



The kinetic quality of store design: An Exploration of its influence on shopping experience

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ABSTRACT

Kinetic quality of store space is the appreciation of the store with regard to the movements and gestures that can be performed during the shopping trip. Few researches have studied this concept despite its potential influence on shopping outcomes. In this paper, we show that the kinetic quality of the store has an impact on hedonic and utilitarian shopping values and on purchase. The impact on shopping value is similar in magnitude to that of atmospheric quality. Music and visual esthetics positively influence kinetic quality.

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1. Introduction

The affective quality of the store environment (Fisher, 1974; Russell et al., 1981) has been a main academic concern since the seminal papers by Martineau (1958), Kotler (1973) and Mehrabian and Russell (1974). Research have shown that tangible stimuli of the store environment (e.g. music, odors, colors or lighting) influence emotional states experienced during the shopping trip (for a comprehensive review, see Turley and Milliman, 2000). These affective states, in turn, impact shopping value (Babin et al., 1994; Babin and Attaway, 2000), and, even if the results are less consistent, willingness to buy and actual purchase (Turley and Milliman, 2000).

In spite of its contributions, this research stream has left aside another crucial quality of the store environment: its kinetic quality. If affective quality is the result of sensorial stimulation by elements of the store environment, kinetic quality is the appreciation of the store with regard to the movements and gestures that can be performed during the shopping trip. This quality of the store environment rests on the recognition that shopping experience is not only a result of the sensory stimulation of the shopper but also of the physical activity needed for the accomplishment of the shopping task. Research has shown that movement and gestures accomplished during the visit to a store are constituents of the shopping experience (Peñaloza, 1999; Kozinets et al., 2004; Borghini et al., 2012). More generally, research in physiology and psychology has recognized the role

of movement and gestures in the constitution of human experience (Berthoz, 2000; Beilock and Holt, 2007; Siakaluk et al., 2008; Cannon et al., 2010). The configuration of the store, its layout and more broadly its design, channel the movements and gestures of shoppers and probably influence the kinetic quality of the store. But the knowledge of its antecedents and outcomes are very limited. Research in this domain is still rare, even after Bitner's remark (1992) that "surprisingly little has been published about the effects of spatial layout and functionality on customers in commercial service settings". The few investigations on the topic have endorsed a narrow approach of the kinetic quality of the store environment by focusing solely on its utilitarian facet and leaving aside its hedonic dimension. This is for example the case for study of "store layout and functionality" (Bitner, 1992) or "instrumentality" (Vilnai-Yavetz et al., 2005).

Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore several unanswered questions:

- What is the influence of the kinetic quality on shopping values and purchase? Does it influence utilitarian value only, or does it also have a positive impact on hedonic value?
- How does the impact of kinetic quality compare with the impact of the affective quality? Is one more important than the other?
- Do sensory stimuli (visual esthetics and music) impact the kinetic quality of the store?

Answering these questions may have strong managerial implications. For example, in 2010 Carrefour invested millions of Euros in a new hypermarket concept to stop the decline in attractiveness among its customers. The aim of the new design was to improve the kinetic quality of the store (larger aisles, lower

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gondolas to facilitate contact with products). In spite of this choice, they continue to lose customers. Has kinetic quality really an impact on customer behavior? Should retailers invest in this dimension of store design, or focus solely on affective quality?

We first specify in more detail the concept of kinetic quality and its place within the other qualities of a store environment. We then present our model that introduces kinetic quality in a broader model of the influence of store environment. Data collection and analysis are then exposed before discussing the findings.

2. Conceptual background

2.1. Qualities of store environment

The store environment is made up of a combination of stimuli (odors, colors, lighting, music, materials, furniture, displays, etc.) that can in turn be divided into smaller units (e.g. for music: tempo, volume, style, etc). An analysis of the influence of store environment could possibly range from a narrow focus on the micro level of analysis (molecular perspective) to a more macro level (molar perspective).

Most of the research on store environment has endorsed a molecular perspective and studied the impact of one of the stimuli or the interactions between two stimuli on shoppers' behavior and perceptions (Turley and Milliman, 2000). This stream of research endorses an experimental approach to the study of the impact of physical environment on shoppers (Aubert-Gamet, 1997; Bonnes and Secchiaroli, 2009). Although this perspective has the advantage of rigor in the control of external factors, it nonetheless has several limitations (Leder and Carbon, 2005; Vilnai-Yavetz et al., 2005; Bonnes and Secchiaroli, 2009; Han, 2009).

First, it is not possible to give a global account of the impact of all the dimensions acting simultaneously. This is an almost impossible task given the number of combinations between the stimuli in the store environment. A complementary approach might then be useful both to account for this complexity and provide an evaluation of the global impact of the store environment.

Second, most research has been conducted in simulated contexts and usually with specific samples (e.g. students). Although this method has clear advantages, it nonetheless biases the exposure to the sensorial stimuli. Complementary investigation conducted in natural environments would be useful to improve understanding of the relationship between shoppers and marketplaces.

The evaluative approach to store environment (Russell et al., 1981; Leder and Carbon, 2005; Vilnai-Yavetz et al., 2005; Bonnes and Secchiaroli, 2009; Han, 2009) is a complementary approach whose aim is to assess the impact of more global properties or qualities of the environment. In this case, the focus is shifted from the molecular environment to the molar environment. Bitner (1992), Baker and colleagues (Wakefield and Baker, 1998; Baker et al., 2002) or more recently Rafaeli and colleagues (Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004; Vilnai-Yavetz et al., 2005) have proposed typologies of the properties of the store environment. In line with these authors, our analysis will be conducted at the molar level. Nonetheless, irrespective of their merits, none of these typologies clearly highlights the kinetic quality of the store.

2.2. Kinetic quality of store environment

Before defining the concept of kinetic quality, we specify the role of body movement in place experience.

2.2.1. Place experience and body movement

The stimulation of the five senses (i.e. the influence of store atmosphere) accounts only for a part of the experience of a place. A comprehensive analysis of the relationship between shoppers and their shopping environments should incorporate body movement.

This statement has its roots in various fields of research. Practice theory has shown that any activity has to be considered as a practice, i.e. a combination of mental and physical activities (Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005). Shopping falls under this category and is a mental (emotion and cognition) as well as a physical (movement and gesture) activity. The performance of both these activities is necessary for a satisfactory shopping experience. Research in the physiology and psychology of action (e.g. Berthoz, 2000; Beilock and Holt, 2007; Siakaluk et al., 2008; Cannon et al., 2010) claims that motor activity can be considered as a "sixth sense": it requires the activation of a variety of areas in the body (sensorimotor neural system, vestibular, muscular, articular receptors) and plays a crucial part in the creation of place experience. In human science, Merleau-Ponty with the notion of "body-subject" stressed the role of body in the relationship to space: "body is our vehicle of being in the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Through body practices people transform a space into a lived place (Lefebvre, 1974; De Certeau, 1980) and create specific experience and meanings. Ethnography and phenomenology of marketplaces (Peñaloza, 1999; Joy and Sherry, 2003; Kozinets et al., 2004; Borghini et al., 2012) have shown that body movement and gestures are indeed active processes through which consumers co-produce consumption and/or the experience of place.

2.2.2. Kinetic quality and place experience

The recognition of the importance of movement and gesture in place experience speaks for the need of an examination of the role of the kinetic quality of store environment. The design of the store, and more specifically its layout, is a structure that frames and is more or less open to patterns of physical behavior (Lefebvre, 1974; De Certeau, 1980). It leaves more or less room for people to perform the specific set of movements and gestures that aims to create a specific experience. Shopping experience can, then, be considered as the result of the negotiation between the kinetic quality of the space and the kinetic practices of the person.

Kinetic quality of a place is defined as the appreciation of the store with regard to the movements and gestures that can be performed during the shopping trip (i.e. movements and gestures). The evaluation of the kinetic quality of a space has various sources.

First, people evaluate the instrumentality (Vilnai-Yavetz et al., 2005) in other words the usability (Davies, 1989) of a place. In this case, the place is supposed to have been built for the performance of a specific task. The evaluation then turns on how it assists the performance of this specific task, i.e. its efficiency and productivity. But kinetic quality cannot rest only on this evaluation. Shopping has both a utilitarian and a hedonic dimension. Analysis of the kinetic quality of the store should take them both into account (Childers et al., 2001). Adaptive Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1986; DeSanctis and Poole 1994) and research on appropriation of space (De Certeau, 1980; Aubert-Gamet, 1997) propose to distinguish between usability (the easiness with which people can use the object or the place), and the "spirit" of the place (the fact that the place is conceived for a specific purpose and is then more or less open to different patterns of behavior). In the case of shopping, the "spirit" of the place can be either utilitarian or hedonic. We propose that the

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