The Effect of Retail Atmospherics on Customers’ Perceptions of Salespeople and Customer Persuasion: An Empirical Investigation

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Research in retailing suggests that atmospherics influence store image and expectations of service and merchandise (Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman: The Influence of Store Environment on Quality Inferences and Store Image. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 22 (Summer 1994) 328–339. Implicit to this stream of research is the realization that store atmospherics can enhance customers’ quality perceptions, which lead, in turn, to higher levels of persuasion. This article examines an unexplored but potentially important area: the influence of store atmospherics on the level of persuasion induced by retail salespeople. The results of the research suggest that store ambience and design positively affect customers’ persuasion as well as customers’ positive perceptions of salespeople. Additionally, the research suggests that in “prestige ambience” stores, a reduction in the number of retail salespeople does not significantly affect customers’ buying intentions. In contrast, in “discount ambience” stores, an increase in the number of retail salespeople dramatically enhances customers’ buying intentions. Managerial implications of the research are suggested, and directions for future research are proposed. J BUSN RES 2000. 49. 183–191. © 2000 Elsevier Science Inc. All rights reserved.

Store environments have become an increasingly important method of retail positioning (Levy and Weitz, 1995). Stores have distinct environments, and marketers understand that the environment of a store is an important part of the shopping experience. The environment offered by a store can influence consumers’ decision to visit the store (Kotler, 1973), and the retail environment can guide consumers’ inferences about merchandise, service quality, and enjoyment at the store (Mehrabian, 1976; Zeithaml, 1988). The store environment also has been considered to be a component of the store’s overall image (Zimmer and Golden, 1988; Levy and Weitz, 1995), with recent empirical results suggesting that cues in the store environment contribute to customers’ perceptions of merchandise and service quality (Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman, 1994).

Atmospheric cues consist of ambience, design, and social factors (Baker, 1986). Previous research has examined primarily the effect of environmental factors on customer evaluations of merchandise, service, and store image. Environmental psychologists have determined that factors of an environment can have synesthetic properties—they work together in a synergistic fashion to influence persons in the environment (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). The assumption of this study is that ambience can contribute to the persuasive effect of salespeople cues and that salespeople sell better in some retail settings than in others. However, the assumed interplay between atmospherics and salesperson influence has not been tested yet.

In this article, we will examine theoretical developments in the area of environmental cues that support store atmospherics. Our specific focus will be how social and environmental cues of the store’s atmosphere either enhance or detract from the customer purchasing process, which is examined in an experiment that manipulates store ambience and salesperson availability. Subsequently, the article is organized in three major sections. First, the theoretical underpinnings of the research are discussed. Second, proposed relationships between store ambience and salesperson availability are tested. Finally, the implications of this research for managers and academics are discussed.

Theoretical Development

The Context of Persuasion

Research already has demonstrated the robust effects of context or “atmospherics” in service and retail settings (cf., Iyer, 1989; Park, Iyer, and Smith, 1989; Baker, Grewal, and Para-
... associated with more credible service providers (Bitner, 1992). On the basis of Baker et al.’s (Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman, 1994) results, it is reasonable to suppose that nicer retail environments lead to higher (service quality) expectations for retail salespersons—a finding that is consistent with previous research that suggests that higher expectations for salespeople should translate into higher credibility levels (Sternthal, Dholakia, and Leavitt, 1978). Nicer stores simply mean more credibility for the salespeople who work in them.

Research suggests that the prestige of the organization can influence customers’ perceptions of salespeople’s credibility (Sharma, 1990). We suggest that customer perceptions of salespeople should be enhanced during visits to stores that have a “prestige store ambience” as compared with a “discount store ambience,” simply as a matter of superior atmospherics (see Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman, 1994). This is based on evidence that customers’ desire to affiliate with salespeople is dependent on the store’s atmospherics (cf., Mehrabian and Russell, 1974, 1975; Russell and Mehrabian, 1978; Dube, Chebat, and Morin, 1995). We expect customers to have a higher need to affiliate with salespeople working in nicer retail environments—which should lead to an increase in the perceived level of credibility for the salesperson. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

$$H1: \text{Sales interactions in which customers perceive store environment to be “prestige store ambience” will result in higher perceived salesperson credibility as compared with sales interactions in which customers perceive the store environment to be “discount store ambience.”}$$

**Store Environment and the Level of Persuasion Induced by Salespeople**

As discussed earlier, retail salesperson credibility should be influenced by store atmospherics. As a result, the persuasive ability of salespeople working in stores with better atmospherics also should be enhanced. The theoretical mechanism through which this occurs is found in cognitive response research. The cognitive response model suggests that persuasion depends on favorability of thoughts available in memory at the time of the decision (Harmon and Coney, 1982). During sales message presentations, customers predominantly process two kinds of thoughts—message thoughts and own thoughts (see Greenwald, 1968). Persuasion will take place when the number and magnitude of supporting arguments—or, “message thoughts” stimulated by retail salespeople—overcome the number of magnitude of the customer’s “own thoughts,” or, counterarguments (e.g., Petty and Cacioppo, 1981). There is good reason to be concerned that many customers are generally suspicious of salesperson motivations (cf., Wright, 1986; Friestad and Wright, 1994), and in the absence of evidence to the contrary (such as increased perceptions of credibility or merchandise quality, for example), one would expect cus-
tomers to produce substantial counterarguments to a salesperson’s persuasive attempts.

Ameliorating variables in the retail sales persuasive process might then be credibility and expected merchandise quality. Earlier, we suggested that better store ambiance positively influences customers’ perceptions of retail salespersons’ credibility. A less credible salesperson increases a customer’s own-thought activation that reduces the acceptance of a message whereas a highly credible salesperson inhibits the buyer’s own-thought activation that increases the acceptance of the message (Harmon and Coney, 1982).

The research of Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman (1994) also suggests that better store ambience positively influences customers’ perceptions of merchandise quality. Customers visiting stores that present environmental cues supporting a discount image are less likely to be persuaded by salesperson persuasion attempts because of the perceptions of inferior merchandise quality. In contrast, when a customer is in a store that presents environmental cues supporting a prestige store ambience (and therefore better merchandise quality), better persuasive outcomes should result. This perspective is consistent with findings that consumers express greater desire to affiliate with salespeople in environments that include background music that they like (Dube, Chebat, and Morin, 1995). Based on this discussion, it is proposed:

H2: Sales interactions in which customers perceive store environment to be “prestige store ambience” will result in higher levels of customer persuasions as compared with sales interactions in which customers perceive the store environment to be “discount store ambience.”

Influence of Prior Expectations of Salespeople’s Behavior

Customers want salespeople to be available to help solve their problems. In selling situations, the availability of salespeople to solve customer problems during and after the selling process has been ranked as being among the most important issues to customers (Williams and Seminerio, 1985; Cooper and Summer, 1990). The research of Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman (1994) suggests that salespeople in “prestige store ambience” are expected to be “easily available” to customers. In contrast, salespeople in “discount store ambience” are expected to be “not easily available.” It is likely that expectations set by the store ambiance for the availability of salespeople will influence consumer response.

The phenomena of prior expectations dictating processing of information is known as “schema-triggered affect,” or “match-mismatch processing” as explicated by Fiske and Pavelchak (1986). When salespeople behave in the manner expected (match condition), regardless of whether expectations are positive or negative, they are evaluated in a rather automatic fashion (e.g., Sujan, Bettman, and Sujan, 1986). Take the case of “discount store ambience” stores where salespeople are “not easily available” (e.g., Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman, 1994). When customers interact with salespeople who are not easily available, salespeople will not have much luck persuading customers, since schema-triggered affect theory suggests that customers might have already made up their mind automatically based on the presence of category-based expected cues.

In contrast, if salespeople do not behave as expected (mismatch condition), research on schema-triggered affect indicates that the provision of such unexpected cues may well lead to increased conscious scrutiny of the encounter by customers. More conscious processing of sales messages means a better likelihood of persuasion (Sujan, Bettman, and Sujan, 1986).

To summarize, in a category match condition where retail ambience and retail salesperson “availability” correspond to customer expectations, category-based heuristic devices (like store ambience) will be the chief influence on customer judgments and decision making. In contrast, in a category mismatch condition (where retail ambience and retail salesperson “availability” do not correspond to customers’ expectations), customers are likely to pay more attention to salesperson message elements and process the message more extensively. To the extent that the message is strong and positive, increased processing of persuasive communications should lead to higher levels of persuasion. Based on the discussion it is proposed:

H3: When there is a match between store ambience and expected salesperson availability, lower levels of salesperson persuasion will be observed as compared to situations in which there is a mismatch between store ambience and expected salesperson availability, under conditions of strong positive messages.

Study

The hypotheses were tested by a two-by-two between-subjects experimental design. Customers’ perceptions of store atmospheres were manipulated at two levels (‘prestige store ambience’ versus “discount store ambience”). Salespeople’s availability behavior also was varied at two levels (‘easily available’ versus “not easily available”). As stated earlier, the Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman (1994) research has suggested that customers expect salespeople from “prestige store ambience” stores to be “easily available” and “discount store ambience” stores to be “not easily available.” Thus, the match cells were the “prestige store ambience”/“easily available” and “discount store ambience”/“not easily available.” The mismatch cells were the “prestige store ambience”/“not easily available” and “discount store ambience”/“easily available.”

Experimental Procedure

In the experiment, subjects read a role-playing scenario (e.g., Urbany, Bearden, and Weilbaker, 1988)” related to shopping
for computers and provided responses to the dependent variables measures. The scenario consisted of a scene-setting description of a retail computer store was presented (“prestige store ambience” versus “discount store ambience”) followed by a description of a retail salesperson. Then, a summarized version of a strong sales message was presented; this message was constant across conditions and described five attributes of the laptop computer. These attributes were a good customer base, customer satisfaction, design of the computer, 90-day money back guarantee and five-year warranty. Following presentation of this sales message, dependent measures were collected. The computer store environment was chosen for reasons of familiarity. The subjects had taken formal courses on personal computers, and most had used a laptop computer.

The experimental procedure was pretested before the actual study, and the match/mismatch condition was confirmed through cognitive responses and recall data. As expected, the mismatch condition led to significantly higher levels of processing and recall. In actual administration of the procedure, subjects were asked to write down what they thought the purpose of the study was, and no subject listed any of the hypotheses as the purpose of the study. Eighty undergraduates volunteered to participate in the experiment and were randomly assigned to the four treatment conditions.

**Independent Variables**

**STORE AMBIENCE.** Store description was operationalized based on the descriptions provided by Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman (1994). The “prestige store ambience” store was described as “The store has an open layout with discrete signs, clean wide aisles, decorative ceiling, classic gold/silver/black colors, decorated fixtures, textures wall coverings, pile carpeting, soft/dim lighting, and you can hear soft classical music.” The “discount store ambience” was operationalized by indicating that “The store has a cluttered layout with big signs, dirty, narrow aisles, painted in industrial colors, has bins with merchandise, linoleum floors with bright lighting, and you can hear a top 20 radio station playing loudly in the background.”

**SALESPERSON AVAILABILITY.** The “easily available” condition was operationalized by indicating, “When you seek help, three salespeople walk toward you to aid you. One of the salespeople, Mark, guides you through the store and shows you the location of products and is ready to answer any questions that you may have.” The “not easily available” salesperson was operationalized by indicating that, “You have to look to find a salesperson. Most salespeople seem to be very busy. You see Mark, a salesperson at the store. Mark is talking to a customer and asks you to wait. When he finishes with the customer he asks you to be quick as he has to be in a meeting in five minutes.”

**Dependent Variables**

The primary dependent variables measured persuasion, as operationalized by subjects’ responses to a nine-point product evaluation and purchase intent scales adapted from Grewal, Marmorestein, and Sharma (1996), which were modified for the specific scenario. The coefficient alphas for the two scales were 0.96 and 0.91, respectively, and the scales are presented in the Appendix. Salesperson credibility was evaluated on a four-item, nine-point, semantic differential scale (α = 0.90) adapted from Leigh (1981) and Sharma (1990). There were two items that evaluated expertise (not an expert/expert; unknowledgeable/knowledgeable) and two items that evaluated trustworthiness (untrustworthy/trustworthy; dependable/dependable).

**Manipulation Checks for the Independent Variables**

Both store atmospherics and salespeople’s availability behavior were evaluated using scales adapted from Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman (1994). Each proved internally consistent, demonstrating coefficient alphas of 0.93 and 0.92, respectively. In t-tests on the store atmospherics manipulation, the store atmospherics of the “prestige store ambience” store was significantly higher than the “discount store ambience” store (X̄ = 7.06 versus 2.08; p < 0.01). Similarly, salespersons’ availability was significantly higher for the “easily available” group when compared with the “not easily available” group (X̄ = 7.27 versus 2.15; p < 0.01).

**Results**

**Hypothesis One: Credibility**

We hypothesized that salespersons’ credibility with customers would be higher when subjected to the “prestige store ambience” condition, as operationalized through an attractive, well-kept store interior. We found main effects for both store atmospherics and salesperson availability in our analysis of credibility, and there were no atmospherics by salesperson availability interaction. The salesperson’s credibility in the “prestige store ambience” group was significantly higher than salespersons’ credibility in the “discount store ambience” group (X̄ = 5.93 versus 4.88; F₁,₇₆ = 22.05; p < 0.01). It appears that our expectations regarding the impact of atmospheric cues on salesperson credibility in the retail setting are confirmed, giving support to hypothesis 1. The salesperson’s credibility in the “easily available” group was also significantly higher than the salesperson’s credibility in the “not easily available” group (X̄ = 6.34 versus 4.47; F₁,₇₆ = 70.31; p < 0.01).

**Hypotheses Two: Persuasion**

In testing this hypothesis for the dependent variable product evaluation, we found a significant main effect (F₁,₇₆ = 31.94; p < 0.001); product evaluations were higher in prestige envi-

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4 In the experiments, only the ambience was manipulated. The phrases “prestige” and “discount” were not used, and no mention of the store’s pricing was made.
Table 1. Group Means for Persuasion Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salesperson Availability</th>
<th>Store Ambience</th>
<th>( \times )</th>
<th>Prestige Store</th>
<th>( \times )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( \times )</td>
<td>Product Evaluation</td>
<td>Buying Intention</td>
<td>Product Evaluation</td>
<td>Buying Intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily available</td>
<td>6.66(^a)</td>
<td>5.63(^b)</td>
<td>7.83</td>
<td>6.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not easily available</td>
<td>4.21(^a)</td>
<td>2.95(^a)</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>5.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Means in rows or columns are significantly different at \( p < 0.05 \).
\(^b\) Means in rows or columns are significantly different at \( p < 0.10 \).

evironments. The atmospherics by salesperson availability interaction was also significant (\( F_{1,76} = 5.11; p < 0.05 \)), and as displayed in Table 1 and Figure 1, under the salesperson “easily available” condition, “prestige store ambience” lead to a higher product evaluation than a “discount store ambience” conditions (\( X = 7.83 \) versus 6.66; \( p < 0.05 \)). Similarly, under the salesperson “not easily available” condition, “prestige store ambience” led to a higher product evaluation than the “discount store ambience” condition (\( X = 6.93 \) versus 4.21; \( p < 0.01 \)). These results indicate the synergistic powers of store atmosphere on product presentation effectiveness.

As shown in Table 1, the results of buying intention were similar to those of product evaluation, with a significant main effect (\( F_{1,76} = 14.13; p < 0.001 \)). Likewise, the store atmospherics by salesperson availability interaction was significant (\( F_{1,76} = 4.15; p < 0.05 \)), and in a decomposition of the effect, the salesperson “easily available”/“prestige store ambience” combination led to a marginally higher buying intention than the “easily available”/“discount store ambience” condition (\( X = 6.45 \) versus 5.63; \( p < 0.08 \)). Similarly, under the salesperson “not easily available” condition, “prestige store ambience” led to a higher buying intention than a “discount store ambience” condition (\( X = 5.70 \) versus 2.95; \( p < 0.01 \)). Thus, based on the results, \( H2 \) was supported.

Even so, it was interesting to note that the buying intention scores were generally lower in this analysis than the product evaluation scores. This might tend to suggest that ambiance could cause customers to perceive a product to be good but
not buy at the store. This finding in conjunction with another finding suggested additional post-hoc investigation of the results for this particular hypothesis.

We discovered that the salespersons’ availability construct significantly influenced buying intention in only the “discount store ambience” condition (see Table 1). In the “prestige store ambience” condition, there was no significant difference in buying intention between “easily available” and “not easily available” conditions ($X = 6.45$ versus $5.70; p > 0.10$). In contrast, in the “discount store ambience” condition, there was a significant increase in buying intention in the “easily available” condition when compared with the “not easily available” condition ($X = 5.63$ versus $2.95; p < 0.01$).

Although these effects were not hypothesized, mainly because the theoretical review did not suggest such an effect, the implications of this analysis are very interesting. In a “discount store ambience” increasing the availability of salespeople dramatically enhances customers’ buying intentions. In contrast, in a “prestige store ambience” decreasing the availability of salespeople does not significantly impact customers’ buying intentions.

**Hypotheses Three: Expectation Disconfirmation**

Recall that H3 suggests that customers’ persuasion is enhanced in conditions in which store ambience and salespeople’s availability do not match when compared with conditions in which the cues match. We compared the persuasion induced by a strong persuasive message in the match cells (“prestige store ambience” + “easily available” and “discount store ambience” + “not easily available”) with the mismatch cells (“prestige store ambience” + “not easily available” and “discount store ambience” + “easily available”). The “mismatch” condition induced higher product evaluations when compared with the “match” condition ($X = 6.79$ versus $6.01; p < 0.05$).

Similarly, the “mismatch” condition induced higher buying intentions as compared with the “match” condition ($X = 5.66$ versus $4.70; p < 0.05$). Therefore, H3 is supported. An issue that arises in this research is whether the higher buying intention in the “mismatch” cells is due to the enhanced processing of the “strong message” or the perceived credibility of salespeople. We analyzed the buying intention data with perceived salesperson credibility as a covariate and found it to be nonsignificant ($F_{1,75} = 0.53; p > 0.10$). Therefore, the reason for the enhanced buying intentions in the “mismatch” cells is due to the enhanced processing of message in these cells. It appears that unexpected combinations of ambiance and salesperson availability have the capability to produce more deliberative consideration of persuasive messages.

**Discussion**

The results demonstrated that store atmospherics positively influence customers’ perceptions of salespeople as well as customer persuasion. We have empirically demonstrated that (1) salesperson credibility is affected by a set of store atmospheric cues, such as prestige or discount ambiance, (2) these ambiance cues can lead to increased persuasion, (3) when customers received inconsistent ambiance and salesperson availability cues, persuasion also was enhanced, and (4) “availability of salespeople” had a differential impact on different types of stores.

As we suggested, ambiance cues have an impact on the performance of salespeople. In general, retail salespeople working in “prestige ambience” stores were perceived to have higher levels of credibility when compared with salespeople working in “discount ambience” stores. This may be a reason that retail salespeople working in “prestige ambience” stores induce higher level of persuasion than salespeople working in “discount ambience” stores. This is a generality; however, recall that when ambiance cues were mismatched with salesperson availability, the persuasive effect observed was not due to credibility effects but rather to higher levels of message processing. This implies that attention must given to ensure that salesperson availability in prestige settings matches customer expectations, or else a potential credibility advantage of the prestige category will be degraded.

The interaction between ambiance cues and salesperson availability suggests that our compound cue conceptualization of salesperson influence and store atmospherics has merit. It would seem that the salesperson is indeed inseparable from the store as far as environmental cues are concerned. This is not only supportive of a compound cue perspective on the judgmental effects of atmospheric factors in stores but is also consistent Baker et al.’s (Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman, 1994) implication that a store’s atmosphere can drive assessments in customers.

We also found differences associated with the mismatch condition and the match condition. In match conditions (store atmospherics match salesperson availability), customers used store atmospherics as the primary evaluative attribute (instead of salespeople), and the most decisive factor in persuading people to buy was the “prestige store ambience.” In contrast, in the mismatch condition (store atmospherics do not match salesperson availability), customers processed sales messages more extensively, and persuasion was enhanced. Therefore, it seems that retail managers have at their disposal several potent tools with which to build better positions for themselves. One way is through simple atmospheric cues, by manipulating decor and music in the environment—as demonstrated here and in previous research. A new way is to manipulate the “availability” of salespeople to increase persuasion.

Particularly, it appears that salesperson availability is a potent moderator for buying intentions in discount store ambience conditions. By increasing the level of salesperson availability to mismatch expectations for the discount store format, it appears that significant improvements in buying intentions can be realized.
Managerial Implications

If retail stores require personnel to influence the purchase behavior of customers, then there are several factors to consider. As a result of the study, we can say that prestige image store salespeople are likely to be persuasive simply as a function of how their working environment is perceived by customers. Nicer environments simply appear to enhance the credibility of sales messages. This may be one of the reasons for success of the well-known Nordstrom’s “personal shopper.”

On the other hand, there is an interesting implication for discount image stores. If competition is strong and it proves impractical to attempt to gain atmospheric advantages (as Target has attempted against Wal-Mart), then the key lies in presenting a mismatch with discount store salesperson availability expectations. In effect, the recognizable presence of personable and ready sales help in discount stores is likely to be perceived by customers as distinctive and desirable, and our results support the contention that more readily available salespeople will have more persuasive impact in discount store settings.

A primary implication of this research is that discounters can hire more salespeople, in order to boost persuasive impact on the sales floor. Of course, training these additional salespeople in the ways of customer service and satisfaction and paying them enough to be motivated to do more than simply what is expected are additional, synergistic steps that could be taken to increase the likely persuasive impact that increased numbers of personnel might bring. Training salespeople to have positive interactions with customers has been shown to have beneficial outcomes (see Sujan, Weitz, and Sujan, 1988). In fact, firms, such as Nordstrom, have developed a corporate culture based on promoting positive salesperson—customer interactions and relationships—Nordstrom stores have frequent group sessions in which they discuss how each salesperson enhanced their service to a customer.

The key question is whether this “discount mismatch” strategy is practical under category-competitive pricing and margin levels. In the battle between Target and Wal-Mart, Wal-Mart appears to have decided in favor of lower prices at the expense of available sales help, where Target may well be trying to increase sales help and service while living with slightly higher prices. There are limits to how much additional overhead a discounter can bear while remaining profitable within a competitive price range. Research will be required to determine just how much additional expense is required to achieve a “just noticeable difference” in salesperson availability at the discount level.

A broad implication of the research is that firms should increase salespeople’s availability as social factor in the compound cue conceptualization of store atmospherics. The effects of decor and music in store environments are robust and have been shown in a number of studies. The present study simply provides the rationale for considering social cues in the store environment in addition to the more normally manipulated environmental cues in store atmospherics.

Future Research and Limitations

This study was among the first to examine the effect of store atmospherics on the customer’s perceptions of salespeople, as well as the salesperson’s role as an atmospheric cue. Second, we defined atmospheric elements as “prestige” or “discount.” There are certainly a number of other possible atmospheric scenarios available for further study. Is a specialty store the same as a prestige store, with regard to atmosphere? Are all discount stores alike in their atmospheric presentations? The robustness of our findings will have to be tested in different environments.

Investigating the individual elements of a store’s atmosphere, as well as their interactions, would further our understanding of customers’ perception processes. As an example, what might be the interaction of the “type of music” and the “type of product/service being sold” on customers’ perceptions of salespeople? Clearly, some types of music will be more suitable for certain products than others. As an example, currently popular music is probably relevant in music stores, but, what sort of music is most relevant in a sporting goods store? Or, what might be the impact of not having country music in a western wear store?

Another issue for future research is the design of optimal atmospherics for specific types of salespeople. The research suggests that increasing the availability of salespeople in a “discount” store will enhance customers’ perceptions. However, how should other atmospheric factors be coordinated with salesperson availability to maximize persuasion? This study is only an initial step in beginning to understand the role that sellers play as part of retail atmospherics, and a host of potential extensions of this work are readily available and immediately compelling.

The experimentation performed here involved simulations of store atmospheric cues, by way of role-play scenarios. Future research can seek to expand experimentation to more realistic settings. Another limitation of the study is that only the element of credibility was examined. With regards to the persuasive process, there are a number of interesting and compelling variables that also could be studied. For example, future research can examine the full range of potential source effect variables such as similarity, attractiveness, knowledge, and expertise.

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References


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Appendix

Scales Used in the Study

**Product Evaluation**

Nine-point strongly disagree to strongly agree scale; \( \alpha = 0.91 \)

1. XX computers would probably perform as well as similar laptop computers.
2. The XX brand is a good product.
3. I expect XX computers to perform well if I buy it.
4. I expect XX computers to fulfill their intended purpose.

**Behavioral Intention**

Nine-point strongly disagree to strongly agree scale; \( \alpha = 0.96 \)

1. I will definitely consider buying a XX computer.
2. If I were to buy a computer for myself, I would definitely consider buying a XX computer.
3. The likelihood of purchasing this product is very high.

**Store Atmospherics**
Nine-point strongly disagree to strongly agree scale; $\alpha = 0.93$

1. The store would be a pleasant place to shop.
2. The store has a pleasant atmosphere.
3. The store is attractive.
4. The store is clean.

**Salespersons’ Availability**
Nine-point strongly disagree to strongly agree scale; $\alpha = 0.92$

1. There are enough salespeople in the store to service customers.
2. The salespeople seem like they would be friendly.
3. The salespeople seem like they would be helpful.