

RESEARCH KIT

Capstone Project - Retail

Team MiSS

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BICYCLE
TEST RIDERS
ONLY

1. INTRODUCTION

With the ever-increasing prevalence of online stores, people are still visiting brick and mortar stores. Physical stores provide people with a multi-sensational experience that online shopping does not. People can see, touch, smell, and hear in a physical store. A novel shopper can receive more insights from a physical store than an online store because of his/her lack of knowledge and first-hand experience.

Koos Service Design identified that there are 4 main shopping journeys: ① Fantasizing includes forming visions of ideal products, outcomes, experiences, and possibilities. ② Scanning consists of customers gravitating towards personal interests, building lists of attractive products and checklist features. ③ Planning encompasses the shoppers' thought process of comparing and contrasting of products, checking for strengths and weaknesses. ④ Transactions is the final stage in which shoppers purchase products. Our focus is on the Scanning and Planning stages in which the shopper is exploring and making decisions whether to purchase items or not. We wanted to design an fully-engaged experience for our users, and it is at these two stages that this experience is created.

We chose athletic/sportswear stores because this shopping area requires more technical expertise than clothing stores which rely more on pleasure and preference. However, athletic/sportswear stores also include a wide variety of products ranging from equipment to apparel. From our research, we found that the supermarket experience is heavily goal-oriented in terms of requirements and therefore shoppers want to pick up their items in a quick and easy way. There is also very little variation of what consumers pick out during their grocery trips. For example, each trip to the grocery store is based on the consumer's lifestyle which does not vary regularly. Rather than creating an experience for habitual shopping, we want to shift our attention towards athletic/sportswear stores which focus on shoppers' recreational activities and interests.

1.1 Take-home Messages from Secondary Research

- The image of the store can influence customers' perceptions of quality, value, and willingness to buy products
- Music, scents, colors, and other aspects of the interior design/decorations such as the building, carpeting, and fixtures can have a positive or negative impact on customers
- Store personnel within a shop are extremely important and have been noted as a contributing factor to entertaining store experiences
- Educating and helping customers by providing instructions and first-rate knowledge about how to use products is valuable to improving customer experience
- Digital material which includes movement plays a key role especially within sports stores
- First few shopping experiences are crucial in determining future shopping decisions and behavior
- Shoppers do not acquire enough information before making purchasing choices, so it is important for a store to provide them with engaging, easy to grasp, and relevant information and recommendations
- Consumers like to take mental shortcuts and do not make shopping-decisions consciously. Emotion, environment, other's recommendations all have an influence on their shopping decisions and their experience evaluation
- Incorporating digital technology into the physical store would give rise to new expectations: as easier ways to find data is expected, information needs to be provided through more diverse methods.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Spatial Design and Environmental Psychology

Retail companies spend millions of dollars designing, building, and renovating their brick-and-mortar stores in hopes to establish a positive shopping experience for customers. There are three different factors that affect customer experiences within the store. Ambient factors include background conditions in the environment such as temperature, scent, noise, music, and lighting. Social factors include store employees and other customers within the store. Design factors are the functional and aesthetic elements such as the architecture, style, and layout (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). These 3 different types of factors can make or break the image of the store. Research has found that store image influences consumers' perceptions of quality, value and willingness to buy (Dodds et al., 1991). With the correct use of the factors, a retailer can be viewed as a high-image store. However, if used incorrectly, the retailer can suffer as a low-image store. For example, environmental elements such as soft/dim lighting, classical music, open layout, nicely dressed and cooperative salespeople are associated with high-image stores, whereas bright/harsh lighting, Top-20 music, gridlayout, sloppily dressed and uncooperative salespeople are associated with low-image stores (Gardner and Siomkos, 1985; Golden and Zimmerman, 1986; Berman and Evans, 1989).

Atmospherics is an area which has been popular for retailers to understand how store environment ambient and design factors can be used to bring out particular emotional and behavioral responses from customers (Kotler, 1973). Atmospherics include music (Yalch and Spangenberg, 1990), scents (Spangenberg et al., 1996), and colors (Bellizzi and Hite, 1992) and also include aspects of the interior design and decorations such as the building, carpeting, and fixtures (Hoffman and Turley, 2002). An important ambient factor is the temperature. A product recommendation is likely to have a greater influence if it is warm inside the store, or if it is viewed by a consumer on a warm day. In fact a study, by Xun Huang, found the optimum temperature for this is between 75-77 °F, or 24-25 °C (Huang, 2014). Aside from temperature, music plays a role in influencing customer experience. Consumers listening to music familiar to them experience that they spent less time in the store than consumers made to listen to unfamiliar music (Yalch and Spangenberg, 2000).

Social factors also influence the customer experience. The number, appearance, and behavior of store employees may help shape a customer's perception of the service level within a retail store (Baker, 1986). Store personnel are extremely important and have been noted as a contributing factor to entertaining store experiences (Jones, 1999). Along with this sales people have to be credible sources in order for positive service encounters to occur (Swinyard, 1995).

Some retail companies also take into account the importance of education and knowledgeable salespeople who create pleasurable in-store experiences for customers. Educating and helping customers by providing instructions and first-rate knowledge about how to use the products is valuable to improving customer experience. Specifically in sports stores, retail companies want more people to take part in the knowledge of personnel.

In Bäckström & Johansson, 2006, the researchers discuss trends and observations of store designs within sports stores. Retailers wanted to inspire customers by suggesting possible ways of using the products. This could be done by complementing displays with additional items that were related to the products presented, or by presenting new combinations of products in their displays. There was also this idea of combining inspiration with the products in the store. For example, when a ski-race was on, there was a digital screen broadcasting the race within the store.

Aside from this, there was also the use of movement in sports stores. Within the stores, the use of plasma screens, touch screens and television sets with commercials or music channels were used. Digital material seems to play a key role in order to entertain shoppers and has been growing in new store concepts that are presented.

Furthermore, all retailers included special arrangement or activities in order to create pleasurable experiences to their customers; within a sport store this could mean suppliers in the store providing shoppers with information about their products; Thus, by increasing the availability of the products offered, the customer visit becomes easier which in turn contributes to a positive experience (Bäckström & Johansson, 2006).

To summarize, many factors can influence customer experience within the store. If these factors are used correctly, customer experience can be improved. Ambience, design, and social elements can make or break the image of a retailer. The image of the store can influence customers' perceptions of quality, value and willingness to buy products. Music, scents, colors, and other aspects of the interior design and decorations such as the building, carpeting, lighting, and fixtures can have a positive or negative impact on customers. Digital material from screens that include movement play a key role especially within sports stores. Aside from ambient and digital factors, social factors also come into play. Store personnel within a shop are important and have been noted as a contributing factor to entertaining store experiences. Furthermore, educating and helping customers by providing instructions and first-rate knowledge about how to use products is valuable to improving customer experience. By leveraging these factors, customer experiences within a store can be improved.

2.2 Consumer Psychology and Decision Making

Most of the influential models in consumer behaviour research assume that purchases (at least for the first few times) are conscious decision-making processes, which involve choosing and evaluating (E.g. Howard & Sheth, 1969). People gradually shift from rational decision making to automatically applying a pattern or strategy found successful in the past. Katona (1964) found that this transformation of behaviour patterns require satisfactory experiences. It indicates the importance of first few purchases, which need to be an enjoyable experience.

Such a conscious process would require people to have enough, if not extensive, knowledge on the product they are trying to purchase. However, many researchers found that people make decisions before extensive research, even for expensive purchases; for example, over 60 percent of car buyers used three or less total sources of information (Muse & Hutt, 1977). Many shoppers begin their search with a reasonable amount of prior knowledge of brands and their characteristics, so they under-acquire information while shopping (Granbois, 1977). Vanhuele and Dreze (2002) also found consumers spend little time on cognitive processes like reading and comparing prices. Given the importance of the first purchase, it is very important that a shop encourages consumers to explore different options, perhaps by providing related information in time. This could help the consumers to gain important knowledge on the product to help them make the final decision.

Even though semantic elements impact on the evaluation process, getting attention is still a key role for the in-store buying process and can bring in new consumers (Selame and Koukos 2002). There are two processes for visual attention: bottom-up processing, when people are being attracted to stimuli present in the environment (e.g. Helmholtz, 1925); and top-down processing, when people direct their attention to specific things such as their interests (e.g. James, 1890). It is a question of what people are searching for and what is notable within the space. A special installation and spatial design will attract attention if it fits consumers' needs. Consumers want a quick and effortless decision and they will find simple rules or tactics to satisfy their choice (Hoyer 1984; Dodds 1995). Thus, providing clear guidance in information-searching and salient information cues could potentially improve the shopping experience.

Moreover, in a literature review by Olshavsky and Granbios (1979), the authors concluded that for a portion of purchases, a decision process may have never occurred – not even for the first purchases. Thus, it is also important to understand what factors would influence such unconscious automatic processes. Recommendations from personal or nonpersonal sources are one of the reasons leading to final purchases (Olshavsky & Granbios, 1979). This also indicate the importance of providing relevant information or suggestions to shoppers. Retail environments also alter consumer emotions (Dube & Morin, 2001). The change in emotions could affect both shopping task performance (Bitner et al., 1990) and consumers' post-shopping evaluations (Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994). Shoppers experiencing relatively high pleasure and arousal generally are more willing to make a purchase (Darden and Babin, 1994) and see a store environment as a more attractive place to spend time (Babin et al., 1994). In addition, customers in a negative emotional state seek to repair their emotion by purchase, and want outlets with easy access and avoid personal interaction and are more comfortable with impersonal, undemanding sources of information (Maxwell & Kover, 2003). Thus, how the store looks, feels, sounds, and smells could all contribute to people's evaluation of their shopping experience.

In this digital age, people also have different expectations for the store, especially when the store incorporates more technology. Failure to meet these expectations might hinder people's evaluation of their shopping experiences. Enjoyment is considered to be a motivational factor for the choice of the tech-heavy store for their purchases (Oh et al., 2009). As for sports marketing, Kelley and Turley (2001) found the "game experience" attribute is the major element of sport cues. Thus, creating an engaging and enjoyable game experience for a sport retail store could attract customers' interests in shopping in such store. Pantano and Laria (2012) created a virtual reality store, and found that consumers expect to find more detailed information on available products, which can be accessed by videos and photos in order to support the decision process. These types of information enhance customer rapport building (Schlosser & Shavitt, 2009), with benefits for the trust in retailer (Niininen, Buhalis, March, 2007). Customers also expect areas for relaxing, eating and drinking. In addition, a study found that consumers rated search as the most important tool in helping them save time and for obtaining new product ideas (comScore [Local Search Association Conference], 2014)

In conclusion, although many theories and models assume people make purchasing decisions consciously, at least for their first purchase, it does not happen all the time. Nevertheless, "first-buy" still has an important role in determining people's future purchasing choices. However, people do not seek enough information while they make this decision, and it is important for the store to provide engaging, easy to grasp relevant information to the customers to help their decision-making. On the other hand, a large portion of people's shopping choices are made unconsciously. Recommendations influence people's unconscious buying decisions, and stores should be able to give good suggestions for people in order to improve consumer satisfaction. Environment also has a big influence on consumers' emotion, which in turn would have an effect on people's shopping behavior, experience evaluation, and ultimately making the store an enjoyable place to be. Finally, incorporating digital technology into the physical store would give rise to new expectations: as easier ways to find data is expected, information needs to be provided through more diverse methods.

2.3 Sport Characteristics & Participant Requirements

There are many ways to classify sports and activities. They can be categorized according to the intensity of the exercise and also levels of dangers (Mitchell & Shatfer, 1994). Most of the ball games, such as soccer, tennis, hockey, and basketball can be classified as one category as they have an intermittent and dynamic energy level (Bloomfield & Jonathan, 2007). One characteristic of these types of sports is that they usually require specialized coaching equipment to effectively improve performance. For example, in tennis, many researches found that young and entry-level players found it is more helpful to use scaled racquets and low-compression balls (Farrow & Reid, 2010). This indicates that special modifications of equipment could effectively improve performance and grow technique. Therefore, ball-related sports require more knowledge-based understanding of the equipment to participate at full potential. We want to focus away from ball-sports because the requirements of these types of sports are skill- and equipment-specific, which is hard to be generalized to all types of athletic activities.

Outdoor recreation or outdoor activity refers to leisure pursuits often in natural or semi-natural settings out of town. Examples includes camping, climbing, hiking etc. Camping is a family-oriented activity. (The 2014 American Camper Report), and the customer's purchasing decision usually involves family factors. Other sport types involve a more personalized decision and preference. The outdoor exercise also includes the "adventure activities", which involve excitement, physical challenges, or risks such as river-rafting and climbing (Rolston, 1988). Moreover, many of these types of exercise require temporarily living outdoors. These groups of sports are very age and skill specific.

Fitness-centred activities are very common for people to engage in exercise. It is easy to access and have little age or space restriction. The performance of this type of sports largely relies on relevant sports equipment or wearable goods. One example is the footwear, which is designed specifically to prevent injury, improve performance and provide comfort (Frederick, 2003).

The wearables and equipment were also customizable to fit individual needs and physical conditions (Nigg & Luthi, 1997). Although these criteria are subject-specific, designs for running and court shoes also need to follow the generally applied principles for fitness activities (e.g. Reinschmidt & Nigg, 2000). Generalizations also apply to other equipment, such as apparel and safety equipment. We found that design and criteria for fitness-centred activities is easier to be generalized to a broader variety of sports for our future design direction and concept. But this focus on sports can provide a deep enough field for us to learn more about decision making for purchasing sportswear in our primary research activities.

1.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, we chose to focus on fitness-centred activities because of its technical and knowledge-rich space, which allows us to delve deeper and learn extensively. Our research on spatial design revealed that the image of the store can influence customers' perceptions of quality, value, and willingness to buy products. The store image consists of the physical layout of the store and the social factors such as the store personnel who also come into play. The consumer decision making literature suggests the importance of the first few purchases on later buying decisions. Research also found people do not always follow logical processes and make rational decisions while shopping. They are susceptible to unconscious cues and mental heuristics. Thus, by providing people with clear-cut facts, information visualizations, in-store guidance, and suggestions shoppers can make better decisions and take away an exceptional shopping experience.

3. RESEARCH QUESTION

What relevant information can we provide to aid the browsing and decision-making experience in athletic and sportswear retail stores for novel shoppers?

4. PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Novel:

People who are new to the sport and have not done shopping for the particular sport previously.

New Shopper:

People who will enter the store for the first time. People who have not shopped in the store of our choice before.

Profile

We want to recruit people living in America who are interested in trying out fitness-centered activities who have very little to no knowledge or experience. Target participants include people who have tried these activities before, but do not have technical experience (knowledge on equipment selection and usage, suitable clothing/fabric and wearables, specialized products, etc). Our ideal participants also include those who have not purchased specific equipment for intended sports before (e.g. dedicated shoes, joint protectors or safety equipment, etc), but could have bought generic athletic sports wear (t-shirts for running, swimsuits, sneakers etc). Participants should be new to at least one of the stores from the list below. We seek a mix of socio-economic status and working status of participants such as students, professionals, and unemployed. People who have experience within the UX/Research field or have participated in research studies within the past 6 months will not be considered.

5. RESEARCH ACTIVITIES



01/
Shop-Along

02/
User Interview for
their shopping
experience

01/ SHOP-ALONG

APPLICATION

Our team wants to gain immediate, real-time feedback from customers about how they navigate through the store and where and when they are considering a purchase. We want to use the shop-along method because it is a more in-depth one-on-one interview which examines actual shopping behavior rather than behavior that is recalled and reported after an event has taken place. This method can be conducted with users in any venue that sells goods/services, excluding the online space.

We plan to use shop-alongs to identify specific influences/influencers, understand barriers, or uncover opportunities. Shop-alongs also:

- Check ease of store navigation, shopability, or findability.
- Observe the influence of the retail environment on the purchase decision.
- Understand the level of consumer engagement with products.

TECHNOLOGY

We plan to audio record and video record during the shop-along sessions. Small and simple devices such as a smartphones or handheld video cameras are preferred because they are subtle and non-threatening.

Before the shop-along begins, we will require each respondent's permission to be audio and videotaped. We also require the company's permission to record and execute interviews within the store.

TARGET STORES

- Nordstrom
- Macy's
- JC Penny
- REI

OBJECTIVES

- To observe how shoppers navigate through a store and understand the different types of store design.
- To examine the process of how shoppers interact with a product.
- To understand how shoppers search for the information they need within the store
- To find out what causes shoppers to talk to the store staff

OBSERVATIONS

- Which parts of the store are most visited or used?
- Which parts of the store are least used?
- What types of questions do customers ask the retail staff?
- What kinds of difficulties do customers face within the store?
- Where do people go when they have a question or are confused?
- How does the staff behave when they see a potential customer? (When they enter, look confused, need help etc.)

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- Is it easy to navigate through the store?
- Are you distracted by anything along the way?
- Does the placement of the product make it stand out?
- What is the influence of a brand, a coupon or special price?
- Is the product easy to reach (and be picked up)?
- Does the package provide desired information (text and images) about the contents?

BREAKDOWN OF SESSIONS (70 MINUTES)

- | | |
|------|--|
| 10 m | Greet participant and direct them to the pre-chosen interview spot. Ask if the participant needs anything before the activity starts. Give participant a consent form to sign. |
| 30 m | Conduct shop-along. Please see page X for more detailed overview. Recordings of the participant will be taken during this phase. |
| 20 m | Ask questions regarding the shop-along. Please see page X for more detailed view of questions. Notes and audio recording will be taken during this phase. |
| 10 m | Debrief the participant and allow any questions he/she might have about the study. Thank participants and provide compensation. |

INTRODUCTION

Hello, thank you very much for coming in today. In this session, we will be shopping with you at X. Go through X how you would normally go through the store. We would like you to think aloud as you navigate through the store. We will pay you \$X per hour. Do you have any questions? If you do not have any questions, please sign the consent form. Do you mind if we take audio and video recordings? All recordings will remain confidential and are strictly for research purposes.

Remember, we are here to learn. There are no right or wrong answers to any of this, and if anything is unclear to you, feel free to ask for explanations. We just want your honest response— do not hold back!

Before we start, would you like anything? Do you need to use the bathroom before we start? You are free to use them anytime during the session.

DEBRIEF

That's everything we need to talk about in this session. If you will excuse me for a few minutes, I just want to confer with my observers and see if they have any final questions.

[Ask observers for any follow-up questions]

Ok, that's it. Could you please sign this form and confirm that I paid you the promised gratuity? [Provide gratuity and ask for signature]

Thank you again for your participation today. We really appreciate your feedback. It will help us very much in understanding consumer's thoughts and attitudes in shopping. Have a good day!

02/ USER INTERVIEW FOR THEIR SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

OBJECTIVES

This interview will help us to create a cognitive and emotional timeline of users during their shopping experience. We will ask participants to map out their shopping journey to prompt them to think about every step they take within the store. We want to understand and address customer needs and pain points, and use it to help us visualize the shopping process. The user interview serves to get people's thoughts, attitudes and beliefs about shopping. It also gives us a holistic and detailed view of the customer experience within a physical store.

- To reveal how people make sense and interpret the store design and layout.
- To identify at which steps of shopping do people tend to make what decisions.
- To understand how different decisions interact with each other throughout the shopping journey.
- To understand what constitute as a good shopping experience for the customers, and what factors could interfere with such experience.
- To map out user's emotional journeys while shopping.

BREAKDOWN OF INTERVIEW SESSIONS (60 MINUTES)

| | |
|------|---|
| 10 m | Greet participants and direct them to the pre-chosen interview spot. Ask if they need anything before the interview start. Sign consent form and take headshot. |
| 40 m | Conduct the semi-structured interview. Please see page X for the detailed overview of the questions. Photos of participants will be taken during this period. |
| 10 m | Debrief, allow questions for the study. Thank participants and provide compensation. |

INTRODUCTION

Hello, thank you very much for coming in today. In this session, we will be talking about your retail store shopping experience. I will ask you to imagine a scenario in which you will be shopping sport equipment for yourself, and ask you to go over your shopping journey in detail with me. We will pay you \$000 per hour for the interview. Do you have any questions? If you do not have any other questions, please sign the consent form. Do you mind if I take a photo of you to refresh my memory of this session in the future?

We are here to learn. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions, and if any of the questions were not clear to you, feel free you ask for explanations. Please give us your honest response and do not hold back.

Would you like a glass of water or a cup of coffee? Do you need to use the bathroom before we start? You are free to use them anytime during the session.

SECTION 1: ENTERING THE STORE

Imagine that you are trying to buy a new pair of shoes, and free weights / kettlebells. It is your first time visiting the store. Why would you choose to enter this store?

- **[Prompt]** What do you notice first, or pay attention to, when you first enter the store?
- How do you usually feel when you enter a store. What might annoy you or attract your attention in a store?

SECTION 2: BROWSING

Now that you have entered the store, where do you usually start?

- **[Probe]** What do you pay attention to while you are browsing?
- What information are you looking for? Is there anything in particular that is crucial for you?

(CONTINUE)

What would you do if you do not have enough knowledge on a product you need or is best for you?

Would you decide to purchase anything at this stage?

- **[Probe]** What factors have you been considering and why do you think they are sufficient for your decision?

SECTION 3: TRYING

[Probe] How do you decide what articles/products to try?

Why would you want to try the products before making a decision to purchase or not?

- Would you make a decision now on whether or not to buy it?
- **[Probe]** If not, what do you need further to help you make the decision?

SECTION 4: AFTER TRYING

Would you do anything else after trying but before making the purchase?

- **[Probe]** Why do you feel the need to do so?

Is there anything else you want to share about your shopping journey?

DEBRIEF

That's everything we need to talk about in this session. If you will excuse me for a few minutes, I just want to confer with my observers and see if they have any final questions.

[Ask observers for any follow-up questions]

Ok, that's it. Could you please sign this form and confirm that I paid you the promised gratuity? [Provide gratuity and ask for signature]

Thank you again for your participation today. We really appreciate your feedback. It will help us very much in understanding consumer's thoughts and attitudes in shopping. Have a good day!

6.SUPPORTING MATERIALS

01/
Consent
Form

02/
Gratuity Release
Form

01/ Consent Form

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Siyi Kou, Maggie Wang and Shravya Neeruganti from the University of Washington.

My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will be paid for my participation with the rate specified in the gratuity release form. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

Participation involves being interviewed for approximately one hour. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio recording and photos will be captured during the interview, and I give my consent to be recorded.

Participation involves writing diaries and make video recordings of my daily driving activity. I give my consent to the recording.

I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

NAME _____
SIGNATURE _____
DATE _____

02/ Gratuity Release Form

Thank you very much for your participation. As a reimbursement, we pay you \$00 for every interview hour. Please sign below to confirm you have received the incentives for your participation.

For participant

I confirm that I have participated the experiment with Siyi Kou, Maggie Wang and Shravya Neeruganti and have received \$_____ for my participation.

NAME _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

7. CHECK - LIST

Shop-Along

- Script
- Consent Form
- Gratuity Release
- Gratuity (form of gift card or something similar)
- Audio/Video Equipment

User Interview

- Interview guide
- Note paper & pen
- Consent Form
- Release Form
- Gratuity (form of gift card or something similar)
- Audio/Video Equipment

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