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PRIMAX IJCMR VOLUME NO.14, ISSUE NO-3, OCTOBER- DECEMBER, 2026 **Research Article**

INFLUENCE OF IN-STORE EXPERIENTIAL BRAND ENGAGEMENT ON PURCHASE LIKELIHOOD: EVIDENCE FROM AFFORDABLE FASHION RETAILING IN AN EMERGING MARKET IN CHENNAI

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Abstract
The retail sector in emerging markets has witnessed tremendous change as competition increases and consumer expectations evolve. This study examines the effect of in-store experiential brand engagement on purchase likelihood in Affordable fashion retail stores across four dimensions: store atmospherics, product value and pricing, visual merchandising, and salesperson engagement. A structured questionnaire was analyzed using statistical techniques, such as reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis, and regression analysis. The results show that product value and pricing and visual merchandising have significant impact on purchase likelihood, whereas store atmospherics and salesperson engagement do not have statistically significant effect, but the overall in-store experience has a strong effect on purchase likelihood.
Keywords :*In-store Experience, Fashion Retailing, Visual Merchandising, Perceived Value, Store Atmospherics, Purchase Likelihood, Emerging Markets.*

Introduction

The fashion retail industry has experienced rapid growth in emerging markets as disposable income increases, urbanization increases, and consumer lifestyles change, and while online retail platforms are growing rapidly, physical stores are still a major factor that influences consumers on what they buy, and in-store experiential brand engagement has become the new differentiator for retailers on consumers demand more engaging and immersive shopping experiences. In-store experiential brand engagement involves the interaction between customers and store layout, ambiance product displays, pricing strategies, and employee interactions, which collectively influence customer perceptions and ultimately drive purchasing behavior, Retailers are now looking to create memorable experiences that go beyond transactional interactions and create emotional connections with customers.

Literature Review

Store Atmospherics

Atmospherics in store can have a significant impact on consumers, and recent research has shown that lighting, music, scent, layout, and ambience all affect consumer satisfaction, store evaluations, and purchase behavior. According to Zulu (2021), store atmospherics are a key factor in revitalizing brick-and-mortar fashion retailers through enhancing the customer experience and time spent in-store, Likewise, according to Sinha (2019), atmospherics are a strategic component of omni-channel fashion retail to develop in-store experiences that set physical stores apart from online rivals. In summary, store atmospherics are a sensory cue that can significantly impact customer engagement which in turn will increase purchase likelihood.

Product Value & Pricing

In today's retail market, perceived product value and fair pricing are still two of the key factors in consumer purchase decisions, and research has found that apparel and fashion products are judged by the quality, durability, brand reputation, and price fairness (Agrawal et al., 2024; Kumar, 2021). However, as competition increases, retailers must strike a balance between affordability and perceived benefits to maintain customer trust, which is why value-driven pricing leads to satisfaction, lowers the risk of purchase, and increases the likelihood of purchase.

Visual Merchandising

In the context of fashion stores, visual merchandising plays a key role in attracting attention, guiding shopper flow, and influencing purchase decisions (Basha and Shyam 2021; Mondol et al. 2021). Well-planned visual merchandising conveys brand identity, triggers impulsive buying, and enhances the shopping experience, thus allowing the retailers to stand out in competitive markets and to increase the cognitive and emotional connection of the consumer with the store.

Salesperson engagement

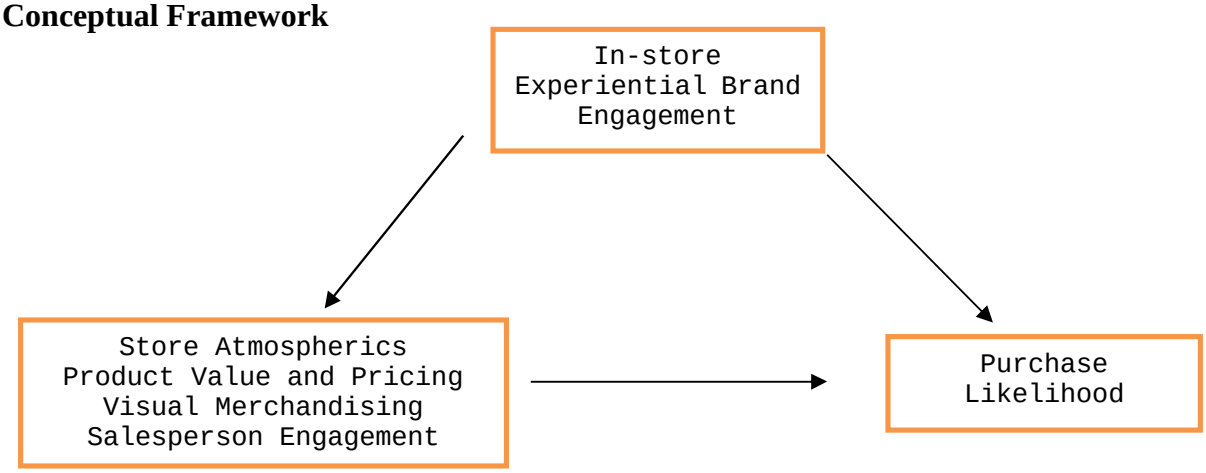
Salesperson engagement is an important part of the customer experience in retail setting because customer-employee interactions play a significant role in customer brand engagement and behavioral intentions (Cheung et al.2021). Engaged salespeople offer personalized assistance, product knowledge, and emotional support that helps build satisfaction and reduces purchase uncertainty. With the rise of online channels, and physical retailers facing increased competition from online channels, the relational value that comes

from human interaction can help build loyalty, and salesperson behavior can be a critical factor in service quality and store credibility in fashion retailing.

Purchase Likelihood

Purchase Likelihood is a measure of consumer willingness to buy a product based on their assessment of store cues, product perceptions, and shopping experience, and persuasive cues (KV et al., 2021), when the store has enhanced store atmospherics and service experiences (Zulu, 2021), and when the brand communication and retail environment are positive (Gupta and Kumar, 2022).

Conceptual Framework



Objectives

1. To examine the influence of in-store experiential brand engagement on purchase likelihood.
2. To examine the influence of Store Atmospherics, product value and pricing, visual Merchandising, Salesperson engagement

Statement of the problem

Although retailers spend heavily to improve in-store experiences, it is unclear which experiential factors matter most in shaping purchase likelihood in affordable fashion retail stores. This is particularly important for understanding the relative impact of various experiential factors in order to optimize retail strategies and increase customer engagement.

Relevance and significance of the study

This study is relevant and significant because it sheds light on consumer behavior in the context of affordable fashion retailing, allows the retailer to allocate resources to the experiential factors that most drive purchase likelihood, and contributes to the academic literature by including multiple dimensions of in-store experience in a single framework.

Scope of the study

The study focuses on consumers shopping in affordable fashion retail stores, particularly young adults. It examines the impact of in-store experiential factors on purchase likelihood and provides insights relevant to emerging market contexts.

Research Methodology

The study used a descriptive research design to examine consumer perceptions of in-store experiences, and primary data were collected using structured questionnaire distributed to 270 respondents through convenience sampling, measured through items assessing store atmospherics, product value and pricing, visual merchandising, salesperson engagement, and purchase likelihood, analyzed using SPSS software, with reliability analysis to check internal consistency and exploratory factor analysis to identify underlying constructs, and regression analysis to examine the relationship between independent variables and purchase likelihood.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Demographic profile (N=270)

	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	18-20	187	69.3**%**
Age	21-23	51	18.9**%**
	24-26	32	11.9**%**
Gender	Male	165	61.1**%**
	Female	105	38.9**%**
Monthly Personal Shopping Budget	Less than 1,000	79	29.3%
	1,001-2,000	80	29.6%
	2,001-3,000	66	24.4%
	Above 3,000	45	16.7%
Apparel store preference	H&M	59	21.9%
	Zara	58	21.5%
	Lifestyle	37	13.7%
	Reliance Trends	52	19.3%
	Max Fashion	37	13.7%
	Westside	26	9.6%
	Yousta	1	0.4%

The majority of respondents (69.3%) belong to Category 18-20 (likely younger age group), indicating that the same is dominated by younger consumers, who are more active in fashion retail shopping. The Sample consists of 61.1% male respondents and 38.9% female respondents, showing a higher representation of male consumers in the study. Most respondents fall into less than 1,000 and 1,001-2,000 (~59%), indicating moderate spending levels on fashion shopping. Preferences are fairly distributed across multiple stores, with

Categories H&M and Zara being the most preferred (~43%). This indicates no single dominant retail brand suggesting competitive market dynamics.

Table 2: Preference for offline shopping & Switching stores Due to Poor Experience

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
offline	160	59.3%
online	110	40.7%
Switching	158	58.5%
Not Switching	112	41.5%

A majority of respondents (59.30%) prefer offline Fashion stores, indicating the continued importance of physical retail experiences. More than half of the respondents (58.5%) are willing to switch stores if they have a poor shopping experience, highlighting the importance of maintaining a high-quality in-store experience.

Table 3: Reliability Analysis

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Store Atmosphere (SA)	3	0.882	Excellent
Product Value & pricing (PVP)	3	0.807	Good
Visual Merchandising (VM)	3	0.904	Excellent
Salesperson Engagement (SE)	3	0.893	Excellent
Purchase Likelihood (PI)	3	0.903	Excellent

All constructs have Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency. Visual Merchandising and Purchase Likelihood show excellent reliability (>0.90), while Product Value & Pricing is also acceptable (>0.80). Therefore, all scales are reliable and suitable for further analysis.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Table 4: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Test	**Value**
KMO Measure	0.924
Bartlett's Test (Chi-square)	2848.796
Significance (p-value)	0.000

The KMO Value (0.924) indicates excellent sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's test is significant ($p < 0.001$), confirming that the data is suitable for factor analysis.

Table 5: Total Variance Explained

Component	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Cumulative%
1	7.939	31.91%	31.91%
2	2.757	22.98%	54.89%
3	1.983	16.53%	71.41%
4	1.361	11.34%	82.75%

Four factors explain 82.75% of total variance, which is very high. This indicates a strong factor structure and good validity.

Table 6: Rotated Component Matrix (Loading ≥ 0.50)

Item	Compo_1	Compo_2	Compo_3	Compo_4
Product displays and mannequins are visually appealing.	0.794	—	—	—
The store has an attractive and pleasant ambience.	0.759	—	—	—
Music, lighting, and layout create a positive mood.	0.745	—	—	—
Discounts and offers affect my decision	0.728	—	—	—
Merchandise is well-organized and easy to locate.	0.681	—	—	—
Visual displays attract my attention to new arrivals.	0.596	—	—	—
Staff are friendly and make me feel comfortable.	—	0.837	—	—
Staff provide helpful suggestions during shopping.	—	0.742	—	—
Staff interaction enhances my shopping experience.	—	0.701	—	—
Trendy styles at low prices attract me.	—	—	0.798	—
The store environment encourages me to spend more time.	—	—	0.651	—
Affordable prices motivate me to purchase	—	—	—	0.852

All factors loading is above 0.50, confirming good convergent validity.

Regression Analysis

H1: Store Atmospherics has a significant effect on purchase Likelihood

H2: Product Value & Pricing has a significant effect on purchase Likelihood

H3: Visual Merchandising has a significant effect on purchase Likelihood

H4: Salesperson Engagement has a significant effect on purchase Likelihood

Table 7: Linear Regression Analysis (4 Elements → Purchase Likelihood)

Independent Variable	Beta (β)	Std. Error	t-value	Sig. (p-value)	Result
Store Atmospherics	0.172	0.088	1.951	0.052	Not Significant
Product Value & Pricing	0.302	0.077	4.518	0.000	Significant
Visual Merchandising	0.302	0.091	3.450	0.001	Significant
Salesperson Engagement	0.034	0.073	0.490	0.625	Not Significant

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F-value	Sig.
0.747	**0.559**	**0.552**	**83.876**	**0.000**

The multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of four in-store experiential factors- Store Atmospherics, Product Value & Pricing, Visual Merchandising, and Salesperson Engagement- on Purchase Likelihood. The model is statistically significant ($F= 83.876$, $p< 0.001$) and explains 55.9% of the variance in purchase likelihood ($R^2 = 0.559$).

Among the predictors, product Value & Pricing ($\beta = 0.302$, $p < 0.001$) and Visual Merchandising ($\beta = 0.302$, $p = 0.001$) have a significant positive effect on purchase likelihood. In contrast, Store Atmospherics ($\beta = 0.172$, $p = 0.052$) was found to be marginally non-significant, while Salesperson Engagement ($\beta = 0.034$, $p = 0.625$) does not show a statistically significant influence.

These findings indicate that customers' purchase decisions in affordable fashion retail are primarily driven by perceived value and visual appeal rather than store ambience or salesperson interaction.

Table 8: Linear Regression Analysis (In-store Experiential Brand Engagement → Purchase Likelihood)

H5: In-Store Experiential Brand Engagement has a significant effect on purchase Likelihood

Independent Variable	Beta (β)	Std. Error	t-value	Sig. (p-value)	Result
In-Store Experiential Brand Engagement	0.732	0.010	17.613	0.000	Significant

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F-value	Sig.
0.732	**0.537**	**0.535**	**310.231**	**0.000**

In-Store Experiential Brand engagement significantly and positively influences purchase Likelihood

Hypothesis Table (H1-H5)

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result
H1	SA → PL	**Rejected**
H2	PVP → PL	**Accepted**
H3	VM → PL	**Accepted**
H4	SE → PL	**Rejected**
H5	In-store Experience → PL	**Accepted**

Findings & Conclusion

Research shows that not all in-store experiential factors have an equal impact on purchase likelihood. **Product value and pricing**, along with **Visual merchandising** are the most important factors to consumers; conversely, **Store atmospherics** and **salesperson engagement** were found to be not statistically significant.

This suggests that in the competitive landscape of high-end malls in Chennai, a state of 'Atmospheric parity' has been reached. Retail managers should recognize that premium ambient conditions - such as lighting and climate control - have transitioned into 'Hygiene Factors'(Herzberg,1966). In this context, these elements are baseline expectations; their presence prevents dissatisfaction, but they no longer possess the 'Conversion power' to actively drive a purchase decision.

This may indicate that modern consumers, especially young shoppers, are most concerned about the tangible benefits - such as price and product presentation - than with the environmental and interpersonal aspects of the shopping experience. The most important finding is that the over all in-store experience (H5) has a significant impact on purchase likelihood; this implies that multiple experiential elements need to be integrated to provide a holistic, positive experience for consumers.

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