

Impact of Store Environmental Characteristics on Customers' Impulse Buying Behavior: Mediating effect of Customers' Positive Emotional Responses

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Article History:	ABSTRACT
Received: 28 Jun, 2018	Purpose: This research attempts to investigate the effect of store environmental characteristics and customers' positive emotional responses on customers' impulsive buying behavior.
Revised: 27 Sep, 2018	Methodology/Design: Data is obtained by structured questionnaire from customers of apparel stores of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Convenience sampling technique is used for taking sample. Data is examined for the acceptance or rejection of the developed hypotheses by SPSS.
Accepted: 29 Sep, 2018	Findings: The current research has established direct and indirect relations among store environmental characteristics, customers' positive emotional responses and impulsive buying behavior of customers. But only ambient characteristics of store environment have indirect effect on impulse buying behavior. Implications: This research is expected to provide a better understanding of the variables that influence impulsive buying behavior. It also delivers important implications for the marketers and retailers. Current research also delivers the limitations and suggests recommendations for future studies. Limitations: This study uses only listed commercial banks of Pakistan. All other i.e. specialized banks are excluded in this study. Keywords: <i>Impulsive buying behavior, Store environmental characteristics, customers' positive emotional responses.</i>

1. Introduction

Buying impulsively is a prevailing phenomenon across the world. The retailers and marketers are working to appeal the buyers to increase impulse purchases. For this objective, diverse companies are struggling and conducting research on how to increase in impulse behavior of the customers for achieving competitive edge. The review of literature has presented that impulse buying behavior has been argued and discovered widely during the past sixty four years, consequently the emphases of impulse buying behavior research has arisen from the collaboration

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of several social, psychological, situational, environmental, and individual factors (Chang, Eckman, & Yan, 2011). The environmental characteristics, individual characteristics, and customers' circumstances (situational factors) may be the causes of the customers' impulse buying behavior (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Scholars have suggested that customers' impulse buying behavior may be a self-identity seeking behavior (Dittmar & Bond, 2010). Customers buy the products to reflect their self-image, or it may boost their self-image by turning them into what they "want to be" a better self (Dittmar & Drury, 2000).

Several studies have been done on customers' impulse buying behavior. A number of future recommendations are given by earlier studies (Lunardo & Roux, 2015; Chang, Yan, & Eckman, 2014) in the arena of customers' impulse buying behavior. It has been suggested to pinpoint external factors and internal factors with the view to label whether they impact impulse buying behavior. The influences of store environments on customers' behavior such as money spent and browsing in the retail store have been studied extensively (e.g. Tai & Fung, 1997); however, researchers (Chang, Yan, & Eckman, 2014; Jani & Han, 2013; Mohan, Sivakumaran, & Sharma, 2013) have called for further investigations to understand the effect of store environmental characteristics on impulse buying behaviors.

Customers' impulse buying behavior is a quick inspiring and hedonically merged buying behavior in which the haste decision of customers' impulse buying avoids any rational, schedule observation of selections (Kacen & Lee, 2002). Customers' impulse buying can also assist the purpose of customers' pleasure (Hausmann, 2000). Satisfying material longings makes customers contented. Longing can be defined as 'urges to gain pleasure' to satisfy a want or need related in consumer behavior (Ramanathan & Menon, 2006). Earlier studies have described the emotional implications that emerge from customers' impulse buying behavior (Sayre & Horne, 1996).

Customers are constantly subjected to different cues in the retail store environment that can influence impulse buying (Shalom & Gendel-Guterman, 2012). Store environment such as light and music have an effect on positive emotions of customers, which further effect on customers' impulse buying behavior (Mohan et al., 2013). This research is intended to examine store environment (i.e. ambient, design, and social characteristics) affect customers' emotions, which further influence impulse buying behavior. Keeping in mind the above mentioned propositions, it is essential to identify and understand the decision path of customers' impulse buying and to test the mutual impact of internal and external effects on customers' impulse buying behavior. Current research suggests a framework to understand the way the outer elements excite inner elements in the making of impulse buying behavior. By studying the current literature, it is established that no study could be found on the link between store environment and impulse buying behavior with mediating role of customers' positive emotional responses and with precise focus on ready to wear clothing outlets and stores in Pakistan.

The current research has the purpose to examine whether store environmental characteristics and customers' positive emotional responses affect impulse buying behavior. More

specifically, the purpose of the study is: to add to an enhanced understanding of direct effect between three core variables i.e. store environmental characteristics, customers' positive emotional responses and impulse buying behavior of customers. Another objective is to analyze indirect effects of characteristics of store environment on impulsive buying behavior through customers' positive emotional responses. The current study will focus on apparel purchases since apparel purchasing are sensual experiential items with definite symbolic significances and are bought because of buyers' emotional preferences (Park, Kim, & Forney, 2006). Second, shopping for non-food goods such as clothing is a scope for self-expression par distinction (Das, 2014). So, these are some of other causes to conduct research in the clothing context by revised Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

2. Literature Review

The review of literature tests relations among store environmental characteristics (i.e. ambient, design, and social characteristics), customers' positive emotional responses and impulsive buying behavior.

2.1 Store Environmental Characteristics

Three groups of store environment that were classified by Baker (2002) are useful for the current research. Baker (2002) offered a typology for categorizing store environmental signs into three sets built on the experiences that create customer's responses. For the first cue (ambient) comprising non visual elements like music, temperature and lighting. For the second cue (design) which comprises visual elements, such as store layout, fitting room signage, merchandise display, fixtures and color scheme. For the third cue (social), it comprises persons who are in the buying environment like salesperson and other customer. The environment of store has an influence on customer's insights about service quality, products and pleasure at the retail outlet (Sharma & Stifford, 2000). Several characteristics of store environment combine to denote three factors ambient, design and social those play an important role in influencing customer's emotions and probability of purchasing (Turley & Milliman, 2000). Kotler (1973) familiarized the concept of atmospherics for the first time. He defined the store atmosphere such as "the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance purchase opportunity."

2.1.1 Ambient Characteristics and Customers' Positive Emotional Responses

Ambient comprises the settings of non-visual nature in the retail store environment like light and scent (Baker et al., 1994). For example, light may affect the image of store as well as inspection of goods, d' Astous (2000) mentioned ambient factor as 'contextual conditions that exist under the level of our immediate awareness. It includes scent, sound, cleanliness, humidity, brightness, ventilation and temperature etc. It is demonstrated from the studies of restaurants and supermarkets that the tempo and volume of music can affect customer's emotions and as a result interval of stay, shopping pace and amount spent (Turley & Milliman, 2000). Lighting designer noticed that lighting can affect how customers experience the space and light is an important element for the retail designer that can create a positive store experience.

2.1.2 Design Characteristics and Customers' Positive Emotional Responses

Design Characteristics consist of two elements (i.e. physical and visual) of store environment which include the architecture, material, color and style that may differentiate it from one retailer to another retailer (Baker et al., 1994). The structures of store environment like physical appeal and features of store (window displays, sign clutters) may affect the customers' insight relating to product quality (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004). The finest design characteristics of the environment of store may have a positive effect on the customers' positive emotional responses. Positive responses arise if the store makes it easy for the purchasers to find the merchandise they are looking for, by providing appropriate signage and logical store layout (Spies et al., 1997).

2.1.3 Social Characteristics and Customers' Positive Emotional Responses

Social characteristics may comprise customer types, confidentiality, behavior and the staff's look and appearance (Turley & Milliman, 2000). These characteristics of the store environment denote to the characteristics caused by other shoppers or sales assistants. Chang, Yan, and Molly (2011) presented the bearing of social characteristics on customer's positive emotional responses. Often, subtle aspects in the personnel's behavior lead to positive feelings, for example being easily available and a smile for customers. Even in brief and mundane encounters, the sales persons cause positive effect (Mattila & Enz, 2002).

2.2 Customers' Positive Emotional Responses and Impulse buying behavior

State of emotions is a judgment whether an object is attractive, pleasant, valuable, preferable or likeable (Russell & Snodgrass, 1987). The extent to which an individual may feel enthusiastic, attentive, and active can be characterized by positive affect (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). A customer's emotional state has an effect on customer's impulse buying behavior. Customer's positive emotions like enthusiasm have positive effect on customers' impulse buying behavior (Chung et al., 2014). Some examiners have found the influence of arousal and pleasure on making impulse buying (Babin & Attaway, 2000). Theoretical and empirical indications have shown that the

effective and emotional state is the driver for customers' impulse buying behavior (Strack & Deutsch, 2003).

2.3 Mediating Effect of Customers' Positive Emotional Responses

Related work demonstrates the significant impact of store environmental characteristics on customers' positive emotional responses as well as the significant effects of customers' positive emotional responses on impulsive buying behavior (Chung et al., 2014; Talukdar & Lindsey, 2013). It is argued that the characteristics of store environment have a significant effect on customers' positive emotional responses, and in turn, those customers' positive emotional responses have effect on impulsive buying behavior. As stated by Mohan et al. (2013), store environment like light and music (ambient characteristics) have influence on positive emotions of customers, as a result, influence customers' impulse buying behavior. Another study displays that the ambient/design features in a retail store can activate customers' positive emotions, which lead to customers' impulse buying behavior (Chang et al., 2011).

Researchers have established in their explanations that occasionally the contact between customers and salesmen may change into their friendships, comprise affection, provision of social nature and gift giving. This type of association is helpful to support the marketing purposes like contentment of customers, loyalty and impulse behavior from customers (Hu & Jasper, 2006). If characteristics of store environment (i.e. ambient, design and social) exert significant effects on positive emotional responses of customers and customers' positive emotional responses (organism) has significant impacts on impulsive buying behavior (response).

2.4 Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Stimulus–Organism–Response Model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; Rotter, 1954; 1966) provide the base for the development of theoretical framework of this study. In this research, store environmental characteristics denote stimulus, customers' positive emotional responses denote organism and customers' impulsive buying behavior denote response as per the S-O-R model.

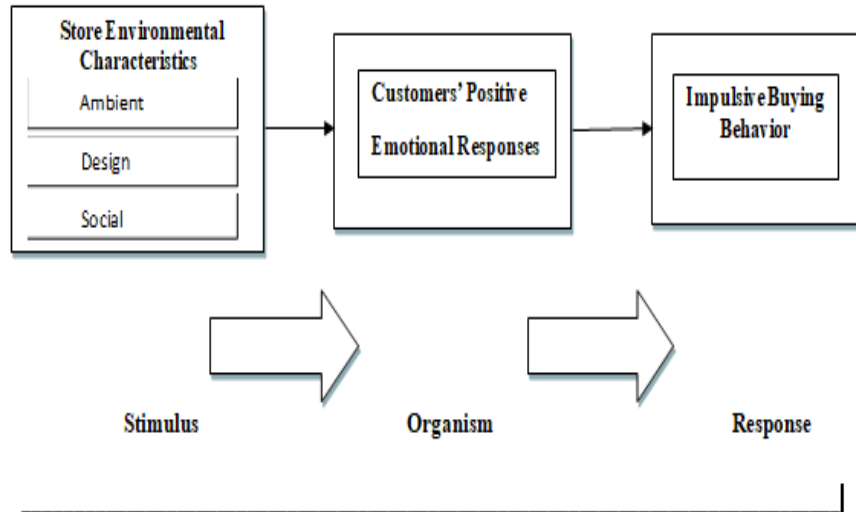


Fig.1: Proposed S-O-R Framework of Impulsive Buying Behavior

H1: There is a positive impact of ambient characteristics on customers' positive emotional responses.

H2: There is a positive impact of design characteristics on customers' positive emotional responses.

H3: There is a positive impact of social characteristics on customers' positive emotional responses.

H4: There is a positive impact of customers' positive emotional response on customers' impulsive buying behavior.

H5: Customers' positive emotional responses act as a mediator between ambient characteristics and customers' impulsive buying behavior.

H6: Customers' positive emotional responses act as a mediator between design characteristics and customers' impulsive buying behavior.

H7: Customers' positive emotional responses act as a mediator between social characteristics and customers' impulsive buying behavior.

3. Research Methodology

Population of the study is customers visiting and making purchases at famous ready-to-wear clothes outlets in Rawalpindi and Islamabad (Pakistan). Apparel stores are chosen, by following Lin and Liang (2011) to confirm that service environments and emotional state would be related to the customers' purchasing experience. Method of mall-intercept survey is used for data collection following Mohan and Sharma (2013). 410 final questionnaires are included in study. Male customers are dominated the sample as 214 (52.2%) and female customers are 196 (47.8%). Most

customers' lie in 30-40 years age category as 159 (38.8%). 227 (55.4%) customers have 14-18 years qualification. 105 (25.6%) customers have less than Rs. 20,000 income.

Table 1: Descriptive of Sample Respondents

Demographic Variables	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Mean/S.D
Gender	Male	214	52.2	0.48/0.50
	Female	196	47.8	
Age (in years)	Under 20	40	9.8	2.58/0.50
	21-30	157	38.3	
	31-40	159	38.8	
	41-50	46	11.2	
	51-60	4	1.0	
	Over 61	4	1.0	
Qualification (in years)	Under 10	20	4.9	2.79/0.74
	10-14	104	25.4	
	14-18	227	55.4	
	Over 18	59	14.4	
	Under 20	105	25.6	
Income (In thousands)	20-30	81	19.8	2.87/ 1.47
	30-40	62	15.1	
	40-50	88	21.5	
	Over 50	74	18.0	

3.1 Measures

This study has three store environment characteristics i.e. design, ambient, and social. To measure these store environment characteristics, Kumar and Kim (2014) scales are used. Design, ambient, and social scales have 9, 5, and 5 items respectively. Value of Cronbach's Alpha of these measures are 0.87, 0.79 and 0.76 respectively. Customers' positive emotion response scale is adopted from Chang, Yan, and Eckman (2014) and it consists of 7 items with Cronbach's Alpha of 0.90. To measure impulsive buying behavior, Chang, Yan, and Eckman (2014) scale is adopted with 3 items and having Cronbach's Alpha of 0.77. Responses are taken on 5 point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' (1) to 'Strongly agree' (5).

3.2 Procedure

For data analyses, descriptive analysis of all variables i.e. demographic and study variables is performed through SPSS 21. On the other-side, for inferential analysis, structural equation modeling technique is applied with the help of AMOS 22.0. Through SEM, measurement model validation and structural model fitness is checked for hypotheses testing.

4. Results

Descriptive analysis is executed to study the mean and standard deviation of variables. Mean and standard deviation of MIBB are 3.49 and 0.94 respectively. Descriptive of other variables are presented in following Table 3. Skewness and kurtosis are also found to check normality of data and results of Skewness and Kurtosis are in acceptable range i.e. -2 to +2 that represent data is normal. Correlation analysis is accomplished to check association between variables. Results have shown that variables have significant positive association with each other at $p < 0.01$. Design characteristic (MDC) has strong positive and significant association with social characteristic (MSC) i.e. $r = 0.69$, $p < 0.01$. In same way, social characteristic (MSC) has weak positive and significant association with impulsive buying behavior (MIBB) i.e. $r = 0.24$, $p < 0.01$.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
1. MDC	1					3.81	0.68	-0.62	0.83
2. MAC	.51**	1				3.57	0.86	-0.50	0.15
3. MSC	.69**	.50*	1			3.90	0.76	-0.95	1.15
4. MCPER	.64**	.42**	.49**	1		3.65	0.84	-0.61	0.30
5. MIBB	.36**	.29**	.24**	.47**	1	3.49	0.94	-0.70	0.41

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

4.1 Structural Equation Modeling

4.1.1 Testing of Measurement Model

Confirmatory factor analysis is executed for measurement model. To check reliability of each item, factor loading (FL) and squared multiple correlation (SMC) are calculated. Items having FL less than 0.50 and SMC below 0.20 are eliminated (Hu & Bentler, 1999). First latent variable is design characteristic with 9 items. Three items are dropped due to low FL and SMC values. These values of incorporated items are ranged from 0.62-0.72 and 0.38-0.51 respectively. Second latent variable is ambient characteristic with 5 items. Two items are dropped due to low FL and SMC values. FL and SMC values of incorporated items range from 0.75-0.89 and 0.56-0.80 respectively.

Third latent variable is social characteristic with 5 items. Two items are dropped due to low FL and SMC values. FL and SMC values of incorporated items are ranged from 0.69-0.77 and 0.47-0.59 respectively. Fourth latent variable is customer positive emotional responses with 7 items. FL and SMC values are ranged from 0.70-0.80 and 0.48-0.64 respectively. And fifth latent variable is impulsive buying behavior with 3 items. FL and SMC values are ranged from 0.64-0.78 and 0.41-0.61 respectively. Finally, measurement model has five latent variables with 29 observed variables.

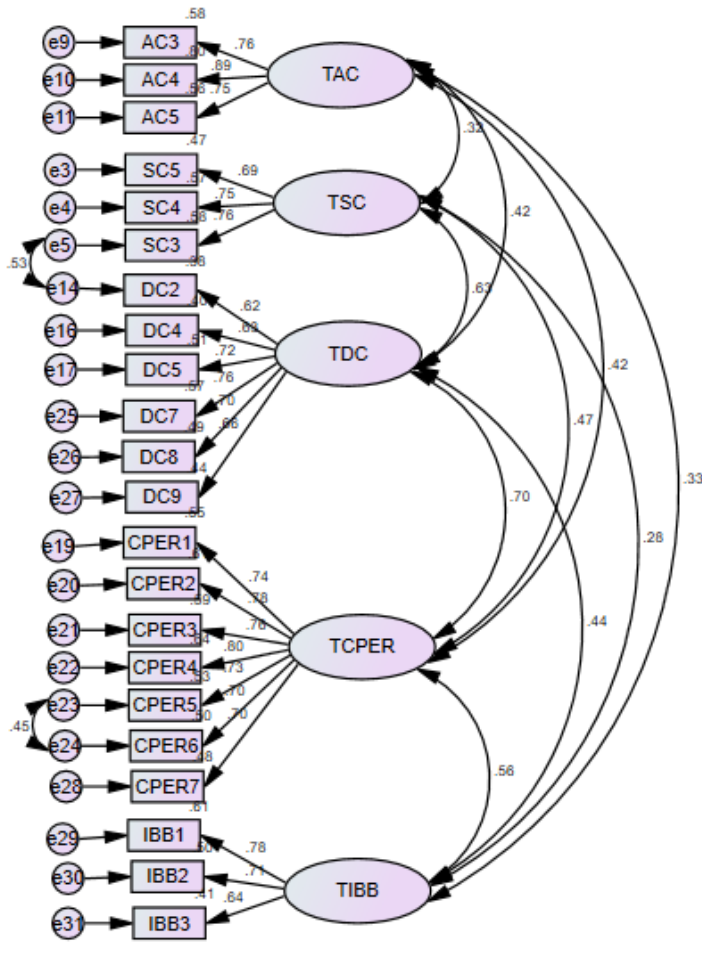


Figure 2: The Measurement Model

4.1.2 Structural Model Testing

Structural model is developed based on conceptual model with four exogenous variables i.e. design characteristic, ambient characteristic, social characteristic and two endogenous variables i.e. ‘positive emotional responses’ of customers and ‘impulsive buying behavior’ of customers. Demographic variables i.e. gender, age, qualification, and income are taken as control variables.

4.2 Results and Analysis of Hypotheses Testing

As first two hypotheses state the positive impact of ambient characteristic (MAC) and design characteristic (MDC) on customers’ positive emotional responses (MCPER). Results show that both characteristics have positive impact on MCPER with standardized regression weight 0.14 ($p < 0.00$) and 0.55 ($p < 0.00$) respectively. Third hypothesis states that social characteristic (MSC) has positive impact on customers’ positive emotional responses (MCPER). Results show that MSC have no significant impact on MCPER as $p > 0.05$. The fourth hypothesis exhibits the positive impact of customers’ positive emotional responses (MCPER) on impulsive buying behavior (MIBB) of customers. Results show that MCPER has a positive and significant impact on MIBB with standardized regression weight 0.42 ($p < 0.00$). To check mediating effect of customers’ positive emotional responses, mediation analysis is executed by using 10,000 bootstrapping through 95% bias-corrected two tailed significance (BC) through AMOS. Indirect effect is calculated with 5000 bootstrapping at 95% bias-corrected two tailed significance (BC). Thus, indirect effect from ambient characteristic and impulsive buying behavior through customers’ positive emotional responses is significant with standardized indirect effect of 0.05 and standard error of 0.02 at two tailed Significance (BC) of 0.01. In simple words, customers’ positive emotional responses act as mediator between ambient characteristic and impulsive buying behavior. So, result presented that mediation exist. Finally, there is no mediation between DC-IBB and SC-IBB (remaining two hypotheses i.e. H6 & H7).

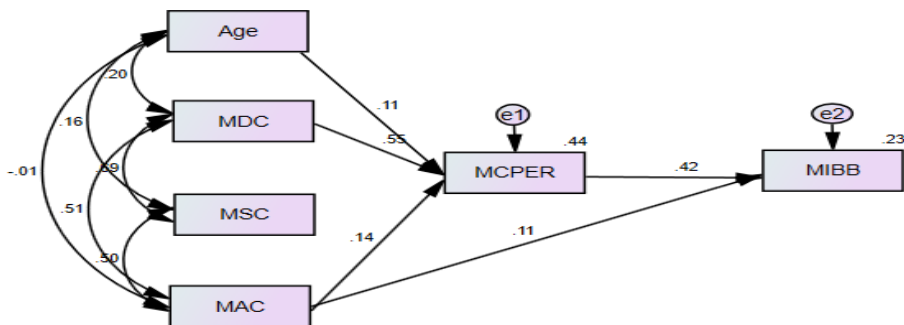


Figure 3: Structural Model

Model fitness indices are also checked for structural model testing. Results showed good model fitness i.e. CMIN/DF= 1.550/p=0.18, RMR=0.02, GFI= 0.99, AGFI= 0.97, CFI= 0.99, and RMSEA= 0.03.

5. Discussion

H1, H2, and H3: predicted the effect of store environment (i.e. ambient, design & social characteristics) on positive emotional responses of customers. Results show that there is a positive impact of ambient and design on positive emotional responses of customers while social characteristics have no positive effect on positive emotional responses of customers. The results supported the past literature (Chang, Yan & Eckman, 2014; Kim & Kim, 2012) that store environmental characteristics may significantly impact on customers' positive emotional responses. The current study has supported the direct impact of store environment (i.e. characteristics) on customers' positive emotional responses. For example, consumers who experienced that the retail store is sparkling are more joyful and happy. This result adds in knowledge to the understanding of retailers' parts. The retailers who provide a relaxing, clean and exciting store environment more likely appeal customers and make them joyful and satisfied with their shopping experiences.

H4: predicted that customers' positive emotional responses affect customers' impulsive buying behavior. The outcomes of the current study supported the literature (e.g. Park, Kim, & Forney, 2006; Chang, Yan, & Eckman, 2014) that the customers who have more positive emotional responses are more impulsive in their purchasing behavior. The customers who are more excited, happy, attentive, delighted and stimulated are more involved in buying that is not scheduled. The result of the current research has maintained the related previous literature that customers' buying behavior is not always planned (Rook & Gardner, 1993) and their reactions may be the causes for their impulsive buying behavior.

According to the results and analyses of H5, H6, and H7 regarding the characteristics of store environment–customers' positive emotional responses –customers' impulse buying behavior, the current research has established a direct and indirect relations among store environmental characteristics, customers' positive emotional responses and impulsive buying behavior of customers. But only ambient characteristics of store environment have indirect effect on IBB. The results of the current study are in line with literature (Mattila & Wirtz, 2008; Chang et al., 2011) that support the mediating effects of customers' positive emotional responses. The outcomes of the current research enlarge to a better consideration of the direct and indirect impact of store environmental characteristics on impulsive buying behavior through customers' positive emotional responses in context of apparel (Kim, 2005).

The input of the current study is to suggest and assess a model that denotes potential relations between store environmental characteristics and impulsive buying behavior of customers. Numerous prior research studies have paid attention to some of the associations mentioned here, the distinctive contribution of the current study is to look at the body of literature in a way that brings

together store environmental characteristics, customers' positive emotional responses and customers' impulsive buying behavior in natural and non-contrived settings and to assess an acceptable research model. A profound perception at these associations helps test the role played by store environmental characteristics in affecting impulse buying behavior of customers in a store environment. Mainly, the outcomes focus on the following three important relations: (1) store environmental characteristics positively affects customers positive emotional responses (2) customers positive emotional responses positively affect impulsive buying behavior of the customers (3) customers positive emotional responses mediate the role of store environmental characteristics on impulsive buying behavior of customers.

5.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

Important theoretical implications result from the current study. First, this study contributes to the understanding of customers' impulse buying behavior by applying the S-O-R model and by including three factors of store environmental characteristics, mediating effects of consumers' positive emotional responses. These results hope to enable other researchers to use this model in other settings of buying behaviors. Secondly, most of the previous studies (e.g. Baker et al., 2002; Massara & Pelloso, 2006) checked the relationships of store through experiments; this research is based on a field study approach and data is collected in the non-contrived settings. According to Kerlinger and Lee(2000), data collected in field survey has more external validity than the experimental approach where the attention is on internal validity. The results of the current study also deliver some practical implications for apparel industry. Remarkable interior, sparkling environment and attractive designs may create affirmative emotions among customers and increase more impulse buying, which may increase sales. Marketers and retailers are working consistently to find better ways to attract the customers. Therefore, this study would be helpful to the retailers and marketers in a way to focus on the customers' positive emotional responses in detail for developing the strategies regarding environment of the stores.

5.2 Limitations and Future Recommendations

The results of the current study may not be generalizable for many reasons. First, this study is a store interrupt research and there are limits to control internal and external aspects. Each aspect of the retail store environment may come in interrelate with one another and affect customers. The influences of those interacted factors are beyond the focus of this research. Second, because of limitation of time, cross-sectional method is employed to examine the effect of several factors on impulsive buying behavior of customers. Third, main limitation of this research is the use of non-probability convenience sampling technique that confines the generalization of the results.

It would be interesting to examine the relations of customers' positive emotional responses and impulsive buying in stores of other cities with diverse retail offerings and store environmental characteristics. For instance, impulsive buying behavior of electronics and jewelry merchandises can

be further investigated and matched with the results of this research. Many other factors that influence impulsive buying exist, however, only a few aspects are checked in the current research. As shown by the regression analyses, some factors that are related to individual characteristics such as self-classification and self-evaluation as well as some situational characteristics such as location of the stores can moderate the relations between store retail environmental characteristics and positive emotional responses of customers or directly affect customers' impulsive buying behaviors. It is suggested that future research may use a method of longitudinal research. Additionally, future research can use other sampling techniques to expand the generalization of the results.

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