



## **Impact of Store Environment on Impulse Buying (A case of International Modern Trade Retailers in Karachi)**

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### **Abstract**

Retail landscape in Pakistan has evolved rapidly giving rise to contemporary shopping practices in the country. The evolution in industry has attracted investment from both international and national retail chains giving rise to stiff competition. Hence, winning on customers and market share heavily relied on providing unique customer experience by enhancing store environment. Therefore, heavy investments are laid in nurturing pleasant store environment uplifting customer satisfaction and loyalty in return that helps increase store profitability. Moreover, significance to customer value proposition, convenience and discounted pricing strategy remained core to retailing dynamics in the country. Hence, research purpose instilled in determining the impact store environment have in inducing impulse buying behavior of the shoppers in the international modern trade stores in Karachi. This study used survey questionnaire to tap the response of the shoppers to administer relationship between independent variables that include music, light, layout and employees which are also referred as the determinants of in-store environment with impulse buying behavior being dependent variable of the study. The statistical tools adopted involved multiple regression analysis that helped test the hypothesis and the outcomes retrieved depicts that independent variables include music and layout has significant positive impact on the impulsive buying patterns. The managerial implications of our research recommended that the decision makers of the stores need to spend and manage the in-store determinants in a very careful manner in order to retain and welcome maximum number of shoppers which eventually helps them to increase their sales volume and profitability.

**Keywords:** store environment, impulse buying behavior, music, light, layout and employee.

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## Introduction

The escalating consumerism and changing global retailing environment have provoked the widely prevailing phenomenon of impulse buying behavior across the globe and so does in Pakistan. Retailers spend millions to improve their store environment that augment's customer shopping experience and leave no stone unturned in understanding the consumer impulse buying behavior Guenzi et al.(2009). They do so to endeavor means and methods to increase both their sales value and volume. Moreover, with modern trade channels and all under one roof concept retailing concepts prevailing in Pakistan the impulse buying behavior is on rise as well (Hu and Jasper, 2006). As retailer's allures consumers with lucrative store environment and convenience shopping means to spend more than they actually desired invigorates researchers to investigate factors that entices consumers to do so. Various researchers have explored factors like store liking, perceived quality of merchandise, sales, product evaluation, satisfaction in understanding the impulse buying phenomenon. However, a little attention has been highlighted on affect store environment has on consumer impulse purchases regardless of having a rise in its significance for creating point of difference (Guenzi, 2009).

Latest studies on the domain include store environment and consumer behavior in general, finds a positive relation between the variables that instill customers to nurture trust in store offerings and its merchandise's by (Hu and Jasper, 2009). This study helps in unveiling the literature gap existing on the domain by critically appraising store environment factors involving (music, light, layout, and employees) on impulse buying behavior which will eventually help the future researchers in exploring the new dimensions by (Hu and Jasper, 2006). Moreover, the implications of the research will help the store managers or retailers to help increase their business profitability through

acutely identifying factors that helps improve the store environment alluring the impulse buying behavior at their stores.

**Statement of the problem:**

In modern retail landscape, a retail store should be more than a place to purchase products. It has now become a place for people to enrich their lives as well as for retailers to create store loyalty and store choice. In recent times, store environment should be augmented enough to influence impulse buying without any limitations. Now day's people not only visit retail stores for shopping, but they come to cherish the value added environment that make them to stay long hours in stores and shop more than they normally do. It is all now become a new retail experience. Store retailer are now paying close attention to the factors that enrich store environment, induce impulse buying and ensure a valuable customer experience (Sheikh, 2017). Studies rendered in the past have focused on investigating the effect of store environment and impulse buying and its many dimensions including individual personality propensity towards unplanned buying (Weun, Jones and Beatty, 2008), product packaging and functional characteristics, conditional factors such as time and money availability (Jones, Reynolds, Weun and Beatty, 2003), demographic factors such as age, gender and education, in store promotion and visual merchandising (Mishra, Mishra and Masters,2010).

Therefore, there is a need of this study to conduct and identify various factors in the context of Pakistan retail industry that allure buyers towards impulse buying specifically to the modern trade retailers. As per the research conducted by standard chartered bank in 2016, the size of Pakistan's retail industry has moved from \$96 to 133 billion, which is 38.5% high as compared to the last four years. Pakistan retail sector has become a third largest provider (18% of the total GDP) to the economy after industry and agriculture sector (Aisha, 2017). The rise in growing middle class in Pakistan has led to more consumer spending (assessed at \$293 million in 2017 and predictable to

cross \$333 million by 2018) which in turn has increased the need for more retail stores with enrich ambience that trigger impulse buying (source: Retail Sector Report, Punjab Board of Investment and Trade 2017).

**Research Objectives:**

The research objectives for our study include:

- To identify most influential dimensions of store environment.
- To investigate the role of store environment factors (music, light, layout, and employees) on impulse buying behavior in context of modern retail stores in Pakistan.
- To assess the impact of various store environment factors in creating pleasant in store experience.
- To assess the expectation that consumers have an mind while entering in the modern trade retail stores
- To highlight the most effective factors of store environment which urge impulse buying
- To suggest the recommendations related to the marketing strategies adopted by the retail store managers.

**Significance of the study:**

This study is unique in its kind and contributing with a strong share of knowledge to the field of retail sector in Pakistan. The retail sector potential is expected to reach \$96 to \$133 billion (A study conducted by standard chartered bank in Pakistan 2016). This study will provide an insight view of the consumer buying behavior which eventually help the existing modern retail chain owners but also for the upcoming investors from the international market who are taking serious interest in investing, as the opportunities are disclosed to everybody after the successful penetration of retail chains like Hyper-star and Metros and in their decision making process for investing,

improvising of their services, sales or profits. In addition, the direction for future research is also setting a ground in order to identify further factors and their impact.

### **Literature Review**

Several researchers have investigated factors involving store environment as a sub variable in their studies. This chapter entails a critical appraisal to relevant literature for our research, together with the scarce literature related to store environment and impulse buying is discussed in this chapter.

#### **Store Environment and Impulse Buying:**

The concept of store environment was first coined by (Kotler 1973) refers to the designing of a store environment (such as display, layout, Aroma, Lighting, colors, employees and furniture and fixtures etc.) that efforts to create a distinguish image in the minds of customer, influence customer emotional state that increase the chances of purchase (Akram, Hoi and Kaleem, 2016)

As per (Hashmi and Rasheed, 2016) the exterior and interior of a retail store attract customer attention and encourage customers to gain hedonic benefits of consumption (Sachdeva, 2015). Tangible aspects of store ambience include fixtures, store neatness, layout, stock display, decoration and signage. On the other way round intangible parts consist of aroma, temperature, lighting and music. The overall store environment helps customer for better shopping convenience and influence impulse buying (Duong, 2016).

Recent studies conducted in the field debate retail store environment (and its dimensions) and consumer buying behavior investigated that store ambience is positively associated with unplanned purchase which in turn nurture store preferences, store loyalty and positive assessment of merchandise. A store with high perceived value and hedonic benefits create interest and enthusiasm during shopping (Ashley, Ligas

And Chaudhary, 2012). Shoppers expects pleasant ambience with effective visual merchandising, proper lighting, efficient services on retail counters, informative signage and coordinative staff (Shams, Mohan and siwakumaran 2015).

A store with value added environment results in more increased impulse buying. Visual merchandising and atmospheric elements are indispensable to exert influence on the shopper that induce them to purchase without any pre shopping intentions (Wai Man, 2015). Pleasant and luxurious store ambience cultivate unplanned purchase and encourage customer to make impulse purchase decision. Researchers have found that amusing store environment keep customer to stay long hours, feel a sense of luxury, desired to visit store again and expects to buy impulsively (Herath, 2015).

### **Importance of Store Environment:**

(Wen, Burns and Francis, 2010) opined in their study that store environment act as a strong tool to influence people for unplanned purchase. The importance of store environment has long been neglected by the retailers. In fact, store environment has a more powerful affect than the product itself in buying choices. According to (Ashley and Chaudhuri, 2014) customers who visits more upscale retail stores need more luxurious and distinguished store environment which lead to spend more time in stores and maximum possibility of purchase. (Guenzi and Castaldo, 2009) found in their study that various exterior and interior store design factors impact customer perception about the store, influence store preferences, and ultimately affect their purchase decision. Store environment can also change customer perception about product and service quality and satisfaction (Bell, 2011).

Retailer have realized the potential of distinguish store environment in cultivating long term relationship between in store experience and customer satisfaction. Store environment factors play a major role in impulse buying and in store experience (Sharma, Siwakumaran, and Marshall, 2010).

**Music:**

(Matilla and Wirtz2001), studied the impact music creates in retail settings through a meta-analysis technique by identifying various published studies on the effect of background music on its customers and employees within business settings. For this, 11 databases were searched out of which 148 abstracts had been finalized for coding. The results revealed quite positive effect of the pleasant music. In addition, (Garlin and Owen, 2006) investigated music and scent congruence to have driven behavior in-store and its evaluation. The findings showed that the compatibility of music and scent had a positive impact in arousing impulse buying behavior and shoppers satisfaction. Customer interest and enthusiasm caused by aroma and music leads to pleasant in store experience which results in impulse buying and satisfaction with the overall store environment (Muruganatham, Ganesan, and Ravi, 2014).

**Light:**

(Basera et al. 2013) examined the effects ambient variables create through light, music, scent and color factors on consumer patronage in fast food retail outlets. It's entailed that synergistic impact helps ambient variable create tempting environment that allures patronage. Likewise, (Wanninayake and Randiwela, 2007) investigated the impact of visual merchandising grouped into variables including design layout, cleanliness, product display and lighting on consumer decision of store choice. The findings of the results revealed that layout and lighting reasonably influenced the decision of store choice. Store lighting is one of most crucial factors in store environment practiced by retailers to deliver non-verbal messages to customer. A research carried in Netherlands

investigated respondent's reaction to store lighting in fashion store premises. Respondents were requested to rate the store ambience after evaluating the picture showed by the researcher. The evaluation was categorized into two groups, articulateness and warmth. In survey questions, the participants were asked to choose between luxuries,

In the questions, rating includes some feeling such as liveliness, coziness, excitement, anxiety and detachment. In the end the research results conclude that lighting play a pivotal role in overall store environment and they also found that effective lighting within stores increase customer interest in the purchase create a sense of coziness and decrease shopping hassle and tenseness (Mohan and Sharma, 2018).

**Layout:**

Layout instills a planned division of total floor area into selling area, product assortment arrangement and various other space peripherals utilization (Saad and Metawei, 2015). (Baker et al. 2012) claimed that a good layout can add more pleasant, entertaining and enjoyable moods in the shoppers' mindset by reducing the perceived stress while shopping. (Banat & Wandebori, 2012) critically appraise relationship between store environment factors to customer's personal traits influencing impulse buying in Egypt. Positive results had been shown by the two store environment factors including layout and music when associated with impulse buying behavior.

Most of the retailers consider store layout as the "Selling Machine". As per (Herath, 2014) store layout has the power to fulfill customer recreational and hedonic needs and influence their shopping decisions and store preferences. For retailer store environment play a key role in driving sales because retailers are the only member in in marketing channel that has direct and frequent contact with the final customer (Mohan, 2013).



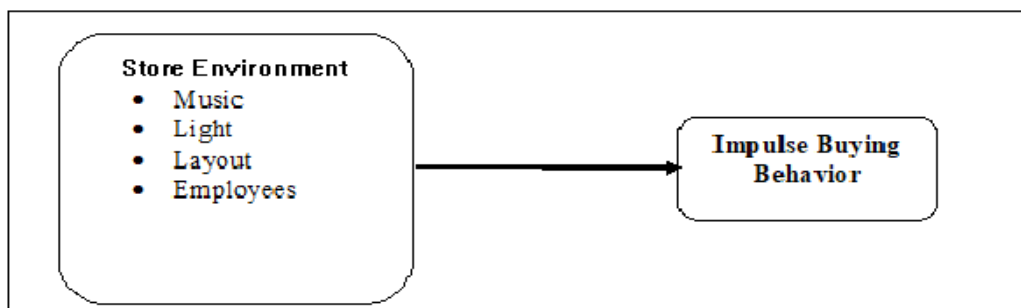
**Employees:**

As perceived by the customers, employees working in the retail stores are not considered as the sales person only but also the counselors. The assistance provided by the employees to the customers during their purchase process in terms of information and services creates a serious relationship between the retailers and their customers (Lee and Dubinsky, 2003). In addition to it, (Pornpitakpan and Han, 2013) stated in their study of the effects of culture and salespersons’ retail service quality on impulse buying that good services are directly proportional to the impulse. Positive behavior and knowledge sales persons cultivate positive customer response and they tend to get more involved in shopping. Moreover, sales people assistance in purchase and product browsing may influence customer for impulse buying (Mattila and Enz, 2002). Sales people positive and cooperative behavior may greatly influence customer perceived value and store image which in turn results in impulse buying (Ghani and Kamal, 2010). On the other hand absence of sales people or their inappropriate attitude may leave a bad in store experience (Mishra, 2012).

**Conceptual Framework of the Study:**

The conceptual framework outlines core foundation for any research work. In this study conceptual framework comprises of four predictors which include music, light, layout, employees and one response variable which is impulse buying behavior.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study**



## Econometric Model

$$\text{Impulse Buying} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{MUSIC}) + \beta_2(\text{LIGHT}) + \beta_3(\text{LAYOUT}) + \beta_4(\text{EMPLOYEES}) + \varepsilon$$

### Hypotheses:

#### *Null Hypothesis*

Store Environment including Music, Light, Layout and Employee has no impact on impulse buy of customers

$$\beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = \beta_4 = 0$$

#### *Alternative Hypotheses*

Hypothesis 1: Music is positively associated with impulse buying ( $\beta_1 \neq 0$ )

Hypothesis 2: Light is positively associated with impulse buying ( $\beta_2 \neq 0$ )

Hypothesis 3: Layout is positively associated with impulse buying ( $\beta_3 \neq 0$ )

Hypothesis 4: Employee is positively associated with impulse buying ( $\beta_4 \neq 0$ )

## Research Methodology

### Research question:

The research question should be in line with the objectives of this study which is as follow:

Q: In modern retail landscape, what are the factors that help create and enhance store environment and how does these factors influence customer for impulse buying without any pre shopping intention in context of modern trade channels in Pakistan.

### Research Design:

This study envisions a quantitative technique; a survey with help of structured close ended questionnaire is conducted to collect the cross sectional primary data from clientele of various shopping malls. Other aspects of research design are discussed below:

### Data and Sampling:

The primary data was gathered from individuals who are habitual to shop from the modern trade retail outlets like Metro and Hyperstar. As it is hardly possible to construct complete sample frame for such a huge and dispersed population, thus we employed judgmental cum convenient sampling. For a pilot study, a sample of 30 respondents is selected. 323 samples were collected for the regression analysis beside the pilot study. A useful data of 273 respondents including 106 Males and 167 Females, after the removal of univariate and multivariate outliers were used for further calculations and analysis.

**Research Instrument:**

Survey questionnaire consists of Likert chart with a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) were adopted for the study. To measure the impact of store environment on impulse buying, the study contextualized twenty-eight (28) items adopted from (Morin and Chebat, 2005); Smith, (1989); (Areni and Kim ,1994); (Summers and Herbert 2001); (Dickson and Albaum ,1977); Watson et al. (1988) and few items had been endorsed and validated by the market experts. These items were classified into four sub-scales as follows: music (seven items), light (seven items), layout (seven items) and employees (seven items). To measure impulse buying (IB), the study used seven items out of which four are adapted from (Weunet al. 1998) and three are adopted from (Lumpkin et al. 1985); (Meneely et al. 2009). There were no sub-scales for this measure.

**Face and Content Validity of the Instrument:**

The pilot test of the study was conducted after the consultation of three relevant but independent industry experts with different organizations. Certain correction and changes had been proposed by them; the reliability of the instrument from pilot testing measured through Cronbach Alpha.

**Statistical Tools:**

Since this model instills multiple predictors alongside a single dependent variable therefore multiple regression method is used to test hypotheses. Various statistical assumptions have to be satisfied before applying any statistical tool, in case of multiple regression multi-collinearity is the most important one. Thus, we used VIF to check multi-collinearity among the variables. Univariate outliers will be identified and removed from the data by using standardized (Z) score whereas In order to detect and remove multivariate CDF.CHISQ function (Mahalanobis D2,  $P < .001$ ) will be used.

**Data Analysis and Discussion:**

SPSS V.22 is used for several analysis including exploratory factor analysis, regression analysis, data screening, descriptive analysis, Pearson correlation and reliability test.

**Reliability and validity:**

Reliability test was conducted to test questionnaire reliability. 323 samples were collected for the regression analysis beside the pilot study. A useful data of 273 respondents including 106 Males and 167 Females, after the removal of univariate and multivariate outliers were used for further calculations and analysis.

The reliability of all the variables including dependent and independent variables is greater than the cut off value that is 0.70 which was good (Santos, 1999). Overall Cronbach's Alpha of the questionnaire was 0.889. As the scale items were taken from previous studies, construct validity through discriminant and convergent validity is also established. Whereas Variable wise results of reliability and validity are as follow:

**Table 1: Reliability & Validity (N=273)**

Variables	Construct Reliability		Construct Validity		
	Cronbach alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Convergent Validity (Average Variance Extracted) (AVE)	Discriminant Validity	
				Maximum Shared Variance (MSV)	Average Shared Variance (ASV)
Music (IV)	0.851	0.874	0.535	0.46	0.3302
Light (IV)	0.772	0.787	0.540	0.054	0.03328
Layout (IV)	0.870	0.854	0.591	0.51	0.2918
Employees (IV)	0.870	0.854	0.591	0.51	0.2918
Impulse Buying (D)	0.932	0.945	0.749	0.452	0.3451

**Data Screening:**

The data was initially screened by using several techniques including missing value analysis and outlier’s analysis:

**Missing Value Analysis:**

The existence of missing data is usual, as it is beyond the researcher’s control due to several reasons include: the respondent failed to understand the instrument language, the length of the questionnaire infuriates the respondents to fill the complete instrument while in the mid of their shopping spree, some of the respondents are in short of the time, some are in a rush while responding and so on and so forth. To address the problem of missing data, statistical techniques were used on the data to validate it for further usage. To test the pattern in the missing values Little MCAR test applied, the significant value of the test was greater than the p-value (>0.05), therefore mean replaced technique was used for data validation.

**Outliers:**

Sixty-four potential outliers including univariate and multivariate outliers were detected in the data set. Initially, 33 univariate outliers were extracted from the data and removed by using standardized (Z) score. Cases with standardized scores in excess of 3.29 (p < .001, two-tailed test) are potential outliers (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Likewise, 31 multivariate outliers were also

detected and removed from the dataset by using Mahalanobis distance (D2) critical Chi-square CDF.CHISQ function at  $p < .001$ .

**Common Method Bias:**

To avoid the issue of common method biasness, the data was collected through different mediums including online survey (google forms) and through in person survey questionnaires. The value of the Herman’s Single Factor test was estimated by extracting fixed number of variables to one, the total variance explained by converging all the items into single variable was 22.77% which depicts that the study has non-significant common method biasness.

**Regression Analysis:**

Multiple regression analysis applied over the dependent and independent variable after converging the items into a single mean through compute variable technique from the software support of SPSS V.22, Variables were identified through literature review. Each variable is quantified through seven items where were also identified from literature review. Following are the results of regression model:

**Table 2: Relation between Impulse Buying and Predictor Variables (N = 273)**

Predictors	B	SE	t-stat	Sig.	VIF	Remarks
Constant)	1.931	.633	3.049	.003		
H <sub>1</sub> c	.216	.054	4.011	.000*	1.113	Accepted
H <sub>2</sub> t	.091	.103	.882	.378	1.289	Supported
H <sub>3</sub> out	.347	.128	2.712	.007*	1.336	Accepted
H <sub>4</sub> loyees	-.242	.124	-1.957	.050*	1.169	Accepted

F (4, 268) = 8.8, (p < 0.001); Adj R<sup>2</sup> = 0.103

\*p < 0.10

**Discussion of Regression Model:**

In the above table, the results of VIF, the statistical measure of multi-collinearity, is also mentioned besides the results of regression model. According to VIF, there is no multi-collinearity among the independent variable of model, as all the values of VIF are closer to 1.

The results of the multiple regression depict that the overall model has low explanatory power as exhibited by adjusted R<sup>2</sup>, but the overall model is significant as depicted by F test which is 8.8. There are three out of four variables determining the store environment are significant including music, layout and employees, having coefficients of .216, .347 and -.242 with t values of 4.011, 2.712 and -1.957 respectively. Among these variables, music and layout have positive impact on impulse buying whereas employee factor is influencing the impulse buying negatively. As far as light factor is concerned, it proved to be insignificant on impulse buying.

Predominantly music genre, volume and tempo remained key components in deriving influence on consumer behavior. Top chart music and slow volume nurtured positive impact on impulse buying behavior as observations deduced customer spending longer hours in store through its soothing effect. While effective store layout also plays a distinctive role in creating a memorable shopping experience for shoppers. Stores with elegant designs and layout stimulate welcoming feeling for the customers as it adds value to store atmosphere inducing customers towards impulse buying as depicted through our results as well by Hussain and Ali (2015).

(Waiman, 2104) Conclude in their study that store environment factors such as sales people, store layout, aroma, lighting, music and temperature had a significant impact with customer emotional reactions, whereas emotional responses encourage customer to buy and stay long time in stores, while the customer desire to buy more had found to be positively correlated with impulse buying behavior. Consequently, impulse buying decisions positively related with the effectiveness of store environment elements and their strategic implementation. (Sharma, Siwakumaran, and Marshall, 2010) have critically appraised in their research that people who visit more upscale stores had the tendency to buy impulsively. According to them, Majority of the respondents do not go through with the complex buying decision, store environment especially visual merchandising, store

layout and atmospheric factors create the need to buy without any pre shopping planning. (Herath, 2014) Identified that demographic factors also play a major role between store environment and impulse purchase. Customer with younger age tend to buy more impulsively as compared to older customers. The reason behind this spending pattern is that young people are less cared about their expenses and their purchase decisions are habitually impulsive.

(Duong, 2016) recognized the fact that retailer should identify the indispensable importance of store environment factors on impulse buying decision. Selection of appropriate store design element is the most important decision in making effective retail strategy. Creating a pleasant store environment means more impulse purchase which lead to maximum sales and higher profitability.

(Guenzi, 2009) Studied that a store with alluring and enticing environment have greater tendency to induce customer towards impulse buying. Different elements in store environment such as product packaging, price, layout, store lighting, positive attitude of sales people stimulate unplanned purchase. The effective integration of all these elements put a significant influence on impulse buying.

Moreover, front line store employees at store floor pertinently needs to exhibit diligent customer service to ensure customers' satisfaction and loyalty. Modern trade channels in Pakistan need to improve on their customer services as research findings derive a negative notion for our study. Lastly lighting factor to our surprise entailed insignificant effect on impulse buying behavior. This is largely because respondents might have attributed lighting as a common notion and adequately managed in Pakistani modern trade channel setting.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The major objective undertaking this study was to recognize the impact of the determinants of store environment on impulse buying behavior of the customers in the international modern trade



retail chains in Karachi (Metro & Hyperstar). Similar researches have been conducted on these variables globally but very scarce in Pakistan specifically in Karachi. This research studied that the impact of store environment determinants including music, and layout and have a positive impact on impulse buying behavior whereas employees has negative impact on impulse buying behavior. The store environment assumes as an indispensable part in examining clients to buy things that they didn't at first expect to buy. There are components which must be considered while forming the store environment to fit to the necessities of the clients for impulse buying. If the stores can take measures to expand the pleasure for the customers through music and layout, the inclination to buy impulsively will be expanded; whereas sales person factor is a very delicate issue to be handled, too much role and interaction of sales staff may irritate the customer and consequently play negative role in impulse buying.

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