THE INFLUENCES OF STORE ATMOSPHERE ON PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARD A FAST FASHION BRAND IN BANGKOK

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Abstract: *The objective of this research is to investigate how store atmosphere influences purchase intention in fast fashion brands in Bangkok. There is robust growth and high competition in the fast fashion's market. Seven factors, which are music, color, lighting, traffic flow, space allocation, product display, and window display, are selected in order to find statistical relationship with purchase intention based on thorough literature review. Findings of this current research show that color, lightening, traffic flow, product display and window display have statistical influence on purchase intention whereas music and space allocation have not. This result provide important managerial implications to fast fashion industry to focus on purchase intention to enhance sustainability and profitability. Further investigation of the factors contributing to purchase intention and in other geographical areas is suggested for future studies.*

1. Introduction

Fast fashion is revolutionizing the way consumers shop and dress (Cachon & Swinney, 2011). In recent years, brands including ZARA, Topshop, and H&M have grown robustly and have continuously gained the market share from the traditional rivals, such as Haute Couture (Sull & Turconi, 2008). A key behind this success is that all these fast fashion brands can offer products to the market at more affordable prices, being quicker, and more up-to-date than the traditional fashion house (Cachon & Swinney, 2011). A report from New York City Economic Development Corporation (2010) shows that the fast fashion market has rapidly grown from year 2006 to 2010, with ZARA, H&M, and Forever 21 growing at 12%, 13% and 25%, respectively, while the others at 2% in the same period.

The rise of competition in the world's fashion market today has promoted many brands to become more alert (New York City Economic Development Corporation, 2010). As we all live in a fast changing times, the rapid change is not only restricted to the merchandise or on-sale products, but also the store (Parsons, 2011).

'A' fast fashion brand has proven its success by tripling its stores and revenue, and become the third largest international retailer (Zhang, 2008). The production process at the 'A' brand is very outstanding. From design to delivery, it can make it within a week and products are sold out to the eager customers right away (Caro & Gillien, 2010, Fisher et al., 2001; Ghemawat & Nueno, 2006).

The purpose of this research is to investigate how store atmosphere influences purchase intention under the particular fast fashion brand context as well as to provide evidence guidance for real world business practice. Besides, it is also still difficult to find a research study on store atmosphere influencing purchase intention in fast fashion brands, under the specific Bangkok area while these brands are rapidly expanding globally.

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2. Literature Review

2.1. Review of Studies Related to Fast Fashion

Understanding purchase intention toward fast fashion brands is grounded in comprehending the term fast fashion itself. As defined by Sheridan et al. (2006), it is an approach that is adopted by retailers to be able to catch both existing and newest trends into their productivity process as fast as possible.

A similar idea is shared by Barnes and Lea-Greenwood (2010): fast fashion can be defined as how a company is able to shorten their production process while offering its goods to the right target at the right time in order to fulfill consumer demands at its peak. The shorter period between introduction stage and decline stage has pushed business into pressure, thus resulting in more frequent renewal of product ranges (Sull & Turconi, 2008).

2.2. Review of Studies Related to Purchase Intention

In general, people interact with their surroundings with certain predictable behaviors. In the past, there have been many studies which have attempted to gain a greater insight into how people react to various external environmental stimuli. (Baker, 1986; Billings, 1990; Kaltcheva, 2011; Ramlee & Said, 2014). Kotler (1973-4), for example, explored how specific facility-based cues could produce predictable behavioral reactions from consumers as a derivative of environmental psychology. As seen in Figure 1, the Stimulus-Organism Response (SOR) model proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) is one of the most accepted and useful models of environmental psychology to study what "environmental stimuli (S) influences emotional response of organisms (O) which in turn, initiates consumers' behavioral response (R)" (Ramlee & Said, 2014, pp.427).

Figure 1: Stimulus Organism Response (S-O-R) Model
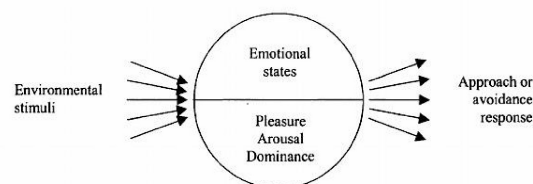
Another previous study (Jang & Namkung, 2009) also found that there are three conditions of emotional response including pleasure, arousal, and dominance. These three emotional responses describe the consumer behavior, in which they choose to approach or avoidance response. When looking into approach response, it consists of the intention to stay, explore and affiliate with surroundings people, whereas escaping and ignoring to communicate with others nearby can be described by avoidance response (Jang & Namkung, 2009; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). The variables of this SOR model are used as the predictor for consumer behavior such as in-store time and purchasing intention.

The term "atmosphere" can be understood as the ability of a given system to instill positive emotional states in buyers in order to maximize the probability of purchasing in marketing literature (Kotler, 1973-4). According to Liu and Jang (2009), it can consist of both touchable and untouchable elements of the environment, furnishings, scents, music, and lighting as such. The authors have further asserted that there are three disparate atmospheric dimensions. First as "ambient conditions", it refers to the characteristics of the intangible environment (temperature, scent, music, color etc.) primarily affecting the non-visual senses of consumers. Second, the "spatial layout and functionality", explains how the facilities machinery, and furniture are set and how these components help to determine customer react. Third, the "signage, symbol and artifacts", imparts consumers with explicit or implicit signals

as a means of communication with the purchasers (Bitner, 1992).

2.3. Review of Theories and Studies Related to Independent Variables

2.3.1: Ambient Cue

Baker et al. (2002) defines ambient cues as non-visual components of a store's atmosphere, including music, scent, color, lighting, etc., which reflect the consumers purchase intention.

- Music

It can be explained as an enjoyable sound that affects consumers' decisions, either in a conscious or unconscious way (Banat & Wandebori, 2012). It is significant for the retail chain outlet to carefully choose their background music, as it impacts consumer purchase intention. Holbrook and Anand (1990) also supported that music styles and tempos can influence buyers in terms of increased sales in the store. The more enjoyable the background music is, the longer a consumer stays, and this, therefore, affects the purchase intention. Thus, Herrington (1996) asserted that music has a positive effect towards customers in terms of time and amount of purchase.

- Color

A previous study proved that colors affect behavior, feelings, and attitude of consumers (Banat & Wandebori, 2012). Banat and Wandebori explained that the memories, thought, and experiences can be stimulated by color. For instance, Bellizzi et al. (1983) suggested that green and blue tend to be more attractive than red, as they create pleasant, positive, and comfortable feeling towards consumer's behavior. A similar idea is shared by Yuksel (2009) in that a good color would attract customers' attention in the retail outlet, and create a positive perception of the merchandise.

- Lighting

Mehrahbian and Albert (1976) stated lighting is a key to highlighting products, which significantly affects consumer behavior in terms of amusement. The lighting tone that is used inside the store also affected the consumer's mood (Areni & Kim, 1994). With the proper tone, it makes consumers inclined to touch products to assess quality. Another study by Wanninayake and Randiwela (2007) proved that the lighting and store layout affect consumer's choice of store. The brighter lighting in the retail outlets influenced customers' attention to start navigating the outlet that would lead to product purchase (Wanninayake & Randiwela, 2007).

2.3.2: Design and Layout Cue

Layout is a part of the selling area and space utilized (Banat & Wandebori, 2012). Vazquez and Bruce (2002) explained that the design and layout in a retail chain outlet are typically complex and therefore, involve various elements. Furthermore, a better design and layout could attract consumers to step in. Baker (1986) classified the design and layout as a visual part of the store atmosphere, including layout and space.

- Traffic Flow

Quinn and Steward (2007) defined traffic flow as the heart of operations. This is because it can be used to determine strengths and weaknesses of the store layout. Basically, this is measured from the extent hat consumers can easily access and explore the products (Hui et al., 2007). In doing so, the previous study proved that the store layout can enhance merchandising techniques to improve in sales, appearance, and making shopping more enjoyable to consumers (Hui et al., 2007). A similar idea is shared by Quinn and Steward (2007). It is evidenced that a good traffic flow is a key that affects consumer decision process.

- Space Allocation

A good design should be made for spacing within the retail store (Banat & Wandebori, 2012). This is because a better planning could make better use of space in the future. Additionally, Jo and Gero (1998) suggested that setting a barrier could slow customers down when shopping. In so doing, this could give extra time to

consumers to absorb the environment within the store and decide which direction to go (Jo & Gero, 1998).

2.3.3: Display Cue

Display also matters (Kaltcheva et al., 2011). It refers to how consumers are made to focus on which products are differently displayed and are artistic (Vieira, 2010). This includes the products display and window display.

- Product Display

Mill et al. (1995) illustrated that a better design and display of products could lead to the rise in sales, approximately by one fourth in the store. In addition, another previous study (Ward et al., 1992) found that there is a significant impact of product display on intention of purchase.

- Window Display

A window display as a key instrument, is to be used as a communication tool between brand and consumers (Lilly, 2010). In other words, it is a visual merchandising strategy that affects consumers' purchase intention as a part of their shopping experience (Lilly, 2010). Window display consists of two main purposes (Grewald et al., 1998; Lilly, 2010). First, it can identify the brand and its products throughout the display. Second, it can grab customers' attention, which could lead to unplanned purchase. Thus, the previous study (Sen et al. 2002) has pointed that window display does have a positive relationship with shopping decisions.

3. Research Framework

There are three cues being applied in this particular research study. They are ambient, design and layout, and display respectively. As seen in Figure 2, the conceptual framework consists of seven independent variables and one dependent variable. The first three independent variables are music, color and lighting, which are under ambient cue. The two independent variables, traffic flow and space allocation are under layout cue. The last two independent variables, product Display and window Display are under

display cue. Last, purchase intention is the one dependent variable.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework
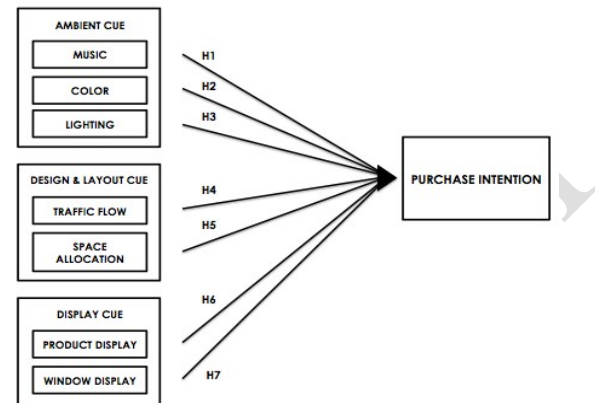
(Source: Developed by the researcher for this study)

The emotional response (O) part was not applied here for the reason that this research is merely conducted via questionnaires distributed to consumers. There is a lack of chance or being invalid to observe or measure consumers' emotional response whilst atmospheric (S) factors and behavior (R) could be examined.

- Research Hypothesis

There are seven hypotheses purposed in this study which are categorized into three cues as follows.

Ambient Cue:

H_{1a}: Music affects customers' purchase intention.

H_{2a}: Color affects customers' purchase intention.

H_{3a}: Lighting affects customers' purchase intention.

Design and Layout Cue:

H_{4a}: Traffic flow affects customers' purchase intention.

H_{5a}: Space allocation affects customers' purchase intention.

Design and Layout Cue:

H_{6a}: Product display affects customers' purchase intention.

H_{7a}: Window display affects customers' purchase intention.

- Research Methodology

There are four statistical analyses run for this research; reliability test, descriptive, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression. First, the data is tested for reliability by Cronbach's alpha to ensure the questionnaire is reliable to be distributed. Descriptive analysis is conducted to identify general characteristics of samples. Moreover, Pearson correlation analysis is used to determine the relationship between independent and dependent variable. Lastly, multiple linear regression is utilized to investigate the casual (predicting) relationship from seven independent variables on dependent variable in the regression model.

The target population in this current research are potential purchasers of 'A' fast fashion brand's products in Bangkok. The convenience sampling and snowball technique are used and the survey questionnaire is distributed via online platform. The questionnaire consists of three main parts: Demographic information, General information, and Measuring variables. Demographic information include gender, age, occupation, and income. General information consist of frequency of visit the store, and longevity of staying. Measuring variables consists of seven variables utilizing 5–point Likert Scale where value '1' indicates 'strongly disagree' and value '5' indicates 'strongly agree'.

- Pilot Study

The pilot study is tested for the reliability of the questionnaire. It is to ensure that the questionnaire is in the right direction and also has consistent responses (Fasheyitan, 2015). The results of reliability are shown in Table 1, indicating that all questions are reliable to be used.

Table 1 – Reliability Analysis of Research Instrument (N=30)

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Item
Music	.762	5
Color	.822	5
Lighting	.73	5
Traffic Flow	.807	5
Space Allocation	.775	5
Product Display	.711	5
Window Display	.709	5
Purchase Intention	.75	5
Overall	**.919**	**40**

4. Data Analysis
Descriptive Analysis

As aforementioned, data from 429 sample was collected. Among 429, there are 244 female respondents (56.9%), and 185 male respondents (43.1%). The majority of the respondents are aged 26-35 (59.4%) and are full-time employees (51.3%), and have monthly income of more than 50,000 (29.1%) and 20,001-30,000 Baht (26.1%) and 30,001-40,000 (20.3%) as shown in Table 2. Once per month (33.3%), less than once a month (31.5%), and 203 times per month (29.1%) are the frequency of visit by respondents to the store. The majority of respondents stay inside the store are 30 minutes to 1 hour (45.9%) and less than 30 minutes (33.8%).

Table 2 – Descriptive Information

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	185	43.1
Female	244	56.9
Total	429	100
Age		
16-25 years old	120	28.0
26-35 years old	255	59.4
36-45 years old	42	9.8
More than 45 years old	12	2.8
Total	429	100.0
Occupation		
Student	71	16.6
Part-time Employment	13	3.0
Full-time Employment	220	51.3
Self-Employment	109	25.4
Others	16	3.7
Total	429	100.0
Income		
Less 20,000 Baht	44	10.3
20,001-30,000 Baht	112	26.1
30,001-40,000 Baht	87	20.3
40,001-50,000 Baht	61	14.2
More than 50,000 Baht	125	29.1
Total	429	100.0
What is your frequency of visiting ZARA's store?		
Less than once a month	135	31.5
Once per month	143	33.3
2-3 times per month	125	29.2
4-5 times per month	22	5.1
6 times and above per month	4	0.9
Total	429	100.0

How long do you stay inside the ZARA's store per one time visit?

Less than 30 minutes	145	33.8
30 minutes - 1 hour	197	45.9
1 hour - 1 hour 30 minutes	70	16.3
1 hour 30 minutes - 2 hours	16	3.7
More than 2 hours	1	.2
Total	429	100.0

- Correlation Analysis

The changes between two variables can be interpreted in terms of relationship (Walker & Almond, 2010). As seen in the Table 3, the Pearson's correlation is conducted to measure the relationship between each pair of variables. The positive relationship between paired data can be identified into two levels, in which music shows a positive moderate relationship, whereas color, traffic flow, product display, and window display have a positive strong correlation at two-tailed, 0.01 significance level.

Table 3 – Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (N=429)

Factors	Significant Value at 0.01 level (two-tailed)	Level of Correlation
Music	.000	.596
Color	.000	.651
Lighting	.000	.656
Traffic Flow	.000	.677
Space allocation	.000	.628
Product display	.000	.657
Window display	.000	.682

- Hypothesis Testing

Multiple Linear regression is run as seen in Table 4. Adjusted R^2 of .619 indicates that 61.9% of the variation in purchase intention can be explained by the independent variables in the regression model. Among seven factors, five factors which are color, lighting, traffic flow, product display and window display, have statistical influence on purchase intention while music and space allocation does not.

Among these five factors, traffic flow is the strongest factor with the Beta value of .227 indicating that one unit increases in traffic flow, there is .224 increase in purchase intention, followed by window display (.224), color (.204), lighting (.149), and product display (.115).

Table 4 – Summary of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis (N=429)

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	Sig.	VIF
Music	-.048	.335	-.047	.335	2.515
Color	.219	.000	.204	.000	2.882
Lighting	.164	.003	.149	.003	2.792
Traffic Flow	.224	.000	.227	.000	2.620
Space Allocation	.068	.176	.066	.176	2.732
Product Display	.127	.020	.115	.020	2.808
Window Display	.218	.000	.224	.000	2.709

**Note: R^2 = .625, Adjusted R^2 = .619, p-value < 0.05

The multicollinearity test is also conducted to ensure no serious multicollinearity observed among independent variables. The results show that all VIF values are less than 3, indicating no serious multicollinearity violation.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this current research is to investigate the effect of store atmosphere on purchase intention under the particular fast fashion brand context. The study has found a statistically significant relationship between five independent variables (color, lighting, traffic flow, product display and window display) and purchase intention whereas music and space allocation show no statistical relationship with it. Therefore, the five null hypotheses (H2, H3, H4, H6, H7) were rejected, while two (H1, H5) failed to reject as seen in Table 5.

Table 5 – Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypo-theses	Significant Value	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Status
$H1_0$	.335	-.048	Failed to reject
$H2_0$	.000***	.219	reject
$H3_0$	.003**	.164	reject
$H4_0$	.000***	.224	reject
$H5_0$	.176	.068	Failed to reject
$H6_0$	.020**	.127	reject
$H7_0$	.000***	.218	reject

**Note: p-value < 0.01 (***), p-value < 0.05 (**)

The following section is the comparison between findings of the current research and those of the existing literature.

- Music

Previous studies (Holbrook & Anand, 1990; Smith & Ross, 1966) found that music has an impact on the consumers' purchase decision, which is dissimilar to what this research has found. This indicates that music might not be such a major impact on customers' purchase intention at 'A' fast fashion stores in Bangkok.

- Color

The findings of this current research show statistical relationship between purchase intention and color supporting results of existing studies. Bellizzi et al., (1983) and Yuksel (2009) proved that the tone of color affects consumer's intention to purchase. Furthermore, it shows the same direction of relationship in that the colors affect feelings, behavior, and attitude of consumers (Banat & Wandebori, 2012).

- Lighting

Lighting turns out to be an influencing factor on customers' purchasing intention, which supports the previous research findings (Areni & Kim, 1994; Mehrahbian & Albert, 1976; Wanninayake & Randiwela, 2007).

- Traffic Flow

The current research found out that there is a strong significant relationship between traffic flow and purchase intention which is similar to previous studies (Banat & Wandebori, 2012; Jo & Gero, 1998). Therefore, the effective traffic flow would make consumers want to purchase the products in the store.

- Space Allocation

Being inconsistent with previous literature, space allocation has no statistical influence on purchase intention. This could be attributed to the fact that all 'A' stores in Bangkok have a large to ultra large retail space. At such spacious level, space allocation may not be a significant environment stimulus that impact customers when they purchase their products.

- Product Display

The results of the current research confirm the findings of the previous studies by Mills et al. (1995) and Ward et al. (1992) in that there is a significant impact of product display on consumer purchase intention. The current research found that people are willing to purchase more when seeing attractive and impressive product display.

- Window Display

The current study finds an echo with Sen et al. (2002), who found the strong significance between window display and purchase intention. As indicated by the findings of this current study, the window display grabs customers' intention to get into the store supporting what the previous studies have found (Grewald et al., 1998; Lilly, 2010; Sen et al., 2002).

In conclusion, the relationship between color, lighting, traffic flow, product display, and window display and purchase intention is statistically significant whereas music and space allocation has no statistical association with purchase intention.

- Recommendation

The results of this current research and the subsequent analysis of the raw data support several recommendations for fast fashion stores, as follows.

First, regarding ambient cues, it is clear that the ambience can affect customer perceptions, emotional responses and, attitudes. Ensuring that the color scheme in the outlet imbues the customers with the appropriate emotional state and, therefore, it deserves the managers' proper attention. Similarly, a slightly more complex lighting scheme, in which multiple colors are utilized, can draw the customers' attention to specific products and items. Thus, it is advisable for interior designers, managers and owners to create an overarching color and lighting scheme so as to create a more comfortable environment, which could lead to a longer length of stay and, therefore, may lead to purchase intentions.

Second, a well-thought out store design with good flow has a significant influence on customers' purchase intention. Since the flow of a given design is difficult to change once the store layout has been set, it is important that 'A' store (or any fast fashion) management pays attention to and forethought before any installation of furniture in order to improve operational efficiency inside the store.

Third, as demonstrated by the display cues, the product display and window display affect purchase intention, which could be seen as a practical implementation of S-O-R theory in business. Both product display and window display give significant environmental stimulus to customers, generating higher chances of customer-product communication. This

relationship acts as a key device that leads to the direct point of sale. Thus, it is recommended that the management and owners create a more attractive product display and window display in order to grab customers' attention, as well as encourage them to visit the store.

- Further Studies

As this present research focuses only on customers who visited 'A' stores in Bangkok, the results may not be representative of fast fashion as a nation level. Thus, future researchers may conduct studies in different areas of Thailand. Furthermore, future researchers may utilize both qualitative and quantitative research for a more in-depth exploration of consumer behavior and motivations. Quantitative research may limit respondents' in-depth information of their purchasing habits.

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