Review Article | Peer Reviewed | Open Access

Emotions in retail setting: a systematic literature review based on current research

Renu Sharma[1], Mamta Mohan[1] and Sandeep Kumar Gupta[2]*

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[1]Amity International Business School, Amity University, Noida, India;
[2]AMET Business School, AMET University, Chennai, India

E-mail/Orcid Id:

RS, ✉ renukriti@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9084-3356; *MM,* ✉ mmohan@amity.edu, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7585-5618;
SKG, ✉ skguptabhu@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2670-2858

Abstract: This study aims to find out how emotions influence shoppers' behaviour in offline retail settings and how they get influenced by different elements. This research makes use of secondary data with an in-depth study of research papers published in the last ten years (the year 2012 onwards) in ABDC category 'A' research journals. Emotions play a complex role in retail consumption. Personal and interpersonal relationships, atmospheric factors, including messiness & crowding, and the interplay of different emotions exert significant influence on consumer emotions. Positive emotions encourage ethical buying, which in turn gives a boost to positive emotions. Consumer ambivalence is prevalent in luxury shopping where negative emotions complement positive ones. The study is based entirely on secondary data. All the research papers which are a part of this study dealt with shoppers in malls, shopping centres, and retail stores. There is a lack of research in the context of shopping markets and shopping streets. Retailers and marketers can plan their atmospherics, marketing mix, and promotions based on the emotions they wish to engineer amongst shoppers. As the role of emotions varies according to the retail format experiences can be customized and designed to cater to target customers and staff should be trained to understand consumer emotions. An understanding of emotions can help enhance ethical buying which is beneficial for the environment and society.

Introduction

Emotions are key drivers in the consumer decision-making journey. The pressures of the experience economy have pushed retailers to devise and sell experiences rather than mere products (Pine and Gilmore, 2011; Verhoef et al., 2009) and emphasize customer engagement (Gallart-camahort et al., 2021). However, creating experiences involves factors beyond store design and merchandise availability. For example, pleasure created by meeting friends, family, and others can ensure patronage of shopping malls rather than the mere availability of goods (Gilboa et al., 2016), giving them an edge over online portals. With a deep understanding of consumer emotions, retailers can design experiences to excite (Pham and Sun, 2020), surprise (Vanhamme and Snelders, 2003), and delight (Bäckström, 2011) their customers to ensure their satisfaction and repeated visits. Catering to consumer emotions can help retailers build sustainable and competitive advantage through inexpensive methods like store cleanliness (Coskun et al., 2019), the creation of relaxation hubs (Pham and Sun, 2020), creating opportunities for gratitude (Ball and Barnes, 2017) , facilitating social interaction (Davis and Hodges, 2012) and providing escape from boredom (Sharma,R et al., 2022). But consumers can also face emotional turmoil as the pleasure and arousal on getting the goods that one aspired for can be accompanied by guilt or anxiety for too much spending (Bäckström, 2013).

However, the challenge is that these emotions don't exist in isolation, they get influenced by multiple

416

elements and can change within a shopping trip (Bäckström and Johansson, 2006). Besides it's not only the emotions that shoppers experience during the purchase journey that matter, but also their moods and emotional states before their shopping (Parasuraman et al., 2021). For example, excitement can be anticipatory (before shopping), immersive (during shopping) and outcome-based (after shopping) (Pham and Sun, 2020). Although there are numerous research studies about emotions, each one of them either focuses on a specific emotion (Hernandez and Vicdan, 2014; Kim and Mattila, 2013; Parasuraman et al., 2021) or a particular experience (Idoko et al., 2019a; Spitzkat and Fuentes, 2019), making it difficult for practitioners to take a comprehensive view. Emotions keep shifting in different retail formats and even within the same context and same shopping trip (Bäckström, 2013). For example, getting a deal at a department store generates more excitement rather than the everyday low price prevalent in mass merchandisers (Davis and Hodges, 2012). To delight the customers, a single measure will not suffice (Parasuraman et al., 2021). Cognition and emotions interact and impact personality and decision-making according to the Differential Emotions theory (Izard et al., 2009). Despite extensive research on consumer emotions, this knowledge lacks integration and consolidation of research results and therefore, does not get an important place in the theory and practice of marketing (Pham and Sun, 2020).

Recent research studies point to (a) emotional complexities, including ambivalence, (b) the impact of atmospherics including crowding and messiness, and (c) the impact of interpersonal relationships on consumer emotions of pride, excitement, surprise, delight, contentment, security, happiness, and confusion.

This study pools important research outcomes unearthed during the last ten years (2012- 2022) for the benefit of practitioners and academicians. The objective of this study is:

1. How do consumer emotions exert their influence in an offline retail setting?
2. What are the various factors that impact consumer emotions in retail settings?

Rather than seeking to analyse and define various emotions, this paper empathizes with practitioners' needs, focusing on the availability and applicability of recent research outcomes. Besides improving footfall, customer retention, and profitability, retailers can also reduce shrinkage, which is a critical challenge globally. The consequences of emotions in consumer behaviour are important as also their antecedents or how to trigger

specific emotions (Pham and Sun, 2020). The paper also helps academicians to understand a plethora of consumer emotions, their interactions, and the factors to engineer these emotions.

Research methodology/ theoretical basis

This study makes use of a systematic review of the literature, making use of guidelines provided by Kitchenham (2004). The first data search was carried out with prominent databases i.e., Google Scholar, Taylor and Francis Online, Web of Science, Wiley, and Elsevier. Based on the research objectives, research papers were searched online using keywords - emotions, excitement, delight, arousal retail, and shopping. An inclusion and exclusion criterion was decided. Only articles published in the scientific journal were searched. Both qualitative and quantitative studies were considered. The results were filtered using a date range of 2012-2022 and it included only peer-reviewed papers published in English. Further shortlisting was carried out using journal quality. Only journals having an 'A' rating as per ABDC ranking were selected. The resultant list was scanned for relevance as many of these research papers were from sports, tourism, and golf. In the context of retail, studies about offline retail were considered and other research related to the realm of online retail or e-commerce was excluded. Table 1 depicts the various stages of this research process.

Finally, an in-depth literature review of 20 papers was carried out for this study. Eight papers were from the Journal of Consumer Behaviour, four from the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services and three from the International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research Table 1 includes details of shortlisting of research papers for review and it also shows a journal-wise selection of papers.

Results

Table 2 provides details of the reviewed papers, along with the key findings. The research outcomes of various studies are grouped under five major headings– (1) Emotional Complexities (2) Emotions and Ethical Intentions (3) Emotions in Mall (4) Impact of Atmospherics (5) Emotions and Interpersonal relationship. Table 3 includes major concepts, classifications, and theories available in shortlisted research papers.

Emotional Complexities

There are finer layers and complexities within positive emotions. Consumer pride is a result of self-focus, whereas excitement is an emotion based on objects (Pham and Sun, 2020).

Table 1. Process of shortlisting research papers

Research Step	Results
Initial Search results based on keywords	Google Scholar – 110 Taylor & Francis – 96 Wiley - 278 Elsevier- 59 International Review of Retail, Distribution and consumer research - 3
After filtration for Date Range	Google Scholar – 67 Taylor & Francis – 46 Wiley - 141 Elsevier- 39 International Review of Retail, Distribution and consumer research - 3
After Taking out the duplicates	Google Scholar – 47 Taylor & Francis – 45 Wiley - 141 Elsevier- 35 International Review of Retail, Distribution and consumer research - 3
After filtration for Journal Quality	Google Scholar – 20 Taylor & Francis – 12 Wiley - 22 Elsevier- 30 International Review of Retail, Distribution and consumer research - 3
After filtration for subject relevance	Google Scholar – 3 Taylor & Francis – None Wiley - 9 Elsevier- 5 International Review of Retail, Distribution and consumer research – 3 Total – 20 Papers considered for this study
Journal-wise selection of papers	Computers and Human Behaviour - 1 Facilities - 1 International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research - 3 Journal of Consumer Behaviour - 8 Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services - 4 Journal of Service Theory and Practice - 1 Journal of Retailing -1

Another positive emotion – consumer relaxation is considered as an emotional state rather than any particular emotion induced by an emotional trigger (Pham and Sun, 2020). Similarly, customer delight can be considered as an attitude, an emotion, or a result of the fulfilment of certain specific needs (Torrres et al., 2020).

Consumers can feel different emotions at the same time and sometimes negative emotions become a precursor or promoter of positive emotions (Prestini and Sebastiani, 2021). For example, shoppers can experience the delight, and the pleasure of finding a desirable product, but they will be busy calculating the risk and sacrifices required to make a purchase (Bäckström, 2013). Therefore, retailers need to design shopping experiences so that thrill is balanced with a sense of control. That is why they need to have an understanding of how desirable emotions can be engineered to meet their strategic business objectives. Taking a simplistic view can end up doing more harm than profit. For example, surprise offers and freebies can increase customer delight, but they will also raise consumer expectations in the future (Kim and Mattila, 2013). An alternative can be to generate customer delight through gratitude as it does not increase customer expectations for future encounters (Ball and Barnes, 2017).

Furthermore, too much excitement or arousal can make the experience unpleasant or aversive (Pham and Sun, 2020). Similarly, frequent surprise events can become a part of shopper expectations, and if they are like previous events, they will lead to scepticism rather than excitement (Kim and Mattila, 2013). Like an adventure, shopping requires balancing excitement and

Table 2. Details of Reviewed Research Papers

Sr. No.	Name of Journal	Year	Country	Method	Sample Size	Key Findings
1.	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	2012	USA	Interviews	12	Shoppers derive self-gratification and socialization values from a shopping trip to a department store. However, functional, transactional, and epistemic values are provided by both, the mass merchandisers as well as departmental stores. Department stores provide more fun, gratification and recreation compared to mass merchandisers. Mass merchandisers need not emphasize consumer emotions. Instead, they should focus on price, efficiency, and the in-store environment. Consumers experience more excitement when they get a surprise deal at the departmental store rather than the everyday low price at mass merchandisers.
2.	International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research	2013	Sweden	Interviews	23	Leisure shopping involves the interplay of contrasting elements like spontaneity, delight, and dreams as well as control, disappointment, rational calculations and purposive planning. Shoppers can display adventure, auction, or aspiration themes. The adventure involves balancing excitement and novelty with risk calculation and impulse control. The auction mind-set signifies the thought of what are they receiving and what are they sacrificing in terms of time, effort, etc. The aspiration theme balances dreams, fantasies, and desires with planning, purposiveness, and effective actions. Leisure shopping can provide an escape from sickness, stressful work, and medical care or cater to a pure fantasy of acquiring goods. Functional values are important for leisure shopping experiences too.
3.	Facilities	2013	India	Survey	386	Personal relationships play a key role in the evaluation of service quality of small retail outlets and social interactions add to the pleasure. Culture plays an important role as collectivist cultures emphasize personal relationships.

4.	International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research	2014	Mexico (Cross Border Shoppers	Interviews	10	Shopping provides an escape for women from their prescribed roles. However, women are concerned about family needs while purchasing. The achievement of their shopping goals induces 'flow' between them
5.	International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research	2015	India	Survey	639	Shoppers are classified into 5 categories based on their decision-making styles: Up to date Shoppers, Dissatisfied Shoppers, Economic shoppers, Perfection and Quality seekers, and Disloyal Shoppers. In terms of emotional needs, these segments differ from each other. Up-to-date shoppers are recreational while dissatisfied and disloyal shoppers experience confusion due to over-choice.
6.	Journal of Consumer Behaviour	2016	Israel	Four stages, including story collection & Survey	599 (Total)	Confirmed four types of mall experience: seductive, functional, social recreation, and social scene. The mall experience is not entirely emotional. It comprises behaviour and cognitions too. Malls can promote their proposition as "selling social experiences" rather than "selling products". They can provide social scopes, and safe places to meet each other.
7.	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	2016	UAE	Survey	368	Confirmed seven types of values that malls can provide: Hedonic, Self-Gratification, Utilitarian, Epistemic, Social Interaction, Transaction, Time Convenience Pleasure, satisfaction, and excitement can be the outcome of a positive evaluation of the mall environment which comprises recreational facilities, mall interior, and staff.
8.	Journal of Service Theory and Practice	2017	Amazon Mturk	Survey	557	Gratitude influences consumer delight. Gratitude should be given a strategic focus and can be used for better customer & employee engagement. Psychological sense of brand community (PSBC) and transcendent customer experiences (TCE) exert a positive impact on the antecedents of delight.

9.	Computers in Human Behaviour	2017	Belgium	Experiment	183	Virtual reality experience in a mall can provide an escape to the shoppers. It can also reduce the negative effects caused due to perceived crowding.
10,	Journal of Consumer Behaviour	2018	South Korea	Two stages comprising of Survey & Experiment	236 (Total)	The feeling of intimacy is evoked among affective processing consumers if the store environment is visually warm. This perception of intimacy has a positive impact on approach behaviour towards the store.
11.	Journal of Consumer Behaviour	2018	Italy	2 studies using Experiment & Survey	655 (Total)	Famous music can help consumers connect with themselves in a retail store. Feelings of togetherness can be triggered by popular music in the store. It also helps shoppers fit in with the store environment as well as other shoppers as music becomes a common factor. Positive emotions mediate the interaction between music and purchase intention. Popular background music acts as a stimulant for luxury or impulse purchases. But in the case of rational or functional purchases, non-popular music is preferable as it does not distract shoppers.
12.	Journal of Consumer Behaviour	2019	USA	5 studies comprising experiments & online panel	750 (Total)	Consumers are ready to take more risks while buying experiences rather than buying material goods. Personal connection influences risk-taking behavior. They can also encourage shoppers to take more risks while buying material goods.
13.	Journal of Consumer Behaviour	2019	Online Context, USA	2 studies using Experiment	618 (Total)	In high-messiness situations, shoppers experience more emotional confusion, even when the crowds are low. Retail shopper confusion influences the time spent in the store, purchase intentions, re-patronage intentions, browsing, and impulse purchases. Retail shopper confusion partially mediates the impact of human crowding on revisit intention.

14.	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	2019	Denmark	Shopping with Consumers & Interview	12	Pop-up stores stimulate frenzy shopping where consumers forget the normal rules of conduct and shop in an intensely emotional way. Consumers expect and prepare for messy conditions, crowds, and chaos in such stores. These stores create wild emotions by building anticipation, creating, browsing opportunities, rummaging and fighting, and promoting hoarding, fitting, and buying.
15.	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	2019	Nigeria	Survey	1537	The frequency of mall patronage depends on Convenience, Social Networking, Promotional offers, Mall Tenant Mix, Prices of products, Role Enactment, Product assortment, Perceived Quality, Aesthetics, and Architectural Design. Proposes DAB model (Determinants – Attitude – Behaviour). Escapism, exploration, and flow do not predict the mall's attitude.
16.	Journal of Consumer Behaviour	2020	Portugal	Survey	433	Positive emotions are a significant determinant of ethical decision making and they in turn generate more positive emotions post-purchase creating a 'virtuous ethical cycle. Emotions of happiness and gladness impact the ethical judgments and intentions of consumers. Feelings of guilt and shame play a pivotal role in the decision-making process and ethical evaluations.
17.	Journal of Retailing	2020	Amazon MTurk	Survey	150	Proposes 'Theory of Relaxation'. Pride, excitement, and relaxation are distinct emotions. Retailers can engineer desired emotions amongst shoppers during various stages of consumption. They can create 'relaxation hubs' inside the store to trigger feelings of relaxation.
18.	Journal of Consumer Behaviour	2021	USA	Survey	914	If consumers feel a threat of getting infected in the store, it causes an increase in arousal and a decrease in pleasure. Shoppers tend to be careful and take measures to protect themselves due to this arousal. If shoppers experience pleasure, it may dampen their arousal leading to less alertness and precaution against infection.

19.	Journal of Consumer Behaviour	2021	USA, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Korea Turkey	Survey (7 episodes of Data collection)	453 students + 1,994 adult respondents from six countries	Happiness, social recognition, and distinctiveness can be evoked by materialistic consumption. Happiness can inspire materialistic people to invest more energy in materialistic pursuits like shopping. Provides MMM (Measure of Materialism Motives)
20.	Journal of Consumer Behaviour	2021	Italy	Shopping with consumers, ZMET, In-depth interviews	15	Consumers can experience three types of ambivalence: awe & pride, uncertainty & contentment, guilt & pleasure. Ambivalence varies according to the type of customers – Excursionists, Light Users, Heavy User

arousal with a desire for risk control and routines (Bäckström, 2013). Indeterminacy, a situation where one does not have prior information as to what will happen, is linked to anticipatory excitement (Pham and Sun, 2020). Environmental factors exert their influence on the risk-taking behaviour of consumers. In the event of a pandemic, arousal can make customers more fearful whereas the feeling of pleasure can make them lower their guard for taking precautionary measures (Szymkowiak et al., 2021). However, in instances like pop-up stores, emotional intensity can make the customers neglect the rules and behaviours expected of them (Spitzkat and Fuentes, 2019). Customers can get excited to buy even discarded products if they feel that it's a good deal and they may not get it again (Spitzkat and Fuentes, 2019). The same customers will behave in a sophisticated manner in a different setting.

Furthermore, opposite emotions combine and become part of the shopping experience in the case of luxury retail (Bäckström, 2013). Spontaneity, delight, and fantasies exist side by side with the need for control, risk assessment, and goal-directed planning (Bäckström, 2013).

In addition, the emotion that a retailer would desire in shoppers will vary depending on the type of consumer, retail format, and type of merchandise. Exclusivity in the context of luxury retail triggers both positive and negative emotions. Low and medium-frequency shoppers experience amplified guilt and pleasure, as they are not used to splurging, when they go luxury shopping for a special event, either to celebrate or to overcome any personal drawbacks (Prestini and Sebastiani, 2021). Positive emotions like pleasure, delight, etc., will be ineffective in the context of negative services like funeral services, garbage collection, etc. In such cases, gratitude can improve the customer experience (Ball and Barnes, 2017) rather than other emotions.

Moreover, consumers' moods and mind-sets interfere with their retail experience. Emotions, even the anticipated ones, can influence consumer behaviour as they impact 'flow' experiences (Hernandez and Vicdan, 2014). Shoppers have their dreams and fantasies, but they also plan towards meeting their goals (Bäckström, 2013). Time constraints and extreme focus on work priorities can create dissatisfaction and aversion among consumers (Mishra, 2015). Unfulfilled wants holding for a long time and repeated failures to accomplish a goal can make them excited about the outcome (Pham and Sun, 2020). In the case of women shoppers, a compulsion to buy for the family makes them feel entrapped although shopping in the mall provides them with an escape from domestic life (Hernandez and Vicdan, 2014).

Further complexities are added as emotions keep changing as shoppers' journey progresses from awareness of the need to its fulfilment. Consumers can feel awe in a luxury retail setting and the same feeling can turn into pride once they make a purchase (Prestini and Sebastiani, 2021). Consumers desire to acquire the product but also think about the cost in terms of price and effort (Bäckström, 2013). This uncertainty accompanied by a chance to observe the resolution or witness the event causes arousal (Pham and Sun, 2020). To reduce this uncertainty, some consumers may also seek information before visiting a luxury store to ensure that they make a purchase and an inability to do so can induce negative emotions of being isolated from the elite (Prestini and Sebastiani, 2021). However, the feeling of uncertainty before shopping induces contentment during the purchase process and after shopping expectations are met (Prestini and Sebastiani, 2021). Feeling guilty for making expensive purchases also fuels a feeling of pleasure after

Table 3. Harvesting from Current Research Papers

| Subject	Details	Reference
Shopper Typology	Relaxed Utilitarian Strict Utilitarian Committed Shoppers Browsers	(Millan and Howard, 2007)
Consumer Decision-making styles	Up to date Shoppers Dissatisfied Shoppers Economic Shopper Perfection and Quality seekers Disloyal Shoppers	(Mishra, 2015)
Type of Shoppers (Luxury Shopping)	Excursionist Light User Heavy User	(Prestini and Sebastiani, 2021)
Types of Mall Experience	Seductive Functional Social Recreation Social Scene	(Gilboa, Vilnai-Yavetz and Chebat, 2016)
Mall Values	Hedonic Self-gratification Utilitarian Epistemic Social Interaction Transaction Time Convenience	(El-Adly and Eid, 2016)
Determinants of Shopping Mall Patronage	Convenience Social Networking Promotional offer Mall Tenant Mix Prices of products Role Enactment Product assortment Perceived Quality Aesthetics Architectural Design	(Idoko, Ukenna and Obeta, 2019)
Shopping Trip Value (STV)	Functional Value Self-gratification value Epistemic value Socialization Value Transaction Value	(Davis and Hodges, 2012)
In-store Shopping Value (ISSV)	Product Quality Value Product Price Value Product Selection Value In-store service value Shopping environmental value Shopping efficiency value	(Davis and Hodges, 2012)
Properties of Consumer Delight	Customer experiencing positive emotions Interacting with others Successful problem-solving Engaging customer's senses Timing of the events Sense of control	(Parasuraman *et al.*, 2021)
Process of Relaxing	Disengagement Slowing down Acceptance Low-level attentional focus Sensory openness Appreciation	(Pham and Sun, 2020)
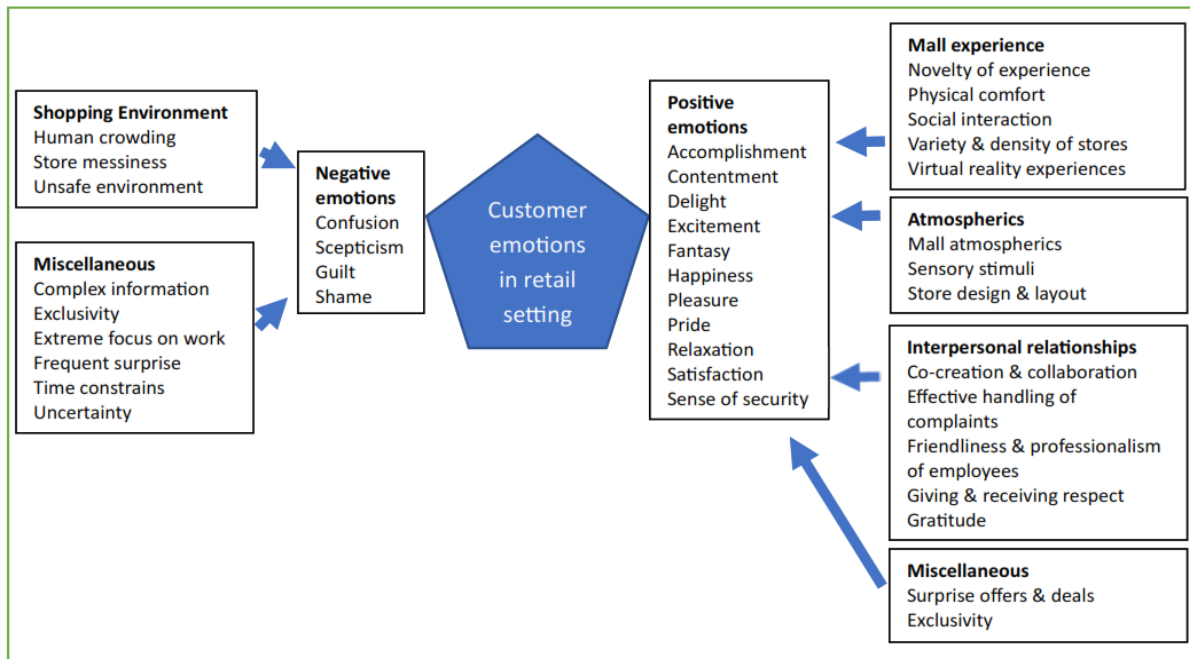
Figure 1. Consumer Emotions in Retail Settings

purchase in the case of luxury retail (Prestini and Sebastiani, 2021). In the case of ethical decision-making, negative emotions like guilt and shame influence each stage of the purchase process (Escadas et al., 2020). Consumers desire to avoid guilt and opt for behaviour that either reduces the guilt or eliminates it.

Another point to observe is that negative and positive emotions can be the antecedent of one another i.e., negative valence can promote positive and vice versa. Such consumer ambivalence can be witnessed in retail settings. The negative emotion of 'awe' becomes a precursor for the positive emotion of 'pride' (Prestini and Sebastiani, 2021). The contentment of receiving unusual care and privileges is frequently preceded by uncertainty related to such care and facilities (Prestini and Sebastiani, 2021). So a shopper who is harbouring some doubts about the treatment that he will receive in the store will be highly contented when he gets a decent treatment and his doubts are laid to rest (Prestini and Sebastiani, 2021). Emotional comfort can help in enhancing profitability besides operational efficiency in areas like supply chain management (Mangal and Gupta, 2015) and lean manufacturing (Singh et al., 2014). Figure 1 highlights positive and negative consumer emotions in retail settings along with their respective triggers.

Emotions and ethical intentions

Positive emotions prompt consumers to indulge in ethical decision-making, which further generates more positive emotions post-decision (Escadas et al., 2020). A sense of awareness or acting ethically is enough to generate the emotion of pride (Parasuraman et al., 2021; Pham and Sun, 2020), accomplishment, and happiness

(Escadas et al., 2020). These pleasant emotions significantly impact future ethical consumption, creating a *virtuous ethical cycle* (Escadas et al., 2020). On the other hand, unethical decisions can make people feel guilty and uncomfortable (Escadas et al., 2020).

Therefore, positive emotions can help retailers reduce and prevent shrinkage as they trigger ethical behaviour amongst consumers, and the feelings of satisfaction that arise due to this behaviour further propel people to make ethical decisions (Escadas et al., 2020). Similarly giving and receiving respect whether directly or indirectly impacts how customers evaluate delightful experiences (Parasuraman et al., 2021).

In light of the above discussion, engineering positive emotions can help prevent shrinkage (Escadas et al., 2020), which is a pain area for the retail sector. Happy customers are also likely to be ethical customers (Escadas et al., 2020).

Emotions in mall

Mall atmospherics elicit strong emotions in customers seducing them to indulge in impulse buying (Gilboa et al., 2016). Malls satisfy diverse curiosity, a general pursuit of novelty (Hernandez and Vicdan, 2014) and provide epistemic value (El-Adly and Eid, 2016). They provide more value to shoppers by engineering an entire shopping experience rather than a single aspect (El-Adly and Eid, 2016). Apart from that, malls also provide opportunities to interact with strangers and observe their behavior, stimulating an emotional response (Gilboa et al., 2016).

Malls improve the well-being of shoppers by reducing their stress and facilitating escape from daily routines

through engaging shopping experiences (El-Adly and Eid, 2016). Experiences like virtual reality can create a sense of joy for customers and provide them escape from reality and trigger positive behavioural responses (Van Kerrebroeck et al., 2017). This escape is facilitated by the fact that consumers can behave differently in a shopping mall. A study conducted on Mexican shoppers showed role reversal amongst genders in mall settings, where females exhibited masculine qualities like making product choices, assigning passive roles of bag carriers to males, etc., whereas males exhibited feminine behaviour like waiting outside retail stores, etc. (Hernandez and Vicdan, 2014). Thus, women feel a sense of escape from their domesticated life and enjoy shopping excursions, but their concern for their family and friends reflects in their shopping tasks (Hernandez and Vicdan, 2014). The result is a flow experience where they joyfully accomplish a shopping task.

In addition, malls provide a safe and comfortable environment so that shoppers can pay more attention to shopping rather than looking after their belongings. An orderly and scripted layout of the mall makes the shoppers feel safer (Hernandez and Vicdan, 2014). The availability of physical comfort in the form of seats and comfortable sitting spaces can make the shopping experience more relaxed (Pham and Sun, 2020). Malls also add value to the shopping trip by providing opportunities for social interaction and self-gratification (El-Adly and Eid, 2016). The anticipation of meeting other friends or spending time with family members during mall visit triggers positive emotions and create mall loyalty (Gilboa et al., 2016).

However, no one can deny the importance of functional aspects be it utilitarian, or hedonic settings. An emphasis on problem-solving and functional values can delight customers even in non-hedonic shopping scenarios (Parasuraman et al., 2021). A shopping mall can increase shopper arousal because of the variety and density of stores (Idoko et al., 2019). Further immersive excitement can be triggered amongst shoppers due to the uniqueness and novelty of an experience (Pham and Sun, 2020). Figure 2 depicts the sources of emotional comfort available to consumer in a shopping mall. A switch in mall positioning from selling products to selling experiences can help malls survive in the long run (Gilboa et al., 2016) as safe urban social spaces are scarce.

Impact of atmospherics

The atmospherics of shopping centres, markets, malls, and the store does influence the feelings and emotions of customers in several ways. Interiors are one of the three key components of the mall environment, the other two being recreational facilities, and mall staff (El-Adly and Eid, 2016). Mall atmospherics attract and entice customers to spend more time and as a consequence, more money (Idoko et al., 2019). Mall atmospherics results in customer satisfaction and the desire to shop at the mall, but it does not impact customer loyalty (El-Adly and Eid, 2016).

But the anticipation of retail elements depends on the retail format. In temporary locations like pop-up stores simple, functional interiors, even the messy ones can arouse customers as they aggressively search for deals

Figure 2. Sources of Emotional Comfort in Mall

(Spitzkat and Fuentes, 2019).

Certain sensory stimuli like music, smell, or visual aspects can create immersion (Hernandez and Vicdan, 2014) and a transcendent experience for the customers (Ball and Barnes, 2017). The shopping environment can facilitate the flow experience in the context of malls (Hernandez and Vicdan, 2014). It can induce relaxation by providing a comfortable waiting space and small indulgences like water, candy, magazines, etc., especially In those contexts where customers need to wait (Pham and Sun, 2020).

Furthermore, the in-store environment exerts its influence on shoppers' behaviour. The shopping environment is one of the key dimensions of the store's shopping value (Davis and Hodges, 2012). If the store looks 'warm', it also makes people feel physically 'warm' and also triggers feelings of psychological warmth or intimacy (Baek et al., 2018). However, stimulants like fragrances and smells can lead to shoppers' delight or may put them off (Parasuraman et al., 2021). Care should be taken to balance the environmental elements and avoid extremes because too many stimulants and unusual and complex information in-store environment can confuse the shopper (Coskun et al., 2019). Consumers assess aesthetic aspects of the store environment and also stay aware of their purpose and goal so that they can manage their time spent in a store (Bäckström, 2013). Store designers whose focus is on providing a rich customer experience can avoid using clocks so that people are not reminded of the time, which makes them relax and have a sense of timelessness (Pham and Sun, 2020). Similarly, a pleasant shopping environment in a department store can help customers relax and have fun (Davis and Hodges, 2012).

In situations where the focus is on getting a deal, the lure of bargaining can make customers forget about atmospherics (Spitzkat and Fuentes, 2019). But while buying products that enhance their status, shoppers are also concerned about the display, store design, and clear layouts which help them search and look for their desired products (Bäckström, 2013). To honour shoppers and stimulate emotions of pride, retailers should carefully use bright lights, and elevated physical spaces, create well-sized trophies/medals, and ensure loudness so that other customers can become part of it (Pham and Sun, 2020).

However, in certain situations like Covid 19 pandemic, different elements of store atmospherics like music, lights, and comfortable temperature can make the shoppers feel safe and seduce them to stay longer in store, which can be risky, as it increases the risk of spreading the infection (Szymkowiak et al., 2021). In the wake of a pandemic, shopping pleasure may make shoppers ignore precautions, and therefore, pleasant atmospherics can become dangerous for society as shopping is a regular activity that goes on even during pandemic situations and it can become instrumental in spreading the infection further (Szymkowiak et al., 2021).

Emotions and crowding

Human crowding and store messiness create visual clutter which results in information overload and consumer confusion (Coskun et al., 2019). Besides crowding can disrupt peacefulness leading to a negative impact on relaxation (Pham and Sun, 2020) as it can irritate customers, make them feel helpless, and make their shopping experience inefficient (Coskun et al., 2019). But the impact of crowding can vary among shoppers. Whether the shopper desires an efficient service encounter or a leisurely one relies on his temporal needs (Parasuraman et al., 2021). In situations like Covid- 19, fear of catching infections from others can create negative arousal so people would like to protect themselves (Szymkowiak et al., 2021) and stay away from crowded places. In such situations shoppers try to gain control over the situation by limiting their time inside the store, staying away from others, and visiting a lesser number of stores (Szymkowiak et al., 2021). At the same time, such arousal can reduce pleasure (Szymkowiak et al., 2021). Although footfalls are desirable at malls, a crowd can be a problem as it exerts a negative impact on the shopping experience. The presence of the crowd can encourage consumers to go for 'in-store hoarding' so that they don't lose their chosen goods (Spitzkat and Fuentes, 2019) as getting a desirable product at a low price can make shoppers feel proud (Pham and Sun, 2020). However, virtual reality experience can be used in malls to counter the negative impact of perceived crowding (Van Kerrebroeck et al., 2017)**.**

Emotion and messiness

Store messiness creates much more problems than human crowding and makes the shopping experience inefficient (Coskun et al., 2019). But the excitement and the thrill of shopping the way that one wishes make customers, tolerant towards chaos and messiness (Hernandez and Vicdan, 2014) in the case of pop-up stores. Shoppers who visit temporary retail locations like pop-up stores are tolerant and also geared up to handle the disorderliness and chaos prevalent there (Spitzkat and Fuentes, 2019). These messy conditions necessitate rummaging through the heaped goods and can result in the thrill of discovering 'treasures' that are not easily

visible, unlike an orderly setting (Spitzkat and Fuentes, 2019).

In other cases, however, crowded and messy stores prevent consumers, especially the ones with recreational motives, from spending more time in the store and it also makes browsing and in-store exploration difficult (Coskun et al., 2019). Not only does in-store messiness impact the shopping experience, but also the atmospherics of shopping centres. Filthy and unsafe shopping environments in traditional shopping markets negatively impact the experience and make it difficult for shoppers to act as a companion or friends (Idoko et al., 2019). For making consumers feel relaxed, the shopping environment should ensure safety, peace, and comfort (Pham and Sun, 2020).

Emotions and interpersonal relationship

Another important factor that has a significant impact on shoppers' emotions is interpersonal relationships. This includes the impact of interaction with retail employees, how they behave amongst themselves, with other customers, and also with friends, family, and companions. Efforts to create affinity between different customers and also between employees and customers can reap benefits for the retailers in terms of customer delight (Parasuraman et al., 2021), loyalty, and positive word of mouth (Ball and Barnes, 2017). The opportunity to connect with friends and family and also strangers in a mall positively impacts mall loyalty by generating pleasure and favourable perceptions about the mall (Gilboa et al., 2016). If the merchandise or services is projected as an opportunity for personal connection, consumers are likely to be less risk-aversive, purchase more and even pay a higher price (Mittal et al., 2019).

Retail spaces are not only material spaces, they are also social spaces (Spitzkat and Fuentes, 2019). Retail spaces direct the action of shoppers, who in turn result in the reconfiguration of these spaces through their activities. Shoppers derive socialization value when they get an opportunity to interact with their companions, employees, and other customers in the retail realm (Davis and Hodges, 2012). In the case of pop-up stores, shoppers create excitement for other shoppers when they queue up outside the store waiting for their turn (Spitzkat and Fuentes, 2019). Malls especially add value to a shopping trip by providing the opportunity for social interaction (El-Adly and Eid, 2016). They can survive in the long run if they project themselves as safe spaces for social interaction rather than merely selling spaces (Gilboa et al., 2016). They can have a competitive edge over

shopping markets as the unsafe environment in traditional markets makes it difficult for shoppers to enjoy the company of their accompanying people (Idoko et al., 2019).

Consumers wish to acquire material possessions to become happy and get social recognition (Gurel-Atay et al., 2021), and feel proud (Pham and Sun, 2020). When shoppers share their experiences with their family, friends, or other customers, it has a direct impact on their delight (Parasuraman et al., 2021). Besides honesty, integrity, thoughtfulness in behaviour, and interaction with others can add to shoppers' delight (Parasuraman et al., 2021). It also makes them less risk-averse. Personal connections in commercial settings prompt consumers to take more risks in case of experiential purchases (Mittal et al., 2019). Besides providing the goods, retailers can also create events and experiences which promote the recognition of customers by others. The positive feedback provided by a social audience about the person's accomplishment or behaviour can increase the pride felt by shoppers (Pham and Sun, 2020). Customers are also delighted when they collaborate with others (Parasuraman et al., 2021) as it gives a feeling of accomplishment (Pham and Sun, 2020). Moreover, the presence of other shoppers helps in creating a feeling of safety which ultimately leads to relaxation (Pham and Sun, 2020). Similarly, shopping with a companion also adds to a sense of security as a customer is not afraid of rejections or judgments, which makes their shopping experience less stressful and more relaxed (Pham and Sun, 2020).

Consumers also impact the behaviour of other shoppers in the store. For example, intense hunting for desirable goods and rummaging allure other shoppers to exhibit the same behaviour (Spitzkat and Fuentes, 2019). In temporary pop-up stores, shoppers become comfortable trying in front of others, one of the reasons is that most of such shoppers are women (Spitzkat and Fuentes, 2019). Shoppers also create and enhance the excitement amongst other shoppers. Sharing information about any eagerly awaited event increases anticipatory arousal whereas sharing of novel experience with others and aligning with them can result in immersive excitement especially when people feel that they are a part of something larger than themselves (Pham and Sun, 2020) like being a part of a psychological brand community (Ball and Barnes, 2017). The exchange of gratitude in such interactions provides them with delight (Ball and Barnes, 2017; Torrres et al., 2020).
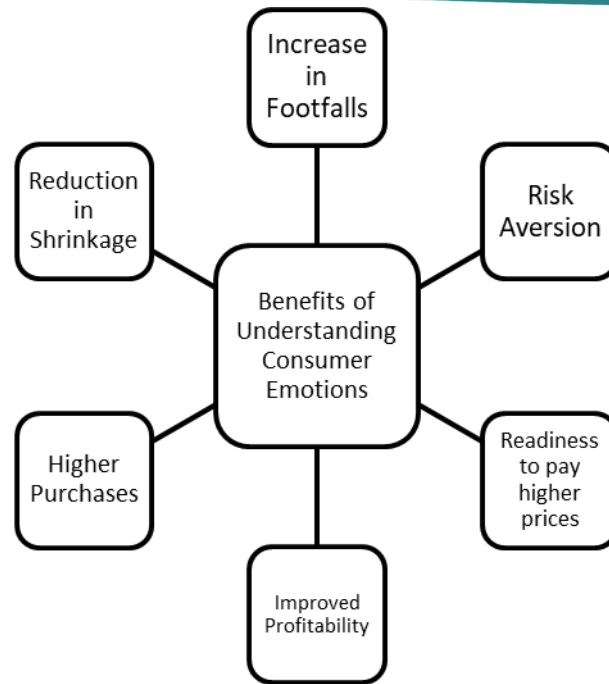
Figure 3. Benefits of Understanding Consumer Emotions

In addition, interaction with retail employees plays a pivotal role in customer experience. Service employees play an important role in reducing uncertainty, ensuring contentment, and thereby leading to satisfied and loyal customers. Human resources, including the friendliness and professionalism of employees, and quick and effective handling of complaints contribute to the delight (Torrres et al., 2020).That is why service marketers invest time in talent hunting and retaining employees (Rana et al., 2021). In the case of established brands, consumer expectations of trust and consistency are already set and generally met. Therefore, these retailers need to design unusual and unexpected care and distinct facilities to make their customers contented (Prestini and Sebastiani, 2021). A combination of emotions, social interactions with other customers or employees, and finding solutions to their problems can result in delightful experiences for customers (Parasuraman et al., 2021). Co-creation and collaborations with employees, provide a sense of achievement leading to pride (Pham and Sun, 2020). Shoppers, especially frequent and high spenders, harbour uncertainty about the treatment they will get in luxury stores. To reduce their doubts and uncertainty, they tend to either inform the staff before their arrival or establish a special rapport with sales staff who can cater to their preferences (Prestini and Sebastiani, 2021). Therefore, commitment of employees and their enthusiasm is vital for the organization (Kumar et al., 2022). Similarly, staffs play an important role in designing surprise offers and promotions for customers. When staff explains to the customer why is he getting the surprise, this simple communication can make him feel special and will also manage his expectations for future shopping trips. In cases where an explanation is provided, surprise can create arousal and increases delight even more (Kim and Mattila, 2013).

Interpersonal relationships exert both positive and negative influences on shoppers' emotions. Not only that direct exchange with an employee impacts consumer delight but also indirect interactions like how managers are dealing with customers (Parasuraman et al., 2021). Staff behaviour impacts the perception of quality, especially, in cultures where social relationships are considered significant (Khare, 2013).

Discussion

Retailers should understand the type of emotions that is suitable for their business. An art store may focus on relaxation, but a sports retailer may use excitement and pride. Figure 3 highlights key benefits of understanding consumer emotions.

Communicating 'personal connections' should be considered while designing advertisements and other promotions as it triggers anticipatory positive outcomes. Personal connections may be initiated before real purchase as it will induce feelings of positive outcomes and will overcome the risk-aversive behaviour of shoppers and will encourage them to buy, especially in experiential settings. Procedures and processes may be created where shoppers can easily chat, interact and attend to customer queries before the actual purchase of material goods or services. As companions induce a feeling of safety, private shopping assistants can accompany single shoppers so that they spend more time

inside the store. Besides retailers should flowchart and design their processes which create gratitude in customers for employees as it will lead to improving satisfaction and engagement and benefits for the business. To manage and prevent shrinkage, retailers should create feelings of happiness and ensure to make customers feel proud after taking ethical decisions. Public and private organizations where ethical decisions are important should strive to engineer feelings of happiness, excitement, and satisfaction.

While hiring employees' firms should hire employees who are friendly and approachable as interpersonal relationships play an important role in customer delight. Frontline employees can be trained to deliver simple acts of kindness to elicit customer gratitude. They should be imparted skills for understanding and reading consumer emotions so that they can resolve problems in different contexts. Besides, they should be careful about their interactions with other staff members/ managers. Supervisors should provide thoughtful feedback where they highlight and appreciate the strength of the employee besides informing them about areas of improvement (Machova et al., 2022).

Store cleanliness should be paid attention to avoid consumer confusion. Besides promotional messages and signage should be placed in a number and manner so that it does not overload consumers with information. In-store shopping environment should be fun and relaxing in the case of department stores whereas mass merchandisers need to focus more on providing better prices and improving shopping efficiency. Stores can create relaxation hubs within their premises by using objects or cues to slow down consumers.

Frontline staff should be trained to keep the store clean. During situations like Covid-19, the in-store environment should make shopping more efficient, creating a sense of urgency rather than focusing on creating pleasure and making shoppers stay longer inside the store.

In business establishments where crowding is expected, virtual reality experiences can be used to relax the customers and reduce the negative effect of crowding. Malls can decide their tenant mix in such a manner that it provides social recreation to customers. Component and placement of food and beverage, restaurants, coffee shops, bakeries, and gaming zone should be given serious consideration. Marketing communication should include visuals and promote malls as a place for meeting and mingling with friends and strangers.

Retailers should provide some surprise offers and they should explain about it to the customers so that customers feel special and their expectations don't rise in the future. Timing and target audience for these surprise offers should be carefully selected. Explaining can also work in the case of managing service failures. Make it easy for shoppers to share their experiences with others by using technology like magic mirrors or by allowing them to make video calls while shopping, so that they can consult others about their purchases and these friends can share their shopping experience. Retailers should create opportunities for co-creation and collaboration as it makes consumers feel proud and become aware of their self–worth. They can also provide physical symbols for accomplishing something like pins, stickers, and personalized items like cards, stationery, etc. Moreover, they should facilitate consumers to build and sustain a community.

Conclusion

This study highlights the emotional complexities in the retail scenario. In certain contexts, negative emotions can enhance and even trigger positive emotions. Atmospherics including crowding and messiness affect emotions in addition to interpersonal relationships. Consumer emotions like surprise, relaxation, delight, arousal, pride, and happiness can help retailers get more business. Designing experiences to engineer relevant emotions along with staff training are crucial factors for retail success. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence in the retail industry and its potential to drive business success.

Limitations & further research

This study is based on research papers about offline retail available in the English language. The shortlisted research papers are focused on malls and retail stores. Future studies can include online retail and also emphasis can be given on shopping streets. As culture varies across different countries, future studies can strive to validate these findings through country-specific primary data.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests to declare.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in the submitted article are that of authors and not an official position of the institution or funder.

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