

The Antecedents of Behavioral Intentions: The Conceptual Approach Towards Servicescapes and its Consequences

Abstract

Going to shopping mall is not a new trend. But when it comes to the research then there is still gap which needs serious considerations from emerging researchers. The aim of this conceptual approach is to find the consequences of servicescapes model, which was previously presented by (Bitner, 1992). This conceptual approach was taken in consideration after reviewing the past literature. In this approach, Ambience condition, Interaction and Design of shopping mall took as antecedents from the servicescapes model presented by (Bitner, 1992). Behavioral intentions were considered as the consequences of the study.

Keywords: Ambience, Interaction, Design & Layout, Enjoyment, Behavioral Intentions

1. Introduction and Literature Review

A well-accepted concept in marketing states that consumers purchase goods or services not only for their functional advantages but also to have pleasant experiences (e.g., Pine and Gilmore 1999). Traditional retail research has focused on the utilitarian aspect of shopping (Chang & Fang, 2012). However, later research has suggested that shopping is not merely a task to acquire a product. Shopping provides both utilitarian value and hedonic value (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994).

In the past service providers attracted consumers to their industry through different promises and wide assortment of stores and merchandise available in a single location (Ahmed et al., 2007). But things changed with time, and researchers suggested some new terminologies. Initially the word atmosphere used by (Kotler, 1973-74) and defines atmosphere as, "it is the atmosphere when it is consciously designed to influence shoppers". Similarly (Baker, 1987) defined that it is the physical environment which influences customer judgment of services. (Bitner, 1992) used the term servicescapes as an alternative word for atmosphere, it was described that it is a man-made physical environment in which the delivery of service products takes place. Further, the ability of the physical surroundings to facilitate achievement of organizational as well as marketing goals is explored. According to (Turley and Miliman, 2000) the physical environment interacts with the characteristics of individuals to determine their response.

An attractive and good physical environment should result in customers' positive emotions which in turn should have customer satisfaction and their loyalty (Faizan & Muslim, 2014). Further the loyalty can be divided into two types: behavioral loyalty and attitudinal loyalty (Baumann et al., 2011).

The physical surroundings are in general more important in organizational settings, because customers as well as employees often experience these facilities (Bitner, 1990). These organizational environment consisting overall layout, design, decoration and aesthetics, ambients, interaction etc. (Lee and Jeong, 2012), (Bitner, 1992). It is to be suggested that physical settings may also influence customer ultimate satisfaction with service. Different researchers have identified some common factors of the physical environment e.g. decor and artifacts, layout, and ambient conditions that are particularly pertinent to the service industry (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). (Turley and Miliman, 2000) discussed (57) different variables which are related to influence customers and may could be the source of loyalty for any organization. These variables are with sub-variables and these include internal variables, external variables, layout and design variables, and point-of-purchase and decoration

variables, human variables. Likewise in our current study the physical environment refers to the manmade physical setting and conditions, which can be controlled by retail industry, including three dimensions i.e., Ambient factors, Interaction and Design. Since this study is limited and conceptual, therefore the focus will be on the most debatable variables. These variables are *Ambience*, *Interaction* and *Design*, adopted from (Bitner, 1992), (Ahmed et. al. 2007). The focal variable i.e. *Shopping Enjoyment* adopted from (Johnson et.al. 2015, and the consequential variable i.e. Behavioral Intention adopted from (Ali & Amin, 2014).

2. Ambience

In the recent business advances, it is very common that people are responding towards the product and services in their own approach (Kotler-1973-74). (Baker, 1987) identified that ambient conditions as a factor that affects perceptions and human responses to the environment.

The ambient conditions included the background characteristics of the environment, i.e. temperature, lighting, noise, music and scents, as a general rule's ambient conditions affect all five senses (Bitner, 1992). Many of the researchers has developed different models for testing atmospherics variables in different places with their own approaches and targeted different areas for this purposes, e.g. Winter Park (Norway) was chosen to test atmospheric variables by (Terje&Mehmetoglu, 2009), for testing Hotel lobby variables by (Countryman & Jang, 2006), and there are plenty of studies available of different researchers whose discuss the atmospherics effects in retail and service industry. The ambience, the background conditions can imply a range of elements such as : smell, scent, temperature, coloring, aroma, air quality, sound and lightening, these all ambient elements are used by researchers in the past and all these elements are depending on the characteristics of the services offered and to the customer segments (Terje&Mehmetoglu, 2009). Similarly, (Turley and Miliman, 2000) added that in the retail market there is a large number of atmospheric stimuli's are existing, e.g. color, music, crowding and consumers evaluation of stores, their behavioral responses such as their spending time, sales and impulse buying. (Turley and Miliman, 2000) revised the atmospheric model of (Berman and Evans, 1995), their study model reveals the atmospherics and their effects on consumers in details e.g. they discuss what type of elements are under exterior, interior, store layout, interior display and the last one human variables which were added by (Turley and Miliman, 2000). The regular efforts are always beneficial; likewise presently the man has taken steps for enhancing daily work environment, human's nature mostly historically by blessings to love lives, works and plays in artificial environment (Kotler-1973-74).

3. Interaction

There might be several definitions available for interaction in the previous literature but the one which was cited in (Dongseong&Jinwoo, 2004) by (Laurel, B., 1993) it is stated that "the communicating behavior with two or more objects, especially when they are effective for each other's. The experience of customers with any organizations may be framed as a function of two different perspectives i.e. physical and social environment (Ali & Omar, 2014). This physical environment consists of physical objects e.g. design, layout, equipment, colors, sign/symbols etc. (Bitner, 1992), while social environment of any organization means the interaction among employees vs. customers or employees vs. employees or customers vs. customers. For example (Kim & Choi, 2013) observed a significant impact of customer to staff and customer to customer interaction quality on customer behavior. The same relationships

are supported by a recent study which was conducted by (Cetin & Dincer, 2014) who postulated that social environment is closely related to customer satisfaction and behaviors. Some studies e.g. (Bitner, 1992, Bennett & Bennett, 1970), found with the relationship of employees and customers and both of their studies they elaborate the influence of physical atmosphere and influence of physical object on customers and employees, they further added that physical atmosphere influence quality and nature of employees and customers, which further leads to interaction among employees and customers. Usually customers prefer shopping mall where they expect a good service and help from the service providers, moreover customers generally desire to trade where organizational personnel particularly in a shopping malls where salespeople are perceived as helpful, friendly and courteous (Loudon & Bitta, 1993). (Ahmed. et. al, 2007) found that atmosphere of the shopping mall motivating the customers for visit and primarily by the interior design of the mall, opportunities for socializing with friends and others and convenient one stop shopping. Their study (Ahmed. et. al, 2007) was based on primary data and found positive approach towards the atmosphere of shopping malls. From the above discussion it can be concluded that there is positive effect of positive atmosphere on employees and customers, and specially the personnel's can serve customer in a better way (Bitner, 1992, Bennett & Bennett, 1970).

4. Design and Layout

The physical environment of any organization includes its overall layout, design, decoration and aesthetics (Lee and Jeong, 2012). The careful design / layout of an environment help people to orientate, to learn and find the way to understand the signs, to get personal feelings and control (Bitner, 1992). Design is crucial construction of joy between customer feelings of joy and customers loyalty (Terje & Mehmetoglu, 2009). It is an appropriate activity which influence customer attitude towards service providers in all service settings (Bitner, 1992).

Since this study is limited to retail industry, therefore, there are few attributes will be under discussion which are related to the overall designing & layout of the retail industry. In this category included, different variables e.g. fixtures, floor space, product groupings, traffic flow, different department locations, and different allocations within the department (Turley and Miliman, 2000). This is the design/layout of retail industry when they get enter to any product industry and they see the scenario around them.

From the regular observations of different retailing stores, it was observed that power aisle is used to display large quantity, a small number of products to make the impression that the products are on very low-priced (Turley and Miliman, 2000). Simply, Design could describe the relationship to the physical surroundings (Bitner, 1992). In any retail industry, the designing is creating for attention of people, the aim is behind to attract customer (Terje & Mehmetoglu, 2009).

This is the design of environment which peoples are bothering to stay more (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). A successful layout of a store where one can easily find their ways and things, different department are very easy to recognize, whether one does not get lost etc. (Kordelia et. al., 1997). It is clear from the previous studies that physical design is the reason for evoking the peoples feeling (Terje & Mehmetoglu, 2009).

Designing is important for both service and retail sector because for competitive edge and to maximize their profit, the retailers uses different strategies for their positioning (Kapil and Jane, 1989).

The design of any organization is important, every organization needs internal marketing because in the number of studies it is demonstrated that in-store marketing stimuli's are influencing the consumer behavior (Kapil and Jane, 1989).

The design of any organization should be clear but not so simple so there is a possibility of surprise and unexpectedness (Kordelia et. al., 1997). Some times this is the design that

attracts customers and remains stay for a long which leads for more shopping for example (Wakefield and Baker, 1998) that architectural design had the strongest positive influence on mall excitement, while inner decor has the strong positive effect on desire to stay. Therefore we have suggested for this research that customers will be attracting through design and layout and will increase the intention of shopping, as said by (Terje&Mehmetoglu, 2009) design is crucial construction of joy between customer feelings of joy and customers loyalty.

5. Shopping Enjoyment

Shopping will be referred to a fun, full of pleasurable activity that leads to feelings of 'joy' (Jin & Sternquist, 2004). The term enjoyment is not a unique for researchers, but still there is lack of studies. Many researchers have defined the term "shopping enjoyment" from their own approaches and perspectives e.g. (Childers et.al. 2001), it is the extent to which a shopping experience with a store is perceived to provide strengthening in its own right. (Hart et. al. , 2007) cited from (Bell , 1999) that consumer positive perceptions of a store on different qualities may cause of high levels of pleasure, feelings and lead to their enjoyment of spending time in the defined area. (Bush and Grant , 1995) were cited in (Kim & Kim, 2008), they mentioned that the consumers who enjoy shopping for their own sake i.e. recreational shoppers engage more in no planned buying are spending more time per shopping trip and they are continue to shop after making a purchase as compared to all those who do not. Past research has identified that shopping enjoyment is a source for staying more in the shopping centers and that joy is strongly linked with customer's loyalty (Terje&Mehmetoglu, 2009). Loyalty will be increasing if customers are satisfied, therefore, aesthetic design and ambience of a physical environment attracts customers and directly affects customer satisfaction levels leading to positive behavioral intentions (Han & Ryu, 2009). For example (Wong et al, 2012) found that those who enjoy shopping always look for the attractive decor in the stores as well as exciting shopping experience. Moreover, they found in their study which assumes that internal and external factors affect shopping enjoyment, and those factors evidently reveal that shopping motive of anticipated utility and store attributes of enhancement significantly influencing shopping enjoyment. Similarly (Hart et. al, 2007) conducted a study in five countries of United Kingdom and found that shopping enjoyment has a significant positive influence upon customers which leads them further to their patronage intentions. In the past some studies were conducted and found that some consumers who are not comfortable with shopping, but still there were some consumers whose truly enjoy shopping in order to make a product purchase and or engage in hedonic consumption (Reynolds and Beatty, 1999). For such consumers, shopping is a form of recreation that may even be one of their favorite leisure activities (Kim & Kim, 2008). Past research shows that atmosphere has some positive impact on the consumer's behavior and they get loyal (Hart et. al. 2007). Furthermore research also shows that if the consumers enjoy the environment than more possibility for more purchasing. In the past literature showing some evidences that consumers who experience enjoyment as a result of shopping at a specific retail store do build affective ties and do become attached to the location (Johnson et.al. 2015).

6. Behavioral Intentions

Behavioral intentions are the state or signal of a customer whether they remain with or defect from the company (Zeithaml et al., 1996). These intentions towards organizations either positive or negative (Ali & Amin, 2014). Positive intentions leads to positive things e.g. positive word of mouth, intentions to recommend, intention to stay, intentions to repurchase and most likely remain loyal while negative intentions including negative word of mouth, reduce spending etc. (Ladhari, 2009). A number of researchers in the business and other fields have established the significant relationship between customer satisfaction and intentions to revisit (Ali & Omar, 2014). If the customers are satisfied from their service provider, they can bring other advantages for them e.g. loyalty to service provider, spread the positive word-of-mouth and paying premium prices (Amin *et al.*, 2013). Customer satisfaction has caught considerable attention from the academicians and the practitioners

(Hu *et al.*, 2009). According to (Baumann *et al.*, 2011) loyalty can be therefore dividing in two forms i.e. attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty. Attitudinal loyalty reflects the emotion and the psychological state of the customer to repurchase and to recommend to other people (Reichheld, 1993). Behavioral loyalty is a customer's behavior to repurchase, due to their liking of a particular brand or service (Amin *et. al.* 2013).

According to (Jani& Han, 2011) behavioral intentions are considered to include revisitant and word-of-mouth intentions. Word-of-mouth can be defined as "customer will inform about the positive experience relationship to their friends, relatives, and others (Donio *et al.*, 2006. This terminology covers all the communication of customers with members of their social & professional network (Anderson *et.al*, 1998). It can be expressed through different ways like e-mailing to family members, friends, relatives, or colleagues, and now adays it can be shared among different people through blogs or social media, further addition, PWOM communication has been recognized as a particularly valuable vehicle for promoting a firm's products and services(Binta& Felix, 2014).Similarly, customers' past experiences with a product or service results in formation of an attitude toward theprovider that is greatly associated with consumer intentions to repurchase and recommend (Han and Kim, 2009). Similarly loyalty can be defined as "a deep commitment to repurchase or patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future (Oliver, 1997).It is important for service providers/retailors to understand the customers purchase intentions because customers behavior can usually be predicted by their intention (B. Bai *et al.* 2008).

Limitations

Likewise most of the researches, this research alsohave some limitations. This research can be conduct through collecting a primary data. Especially for the Gulf region this model can be applied, a study lake was found in the previous studies from the Gulf region. Many researchers replicated the same approach in different industries, but no studies have found so far in any Gulf counties which should be based on Gulf region.

The current study concepts can be modified with positive criticism. As many researchers have suggested that the (Bitner, 1992) model has no more valuable and importance but a gateway for emerging researchers. Therefore, we suggested to the emerging researchers to explore the (Bitner, 1992) study model and add some new dimensions.

The study also needs some

Conclusion

The major contribution of the current study is to examine servicescape in a retail industry. Also to discuss the importance of the modeled variables and implication on retail industry. In this study the independent variables are Ambience, Interaction and Design, which has some positive affects on Shopping Enjoyment which leads them further to Behavioral Intentions.

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