

## Environment impact assessment of retail outlets and their influence on consumer buying behaviour- with reference to Lucknow City

<sup>1</sup> Arpit Shailesh, <sup>2</sup> Dr Taruna

<sup>1</sup> PhD (Management) Research Scholar, School for Management Studies, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow, India.

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, School for Management Studies, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow, India.

### Abstract

In creating a confirmatory atmosphere to a retail outlet, Environment plays a very important role. A pronounced influence on the modern consumer is of the visuals of the retail store (exterior or interior). A demanding task for Indian retail is posed by the modern consumer. This research makes it easier to understand the forthcoming trading trends in terms of stores design, architectural makeover, stores layout, which, hence, leads to understand the buying perception between customers. The aim of this study is to check the dependency of stores on environment in attracting customers. It stresses on the importance of retail environment as a mechanism for the sales to increase. The study of retail environment may be helpful for the managers to plan and incorporate customer value strategies in setting up retail stores. The study braces that stores environment plays a major role in luring customers and is leading factor for creating the brand image of the store.

Research findings indicate that environmental variables such as entrance, cleanliness, floor spaces, store layout, ventilation, and mercantile display have a positive influence on consumers' purchase intention; whereas color, lighting and music do not have any significant impact on consumers' purchase intention. The temperature nearly has no impact on the consumers' purchase intention. This study has signification insinuation for Academicians and Practitioners.

**Keywords:** Need Recognition, Information Search, Evaluation of Alternatives, Pre-purchase.

### 1. Introduction

Philip Kotler in the year 1973 gave the term atmospherics in the journal named "Journal of Retailing". Anything inside a retail store that is intended to affect the perception towards buying and consumer's attitude is referred to as Retail Environment comprising of the use of lightning, decors, designs, music or colors. The basic objective of all of this is to involve all the senses of the consumers to lure them to purchase. Retail environment is basically based upon a psychology of the customers in relation to use triggers to tell people to stay in the store or to make a purchase from the store. The appearance of the stores also plays an important role in tempting customers through the doors. It can be said that environment is a determination to create a brand image of the store leading to purchases by customers. The buying behavior of the consumer depends on the physical characteristics of the store.

The environment of the stores involves brand design which continuously throws brand messages that the consumer looks for throughout the shopping period. The retail atmosphere is planned in order to create an image of the store. Another observation related to stores environment communicate that it is not only planned to make purchases or create a positive image but it also makes differentiated from the competitors and creates an adaptive brand value.

### Objectives of Retail Environment

- Providing customer's easy and positive environment with proper music, lighting and decors.

- Designing the stores in such a way that customers enjoy their shopping.
- Maximizing the space of the store through proper layout so that it does not lead to congestion.

### Types of Retail Environment

#### Retail environment is classified as

1. External Environment: External Atmospherics includes all those things which are at the outer side of the store and lures the customers with the entrance of the store, parking facilities and display windows and other basic necessities.
2. Internal Environment: On the other hand, internal environment involves the internal elements like lightning, flooring spaces, entrance, layout of the outlet, merchandise displays, ventilation, crowd density, music, ambience, decorations, flooring etc.

The Mehrabian Russel is a classic model which is useful to various researchers for reference. The model studies about Organism (O) – Stimuli (S) – Response (R). In Organism (O) - Stimuli (S)- Response (R), it is assumed that stimuli are the combination of various elements of stores which are external to the person (Bagozzi, 1986). Organism refers to the state of internal processes which lies between the stimuli and the responses (Bagozzi, 1986). This concludes that through the effects of atmospherics on consumer their emotional state can be known.

Turley and Miliman presented S-O-R model in the year 2004 which constituted five variables in Atmospheric Stimuli (Stimulus), after the Mehrabian and Russel Model. The five variables involve interior display, exteriors, interiors, human

variables, and store layout affecting the emotional state (Organism) of the employees and the customers which results in the responsive behavior of the customers (Response).

### Literature Review

Levy & Weitz (2009) when consumers recognize that they have an unsatisfied need, then the process of buying in a retail environment is generated. While shopping for fun, the environment of shopping and its effects on emotions of the consumers influences the choice of entering a particular store, how much time to pass in the store and to purchase or not to purchase. Subsequently, a retailer designs his shops so as to attract customers, easily locate their retail and also offering a satisfactory shopping experience.

Subhashini Kaul, (2006) the various measures of store patronage and its antecedents; store loyalty, was examined. The author concluded that consumers would display greater patronage behaviour for groceries as compared to garments, more for garments as compared to furniture etc. In any of the cases, exclusive shopping at a single store is not possible. Loyalty is the prime objective that every retailer or marketer targets for with his elements of marketing mix.

Wakefield & Baker (1998) [31] proved that the possibility of customers staying longer in the store increases because of atmospheric inducement. When a consumer feels satisfied from the store's retail environment, he spends much more time in a particular store and buys more because of the pleasant environmental inducements (Bohl, 2012) [11]. The environment has a huge impact on the satisfaction and emotion of the consumers. The remarkable atmosphere of the retail chain outlets increases the customers' satisfaction level and purchase experience (Silva & Giraldi, 2010).

Hampton, Rammohan, Grossbart, and Lapidus (1990) [4] researched about the customer behaviour, mostly among those with higher incentive looking for pleasure-seeking or sympathy is dependent on the atmospheric uniqueness of the area of shopping.

Rossiter and Donovan (1982) [3] brought in the concept of environmental psychology to marketing research; the effect of environmental cues on customer behaviour has been broadly discussed in the scientific literature. The basic model of Rossiter and Donovan assumes Stimulus Organism-Response taxonomy, where the environment (stimulus) has an influence on the emotional states of customers along three dimensions, arousal, pleasure or dominance (organism). These act as middleman on the response, which is a performance characterized as approaching or avoiding (Mehrabian & Russell 1974, Woodworth 1928).

Martinean (1958) The Store Image was studied by the way back in the 1950s. As a shopper has of oneself similarly Martinean linked store images to the images. He called Store image 'as personality of the store or its image. According to him, the store is defined in the shoppers' mind, partly by the quality of its psychological attributes by its functional qualities and partly. He lists functional attributes such as price ranges, and merchandise selection, location. He illustrates the psychological characteristics leading to the creation of store image as: symbols (emblems) and colors, advertising, layout and architecture of the store, and sales personnel of the stores.

### Problem of the Study

Now-a-days consumers are more demanding and sensitive than before. Consumers need friendly and fast service and pleasing

environment on their own terms each time they enter the store. If the consumers do not get these services friendly and fast, they will abandon going to that particular store and search for another store which offers these convenient, fast and better services.

### Objectives of the Study

- To study the importance of retail environment affecting the attitude of the consumers and view towards purchasing.
- To study the impact of the environment of the stores on brand image of the retail outlets.
- To identify the consumer's behavior in outlets of retail.
- To study the relationship between the image of the retail outlet and the stores environment.

### Research Methodology

It was basically a quantitative research which has been carried for the determination of knowing the retailing trends and changes due to exteriors and interiors of the store, in opinions of the consumers. For the collection of the data, Survey Method is engaged. Survey is directed in the retail outlets of Lucknow city. A questionnaire was prepared containing 10 questions containing closed and open ended questions as well. The scope of the study is restricted to few selected retail outlets of Lucknow i.e. Max, Globus, Shoppers Stop and Pantaloons. People were selected on the basis of convenience and judgement. Data The collection of data was done by visiting these stores several times at different timings interpreting more and less crowded conditions.

**Questionnaire:** A well-structured questionnaire was prepared in significance to the objectives of the study. Different questions were arranged in such a way that field information was collected from the customers on their perception towards the environment of shopping stores and their preferences for the stores.

Questionnaire contains two types of questions

- Open Ended
- Closed Ended

Open Ended Questions are used for exploratory study. Closed ended questions used for quantitative research.

### Population

The population targeted in this study are all the customers who shop at retail stores in the Lucknow city. A comparison amid various educational levels, gender and age were also considered since the researcher believes that these factors could also influence the results of the research.

### Sample Size

The sample of study is 200 respondents.

### Tools Used

The method of correlation is applied to calculate the dependability among variables. Further t-test is applied to check the hypothesis statistically.

### Data Analysis and Findings

Marketers understand that attractive environment of a store is a chief attribute of the shopping experience that can easily effect consumer's decision to visit the store (Kotler 1973-

1974). The cues of the environment of stores like lighting, music, color, crowding, smell, storefront and windows display plays a vital role in perception of the customers and in the store's evaluation. Stores with pleasant arousing atmospheres are likely to contribute to the overall image of the store and affect the behaviour of the consumer in a positive way. (Chebat and Sirgy, 2010)

In this study, a remarkable impact has been found on the attitude of the consumers due to interior environment or the retail stores. As seen in a number of previous studies, including those of Kotler (1973-1974), Yalch and Spangenberg (1990), Crawley (1993) and Babin and Darden (1995) [5, 7, 1], environment of the store has become an important tool to lift the mood of the customers influencing them to buy more. The study has spotted that numerous factors contribute to the environment of the store like lighting, decorations, music, color etc.

### Store traffic and crowd density

The foundation for operations is the store's layout. Therefore, when the goal is to improve store's performance, conducting a traffic flow analysis is a good step to take. This tool is useful in scheduling the current arrangements into a simpler reorganization or remodelling it. The analysis is also useful after a remodel when the motive is to fine tune. The strengths and weaknesses of the layout can be examined by the retailer, via establishing shopping patterns of the customers. This analysis is easy to conduct on any scale be it large or small encircling the any one department or the whole store. The results would be very clear and will help in taking decisions accordingly. Overall, the main objective of conducting a traffic flow analysis is to determine methods to use layout and merchandising techniques to enhance sales, making it easier to shop and run the store, enhance the store's appearance and making shopping more fun (Quinn and Stewart, 2007).

**Table 1:** Store crowd density

Response	No. of Respondents	% age
Strongly agree	36	18%
Agree	48	24%
Uncertain	29	14.5%
Disagree	52	26%
Strongly Disagree	35	17.5%
Total	200	100%

The store attracts customers by crowd

**Interpretation:** 17.5% of the respondents have strongly disagreed that the crowd in retail stores in the Lucknow city lures consumers, whereas 26% of the respondents disagreed, 14.50% were uncertain, 24% agreed and 18% strongly agreed. The results, therefore suggest that 43% of the respondents agreed that retail stores in the Lucknow city do not lure the customers by crowd in the store.

### Merchandise Display

As per Zentes *et al.* (2007: 209), Merchandise display, is a term which is repeatedly used in relation to in-store marketing. It refers to the way of presentation of the products in a retail store. While this term has been used with an emphasis on merchandise display it relates to overall store layout, store design and other facets of the environment of store. Hence, it

is often used synonymously with the design component of in-store marketing.

**Table 2:** Merchandise Display

Response	No. of Respondents	% age
Strongly agree	55	27.50%
Agree	81	40.50%
Uncertain	27	13.50%
Disagree	25	12.50%
Strongly Disagree	12	06%
Total	200	100%

I encounter problems with merchandise display in this store

**Interpretation:** Table 2 reflects that 6.00% of respondents from the retail stores in Lucknow city strongly disagreed that they encountered any problems with merchandise display in stores, 12.5% disagreed, whereas, 13.5% were uncertain, 40.5% agreed and 27.50% strongly agreed. Therefore, a majority, that is, 68.25% of the respondents encountered problems in convenience stores of merchandise display. Therefore, it can be assumed that, since customers are encountering problems with merchandise display, patronage of retail stores would have negative impact. The outcomes bind up with the trends witnessed by Paulins and Geistfeld that most trade stores are poorly ostensible with respect to interior displays and exterior appearance. Hence, the result suggests that merchandise display in stores is an important factor in influencing customers to spend time in retail stores.

### Adequacy of the passageway width

**Table 3:** illustrates responses on adequacy of passageways widths from respondents in Lucknow city

Response	No. of Respondents	%age
Strongly agree	24	12%
Agree	25	12.50%
Uncertain	24	12%
Disagree	83	41.50%
Strongly Disagree	44	22%
Total	200	100%

I find the passageway width adequate

**Interpretation:** Table 3 shows that 22% of respondents from the retail store in the Lucknow city strongly disagreed that the passageway width in stores are adequate, 41.50% disagreed, 12% were uncertain, whereas, 12.50% agreed, and 12% strongly agreed. The results, therefore, indicate that 63.25% of the respondents did not find the adequate passageway width at retail store adequate. Therefore, the results might have an impact on the store layout, traffic, design and merchandise display. Byron (2007) supports the results by emphasising that well designed passageways helps in better understanding consumer's behaviour and makes fast testing of new products, more precise and more convenient. This finding is an indication that passageway width is an important factor in the customers shopping process.

### Store Floor Space

Floor space shows how in-store communications and store design make shopping trips easier and more fun for both children and parents. Stores can also enhance the communication of their values by strong departments using better point of sale (POS), memorable window displays, and

personal touches to increase customer loyalty, highlighting prices, graphics and age ranges in busy areas.

**Table 4:** Adequacy of the floor space

Response	No. of Respondents	% age
Strongly agree	39	19.50%
Agree	41	20.50%
Uncertain	16	8.00%
Disagree	76	38%
Strongly Disagree	28	14%
Total	200	100%

I find the floor space adequate

**Interpretation:** Table 4 shows that 14% of the respondents from the stores in Lucknow city strongly disagreed that they found floor space adequate in the retail stores, 38% disagreed, 8% were uncertain, whereas, 20.50% agreed, and 19.50% strongly agreed. The results, therefore, indicate that a major portion (52%) of the respondents found the floor space of the retail stores in Lucknow city inadequate. As noted in the study, Floor Ideas (2008) authenticate that the look and feel of a store might influence the amount of time spend by the consumers in the store and even the urges them to purchase. Floor space prove to directly affect the consumer’s moods, especially when it comes to shopping, which will have a big influence because of the area it covers. Therefore, it is suggested that floor space of retail stores has great impact on store’s design and layout.

### Store Ventilation System

Ventilation of buildings significantly depends on how we use the indoor environment, also affecting, comfort health and productivity of the retail consumers. Firstly, we should not sacrifice consumers’ health and comfort while shopping, before measuring ventilation of the stores. There is, therefore, a necessity for ventilation system for the indoor environment of the stores for retail design, and to enhance shopping conditions (Olesen, 2006: 445). As per Hayter *et al.* (2000: 3), the retail sector is slow in adopting methods of sustainable building for various reasons. These reasons include an aspiration to construct retail building quickly without planning for the ventilation system, so that the profits start incurring without affecting the sales. Retailers have great knowledge on how to ensure the profits of the store by controlling level of lighting and other elements related to the store. Most retailers are unwilling to integrate ventilation systems into their stores because of the risk of reduction in profits. Incorporating ventilation systems in the stores provide the greatest opportunities to reduce cost of energy and results in improving the shopping morale.

**Table 5:** Level of satisfaction about store ventilation systems

Response	No. of Respondents	%age
Strongly agree	13	6.50%
Agree	23	11.50%
Uncertain	26	13%
Disagree	81	40.50%
Strongly Disagree	57	28.50%
Total	200	100%

The ventilation system is satisfactory

**Interpretation:** Table 5 indicates 28.50% of respondents from retail stores in Lucknow city strongly disagreed about their level of satisfaction with the retail stores’ ventilation systems, 40.50% disagreed, 13% were uncertain, whereas 11.50%

agreed and 6.50% strongly agreed. From the results, it can be found that most customers (68.5%) are not satisfied with the ventilation systems of retail stores in the Lucknow city. Moreover, as per Miranda *et al.* (2005:220) proposes that a number of store image which were studied determined that store’s ventilation system and services provided by them contribute a lot to the intention of the customers to return back. Pan *et al.* (2008: 95) further contended that well-functioned air-conditioning and comfortable lighting system act as hygiene aspects that are important and increase satisfaction level of customer. Above all, the results states that most of the respondents are not gratified with the ventilation systems of the stores.

### Music and Lighting

The store retailers use background music in orders to improve the atmosphere of their stores. The music influences the outlooks of the buyers toward the store, the seller. The visit to the store is kerbed by logical processes like number of thoughts and depth of processed information). As predicted, both low arousing and pleasant music helps to enhance the logical activity when other intellectual motivation is low. Nevertheless, sellers are warned that increasing perceptive activity is no remedy since higher perceptive activity is connected with lesser attitudes in this case. It is anticipated that music fit with the store may describe such outcomes. Music fit and intellectual processes activated by store music are strongly recommended as avenues of store surroundings.

**Table 6:** Perceptions about music in store and lighting

Response	No. of Respondents	%age
Strongly agree	27	13.50%
Agree	37	18.50%
Uncertain	11	5.50%
Disagree	67	33.50%
Strongly Disagree	58	29%
Total	200	100%

The store provides adequate lighting and music

**Interpretation:** Overall 200 respondents were interviewed, where 29% strongly disagreed that retail stores in Lucknow city provide appropriate lighting, while 33.50% of the respondents disagreed, 5.5% were uncertain, whereas 18.50% agreed and 13.50% strongly agreed. The results, hence, imply that a major portion (62.5%) of the respondents find that retail stores did not provide proper music. In support, Hoyle (2003:149) verifies that lighting and music has the potential to intensely affect the sales for any retail environment of any store. Through music and lighting floor traffic increases, helps in creating visual interest and also directs people to the store. This outcome confirms the significance of lighting and music in the store towards store’s benefaction and merchandise display.

### Store Entrances

Retailers often sidetrack the positive contribution of store’s entrances and exit points can add up to their success. Thus, it would be a wise decision to spend much portion on through-the-line and below the line strategies. An important challenge is to develop an environment where the consumer identifies a one-to-one relationship with the store; to improve the time of the consumers; and by giving consideration to it, retailers will be delivering an experience the consumers will think of visiting the store again. (Soars, 2003: 628)



**Table 7:** Preference of store entrance and exit points

Preferences	No. of Respondents	%age
One narrow entrance serving as both entrance and exit point	4	2.00%
One big entrance serving as both entrance and exit points	86	46.00%
One separate entrance and one separate exit point	60	30.00%
Different entrances e.g. south & east serving as both entrance and exit points	44	22.00%
Total	200	100%

**Interpretation:** With respect to the store's entrance and exit points, 22% preferred different entrances e.g. East and South serving as both entrance and exit points, 30% preferred a separate exit and entrance points, 46% of the respondents prefer one big gate which serves as both exit and entrance points and 2% of the respondents prefer only one narrow gate which serves as both exit and entrance points. Thus, it can be presumed that a store entrance also is a factor affecting store traffic.

Interpretation: With respect to the best components of a good store layout, 26.50% of the respondents viewed good store entrances as the best components, whereas 35.50% observed good merchandise display to be one of the best component, although easy accessibility accounted for 11.50% and store appearance accounted for 26.50%. Good merchandise display was regarded as the best component of a good store layout.

**Table 8:** Best components of a good store layout

Preferences	No. of Respondents	%age
Easy Accessibility	23	11.50%
Store appearance	53	26.50%
Good merchandise display	71	35.50%
Good store Entrances	53	26.50%
Total	200	100%

Best components of a good store layout

**Table 10:** Comparison of Environment across four retailers

Stores/Response	No. of Respondents	%age	No. of Respondents	%age	No. of Respondents	%age	No. of Respondents	%age
	Excellent		Good		Poor		Total	
Max	13	26%	30	60%	07	14%	50	100%
Pantaloons	34	68%	11	22%	05	10%	50	100%
Globus	30	60%	14	28%	16	32%	50	100%
Shoppers Stop	28	56%	21	42%	01	02%	50	100%

The above table shows the comparison among different retail shops in terms of environment of the store. It can be deduced that Pantaloons has gained the largest percentage (68%) among

### Decorations

A beauty is created by decorations and also it communicates the image of the store. Decorations of a store should be as such so as to attract the buyers and giving customers a pleasant environment. It communicates value of the store and thus brings in uniqueness to the store.

**Table 9:** Decorations in a store

Response	No. of Respondents	%age
Strongly agree	59	29.50%
Agree	71	35.50%
Uncertain	24	12%
Disagree	36	18%
Strongly Disagree	10	05%
Total	200	100%

**Interpretation:** Decorations in the store is as important as other things as strongly agreed by 29.5% and 35.5% agreed on the fact where as 12% were uncertain, of the people while 23% think it as a non- considerable factor by responding 18% and 5% for Disagree and Strongly Disagree. But the fact is that without decoration and arrangements a customer would not be attracted towards the stores

**Table 11:** Purchases made by Consumers

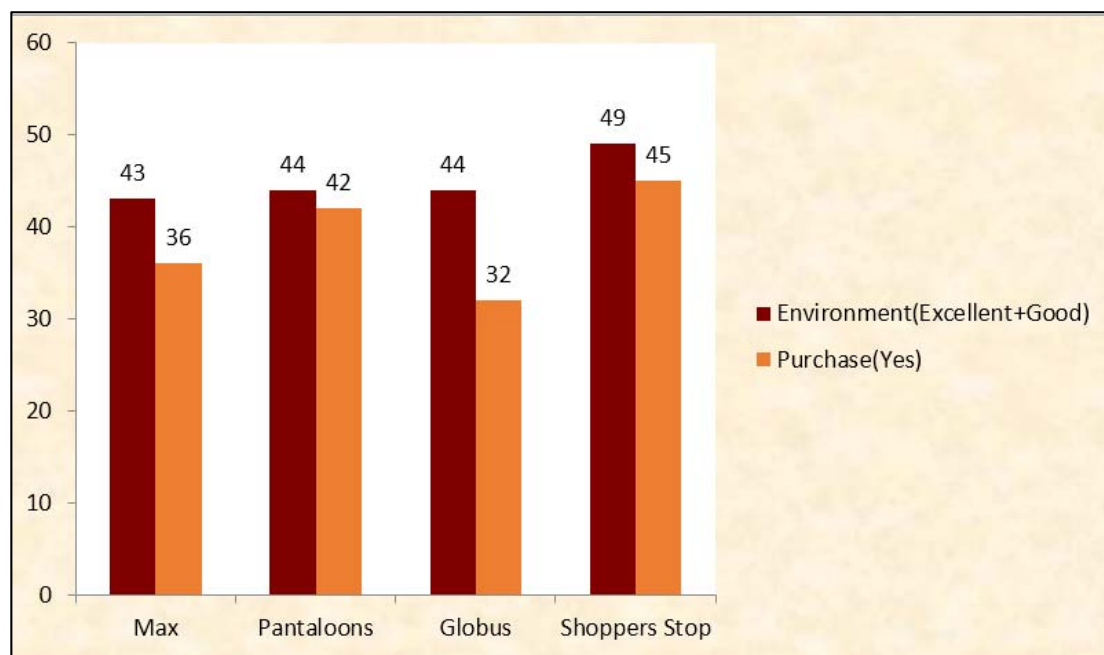
Stores/Response	Yes		No		Total	
	No. of Respondents	%age	No. of Respondents	%age	No. of Respondents	%age
Max	36	72%	14	28%	50	100%
Pantaloons	42	82%	08	16%	50	100%
Globus	32	64%	18	36%	50	100%
Shoppers Stop	45	90%	05	10%	50	100%

Table 11 shows purchases made by consumers due the environment of the store. Many people think that yes the environment of the store is a factor for making purchase from a particular retail store. It is not that the brand image but also the interior and exterior environment plays a significant role. The above figure shows a combined data of atmospherics

all the above. Also, people are less attracted with the environment of Max. After Pantaloons, Globus is considered to have a pleasant environment of store.

(Excellent + Good) and purchases made by consumers (Yes). It can be concluded that the more will be the purchases, if the store's environment is better. Shoppers Stop is measured to have the best atmospherics and thus the purchases made by the consumers are also high. On the other hand, Max lacks behind and therefore, the consumers also purchase less.

**Fig 1:** Effect of Environment on Consumer Purchases



### Hypotheses

- Environment of retail store does not affect the purchases of the customers.
- Environment of retail store affect the purchase of customers.

Through the research it has been deduced that the customers do acknowledge the environment of the store while purchasing and also it is the main factor in luring the customers.

From the above hypotheses, two variables are obtained: Environment and Consumer Purchases. The responses for this parameter are taken in terms of —Good, for Environment (The sum of response Excellent and good is taken) and yes for Consumer Purchases (Table 11). The Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation at + 0.991 establishes an almost perfectly positive correlation between environment and Consumer Purchases of the store. It can be answered that the more attractive the atmospherics in a store the more purchases made by consumers. Further t-test is applied to test the hypothesis. The calculated t-value at 15.622 is greater than the table value at 95% confidence level i.e., 12.676. Therefore, the hypothesis: Environment of retail store affect the purchase of customers is accepted.

### Conclusion

The success of key for any Retail Store is Globalization and Westernization. The major objective of conducting this research was to identify the impact of environment variables on the consumer purchase intention in the Retail outlets of Lucknow. This research examined the impact of crowd density; merchandise display; passageway width; store floor space; store ventilation system; music and lighting; store entrance; store layout has significant impact on purchase intention of consumers.

The research paper concludes that proper store's environment leads to increase in sales. The exterior and interior environment of the store is the only to lure the customers. The styles and the needs of the customers are increasing everyday that is why the retailers need to stress on the environment of the store to meet

the challenges of the customers and even competitors. It is well understood by the research conducted in the city of Lucknow that store's environment does play an important role in influencing consumers. The environment of the store should be consistently improved which helps in Retail Outlets. In turn it will lead to the increase in satisfaction of the consumer.

### Recommendation for Future Research

It is suggested that further study should be done of a qualitative nature that will discover, more about store's layout at convenience stores and its impact on purchasing behaviour of the consumer. This study was made limited to Lucknow city only. Future research, which would be done, should cover either significant number of large and small cities or whole country to have a wider outlook of behaviour of the consumers in India. Relatively large sample should be used while conducting future researches. Comrey & Andrew (1992) anticipated that one thousand respondents or more than that is considered as an excellent sample size. Similarly, it was observed that some respondents wanted to say more about the layout of the store and their behaviour of purchasing, but the questionnaire was not designed in that manner that it allowed the respondents to elaborate.

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