

Enhancing Customer Experience Through Retail Therapy

K. Sasi Kumar¹ and Dr.M.Sadika Sultana²

¹ Research Scholar (Bharathiar University) & Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, K.S.Rangasamy College of Arts & Science, Tiruchengode, India.

² Associate Professor & Research Supervisor, PG & Research Department of Management Science, Park's College, Tirupur-5, India.

sknice2006@gmail.com, sadikasultanasayed@gmail.com

ABSTRACT - Retail therapy refers to the act of going shopping or buying special things for oneself in order to feel better when they are unhappy. In other words, it is the habit of shopping in order to make oneself feel more cheerful and to get rid of negative moods. The article intends to understand the motive and psychology behind the behaviour of obtaining comfort through shopping. Retail therapy describes that purchase behaviour which uplifts one's mood. Shopping has now turned into a stress-relief activity. Successful mood management during the course of shopping might affect perceived quality of life and emotional well-being. The significance of retail therapy was acknowledged in retail businesses and has been utilized in marketing efforts.

Keywords: *Shopping, Therapy, customer experience, Sadness, Decision making, consumer behaviour.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Retail therapy aims to improve sales along with profit and shopper loyalty. Exposure to shopping or purchasing facilitates people to feel better about them. Enjoying the shopping moments decreases anxiety and stress. Retail therapy is understood by exploring consumer's experiences during pre-shopping, shopping, and post-shopping. A consumer may be driven to retail therapy by several factors. Most common method is to escape from a bad mood. Surveys have conveyed that the practice of browsing and choosing is considerably more pleasurable to the majority customers than the real purchase event. Shopping moreover helps people to prepare for notable occasions in their life like marriage, child birth and consequently feel in control. Several customers involve in shopping as a tool to celebrate a success or special occasion. Shopping develop into a channel to strengthen their positive mood.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Arnould & Zinkhan, (2002) reported that impulse purchase occur when consumers experience a sudden, often powerful, and persistent emotional urge to buy immediately [1]. Also high emotional activation can lead to unplanned purchases or impulse purchases. Macinnis, (2010) stated that consumer's decision for buying can be affected by both positive and negative emotions [2]. Murray, (2013) stated that majority of people trust that the selections they make result from a balanced evaluation of available alternatives [3]. In fact, emotions significantly effect and in many cases even determine the decisions. Kacen, (1998) found that shoppers in negative moods frequently procured accessories, clothing, food and electronic products [4]. These categories of products were preferred because they enhanced self-image and distracted attention. Woodruffe, (1997) discovered that people employed in several forms of consumption (e.g., eating, shopping, buying and traveling) to make up for felt shortages such as feeling depressed or bored [5].

3. SHOPPING AS A FORM OF THERAPY

Though shopping is not the traditional form of therapy, it have positive emotional effects on individuals, hence shopping is so popular. At many a times, shopping relieves anxiety and stress, which can be beneficial for several individuals. The foremost contribution to the consumer behaviour

arena is to support and considerably widen present information of shopping as therapy [6]. Furthermore, recognizing several therapeutic desires (e.g., activation, escape) and diverse features of shopping (e.g., purchasing, retail environment) to encounter these necessities which can significantly assist retailers in building methods to craft consumers' shopping experience an efficacious therapy. Additionally, while engaging in retail therapy, the purchases are more or less always unintended. Majority of the customers expressed their state of mind with phrases like depressed, sad, stressed and lonely and but they expressed their state of mind after their shopping incident with phrases like relaxed, happy, distracted and satisfied [7].

Former studies disclosed that women believe shopping as a stress relief action beyond men [8]. More than one-third of the adults revealed that shopping makes them to sense healthier than indulging in eating sweets like ice cream, pizza or working out. Specific categories of purchasing make consumers to experience superior than others. Clothing, Entertainment (i.e., books, movies, music), Travel, Tech/electronics, Furniture/home décor games and toys are the products purchased during retail shopping.

4. PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND RETAIL THERAPY

Researchers found that shopping makes a person feel more in control of life and an effective way to minimize sadness [9]. It helps a person feel more in control of their environment. Consumers have been driven to fulfill their aspiration to keep in touch to the latest trend by merely window shopping and browsing in store. Shopping had been motivated by a desire to repair mood. Retail therapy is shopping activity with the main intention of enhancing the buyer's personality or mood.

Around the pre-shopping stage, all aspects of negative moods (i.e., dejection, stress, anger) direct to therapy shopping [10]. While experiencing negative moods, majority of the members proceeded with shopping to relieve them more than half of the time. A clear pattern was not displayed relating the incidence of feeling a negative mood with the rate of going for shopping to relieve it. In the course of shopping stage, enhancement of mood hindered from visualizing consumption, existence well treatment by sales associates, experiencing retail environments, purchasing and shopping activity. Generally, the shopper's shopped unaccompanied, expended more money and time than average, made an unplanned purchase for themselves and were loyal to the store. Post-retail therapy experiences from shoppers revealed better feeling after a shopping therapy trip. In general, shoppers signified their use of shopping as therapy was successful and effective and had little or no negative consequences.

5. SUGGESTIONS FOR RETAILERS

Retail therapy purchasing is impulsive and unplanned [11]. Consumers appreciate an extensive range of goods to decide selection. The consumers recognize browsing and choosing to be incredibly pleasurable actions. Hence retailers need to setup an online presence with their entire product range, apart from their store.

Music comes out as the tremendously dominant sub-factor, followed by fragrances and messages. Therefore, playing cheerful songs facilitate to attract those who involve in retail therapy, by instantly making them experience better and at the same time elevating the experience for the other customers. Layout and lighting remain noticeable as the most significant factors to influence the customers.

Store layouts with clean environment, plenty of free space and orderly arrangement work well with customers inclined to retail therapy.

Attractive interiors, special zones like coffee shops, smoking zones, quality of service, customer attention, answering the queries, surprise gifts and rewards also plays a significant impact over retail therapy. Retailer's policies like exchange or return and loyalty programs also play a predominant role in attracting customers to the store.

6. PROBLEMS CAUSED BY RETAIL THERAPY

The bad mood steers to huge purchase and consumption of unplanned delights for the self. On the other hand, retail therapy has also remained linked with compulsive buying and shopping addiction. Some best ways to keep spending under control are budgeting and keeping the finances clean, track the spending and take control of where the money is going, Avoiding credit card for shopping and as alternative cash can be used.

7. CONCLUSION

Products bought during stages of retail therapy are at times mentioned as comfort buys. The event of shopping may perhaps provide a short period of comfort (relief from dysphoria), moreover it inflicts costs or addiction, depend on whether a person utilizes it adaptively or mal adaptively. Window shopping may offer the comfort of shopping. The benefit is that several items and various stores can be enjoyed at free of cost.

Retail therapy is an event to be considered in the Indian context. The perception towards shopping is varying from a simply functional action to one which can be therapeutic. It is the right time for retailers to recognize the truth and adapt appropriately. Providing broad range of products to select from and having an online existence is crucial to stay competitive. An environment of positivity needs and empathy needs to be created through messages, upbeat music, lighting and organized layout. In addition, retailers must to train their employees to delight and surprise the customers, but not at the cost of being intrusive. Finally, loyalty programs will go a lengthy way in influencing the retail therapy shoppers to stay with the brand or store, even when the purchase is impulsive and unplanned.

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