

Approval Form

The undersigned certify that they have supervised the student Kudakwashe Takawira's dissertation titled "The effects of store environments on customer buying behaviour, a case of the Midlands Spar", submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the bachelor of commerce Honours degree in Retail and Logistics Management at Midlands State University.

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Declaration

I, Kudakwashe Takawira do hereby declare that this research represents my own work, and that it has never been previously submitted for a degree at this or any other university.

.....

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Student`s signature

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Release form

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Dissertation title: Effects of store environments on customer buying behaviour. A case of the Midlands Spar

Degree title: Retail and Logistics Management

Year this degree granted: 2014

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved family, and friends for believing so greatly in me and in the potential that I have to achieve greatness. I want to continue making you proud.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to give my heart-felt appreciation to Mr. O. Manjengwa my dissertation supervisor who sacrificed a lot to make and enable me to come up with this wonderful piece of work. His professional expertise, enthusiasm and commitment to supervising my work was excellent.

Furthermore, I would like to thank all respondents in the retail sector for spending their valuable time for accepting my interviews, questionnaires and sharing information to make this study successful. I also extend my gratitude to the Midlands Spar Manager Mr. E Daramanzi for his commitment and advice during my data collection phase

Finally, I extend my gratitude to my family, school mates and loved ones for their unwavering support. My special thanks are also directed to Kudzie Nyaira, Mrs RS machekano, Mrs S Mashingaidze and Tawanda Takawira. They stood as a jewel and a pillar of strength in my life. Being loved and supported by them made me complete my research.

Abstract

The research investigated the effects of store environments on the buying behavior of customers. Its main objective is to explore the effects of the physical components of the store environment on customer buying behavior. Literature was reviewed guided by given objectives and gaps were noted as the literature flows. The type of research design used in this study was exploratory, making use of a qualitative approach and a communicative technique of interviews. Data collection instruments used in the research includes questionnaires, interviews as well as published documents. Questionnaires targeted customers at Midlands Spar supermarket in Gweru. The researcher used random sampling technique to select the customers in who were shopping at Midlands Spar. Interviews targeted key informants that are the two senior managers at the supermarket. Key informants were selected using purposive sampling. It was found that the physical elements of a store environment which are the ambient factors, designs, people and technology do have the ability to influence consumers in either a subconscious or a conscious way. This had a direct influence on the amount of time that consumers will spend in store and ultimately influences their buying decisions and behaviors either positively or negatively, meaning that the consumers' will display either an approach- or avoidance behavior.

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Definition of Terms

Store environment

the multiple décor elements—lighting effects, sounds, aromas, sights, textures—that appeal to the five senses and contribute to the brand image and overall surroundings of the retail store. *(Kiser 2013)*

Customer behavior

It is the study of consumers and the processes they use to choose, use (consume), and dispose of products and services. www.marketingteacher.com

Store atmosphere

It can best be defined as the physical characteristics and surrounding influence of a retail store that is used to create an image in order to attract customers.

Atmospherics

The physical characteristics of a store that are used to develop an image in order to attract consumers (Berman & Evans, 2010)

Ambience:

The “overall feeling or mood projected by a store through its aesthetic appeal to human senses” (Dunne & Lusch, 2008).

Chapter One

General introduction

1.1.0. Introduction

This chapter outlines the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives and research questions, significance of the study, delimitations, and also limitations of the study

1.2.0. Background to the study

Competition, technology and creativity have greatly impacted the modern day retailing in an amazing manner. These factors have greatly influenced and encouraged heavy innovation among retailers as they scramble for huge chunks of market share, profitability as well as survival. It is in this light that retailers have turned to focus on the Retail Store Environment as one of the possible options to help them achieve their business objectives.

The main aim of this study is to help provide an insight into how the atmospherics of a retail environment influence shopping behavior. The buying process in a retail environment is triggered when consumers recognize that they have an unsatisfied need. Especially when shopping for fun, the decision to enter a particular store, how much time to spend inside, and to buy or not to buy is heavily influenced by the shopping environment and its effect on customers' emotions.

According to Levy & Weitz 2009, retailers design their shops so that customers are attracted, locate merchandise easily, motivate unplanned purchases, and offer a satisfying shopping experience. Heavy and more new players are penetrating the retail industry on a daily basis and customer retention remains of great importance to retailers such as the Midlands Spar. People always bear a great weakness of attempting to judge books basing on their covers and this re-emphasize the fact t that general looks stimulates and ignites an evaluative behavior in the minds of beholders. Thus, a concept of retail store environment remains an issue, critical to retailers as it has the ability to cultivate internal and external impressions that help attracts customers.

1.3.0. Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to explore the influence of Physical components of store environment that affects customer buying behavior and thus, the research will be undertaken basing on the following objectives:

- To determine the effects of ambient factors on customer buying behavior
- To find out the effects of design factors on customer buying behavior
- To determine the effect of social factors on customer buying behavior
- To determine the effects of technological factors on customer buying behavior

1.4.0. Statement of the Problem

What are the effects of store environments on customer buying behavior?

1.5.0. Research questions

As a result of this study, various questions will remain in need of answering. Several areas may be examined. A few are listed below:

- How do ambient factors affect customer buying behavior?
- What are the effects of design factors on customer buying behavior?
- What is the influence of social factors on customer buying behavior?
- What is the impact of Technological factors on customer shopping experience and behavior?

1.6.0. Significance of the Study

Store environment is one of the most crucial elements in the success of a retailer. It is one of the marketing strategies adopted by innovators and marketers in order to arouse the feelings of customers to make the shopping experience more interesting, exciting, fun and more appealing

One European study found that 87% of Hungarian retailers consider the styles, colors and size of their shop an important part of tactical marketing (Bohl 2012). This factor alone shows how great store environment is towards an overall retail success.

1.6.1. To the Retailers

As a result of this, it is worthwhile to conduct a research which may give further light on this aspect of retail marketing. This study may also help evaluate the relationship between the retail environment and customer buying behavior. It may also look on the customer evaluation, purchasing decisions as well as the cost, profitability and competitive benefits posed by store environment on the retailers. Above all, this study may also be of great significance in the sense that it will take a broad review of retail environmental atmospherics and their limitations to the retail organization. The research may also help the retailers in the following ways:-

- The research may help the supermarket to identify ways and improving its store environment
- The Company may be in a position to note the challenges in their current retail environments

1.6.2. To the Customers

Knowledge of store environmental importance may trigger retailers and managers to tackle this concept more seriously. Such a move is likely to be succeeded by a wave of readjustments of activities that might cause shopping experience more enjoyable, fun and more pleasurable.

1.6.3. To the University

This research is also important to the academic world, when it is done it can be posted on the internet on websites like Emerald Insights or answers.com so that students researching on related topics can have a starting point. Students may also be able to appreciate and also gain an insight into the efforts which are being taken by companies in trying to gain market leadership and realization of profits. This research may also help in exposing the practical view point of the industry and commerce to students. Most of the undergraduate students know the theories but they do not have experience of how the strategies are implemented so this may add to the literature that they can refer to as far as the practical aspect of the retail environment is concerned.

1.6.4. To the researcher

Submitted to the Midlands State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the bachelor of commerce honors degree in Retail and Logistics Management, it keeps the researcher up to date with relevant information and experience in the field of retailing.

1.7.0. Limitations

The research will be confined and limited to one organization that is the Midlands Spar and therefore not geographically representative. This research will be done by inexperienced students who have minimal knowledge of industry and commerce. The fact that a non-probability purposive sampling method was used in this study can itself be seen as a limitation, as the findings cannot be generalised to the greater population. It would therefore be advisable for future researchers to select a more representative sample. This is also the first time the researcher may have written a proposal and they have very little knowledge of how to best tackle the subject. To try and solve this problem they had to consult other experienced individuals in the industry to help fill in the gaps they however fell short. These colleagues in the industry may also help to create solutions to identified problems

1.8.0. Delimitations

The research was carried out at Midlands Spar from a period of May to September 2014. The study looked at physical components of the store environment namely the ambience, designs, social factors and technology.

1.9.0. Summary

This chapter has given an insight to the background to the study, the objectives of the study as well as the research problem and the importance of the study. Also discussed are the assumptions and significance of the study.

Chapter Two

Literature review

2.1.0. Introduction

Literature review intends to provide a broader picture to the study under review by looking at the surrounding literature by other scholars on the subject matter. Its core objective is to highlight the extent to which the existing theories do compliment the subject. Literature review will focus on the presentation of the statement of the problem, main research objective, specific objectives and research questions.

2.2.0. Store environments

Customers are becoming more and more evaluative as more and more options are becoming available to them. This is due to a rapid expansion of the whole retail industry at large. And In a battle to win customer loyalty and influence their buying behaviors, retailers are now embarking on the retail environment which is the real and absolute source of cues used by customers in their purchasing decisions and evaluations

Store Environment can be defined as “the physical characteristics and surrounding influence of a retail store that is used to create an image in order to attract customers.” (Waters 2014). Kissler (2013) is very specific in his definition by describing the store environment as the real multiple décor elements—lighting effects, sounds, aromas, sights, textures—that appeal to the five senses and contribute to the brand image and overall surroundings of the retail store. It is these elements that Bohl (2012) asserted as giving cues to customers that help them make purchasing evaluations and their buying behavior.



FIG 2. 1: a good store environment

SOURCE: <http://www.blit-supermarket-by-rkd-retail-iq-shenzhen-02.jpg>

2.2.1. Physical environmental components that affects buying behavior

Components of the Physical Store Environment

<p>Ambient Factors</p>	<p>Background conditions that exist below the level of our immediate awareness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Air Quality Temperature Humidity Circulation/Ventilation ● Noise (Level/Pitch) ● Scent ● Cleanliness
<p>Design Factors</p>	<p>Stimuli that exist at the forefront of our awareness</p>	<p>Aesthetic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Architecture Color Style ● Materials Decor ● Scale Shape ● Texture, Pattern <p>Functional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Layout ● Comfort ● Signage ● Accessories
<p>Social Factors</p>	<p>People in the Environment</p>	<p>Audience (Other Customers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number, Appearance, ● Behavior <p>Service Personnel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number, Appearance, ● Behavior

FIG 2.2: Components of the Physical Store Environment

SOURCE: Patrick Bohl (2012:6)

2.3.0. Effects of Ambient factors on customer buying behavior

2.3.1. Ambient Factors

Ambient factors are background conditions that exist below the level of the customers' immediate awareness. According to Levy and Weitz (2009), store atmosphere/ ambient factors are referred to as the attributes that actually strive to intensify the store environment with a combination of different cues such as lighting, color, music, and scent. Masson, Morris and Wilkinson (1993), acknowledge that ambient factors are psychogenic variables which are highly impalpable and are therefore hard to quickly remember and that these variables (i.e. scent, color, music and lighting etc.), are critical in influencing and shaping behavior. These factors stimulate customers to behave in a certain way upon entering a store environment. Baker in (Bohl, 2012) identified the ambient factors to include elements such as air quality, noise, scent and cleanliness as having a less motivating impact on a customer purchasing decisions by merely meeting customer expectations but extremely high ambient factors like too much noise or extremely high or extremely low temperatures may actually result in an avoidance behavior. There is however some argued exceptions when extreme levels may cause an impact to purchasing behavior for example a tantalizing aroma may attract customers to a Deli.

A store that induces feelings of alertness and excitement leads to :

- more enjoyment when shopping in the store,
- increased time spent browsing and exploiting the store's offerings,
- more interactions with the store personnel,
- a greater propensity to spend more money than initially budgeted and
- An increased likelihood of returning to the store (future patronage)"

2.3.2. Air Quality

There are three main elements of weather that shapes up the quality of air. The elements include temperature, humidity and ventilation/ circulation. These have a on the buying or avoidance behavior on customers if poorly met.

- **Temperature**

Temperature as a sensory expression is registered by consumers' receptors as either warm or cold. Whether a product or an in-store atmosphere is considered warm or cold is essential for the touch experience. For instance, when a person goes to a coffee shop he/she expects the cup of coffee to be warm; otherwise the experience can turn out to be negative. The same applies to almost all types of industries, especially in the apparel, grocery and restaurant industries. If consumers perceive a retail store to be either too warm or too cold, an unacceptable atmosphere is created and it can have a direct negative impact on their behavior (Krishna, 2010).

- **Humidity**

According to the English dictionary, humidity refers to the dampness especially of the air. It can also be taken to mean the amount of water vapor or moisture in the atmosphere or air. Air that is highly humid has negative impact on product especially dry unsealed products and may also negatively affect or spoils the aromas or odors circulating within the whole shop environment

- **Circulation/Ventilation**

This is the act of the replacement of stale or noxious air with the fresh. The English dictionary also defines it as the mechanical system that is used circulates and replaces the air. Ventilation keeps the retail atmospheric air very fresh. It allows for spoiled air to be exchanged with new fresh air. Apart from air, ventilation features such as window allows plenty of lighting to fill the shop. This in turn affects the sight and touch elements of buying behavior discussed later.

2.3.3. Sound

The Dictionary.com 2012 describes sound as a specific feeling that is produced by the stimulation of the hearing organs through vibrations sent out through the air or any other medium, such as the sound of music. Kotler (2001) has classified sound as the volume or pitch of music that retailers use in order to create an appealing atmosphere. A good example of how sound is used by retailers as an atmospheric tool is through music.

- **Music**

Music is always described as an excellent therapy to a troubled soul (<http://method-behind-the-music.com/history>) It has been known as the best antidote to alleviate stress, to counteract loneliness and it has been one of the greatest forms of entertainment that has survived centuries and centuries of human development (Hollis 2014) This fact makes music another special element of a Retail store environment.

Some forms of music are so sweet that they can even help distract a customer during the waiting (Bohl, 2012). Others types of music are so exciting that they can even attract a passerby to come and just spend minutes inside the store until the song is over. A good example of how music nourishes a store environment can be found in beer halls, bottle stores and clubs. Customers will be so entertained and so much engrossed up to the extent of spending all their fortunes and even forget to go home.....



FIG 2.3: Customers musically entertained, dancing and spending

SOURCE: <http://www.> <http://google.images.jpg>

2.3.4. Scent

From a service marketing point of view scent is a psychological moderator which enhances individual customers' moods, their emotional and evaluative responses (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011) What we eat, drink and breathe are heavily influenced by gustation (sense of taste) and olfaction (sense of smell), Lahey (2009) Levy and Weitz, (2009) concede to the fact that the odors are key drivers of individual buyers' emotions. Odors are believed to be key stimulants of discontent, hunger, satisfaction and nostalgia depending on the manner in which the retailer has set out scent ambient background (Levy and Weitz, 2009) Thus to create conducive buying atmosphere a retail store should, "smell like it is supposed to smell",

(Lewison and Delozier, 1986) The results reveals that pleasant ambient odor influence consumer decision making, congruent odors lead to a greater access to congruent attitudes, autobiographical memories, thoughts regarding prior experience with the product class and product class knowledge. The authors consider that ambient smell is a stimulus which lead consumers to develop a holistic impression of the store which can be consider its atmosphere which links to the notion of retail identity, retail image and consumer behavioral responses in terms of approach and avoidance behavior (Ward, Davis and Kooijman, 2003).

2.3.5. Cleanliness

There is this widely used quote that says "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." On the other hand, dirt causes illness and attracts diseases and also pests. Everyone one views a clean environment as a safe haven to spend time in but none would wish to shop in a rodent and cockroach infested supermarket. Retailers can use cleaning services strategically to enhance the customer experience and increase brand loyalty, whilst driving operational cost savings and efficiencies. Cleanliness is a key driver of customer retention and an effective means of adding value in the retail sector. "Cleanliness and hygiene makes a lot of difference to the customer who has chosen to visit the store" (Ramesh Kanna 2014). Any store may have fabulous merchandise to sell, but if the store is dirty and cleanliness & hygiene is not maintained, customers will leave a very bad impression with the customer. If shoppers are unsatisfied with the cleanliness of a retail store, they will take their business elsewhere," added (Dave Mesko 2014)

2.3.6. Lighting

When the store environment is brighter, buyers are likely to observe and touch the commodities in the store (Vaccaro et al., 2008). When the store environment is brighter, buyers are likely to observe and touch the commodities in the store (Vaccaro et al., 2008). This means that bright lighting induces shoppers to behave positively towards a business or a retail brand.

When the store atmospheres is brighter, customers see and touch the products in the shop (Vaccaro et al., 2008). Therefore lighting has an influential impact on how customers react and finally reach at the purchase decisions. Even brand labels, tags, tokens and graphics are easily seen and readable in a bright light and thus giving customer access to information that may be used for direction, pricing and evaluation processes based on her view, ambient factors, such as music, scent or air quality do not motivate purchase decisions when they are simply meeting customer expectations. Also an extreme ambient factor, such as very high or very low temperature can lead to avoidance behavior

2.4.0. The effects of Design factors on customer buying behavior

2.4.1. Design Factors

Design factors have been defined as either functional or aesthetic. Functional factors facilitate the behavior of customers in the servicescape and include layout, signage and comfort (Baker 1987). In fact, store design refers to the interior design of a store where goods are sold to the community. The goal of retail design is to make the store space more appealing and inviting to customers (Burns, 2012). It is important that the design be consistent as well as reinforce the retailer's merchandise strategy by meeting the needs of their target market and creating a sustainable competitive advantage (Levy et al., 2012:468) Aesthetic factors are simply those physical cues which are highly observable to customers e.g. architecture, color, style etc.

2.4.2. Aesthetics

The aesthetics design elements are meant to appeal to the target market and stimulate consumer purchase behavior. The rationale is to outwit competitor offerings through unique, beautiful and attractive packaging that stands out of the clutter of thousands of competing products and brands and eventually triggers purchase behavior. The concept of aesthetics has been designated to an experience, theory of art and the doctrine of beauty (www.ashgate.com). It is defined as the set of principles of philosophy that deals with the nature and appreciation of beauty and artistic taste, (Dictionary.com 2014).

2.4.3. Architecture Color Style

From an artistic point of view color has the ability to invoke feelings, emotions and behaviors in different people (White and White, 2006). Color creates a very strong and lasting visual impression and image about a retailer (Lovelock, and Wirtz, 2011 and Lewison and Delozier, 1989) since color catches the customer's attention it therefore creates either a positive or negative feeling in a customer.

As quoted by Lovelock and Wirtz, (2011) the Munsell system classifies color into three broad categories on the basis of their psychological effect on retail patrons, namely hue – which suggests the names of the common ordinary colors i.e. red, green, blue, and yellow, value- which suggests the scope of vividness or dullness of the color and the chroma- which refers to the extent to which the hue is bright and dull.

2.4.4. Fixtures

The other component of visual merchandising is fixtures. Fixtures can be described as all the different types of equipment used to display merchandise (Levy et al., 2012:471). These fixtures includes shelves, gondolas, chillers, freezers, trays, round racks, straight racks, superquads etc. other aesthetic elements affecting a store environment includes

- **Materials Décor:** eg ribbons, balloons, cay lights, glitters in a shop
- **Scale Shape:**
- **Texture, Pattern:** for example the merchandise display pattern shown.

These simply make the shopping environment looks like an earthly paradise and thus making the shopping a huge exciting and entertaining experience that would linger in their minds forever and encourages customer loyalty



FIG 2.5: Midlands Spar bulk displays, gondolas and racks clearly visible

Source: Photo taken by Kudakwashe

2.4.5. Functional

- **Layout**

The effective flow of used space, traffic control and sales productivity of a retail store in order to ensure that consumers are comfortable while shopping and that the overall appearance of a store is attractive (Levy et al., 2012)

- **Product information**

Williams and Larson suggested that a retail environment with full product information is considered one of the most platforms for maximum shopping experience. Product information includes price tags, expiry dates, isle boards for quick and easy product location and identification etc. at times customers are frustrated with products that have no information about their prices or rather with wrong prices and this usually spoils the shopping experience

- **Shopping Aids/ accessories**

These are usually described as general guides to the overall shopping experience. People have a greater interest in custom-designing their own ideal product when purchasing lifestyle-oriented items, such as furniture, lighting, music, and apparel. A retail environment full of shopping aids such as sales personnel as well as equipment such as trolleys and carts is usually regarded as more pleasurable.

- **Signage**

Refers to any drawings, paintings or words to create a graphic display that is used by retailers within a store to help consumers locate particular products and departments. (Pegler, 2010). An effective sign attracts the attention of consumers as well as communicates the brand identity. All of this contributes towards the consumers' first impression of what they will find when they enter a store (Levy et al., 2012; Bell & Ternus, 2006).

2.5.0. The influence of Social factors on customer buying behavior

2.5.1. Social factors

Social factors include the influence posed by human presence in the retail environment. In short, these are people within the shopping environment. The service personnel present in a customer environment, its size, appearance, and behavior, has been shown to impact on consumer behavior (Turley & Milliman 2000). The number of customers, shop workers, sales assistance etc. greatly influence the willingness of customers to buy or leave. It does have as far impacts as the decision to enter or not to enter the shop

2.5.2. Audience (Other Customers)

a) Number of customers

The number of customers in a store affects shoppers' selection of retail stores. Most people are normally against the issue of too much people in a particular shop as this is a major factor promoting waiting conditions. Waiting is usually done in the form of queues on till points, service points such as the butcher or at tellers in banks. Physical density is the number of people per unit area and overcrowding refers to the negative reactions to density. More people in a store environment may end up being resulting in the perceptions of overcrowding.

2.5.3. Service Personnel

b) Number of visible employees

Grewal (2002) describes this as one of the most common feature of a good store environment to almost all retailers. The number of employees e.g. bank tellers, till operators, counter servers etc. has also been deemed as affecting the impressions of the store. According to Grewal (2002), the underlining framework will states that, "due to the more number of employees in a store, they ought to help the store function properly by shortening customer wait times and wait expectations will also be lower if they can see more employees in the store who can give them an immediate service."

c) Sales person

According to Hieddriek N (2002), Researchers have focused upon individual elements of the store, such as music, lighting and aroma and have found that they influence customer mood, satisfaction and patronage intentions. However, the role of the retail salesperson has been considerably ignored in the store atmospheric literature in determining how the two interrelate and work together to affect customer perceptions of the store.

At present, the focus on relationship selling has been studied mostly in more upscale stores where these types of relationships are typically expected. Sharma and Stafford (2000) suggest that customers have a higher need to affiliate with salespeople working in nicer retail environments or 'prestige ambience environments' – which should lead to an increase in the perceived level of credibility for the salesperson, and subsequently a higher likelihood to purchase (Sharma and Stafford 2000)

2.6.0. The impact of technological factors on buying behavior



With this current technological revolution, the shopping world has gone digital. Many regard this generation as “The information Age.” Gone are the days of cart and trolley shopping, now it is becoming “click and button” shopping characterized by automatic money transfer....thanks to the modern technology. Technology has changed the way people shop. Due to the proliferation of online shopping and mobile purchase research, consumers are more informed and less inclined to wait around in-store for assistance. As a result, they have become disenchanted with traditional brick-and-mortar retail. (www.iQmetrix.com 2014)

Technology has changed consumers’ view of in-store shopping. Online shopping and mobile access to information via smartphones allow consumers to determine – prior to setting foot in a store – the product they want, at the price they want, from a store with the most selection. With the growing use of smartphones, shoppers can collect all of this pre-purchase information in a matter of minutes, even while on the go. Companies also have struggled to find the best applications of technology in conventional retail stores. While UPC scanning and automated teller machines (ATMs) achieved widespread acceptance, other technologies have not met retailers’ expectations. (Williams and Larsons 2012)

With the current trends of events, a shop without technology may prove to be difficult for some customers to shop there. Others technologies such as the ones listed below make life easier for customer whilst others motivates them to buy even with money ways. In general, technology has revolutionized the way people shop and their shopping behavior as well. According to 47% of shoppers use technology to save shopping time (www.iQmetrix.com)

2.6.1. High tech automated machinery

- Bar code scanners, Automated teller machines

A retail store that is furnished with such technology is usually very interesting to shop in. automated machinery includes bar code scanners and advanced till makes customer service very fast. A large volume of customers are served per every hour hence queuing which discourages some customers is shortened. It also shortens the customer waiting time. Automated teller machines inside supermarkets and other retail chains also prompt those who do enjoy travelling with hard cash to buy. A customer may simply withdraw money from the bank or simply visit the store just because of the available service which will in turn encourage them to buy something before they leave the premise.

2.6.2. Digital equipment

- Digital electronic price tags, Touch screen tills

In some shops, price tags have gone digital in which they are just programmed and updated electronically. This issue has seen the reduction of wrong prices on old stickers which at time frustrate customers. Huge big touch screens tills also display the transaction underway and thus assuring customers that no fraud or cheating is being undertaken.

2.6.2. Online shopping

The top business pressure that is driving retailers toward device-centric retailing is the pace of change relative to customer shopping expectations. A 2010 survey of U.S. consumers found that 88% of shoppers are more likely to choose a company that allows them to interact via an online, mobile or self-service device. (www.iQmetrix.com).

When shopping on the Internet, almost all consumers insist on knowing the prices of products sold online and most want to know the prices at the closest retail store. In addition, online shoppers like access to product specifications and instructions, warranty information, and a list of the products currently on sale Williams T and Larson J M (2000:4). In our Zimbabwean context, we do also have the following technological atmospherics

- **Zimswitch**

According to information available on <http://www.zimswitch.com>), Zim-switch is a Zimbabwean third party transaction acquiring business launched in 1990s. This service is affiliated with 13 commercial banks which operates a network of over 300 point of sale terminals. It provides transaction processing, bank interoperability, transaction switching, settlement and clearing, risk mitigation. With this technology as an atmospheric, retailers have a chance of prompting customers to even try shopping without the use of traditional paper and coin cash. Even customers from abroad with money in their visas, master cards etc are catered for

- **Mobile wallet services**

This is another atmospheric that is chapping the whole face of shopping. Good examples are Eco-cash and Telecash. Such services may motivate customers to buy a product even though money is away from their pockets or actually make direct payments from their mobile wallets to the shopping

2.6.3. Other technological factors

- **Air conditioning**

According to Dictionary.com (2014), air conditioning is a system for controlling the humidity, ventilation and temperature in a building or vehicle typically to maintain a cool atmosphere in warm conditions. In the challenging and highly competitive retail markets, customer comfort and the creation of a pleasant atmosphere is a major

factor in successful retailing (<http://www.climaveneta.com>). Air conditioner is also another technological factor that provides those ambient factors like ventilation, temperature, humidity etc. as discussed earlier.

Entertainment/ televisions

Most retailers are fitting their premises with TV screens. This technology has been very effective in clubs and restaurants and those supermarkets with in-house restaurant where customers may just come to watch a soccer match but in the process of stay, s/he is then motivated to buy.

- **Wifi hotspots**

A wifi hotspot is a wireless access point that provides internet access to network devices in public locations such as down town centers, cafes, airports hotels and restaurants (Mitchel 2014). According to Cobanoglu et al (2012), wifi in retail institutions allows customers to:-

- i. Use WLAN infrastructure to make calls both inside and outside the retail premises while roaming around
- ii. Allow the ability to view movies, video clips and browse the internet
- iii. Watch television over the WLAN infrastructure
- iv. Access games available for playing wirelessly within rooms
- v. Downloading and uploading

Thus with such a service in store, some customers would even wish if they could sleep insides the store.



Fig 2.6: Entertained customers

Source: <http://www.gannett-cdn.com/media/USATODAY/WiresImages/-x-large.jpg>

2.7.0. Summary

The chapter aimed at establishing the role of Store environments on buyer behaviors. It looked at the effects of ambience, people, designs and technology on the customers' buying behavior as well as their advantages to retailers.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.1.0. Introduction

This chapter presents how the research was undertaken. It looks at the research design, the research instruments, and the sampling techniques and also data collection procedure.

3.1.2. Research Design

Research design will be the general plan of how you will go about answering your research question(s) (Saunders M, Lewis P and Thornhill A, 2008). The research design is the first aspect to consider in addressing the research problem at hand. And they are three main types of research design and these are:

- Exploratory research design
- Explanatory research design
- Descriptive research design

3.1.3. Exploratory Design

An exploratory study is a valuable means of finding out 'what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light' (Robson 2002). Exploratory research is conducted to clarify unclear situations or to find possible business opportunities through the gathering of in-depth information.

3.1.4. Explanatory Design

Studies that establish causal relationships between variables may be termed explanatory research. The emphasis here is on studying a situation or a problem in order to explain the relationships between variables (Sunders et al 2008).

3.1.5. Descriptive studies

The object of descriptive research is 'to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations' (Robson 2002:59). This may be an extension of, or a forerunner to, a piece of exploratory research or, more often, a piece of explanatory research. It is necessary to have a clear picture of the phenomena on which you wish to collect data prior to the collection of the data.

An exploratory study was appropriate for this study because it will enable customers and retailers to have a better in-depth understanding of their consumers' needs and wants in terms of store atmospherics and its influences on consumers' buying behavior.

3.2.0. Population and sampling techniques

A population is the set of all the individuals or objects which have a given characteristic, e.g. the set of all persons eligible to vote in a given country. The researcher had a population which is made up of customers and the management of a retail store in which the research was conducted. Sampling is a process which involves making use of a small part of a specific population in order to draw conclusions about the entire population. A sample is a subset of a population, e.g. the voters selected for questioning about their views. (ABE 2006). The researcher used the following procedure in drawing up a sample.

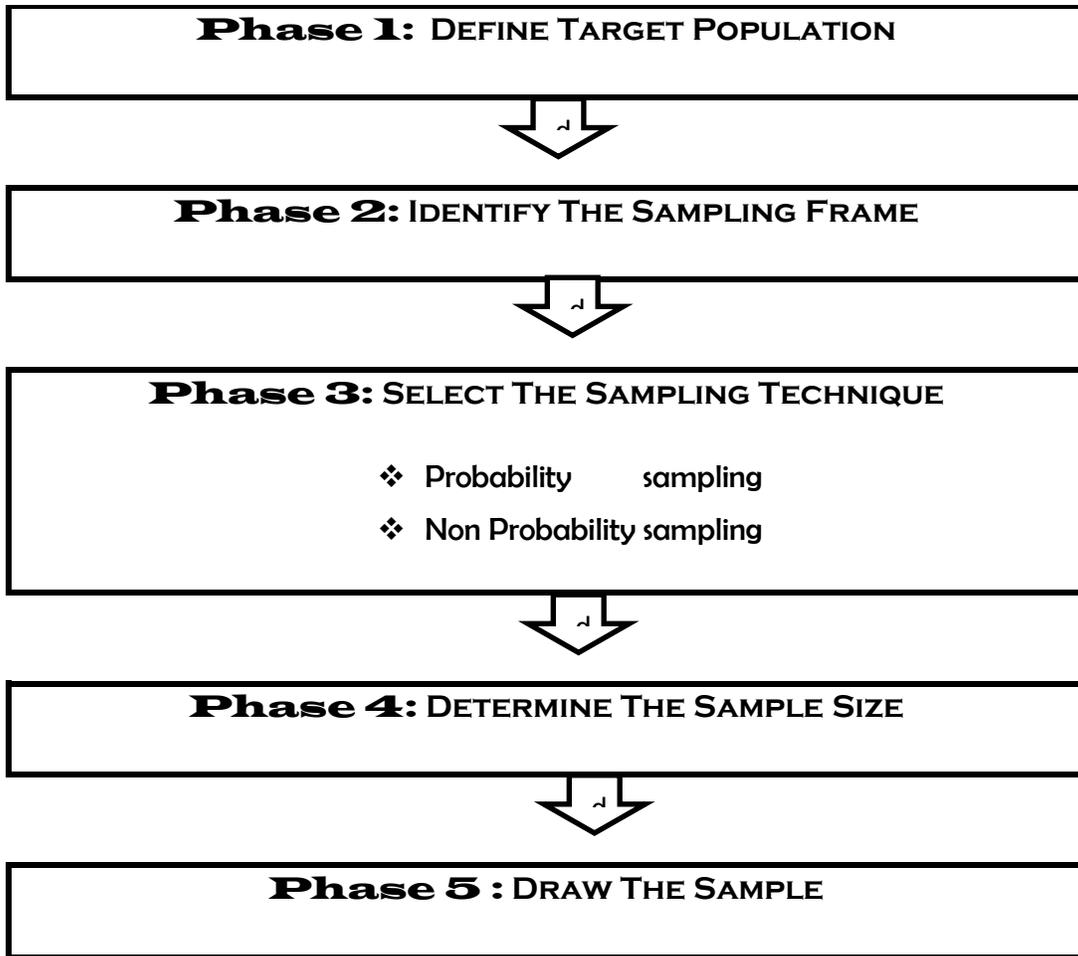


fig 3.1 Sampling techniques

3.2.1. Target market

The full set of cases from which a sample is taken is called the population. The target population of interest can be defined as the total group of people that a researcher will need to gather data from in order to investigate the problem at hand (Zikmund & Babin, 2007). In this case, the target population is any person or customers who buy any product at Midlands Spar

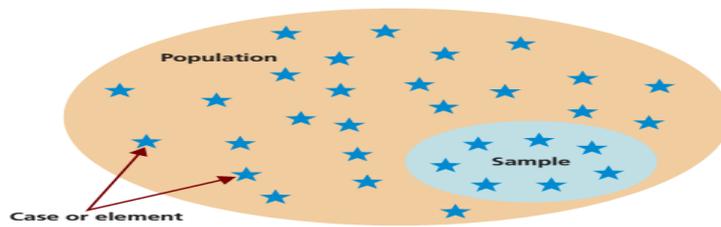


Fig 3.2 A sample

3.2.2. The sampling frame

A sampling frame is a representation of the elements of the target population and it includes a list of characteristics to identify the target population. This implies that the greater the sample frame, the more representative the survey would be. It was rather unnecessary to specify the sample frame size in the case due to the probability nature of this research.

3.2.3. The sample size

Having chosen the sampling frame, now the next step has to decide on the size of the sample, and this is a very complex problem (ABE 2008). The cost of a survey is directly proportional to the sample size, so the need to keep the sample as small as possible was very crucial. The larger the sample, the more costly it would be to deal with. Statisticians have also shown that a sample size of 30 or more will usually result in a sampling distribution for the mean that is very close to a normal distribution. (Sunders et al 2008). Therefore the researcher distributed 50 questionnaires to ensure highest reliability of the sample.

- **Probability sampling**

Probability sampling (or representative sampling) is most commonly associated with survey-based research strategies where you need to make inferences from your sample about a population to answer your research question(s) or to meet your objectives. (Sunders 2006:214). In probability sampling, every item in the population has a known chance of being selected as a sample member.

- **Non-probability sampling**

Nonprobability sampling (or non-random sampling) provides a range of alternative techniques to select samples based on the subjective judgments. In the exploratory stages of some research projects, such as a pilot survey, a non-probability sample may be the most practical. (Sunders et al 2006). In non-probability sampling, the probability that any item in the population will be selected for the sample cannot be determined.

The sampling methodology that was deemed appropriate for this study was nonprobability sampling mainly due to budgetary constraints, time limitations and the exploratory nature of the study. The non-probability sampling technique that was utilized for this study was purposive sampling.

The researcher chose participants “at random” (meaning as they wished or where he found them) based on their unique characteristics, experiences, attitudes or perceptions which were in line with the research question and problem at hand. The participants were therefore chosen on the basis of their accessibility and by the purposive personal judgment of the researcher. This sampling technique is generally used when one or more predetermined groups are needed, when the researcher must reach a targeted sample in the shortest possible time and where sampling for representativeness is not the main concern. The inclusion criteria for the purposive sampling for this study were as follows:

- Any male or female older than 10 years
- Any person who bought at Midlands Spar

3.3.0. Sources of data

3.3.1. Secondary Data

Secondary data is data which has been collected for some purpose other than that for which it is being used. Secondary data include both raw data and published summaries. Published sources provide valuable access to secondary data for use in business and management research (Association of Business Executives 2008). Example of secondary data includes payroll details, copies of letters, and minutes of meetings and accounts of sales of goods or services. Quality daily newspapers, reports about takeover bids and companies’ share prices. The researcher used both external and internal secondary data sources for the entire research.

3.3.2. Primary data

Primary data can be described as data that is collected from scratch to solve a specific marketing problem or opportunity, thus to address the research problem or opportunity at hand (Malhotra, 2010). The researcher used questionnaires to collect his data. See **appendix B** for a sample questionnaire. The researcher also conducted interviews to get an insight on the

views of the management pertaining to store environment. See **appendix C** for a sample interview guide.

3.3.1. Data collection procedure

The researcher had an appointment with the two managers at Midlands Spar. These two managers were interviewed separately on the same day. Questionnaires were also distributed at different hours per day on two separated days.

3.3.1. Summary

This chapter looked at the research design, sampling techniques, sources of data, research tools used to gather the data and the research population from which the data was gathered.

Chapter Four

Data presentation and analysis

4.1.0. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the findings and the analysis of the data collected through the data collection process using the research instruments. It will present the data through the use of tables, pie charts and bar graphs.

4.1.1. Response Rate

AGE	10 - 20	21 – 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	50+	TOTAL
DISTRIBUTED	8	21	13	5	3	50
SPOILED	0	0	2	1	0	3
RESPONSE RATE	8	21	11	4	3	47

Fig 4.1: response rate

The response rate of 94% was obtained which according to Saunders surpasses the 80% threshold to be considered reliable

4.2.0. Role of ambience

Ambient factors promote an environment usually conducive for an amazing shopping experience but extreme ambient factors ruin the environment resulting in customers' differing opinions as shown below

4.2.1. Ambience

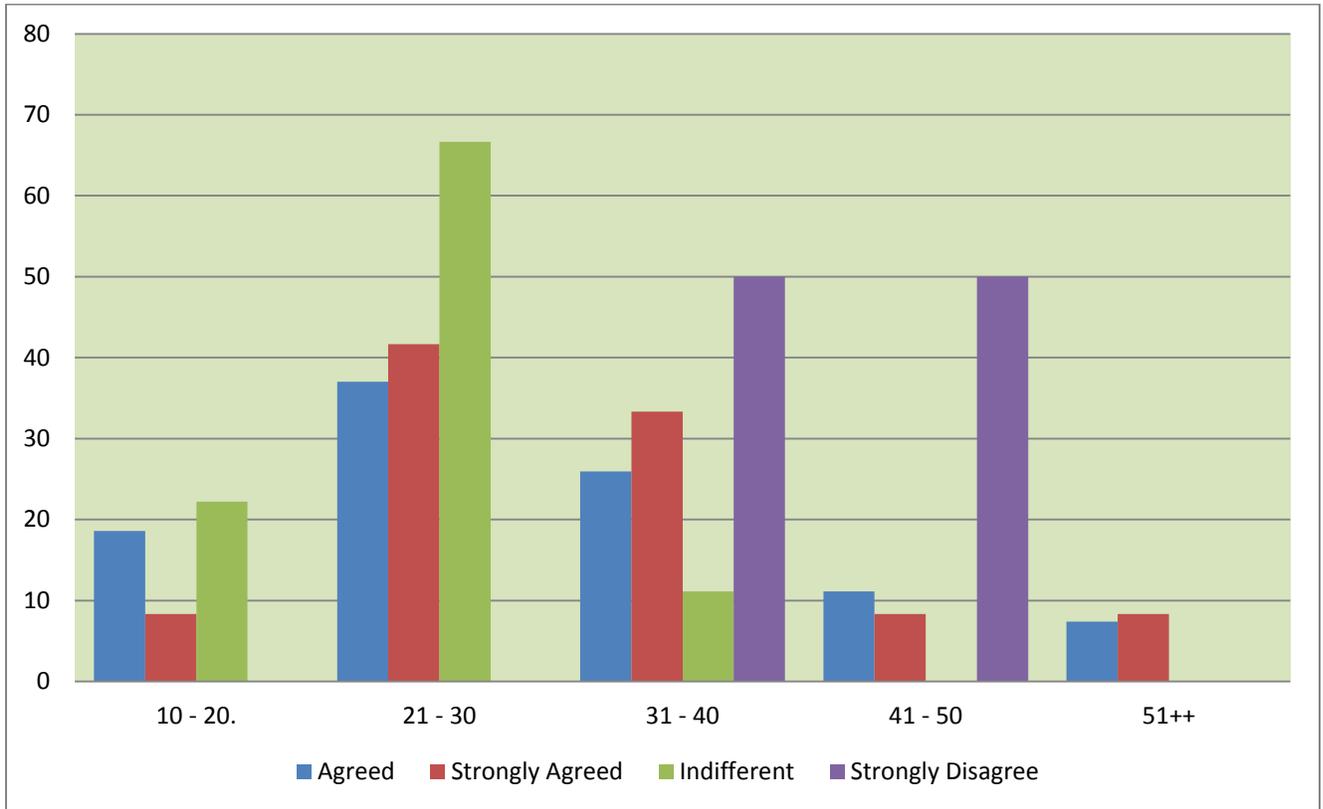


FIG 4.2: Percentage response to ambient factors

As illustrated on fig 4.4 above, participants expressed different feelings towards ambient influence on their buying behavior. 78% of the customers responded In favor of ambient factors as influencing behavior whilst 22% said they are irrelevant. This shows that ambience is a contributing factor in customer buying behavior.

4.3.0. Role of design factors

Shapes, deco, layouts, displays etc. also influence behavior according to Grewal as cited in the literature and these are known as design factors.

4.3.1. Design factors

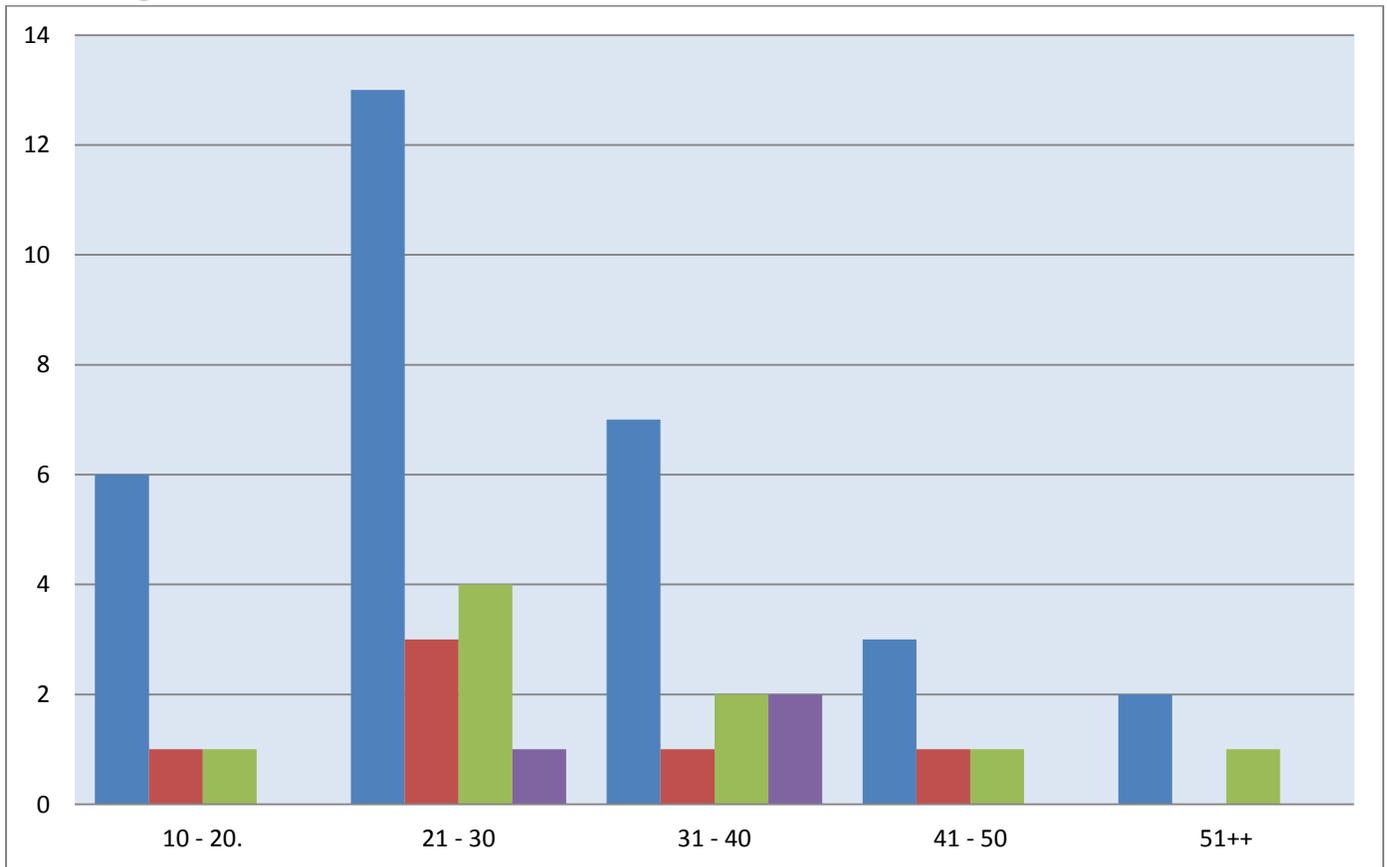


FIG 4.3: reactions to design factors

As depicted in fig4.7, design factors have influence on the purchasing behavior as shown by the 60% response rate.

4.4.0. Role of social factors on buying behavior

Each store is filled with service men. These includes counter servers, tellers, shop assistance etc. these are better known as the store audience. Together with the number of shoppers in the retail environment, they all sum to make up social factors which also bear a significant effect on the behavior of customers

4.4.1. Social factors

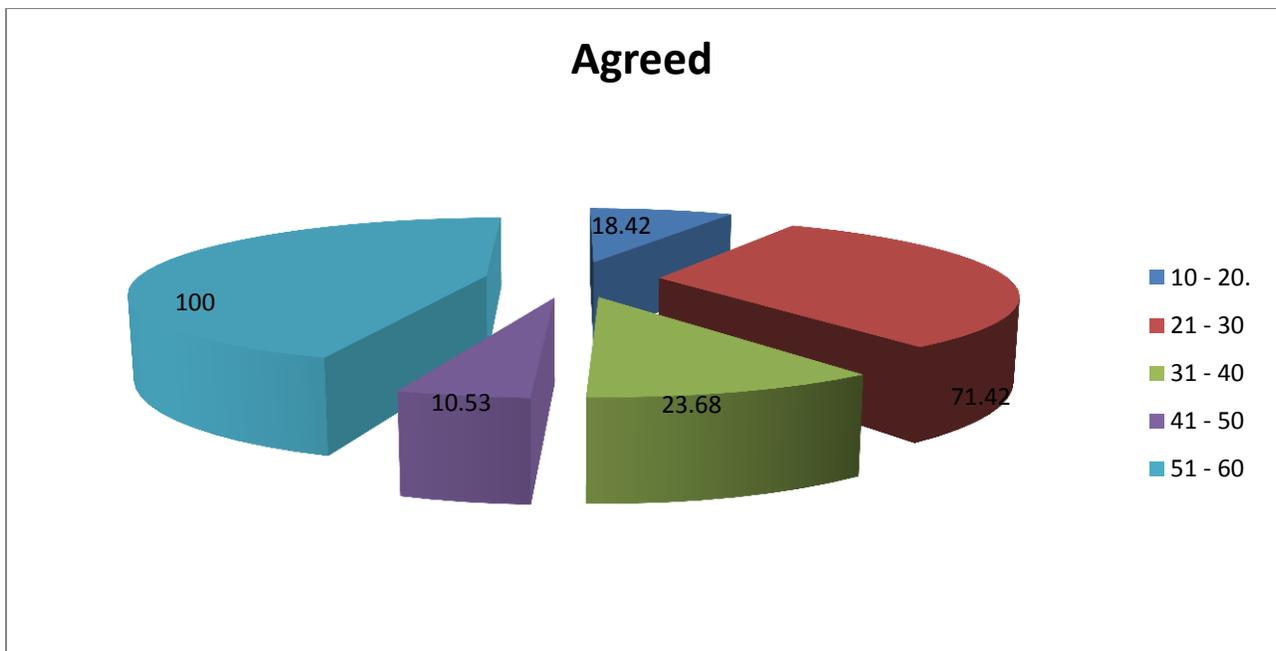


FIG 4.4: % reaction to social factors

As illustrated on the fig above, a majority of customers were of the opinion that social factors influence their buying behavior. The graph shows that social factors have a bearing on the overall buying behavior.

4.5.0. Role of technology

Technology has also brought many factors which are also known to influence behavior of customer. These include online stores, ATMs, Zim switch, bar code readers, fast big touch screen tills etc. The graph below how participants reacted to the influence of technologies on their buying

4.5.1. Technological factors

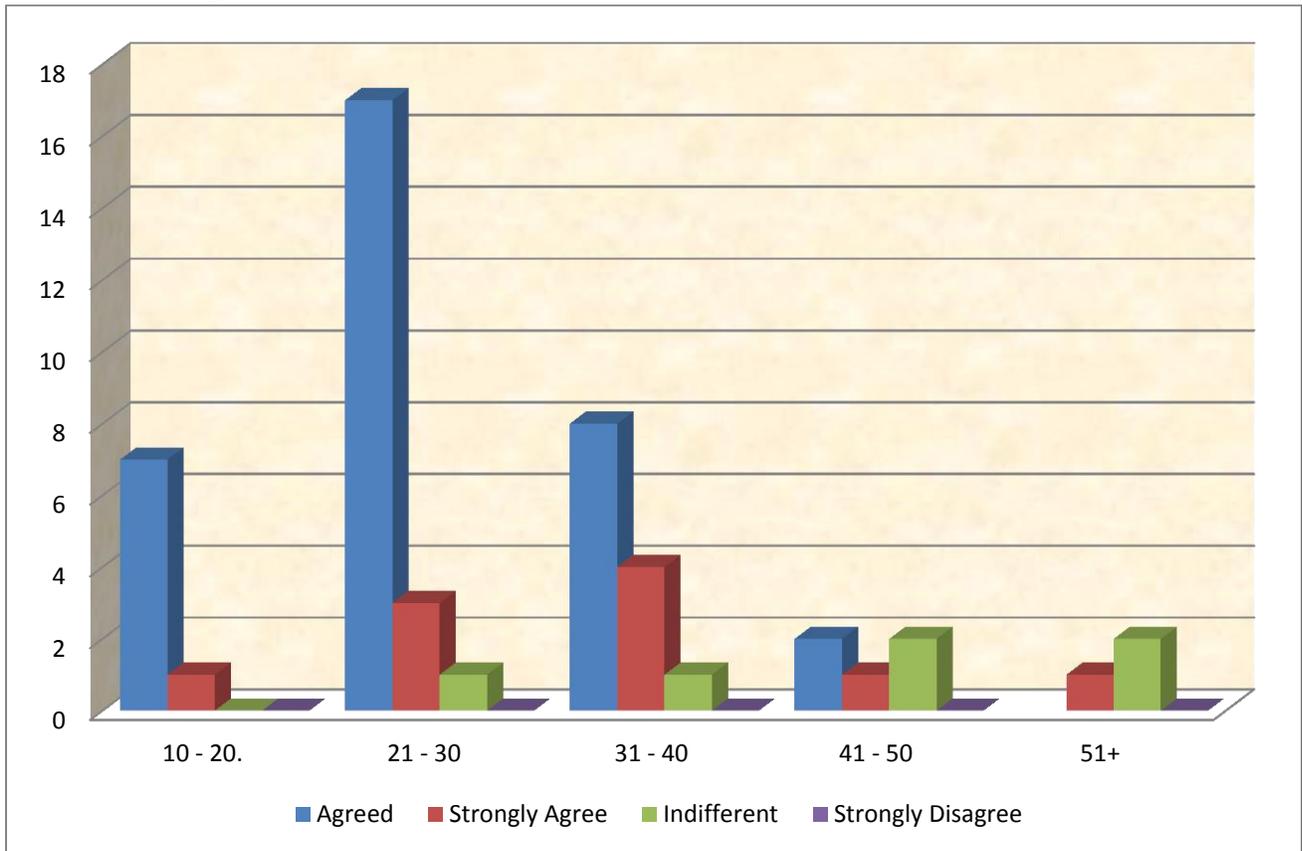


FIG 4.5: Participant reactions to tech factor

As shown on the figure above, it can be concluded that technology has a major influence on buying behavior as seen by the 95.2% response rate.

4.6.0. Interviews

The researcher also had to conduct interviews with the management of Midlands Spar. From the responses given by the management, it can be seen that all components of the store environment do have an effect on the buying behavior of customers. Major elements cited included technology as well as the general ambience.

4.7.0. Summary

In this chapter the researcher looked at the presentation, analysis and the interpretation of the data. Graphs, pie charts and tables were used to analyze the data. The next chapter will present the recommendations and conclusions.

Chapter 5

Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1.0. Introduction

The topic of the research was to study the effects of store environment on the customer buying behavior basing on a case of the Midlands Spar. The real purpose of the study was to determine the effects of the physical elements of a retail store environment on the buying behavior of customers. Thus conclusions were from the underlying objectives:

- To determine the effects of ambient factors on customer behavior
- To find out the effects of design factors on customer buying behavior
- To determine the effects of social factors on customer buying behavior
- To determine the impact of tech factors on the customer buying behavior.

5.1.1. Role of Ambience

78% responded favorably to the effects of ambient factors on their buying behavior and from these statistics, it can be concluded that ambient factors generates a positive response on buyer behavior if they are operated at optimum conditions. Too high or too low ambient factors will provide an avoidance behavior which will in turn results in a negative response but optimum ambient factors attract customers

5.1.2. Role of designs

Questionnaire participation showed a 78% response in favor of design factors while a remaining 22% constituted a mixed feeling of being indifferent and disagreeing. These findings concludes that design factors do possess a motivating influence on their buying behavior and in order for retailers to win such a big customer catch, a good investment in general designs is highly crucial among retailers.

5.1.3. Role of people

All participants agreed that social factors are of great importance in their buying behavior with the elderly for example constituting a 100% support for it. Social factors greatly influence the willingness of customers to buy or leave. Therefore, it can be concluded that the members of staff need to be friendlier to them so they would feel welcome. Retailers also need to ensure fast services and shortest queues as possible to avoid overcrowding as these deter customers

5.1.4. Role of technology

Young participants responded in favor of technology in retail stores with a 95.2%. Most of them strongly agreed that technology motivate buying. However, basing on the few who responded against technology, it can be concluded that technology provides a great shopping experience but it is expensive to set up and also requires some special academic and literacy skills, a burden, usually too heavy for the aged and the unlearned.

5.2.0. Recommendations

5.2.1. Role of ambience

Retailers are encouraged to optimize ambient factors because they are regarded as the ones nearest and surrounding each and every customer. If tampered around them provides a great impact as they are highly responsive to attractive or avoidance behavior. Music and cleanliness are some of the elements that are also crucial to a retailer which their strong presence is highly recommended.

5.2.2. Role of designs

The recommendation to retailers is to ensure that the designs of the store layouts, decos etc. are not too cramped and confusing, as consumers want to move more freely between the gondolas. It is also advised that retailers design in a manner that enable customers to see from outside the store what the store is offering so that they could see whether the store is too crowded or not

5.2.3. Role of people

The recommendation to retailers is that their staff need be trained well to be able to assist customers with any type of query. Retailers must also motivate their staff, as highly motivated staff might be more friendly and eager to help consumers and serves faster and quickly.

5.2.4. Role of Technology

Retailers are encouraged to heavily invest on technology as it makes every activity possible, fast, efficient, effective and interesting. They are also recommended to increase their technological base as it most customers just love to be up to date with current trends and they associated lack of technology with archaisms.

5.3.0. Suggestions for future research

- a) This study only focused on the retail industry particularly supermarkets. Store environment could have an influence on consumers 'buying behavior in other retail industries, more specifically the apparel industry, the do it-yourself (DIY) industry and the safari and outdoor industry, where clothing and outdoor accessories are sold.
- b) As indicated, this research study only focused on one supermarket of Zimbabwe and it may therefore be interesting to see what the effects of store environment will be on consumers' buying behavior in other supermarkets around Zimbabwe
- c) This study used a qualitative research design and it may be interesting to see what the outcomes would be if a similar study used a quantitative research design where the consumers' buying behavior in terms of store the store environment is tested in the all provinces of Zimbabwe.

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Appendix A: Research Questionnaire guide for customers



Research Questionnaire for Customers

This questionnaire has been prepared by a final year student studying a Bcom Honors Degree in Retail and Logistics Management at Midlands State University. In partial fulfillment of the program, it is a requirement for every student to carry out an academic research dissertation on a topic of his or her own choice. The research topic is:

The Effects of Store Environment on Customer buying Behavior: A Case of The Midlands Spar

Instructions

- Please indicate by ticking in a box corresponding to your desired response or writing in the spaces provided
- Please do not write your name anywhere on this questionnaire
- Kindly assist by completing this questionnaire. All information shall be treated with utmost confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes

1. Gender

Male Female Other

2. Age

10-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 50+

3. How long have you been a customer at Midlands Spar

Less than one month less than 1 year 1-2 years more than 2 years

4. Do you agree that retail environment helps you make a purchase decision

Strongly disagree indifferent agree strongly agree

5. a). Are you of the opinion that ambient factors (lighting, color, music, and scent) do have an impact on your buying behavior?

Strongly disagree indifferent agree strongly agree

b). If you don't, explain why

.....
.....

6. Did you ever come across a situation whereby ambient factors (lighting, color, music, and scent) prompted unplanned purchase at Midlands Spar?

YES NO

If no please explain

.....
.....

7. a). When you walk into Midlands Spar, what is the influence of the design factors {Aesthetic, Functional} on your buying behavior?

Motivated to buy Demotivated No effect Other

8. Is your regular come back to shop and stay loyal to Midlands Spar also influenced by its social factors (Service Personnel, Audience, sales persons)?

YES No

b). If no, please specify

.....
.....

9. Do you agree that Technologies e.g. Eco cash, zimswitch, ATM, bears a huge impact on your shopping experience and purchase decisions?

Strongly disagree indifferent agree strongly agree

10. Do other environmental elements such as car park, loan, and hygiene have impact on your shopping at Midlands Spar?

YES No

If no please explain

.....
.....

Appendix B: Research Interview Guide for Management



Midlands State University
Established 2000

Our Hands, Our Minds, Our Destiny

Research Interview Guide for Management

My name is Kudakwashe Takawira and i am a final year student studying a Bco Honors Degree in Retail and Logistics Management at Midlands State University. In partial fulfillment of the program, it is mandatory for every student to carry out an academic research dissertation on a topic of his or her own choice. The research topic is:

The Effects of Store Environment on Customer buying Behavior: A Case of The Midlands Spar

- 1) What is your view on the effects of store environment on the purchasing behavior of your customers?**
- 2) Do you think that store environment is meeting some of your retail objectives?**
- 3) Does store environment bear any impact on the daily sales of Midlands Spar?**
- 4) How do ambient factors (lighting, color, music, and scent) affect the buying behavior of customers at Midlands Spar?**
- 5) What are the effects of design factors {Aesthetic, Functional} on buying behavior of customers?**
- 6) What is the influence of social factors (Service Personnel, Audience) on behavior of your branch?**
- 7) How do modern Technologies in Midlands Spar motivate your customers to buy?**
- 8) How often do customers react when the shopping environment is not very appealing?**
- 9) Do you think that any drop or failure to maintain and improve your store environment would affect the volume of your customers and company performance?**
- 10) Are there any circumstances in which physical components of store environment could prompt customer unplanned purchases?**

Appendix C: Percentage response to ambient factors

AGE	10 - 20	21 – 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	50+	TOTAL
AGREED	5	10	7	3	2	27
S/AGREE	1	5	4	1	1	12
INDIFFERENT	2	6	1	-	-	9
S/DISAGREE	-	-	1	1	-	2
TOTALS	8	21	13	5	3	50

Appendix D: Number of customers affected by design factors

AGE	10 - 20	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	50+	TOTAL
MOTIVATED	6	13	7	3	2	30
DEMOTIVATED	1	3	1	1	-	7
NO EFFECT	1	4	2	1	1	18
OTHER	-	1	2	-	-	5
TOTALS	8	21	13	5	3	50

Appendix E: Reaction to social factors

AGE	10 - 20	21 – 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	50+	TOTAL
AGREED	7	15	9	4	3	38
DISAGREED	1	6	4	1	-	12
TOTALS	8	21	13	5	3	50

Appendix E: Rate of customer reaction to tech factors

AGE	10 - 20	21 – 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	50+	TOTAL
AGREED	7	17	8	2	-	34
S/AGREE	1	3	4	1	1	10
INDIFFERENT	-	1	1	2	2	6
S/DISAGREE	-	-				0
TOTALS	8	21	13	5	3	50