct examination of the material properties of a product than a company website (Bickart and Schindler, 2001), and more likely to increase consumers' willingness to buy a product. The proposed conceptual model also maintains that this effect only holds when touch information is present (*vs*. absent).

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. The next sections present the theoretical background by focusing on the importance of touch in shopping environments and of tactile information in online environments. Then, a distinction is drawn between the two information sources that can provide such information. The subsequent sections present the research hypotheses and the two experimental studies that provide empirical support for the proposed conceptualization. Finally, the implications of the results are discussed.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TOUCH IN SHOPPING ENVIRONMENTS

The importance of touch has been recognized since the time of the ancient Greeks. For example, the philosopher Aristotle believed that touch mediates every type of sense perception, even vision (Siegel, 1970). Humans were hunter-gatherers for most of their history; the ancient practice of weighing game or foraged goodies in the hand has made a lasting impression on people, even today. As regards marketing, interpersonal touch has been found to affect both consumer attitudes and behavior in many contexts. For instance, Crusco and Wetzel (1984) showed that being touched by a waiter in a restaurant increases tips. Hornik (1992) also underlined the importance of touch, by demonstrating that consumers touched by a promoter (to taste a new snack in a supermarket) tended to be more cooperative than consumers in no-touch situations. In a similar vein, Hornik and Ellis (1988) showed that interpersonal touch, such as a handshake, increases shoppers' willingness to take part in mall interviews, whereas according to Willis and Hamm (1980) individuals who were asked to sign a petition were found to be more compliant if they were briefly touched. Other research has explored how the act of touching products affects consumer responses. For example, a number of studies has provided insight into the influence that touch may have on impulse buying (e.g., Ramanathan and Menon, 2002; Kacen and Lee, 2002; Peck and Childers, 2006) by increasing the feeling of ownership of the desired object (Peck and Shu, 2009).

Consumer behavior research has found evidence for individual differences in terms of preference for sensory forms of information (Heckler, Childers, and Houston, 1993). Burke (1997) noted that home shopping often does not provide the same level of product information or entertainment as physical stores, where customers can increase confidence in their evaluation through physical contact with the items on sale. In fact, attitudes toward a product can be strongly affected by the opportunity for sensory feedback before deciding whether to purchase. Peck and Childers (2003b) noted that some consumers are likely to become very frustrated by their inability to acquire tactile information. These customers typically like to touch products and consequently they spend more time exploring products with their hands before making an eventual purchase. Other customers do not share this frustration and they touch products to simply place them in shopping carts. Thus, consumers differ in terms of the importance given to product-based haptic information. Haptic orientation is indeed an individual difference variable that reflects a person's motivation to or preference for touch. In particular, Peck and Childers (2003b) developed the *Need for Touch* scale (NFT), defined as "*a preference for the extraction and utilization of information obtained through the haptic system*" (p. 431). This construct is based on motivational *vs*. ability differences of individuals (Johansson, 1978), and on the haptic information that can be gained from physical contact with the product. As a consequence, it is possible to distinguish between two types of tactile information: the *instrumental* and the *autotelic*. Instrumental information refers to an intrinsic type of tactile information, detailed and focused toward the goal-directed evaluation of a product's performance or value; autotelic information is related to the sensory experience and hedonic appreciation of the product derived through touch (Holbrook and Hirshman, 1982). Moreover, extrinsic or intrinsic considerations can drive the need to examine products by means of touch. Some customers are problem solvers and therefore they use haptic information in order to decide whether to buy a product or not, while others seek fun, fantasy, arousal, sensory stimulation, using haptic information without a precise goal, but just because they enjoy tactile sensation (Peck and Wiggins, 2006).

In keeping with these differences, the NFT scale is aimed to measure a multidimensional construct with two underlying factors: an instrumental factor and an autotelic factor. The instrumental dimension of NFT refers to that information which reflects outcome-directed touch with a salient purchase goal. Consumers who are high in that dimension typically engage in goal-directed activities of searching information and arrive at a final product judgment using also haptic information (e.g., picking up an agenda and holding it in one's hand to assess its weight). The autotelic factor relates to touch as an end in and of itself. This dimension corresponds to the sensory aspect of touch characterized by high levels of hedonism and the compulsive need to engage in exploratory variety seeking via touch, without necessarily having any goal in mind. Consumers who are high in autotelic NFT typically exhibit an affective response to hedonic touch elements, especially when they provide positive sensory feedback (e.g., the pleasurable feel of a velvet agenda cover). Previous work in marketing has focused on both the instrumental (Citrin et al., 2003) and autotelic dimensions (Peck and Wiggins, 2006) of NFT. In the contribution of Peck and Wiggins (2006), for example, participants reported their liking for a particular text (e.g., a promotional pamphlet) and willingness to donate money or to become a member of an organization after reading the communication that did *vs*. did not have a haptic element attached to it (i.e., a tree bark on a pamphlet for an arboretum). Across several studies, they found that for high (but not low) autotelic consumers, a communication with (*vs*. without) a positive touch element generally enhanced persuasion. Moreover, Streicher and Estes (2016) investigated how touching a given product can influence perception and choice of other products that have similar shape. In particular, they showed that holding a "source" product (e.g., a smartphone) increases the visual fluency of a haptically similar product (e.g., a chocolate bar), thereby increasing the likelihood of choosing that product. These results suggest that mimicking the haptic features (e.g., shape and size) of objects that certain consumers handle while shopping, can lead to packaging that facilitates the visual processing of products and therefore positively affects the choice of those products.

The importance of touch in shopping environments is also demonstrated in another study showing that haptic brand identities can facilitate recognition, consideration and brand choice, regardless of consumers' conscious awareness of this haptic priming (Streicher and Estes, 2015).

Conversely, other research stated that the possibility to touch does not always improve consumers' attitude toward the product. Underhill (2009) discussed the challenges retailers face in effectively managing the impact of products on display being handled by customers. Indeed, it is common for consumers to try on an article of clothing or flip through a magazine, touch a cosmetic but, after deciding to make a purchase, select a "fresh" one from the back of the display. In a similar vein, Argo, Dahl and Morales (2006) showed that customers react negatively if they believe products have already been touched, perceiving the item as "contaminated" by other customers.

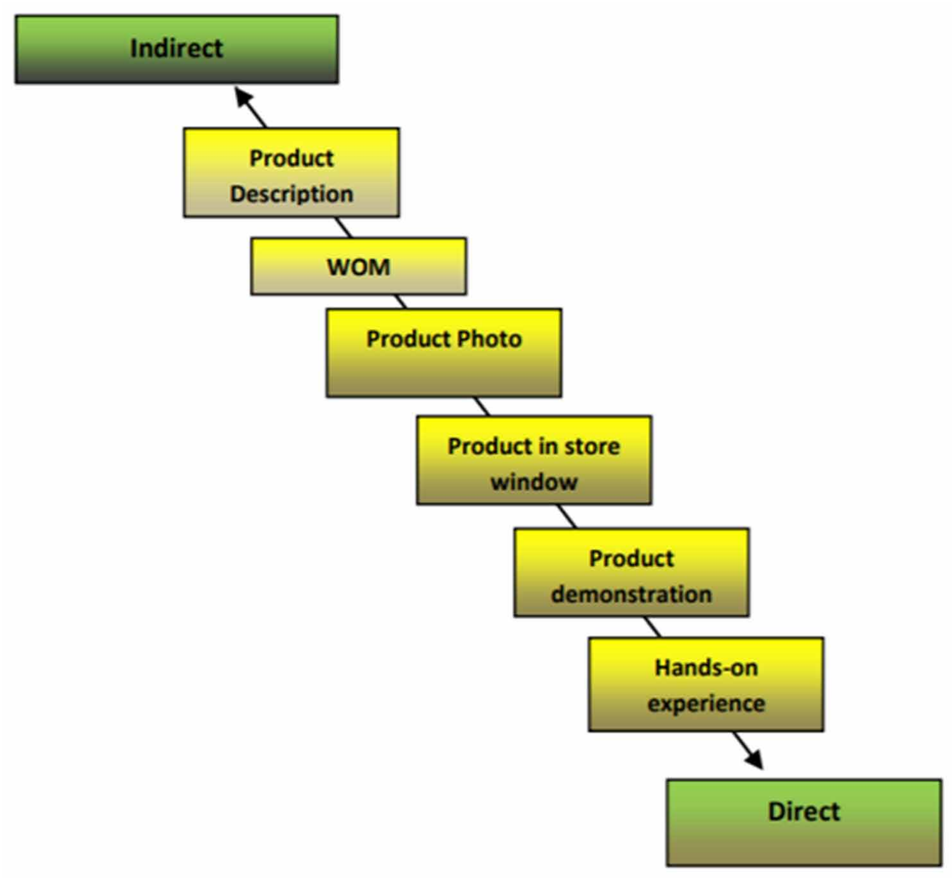
Despite these potentially negative effects, the importance of touch in consumption is universally considered as one of the critical factors that has limited the adoption of online shopping, an environment that does not allow to obtain tactile information with the direct contact (Alba et al., 1997; Citrin et al., 2003; McCabe and Nowlis, 2003). The next section will discuss the importance of tactile information in online settings.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TACTILE INFORMATION IN ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS

Product touch gives customers several benefits in terms of input. This information concerns the specific characteristics of products, such as their feel, temperature, and weight, that cannot be inferred from visual inspection alone (Klatzky and Laderman 1992; Klatzky and Lederman, 1993). In fact, whereas sight is used primarily to examine the shape of an object, touch reveals its "substance". With reference to the different ways to acquire tactile information, it is possible to examine the information spectrum proposed by Mooy and Robben (2002). This spectrum, represented in Figure 1, starts from the indirect contact with the product that can be represented by a product description or by verbal print ads. The contact is called "indirect" because the presented information is illustrated through a third party, namely the supplier or the advertiser, and contains only verbal information. Word of mouth (WOM) communication is higher up on that spectrum, because consumers can interact with the source of information (e.g., friends, salespeople), but they still cannot interact with the product. Next, a picture of the product graphically reflects the ideas given by the advertising agency or supplier, but it yields only indirect visual experience. A three-dimensional view of the product (e.g., in a store window) provides additional information. Next, product demonstrations in the store or directly on television add auditory information related to how to handle the product. Nevertheless, the experience is still not direct, because consumers themselves have no physical access to the product. The most direct form of product experience occurs when consumers have hands-on involvement with the product (see Figure 1).

In online environments, this continuum does not contain tactile experience. As a consequence, the evaluation of the product coincides with the evaluation of its picture and the description of its characteristics. The absence of tactile input can restrict sales for some categories of search goods, such as clothes and textile furnishing.

Figure 1. The direct experience spectrum (adapted from Mooy and Robben, 2002)



Moreover, Liu, Batra and Wang (2017) noted that the absence of touch is particularly important for discerning shoppers who value physical contact with a product.

A possible proxy of touch information in online environments could be the provision of a written description of the tactile sensations given by the contact with the product (McCabe and Nowlis, 2003; Peck and Childers, 2003a). In fact, online consumers only have descriptions and/or images of the desired item, but neither can compensate for actual touch. According to McCabe and Nowlis (2003), the likelihood of choice for products with tactile properties in in-store environments is greater compared to remote environments. However, if written descriptions in remote environments also take into account the tactile properties of a product, this can reduce consumers' uncertainty and favor their willingness to purchase. The research presented in this chapter aims to verify this assumption by considering the influence of different online sources of information when consumers do not have previous knowledge of the product or brand. To begin with, therefore, it is necessary to define which online sources may provide such additional tactile information in remote environments. This issue will be discussed in the next section.

TACTILE INFORMATION SOURCES IN ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS

The use of the Internet as an information source implies that the information related to a product can be mainly provided by two different kinds of sources (Bickart and Schindler, 2001): *institutional sources*, where the information is provided directly from the company (e.g., company website), and *informal sources*, where the information is provided directly from the users of a virtual community (e.g., third-party platforms hosting web-communities formed by peers). A company website is an impersonal source, where a producer or retailer provides promotional information, whereas a virtual community is a personal source, where groups of users interact without an economic purpose. Indeed, virtual communities represent self-selecting groups of individuals engaged in sustained computer-mediated interactions around common interests or goals, governed by shared norms and values, to serve individual and shared needs (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2002; Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo, 2004). Therefore, in online environments, both firm- and user-generated information is available in the form of product description produced by a company or given by users through opinions, comments or reviews, respectively. As a consequence, consumers can acquire tactile information about products they are interested in without having any direct tactile experience (McCabe and Nowlis, 2003).

Both marketers and academics have devoted considerable attention to virtual communities for several reasons: first, web-communities are able to positively influence consumers' willingness to buy through spreading "electronic" word of mouth information (i.e., eWOM – Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004); second, virtual communities can represent self-selected highly specialized target markets; third, most of the time they contain valuable sources of information about trends, preferences, and new product ideas (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Other possible effects of virtual communities are related to their social nature: they add interactivity to electronic storefronts, thereby making their goods more attractive to recreational shoppers (Lee, 2005), as well as serving as reference groups that can influence their members' shopping preferences (Zhou, Dai and Zhang, 2007).

The digital environments have provided several platforms for virtual communities, and therefore for the spread of eWOM, such as blogs, discussion forums, review websites and, more recently, social media websites (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). The latter (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) are relatively new eWOM platforms and have enabled users to communicate with their existing networks and exchange opinions and experiences about products or services with their friends (Chu and Choi, 2011; Chu and Kim, 2011). Previous research shows that eWOM information provided by web-communities, as a form of user-generated content, can influence consumer evaluations and product sales more than firm-generated content provided through company websites (e.g., Dhar and Chang 2009; Ghose and Ipeirotis, 2010). Indeed, several studies have provided evidence that information given by users is able to influence consumers buying decisions (e.g., Mudambi and Schuff, 2010; Punj, 2013) more than information provided by companies since it is perceived as more trustworthy and reliable.

This evidence would lead to believe that, in online environments, where consumers cannot examine a product through touch, a description of its tactile characteristics may be more effective in terms of consumer responses if it is provided by web-communities rather than company websites.

The next section will explicitly develop and present the research hypotheses that will be tested in the rest of this chapter.

THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

On the basis of the above-mentioned research, the authors argue that a description of the haptic sensations based on the direct experience of a product by the users of a web-community will increase consumers' willingness to buy the said product more than the same tactile information provided by a company website.

Since online reviews, opinions and comments mainly represent evaluations and experiences provided by peers through the form of online word-of-mouth (eWOM), that has been extensively shown to affect consumers' purchasing decisions (e.g., Godes et al., 2005), it is possible to expect that the tactile information provided by a web-community is better able to compensate for the absence of any direct examination of the material properties of a product than a company website (Bickart and Schindler, 2001), thus increasing consumers' willingness to buy. Formally:

H_1: Tactile information provided by a web-community (*vs*. a company website) increases consumers' willingness to buy the product.

The present research also maintains that such a relationship holds only when web-communities (*vs*. company websites) provide tactile information (i.e., material properties and haptic sensations related to the product), but not when tactile information is absent (i.e., only generic characteristics of the product are available). In online environments, the inability to experience tactile contact with a product can be compensated for by a written and /or visual description of the material properties and haptic sensations of the product (McCabe and Nowlis, 2003). When tactile information is present, the description provided by web-communities helps consumers to overcome their lack of tactile experience with the product more effectively than the same description provided by company websites. Indeed, the experience reported and shared by peers through community interaction and eWOM can replace more effectively any direct tactile experience unavailable to the consumer. This line of argument leads to predict that consumers will show a greater willingness to buy the product when tactile information based on the direct experience of the product is provided by the users of web-communities rather than producers or retailers through their websites. When tactile information is absent, the description of the product does not contain haptic information. In this case, no difference in willingness to buy the product between web-communities and company websites is to be expected, since this information is easy to evaluate online regardless of its source (De Figueiredo, 2000). Formally:

H_2: The positive relationship between a web-community (*vs.* a company website) and consumers' willingness to buy the product holds only when tactile information about the product is provided.

The following section will be devoted to the presentation of two experimental studies testing the research hypotheses.

STUDIES OVERVIEW

The authors conducted two experimental studies. Study 1 aims to test $H_{1,}$ by verifying that tactile information about a product provided by a web-community significantly increases consumers' willingness to buy that product compared to a company website. Two scenarios where a product (i.e., a comb) was described by a fictitious web-company *vs.* a fictitious fan page hosted by a social network (i.e., Instagram) were built.

Study 2 has several goals. The first goal consists in testing for H_2, according to which web-community information about a product increases consumers' willingness to buy only if it provides haptic descriptions, whereas no differences between the two information sources are expected when tactile information is absent. The second goal is to replicate the results of Study 1 by using another operationalization of web-community, namely a fictitious forum instead of a social network. The third goal aims to give more robustness to the results of Study 1, this time by using another product type (i.e., a keyring).

STUDY 1

Design

Study 1 was an online experiment aimed to test the direct effect of tactile information provided by a web-community (*vs*. a company website) on consumers' willingness to buy the product. Study 1 used a one-way (online information source: web-community *vs*. company website) between-subject design. One hundred and eight participants (68 females, $M_{age} = 34.78$, $SD = 12.85$) recruited through M-Turk were randomly exposed to a product (i.e., a comb) described by a fictitious e-commerce website *vs*. a fictitious page of a social network (i.e., Instagram). Specifically, participants were first asked to imagine that they had to buy a comb of a fictitious brand (i.e., Class) and, in order to get additional information about the product, they decided to read a product description. Then, depending on the condition, participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental scenarios: the description of the comb provided by the users of a fictitious Instagram page (i.e., "*Beauty_house_stuff*") or by the company website of the fictitious brand (i.e., Class; see Appendix). In each description, the same tactile information (e.g., weight, feel, etc.) was provided, along with an image of the product. Then, participants were asked to indicate their willingness to buy the product using a seven-point Likert scale (i.e., "Could you please indicate how likely is that you would buy the "Class" product in the previous screen?" 1 = Very Unlikely, 7 = Very Likely).

Participants were also administered a manipulation check of information source (i.e., "To what extent do you think that the description of the "Class" product was provided by …" 1= company; 7 = community users). Finally, participants were asked some demographic questions, such as age and gender, they were then thanked and compensated for their participation.

Analyses and Results

First, the authors ran a one-sample t-test to verify the manipulation success. The results confirmed that participants successfully perceived the proposed manipulation ($M_{instagram} = 4.45$; $SD = 1.59$; $M_{website} = 3.80$, $SD = 1.44$; $t(116) = 3.22$, $p = .00$). Then, in order to verify if the tactile information provided by users of a social network generates a higher consumers' willingness to buy the product compared to the same information provided by a company website, a one-way ANOVA was performed, considering the information source (web-community *vs*. company website) as independent variable and consumers' willingness to buy (WTB) as dependent variable.

The results confirmed that consumers were significantly more willing to buy the product if the tactile information was provided by the users of the social network rather than the company website ($M_{instagram}$ = 4.56, SD = 1.47; $M_{website}$ = 3.64, SD = 1.65; $F(1, 116) = 10.35$, $p = .00$). These results (see Figure 2) support H1, namely that tactile information provided by users of a web-community is more effective than the same information provided by a company website in determining consumers' willingness to buy.

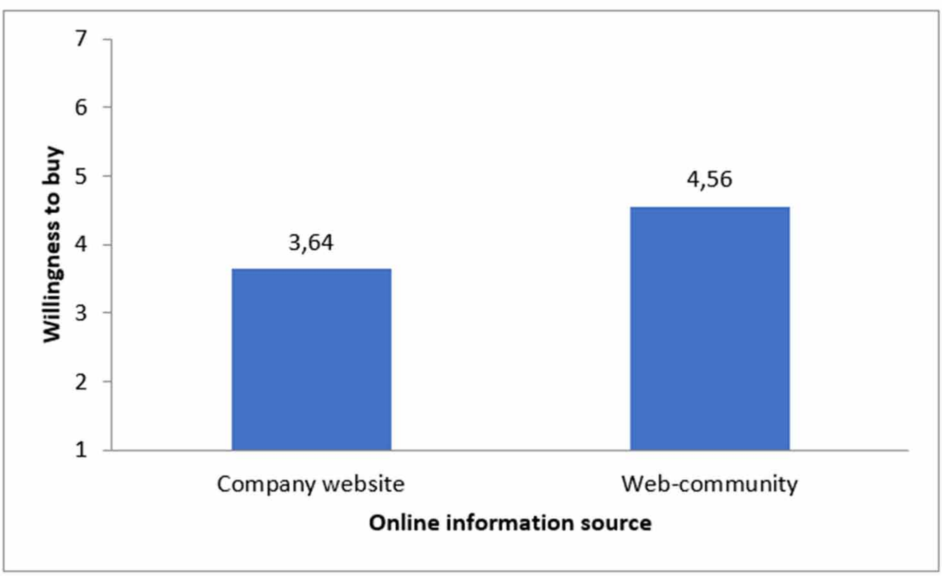
In order to extend these results, as well as to verify the proposed moderation effect of tactile information (present *vs*. absent), an additional study was administered.

STUDY 2

Design

The aim of Study 2 is threefold: first, in line with H_2, to verify the proposed moderation effect of touch information on the relationship between information source and consumers' willingness to buy; second, to replicate the results of Study 1 using a different form of web-community (i.e., a forum); third, to extend the results of Study 1 using a different product (i.e., a keyring). The adopted design was a 2 (online information source: web-community *vs*. company website) x 2 (touch information:

Figure 2. Graphical representation of results of Study 1



present *vs*. absent) between-subjects design. Ninety-six undergraduate students at a large European University (65 males, $M_{age} = 22.53$, $SD = 3.16$) voluntarily participated in a lab study in exchange for a credit-course bonus. Specifically, they were randomly assigned to one of four experimental scenarios[2]: the description of a keyring of a fictitious brand (i.e., Class) given by the users of a fictitious forum (i.e., *Look&Accessories*) or by the company website of a fictitious brand (i.e., Class), both descriptions providing the same tactile information about the keyring (e.g., weight, touch pleasantness); the description of a keyring of a fictitious brand (i.e., Class) given by the users of a fictitious forum (i.e., *Look&Accessories*) or by the company website of a fictitious brand (i.e., Class), but without providing any tactile information in either description. A picture of the product was also present in the four scenarios. Then, similarly to Study 1, participants were asked to indicate their willingness to buy the product using a seven-point Likert scale (i.e., "Could you please indicate how likely is that you would buy the "Class" product in the previous screen?" 1 = Very Unlikely, 7 = Very Likely).

Participants were also administered a manipulation check of information source (i.e., "To what extent do you think that the description of the "Class" product was provided by …" 1= company; 7 = community users). Finally, participants were asked some demographic questions, such as age and gender, then thanked for their participation.

Analyses and Results

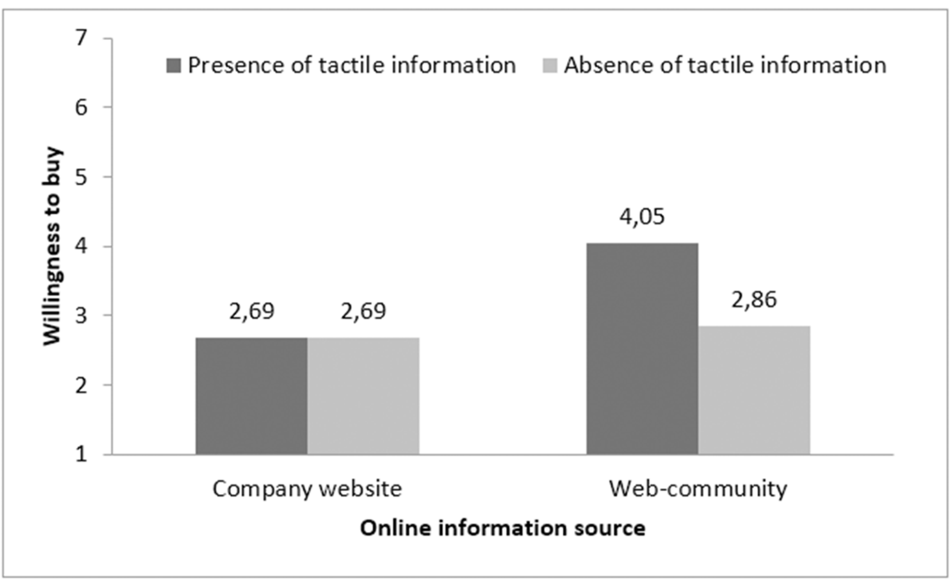
First, the authors ran a one-sample t-test to verify the source manipulation success. The results confirmed that participants successfully perceived the proposed manipulation ($M_{community} = 4.56$; $SD = 1.52$; $M_{website} = 2.63$, $SD = 1.63$; $t(93) = 5.89$, $p = .00$). Then, in order to verify the proposed moderation effect in H_2, a two-way ANOVA was performed using willingness to buy the product as dependent variable, information source (web-community *vs*. company website) as independent variable, and tactile information (present *vs*. absent) as moderator.

The results showed a significant direct effect of information source, demonstrating that information provided by web-communities is more effective than information provided by company websites ($M_{community} = 3.41$, SD = 1.50; $M_{website} = 2.69$, SD = 1.48; $F(1,92) = 6.55$, $p = .012$). The results also showed a significant main effect of tactile information, implying that the provision of haptic sensations increases consumers' willingness to buy the product ($M_{TouchInfo} = 3.23$, $SD = 1.60$; $M_{No\_Touch\_Info} = 2.77$, $SD = 1.42$; $F(1,92) = 3.92$, $p = .05$). More importantly, these main effects are qualified by an interaction effect between the information source and the touch information ($F(2, 92) = 3.95$; $p = .05$). Coherently with expectations, planned comparisons revealed that, when tactile information is present, consumers' willingness to buy is higher if this information is provided by a web-community rather than a company website ($M_{community\_TouchInfo}$ = 4.05*;* $M_{website\_Touch\_Info}$ = 2.69*;* $F(1,92)$ = 6.86, $p = .01$). However, when tactile information is absent (i.e., presence of only generic information), there is no significant difference in terms of willingness to buy the product between the two sources ($M_{community\_NoTouchInfo}$ = 2.86*;* $M_{website\_NoTouch\_Info}$ = 2.69*;* $F(1,92)$ = .00, $p = .99$). These results (see Figure 3) confirm the proposed conceptualization, according to which web-communities are more effective than company website in influencing consumers' willingness to buy a product sold online, but only if tactile information about the product is provided.

CONCLUSION

The research presented in this chapter contributes to a better understanding of a little studied field: namely, consumers dispositions (i.e., willingness to buy) toward products sold online when haptic compensational strategies providing haptic cues (e.g., written description of tactile information along with pictures of products) are used with the aim of compensating for touch absence in online environments. Specifically, this research underlines the differential influence of online sources of tactile information on consumers' willingness to buy by distinguishing between

Figure 3. Graphical representation of results of Study 2



institutional *vs*. informal sources of information. Moreover, the moderating role of touch information (present *vs*. absent) is investigated.

The results demonstrate how the kind of information source influences consumers' willingness to buy within the digital environment, where the inability to touch products is one of the main causes of uncertainty that hinders online shopping. The two experimental studies have shown that the presence of a description of the tactile characteristics of a product provided by a web-community generates a greater willingness to buy with respect to the same description provided by a company website (Study 1). Moreover, the relationship between the online information source and the consumer's willingness to buy is moderated by the type of information (Study 2). In fact, whereas opinions exchanged among peers on the tactile characteristics of a product are more likely to influence consumers' buying dispositions than a description of the same characteristics on a company website, the source of the information is unimportant in the absence of tactile information, since consumers are able to evaluate the generic characteristics of the product from the description provided.

The results of the presented research are important from both a theoretical and managerial perspective. From the theoretical perspective, this research contributes to a better understanding of the role of web-communities as an information source in terms of marketing effectiveness. According to previous consumer behavior studies, the presence of a description of material properties and tactile sensations related to the experience with the product within digital contexts can reduce consumer uncertainty and enhance evaluation of the product (McCabe and Nowlis, 2003). However, the literature does not clarify which information source is the most persuasive in determining willingness to buy, or whether the provision of tactile information is an influential factor. The results presented in this chapter help to clarify these issues, by finding a greater influence played by web-communities compared to e-commerce websites when information of tactile nature is provided. The greater effect of web-communities vis-à-vis company sites are in accordance with previous literature on e-WOM (Sussman and Siegel, 2003; Cheung et al., 2009), as the information provided by web-communities is perceived as more credible and reliable than that provided by websites.

The results of the research assume particular importance also from a managerial perspective, especially for emerging brands wishing to commercialize their products in the digital environment where consumers perceive a high level of uncertainty. These companies should be present in web-communities and social networks describing product tactile characteristics.

The increasing complexity of web-communities and, more in general, of online social networking services, such as brand pages on Facebook or Instagram, has enabled companies to transform the users from passive observers to active descriptors of the product and, in some cases, even to collaborators generating new ideas. Consumers are, therefore, becoming the authors of brand stories by sharing their experiences via social media, liking specific contents or posting personal opinions (Gensler et al., 2003). The availability of these powerful social networking tools makes it relatively easy to initiate conversations, gather and capture user-generated input rapidly from a large number of participants. In such a context, companies are generally required to introduce practices that stimulate and encourage customer participation both with respect to the brand and other customers (Carlson et al., 2019). Based on the first finding of the present chapter, it is important for companies to get involved, not only in providing the formal information via their websites, but also in participating to informal sources of information, such as web-communities and social networks. The second finding of this research is the importance of offering a description of the material properties of the products and the sensations that they generate rather than limiting the description of products to generic characteristics. The provision of such tactile information can be firstly concorded/negotiated with micro and macro influencers, then with pioneer users, or with the most active fans of the page in the attempt to reduce uncertainty and abolish the barrier, inherent in online shopping, that is to say the absence of touch.

The research presented in this chapter suffers from limitations that future research may want to address. First, this research considered two kinds of products of an unknown brand. Further studies may verify whether the proposed conceptualization could be extended to different types of products (e.g., search *vs*. experience) or different types of brands (e.g., mass brand *vs*. luxury brands). Second, the presented studies did not test the mechanism explaining the positive effect of web-communities providing tactile information on willingness to buy. Future research may want to model and measure the underlying mechanism based on e-WOM. Finally, the scenarios used in the experimental studies only presented descriptions of positive characteristics (both tactile and general) of the products being evaluated. Future research, focused on informal sources of information, could compare more balanced descriptions of products, in terms of their positive and negative aspects.

In spite of these limitations, the research presented in this chapter contributes to shed light and pave the way for further investigation on a phenomenon, the provision of tactile information by different sources of digital information, which is of key interest to both internet users and e-commerce companies.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Company Website: Institutional information source, where the product information is provided directly via Internet by the producer or retailer on its website.

Consumer Willingness to Buy: The behavioral intention of a consumer to buy a particular product.

e-WOM: Electronic word-of mouth; electronic version of interpersonal communication regarding products or services where the receiver regards the communicator as impartial.

Instagram: An online photo-sharing application and social network platform that allows users to edit and upload photos and short videos through a mobile app.

Need for Touch: Personal trait that defines the preference for the extraction and utilization of information obtained through the haptic system.

Touch Information: The provision of a written description of the material properties and tactile sensations given by the contact with the product.

Web-Communities: Informal information sources where the content is user-generated and whose members interact with each other primarily via the Internet.

ENDNOTES

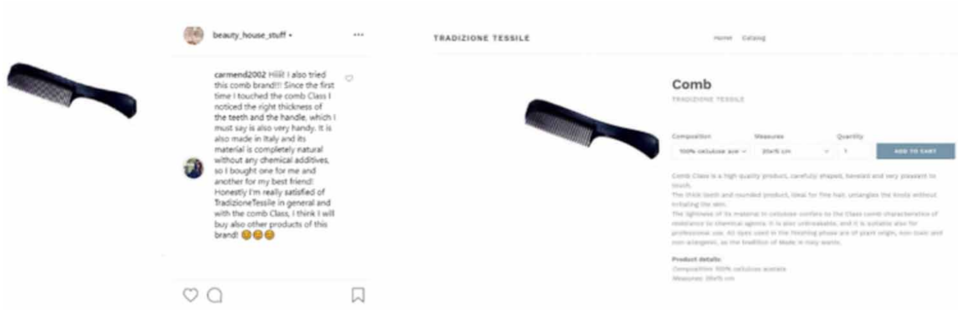
1 https://www.statista.com/topics/4381/online-reviews/

2 Scenarios are available upon request

APPENDIX

Scenarios used for Study 1

Figure 4.



Section 3
Other Experiences

Chapter 11
Sophisticated Segments of the Market:
Changes in Consumer Dynamics and Behaviors

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ABSTRACT

Certain industries have developed segments in which both consumers and businesses have attitudes, expectations, and behaviors that differ significantly from those of the industries they are part of. Some of these new dynamics include a heightened interest in quality and the concomitant development of entities and mechanisms designed to ensure certain standards, as well as an increased level of involvement of the consumer with the product. Consumers who show the various characteristics mentioned above are part of what may be considered sophisticated segments of the market. This chapter analyses the relevance of perception of quality, the importance of educating consumers, and the changes in levels of consumer engagement in these segments. The chapter also suggests theoretical and practical implications regarding marketing strategies, as well as some gaps of knowledge that further research might address.

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RECOGNIZING SOPHISTICATED SEGMENTS OF THE MARKET

Segmentation has been recognized for its role as an indispensable marketing function in the path towards business development. Successful brands and companies are able to define in detail the characteristic of the segment(s) they are trying to reach and serve. However, it has also been recognized that the segments might evolve and change; and certain relevant segments might emerge or disperse according to certain market circumstances (Carvalho, Paiva, & Vieira, 2016). This change and evolution may be accompanied by variations in certain behaviors observed among consumers. How these consumers relate to the products, companies, and brands also tends to undergo a transformation. Therefore, various roles and dynamics among these entities may also be subject to change.

Some industries have developed segments that differ significantly from those of the industries they are part of in the way consumers and businesses interact and behave. These new dynamics include a heightened interest in quality and the concomitant development of entities and mechanisms designed to ensure standards, as well as an increased level of consumer engagement with the product. Furthermore, the circumstances (*e.g.*, the brand's actions) likely to enhance this new level of consumer engagement are different from the level prior to these developments, possibly calling for distinct business and marketing strategies. Consumers who show the characteristics mentioned above are part of what may be termed *sophisticated segments* of the market.

A possible example of such an industry in the food and beverage category is coffee. Throughout this chapter, *coffee* refers to coffee in its final stages of the value chain, when it is made available to the consumer for personal consumption. This includes coffee sold in a cup and ready to drink, and ground coffee consumers buy to brew at home. Within this part of the industry, coffee has been commonly considered a mass consumption product. However, a segment has evolved in recent years implementing new business models requiring that companies analyze and build specific marketing strategies in response to parallel changes in consumer behavior. These changes include alternative schemes to trade coffee, as well as increasing numbers of consumers expecting higher quality coffee (Carvalho *et al.*, 2016). Some consumers who have been used to drinking instant coffee most of their lives may happen to be exposed to higher quality coffee and thus start their journey toward consumer sophistication. Certain global brands have been part of this evolution, and new brands have also been developing in response to this market need. For example, Nestlé group, which has had a long and successful history with Nescafé (its instant coffee brand), has recently launched its highly popular Nespresso brand, whose products are marketed as high quality. Some other brands have emerged, Blue Bottle Coffee, Sightglass Coffee, and Ritual Coffee Roasters, among others, particularly targeting this demanding and sophisticated new market. This type of brand has a special relationship with consumers. Such companies do not merely provide coffee in a cup to the consumer in their coffee shops; they also invite the consumer to buy their ground coffee beans and make their own brew at home, as part of a ritual. What's more, they dispense advice on the different ways of making coffee to bring out the best possible flavor. Buying ground coffee from this type of business thus involves a new type of consumer—one who has a distinctive relationship with the product category and the companies involved in it. Someone who brews supermarket-purchased, global brand coffee at home will have a different purchasing behavior than someone who goes to specialty shops and values a freshly roasted high-quality coffee bean.

How evolution is potentiated and how sophistication is developed differs from consumer to consumer. Moreover, the interaction with coffee brands and coffee shops may likewise be different. So too may be the consumer's desire to learn about coffee and the time he is prepared to invest in it. However, there is indeed a process of sophistication that entails a change in consumer behaviors and industry dynamics. Understanding this phenomenon is a first step in developing appropriate strategies for serving this consumer. Other food and beverage industries that have experienced this sophistication include wine and beer. The coffee, wine, and beer industries have in common the consumer's newly developed interest in higher quality, as well as business's increased interaction with the consumer in a way that shows a growing concern for educating tastes and enhancing product enjoyment. These product categories have been previously identified as high-specification due to their focus on satisfying the needs of one extreme end of the market where consumers have high expectations (Carvalho *et al.*, 2016). All three of these product categories (coffee, wine and beer) have also experienced a marked increase in the complexity of quality evaluation and perception (Arce Alvarado & Linnemann, 2010; Goldstein, Almenberg, Deber, & Emmerson, 2008; Verdú Jover, Lloréns Montes, & Fuentes Fuentes, 2004). This chapter will attempt to explore the implications of these industrial developments for three research areas: perception of quality, consumer engagement, and consumer education.

Distinguishing Sophistication from Luxury Markets

When attempting to understand sophisticated segments of the market, references to luxury consumption or comparisons with it are better avoided. Luxury markets cater to higher income consumers. There is a strong relationship between the consumption of these brands and the need to display status and wealth, or in some cases, a desire to achieve such wealth (Truong, McColl, & Kitchen, 2010). It is difficult to think of luxury consumption without evoking conspicuousness. Clothes, accessories, and jewelry offered by luxury markets are meant to be displayed in public. In contrast, when we speak of sophisticated segments of the market, the focus and motivation for consumption may be related more to pleasure and enhanced personal experience than to the mere purchase of a product in order to display status. Specialty coffee, as an example of a sophisticated market, is a product that is commonly enjoyed either in specialty coffee shops or at home, but its consumption and enjoyment is not always public. Such consumption is an intimate experience, more than the public consumption of luxury goods is likely to be.

One must keep in mind that while new consumption habits are observed in sophisticated markets, situational variables can play a highly relevant role in industries like coffee in shaping consumer behavior (Belk, 1975). For example, when pressed for time, a sophisticated consumer of specialty coffee may need to buy a cup in the nearest convenience store rather than at his preferred specialty coffee shop. However, *sophistication* as discussed in this chapter refers to the constant and repeated search for higher quality products and services. On the other hand, a consumer used to drinking instant coffee may indulge every once in a while in a higher quality coffee. This latter outcome may be the result of choosing this affordable luxury in the quest for status (Brun & Castelli, 2013) or in the search for a more hedonic experience for a special occasion (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). However, if this behavior only appears sporadically, the consumer is not considered sophisticated as the term is defined and analyzed in this chapter.

Changes in consumer behavior in sophisticated markets include a deeper awareness of quality, as well as a newfound need for information about this particular product that was not previously significant to that particular market. Hence, we can identify an additional difference with luxury markets, where consumers are usually more concerned about brand reputation and the perceived status that a product can convey about them than the quality of the product itself. Additionally, it would appear that a heightened interest in the value chain and in all the participants involved in that chain has become relevant to sophisticated segments of the market. Furthermore, engagement levels with the product category and with the brands within these sophisticated segments of the market have become distinct from, and higher than, those of other wider segments previously analyzed within this category. These circumstances and differentiated elements call for a deeper analysis of sophisticated segments. In order to subsequently analyze the interaction between consumers and other entities in the value chain (*e.g.*, specialty coffee shops), it is necessary to explore each of these segments independently, focusing on their behavior in sophisticated markets. For this purpose, quality, consumer education and engagement are explored in this chapter in light of recent research and their implication in the rise of sophisticated segments of the market.

This chapter thus attempts to present current findings, choosing certain constructs which, in the authors' opinion, are among those within which consumers show behaviors that are distinct from those usually observed in the mass consumption of products of a given category. Although the empirical findings are from the coffee industry, we believe that these may be generalized over several product categories not limited to food and beverages. However, due to the nature of this latter category, sensorial elements take on special relevance.

THE RELEVANCE OF CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF QUALITY

Within industries having undergone a sophistication process in their consumption patterns, perception of quality has been a recurring topic. However, how the consumer evaluates product quality and his develops his ability to identify higher levels of quality is still not clear. Perception of quality is a complex process that has been analyzed from many different angles and perspectives. Regardless of one's approach to understanding the perception of quality, it is commonly agreed that perceptual processes are indeed relevant for consumer behavior and have a significant impact on consumer decision-making. Therefore, contributions to the understanding of the consumer's perception of quality are highly relevant to business and the development of effective business strategies (Carvalho *et al.*, 2016). It is important to note that the measurement of perception of quality has been perceived as being a difficult task (Sulé Alonso, Paquin, & Lévy Mangin, 2003). The measurement of the perception of quality is a challenging endeavor, in part due to the manifold factors that can have an impact on it. Such factors can include consumer characteristics, educational processes, product characteristics, and consumer cultural context.

As suggested above, the coffee industry can be adduced as an example of an industry in which consumers in recent years have changed the way they assess quality. Apparently, as a result of this change, consumers are more interested in higher levels of quality, and the market has evolved in parallel with this (Carvalho *et al.*, 2016). For the coffee industry, there appears to be an increased interest in higher quality in these sophisticated segments of the market—but the consumer seems to be unable to differentiate levels of quality accurately (Ornelas & Vera, 2019).

It was interesting to observe whether differences in actual quality were perceived by consumers. It was of particular interest to do this research in a country that produces coffee the quality of which is recognized internationally; however, consumers were apparently used to drinking low-quality coffee due to cultural context (Ornelas & Vera, 2019). The Brunswik lens model (1955) has been helpful in sorting out the differences between perceived and objective quality. This model defines and analyzes an achievement index based on the respondent's accuracy in matching his or her own assessments with those based on previously established objective quality parameters. The potential gap between perceived quality and objective quality should be particularly interesting for businesses, since those businesses might be focusing on (objectively measured) quality attributes that consumers are unable to perceive. It is important to note that (perceived *vs* objective) quality is measured and compared in terms of attributes due to the strategic implications of being able to identify which particular characteristic of a given product has an impact on the perception or assessment of quality. Continuing with the coffee example, it might happen that consumers, when not properly educated in how to do so, might be unable to appreciate a certain attribute of quality such as *acidity*. Contrastingly, suppose it is easier for them to differentiate another attribute such as *aroma*. Therefore, coffee shops might need to look for spaces adequate in order to make the aroma more accessible and easily perceived by consumers. The use of attributes to assess quality makes it simpler for companies to address their efforts more efficiently.

Quality Attributes and Sophistication

The consumer's choice of which attributes to use, and the ability to use them accurately to assess quality levels may also be taken as an indication that distinctively sophisticated markets are present. The consumer is assumed to rely on extrinsic and intrinsic attributes to evaluate quality. Intrinsic attributes are those that denote a product's fundamental characteristics, whereas extrinsic attributes are those which, although part of the creation of a certain perception of a product or service such as price or brand name, are not part of the core product properties (Qasem, Baharun, & Yassin, 2016). It seems that for sophisticated markets the elements that become relevant for consumers in order to assess quality might be different than those that consumers value in luxury markets. Exclusive designer labels convey quality through elements like luxurious establishments and high prices; and consumers respond to these cues. Consumers of this type of products rarely stop to analyze the intrinsic characteristics and attributes of their luxury choices. On the contrary, the authors of this chapter believe quality within sophisticated segments of the market tends to be more focused on the characteristics of the products themselves, which might or not be further accompanied by a differentiated establishment or high prices.

Empirically, this has been tested for the coffee industry, in which professional cuppers assess quality in terms of attributes such as aroma, body, flavor and residual flavor—while in parallel, regular coffee consumers given a brief description of each attribute are asked to evaluate the same characteristics (Ornelas & Vera, 2019). The consumer's ability to match a professional cupper's assessment is called an achievement index, which is calculated as the correlation of the two measurements (Orquin, 2014). Additionally, this research included a moderator variable in order to explore if the variations on the achievement index might be due to the consumer's educational level. This was based on the hypothesis that a given consumer might have been exposed to a higher-quality coffee product due to the consumer's having a higher educational background which is usually found in conjunction with a certain lifestyle that might have made it possible. Therefore, the hypothesis stated that this interaction with higher quality products might lead him or her to the development of a better ability to discriminate this type of products from those of lower-quality ones. Previous research that had explored relationship between the achievement index and consumer's characteristics such as age or previous knowledge of a topic had proven to be significant (González-Vallejo & Lavins, 2016). However, educational level showed no evidence of being relevant for the consumer's achievement index for coffee, since it was found that people with basic education (high school) and people with high levels of education (post-graduate degrees) were found to be similarly unable to distinguish different levels of quality of coffee (Ornelas & Vera, 2019).

The findings of the coffee research showed that consumers were unable to match a professional cupper's assessment. A negative achievement index even showed that the best-evaluated coffees (an objective measurement) were the ones that consumers identified as being the worst. Based on these findings—findings which show that the consumer might not be able to identify higher-quality levels accurately—new questions arise around this interest in quality and about how the consumer can attempt to assess it more truthfully. Additional findings also show that the attributes of the product (*e.g.*, coffee) that a consumer considers to be more relevant (perceived quality), might not be the same than the ones that professional cuppers do (objective quality). This kind of comparison of attributes is usually difficult to perform in food products because there are no "objective parameters" with which a consumer's perception can be compared. It is only possible with certain products which have evolved in a way in which these characteristics are assessed by an objective entity who can deliver a score that evaluates the attributes related to quality. In the case of coffee, for example, it is up to the Specialty Coffee Association of America—the most widely recognized institution—to perform this activity; and their protocol for quality assessment is used all around the world. The possibility to have both an objective and a perceived quality assessment of the attributes of a certain product is one of the signs of an industry evolution that might eventually lead to its sophistication.

The notion of the relevance of the consumer's need to receive help in order to increase his or her ability to distinguish quality becomes relevant for research when one seeks to define the dynamics of industries such as coffee in its high-end market. The understanding of which entities or members of the value chain might be responsible for helping the consumer develop this ability becomes germane for both academia and practitioners. In order to understand the tools that might be helpful in this process and how a certain consumer might eventually be able to discriminate distinct levels of quality and some others might not, it is necessary to revise the concept of consumer education.

CONSUMER EDUCATION AND THE SOPHISTICATION OF A SEGMENT

The concept of consumer education that this section refers to is different from the educational level which was formerly used when referring to a potentially moderating variable used in an empirical test of a consumer's ability to differentiate quality. The educational level used in the work of Ornelas and Vera (2019) referred to scholarly instruction; and it was used to disaggregate consumers who had received a high school diploma from those who had received a bachelor and post-graduate degrees. The following section refers to consumer education—which is not related to scholarly instruction, but which instead refers to a different set of skills and strategies for making consumers more erudite in a topic related to a brand, product, or industry (Bell & Eisingerich, 2007).

Consumer education can be achieved by instructing and helping the consumer to develop the skills to use information; this has been identified as a strategic competitive effort since it contributes to the creation of value for the consumer (Burton, 2002). This is, in part, due to education being helpful in getting the consumer to realize the full potential of the products purchased. Additionally, higher quality products may be accompanied by increased enjoyment, and hedonic consumption may be intensified as the perception of tastes, aromas and visual cues is more accurately perceived by the sophisticated consumer (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). It is important to note that the term *education* must not be used interchangeably with the term *information*. Information is generic and is not concerned with giving consumers the actual ability to use what they learn; it is the mere dissemination of facts and data. In contrast, education goes beyond just giving the consumer information; it exceeds this threshold mainly by focusing on details relevant to the usefulness and practicality of the information.

Regarding the scope of the education that consumers might receive, there is a distinction between *firm-specific* education and *market-related* education. As the names suggest, the first one addresses the consumer's ability to understand, analyze, and evaluate a certain company's offerings—whereas the latter is concerned with giving the consumer the ability to analyze any product or service that might be available in the market (Bell & Eisingerich, 2007). Both types of consumer education can create value for customers; but their impact on further behavior is still being studied. Nonetheless, they both help in the creation of stronger firm-customer relationships, which has long been of concern for companies within most industries.

For sophisticated markets development, consumer education is crucial. As has been stated before, a focus on higher quality products and services only seems right if consumers are able to notice it. Therefore, educating consumers, giving them the tools to be able to differentiate among different levels of quality, constitutes a logical path towards this sophistication of the industry. This education might be both *firm-specific* and *market-related*, according to the company's and the industry's specific needs and choices.

It is commonly observed that consumer education has been receiving more attention in recent years due to the plethora of information available for almost every topic (*e.g.*, products and services). Although we have stated above that *information* is not *education*, it does make it possible for the consumer to become educated. Seminars, online courses, live sessions and customer video reviews are just some of the tools that consumers can easily access today. These can contribute significantly to their understanding of a certain industry, to their ability to recognize key elements for comparing alternatives and (ultimately) to choose the best ones for them. The access to this type of materials contributes to the development of more educated consumers, who can then contribute to the sophistication of an industry.

Having said this, consumer education can be key to the sophistication of an industry. However—in parallel with education—the industry, companies, and other entities should be able to provide and make education accessible and available for consumers. It is only when this two-sided awareness exists that sophistication might occur.

The coffee industry is useful for illustrating this situation. In recent years, together with a higher interest in topics such as fair trade and organic agriculture, the coffee industry also started to bestow a higher degree of attention to the process of getting coffee beans from the farm to the cup. This leads to higher quality coffee. It can now be accurate to place certain type of coffee into the high-specification product category. Within this category, products aim to satisfy the needs of a certain segment of the market—people who know in detail (in greater detail than other segments) what they want, and who expect more from the products they buy (Carvalho *et al.*, 2016). These expectations need to be translated into different types of communication along the value chain in which quality also starts to get noticed in a way that it had not been noticed before. For the coffee industry, for companies who were offering these high-quality coffee beans, this automatically created the need for them to educate consumers on the differences (fair trade, different harvesting techniques, different flavor in the cup, *etc.*) if they wanted to create a strategic advantage. Nowadays, it is relatively easy to find documentaries about this coffee transformation, from the planting and harvesting process all the way to consumers' enjoyment of the finest cups of coffee prepared by skilled baristas. Additionally, coffee shops who have established differentiation based on quality coffee beans also invest in consumer education by inviting them to cupping (tasting) seminars and—inside their establishments— explaining origin history, extraction methods, and home-brewing tips. This becomes a challenge for coffee shops, but it can also mean an attractive opportunity for creating more loyal customers willing to pay higher prices.

The role of consumer education achieves greater relevance when the consumer bestows higher importance on knowledge of the characteristics of a product; the differences among the alternatives that the industry has to offer; and how he or she can enjoy the product more. For sophisticated markets, retailers become the entities responsible for providing this type of education. Although the consumer may sometimes seek additional sources to educate himself, it is typically the final link in the value chain—*i.e.*, the retailer—who is expected to guide him.

Educating consumers can be considered as being a way of helping them get the best out of the products they buy—in order to create value for consumers. This also helps companies who participate in the education process build strong relationships with consumers (Suh, Greene, Israilov, & Rho, 2015). Conversely, they might also develop the tools to switch to competing products if they are now able to spot a better alternative (Bell & Eisingerich, 2007). Therefore, educating consumers can constitute a key strategic choice for companies as long as they can fully recognize the implications of targeting consumers who are able to appreciate the good things about their companies. Nonetheless, companies should also be aware of the risk of educating consumers and providing them with tools that might allow them to see the flaws in their products and services that others might not.

CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT: THE NEW CHALLENGES FOR RETAILERS

Consumers seem to be becoming more active participants with sophisticated products and businesses. This active participation might be analyzed using the concept of consumer engagement, which has been part of the marketing research conversation in recent years, since the term was first used in a business publication in 2001 (Applebaum, 2001). Engagement can be defined as the intensity of the participation and connection of a consumer with a certain offer—one which can be the offer of a product, service, brand, or activity (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011). Among other reasons, engagement has become relevant in marketing due to its expected impact on the way in which a consumer makes decisions and acts upon products and services (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). However, even if it has been noted as being a key aspect of consumer behavior, all the implications and the best ways to measure it and conceptualize it are still being studied. This is a current topic, both in academia and in the practitioner's world. Even if engagement can be measured using different tools, and even if its impact on diverse behaviors (*e.g.*, loyalty) might still need to be thoroughly understood, the significance and relevance of the construct for the marketing discipline is no longer questionable.

Engagement is particularly relevant for the thorough understanding of sophisticated segments of the market because, as stated before, consumers need education in order to make accurate quality assessment of the products. Consumers who are more engaged with a certain product category might be more willing to be educated; they might search for information more actively; and they might interact more intensely with firms and brands within the sophisticated segments of the market. Academics have proposed several definitions for consumer engagement. The authors of this chapter consider it useful to analyze it through a tridimensional perspective that considers conscious attention, enthused participation, and components of social connection (Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, & Morgan, 2014). The choice of this conceptual approach is in part due to the connection that can be made with other constructs such as consumer education. For instance, if we talk about higher conscious attention from the consumer towards a certain brand, product, or service, it would not be adventurous to say that they might be willing to learn about how these products are made or about the differences among the available alternatives. The authors of this chapter are currently conducting research designed to test how these dimensions change when different consumer education levels are present. Early results have shown the existence of significant relationships between education and engagement. If a certain consumer has been attending a coffee shop that displays audiovisual material explaining the coffee harvesting and roasting process, this might increase his or her interest in coffee and s/he might be willing to learn more about it. In time, it is possible that the consumer heightens his or her firm-specific or market-related education level regarding coffee. This, in turn, might lead him or her to become more engaged with this product category. This is relevant because this understanding might shed light on the impact of the contribution of retailers on consumer education, and what impact the foci of these actions may have on consumer engagement.

To add to the previous topical discussion, it is important to remember that engagement can occur at different levels. For instance, a given consumer might show a certain level of engagement towards a particular product category but, due to factors such as preference and/or experience, the level of engagement that the same consumer shows towards the different brands within this product category might be different. In the coffee industry, this multilevel assessment of engagement is also the subject to analysis within sophisticated segments of the market. For example, a certain non-sophisticated consumer might have a low- to mid-level of engagement with coffee as a category, but a high level of engagement with a certain specific brand (*e.g.*, Starbucks). For sophisticated consumers of coffee, they might present a very high level of engagement with coffee as a category and low- to mid-level engagement with the different brands of specialty coffee. This is relevant because it makes it possible for brands to make level of engagement an additional differentiator from its competitors. In order to be able to move towards this strategic path, it becomes mandatory to implement effective tools to measure engagement. Several efforts have been made on this matter (Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2015; Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2016; Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014; So, King, & Sparks, 2014; Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009; Vivek *et al.*, 2014). They are all valuable according to the type of context in which engagement is found and measurement is being sought. For the purpose of making a distinction between a certain product category and the brands within it and their respective levels of engagement, the one that Vivek *et al.* (2014) proposal is particularly useful due to its generalization ability. Using this scale, it is possible to ascertain a level of engagement towards a category and, using the same items with slight modification, to establish the level of engagement towards different brands. For example, an item such as "Anything related to ___ grabs my attention," can be modified to measure "Anything related to coffee grabs my attention" and also "Anything related to Nespresso grabs my attention." This example is one of Vivek's *et al.* (2014) scale belonging to the *conscious attention* dimension. The remaining two dimensions—*social connection* and *enthusiast participation*—include similarly structured sentences which allow the researcher to adapt the items to the different levels he or she wants to measure (*e.g.*, a product category and a brand within the category).

Engagement can even be considered as being a predictor of certain behaviors that have long been business goals, such as preference and loyalty; and research has been focusing on establishing this predictive ability (Vivek *et al.*, 2014). Nonetheless, further work needs to be done in order to fully understand the circumstances that can have an impact on both constructs. For example, suppose a consumer heightens his or her level of education regarding clothing by learning about materials, durability, environmental impact, social implications and so on. This may well contribute to a higher level of engagement of the consumer with the category. However, the effects on loyalty will only be observed for certain types of clothes and certain brands. However, other brands—which might have been preferred by the consumer when he or she was less educated in that category—risk losing that consumer's preference. Additionally, it remains imperative to empirically test the implications of the connections between both types of education and the three dimensions of engagement. It is possible, for example, that certain knowledge—knowledge that might have increased the consumer education level regarding a certain category—has an impact on the *conscious attention* dimension of engagement. In this case, consumers would be actively seeking to learn more, attend more events, and gather as much information as possible about the category and the brands within it. In other cases (possibly other product categories), consumer education might lead to an increased level in the *social connection* dimension of engagement. In this case, consumers would be looking for occasions to share their knowledge and to actively invite other people to increase their own educational level regarding a given product. These two scenarios pose interesting questions for research. For instance: In which cases is one dimension or another increased? Is the product category the only variable producing the change? Are the tools used by retailers (or any other member of the value chain) in the education process relevant to predict the effect on engagement?

The link between engagement and education and the relationship of the effects of these two elements on a consumer's ability to assess quality might contribute to the understanding of the sophistication process of the consumer. Within the coffee industry, particularly in sophisticated segments of the market, a certain consumer that receives information that contributes to his education regarding coffee (different origins; brewing methods; roasting levels; *etc.*) might become both more engaged with coffee and particularly with the coffee shop that educated him or her. If he becomes more engaged, he might be willing to participate in the coffee shop events, such as cupping seminars and/or brewing methods workshops. This, in time, will make him more capable of assessing quality levels of coffee more accurately. The link between engagement, education, and quality perception—in the case of coffee—becomes evident and highly relevant for defining strategic actions.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

Sophisticated industries—ones arising at the higher end of a market that had previously considered as being mass-oriented—present new dynamics. These dynamics require a deeper level of research in order for a fuller understanding of their implications, roles and characteristics to be achieved. Throughout this chapter, three relevant constructs (perception of quality, consumer education, and consumer engagement) have been explored. Relationships between these three concepts have been proposed—relationships which suggest that the consumer might experience a process towards sophistication. Nonetheless, as has previously been stated, more specific relations and effects should be tested empirically in order to understand the specifics of this evolution of the consumer.

Findings showing that perception of quality, although being a highly relevant construct, is still far from being fully understood and pose several opportunities for research. For instance, consumers that perceive better quality coffee as being of low quality might indicate not only the need for education on how to accurately assess quality, but also a cultural element that might be related to familiarity. This cultural influence might ultimately have an impact on quality perception. The relationship between other personal characteristics or contextual variables of the consumer and the achievement index might also show alternative paths for research. For example, would consumers from producing countries of coffee be more or less prone to learning about it? Would the engagement levels increase more rapidly due to the development of the industry in the country? Do certain personality traits encourage a person's ability to develop accuracy in perception of quality or his or her desire to develop this skill?

Consumer education is a highly relevant concept that has gained greater attention in today's world in which information and alternatives can become excessive. The need for helping consumer to be able to discern, evaluate, and understand their options becomes of great relevance and might even constitute a strategic focus for some companies. However, the scope, focus, tools, and the impact of consumer education still needs to be studied from diverse perspectives, according to the differences among industries, types of products, complexity of a given service, the rate of usage, and other elements that might be of relevance in the full understanding of this concept. The element of co-educating consumers seems to be a highly relevant element in the sophistication process. The specific activities, tools, and means in which education might be more effective in building certain desired outcomes (*e.g.*, accuracy in quality perception) is still a path for further research that might contribute to the understanding of these sophisticated segments of the market. For the coffee industry, for example, the effectiveness of sampling different types of coffee in coffee shops, inviting consumers to attend cupping seminars, or inviting them to visit farms might have a different impact on loyalty and engagement.

As has been mentioned, it seems to be a connection between education and engagement. Engagement has been previously established as being an antecedent of behaviors such as brand loyalty. Therefore, further research on engagement's antecedents, consequences, and effects—particularly within these sophisticated industries—would be appealing and necessary. Additionally, research on the distinct levels of engagement that a consumer might have towards different levels of a certain product/service might be beneficial for understanding how this behavior impacts within the industry's dynamics. For example, a high level of engagement with the coffee category (which might be a consequence of consumer education efforts) might result in a high level of engagement with brands like Nespresso or Blue Bottle Coffee, but it might also result in lower levels of engagement with brands such as Starbucks. Furthermore, the recognition of a potential link between education, engagement, and quality assessment abilities becomes pertinent for sophisticated segments of the market and the comprehension of the process of consumer sophistication. Additionally, these elements and the interactions among them represent a suitable approach for differentiating sophisticated segments of the market from other classifications such as luxury markets.

CONCLUDING NOTES FOR PRACTITIONERS

The relevance of recognizing and understanding sophisticated markets resides in its link to current discussions on the strategies needed to achieve and increase consumer behaviors such as engagement and loyalty, which have long been considered as desirable business goals. Companies have devoted considerable efforts and resources to keeping their customers loyal (Applebaum, 2001).

Perception of quality, in particular the gap between objective quality and perceived quality, becomes highly relevant to businesses for many reasons. While a company may dedicate resources to increasing certain quality attributes that they consider significant based on an objective assessment, the consumer may fail to perceive any such change. Conversely, the consumer may perceive quality in other product attributes altogether that the company may be overlooking. Studies have shown that even when the overall quality (as objectively measured) increases, the consumer may not be able to perceive it until many years after a change has been made (Mitra & Golder, 2006). This situation can lead to a waste of resources in some cases and to brand abandonment in other cases.

One of the issues regarding this need for education is to determine who bears the responsibility for this effort. The trend in specialized industries is for retailers (*e.g.*, coffee shops) to take charge of educating consumers. The reward can turn out to be, among other behaviors, higher levels of engagement with the shop—which ultimately, as has been tested, may lead to loyalty. This is due in part to consumers being able to get the best out of the products they buy and being able to choose the best alternative for them. However, this outcome entails a challenge for companies targeting educated consumers, mainly because the focus on providing high-quality products must be made all the more evident to such consumers and be communicated more effectively to them.

Additionally, as mentioned above, educating consumers can be a risky path to take. Therefore, the need for a thorough strategic analysis of how a company should implement its educational process—*e.g.*, what tools to use, or how close to the consumer the company should be—becomes germane to this *caveat*. Some industries and some types of products, due to their nature, require a distinct level of consumer education. Coffee consumers, for example—some more than others—, might appreciate education regarding brewing methods if their consumption is usually at home. In contrast, other coffee consumers who usually go to specialty shops may value education regarding the perception of quality, since this can enable them to choose the best coffee shop possible. In any event, the need for deeper research into consumer education and its role in sophisticated markets is manifest.

Regarding the relevance of the concept of engagement in these sophisticated industries, it is important to define the strategic actions that are likely to lead to an increase in the levels of this aspect of consumer behavior. Additionally, if within a sophisticated industry a connection between education and engagement can be established, the path towards an increase in the levels of engagement may turn out to be through the development of effective consumer education actions. Within the coffee industry, coffee shops should dedicate time and money to creating educational materials and events (*e.g*., brochures, audiovisual in-store displays, events, and seminars) and to inviting as many consumers as possible to these events to expose them to these materials. This investment, in return, can lead to more loyal consumers.

In sum, sophisticated markets call for a thorough analysis of relevant strategic actions and for acknowledgement of these markets' unique characteristics. Sophisticated consumers must not be misidentified in such a way that companies assume them to have the same behaviors as luxury consumers. As this chapter has attempted to show, the sophisticated consumer undergoes a process that leads to changes in certain behaviors (*e.g*., engagement) and outcomes (*e.g*., loyalty) that are relevant to companies in sophisticated markets. It must be noted that mass market consumers of a given specialty category product are different from sophisticated consumers of that product. Furthermore, luxury consumers have characteristics that distinguish them from the other two segments. If we take the apparel industry, luxury segments tend to be highly interested in brand names and reputation which are believed to display status and wealth when the products are worn. The quality of the piece of clothing becomes a secondary consideration. There is thus a clear distinction between mass markets (in the apparel industry) of consumers who buy clothes in supermarkets and department stores, and consumers who purchase clothes in designer label establishments. These segment characteristics and the reasons for them are distinct from the ones we find in sophisticated segments of the market. In the coffee industry, mass market consumers who purchase their beans or coffee in a cup in supermarkets and convenience stores are manifestly different from consumers who prefer specialty coffee shops. The difference is that the latter do not usually focus on the brand name of the specialty coffee, but on the quality of the beans, their origin, and the fairness of the value chain, among other concepts that have been nurtured thanks to higher levels of engagement with the product, usually enhanced by educational efforts. This is why, in the specialty coffee industry, it is common to find consumers who, when asked for their favorite coffee, state a preference for "lightly roasted Mexican coffee beans from Veracruz," instead of a particular brand. Another distinction is the relevance of price. Sophisticated segments of the market do not automatically relate higher pricing levels with higher quality, as luxury consumers tend to do. Excellent coffee beans from small producers can be found in certain communities at relatively low prices, while very expensive brands may not have the level of quality that a sophisticated and educated consumer will expect.

How communication is effected and the focus of investments made may vary according to different dynamics regarding industry actors (*i.e.*, entities in the value chain) as well as consumer behaviors. For sophisticated consumers of coffee, a greater focus on fair-trade practices, traceability, and local consumption is relevant. Tools that effectively communicate these elements become vital. Additionally, educational communication strategies can become more highly valued by consumers due to their need for improved understanding and greater knowledge of the products they buy.

The sophistication of industries can occur gradually or as the result of a specific event in the industry or in the market. The birth of a chain that boosts interest in coffee, repositioning the product as something more than just a morning beverage, started around 50 years ago and marked the development of the coffee industry as it is known today. However, regardless of the reason for the sophistication process or its speed, the developed market includes sophisticated consumers who respond in a way that is distinct from that of the rest, and whose behaviors may also be the consequences of different actions of the companies they interact with. Initial approaches to these new dynamics include increased interest in quality and the greater relevance of education. Today, such approaches are within the retailer's concerns, as well they should be.

This chapter has used the coffee industry as a means or as an exemplification of sophisticated segments of the market. However—due to the world's current circumstances that include a vast and varied availability of information; access to broader markets; and environmental and social concerns; among other factors—sophistication might be expected in several industries. Consumers are becoming more interested to know what they buy; and due to information technologies and worldwide communications, it is now easier for them to compare products (or brands) and make better choices. Nonetheless, this may not be true for the total of the market, but only for certain segments experiencing particular circumstances in the industry or having certain personal characteristics that lead them through this sophistication process. Among the food and beverage industry, sophistication might be present in products such as wine and spirits, beer, dairy products and farm products. Beyond this, it is also possible to think of sophistication in industries such as apparel—where segments may be more interested in knowing where their clothes come from, the materials they are made of, and how durable they might be instead of focusing on just brand names and reputation. Sophisticated segments of the market—and the changes in consumer behaviors and dynamics—represent an attractive path for research due to the potential of their occurrence in several industries. For practitioners, the possibility of not only reacting to the sophistication of the consumer but also motivating and actively implementing strategies to make their industry even more sophisticated could open up an interesting course of action to make businesses more profitable.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Consumer Education: The result of a consumer learning about a certain product and its proper consumption (characteristics, quality, performance, etc.).

Consumer Engagement: The level of emotional commitment, attraction and/or captivation of a consumer with a product/brand which results in attitudes and behaviors towards the product/brand.

Marketing Strategies: Specific plans and actions that companies perform in order to serve their target market in the best way possible in order to achieve certain business goals.

Perception of Quality: The way in which a consumer assesses the overall superiority or inferiority of a product/brand in contrast with their competitors or compared to certain standards.

Segmentation: The division of the market into smaller groups, identified by certain common needs and desires, which require distinct marketing efforts.

Sophisticated Industries: The result of the evolution of the market given certain contextual characteristics that include some consumer learnings and behavioral changes that involve a more complex consumption and the emergence of products and brands of higher quality.

Sophistication: The transition of a consumer from a mass market consumption to a more elaborated and differentiated consumption that involves a process of consumer learning. It also embeds the transition of a product/brand from targeting a mass market to acquiring the characteristics that sophisticated segments of the market require.

Chapter 12
Food Retail in the Rural Periphery Using the Example of Germany:
Identifying Success Factors

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ABSTRACT

Using a mixed-method approach, the author documents processes of decline in food retail on the spatial meso-scale of a northern German federal state and investigates the attitudes and patterns of demand of households dealing with the loss of local retail. Cluster and discriminant analysis are used to identify five relevant sub-groups, all of which are characterised by an ongoing discourse concerning the local retail structures. The five sub-groups define their (dis)interest in local retail using very different spatial, temporal, and substantial criteria. These criteria are drawn upon by local retailers to develop strength and weakness profiles and identify learning potential in an attempt to use innovative forms of niche marketing to better attract non-users or minimal users. Expert interviews with village shopkeepers and local producers of fresh goods indicate which solutions are being implemented to secure the commercial success of rural local retail in the long term and to distinguish such retail from the offerings of ubiquitous chains of supermarkets and discounters.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, it is possible to observe that the spatial distribution of food retail formats is becoming increasingly unequal in terms of sales area, quantitative range and quality of goods. This has led to the development of a multidisciplinary discourse on the emergence and consequences of food deserts, which involve the depletion of food supply structures and create disadvantaged population groups. The following paper builds on and reinterprets this approach, presenting food deserts not only as real and reified spaces with retail locations and patterns of distribution, but (also) as the result of mental structures and basic beliefs that contribute towards diverse retail formats being favoured or, indeed, certain formats being avoided even if they are the last local source of retail supply. The research is based on qualitative and quantitative empirical investigations in rural regions of the state of Schleswig-Holstein (Germany) which include residential households and shopkeepers. It is demonstrated that several of the village shops and local producers are focusing on the concept of a food oasis of ‘fresh’ products and are confirmed in this by selected customer clientele, rather than food deserts developing in this situation. Other consumers re-interpret local retail, looking beyond their place of residence and failing to use local supply structures to an extent that would enable local shops to survive as viable businesses. The aim here is to use psychographic segmentation to achieve a more complex picture of the preconditioning of customers towards retail formats than is possible using only traditional socio-demographic filters. From this, strengths and weaknesses in the learning and adaptation processes of local retailers are derived in an attempt to change the consolidated attitudes of their (non-)customers in the long-term.

BACKGROUND AND AIMS

Since the 1990s there has been a clear increase in research interest in the spatial inequality of food supplies and food retail formats, right down to the micro- and meso-scales. In the 1970s and 1980s the discussion focused rather on food insecurity, hunger, production, growth in the world’s population and declining natural resources, a discussion that adopted a global perspective and was primarily anchored in the global South (Maxwell, 1996). In contrast, in the global North and its so-called developed industrial and service societies, attention is increasingly directed towards country-wide, comprehensive, ‘fair’ and alternative supplies of food on the local scale (Wrigley, 2002; Bitto, Morton, Oakland, & Sand, 2003). In recent decades innovative retail formats like supermarkets, discounters, self-service department stores and shopping centres have spread globally (Reardon, Timmer, Barrett, &

Berdegué, 2003; Nandonde, & Kuada, 2018). These retail formats target customers with cars and focus on growth in floor space, diverse ranges of goods, quality of the shopping experience and the coupling of different retail, gastronomic and service offerings. The visible results of these developments are processes of displacement and depletion that particularly affect traditional, labour-intensive, owner-run and non-chain shops with limited floor space and underdeveloped technology, shops that are often close to residential areas and can be reached by foot. This is because the mobility patterns and retail demands of many customers have changed and there is no longer sufficient demand for convenience stores (Coca-Stefaniak, Hallsworth, Parker, Bainbridge, & Yuste, 2005). In Germany alone the number of businesses in food retail has declined by about 75% to 38,600 units within 50 years (1966-2013) (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015: 3).

Corresponding processes of retail depletion have been analysed by spatial scientists, regional planners and geographers in rural and occasionally in urban areas (Donkin, Dowler, Stevenson, & Turner, 1999; McEachern, & Warnaby, 2006; Paddison, & Calderwood, 2007; Bastian, & Napieralski, 2016). In the context of classical central place theory (Christaller, 1933), retail outlets with central supply functions are identified as places where economic and social services are bundled and thus express local quality of life, either as perceived by the local residents or as normatively defined by planning and policy. In the global North, demographic processes involving the shrinking and aging of the population and an increase in the proportion of single-person households exacerbate the situation (Sthienrapapayut, Moschis, & Mathur, 2018; Matsumoto, Igarashi, Suzuki, & Yamamoto-Mitani, 2019), making it even harder for traditional retailers to survive in competition with supermarkets and discounters with their superior operational logistics and economies of scale. Food-related lifestyles based on regionality, organic goods, and ethnic and ethical products cause further segmentation of demand in the food retail market (Hallsworth, 1991; Bahng, & Kincade, 2014; Witzling, & Shaw, 2019) so that a basic product range is seldom sufficient to guarantee the long-term commercial survival of a retail outlet. In addition, the population and thus number of potential customers are shrinking in certain regions: by 2019 migration and excess mortality in eastern Germany had caused the population here to decline to the level of 1905 (Rösel, 2019).

The effects of spatial and social marginalisation have also been described with reference to other European and North American regions, where facilities catering (not only) for food retail for particularly vulnerable (immobile, elderly, socially and economically poor) groups have deteriorated (Guy, & David, 2004; Gordon et al., 2011; McKenzie, 2014; Thibodeaux, 2016; Amcoff, 2017). On the other hand, it does not follow that the last remaining shops are actually utilised, indeed potential customers may have a range of reasons for avoiding them, such as a lack of loyalty to the retailer, perceived higher prices or insufficient product quality, a lack of parking spaces and an overly limited range of goods.

This led to the terminological conceptualisation and the development and consequences of so-called food deserts, which first became the subject of research in Anglo-American countries, later also in other areas (Mosammam, Sarrafi, Tavakoli, & Mosammam, 2017; Helbich, Schadenberg, Hagenauer, & Poelman, 2017). Food deserts are identified as geographical areas in which potential customers are unable to find sufficient supplies of fresh, healthy and affordable food within an acceptable distance by foot or by car and where residents may thus be subject to statistically significant health impairments. Especially in the USA, areal census data is used to correlate socio-demographic and socio-economic indicators on the household scale or patterns of ill health with local retail supply structures (Wilcox et al., 2018). Various authors have carried out accessibility studies that use Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to visualise the temporal and financial burden of food shopping (Russell, & Heidkamp, 2011; Horner, & Wood, 2014; McKenzie, 2014). Such representations form the basis of planning and policy interventions that support the establishment of supermarkets as local food oases (Bridle-Fitzpatrick, 2015) intended to provide a counterbalance to the ‘unhealthy’ product ranges of so-called convenience stores and their pre-packaged, prefabricated, take-away and fast food products.

Critical research counters this oversimplification: it is not only objective personal indicators such as age, gender, income, education or ethnicity that determine who shops where, when and how much but also subjective factors such as perceptions, attitudes and lifestyle concepts (Grunert, 1990 and 1993; Grzeskowiak, Sirgy, Foscht, & Swoboda, 2016). Thus socio-demographic customer segmentation may not be consistent with psychographic segmentation.

The latter issue has not thus far been tackled by the food desert dicussion. Medical and nutritional research on food deserts has not considered the diversity of customer perspectives or parameters influencing the commercial success of retailers and producers. Classical investigations of behavioural psychology have already demonstrated that different attitudes and perceptions can also be expressed in significantly different types of behaviour, even allowing the actions of psychographically segmented population groups to be statistically ‘predicted’ (Kraus, 1995; Maggioni, 2016). Marketing research in particular uses this predictive potential to investigate the compatibility of supply and demand groups (Seitz, 2015). This gives rise to the following questions for the present investigation, which aim to combine spatially relevant criteria as they manifest themselves in the development, size and extent of food deserts with mental structures and correlated customer behaviour:

Question 1: How can the conception of food deserts be extended beyond standards of facilities and accessibility to include the attitudes and perceptions of relevant groups?

Question 2: Does actual shopping behaviour reflect different attitudes and perceptions?

Question 3: To what extent are alternative retail formats other than supermarkets and discounters accepted by customers as providing food retail close to places of residence?

Question 4: What potential lessons and niches for retailers and producers of fresh goods can be derived from this, enabling them to win over those whose attitudes and shopping behaviour leads them to be non-customers or minimal customers?

Question 5: Who comprises the customer groups that are open to alternative local retail and those that are indifferent to such supply structures?

FOOD DESERTS: A CASE STUDY

Empirical and systematic investigations in the state of Schleswig-Holstein demonstrate the potential for transferring the food desert discussion to the German context. Here the focus is particularly on the infrastructural depletion of large and contiguous (often rural) regions that are affected by the current and pending impacts of demographic transformation, whether this is in the form of a loss of public (local transport, administration, schools), semi-public (building societies) or private services (gastronomy, retail, doctors' surgeries). This challenges fundamental concepts of quality of life and the basic consensus in planning concerning 'equivalent living conditions' in Germany. Structural data confirm the retreat of retail from the area, which paradoxically does not mean that retail space is shrinking throughout the country but rather that retail is becoming more concentrated and less equal on a small scale. It is primarily the supermarkets and discounters that profit from this development. They generally locate in population centres down to the size of rural central places, leaving the customer potential in the spaces between such locations to village shops – although the pulling-power of the large chains can deprive even these shops of the chance of survival. Convenience stores with their largely negative connoted range of goods as seen in the North American food desert discussion do not fill the supply gaps for regular food shopping in rural Germany, for instance in the form of kiosks or petrol station shops. It has become correspondingly time consuming in many parts of Germany to access (from the place of residence) a 'comprehensive' food shop. This is not to imply that the remaining village shops do not provide 'healthy' supplies (often working together with farm shops and selling their fresh products), but due to the limited range of their goods and a lack of customer loyalty they struggle to survive as viable businesses.

The unequal distribution of food retail outlets in the most northern of the German states can be seen in Table 1. The very small-scale administrative structure of 1,116 municipalities allows food retail facilities to be located and mapped close to places of residence and correlated with local population figures. Over 20% of the population in Schleswig-Holstein lives in municipalities that do not possess a single adequate food shop (anymore). An adequate food shop is defined as a walk-in, self-service shop with a basic range of non-perishable and fresh food products. In rural areas this is often a so-called small supermarket, seldom part of a chain, with less than 400 m^2 of retail space. There is no choice of different shops or retail formats linked to this definition. In 2018 more than five adequate food shops (including small shops) existed in only 3.2% of all municipalities (usually larger towns). Focusing on municipalities with more than five larger food shops, it can be seen that the proportion of municipalities with such a choice declined from 3.7% to 3% between 2012 and 2018. This implies a gradual decline in competition between suppliers and in alternative retail options for customers.

A number of rural municipalities in Schleswig-Holstein were selected for detailed empirical analysis, investigating whether food deserts exist here, if so for whom they exist, and where there are small-scale shops beyond the world of large supermarkets and discounters. At the time of the investigation, 2015-2017, all these municipalities were experiencing discourses concerned with the depletion, loss or reestablishment of local retail. The case studies are shown in Figure 1. Information was collected through the systematic inspection of local press reports (especially in the newspaper Schleswig-Holstein-Zeitung). The local discourses meant that sufficient support of empirical investigations could be expected from municipal institutions, retailers and private households. The population size of the case study municipalities varies between 350 and 2,000 residents. Only three case-study municipalities can be termed peri-urban due to their location near the city of Kiel (Probsteierhagen and Neuwittenbek) and near the medium-sized town of Rendsburg (Borgstedt). The location of all the other municipalities allows them to be described as rural and peripheral (10-15 minutes by car to larger central places). Figure 2 shows an example of the GIS-cartographical visualisation of the depletion of rural local retail. The depiction of travel time by car of up to five minutes and up to ten minutes from the supermarkets and discounters clearly shows the high travel time required for households to go food shopping from their place of residence in the municipality of Gülzow. The village shop in Gülzow was forced to close in 2017.

Table 1. Municipalities and proportion of population with active food retail outlets in Schleswig-Holstein; total number of municipalities = 1,116 (figures in %); population: 2,836,378

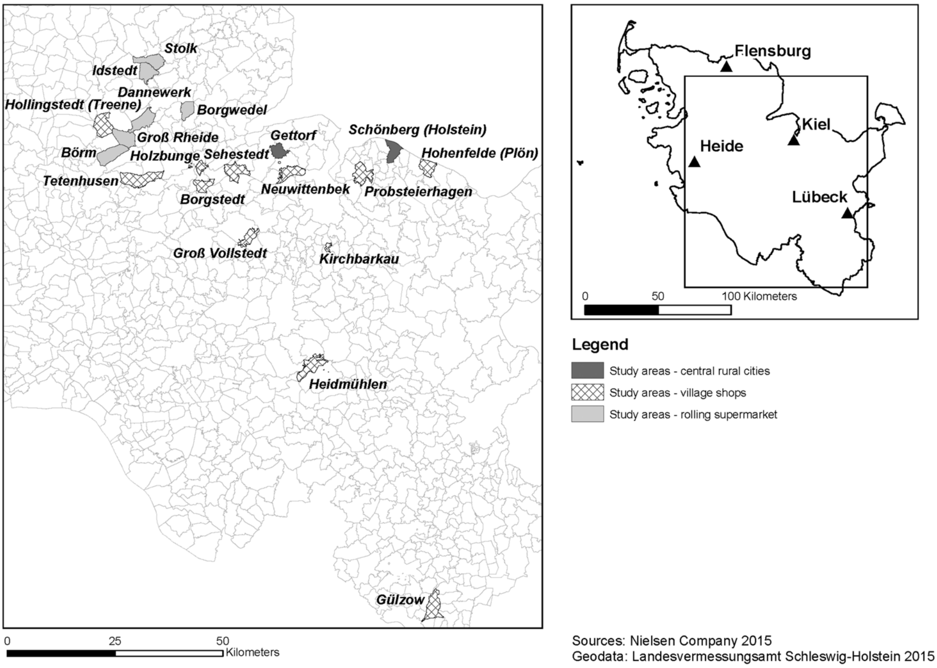
	2012	2015	2018
Number of municipalities with 0 supermarkets/large supermarkets/ discounters	890 (79.6)	887 (79.5)	890 (79.7)
Population affected	596,483 (21.0)	587,883 (20.7)	598,073 (21.1)
Number of municipalities with 0 small shops/supermarkets/large supermarkets/ discounters	NA	796 (71.3)	812 (72.8)
Population affected	NA	483,991 (17.1)	507,862 (17.9)
Number of municipalities with over 5 supermarkets/large supermarkets/ discounters	41 (3.7)	36 (3.2)	33 (3.0)
Population affected	1,409,983 (49.7)	1,326,739 (46.8)	1,295,684 (45.7)
Number of municipalities with over 5 small shops/supermarkets/large supermarkets/discounters	NA	40 (3.6)	36 (3.2)
Population affected	NA	1,355,411 (47.8)	1,312,981 (46.3)

Source: Data Nielsen Company, 2012, 2015, 2018. Small supermarket up to 399 m^2 retail space; supermarket 400-799 m^2 retail space; large supermarket 800-1499 m^2 retail space; all food discounters; basis demographic data, 2011 (Statistikamt Nord); bakers, butchers and other small formats are not included.

METHODOLOGY

The data is drawn from the author's surveys, conducted between 2015 and 2017 in rural municipalities and central places in Schleswig-Holstein. In several municipalities surveys were carried out more than once, other municipalities were later included in the sample due to the development of discussions on the closure of local shops. In a project funded by the German Research Foundation the municipalities serve as case studies for the identification of food deserts. These food deserts can, on the one hand, be captured as 'objective' bounded spaces based on 'acceptable' levels of accessibility (Figure 2). On the other hand, they can be understood in terms of 'subjective' patterns of attitudes through which conspicuous structures of use and shopping avoidance in the form of group-specific action spaces emerge. Overall three quantitative and anonymised survey campaigns were held. The questionnaire consisted of six pages and four sets of questions:

Figure 1. Research areas for rural local retail in the state of Schleswig-Holstein, 2015-2017

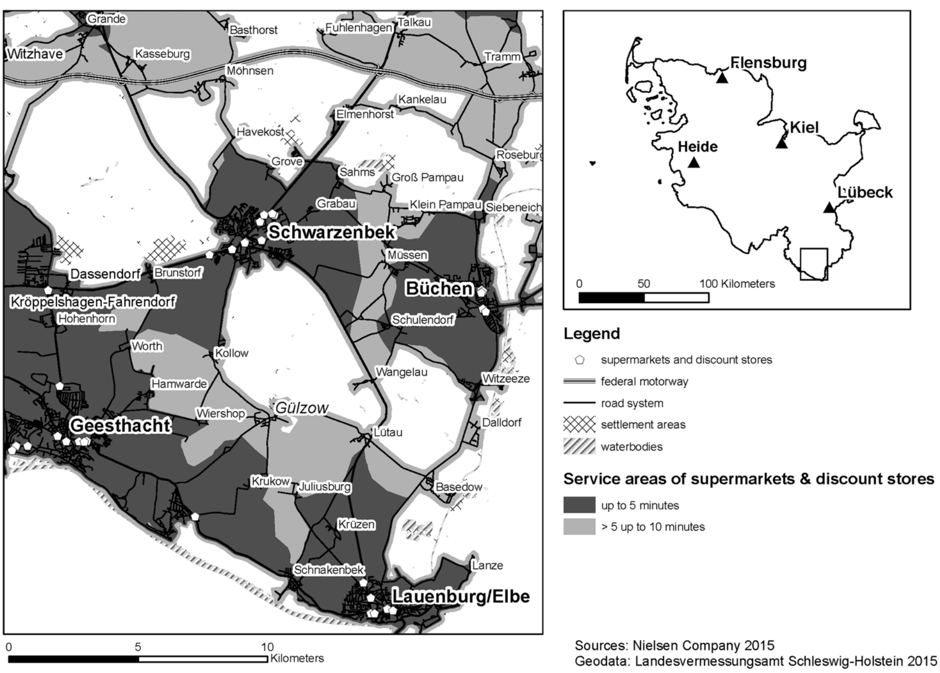


A. on the importance of different retail formats when purchasing food, approaches to food, the importance of services in the food retail sector, and the emotional significance of food shopping;
B. on accessibility, the point of origin (home, work) for food shopping trips, the locations of regular shopping,
C. on the specific local food retail facilities of the place of residence; and
D. on the socio-demographic structures of those surveyed and their households. The number of attitudes surveyed under Question A was limited to 40 to minimise refusals or incomplete sets of answers from those surveyed. The topic was supplemented by questions concerning shopping behaviour and geographical catchment areas so as to correlate shopping attitudes with factual and spatially relevant and variable behaviour.

The response rate of the postal questionnaire was c.20% with a total of 1,963 completed questionnaires suitable for evaluation. The questionnaires were distributed to all residential households with the help of local delivery agents and selected collection points were identified. This enabled the inclusion of customers of local retail outlets as well as non-customers. In several municipalities prize competitions were organised to offer material incentives in order to improve the return rate of the questionnaires. Information provided in local newspapers and consultation with the mayors were intended to make local residents aware of the survey in advance. All the municipalities were aggregated using cluster and discriminant analyses and evaluated with the help of the software SPSS23. The municipalities were aggregated because they experienced similar developments and discourses concerning food supplies and saving local shops. The specific contextual characteristics of the municipalities in the form of location, size, population structure or varying length of experience with local retail are not included in the statistical probability analysis. The sub-samples of the individual municipalities are too small for quantitative analysis. In several cases it would have been necessary here to conduct a full survey to achieve the necessary minimum size of sample (error rate 5%; N=384).

Semi-structured, dialogue-based **expert- and focus group discussions** were held using semi-standardised guidelines to allow developments and perception patterns to be more thoroughly and contextually investigated than is possible using

Figure 2. Service areas by car of supermarkets and discounters for the case-study municipality Gülzow
Source: author's draft; drawn up using ESRI-ArcGIS10.3



quantitative analysis. Expert interviews (in some cases more than once with the same person) were carried out with retailers and the producers of fresh products supplied to local food shops. Group discussions were held with residents from ten municipalities in order to analyse their understanding and support of local food retail and convenience shopping, their interest in food products and the attractiveness of supplies. All group discussions could be recorded as audio files and minutes were kept of diverse expert interviews.

Results: On the Demand Side

With the aid of a combined cluster (K-means-Cluster, pairwise deletion) and discriminant analysis 1,336 useable cases were divided into five significantly different groups of attitudes. 28 of 40 of the items surveyed were included in the calculation (see Table 6 as Appendix for a complete overview of the statements surveyed), because they have discriminant significance. 93.5% of the originally grouped cases were correctly classified. Wilks-Lambda values underlined the significance of the categorisation into groups. The interpretation and naming of the groups was drawn from a combination of sets of attitudes (see Table 7 as **Appendix**) and socio-demographic criteria, as seen in Table 2.

- **Group1=The Immobile (N=162):** Car use is less significant than average (Table 2). The importance of food shopping close to the place of residence is emphasised. In the self-assessments discounters and supermarkets are not viewed as being at the focus of food shopping. The group is older than average and influenced by retired people and the particularly old (75plus). In 17.6% of all households no car is available (anymore). The effective use of small retail alternatives for shopping is very high, 90.6%. This is reflected in the highest rates of weekly expenditure in village retail facilities.
- **Group2=The Alternatives (N=247):** Interest in food focuses on organic standards, personal service and enjoyment of shopping. Saving money is unimportant. Although cars are available to Alternatives, they use other forms of mobility like the bicycle to reach the shops they choose to frequent. Their interest in retail formats apart from chain supermarkets and discounters is reflected in above-average expenditure in village shops (Table 2).
- **Group3=The Price-Aware (N=253):** Of importance here are a focus on cheap prices and a great affinity for discounters and their product ranges. The customers are very car-oriented. Parking spaces are thus correspondingly important. The Price-Aware find considerable enjoyment and satisfaction in comparing prices and combining visits to supermarkets and discounters. The proportion of retired people is particularly high in this group. As committed

bargain-hunters or smart customers they spend little money in village shops (Table 2).

- **Group4=The Lacklustre (N=400):** Shopping by car is the only alternative. In the self-assessments neither travel by bicycle nor travel on foot plays a role. Shopping is viewed as a necessity rather than an enjoyable activity. Treating yourself when food shopping or particular requirements such as organic standards are valued less than average. It follows that the Lacklustre are those who on average shop least in village shops. The proportion of older individuals (75plus) is almost 10%, people who are still sufficiently mobile (by car) and whose sets of attitudes show that they remain alienated from small retail formats.
- **Group5=The Open-Minded (N=274):** These people understand how to combine using discounters and supermarkets with supplies from small formats such as butchers and bakers to satisfy their food shopping interests. Travel by car and bicycle and on foot are viewed as equally significant for shopping trips. The accessibility of retail locations is defined through proximity to the place of residence *and* to the place of work. In terms of disposition and use structures this group is more hybrid than the other clusters and makes space for a variety of retail formats.

Table 3 shows the significance of the selected attitudes concerning interest in food and food shopping behaviour. All the interviewees assess their cooking abilities extremely positively, and use this to justify their food shopping. There are large differences between the groups with regards to whether food shopping can be enjoyable or whether it is simply a necessary evil. It follows logically that the statements of the Alternatives and the Lacklustre are diametrically opposed to one another.

It is equally important for all the groups to have the possibility to access personnel, advice and service when food shopping, whether in personal discussions with village shopkeepers or at the fresh food counters in the supermarkets. Alternative retail formats to the stationary shops investigated here are completely insignificant in the research sample. Both online shopping and delivery services are evaluated on the Likert scale with minimal values (Table 3).

Quotes from the qualitative interviews with local residents reveal the range of problems and potentials related to local retail in rural areas. Problems deduced from the quotes numbered 1-7 in Table 4 are a) perceived high prices b) a lack of reliability in terms of stocks of products; c) estrangement between retailers and customers due to personal animosity, preventing the development of sustainable customer loyalty; d) insufficient product range and a lack of novelty in the shop; e) a lack of awareness among residents that prevents them from acknowledging the shop as ‘theirs’.

Table 2. Socio-demographic structures for discriminant groups

Criteria/group based on discriminant analysis	Group1 Immobile	Group2 Alternative	Group3 Price-aware	Group4 Lacklustre	Group5 Open-minded	Significance KruskalWallis 1	2
Age of interviewee (mean)	62.4	53.0	50.0	54.4	50.3	.000	.000
Age 75plus	23.0	3.3	6.8	9.6	4.4	.000	.000
No car in household	17.6	0.8	1,6	0.5	0.7	.000	.000
Uses small alternatives	90.6	73.1	50.2	52.7	68.9	.000	.083
Proportion of retired	47.8	22.3	38.6	28.6	20.5	.000	.000
Weekly expenditure at village retailers (euros)	47.24	37.00	25.35	23.52	32.46	.000	.000

Source: empirical dataset by author 2015-2017; 1: non-parametric chi-square test (test-by-test deletion); 2: non-parametric chi-square test (listwise deletion)

The potential of local retail is shown in quotes 8-11: a) convenience of access by bicycle or on foot; b) awareness of and satisfaction with the fact that local shops can only stock a limited range of goods; c) strong spatial tie to a local shop due to limited

Table 3. Attitudinal and usage criteria (means) related to food shopping in rural regions of the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein (Germany), 2015-2017, differentiated according to discriminant groups

Attitudes and usage criteria	Immobile (N=162)	Alternative (N=247)	Price-Aware (N=253)	Lacklustre (N=400)	Open-Minded (N=274)
I like to cook and buy the food for cooking.	4.3	4.6	4.5	4.2	4.5
Occasionally I would also like to treat myself when food shopping.	2.1	2.9	3.0	2.3	3.1
I can enjoy shopping for food.	2.8	3.8	3.4	2.5	3.0
Shopping for food is simply something I HAVE to do.	2.8	2.0	2.7	3.4	3.2
I also use other alternatives like online food shopping.	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.1
Being served/advised at a shop counter is important to me.	3.4	3.5	3.3	2.9	3.4
I also use other alternatives like a delivery service	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1

Source: empirical dataset by author, 2015-2017 (Likert scale 1=completely untrue to 5=completely true/ very often true) mobility resulting from old age or small children; d) the ambience and atmosphere of the shop, creating satisfaction and emotional ties to customers.

Results: The Supply Side

Interviews with retailers and the producers of local fresh goods make clear that they have insufficient knowledge about the socio-demographics and psychographics of their customers, only enough to satisfy commercial necessities. New shops are opened in rural areas with corresponding optimism and are welcomed and financially supported by municipal representatives and regional planners without consideration

Table 4. Positive and negative attitudes towards food shopping in local retail facilities in rural areas, municipality of Groß Vollstedt, federal state of Schleswig-Holstein (Germany)

Municipality	Groups	Statement	Quote No.
Groß Vollstedt	Middle-aged	If you personally have different expectations concerning brand, quality and price – then of course you perhaps have to shop elsewhere too	1
Groß Vollstedt	Younger	Sometimes they have stamps, sometimes not, then I don't go there anymore and don't ask anymore	2
Groß Vollstedt	Older	He can't let his personal frustration out on the customers – was so nasty that I didn't go there at all for 14 days	3
Borgstedt	Younger	There must be a broad range of goods – if I only get a small part then I don't go there	4
Groß Vollstedt	Younger	Local retail - never thought about it	5
Groß Vollstedt	Middle- aged	Shop is actually extremely important, that's not clear to other people or they don't care	6
Groß Vollstedt	Younger	Don't want to spend the day food shopping	7
Groß Vollstedt	Middle- aged	Reaching a local retailer on foot or by bicycle with little effort is super important	8
Groß Vollstedt	Middle- aged	In the countryside you know that you don't get everything	9
Groß Vollstedt	Younger	Since having a child, you are tied to a place differently, just more here on the spot	10
Borgstedt	Older	Shop with that little something extra – like how when I get to know someone, I like or don't like	11

Sources: group interviews conducted by the author with selected residents in the municipalities of Groß Vollstedt and Borgstedt in 2016; transcriptions from the digital audio recording; size of groups 3-5 people in semi-structured and open dialogue; older groups c.65plus; middle-aged groups c. 40-60; younger groups ca. 25-40.

of the problem posed by the fact that not all local residents living in the area are also local customers. Although the personal and social embeddedness of shopkeepers (local origins, social acceptance through patronage of local associations) is viewed as being important, it is not enough to foster acceptance among customers and thus to safeguard the basic supply structures of a municipality in the long term. Niche-like solutions must be found to ensure competitiveness within the car-based service areas of the large discounters and supermarket chains. Various ideas have been developed with this aim in mind (Table 5). However, such initiatives require repeated adjustment and recalibration because competitors, other types of businesses and customer demands (e.g. recently for local, fresh, fair and transparently produced goods) are subject to a constant process of transformation. Figure 3 shows a multifunctional village shop that combines food shopping with post office functions, lottery products and various other services in an attempt to act as an intersection point for differently motivated customer trips.

Marketing instruments used by commercially successful retailers in rural regions are summarised in Table 5. They target multi-sensorial marketing to appeal to all five senses (hearing, e.g. crispy bread; touch, e.g. high-quality packaging of glass and porcelain; taste, e.g. tasting opportunities; smell, e.g. the scent of baking bread;

Figure 3. An example of a multifunctional village shop in the municipality of Probsteierhagen

Figure 4. Retail atmosphere in a village shop in the municipality of Hollingstedt

sight, e.g. a wide range of fruit and vegetables), and thus present customers with an idealised, idyllic and compact range of typically local products. The notion of a rural idyll and the local origin of products are indicated by presenting goods in baskets, using materials made of wood and straw as seen in Figure 4, and through labelling. So-called product passports documenting the origin and ingredients of goods, and public tours of the premises are intended to convince customers of the transparency and trustworthiness of production and of product quality. Personalised communication via email-newsletters, subscription systems and doorstep delivery services have no equivalent in the more industrialised and anonymised retail-world of discounters and supermarkets. This individualisation is not, however, without its risks. Relationships between retailers and customers based on sensibility, personal ties and friendship may, for instance, be threatened by a customer not purchasing a particular product: ‘We want to be sure that they know what they are buying’ (interview with Gunda Sierck, Dairy Geestfrisch, 15.04.2016). The attitudes and convictions of customers involve understanding and identifying with the product range (‘The customers could of course buy their things somewhere else’: interview with Claudia Laparose, village shop in Neuwittenbek, 16.08.2017), making it clear that neither the Price-Aware nor the Lacklustre groups (Table 3) are core customers.

Table 5. Retailers and producers searching for innovative ideas, Schleswig-Holstein

Criterion	Implementation
Price	● 'I wait until they [the customers] come' – 'they want us' ● 'Special' products and quality at premium prices
Product	● 'Real' organic products (Demeter) from an organic wholesaler ● Additional products like liqueurs, jam, biscuits ('I'll treat myself for once') ● Box of vegetables – 'you have to just be up for it', recipe ideas ● Labelling with '*Feinheimisch*' ('fine and local') signifying at least 60% regional products ● Product passports (what comes from where?)
Presentation	● 'Rural' atmosphere with straw baskets ● Farmers' market designs – colourful, natural, 'honest' ● Nostalgic designs
Communication	● Communication preferably across the counter (plus Facebook, email-newsletters) ● Flyers in everyone's letterboxes, local newspaper reports ● 'Communication' about opening hours (e.g. parents using the shop while the children are at local sports sessions) ● Word-of-mouth propaganda
Production	● Order-based production – no excess quantities ● Our own recipes, our own grains 'the customer knows who made it' ● Traditional ovens ('back-to-roots')
Service/trust	● Special requests, order service, mobile selling on people's doorsteps ● Subscription system ● Reliability/commitment: 'we always come' ● Develop transparency and a trusting relationship with customers ● Special agreements (monthly billing, money from a neighbour etc) ● Open days – tours of premises ● Social meeting place (café service) ● Taste in keeping with childhood memories ● Out-of-hours sales via a so-called bread cupboard
Cooperation	● Shelves of products in other shops (training of staff) ● Networks with other farm shops and traditional producers

Source: expert interviews conducted by the author in 2016 and 2017 using the example of two village shops (municipalities of Neuwittenbek and Hollingstedt), an organic bakery (municipality of Passade) and a dairy (town of Kropp)

In addition to the Immobile and locally rooted individuals, the groups to be targeted are rather the Alternatives and the Open-Minded (Table 3).

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Retail location planning is usually based on socio-demographic filters and distances, while municipal planning often focuses on the wishes of residents (Would you use the shop?). Expert interviews with local mayors and reports by retail location planners confirm this practice dilemma. However, conducting a psychographic survey of residents (Question 5) before opening a shop has proved much more useful in determining whether it will find broad acceptance, and also provides information on sets of attitudes that can be used to develop innovative approaches to distinguish the new shop from other retail formats, allowing a supplier niche to be utilised (Question 1). This approach makes preparation for retail planning more complicated but the risk of failed plans (the shop is unsuccessful or is only in demand among small niche groups) is reduced. This applies both to regions where there is objectively no shop left open at all and the establishment of a new retail outlet is thus relevant, and also to village shops fighting to survive. The results show that:

- A basic range of food stuffs is not sufficient for small shops to survive in competition with discounters and supermarkets. The latter generally have 1,000-3,000 m^2 of retail space and a product range encompassing several 1,000 articles. The shops investigated here are between 50 m^2 and 400 m^2 in size and in some cases stock considerably less than 1,000 articles. Small shops therefore need to occupy distinctive niches in terms of product range, quality standards, designations of origin and services (Table 5) (also see Jussila, Lotvonen, & Tykkyläinen, 1992; Broadbridge, & Calderwood, 2002; Clarke, & Banga, 2010).
- A product range niche must appeal to the Zeitgeist of potential customers. This is confirmed by the expert interviews with best-practice examples in the research area (Table 5) and the high levels of interest of the so-called Alternative Customers (Table 2) in small-scale shops. Enlightened and ethically oriented customers inquire increasingly often about the production of goods (Brinkley, 2017). They demand transparent, sustainable and fair production conditions, local products and short distance goods transport, and ask about climate impacts, working conditions and the protection of animals and the environment in the production chain. The best-practice examples presented here utilise so-called product passports that document the ingredients of the final product and their origins. Open Days for local residents offer an opportunity to see behind the scenes and observe production and sales. This discourse is widespread in Germany and has helped fuel dramatic growth in the organic and fair trade segment of fresh goods, even in discounters, as demonstrated by the relevant internet presences of discounters like Aldi and Lidl which are familiar throughout Europe. In contrast to anonymous shopping in large stores, small shops (in rural areas) can also gain a competitive edge through the personal touch of the retailer and staff. This is enhanced by cafes acting as meeting places and social events such as the lunch offers provided by the village shops investigated here.

- Cooperation between village shops and direct producers and farm shops helps to extend the product range of local and fresh products and attract attention with very specialised products (Question 4). This mixture of cooperation and competition (co-opetition) benefits both the small shops and the local direct producers and farm shops that often suffer from a lack of visibility (Steiner, & Atterton, 2015). Networks of such establishments can be built up through personal communication, quality commitment and special agreements on commissioning (Table 5). In one case study a small village shop of about 50 m^2 in size offers goods from six local producers to create a fresh food oasis (meat, organic vegetables, milk, baked goods, conventionally grown fruits and eggs).
- The retailers must accept that it will not be possible to attract all local clients (Sullivan, & Savitt, 1997; Scarpello, Poland, Lambert, & Wakeman, 2009). The aim should rather be to gain the long-term loyalty of committed customers with high purchasing power through a small-shop concept that embraces sales, product range and social aspects. The results of the surveys of residential households demonstrate that the actual utilisation of small retail formats varies between 50% and 90% in the different attitudinal groups (Question 2 and 3).
- Many non-customers lack sensitivity for the characteristics and consequences of demographic change, which need to be repeatedly highlighted in local politics. The quotes from residents (Table 4) clearly reveal that a fairly significant proportion of the local population have no interest in the topic of local retail and have adapted to the lack of retail, in some cases by changing their spatial focus. Ageing in place implies that in the future, current non-customers will be restricted in their physical mobility by ageing and will themselves require local retail options.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

3D-GIS analyses can graphically combine locations *and* their retail spaces with one another. This allows the visualisation not only of areal gaps, but also of the varied magnet effect of differently sized stores on one another and product variety. Such representations tend to be concentrated within the field of landscape ecology, while a lack of technical expertise and areal datasets means they are rather underrepresented in the social sciences. However, a more extensive, funnel-shaped representation of undersupplied areas, highlighting the crises, is certainly possible (Chen, & Clark, 2013). Other work already integrates opening hours (afternoon closing, Sunday opening etc) in GIS analyses in order to identify the existence of food deserts that become active at particular times (Widener, & Shannon, 2014).

The analysis of food deserts requires long-term observation. Only then is it possible to show whether the spatial depletion of neighbourhood supplies (not only in rural regions) is increasing, which retail formats and population groups are affected, and whether particular interventions (the construction or opening of new shops) can change sets of attitudes. Supermarkets and food discounters continue to increase their retail space, negatively impacting on smaller retail formats (Jürgens, 2018). Stronger regional planning regulation is required here; development requests from such stores should no longer be dealt with autonomously by individual (small) municipalities.

Discussion of food deserts requires not only a broad mix of qualitative and quantitative methods like focus groups and expert interviews, GIS analyses and household surveys. It also needs to take a multi-actor approach. The success or failure of shops must be understood by considering the commercial or marketing perspective of the retailers, behavioural analyses of customers and non-customers, *and* governance structures that use policy principles, regulations and planning guidelines to influence the behaviour of both the supply and demand sides.

It is unclear whether the effects of further technological development may actually promote customer acceptance of small shops or, on the contrary, finally exclude them from the market completely. Such developments include new types of delivery service involving collection points or automated air drones, and growth in the online ordering of food stuffs via smart phone and virtual shops using touchscreens (Grewal, Roggeveen, & Nordfält, 2017). Several of these developments are still largely unknown in Germany or have only been established as a relevant pattern of demand in selected metropolitan regions.

CONCLUSION

The investigation used a mixed-method approach to combine attitudes and behaviour on the demand side with marketing responses on the supply side. A large proportion of the local population in rural areas does not make sufficient use of its neighbourhood shops. There is therefore a danger that such shops will be forced to close, depriving residents interested in local retail, or indeed dependent on it due to physical immobility, of the opportunity to shop close to home. The latter group may then suffer from food deserts because they will have to invest considerably more effort, both in time and money, to reach shops which they do not actually want to use. For other groups nothing will change, at least initially, because they shop in the discounters and supermarkets located in regional centres. It remains unclear whether the closing of a village shop impacts negatively on the quality of life of residents or at what point a supply gap of this sort starts to be negatively perceived. The effects of ageing in place and the growth of single-person households are heightening the importance of discussions about local shopping facilities in rural areas, not only in Germany. However, many households still see no reason to enter into such a shopping experiment. They thus contribute towards creating food desert experiences for vulnerable population groups because local shops are forced to close due to a lack of commercial viability. This aspect of the situation has not yet been considered in the food desert discourse, dominated as it is by Anglo-American authors. On the other hand, best practice examples on the supply side show that retailers want to better understand their customers. The retailers are aware that they are best able to appeal to and retain customers who are convinced by their products and whose attitudes mean that fresh local (organic) products are important features of their lifestyles.

LIMITATIONS

The data for the GIS analysis are subject to restrictions with regards to their completeness and the exact definition of types of shops. In the household surveys younger residents under 40 are clearly underrepresented. This applies to all the surveys from 2015 to 2017. The forming of clusters of attitudes is inevitably based on the 40 criteria surveyed, which are neither exhaustive nor are they weighted in comparison with one another.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Accessibility: The spatial and temporal effort required to reach a place. Accessibility can vary with changes in speeds, forms of mobility (car, bicycle, on foot) and landscape (e.g., slopes, mountains) and can be graphically depicted as catchment areas using Geographical Information Systems.

Convenience Store: Usually a retail format with limited floor space, such as a kiosk, a petrol station shop, railway station shop or neighbourhood store, which attracts customers due to its convenience and accessibility, both temporally speaking and in terms of transport, and its limited product range.

Discount Store: Retail chain format with a limited product range, aggressive price-based marketing, few service features and a self-service set-up. Particularly successful in the food retail sector; Aldi and Lidl are the most well-known globally active companies from Germany.

Food Desert: A residential area characterised by the depletion, increasing monotony or complete loss of food retail facilities. This is linked to sustained deterioration in the product range. 'Objective' food deserts can be contrasted with 'subjective' food deserts in which people, due to a lack of information or interest, fail to make sufficient use of local retail, placing a question mark on the viability of these retail offerings.

Food-Related Lifestyle: A concept that links interest in and demand for food goods with psychographic attitudes and perceptions.

Geographical Information System (GIS): Software for the computer-aided processing and cartographic representation of large amounts of data.

Schleswig-Holstein: The most northern state of the Federal Republic of Germany with extremely rural settlement structures.

Supermarket: A retail format with a broad range of branded food articles, characterised by a self-service set-up with, usually, counters for serving fresh products like meat, cheese and bread.

Village Shop: A retail format in rural areas that should safeguard local food supplies but is fighting for survival following years of intense commercial pressure arising from competition with chains of discounters and supermarkets.

APPENDIX

Table 6. Criteria surveyed in rural municipalities 2015-2017

Satisfaction with and judgements about food shopping	Scale				
	I strongly disagree	I disagree	I neither agree nor disagree	I agree	I strongly agree
1. I shop in a discount store (Aldi, Lidl, Penny).	1	2	3	4	5
2. I shop in a supermarket (Edeka, Sky, Rewe).	1	2	3	4	5
3. The choice of products in a discount store is enough for me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The choice of products in a supermarket is enough for me.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I combine food shopping in discount stores and supermarkets.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am a patron (regular customer) in my supermarket or discount store.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I always buy everything in **one** shop of my choice.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I choose the shop that is closest to home.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I choose the shop that is closest to my place of work.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I would like the shop to be easily accessible by car.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I would like the shop to be easily accessible on foot.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I would like the shop to be easily accessible by bicycle.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I would like the shop to be easily accessible by bus.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I would like many different shops nearby so I can compare products and prices.	1	2	3	4	5
15. When shopping for food the price is especially important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I like to cook and buy the food for cooking.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Branded (food) products are especially important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I don't care about brands at all, the main thing is to get the right quality.	1	2	3	4	5
19. A large choice of food is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Fresh products are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Organic products are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5

continued on following page

Table 6. Continued

Satisfaction with and judgements about food shopping	Scale				
	I strongly disagree	I disagree	I neither agree nor disagree	I agree	I strongly agree
22. Being served/advised at a shop counter is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I come primarily for the special offers.	1	2	3	4	5
24. If I can save a bit again, then especially with food.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I want to be able to buy non-groceries too (e.g. textiles, computers, books, gardening articles)	1	2	3	4	5
26. I also come because of the more convenient parking.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I like to make use of the longer opening times.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I come because I feel comfortable in the shop.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I go shopping on a fixed schedule.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I like to buy food spontaneously.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Occasionally I would also like to treat myself when food shopping.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I can enjoy shopping for food.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Shopping for food is simply something I HAVE to do.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I like to go shopping in the bakery ‘round the corner’ (a traditional baker’s shop).	1	2	3	4	5
35. I like to go shopping in the butchers (a traditional butcher’s shop) ‘round the corner’.	1	2	3	4	5
36. I also use other alternatives like online food shopping.	1	2	3	4	5
37. I also use other alternatives like a mobile supermarket.	1	2	3	4	5
38. I also use other alternatives like a farm shop.	1	2	3	4	5
39. I also use other alternatives like the weekly market.	1	2	3	4	5
40. I also use other alternatives like a delivery service e.g. from Rewe, Sky, Edeka.	1	2	3	4	5

Table 7. Discriminant Groups by set of relevant attitudes (mean)

Criteria	Immobile	Alternative	Price-aware	Lacklustre	Open-minded
Q15 price important	2,6	**1,9**	**4,1**	3,1	2,9
Q12 bicycle	3,2	3,3	3,5	**1,8**	**3,7**
Fr1 discount store	**2,7**	3,0	**4,4**	4,0	4,1
Q10 car	**2,6**	4,0	**4,5**	4,4	4,4
Q35 butcher	3,6	3,3	2,5	2,5	**4,0**
Q32 enjoy	2,8	**3,8**	3,4	**2,5**	3,0
Q38 farm shop	1,9	**3,3**	1,9	**1,7**	2,5
Q14 comparison	**1,7**	2,2	**4,0**	2,6	2,7
Q11 by foot	3,5	3,0	3,4	**1,8**	**3,7**
Q24 saving money	1,9	**1,4**	**3,2**	2,2	2,1
Q8 closest to home	**3,8**	2,8	3,4	2,9	3,7
Q9 closest to place of work	**1,6**	2,2	2,6	2,3	**3,0**
Q39 weekly market	2,1	**3,4**	2,4	**2,1**	3,1
Q3 choice discount store	2,4	2,0	**3,7**	3,2	3,1
Q26 parking	**2,0**	2,8	**3,9**	3,6	3,5
Q6 regular customer	**2,7**	3,7	4,1	4,1	4,0
Q31 treat myself	**2,1**	2,9	3,0	2,3	**3,1**
Q25 nonfood	2,1	**2,0**	3,4	2,5	2,3
Q34 bakery	3,7	4,1	3,3	3,1	**4,4**
Q5 combine food shopping	**2,6**	3,1	**4,3**	4,0	4,3
Q27 opening times	**1,9**	2,6	**3,4**	2,7	2,6
Q2 supermarket	**3,0**	4,0	3,9	4,0	**4,1**
Q21 organic products	3,0	**4,1**	2,5	**2,5**	2,9
Q33 have to do	2,8	**2,0**	2,7	**3,4**	3,2
Q23 special offers	2,1	**1,9**	**3,6**	2,5	2,4
Q30 spontaneously	2,8	3,4	3,4	2,5	3,3
Q22 service	3,4	**3,5**	3,3	2,9	3,4
Q4 choice supermarket	3,3	3,4	4,1	3,9	4,1

Source: empirical dataset by author, 2015-2017 (Likert scale 1=completely untrue to 5=completely true/ very often true) (mean data)

Chapter 13
Consumer Emotions Research in Luxury Contexts in Emerging Economies

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this chapter is to focus on the emotional experience in luxury contexts in emerging economies. Consumer research literature currently lacks studies of consumer emotions in emerging economies, except for some relevant studies of emerging consumption in China. This chapter reports a systematic literature review of luxury and consumer emotions aiming at mapping the main trends of research on this topic. The results show that the predominant type of methodology in these studies is mainly quantitative versus qualitative and mixed. The studies consider various antecedents of emotions, environmental stimuli, such as familiarity with the brand, the physical aspect of the product, among others, and non-environmental stimuli such as quality of service, product quality, among others. The contexts of studies of consumer emotions are presented. Finally, the authors also identify the studies undertaken in emerging economies.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of luxury has changed a lot over the last decades before it refers to smaller things like wine, cars, clothes and watches. (Srinivasan, Srivastava, & Bhanot, 2015). Luxury is a generic way of describing products, services or lifestyles and its conceptualization also depends on issues related to the consumer experience. (Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2007). Luxury goods have an excellent reputation for being of good quality, rare, unique and expensive, so these characteristics illustrate functional, symbolic or experimental values in the perceptions of owners (Srinivasan et al., 2015).

Consumer behaviour is a continuous process, not only of what happens when a consumer delivers money or a credit card and in turn, receives some good or service (Solomon, 2016). A buying process starts when the consumer feels a need to have something. This process has some steps before, during and after the purchase of some good or service (Secco, Oliveira, & Amorim, 2014). Kotler and Keller (2006) concluded that several factors influence purchasing behaviour, such as cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. According to the authors, culture is the primary determinant of the response and desires of the person, so that, as the child grows, acquires values, perceptions, preferences and behaviours specific to his family and other institutions. Social factors are related to family, status, friends, among other means in society (Secco et al., 2014). Personal factors refer to age and stage in the life cycle, occupation, economic circumstances, personality, self-image, lifestyle and values (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Psychological factors refer to the understanding of human behaviour, analyzing its consumption needs (Secco et al., 2014). In the luxury context, these factors gain enormous importance and are sometimes difficult to understand at different levels.

Consumer research literature currently has few studies about consumer emotions in emerging economies, except for some studies in China, such as the research of Osburg (2013), Dong and Tian (2009), Joy et al. (2018), and Tian and Dong (2010). A detailed discussion of consumer sentiments in consumer culture theory is similarly absent (Gopaldas, 2014). Also, we have to state that emotional responses have been considered an influential antecedent to consumer assessment, mainly related to hedonic products. (Kim, Park, Lee, & Choi, 2016), as luxury products. Hence, our main objective for this proposed chapter is to focus on the emotional experience in luxury contexts on emerging economies.

To do so, the research objectives are fourfold. The first research objective is to understand the evolution of consumer emotions research on both levels: theoretical and empirical. Secondly, to identify the main academic background of consumer emotions (in a luxury context), and the different theoretical proposals that have been studied. The third research objective refers to analyze the luxury contexts that have considered consumer emotions. Last, but not the least, to identify the studies that have been published about luxury contexts in emerging economies.

Research Protocol and Methods

The review protocol was formulated as follows: the keywords used were “luxury” and “consumer emotions”; for the period under study, all articles that were published online until July 2019 enter on the analysis; the research was carried out in two databases, Scopus and Web of Science. This search was limited to peer-reviewed contributions. In the Scopus database 95 documents were identified (articles and book chapters); subsequently, the research areas were limited to “Management”, “Business”, and “Accounting and Social Sciences”, thus reducing the research sample to 64 documents.

Through the research on the Web of Science database, it was possible to identify 56 documents; the research areas were limited to “Management”, “Business” and “Applied Psychology”, which has reduced the research sample to 30 papers. The final sample has 94 documents, from which 17 papers were excluded, 11 because they were duplicated and six because the full-text was not available. The remaining 77 articles were analyzed. After that, 34 documents were eliminated because they were not related to the theme of consumer emotions in the luxury context. A total of 43 studies were retained for the systematic review, as shown in table 1 and figure 1, respectively.

BACKGROUND

The concept of luxury is considered to be dynamic, being a notion that changes according to each society and time, so that the different contexts experienced in each culture have imposed a constant redefinition of the universe of luxury (Bezerra, Arruda, & Merlo, 2017). However, the lack of consensus on the concept of luxury remains. According to Dogan-Sudas, Kara, and Cabuk (2019), in previous studies, there is a lack of consensus among scholars when defining luxury.

In this study, the authors follow the perspective of marketing professionals, who consider luxury all those products and services that provide prestige to consumers. On the other hand, understanding how consumers in a wide variety of countries can conceptualize luxury differently is an important starting point and a relevant consideration in forming a definition of luxury brands (Ko, Costello, & Taylor, 2019). The reasons that lead people to consume luxury products, whether for self-expression, ostentation or self-assertion, are somehow related to emotions linked to luxury experiences (Makkar & Yap, 2018).

Table 1. List of reviewed studies on consumer emotions in luxury contexts

Nº	Author	Context	Country	Type of research	Sample size
1	Akgün et al. (2017)	Restaurant	Turkey	Quantitative	612 Consumers
2	Amatulli et al. (2012)	Outsourced Luxury vs. Internalised Luxury	n/a	Conceptual	n/a
3	Bezerra et al. (2017)	Affordable luxury	Brazil	Quantitative	319 Consumers
4	Braun et al. (2016)	n/a	USA	Qualitative	167
5	Brun et al. (2018)	Luxury yachts	Italy	Qualitative	8 Companies
6	Casidy et al. (2018)	Hotel	USA	Quantitative	376
7	Catry (2007)	n/a	n/a	Conceptual	n/a
8	Chaudhuri (1998)	Perceived risk	USA	Quantitative	146 Product
9	Cho et al. (2017)	Stores	USA	Quantitative	218 Consumers
10	Diemer et al. (2013)	n/a	n/a	Conceptual	n/a
11	Diener et al. (2010)	Happiness associated with higher income	132 Country	Quantitative	136.839
12	Godey et al. (2009)	Stores	France	Quantitative	132
13	Jinjin (2017)	Luxury cruises	China	Conceptual	n/a
14	Joy et al. (2018)	Clothing and accessories	Hong Kong and China	Qualitative	45
15	Hartono and Chuan (2011)	4 and 5 star luxury hotels	Singapore and Indonesia	Mixed	100 Tourists
16	Hartono et al. (2012)	Luxury Hotel	Indonesia, Japan, and Singapore	Quantitative	425
17	Hartono (2012)	Luxury Hotel	Indonesia	Quantitative	181
18	Huang and Chen (2016)	Service failure	n/a	Qualitative	
19	Hyun and Kang (2014)	Luxury restaurant	USA	Quantitative	379 Consumers
20	Ki et al. (2017)	Repurchase	USA	Quantitative	521
21	Kim et al. (2016)	Stores	South Korea	Quantitative	298
22	Kozub et al. (2014)	Hotel	USA	Mixed	18
23	Lassus et al. (2014)	Stores	France	Qualitative	53
24	Lin et al. (2010)	Consumer preferences	n/a	Quantitative	82 Consumers
25	Lunardo and Mouangue (2019)	Stores	France and UK	Quantitative	353
26	Lo (2012)	Hotel	Hong Kong	Qualitative	17
27	Makkar et al. (2018)	Discreet luxury	United Arab Emirates	Qualitative	10 Consumers

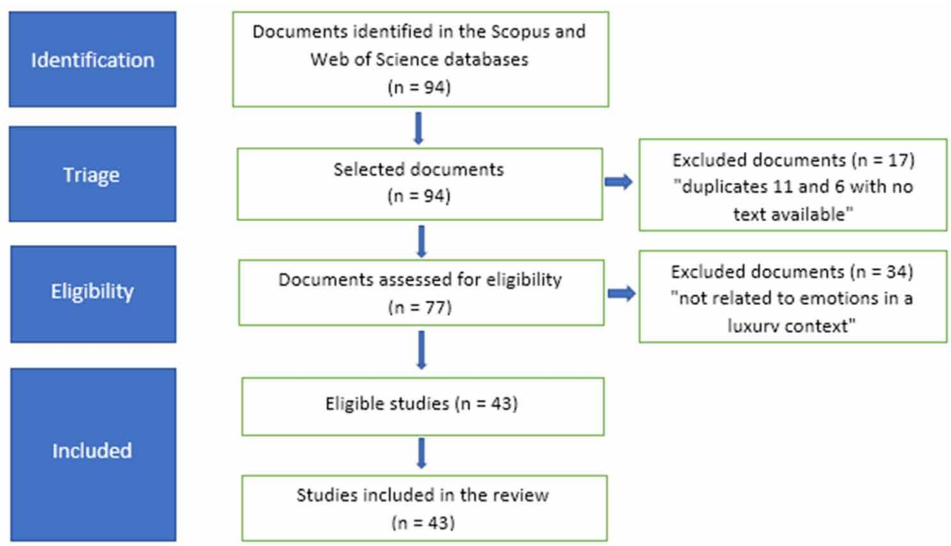
continued on following page

Table 1. Continued

Nº	Author	Context	Country	Type of research	Sample size
28	Manthiou et al. (2017)	Luxury cruise	USA	Quantitative	300 Passengers
29	Marticotte and Arcand (2017)	Counterfeit Luxury	n/a	Quantitative	420 Consumers
30	McFerran et al. (2014)	Discreet luxury	Canada	Quantitative	535
31	McIntosh (2015)	Education and emotions	n/a	Conceptual	n/a
32	Orth et al. (2019)	Luxury counterfeiting	n/a	Quantitative	356
33	Peng and Chen (2015)	Restaurants	Hong Kong	Mixed	238 Consumers
34	Peng and Chen (2018)	Hotels	Thailand	Quantitative	450 Consumers
35	Peng and Hung (2015)	Restaurants	Thailand	Mixed	310
36	Penz and Stöttinger (2012)	Luxury counterfeiting	A small EU country	Qualitative	8 Groups
37	Petersen et al. (2018)	Indulgent purchase	n/a	Qualitative	719
38	Silverstein and Fiske (2003)	n/a	n/a	Conceptual	n/a
39	Suwanamas et al. (2015)	Five-star hotel	Thailand	Quantitative	425
40	Suwanamas et al. (2015)	Hotel	n/a	Quantitative	
41	Wang et al. (2010)	Motivation for the purchase of luxury goods	China.	Quantitative	473 Consumers.
42	Zampetakis (2014)	Counterfeit Luxury	Greece	Quantitative	312 Consumers
43	Zhao and Zhao (2018)	Car in Shanghai	China	Quantitative	1.389

Recent studies incorporate consumer experience as a relevant attribute for luxury products (Bezerra et al., 2017). By using or merely displaying them, luxury brands meet the psychological needs of consumers (Hennigs, Wiedmann, Schmidt, Langner, & Wüstefeld, 2013). The world of luxury offers quality and excitement (Catry, 2007), and emotion refers to a complex set of interactions that lead to an emotional experience (Dubé & Menon, 2000). In addition, emotion is a pre-reflective state of consciousness that involves the whole person. It expresses the perspective of the person in life, based on goals and values, defining how that person positions himself in the world and assesses what is right for them in that world (Illouz, 2009). According to the conceptual theory of the act, emotions arise when the physical sensations in the self and the physical actions in others are significantly linked to situations during a process that can be called both cognitive and perceptual (creating emotional experiences and emotional perceptions, respectively) (Barrett, 2014). The theory establishes two levels of consumer emotions, namely: positive emotions

Figure 1. Flowchart for review of the literature on consumer emotions in luxury contexts.
Source: Adapted from Prayang et al. (2019).



(contentment, happiness, love and pride) and negative emotions (anger, fear, sadness, shame and aversion) as a basic level and 49 specific emotions as a secondary level are significantly related to consumer satisfaction (Akgün, Keskin, & Alan, 2017). However, positive emotions are seen as pleasant and negative emotions as unpleasant.

Previous studies suggest that the way emotions and consumption are linked is explained more by the distinction between background emotions and situational emotions (Joy, Belk, Wang, & Sherry, 2018). According to Illouz (2009), background emotions such as boredom and disappointment are replaced by new feelings of excitement through consumption. Since change and excitement are structurally incorporated into the consumer culture, boredom not caused by change becomes culturally relevant, thus further generating consumption (Joy et al., 2018). Emotions and feelings are prominent during product interaction and service meeting (Hartono, Chuan, & Peacock, 2012). In consumer research, emotions are studied as critical components of attitudes and are seen as influencing consumer choices and preferences (Penz & Stottinger, 2011). Generally, decisions that are based on emotions are perceived as highly valid, are challenging to change, and are not controllable (Penz & Stottinger, 2011). Consequently, previous research has shown that emotions are strong predictors of consumer behaviour (Peng & Chen, 2015). However, few studies of consumer behaviour were found in emerging markets. Emerging markets are increasingly open to luxury brands (Krupka, Ozretic-dosen, & Previsic, 2014), and in these markets, luxury brands are available to a wide range of consumers like never before (Hennigs et al., 2013). However, it is essential to understand the motivations of consumers to buy luxury brands in these countries (Montanari, Rodrigues, Giraldi, & Neves, 2018).

Evolution of Consumer Emotions Research at a Theoretical and Empirical Level

Studies of consumer emotions in luxury goods have been developed using different methodologies. Table 1 illustrates the types of studies carried out. Results show that of the studies analysed, 85.71% are empirical compared to 14.28% theoretical, as shown in Figure 2. In what concerns empirical studies, 63.88% are quantitative, (for example, Akgün et al., 2017; Bezerra et al., 2017; Hyun & Kang, 2014; Zhao & Zhao, 2018) 25% are qualitative (e.g. Braun et al., 2016; Joy et al., 2018; Petersen et al., 2018) and 11.11% are mixed (e.g., Chen, et al., 2015; Kozub et al., 2014; Hartono & Chuan, 2011) according to Figure 3. There is a predominance of quantitative empirical studies over mixed and qualitative empirical ones.

Regarding the periods in which the studies were published, as shown in Figure 4 and Table 2, most of the articles, i.e. 62.79%, were published in the period from 2011 to 2017. From 2018 to 2019, 20.93% of the studies were published. The remaining 11.62% and 4.65% of the papers were published from 2005 to 2010 and 1998 to 2004 respectively. However, recently there has been an upward trend in publications on the subject.

In terms of the number of publications in, the most frequently published are the Journal of Business Research and the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services with three editions each. The International Journal of Research in Marketing, Journal for Global Business Advancement, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management and Marketing Intelligence and Planning follow with two publications. The other journals have only one publication, according to table 2 and figure 5.

Background of Emotions in the Context of Luxury

Previous studies generally considered environmental and non-environmental stimuli to be the antecedents of emotions. The studies found several environmental stimuli with greater emphasis on decoration and artefacts; environmental conditions (temperature, lighting, noise, music, and aroma) and spatial arrangement (Hyun & Kang 2014; Kim et al., 2016). The non-environmental stimuli considered were, the quality of service (Peng & Chen 2015; Suwanamas et al., 2015; Hortano et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2016; Hyun & Kang, 2014), product quality, price and local (Hyun & Kang 2014). Mehrabian-Russell's (1974) theory suggests that environmental

Figure 2. Empirical studies vs. theoretical studies (%)

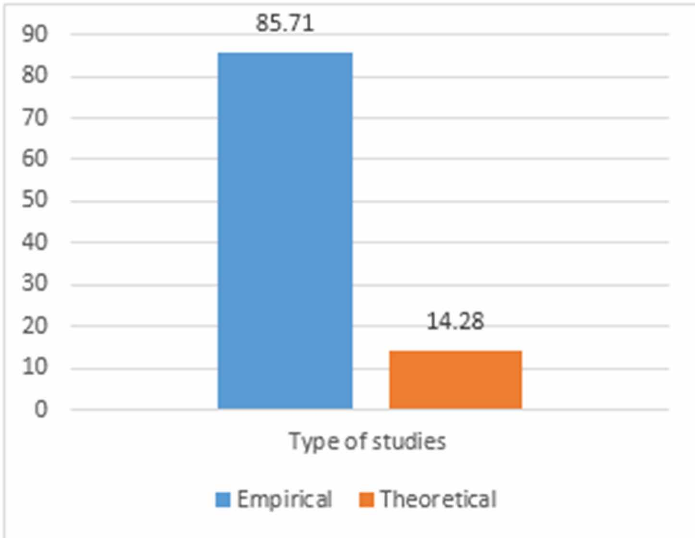


Figure 3. Types of methodology (%)

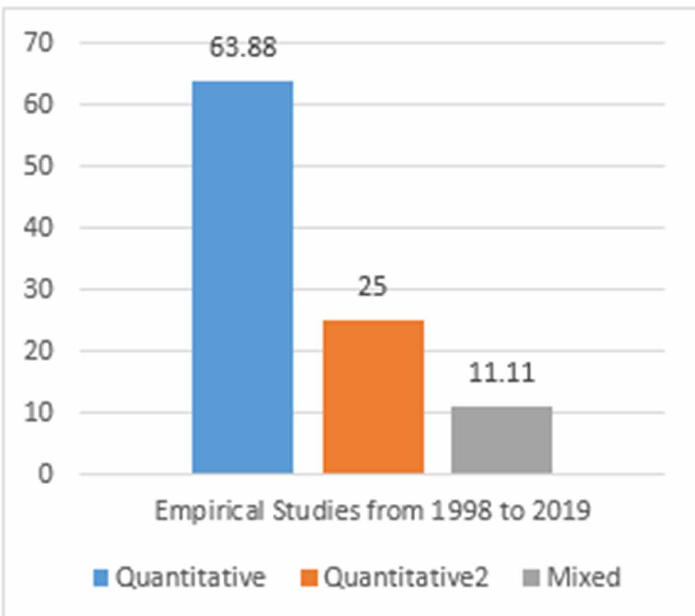


Table 2. Publications by period in Newspapers and Magazines about emotions in a luxury context

Journals	1998-2004	2005-2010	2011-2017	2018-2019	Total
International Journal of Research in Marketing	1			1	2
Harvard Business Review	1				1
Revue Française de Gestion		1			1
International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management		1			1
Journal of Neuroscience, Psychology, and Economics		1			1
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology		1			1
Research in Consumer Behavior		1			1
Ergonomics			1		1
Southeast Asian Network of Ergonomics Societies Conference			1		1
8th International Conference on Design and Emotion: Out of Control - Proceedings			1		1
International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research			1		1
Journal of Brand Management			1		1
Procedia Economics and Finance			1		1
Innovations			1		1
International Journal of Hospitality Management			1		1
Journal of Consumer Psychology			1		1
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services			1	2	3
Journal of Services Marketing			1		1
Educational Philosophy and Theory			1		1
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management			1	1	2
Journal for Global Business Advancement			2		2
Marketing Intelligence and Planning			2		2
Journal of Business Research			2	1	3
NTU Management Review			1		1
Psychology and Marketing			1		1
Clothing and Textiles Research Journal			1		1
European Journal of Marketing			1		1
Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing			1		1
Proceedings of the 14th International Conference on Innovation & Management			1		1
Revista Brasileira de Marketing			1		1
Service Industries Journal			1		1
Business Process Management Journal				1	1
Journal of Consumer Culture				1	1
Tourism Management				1	1
Transportation				1	1
Total	2	5	27	9	43
Total (%)	4,65%	11,6%	62,8%	20,9%	100%

stimuli (S) lead to an emotional reaction to the organism (O), which, in turn, drive the behavioural response of consumers (R) (Peng & Chen, 2015; Kim et al., 2016). This model and its modifications were applied in different contexts, and the results of these studies indicate that stimuli affect consumers' emotions, which in turn influence their responses (Peng & Chen, 2015). Environmental stimuli that form

Figure 4. Distribution of publications in percentage per period

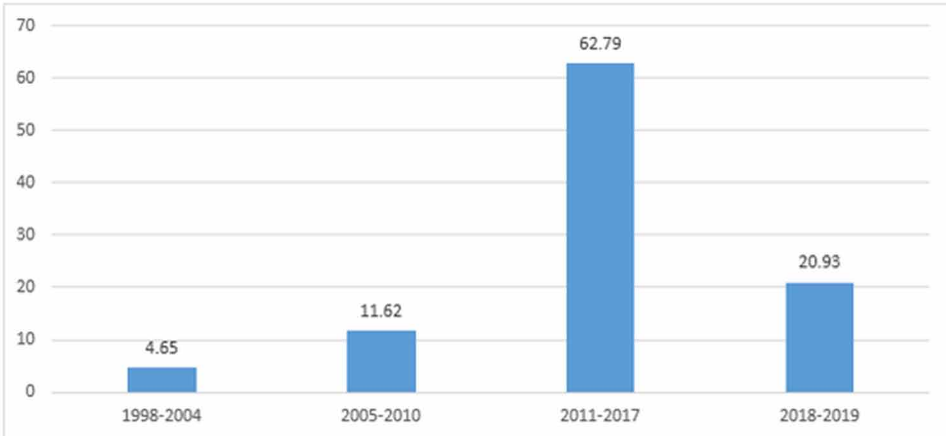
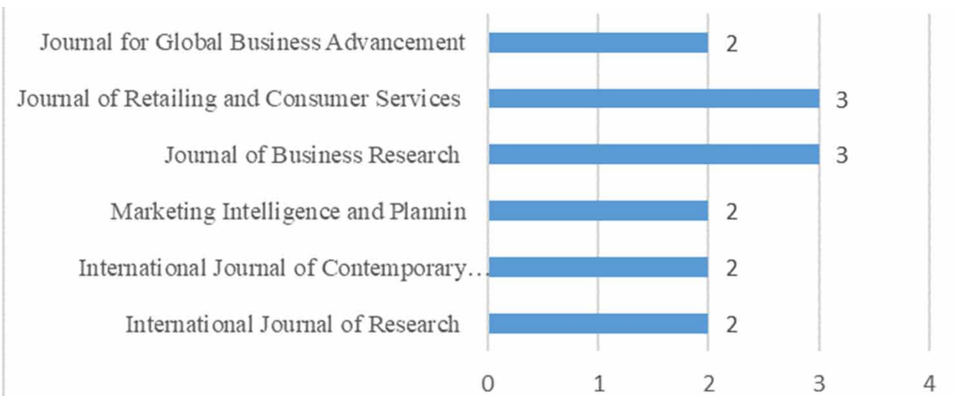


Figure 5. Contribution of publications by Journal (≥two articles)



consumer experiences are much more abundant in a luxury retail environment than in a non-luxury retail environment (Kim, Park, Lee, & Choi, 2016).

Previous studies have shown that consumers' emotions are triggered by service quality. Many studies have considered this background. These were the studies in the context of Hotels (Suwanamas et al., 2015; Hortano et al., 2012), in store context (Kim et al., 2016). Consumers, before experiencing those type of products and services, feel different emotions, and some of them influence their perceptions of the quality of the store's service (Kim et al., 2016). The quality of service was also considered in the studies in the context of luxury restaurants (Hyun & Kang, 2014; Akgün et al., 2017). The individual perception, another antecedent of emotions, was considered in a study in the context of luxury hotels by (Hartono & Chuan, 2011).

It was also found that the previous experiences were considered to be a precedent of the emotions, namely in the studies in the context of luxury restaurants (Hyun & Kang, 2014; Akgün et al., 2017) and in the context of luxury cruises (Manthiou et al., 2017). According to this last author, when consumers are satisfied with their experiences in general, they tend to talk well about their cruise trip to others, on the other hand, negative experiences lead to an unfavourable narrative. Thus, novelty can also be a predictor of positive emotions. In addition, the quality of the product was considered a precedent of the emotions, in studies in the context of luxury restaurants, by (Bezerra et al., 2017; Hyun & Kang, 2014; Akgün et al., 2017). Product quality activates other emotional states related to service quality, and the sensitive network associated with the product is relatively independent of that related to the service (Akgün et al., 2017). The price was considered a precedent of the emotions, in the studies in the context of luxury restaurants by (Hyun & Kang, 2014; Akgün et al., 2017). The low price was considered a background of emotions in the purchase of counterfeiting (Penz & Stottinger, 2011). It was also found that the location was considered to be the antecedent of emotions in the context of luxury restaurants, (Hyun & Kang, 2014; Akgün et al., 2017).

On the other hand, environmental stimuli were considered to be the background of emotions, in studies in the context of stores, by (Cho & Lee, 2017; Lassus & Freire, 2014). For consumers with the sole purpose of only visiting the store and not buying, they are influenced by three emotions, happiness, pride and anger (Kim et al., 2016). In consumption on luxury restaurants, environmental stimuli trigger positive and negative emotions to consumers, which in turn influence loyalty (Hyun & Kang, 2014). Manthiou et al. (2017) in their study in the context of cruises and yachts, the results of our study confirmed that different emotional reactions can be elicited by the effects of four appraisal dimensions: appetitive goal congruence, certainty, novelty, and agency. The environmental stimuli were also considered to be the antecedent of emotions in studies in the context of counterfeiting purchases. (Penz & Stottinger, 2011), and in the context of cruises and yachts (Jinjin, 2017). Environmental cues have a stronger impact on excitement than non-environmental signals, so confusion is a arousal than do non-environmental cues (Hyun & Kang, 2014). However, familiarity with the brand was considered to be the antecedent of emotions, in studies in the context of luxury stores, according to Kim et al. (2016), the influence of emotions depends on the level of familiarity with the brand. Among the various emotions, anger is the most powerful emotion. Anger, disappointment and discontent were the emotions that seemed to be most closely correlated with post-recovery loyalty (Kozub et al., 2014). The physical aspect of the product was considered the background of the emotions, in the context of the purchase of counterfeit goods (Penz & Stottinger, 2011). Self-realization was considered to be the antecedent of emotions in a study in the context of cruises and yachts (Manthiou et al., 2017).

Table 3. Background of emotions in a luxury context – Non-environmental stimuli

Non-environmental stimuli	Luxury context	Correspondence in the bibliography consulted	Description
Service quality	Hotels	(Suwanamas et al., 2015; Hortano et al., 2012)	It has a significant effect on the emotions, satisfaction and loyalty of customers.
	Store	(Kim et al., 2016)	Even before trying out products and services, customers feel different emotions, and some of them influence their perceptions of quality of service in the store.
	Restaurants	(Hyun & Kang, 2014; Akgün et al., 2017)	Considerable research reported the importance of service quality in the restaurant selection process because the interaction between customers and service employees affects the customer's assessment of the dining experience. The excitement of customers is induced by the quality of service
Individual perception	Hotels	(Hartono & Chuan, 2011)	During service meetings, customers experience both physical (servicescape) and non-physical service parts. Their individual perception serves as a cognitive process that stimulates their emotions.
Previous experiences	Restaurants	(Hyun & Kang, 2014; Akgün et al., 2017)	Customers with a strong recreational-oriented motivation are highly interested in exciting experiences. Thus, when they feel excited in a restaurant, they feel higher level of pleasure Hedonists should be a target market for luxury restaurant traders.
	Cruises	(Manthiou et al., 2017)	Creating moments of remembrance should be a focal strategy for traders as these moments build unforgettable experiences that contribute to positive future behaviours.
Product quality	Restaurants	(Bezerra et al., 2017; Hyun & Kang, 2014; Akgün et al., 2017)	The excitement of customers is induced by food quality. Both positive and negative emotional experiences of clients influence their satisfaction, and this influence remains stronger when emotional events are related to the food experience. A dinner activates emotional states related to product quality and also activates other emotional states related to service quality.
Price	Restaurants	(Hyun & Kang, 2014; Akgün et al., 2017)	It is a tool to attract and retain customers, as well as to improve food quality. Customer excitement is price-induced
	Counterfeit purchase	(Penz & Stottinger, 2011)	People buy counterfeit because they gain prestige without paying for it.
Location	Restaurants	(Hyun & Kang, 2014; Akgün et al., 2017)	The effect of location on restaurant assessment can be influenced by emotional responses, such as feelings of alertness and emotion
Appetitive goal congruence, certainty, novelty, and agency	Cruises and Yachts	(Manthiou et al., 2017)	Different emotional reactions can be triggered by the effects of four appraisal dimensions.

Context Search Preferences

The emotions of the luxury consumer have been studied in various contexts, as illustrated in figure 6. In the studies analysed it was found that luxury hotels were the most popular context in the literature, according to the studies of Casidy et al. (2018); Hartono and Chuan (2011); Hartono and Chuan (2012); Hartono (2012);

Table 4. Background of emotions in a luxury context – Environmental stimuli

Environmental stimuli	Luxury context	Correspondence in the bibliography consulted	Description
Familiarity with the brand	Store	(Kim et al., 2016)	Luxury store managers should be aware that customers' emotions depend on the level of familiarity with the brand and the reason for the purchase, so they should customize their approaches to managing customer emotions. However, among the various emotions, anger is the most influential followed by happiness, comfort and sophistication. For customers with low brand familiarity, only anger is influenced by physical aspect, reliability and personal interaction.
Physical appearance of the product	Counterfeit purchase	(Penz & Stottinger, 2011)	The level of happiness increases when the original and the false were of similar quality, because then no one would detect the counterfeit as such.
Previous experiences	Restaurants	(Hyun & Kang, 2014)	In the restaurant industry, all environmental conditions such as pleasant aromas, pleasant music, comfortable temperature, low noise levels and proper lighting creates a synergy effect in generating favourable perceptions of the restaurant and resulting in a positive experience.
Self-realization	Cruises and Yachts	(Manthiou et al., 2017)	When consumers succeed in their achievement goals, they experience positive emotions such as cheerfulness, pleasantness, delight, and gratitude.

Kozub et al. (2014); Lo (2012); Norman and Annie (2019); Suwanamas et al. (2015). Casidy et al. (2018) studied the influence of emotions on revisiting hotels. Already, Hartono (2012) study confirmed that in luxury hotels, emotion is more important than cognition in the impact on overall customer satisfaction. The perceived quality of the service and the customer's emotions were studied by (Hartono & Chuan, 2011; Suwanamas et al., 2015). Lo (2012) analysed the conflicting emotions and concerns in experiences during the stay at the hotel, and conflicting emotions arise because the same background is evaluated based on contradictory concerns, such as: luxury vs. ecological; exploration vs. familiarity; enjoyment vs. cost and novelty vs. practicality, being difficult to solve, since they are not in the control of the hotel guests. Kozub et al. (2014) studied the use of emotions to understand consumer behaviour after a service failure. The studies of emotions in the context of luxury hotels, which have been applied in several countries, have focused particularly in the cases of Indonesia, Singapore, USA, Thailand and Hong Kong, being the author Markus Hartono with more studies carried out, and all of them applied predominantly in Indonesia.

After the luxury hotels, stores constitute the second most common context in which emotion was researched, according to the studies of Cho et al. (2017); Godey et al. (2009); Lassus et al. (2014); Kim et al. (2016), Renaud and Mouangueb (2019). Cho et al. (2017) studied the impact of the interior colours of the luxury store in the retail environment on the emotions and perception of luxury. Lassus et al. (2014), in their study, showed that pop-up luxury stores add new features to the traditional luxury sector: informality, friendliness, playfulness and accessibility in the context of shared emotions.

Recent developments in the luxury goods sector, as well as the distribution strategy of some large companies, were researched by Godey, Lagier, and Pederzoli (2009). According to the latter authors, the distribution strategy should consider the need to comply with the desire for emotions, and for aesthetic experience, as is expressed by luxury goods customers. Kim et al. (2016), in their research, divided customers' on-site luxury shopping experiences into two stages, being before and after entering the luxury store, and then examined the effect of customers' specific emotions at each stage. Visitors to luxury stores are likely to be emotionally stimulated about the brand even before entering the store (Kim et al., 2016).

In luxury retail stores, potential consumers can feel the negative emotion of embarrassment (Lunardo & Mouangue, 2019). Most of the studies in the context of stores have been applied in France. However, there have been studies in the context of restaurants, according to the surveys of Akgün et al. (2017); Chen et al. (2015); Hyun and Kang (2014); Peng and Chen (2015), applied in countries such as Turkey, the USA, Hong Kong and Thailand. Sean and Kang (2014) examined the influence of emotions on behavioural intentions, moderated by motivational orientation and hedonism. Akgün et al. (2017) investigated positive and negative emotions from a prototype perspective and then tested them on customer satisfaction. In particular, the results indicated that both positive and negative emotional experiences of consumers influence their satisfaction.

Counterfeit luxury has been the object of research interest according to the studies of Marticotte and Arcand, (2017); Penz and Stöttinger (2012); Orth et al. (2019); and Zampetakis (2014). The demand for counterfeit products is a constant headache for brand manufacturers and policymakers around the world. (Penz & Stottinger, 2011). Although the purchase of counterfeit products seems to create an emotional atmosphere full of joy and fun, emotional attachment to them does not develop (Penz & Stottinger, 2011). Already in non-misleading counterfeit consumer situations, consumers experience mixed emotions (Zampetakisors, 2014). The purchase of counterfeits shows clearly that the user does not always follow the crowd. However, it is easily recognised that the forgeries would be used as indicators of individualism (Penz & Stottinger, 2011). However, Marticotte and Arcand (2017) introduces a new variable, schadenfreude, referring to the perceived pleasure related to the intention to buy a counterfeit, the attitude towards the original brand, and the orientation towards counterfeiting. Schadenfreude can arise as a result of three interrelated conditions: personal gain, resentment, and envy (Marticotte & Arcand, 2017). These authors refer that the personal gain is related to the pleasure felt by the purchase of a counterfeit luxury product, where consumers expect to obtain the benefit of luxury (conspicuity and status) without having to pay a high price for the brand.

Another study focused on counterfeit luxury, explored emotional aspects and motivations that influence the purchase of counterfeit luxury products in contrast to originals (Penz & Stottinger, 2011). Zampetakisors (2014) developed a consumer taxonomy, based on emotions experienced during counterfeit non-deceptive consumption situations, trying to design strategies to inhibit the problem of fake consumption. Studies in the context of yachts and cruises, according to the studies of Brun et al. (2018), Manthiou et al. (2017) and Jinjin (2017), were conducted in Italy, USA, and China respectively. Luxury cruise passengers are characterised as the most wealthy and experience-oriented travellers (Manthiou et al., 2017). Finally, the studies of discrete luxury (Makkar et al., 2018; McFerran et al., 2014) were applied in Canada and Dubai.

Therefore, in general, China is the emerging country where more studies have been carried out on emotions in a luxury context, according to studies of (Wang et al., 2015; Zhao & Zhao, 2018; Yeung & Shen, 2019; Wang et al., 2015; Joy et al. 2018) and hotels constitute the context with more studies, being the influence of emotions in the recovery of the service the most researched topic. Stores are the second most studied context, with studies focusing on the impact of the interior colours of the luxury store, the experiences of luxury shopping before and after

Figure 6. Context of studies of the emotions of the luxury consumer (≥ two articles)

entering the store. The modified Mehrabian-Russell model is the most widely used when it comes to conducting studies in the Service Industry.

STUDIES CARRIED OUT IN EMERGING ECONOMIES

Emerging economies are characterised by inadequate infrastructure and chronic scarcity of resources (Sinha & Sheth, 2018). These economies have become the target of growing interest, particularly in terms of the lessons that can be learned by studying the essential determinants of current economic performance and the potential of these countries to become the main drivers of global economic growth (Vieira & Veríssimo, 2009). Previous research had already identified that consumers in emerging markets tend to buy luxury goods mainly for reasons of self-presentation and because of pressure to maintain a high social position (Pino, Amaulli, Peluso, Nataraajan & Guido, 2019; Skula, 2010; Dogan-sudas, Kara, & Cabuk, 2019). This form of consumption becomes a pure exposure to wealth (Ostapenko & Cicic, 2011). Thus, conspicuous consumption motivates consumers to buy luxury products (Dogan-sudas, Kara, & Cabuk, 2019). However, in these countries, consumers buy luxury products as a way to create a favourable image concerning others.

For this study, the emerging countries that we present are the ones that verified studies of emotions in luxury context, as are the cases of China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Indonesia, Brazil and Turkey.

China

As a result of China's phenomenal economic growth, the number of wealthy people is increasing rapidly (Wang et al., 2015). Few studies on emotions in a luxury context have been conducted in China, with emphasis on the studies of Zhao and Zhao (2018) who explored pride and its association with behaviours related to car ownership and use, and pride is defined as the self-conscious emotion derived from the assessment of owning and using cars as a positive self-representation. The results of the study revealed that pride is positively correlated with car use; pride correlates significantly with the younger, more expensive car owner, luxury cars, and more costly local car licenses; car owners, in general, are prouder of the car than non-car owners. However, cars are often considered a status symbol. So it goes against the results of the study of Yeung and Shen (2019) who considered pride, a discreet emotion that drives the search for fulfilment and status.

In another survey, Wang et al. (2015) studied the motivation for the purchase of luxury products and uncovered the interrelationships between individual differences, motives and luxury consumption. Eight reasons were identified: self-realisation, product quality, social comparison, the influence of others, investment for the future, gifting, special occasions, and emotional purchase. The results showed that Chinese consumers bought luxury products, both for social and personal reasons, which is similar to Western consumers. The study further suggested that Asian consumers are more likely to purchase luxury goods to give than Western consumers. This kind of propensity of Asian consumers represents ostentation and materialism, two dimensions of outsourced luxury according to (Amatulli & Guido, 2012). In a study in a developed country, Canada, consumers experienced two different facets of pride (authentic and arrogant) from consumption, but that these were activated differently by the acquisition of luxury and non-luxury brand (Mcferran et al., 2011).

However, Jinjin (2017) in his study, analysed different interior decoration spaces in various areas of international luxury cruises and presented the principles and factors of designs and interior colours of international luxury cruises. With the belief that completeness, functionality, cultural characteristics, large spaces, other factors related to light and shadows, user experience and should be considered in colour designs. Design and entertainment are the dimensions of the scenario with the most significant impact on emotions (pleasure and excitement), satisfaction and loyalty. (João, Eusébio, Caldeira, & Cláudia, 2019). It meets with Hartano et al. (2012), who hold that products and services need to offer characteristics and properties that can make them distinguishable and attractive to consumers. In a study conducted in the U.S., Manthiou et al. (2017) considered that it is imperative for managers to examine the stories that consumers tell about their cruise travel experiences by conducting research on the quality of the trip at the end of it, and that when travelers experience positive emotions in a luxury cruise trip, they are more likely to adopt approaching behaviours.

China and Hong Kong

Joy et al. (2018) examined how specific emotions drive consumption of luxury apparel and accessories among Chinese and Hong Kong consumers. The Popular Republic of China elite generally does not aspire to imitate their Hong Kong counterparts. Still, instead, they resent the fact that Hong Kong consumers refuse to identify themselves as Chinese, as in their view, Hong Kong is a part of China (Joy et al., 2018). Therefore, the identity struggle characterises the tension between consumers in both countries that are driven by envy, resentment and status anxiety as the main drivers of consumption according to the theory of emotions of Illouz (2009).

Hong Kong

Lo (2012) analysed the conflicting emotions and concerns in hotel stay experiences. Conflicting emotions often arise because some hotel features and services are beyond the control of hotel guests. This work contributed with a systematic model to explain three common types of hotel personalisation strategies about emotional outcomes (calculating emotions, exploratory emotions, pleasant surprises), design emphases and the nature of the service. In another study, Peng and Chen (2015) examined the consumption behaviour in a luxury restaurant by incorporating product knowledge into a modified Mehrabian-Russell model. The results of this study show that superior food quality, quality of service and environmental stimuli can positively influence consumers' emotions. These results are in line with the results of the study by Suwanamas et al. (2015) in the same context but Thailand. Also, emotions can positively affect loyalty to restaurants (Peng & Chen, 2015).

Thailand

Peng and Chen (2018) analysed the factors that contribute to stay buyback intentions of luxury hotel consumers. The results confirm that in luxury hotels, the perceived functional value, hedonic value and symbolic/expressive value affect the emotions of consumers, which in turn affect their attachment to the luxury hotel and repurchase intentions. In another study, Suwanamas et al. (2015) proposed and tested a model that describes the relationships between perceived service quality, customer emotions, satisfaction and loyalty in a five-star hotel environment. The results indicated that the perception of service quality (tangible and intangible dimensions) has a significant effect on customer emotions, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. These results are in line with the study conducted in Korea by (Han, Yu, Koo, & Kim, 2019). The consumption behaviour at dinners in luxury restaurants, incorporating dinner expectations in a modified Mehrabian-Russell model was analysed. (Chen, Peng, & Hung, 2015). The results of this study contribute to the literature in the sense that the model proposed in the survey can describe experiences of dining consumption in a luxury restaurant. The results also revealed that the expectation of dinner could moderate the behaviour consumption at dinners and customers influence the emotions of diners.

Indonesia

Hartono (2012), in his study, confirmed that emotion is more important than cognition concerning the impact on overall customer satisfaction. However, in another study in previous years, the researchers had a different view, stating that the cognitive assessment of customer satisfaction was found to explain customer loyalty in a retail environment more than the emotional reaction (Omar, 2010).

Brazil

Bezerra et al. (2017) the study aimed to identify the main attributes valued by affordable luxury consumers. The results indicated that consumers value attributes related to the emotions inherent to luxury goods; the quality and durability of the items; the social relationships that can be established from the possession and use of the good; the protagonism and tradition of brands; besides the importance of innovation.

Turkey

Akgün et al. (2017) examined the complex emotional processes that customers go through when dining in luxury restaurants. They demonstrated the relationship between sensitive prototypes and customer satisfaction based on the notion that positive emotions are positively related to customer satisfaction, and negative emotions are negatively associated with customer satisfaction. It meets the results of (Peng & Chen, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Few studies on emotions in the context of luxury for emerging economies have been carried out. The studies considered environmental and non-environmental stimuli as background to emotions. Several environmental stimuli were considered with greater emphasis on decoration and artefacts; environmental conditions (temperature, lighting, noise, music, and aroma) and spatial arrangement. Non-environmental stimuli were considered, the quality of the service, the quality of the product, familiarity with the brand, previous experiences, price and location. Environmental suggestions have a stronger impact on excitement than non-environmental signals. The studies of emotions in the luxury context, hotel have been applied in a few countries, are mainly the cases of Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Hong Kong. Therefore, in general, China is the emerging country where more studies have been carried out on emotions in the luxury context, and hotels have constituted the context with more studies, being the influence of emotions in the recovery of the service the most researched topics. The studies of emotions in the context of luxury hotels have been applied in a few countries, particularly Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Hong Kong. However, the stores were the second most researched context, so the studies focused primarily on the impact of the interior colours of the luxury store, on the experiences of luxury shopping before and after entering the store. For consumers with the sole purpose of only visiting the store and not buying, they are influenced by three emotions happiness, pride and anger.

The modified Mehrabian-Russell model is the most widely used when it comes to carrying out studies in the Service Industry. Researchers mentioned social status as the main reason for luxury consumption, so it meets the results of (Dion & Encounter, 2017; Pino et al., 2019). The authors consider that consumers in these countries, adopt conspicuous consumption, and seek the status for the use of luxury brands and the experience of luxury service. The distinct nature of luxury consumption determines that buying and using luxury is associated with prestige and social status (Wang et al., 2015).

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In future research, one should investigate how desires and culture influence consumer emotions and satisfaction.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Consumer Behaviour: The process that encompasses everything related to buying behavior, like the buying process, antecedents of the buying decision, consequents after the buying decision, and also factors influencing the buying decision.

Consumer Emotions: Sentiments and emoticons that consumers experience before, during, and after the buying decision process.

Emerging Economies: Countries that are investing in order to develop their production capacity, to leave behind a more traditional economic model.

Environmental Stimuli: A stimuli which is related to the physical evidence of the store/space were the product/service is exposed.

Luxury Products: Products that are considered to be unique and very expensive, which give a high experience/value to consumers.

Non-Environmental Stimuli: Stimulus related to the product /service itself (product quality, for instance).

Systematic Literature Review: A method that applies a systematic guideline in order to offer the literature that has been published during a period of time, about one research topic.

Chapter 14
Cause-Related Marketing and Consumer Buying Behavior:
Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The concept of cause-related marketing (CRM) has been in vogue since the past few decades and involves marketing activities carried out with the purpose 'to be successful in addressing worthwhile social causes', through collaboration with charitable organizations that help to increase profitability along with bettering the society, in mutually beneficial ways. This implies a social dimension in this cause-related buying. While this is a good social initiative with many factors that influence consumer choice and purchase of cause-related products, there are also many challenges such as consumer skepticism, etc., which mar CRM's success and effectiveness. Through review of extant literature, this study purposes to examine factors and variables influencing CRM and the challenges impeding its effectiveness and suggests ways to overcome these. Furthermore, to gauge an understanding on its practical application, two case studies on CRM campaigns conducted in two different (developing and developed) markets are also discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

The past few decades have witnessed growing consumer awareness with an orientation towards symbiotic relationships between the business and society, where the focus is on the drivers of marketing based on the principles of ethics, transparency, integrity and partnerships that are mutually respected and beneficial. For this purpose, organizations are using the concept of cause related marketing (CRM) as a strategic marketing tool to demonstrate their belief in a social cause. From the organization's perspective, CRM aligned to corporate philanthropy would help in contributing towards worthy social causes, and alongside it is also a marketing activity and tool that helps to build corporate reputation, promote customer loyalty and increase the revenues. While from the consumers' perspective an interest in CRM can be attributed to a growing social consciousness, awareness, involvement, and willingness to be engaged and participate in socially responsible consumption.

The definition of Cause-related marketing provided by Varadarajan and Menon (1988), popular even today, states "Cause-related marketing is the process of formulating and implementing marketing activities that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specified amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives" (p.60). As can be inferred from this definition CRM refers to a combination of socially responsible behavior of the corporate/organization and the buying behavior of the consumers or shoppers. Hence, as a market driven activity CRM involves partnerships between businesses, non-profit organizations (NPO's) or social causes and the marketing relationships, so as to meet certain objectives, and receive the returns on investments in the form of-cash, time, other resources, or a combination of all. Simply put, cause-related marketing involves partnerships between businesses and charities or causes to market an image, product or service that is mutually beneficial.

If CRM is to be a win-win situation for all involved, the benefits must ensue to all partners. Generally, CRM activity is carried out with the intention 'to be successful' through partnerships with charitable organizations for certain worthwhile social causes. However, given that the success of any marketing activity or campaign linked to a social cause would greatly depend upon consumer participation, it mandates that the focus of such activities be oriented towards the buying behavior of the consumers. This implies there is a need to highlight the long-term benefits of CRM through suitable market positioning, and communications directed at the targeted audience at large. Notably, the intention behind a CRM campaign could be varied, to encourage consumers to purchase a product/brand so that donations are made towards the partnering (social) cause (Lafferty & Edmondson, 2009), as a strategic management tool for CRM effectiveness (Tsai, 2009), to improve the organization's position in the society; be depicted as a socially responsible entity (Jahdi, 2014), to make a significant effect on Consumer–Company identification (Lii & Lee, 2012), and so on.

Given that CRM is seen as a strategic tool (Tsai, 2009), researchers have been trying to evaluate how it can affect consumers' buying behavior. Focusing on the role of 'cause' that affect consumer attitudes, Sheikh and Beise-Zee (2011) found CRM has a positive effect on customers with high cause affinity, but negative effect on those with low cause affinity, or opposing the cause. While investigating the corporate motive and fit of a firm/company brand with the CRM's 'cause' as determinants of the CRM campaign's success Moosmayer and Fuljahn (2013) found that altruistic motives increase consumer evaluations, with campaigns being evaluated more positively when the product cause-fit is low. While, Lavack and Kropp (2003) examined consumer buying behavior relationships between values and consumer attitudes toward CRM in Canada, Norway, Korea and Australia, La Ferle, Kuber and Edwards (2013) had explored consumer attitudes towards company motives of CRM campaigns conducted in India and USA.

Consumer buying behavior could be examined by verifying their attitude towards the 'cause' and purchase intentions of CRM products. For example, Moosmayer and Fuljahn (2013) sought to examine consumer's attitude to product, perception of firm behavior, and goodwill towards a CRM campaign. While exploring the influence of the cause categories on consumer perceptions, Lafferty and Edmondson (2014) observed different charitable cause categories can have differential effect on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, e.g. although the health cause-category and human services cause-category had a greater effect on attitude toward the cause when the brand familiarity and cause importance are high, no differences were found in attitude toward the brand and purchase intentions among the cause categories. Kozłowski and Sobotko (2017) confirmed the significant role of altruistic attitudes in CRM, and felt organizations should recognize degree of altruism as a driving force that influences consumer behavior i.e. willingness to buy cause-related products and attitude towards the CRM campaign.

Given that above studies have established consumer attitudes affect CRM campaigns, buying behavior and purchase intentions, it would be necessary for firms involved in such campaigns to work towards creating positive consumer attitudes. For instance, Langen, Grebitus, and Hartmann (2010) found efficiency and transparency of CRM campaigns are important to consumers, and can affect its successful outcome. Meanwhile, prior studies have reported on skepticism that affect consumer attitudes and purchase intentions of the cause related products therein. In line to this, researchers like Singh, Kristensen and Villasen˜or (2009) and Bae (2018) suggested the need for more research to identify factors and variables affecting the state of skepticism in the consumer's evaluation process.

The discussion thus far on the one hand, has shown CRM is a good corporate social initiative, an effective way of making visible the organization's corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Jahdi, 2014), through variables (like attitude, perception, involvement, gender, etc.) that arouse consumer motivational attributions towards CRM (Broderick, Jogi & Garry, 2003; Cui, Trent, Sullivan & Matiru, 2003; Adkins, 2003; Hammad, El-Bassiouny, Paul & Mukhopadhyay, 2014). On the other hand, studies have also noted that CRM has not been as effective as was thought it would due to consumer skepticism towards firms involved in CRMs (e.g. Singh et al., 2009; etc.). This implies of a gap in the conduct of CRM campaigns and the need to investigate and determine the likely reasons for consumer apprehensiveness towards CRM, and also to suggest of ways to overcome these; such that it paves the way to create CRM effectiveness. This chapter proposes to address the gap through an extant literature review to identify factors influencing CRM and the challenges marring its effectiveness. Additionally, two case studies on CRM programs/campaigns conducted in two different (developing and developed) markets will be briefly discussed to gain an understanding on the practical application of this concept.

The chapter is structured as follows: the next section will briefly touch upon the concept of 'cause related marketing', defining it and discuss whether it can be termed as a social dimension of consumer buying behavior. The section after this will examine factors influencing CRM, and also discuss the challenges affecting its effectiveness. The following section will briefly touch upon two real cases that provide an overview on how CRM campaigns are conducted effectively and, in the final section the conclusions and implications are discussed.

CAUSE RELATED MARKETING

Defining 'Cause Related Marketing'

There is a growing consumer inclination towards synergetic relationships between corporate and society, with marketing based on ethical integrity, transparency, and cooperative partnerships that are of common interests and mutually beneficial. It is in view of this that the concept of cause-related marketing has gained prominence as a strategic marketing tool used by the corporate to demonstrate the commercial link between a charity and them to a social cause, which is mutually beneficial. In other words, CRM is a marketing-driven activity, wherein the involved parties (organizations, charities and good causes) enter into relationships to meet mutually agreed objectives of common interests. Cause-related marketing has been defined by Business in the Community as "a commercial activity by which businesses and charities or good causes form a partnership with each other to market an image, product or service for mutual benefit" (cited in Adkins, 2003, p. 670). In line to this definition, as a commercial activity, CRM partnership objectives are equally relevant to all involved partners, and may include marketing of the image, product or services. Typically, CRM is used for marketing an organization's reputation, enhancing the brand or corporate image, for developing customer relationships, to increase customer loyalty and customer traffic, to improvise public relations, and to generate more income and resources.

If conducted well, CRM can be a win-win for all involved parties, with the benefits of the campaign extending not only to the business organization, charity and cause but also to the consumers and the other stakeholders. From business organization perspective, CRM aligned to corporate philanthropy helps in contributing towards worthy causes, and, as a marketing activity tool would help in building corporate reputation, promoting customer loyalty and increasing revenues, which incidentally signifies an improvement in the corporate performance. From the consumers' perspective, interest in CRM can be attributed to a growing social consciousness, awareness, involvement, and willingness to be engaged and participate in socially responsible consumption. According to the often quoted definition of cause-related marketing by Varadarajan and Menon (1988), it is a combination of socially responsible behavior (corporate) and consumption (consumers/shoppers) involving collaborative partnerships (between businesses, non-profit organizations (NPO's) or causes) and marketing relationships with the aim to meet certain mutually agreed objectives and also to receive a return on the investments (in the form of cash, time, other resources, or even a combination of these).

Prior studies have indicated that CRM initiatives are conducted with different aims and purposes. For instance, some researchers sought to examine consumer behavior perceptions or attitudes towards firms that participate in CRM campaigns (Webb & Mohr, 1998; Chaney & Dolli, 20012; Moosmayer & Fuljahn 2010; Steckstor, 2012), some others were keen to examine how consumers respond to CRM offers (Cui, et al., 2003; Gupta & Pirsch, 2006; Barone, Norman & Miyazaki, 2007),with others like Bigné-Alcañiz, Currás-Pérez and Sánchez-García (2009) purporting to analyze the effect of consumer altruistic values upon drivers of brand credibility in CRM, and Van den Brink, Odekerken-Schro¨der and Pauwels (2006) wanting to determine the effect of CRM on brand loyalty, while, Demetriou, Papasolomou and Vrontis (2010) sought to examine consumer knowledge on the involvement of companies in CRM and determine its value and importance in enhancing the corporate image. Incidentally, Brønn and Vrioni, (2001) noted firms' attempted CSR through adopting the CRM approach, and defined CRM as "the practice of advocating corporate social responsibility in marketing communication activities" (p. 214).

Thus, the above studies have indicated the versatility in using CRM as a marketing-managerial decision making tool, stating that it concerns new collaborations and partnerships between corporate firms and NGOs with their respective assets being combined, used for mutual benefits and to create social value. In line to this, previous studies revealed many benefits that accrue to all involved partners in the CRM campaigns. For example, some studies felt *for the enterprise/firm and the non-profit organization involved in the CRM campaign* it could be a means of addressing social issues and problems such as: to provide funds and resources for social causes, to achieve marketing objectives (Trimble & Rifon, 2006; Demetriou et al., 2010; etc.), to develop CRM such that the social system and enterprise link with the nonprofit organization (NPO) would help to form a closed path which maximizes benefits for the three involved parties (Du, Hou & Huang, 2008). Other benefits of CRM initiatives include: enabling corporate firms to create a link with customers and show their commitment to social responsibility (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001), facilitate donating corporate profits towards a specific cause (Vardarajan & Menon, 1988), increase consumer value to the brand (Wymer & Samu, 2009), add brand credibility (cause brand-fit) in the CRM campaign (Bigné-Alcañiz et al., 2009), impact consumer perception, attitudes and response towards the product cause; have a positive influence on purchase intentions (Cui et al., 2003; Gupta & Pirsch, 2006; Folse, Niedrich & Grau, 2010; Bae, 2016), and enhancement of company image along with receipt of the necessary product marketing support (File & Prince, 1998; Jahdi, 2014). Whereas, *for the consumers, benefits of CRM* would involve-an emotional connect and individual involvement in terms of awareness, perception and response to the CRM campaign (Broderick et al., 2003; Bester & Jere, 2012).

Meanwhile, it is found that consumers responding to CRM campaigns give due importance to the perceived compatibility between a corporate sponsor and cause (Trimble & Rifon, 2006), and use indicators such as cause brand-fit and altruistic attribution to perceive brand honesty and expertise especially when the brand is projected as being 'socially responsible' in the CRM campaign (Bigné-Alcañiz et al., 2009; Che´ron, Kohlbacher, and Kusuma, 2012). Some studies found that CRM programs/campaigns provide social information along with the portrayal of brand-cause alliance which has affect on consumer purchase intentions (Broderick et al., 2003; Lafferty & Edmondson, 2009; Bae, 2016), and that 'nature of the product' used in the CRM campaign could also influence consumer attitude towards the brand and their purchase intentions (Melero & Montaner, 2016). From the above discussions, a simple definition of CRM "as a general alliance between businesses and non-profit causes that provide resources and funding to address social issues and business marketing objectives" (Cui et al., 2003, p.310), is suggested.

Does CRM Involve a 'Social Dimension' of Consumer Buying Behavior?

Given that CRM involves partnerships between an enterprise and the NPO to work for any social cause of mutual benefit, it would be interesting to verify whether consumer buying behavior gets impacted by the social dimension of the cause-related product or brand. Many studies have established consumers have a positive attitude towards CRM programs and display positive purchase behavior for such cause-related products (Webb & Mohr, 1998; Chaney & Dolli, 2001; Subrahmanyan, 2004; Gupta & Pirsch, 2006; Farache, Perks, Wanderley & Filho, 2008; Demetriou et al., 2010; Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2010; Sheikh & Beise-Zee, 2011; Bester & Jere, 2012; Che´ron et al., 2012; Goldsmith & Yimin, 2014; Kleber, Florack & Chladek, 2016). Similarly, in studies involving cross-cultural comparison, Lavack and Kropp (2003) found cultural differences in customer values and value structures played a role in shaping consumer attitudes toward CRM, whereas, Steffen and Gunther (2013) found CRM campaigns increased consumer participation and loyalty in a developed country like Germany, but suggested to apply customized strategies when conducting CRM campaigns in developing countries (e.g. MENA region).

Usually, when social factors/variables such as reference groups (friends, family, peers, club, etc.), family members (close and extended), social status and roles in the society, and so on, affect consumer behavior; it gets termed as the social dimensional influences on the consumer's buying behavior (Nair, 2018). However, given that CRM programs are conducted for the purpose of selling social cause-related products/or brands through partnerships between the organization and the NPO, could similar social factors have influence on the consumer's shopping behavior when purchasing CRM products/brands?, would need to be verified.

Looking at the social benefits of CRM, studies have found organization's can improve its stance and be depicted as a socially responsible entity (Jahdi, 2014), given that the alliance between the corporate and NPO is for a specific social cause (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988).Furthermore, CRM brand's social responsibility image can have a positive effect on consumers' purchase intentions too (Che´ron et al., 2012; He, Zhu, Gouran & Kolo, 2016), given the importance customers assign to the credibility and benefits of the partnering organizations and their involvement in appropriate CRM campaign/program (Broderick et al., 2002; Trimble & Rifon, 2006). In fact, the fit between company/firm, brand-cause and charity also impacts consumer choices and responses (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006; Barone et al., 2007; Che´ron et al., 2012; Melero & Montaner, 2016). Moreover, today's tech savvy customers feel CRM is a very relevant CSR initiative and have shown preference to using digital technologies in CRM campaigns (Galan-Ladero & Galera-Casquet, 2019; Eastman, Smalley & Warren, 2019), with some even suggesting to use innovative potential presumption through crowd-sourcing (Lucyna & Hanna, 2016).

From the above discussion it is seen consumers assign socially responsible image to corporate engaged in CRM campaigns, and having affinity to the social-cause component of the product has a positive impact on their choices and purchase intentions. Customers increased awareness on the social problems/causes; an orientation and involvement in CSR and CRM initiatives propelling them to suggest innovative ways of participating in CRM campaigns, etc. are suggestive of their socially oriented behavior. Furthermore, studies have indicated the cross-cultural differences in customer values and value structures can shape consumer attitudes toward CRM, and influence CRM campaign's effectiveness (La Ferle, Kuber, & Edwards, 2013; Steffen & Günther, 2013; Bae, 2017). These suggest a socio-cultural dimension in the buying behavior of cause-related products. However, although previous studies point to a 'social' dimension in cause-related buying behavior, conducting empirical studies that help throw more light on this is suggested.

FACTORS INFLUENCING CRM

To understand factors that influence CRM, one would need to examine it from the corporate as well as consumer perspectives. From the corporate angle, prior studies have brought out many reasons and factors that influence *firms' participation in CRM*. Business firms participate in CRM campaigns to enhance their corporate image (File & Prince, 1998; Bronn & Vrioni, 2001; Demetriou et al., 2010; Jahdi, 2014), to seek product marketing support through their program (File & Prince, 1998), to enable charitable organizations raise funds (Chaney & Dolli, 2001), create awareness on specific social causes (Broderick et al., 2003), donate funds for social causes (Folse et al., 2010; Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2010), to compensate for negative CSR (Sheikh & Beise-Zee, 2011), and to reiterate CRM efforts link to ethical consumption (Mathews & Nair, 2019) that involve volunteer engagement and brand recognition (Eikenberry, 2013). Additionally, company's past reputation in social activities, cause importance and proximity are major contributing factors to consumer's positive motivational attribution to CRM (Hammad et al. 2014). Moreover, integrating different types of innovation and CRM can impact the CRM's success, add, Christofi, Leonidou, Vrontis, Kitchen, and Papasolomou (2015).

Similarly, previous studies have indicated factors and variables that influence *consumers' response to CRM c*ampaigns. For example, consumers display mixed attitudes toward firms participating in CRM campaigns, with approximately half expressing negative attitudes, being skeptical about its implementation and cynical about the firm's motives, or both, and yet express more positive attitudes toward

NPOs' participating in CRM (i.e. motives are more altruistic), with many even stating CRM campaigns influence their buying decisions, noted Webb and Mohr (1998). Other factors can also impact customer responses to CRM. For example, the emotional level of individual involvement can be a key differentiating factor in customer awareness, perception and response to CRM campaigns (Broderick et al., 2003), triggering of ethical consciousness that initiates an interest in ethical consumerism through purchase of cause related products (Mathews & Nair, 2019), individual connection to a 'specific cause' that influences consumer attitudes and behavior (Farache, et al., 2008; Goldsmith & Yimin, 2014), where cause involvement significantly influences purchase intentions (Bester & Jere, 2012). Similarly, customers display positive attitudes whenever CRM offers are in tune to the targeted group's concern (Cui et al., 2003) significantly impacting their choice behavior when there is a brand/cause fit (Pracejus & Olsen, 2004; Che´ron et al., 2012),with more positive response when there is compatibility between the sponsoring company or brand and the celebrity or sponsored event in the CRM (Trimble & Rifon, 2006), such that it increases consumers' purchase intentions (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006; Barone et al., 2007, Melero & Montaner, 2016, Bergkvist & Zhou, 2019).

Moral identity affects consumer choices during the purchase of cause-related products (Urbonavičius & Adomavičiūtė, 2015) with personality characteristics such as altruism and religiosity arousing positive motivational attribution to significantly predict consumer response towards CRM (Hammad et al., 2014). While, altruistic consumers use altruistic attribution to judge brand credibility in CRM messages, non-altruistic consumers assessment is based on cause-brand fit observed by Bigné-Alcañiz et al., (2009). Consumers are more likely to pay premium price and buy cause-linked practical products more frequently than hedonic ones purchased occasionally, observed Subrahmanyan (2004). Although consumers are interested in obtaining information on the donation size provided by the firm to the NPO/ cause to evaluate the efficiency of CRM campaigns (Langen et al., 2010; Folse et al., 2010; Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2010), purchase intentions of consumers with lower numerical ability is found to be higher when CRM donations are presented in absolute amounts (Kleber et al., 2016).

The above studies brought out many reasons/factors that influence corporate participation in CRM, and, consumer responses to the CRM campaigns. Given that CRM uniquely integrates business objectives with social causes facilitating the corporate to get involved in social and environmental issues, a big factor which influences corporate participation in CRM can be stated as 'to become more *distinctive* and pertinently *gain competitive advantage'*. Whereas, main factors initiating consumer response to CRM campaigns are '*consumer attitude'* and '*the level of involvement with the cause*', which affects their purchase-intentions.

Based on the discussion thus far, Table 1 has provided a brief outline on selective studies (from 2000 onwards) that address different CRM concerns.

CHALLENGES IN CRM IMPLEMENTATION

In view of the aim of CRM to integrate business objectives with social causes, benefits accruing from it (funding opportunities, wider reach, enhancing corporate image, increase in profits, consumer satisfaction in supporting social causes, etc.) may seem to be a win-win for all involved in the campaigns. However, as CRM becomes more prevalent, business firms would need to be more effective and efficient in handling the challenges in conducting such campaigns.

A successful CRM initiative will greatly depend upon the business partnerships formed for the cause-based campaign. A big challenge will be working out, planning and forming partnerships/alliances with like-minded partners for the cause-related campaign. Efforts of all partners would need to be rightly aligned with the cause-related campaign, in a transparent manner so that consumers are convinced and more likely to connect with the cause (Adkins, 2003; Langen et al., 2010). Identifying or choosing potential partners for cause-related programs and the type of help likely to be given to the cause through their involvement-ensuring successful CRM implementation, is another challenge. For example, each partner may have specific preferences when selecting CRM implementation strategies in different situations, or even initially, when social alliances are formed (Liu & Ko, 2011). A related challenge is concerning the partnering NPO's-organizational identity, alliance risks, and the prioritization of various NPO stakeholders' claims; especially when they are competing with each other. To address these, Liston-Heyes and Liu (2013) suggested having in place governance mechanisms that foster transparency and trust among all stakeholders. Although, the challenge would be in developing communications that resonate on a larger level with all stakeholders about the common social-cause related issue(s), and to ensure a product-cause-fit that influences consumer choices. Similarly, Langen et al. (2010) reiterated the need for more transparency and efficiency in CRM, and opined to clearly indicate how the donation amount was going to be devoted for the 'good cause'.

Since CRM programs effectiveness would greatly depend upon consumer perception and evaluation regarding the motives of the firm involved in such initiatives (Bae, 2018), retailer-cause-fit (Barone et al., 2007) and brand-fit and charity (Pracejus & Olsen, 2004), while designing CRM initiatives all efforts should be made to communicate the transparency and efficiency of such campaigns to their targeted market, and ensure product/company-cause fit that improves customer

Table 1. Brief outline on selective studies of cause related marketing

Research Publication	Purpose of study	Results or Findings
Chaney and Dolli (2001)	To develop an understanding of consumers' behavior and perceptions towards cause-related marketing as a promotional activity.	Consumers have a favorable attitude to fundraising through CRM. Although non-purchasers felt that charities should use other methods for their fundraising.
Adkins (2003)	To understand the meaning of CRM, and the principles and guidelines to develop effective strategies and programs for its success.	CRM is a marketing tool to engage with consumers, an effective way to make visible organizational CSR and add value to the organization based on the principles of integrity, transparency, sincerity, mutual respect, partnerships & benefits.
Barone, Norman, and Miyazaki (2007)	To examine how retailer-cause fit affects consumer evaluations of retailers' cause-related marketing strategies.	The effects of retailer-cause fits are moderated by consumer perceptions of the retailer's motive for engaging in CRM, by the affinity for the social cause component held by the consumers and also the interactive effects associated with the two moderators.
Langen, Grebitus, and Hartmann (2010)	To analyze whether efficiency and transparency in a cause-related marketing campaign are important for consumers.	There exists a gap between the levels of expected and requested efficiency of CRM donations. There is a need to make the donation amount relevant to consumers for CRM to be successful.
Che´ron, Kohlbacher, and Kusuma (2012)	Examining the effect of brand-cause-fit, and CRM campaign duration on corporate and brand image, and the buying intention of consumers.	High brand-cause-fit elicits more positive attitudes toward the CRM program, than the duration of the campaign.
Jahdi (2014)	To determine the basis of conveying the socially responsible image of an organization using the CRM approach.	CRM has the potential to depict a firm as socially responsible entity and improve its stance in the society through a strategic fit between the firm and its cause.
Bae (2018)	To explore how consumers with differing levels of consumer skepticism respond to CRM ad.	Firms self-serving, and public serving motivations, could be used as an effective marketing strategy to reduce consumer skepticism on the firm's motives. Further, consumers' perception and evaluation of the company motives determined the effectiveness of the CRM ad.
Galan-Ladero and Galera-Casquet (2019)	To gain an understanding on the fundamental features and digital technologies used in CRM programs.	There is massive usage of digital technologies in CRM campaigns, with different digital tools combined in the same program, complementing them with the conventional mass media.

attitude toward the company-cause alliance and increases their purchase intentions (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006; Melero & Montaner, 2016).

Another challenge is to address ‘skepticism’, that make consumers doubt the corporate-firm’s motivation in getting involved in the CRM campaign. Consumers who are skeptical about the firm’s motive are likely to doubt the credibility of the brand and perceive CRM is being used for ‘self-benefits/motives’ (Hammad et al. 2014) instead of genuinely supporting the cause (Singh et al., 2009). CRM campaigns also face the risk of the ‘potential benefits backfiring’ if consumers perceive ‘cause’ to be out of line with the corporate behavior, which may even lead to negative publicity, adversely affecting the company’s reputation (Ambrose, 2018). Indeed, consumer evaluation of the corporate motive and company-brand fit with the CRM cause can affect its successful implementation (Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2013). Hence, to overcome consumer skepticism, Broderick, et al (2003); Farache, et al (2008) and Goldsmith and Yimin (2014) suggested bringing a positive change through connections and convincing consumers to get involved in specific causes. Bae (2018) felt an effective marketing strategy to reduce consumer skepticism would require the firm to acknowledge its own self-serving motivation along-with the public-serving motivation. Additionally, Singh et al. (2009) found advertisements can be used to raise awareness on CRM campaigns and repetition of these ads helped to reduce skepticism. Meanwhile, Hammad et al (2014) felt involving independent social media to highlight the role and efforts of the company in the CRM initiative, duly endorsed by a trust worthy institution (like-the ministry for supervision) would help to counter negative association and, consumer skepticism and attitude, towards the company.

Since we are living in the electronic-age companies should use social media to create CRM awareness (Eastman, Smalley & Warren, 2019), multichannel integration to effectively communicate the social benefits of CRM campaigns to their consumers and stakeholders (Network for Good & Zoetica, 2010). Additionally, referring to the current digitalized age, researchers have suggested using digital technologies to improve CRM campaign’s effectiveness. For example, Galan-Ladero, and Galera-Casquet (2019) and Yang and Kang (2019) emphasize on digital information and using of reality-creating technologies in CRM campaigns, while Galan-Ladero, and Galera-Casquet (2019) felt this would help in quick diffusion of the CRM programs and also create global impact.

Thus, while there are many challenges in CRM implementation, as discussed above these could be addressed through identification of suitable partners/alliances, transparency, working at consumer affinity for the social-causes through product-cause-fit, effective involvement of all stakeholders to overcome skepticism and using digital technologies for better CRM campaign’s effectiveness.

CASE STUDIES

"With the rise of social media usage and decline of trust in Corporate America, companies increasingly turn to new online cause marketing initiatives–social good campaigns – to drive consumer interest, link their brands to charity and counterbalance negative PR about social harms that arise as a cost of doing business", state, Network for Good and Zoetica, 2010, p.4). Meanwhile, in India it is reported that more than 60 percent of Indian consumers are concerned about the social impact and effect of products on the society, and prefer their favorite brands to play a much larger role in the society (Social Samosa, 2019), which suggests that the new age consumers are not only concerned about the brand image of the product being purchased but also that it (the product) is of social good.

In line to this, given that cause-related marketing campaigns are used to address various social issues, we propose to discuss two real case studies on CRM campaigns conducted in two different countries, which would help to gain an understanding on the practical aspects of CRM initiatives.

(A) Nestlé India and Nanhi Kali (NPO)'s- "Educate the Girl Child", Project (India)

In 1953, (Late) K.C. Mahindra founded KC Mahindra Education Trust (KCMET) with the objective of promoting literacy and higher learning in India. In 1998, Naandi Foundation was formed as a public charitable trust (NPO). Since 2005, *KCMET* and the *Naandi Foundation* have been working together to support girl child education through Project 'Nanhi Kali'. Seeing millions of Indian families consider girl children as a huge economic burden, and deny them education and equal rights is what led to the initiation of project 'Nanhi Kali'. The main purpose of 'Nanhi Kali' is to provide Indian girls (from low-income and/or otherwise disadvantaged families) access to education opportunities that throw up growth prospects and an upward social mobility.

In 2016, Nestlé India joined hands with Project Nanhi Kali, to launch their cause-related campaign – #EducateTheGirlChild. The main purpose of this partnership was to address the gender inequality visible in the field of education and to change Indian mindsets that held-on to gender role stereotypes, i.e. boys should go to school, and girls should stay at home, do the housework and be married off soon. Thus, the primary objective of this cause-related partnership was "Education of underprivileged girl children". Simultaneously, it wanted to draw attention of the society to the collective responsibility of providing young girls an opportunity to pursue education and feel empowered.

Nestle India and Nanhi Kali (NPO)began by identifying vulnerable girls who faced stiff resistance in pursuing education, provided them the necessary academic material to continue attending school, and alongside the social backing to build-up their morale and develop collectives for self-help. For marketing, the cause-related initiative began with a campaign leveraging digital simple storytelling, to spread the word. This campaign #EducateTheGirlChild conceptualized the projection with a stirring film that showed an adorable little girl chopping off her hair in front of a mirror, while her shocked friend standing nearby asks her the reason (given that little girls love long tresses). The girl innocently replies that by cutting her hair short she was trying to look like her brother, and she was also making efforts to wear clothes like him so as to get a chance to 'pursue education', a privilege extended only to sons/boys.

Additionally, Nestlé brought out thoughtful promotions to promote girl education. It changed the packaging of 100 million of its products available on retail shelves to spread awareness on the important issue of 'girl child education'. Another innovative move saw Nestlé's MAGGI, NESCAFÉ and KITKAT give up their most iconic and recognized brand properties in an attempt to support this cause. MAGGI changed its tag line from "2 minute noodles" to "2 minutes for education", KITKAT changed the visual of the finger snap to one without the break, with the line "No break from education" and NESCAFÉ changed the tagline "It all starts with a NESCAFÉ" to "It all starts with education". This was further reinforced with a blue band which carried more information on the association with the URL of Nanhi Kali.

Since its inception, Project Nanhi Kali has been able to reach out to over 200,000 girls and educate over 120,000 under-privileged girls (BEST MEDIA INFO, 2016). 'Nanhi Kali', is seen as a credible program in the field of girl child education, and by leveraging on the extensive work done by Nanhi Kali, Nestlé India was able to support the cause, become a part of the movement and make the CRM campaign more effective. Incidentally, the partnership with Nanhi Kali further strengthened the "Nestlé Healthy Kids Program" to successfully reach around 100,000 beneficiaries.

Anand Mahindra (Chairman, Mahindra Group) states "This is a path-breaking and innovative partnership between Nestlé India and a non-profit organization, both leaders in their respective field. We believe that supporting girl's education is a national priority and will have a far reaching positive impact on the society. I am sure the new packaging of MAGGI, NESCAFÉ and KITKAT carrying the message to #EducateTheGirlChild, will have the desired impact and help Nanhi Kali put a million girls in school". While, Suresh Narayanan (CMD, Nestlé India) stated "We are changing the packaging of three of our most iconic brands to sensitize and draw attention to the crucial need for society and citizens to embrace our collective responsibility in ensuring that girls are allowed to have access and nurtured with the power of education. Girls having access to education not only improve their own lives but also bring positive changes to their families, communities and economies. This is our belief and conviction as Nestlé India, and a humble way of making a small yet deeply felt contribution to a cause that is important and vital to the Indian society" (Nestlé, n.d).

(Source: BEST MEDIA INFO, 2016; India Today, 2016; Nestlé, n.d; Social Samosa, 2019; Vinaya, 2016).

(B) 'Miracle Balloon Campaign', collaboration between Walmart and Children's Miracle Network Hospitals

Every year more than 10 million kids are required to visit a children's hospital across North America for critical treatments and healthcare services. But, given that Medicaid and insurance programs do not fully cover the cost of care, children's hospitals are often required to depend upon donations and community support to be in a position to provide the best care to all such kids. However, with the concentrated efforts of its four founders, Mick, Joe, John and Marie, the *Children's Miracle Network Hospitals* has been able to raise funds and create awareness for 170 member hospitals that provide treatment to about 32 million children every year across United States and Canada. These four founders dedicated themselves to travel extensively recruit hospitals, TV stations and sponsors, all for the needy children's' health, and by using a simple, business and financial model for their 'Children's Miracle Network Hospitals'. The nonprofit organization's (Children's Miracle Network Hospitals) purposive mission is to save and improve the lives of as many children as possible with the help and support of its fundraising partners and programs.

As a part of the campaign, Children's Miracle Network Hospitals organize various fund raising events such as running a few miles, bidding for fun vacations, or dancing the night away, conducted in partnerships to benefit Nationwide Children's Hospital for what they call the best cause, "*children's health*". Donations are used to fund critical treatments and healthcare services, pediatric medical equipment and charitable care. Since 1983, through Miracle Balloon icon campaigns, Children's Miracle Network Hospitals have been able to fill the funding gaps and raise more than $5 billion.

Although Children's Miracle Network Hospitals have been carrying out their cause-related campaign with various partners, here under we will discuss only about Miracle Balloon icon campaign, involving collaborative-partnership between the retail giant, Walmart and Children's Miracle Network Hospitals for the cause of "children's health". These hospitals use the funds received from the campaign for 'what' is most needed. I.e. to help kids with illnesses that require more funding for research and treatment purposes, support to top therapy programs and provide for charitable care. All the money that is raised goes to their local hospitals to help kids and their families. Furthermore, such cause-related campaigns help families to concentrate on the important issue-"their child's health and wellness".

The cause-related campaigns are conducted in different ways. For instance, in a year for a period of six weeks, Walmart employees solicit donations from their customers at the checkout counter. I.e. if donors are to contribute a dollar or more, they could put their name on a paper Miracle Balloon and place it on the honor wall. Additionally, every year, to reach their goals, Walmart and Sam's Club employees try out creative and innovative fundraising activities at the stores level. In 2018, Walmart launched their 31st annual Miracle Balloon Campaign for benefiting Children's Miracle Network during the period August 27 to September 23, by selling 'balloon icons' to raise funds for the many services and programs at Children's Hospital, Seattle. During that year Walmart and Sam's Club had sought to take their campaign to new heights by making a fundraising goal of $380,000, and alongside to reach a target of $1 billion in total lifetime, by Children's Miracle Network Hospitals across the nation (Acrook, 2018).During their 2017 CRM campaign event Walmart managers were placed in "jail", and for their release the store had to raise a certain level of funds. Similarly, in the past there have been instances when Walmart and Sam's Club employees took to wearing crazy bow ties or hats, worn till the fundraising goal was achieved. In this way Walmart and Children's Miracle Network Hospitals through partnerships have been adopting different ways to make their CRM campaigns more effective, and simultaneously raise funds for the cause of 'children's health'. In fact, during the 2019 CRM campaign period (June 10th to July 7th), Walmart and Sam's Club customers had supported the local Children's Miracle Network Hospital by donating funds at the stores, with the partners successfully raising over $188,000, from all the stores put together.

A primary reason for this cause-marketing campaign being effective is customers are able to see many donors supporting this cause, which motivates them to get involved and participate in the campaign. Moreover, although most of the Walmart and Sam's Club locations participate in the campaign, more focus is given to locations near a Children's Miracle Hospital. This gesture further encourages grateful patients or those whose loved ones have already received care at one of the hospitals to donate towards the cause. This ongoing partnership between Walmart (and Sam's Club) and Children's Miracle Network Hospitals has been successfully running for more than 10 years (now) through the Miracle Balloon icon campaign.

The above case studies have illustrated the practical conduct of CRM campaigns for specific causes, and have been effective due to co-operative efforts and the partnerships between NPO's and the corporate. These CRM campaigns helped to create awareness on certain 'specific' causes, raise funds and also enabled corporate to express their philanthropic side. Additionally, both these CRM campaigns success not only benefited the involved partners but also paved ways to earn good will of the society through initiating ethical consumerism. Furthermore, being philanthropic has added to their corporate image which should help them generate more business in the future.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The main objective of the chapter was to discuss the concept of cause-related marketing with the purpose of examining factors that influence CRM, and also to determine challenges impacting its effectiveness. CRM can be referred to as alliances/ partnerships between businesses and NPO's for social/environmental causes with mutual benefits. Review of prior studies revealed many reasons such as corporate-image enhancement, to raise or donate funds for charitable causes, cause-brand or ethical consumption awareness; provide marketing support for a specific cause, etc. encourage firm's to get engaged in CRM campaigns. While, factors influencing consumer response to CRM *c*ampaigns were found to be: positive attitudes toward NPOs' participating in CRM, emotional involvement with a specific cause, perceived cause/brand fit/credibility in CRM campaigns, compatibility between the cause sponsoring company or brand and the celebrity or sponsored event, etc.

Given that CRM integrates business objectives with social causes, and the many benefits that accrue, e.g. funding opportunities, increase in profits, wider reach, corporate-image enhancement, satisfaction when supporting social causes, competitive advantage, etc. it may seem that CRM is a win-win for involved. However, successful CRM implementation would require addressing various challenges that mar its effectiveness, these would call for: identifying the right partners in cause; using ethical principles of transparency and integrity, developing consumer affinity for the social cause through ensuring retailer cause-brand fit that leads to positive customer evaluation of firm's motives and their purchase intentions, and, alongside partners' involvement in the CRM campaign. Additionally, the socio-cultural dimension in consumers' purchase of CRPs implies that CRM programs can help in making effective and important societal changes. For instance, supporting a social-cause related product can have a powerful impact on shopper's psychology, nurturing the feeling of goodwill between the firm and consumers (specifically targeted audience), and help firms to gain competitive edge by satisfying the growing expectations of societal-oriented contemporary customers. This increases the likelihood of earning customer trust and loyalty in the long run. Of course, to ensure CRM makes a difference, the firm and partners must make collective efforts to focus on *'how* and *why'* cause-brands are engaged. This implies that the corporate should strive to create long term, purpose-driven CRM programs that allow product-cause-brands to do well while doing good, as illustrated in the case studies discussed in the chapter.

When corporate authenticate with the right cause, communicate well-defined, measurable, transparent goals, collaborate with partners relevant to the targeted audience, and establish longstanding sustainable relationships with the right non-profit partners in CRM campaigns/programs, it would encourage positive buying behavior of 'cause-related' products, and, thus go a long way in the CRM campaign's effectiveness.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS:

Brand-Cause Fit: A perceived fit between the sponsoring brand and cause that can impact consumer choice.

Buying Behavior: Refers to consumers' behavior at the marketplace in terms of their attitudes, preferences, intentions, and decisions when purchasing a product or service.

Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) Campaigns: A collaborative partnership between a firm and a nonprofit organization designed for a specific cause or causes that are mutually beneficial to all involved parties.

Consumer Skepticism: Consumer's suspect or distrust or doubt towards the claims made by the firm in relation to marketing of any product, service or communication.

Corporate Philanthropy: The act of a corporate firm or business organization to promote the welfare of others, generally through engaging in charitable donations of funds or time for certain causes for the greater good.

CRM Effectiveness: Evaluating and measuring the success of a CRM campaign in terms of the value added and benefits gained from the cause-driven partnerships.

Mutually Beneficial Partnerships: Refer to relationships among stakeholders based on the themes of mutuality and reciprocity such that all involved benefit from the partnership in a meaningful way, in the interest of the larger shared goals.

Non-Profit Organizations: Privately incorporated groups with a charitable purpose and do not provide financial benefits to their members or stakeholders for the activities they carry out.

Purchase Intentions: The willingness of a customer to perform a specific behavior such as to buy a certain product or service.

Social Causes: Issues or problems that affect/influences many individuals within a society and people strive to solve the same.

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