4.3. Study 3: Factors Affecting Consumer Visitors Buying Behavior at Retail Trade Shows[3]

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine variables influencing purchase incidences at retail trade shows. To this end, retailer and consumer related antecedent variables are proposed. The retailer related variables are represented by store environmental cues of sales staff services, store atmosphere and product assortment. The consumer related variables are represented by impulse buying tendency and perceived time pressure. Drawing on relevant literature, hypotheses are developed to link each of these variables to purchase incidence. Data were collected using questionnaire from shoppers (N = 95) at a large retail trade show. The hypotheses were tested using partial least square path modelling. The findings indicate that consumers' favorable evaluation of retailers' sales staff services, store atmosphere and product assortment led to more purchase incidences. The findings about the consumer related variables indicate that impulse buying tendency led to more purchase incidences whereas perceived time pressure led to fewer purchase incidences. Drawing on these results, several implications for practice and research are suggested.

Introduction

Retail trade shows offer companies inexpensive alternatives to promote and sell products to consumers. Retail trade shows do this by convening large number of suppliers and consumers in a single location for a limited period of time which

[3] This study is published as: Tafesse, W., and Korneliussen, T. (2012). Identifying Factors Affecting Consumer Purchase Incidence at Retail Trade Shows. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 19 (4), 438 – 444.

creates temporary market for the exchange of goods and services. At retail trade shows, companies combine traditional retailing variables (e.g., staffing, atmospherics, assortment) with experiential themes (e.g., product testing, contests, giveaways) to engage consumers in an interactive shopping environment (Kim et al., 2010). Consumers too benefit from retail trade shows in terms of gaining access to wide ranging product offers and educating themselves about new trends and innovations (Bello and Barczak, 1990; Rinallo et al., 2010).

Generating onsite sales is an important goal for companies attending retail trade shows and it often tops list of important trade show attendance goals (e.g., Gopalakrishna et al., 1995; Tanner, 2002). To achieve this goal, however, it is of paramount importance for retailers to understand how consumers respond to different in-store stimuli variables deployed at retail trade shows. Understanding the interplay between in-store stimuli variables and consumers' response patterns or more broadly understanding consumers shopping behaviour at retail trade shows helps retailers identify effective in-store stimuli variables and then manage these variables to fulfil their sales potential. The objective of the current article is accordingly to examine consumers shopping behaviour at retail trade shows.

In examining consumer shopping behaviour, we focus on consumers' purchase incidence. Because retail trade shows are transient (i.e., they are bounded by time and place), traditional shopping behaviour constructs like repeat purchase and store patronage are not as relevant as are more instantaneous consumer response patterns like purchase incidence. Informed by existing research, we proposed retailer and consumer related antecedent variables to purchase incidence. Sales staff services, store atmosphere and product assortment represented the retailer related antecedent variables. Impulse buying tendency and perceived time pressure represented the consumer related antecedent variables. We then developed hypotheses linking each of these variables to purchase incidence. Data were

collected from shoppers at a large retail trade show. The hypotheses were tested using partial least square (PLS) path modeling.

We found that consumers' favorable evaluation of retailers' sales staff services, store atmosphere and product assortment at retail trade shows led to more purchase incidences. Similarly, consumers' impulse buying tendency led to more purchase incidences whereas consumers' perceived time pressure led to fewer purchase incidences. These findings produce to interesting implications for retailers by shedding light on how booth stands should be configured with respect to staffing, design and product assortment aspects to drive sales revenue. The findings also provide some insights about how retail trade shows can supplement the activities of mortar and brick stores as consumers response patterns in these two retailing formats appear to be considerably overlapping.

Using Trade Shows for Retailing Purposes

There are certain important features of retail trade shows which render them appealing for retailing activities. By synthesizing available knowledge, this section attempts to highlight these features and justify the use of retail trade shows as supplementary retailing channels. First, retail trade shows allow companies to set up highly sophisticated exhibit spaces (i.e., booth stands) where they display, promote and sell products (Gopalakrishna et al., 2010; Skallerud, 2010). Organizers offer booths of different sizes and of different locations and the onus is on each company to select a booth stand that will suit its individual need. Using an excellent configuration of booth space and graphic materials, display shelves and furniture, lighting and sound equipments, retailers can show off products in a highly attractive fashion.

The second factor which makes retail trade shows appealing retailing formats is that booth stands can be staffed with skilled and experienced people. Because retail

trade shows last only for a handful of days, retailers can pull off diverse assortment of capable people to staff their booths (Kijewski et al., 1993; Tanner and Chonko, 1995). By using diverse assortment of people including senior managers, marketing people and technical people, retailers will be able to efficiently serve the needs of different visitors stopping by their booth stands. Because such diverse assortment of people are not commonly used to staff other retailing channels, retail trade shows can be highly valuable for consumers seeking to solicit complex information about products and suppliers (Godar and O'Connor, 2001).

The third appealing feature of retail trade shows is that they attract consumers on a massive scale (Gopalakrishna et al. 2010; Tanner, 2002). Although the number varies from one show to the other, most retail trade shows attract visitors numbering in their thousands. Because of the sheer scale of visitors, retailers often come in contact with considerable number of first time buyers. As a result, retail trade shows offer companies excellent opportunities to acquire new customers. Although the attendance cost of retail trade show is substantial, when the cost is averaged out over the total number of consumers contacted, retail trade show stands out as one of the cheapest means of establishing quality contacts with consumers (Tanner, 2002).

The fourth attractive feature of retail trade shows is that they reward consumers with exciting shopping experiences (Kim et al., 2010; Rinallo et al., 2010). Because leading retailers make their presences felt at established retail trade shows, consumers shopping at such venues will spent less time searching for desired products. In addition, retail tradeshows are well positioned to satisfy consumers' need for variety as, in their bid to uniquely position themselves, competitors offer different brands and makes (in the same product category) which increase choice options for consumers. Retail trade shows are also excellent places to stay abreast of emerging trends and innovations in specific industry clusters (Rinallo et al., 2010).

For reasons mentioned above, retail trade shows provide consumers exciting shopping experiences.

Hypotheses

Store environmental cues constitute stimuli variables used by retailers to create desired store images and elicit favorable consumer responses. Store environmental cues are categorized into ambiance, design and social factors (Baker et al., 2002; Bitner, 1992; Turley and Chebat, 2002). Ambiance factors include the background features of store surroundings such as temperature, music, noise and scent (Baker et al., 1994; Bitner, 1992). Design factors include the functional and the aesthetic aspects of store environment including layout, space, display, architecture, color and décor (Bitner, 1992; Turley and Chebat, 2002). Social factors refer to social conditions represented by the number, type and behavior of customers and sales people inside the store (Baker et al., 2002). Store environmental cues influence shopping behavior by serving consumers as sources of information and by swaying their emotional states and perception of value. As such, store environmental cues have been studied extensively pertaining to their impact on various shopping behavior constructs including store choice, satisfaction and patronage (e.g., Baker et al., 1994; 2002; Bitner, 1992; Donovan et al., 1994; Pan and Zinkhan, 2006; Spies et al., 1997).

In the present study, purchase incidence is posed as a central component of consumers' shopping behavior at retail trade shows. Purchase incidence captures the occurrence of concrete buying actions on the part of consumers. Purchase incidence is considered as a central component of shopping behavior at retail trade shows for two reasons. First, onsite buying is an important goal for consumers visiting retail trade shows as they visit retail trade shows with strong purchase intentions (Gopalakrishna et al., 1995). Second, retail trade show visitors barely

exhibit traditional shopping behavior dimensions like store patronage and repeat purchase owing primarily to the fact that retail trade show formats (i.e., their time and place boundedness) do not support such behavior. This renders traditional shopping behavior constructs cherished in physical stores somewhat unsuitable to retail trade show contexts. Thus, posing purchase incidence as a central component of consumers' shopping behavior at retail trade shows is sensible.

Because retail trade shows are bounded by time and place, however, not all store environmental cues that we normally associate with mortar and brick stores can readily be applied to retail trade shows. We expect sales staff services, store atmosphere and product assortment to be more influential determinants of purchase incidence as these store environmental variables are readily deployable at retail trade shows (Gopalakrishna et al., 2010; Skallerud, 2010). It is in fact impossible for retailers to pursue usual retailing activities without the direct application of these variables at retail trade shows. Furthermore, consumer related variables of impulse buying tendency and perceived time pressure are expected to influence purchase incidence because of their instantaneous effects on consumers' response patterns at retail trade shows (Beatty and Ferrel, 1998; Inman et al., 2009; Parker et al., 1989). The subsequent section establishes more solid associations between the aforementioned antecedent variables and purchase incidence.

Sales Staff Services

Retailers rely on frontline employees to deliver in-store services to customers. Because these frontline employees serve as an interface between customers and retailers, the service quality of frontline employees is an essential component in customers' evaluation of the service quality of retailers (Baker et al., 2002; Brady and Cronin, 2001; Darian et al., 2005; Hartline and Ferrel, 1996; Parasuraman et al., 1988). In the retailing literature, sales staff services are believed to be dependent on sales staffs' product specific knowledge, helpfulness and accessibility (Darian et al.,

2005; Hartline and Ferrel, 1996; Sharma, 2001). Sales people possessing these attributes can stimulate purchase incidence for a number of reasons.

First, knowledgeable, helpful and accessible sales staff can ease consumers cognitive efforts that go into making purchase decisions (i.e., recall, search efforts, brand evaluations etc). Because consumers sometimes rely on sales staff expertise to make purchase decisions, the presence of competent staff can assist them to resolve decision difficulties and improve their decision confidence which will likely lead to more purchases (Darian et al., 2005). Second, knowledgeable, helpful and accessible sales staff are capable of delivering favorable in-store services such as helping consumers locate products (Baker et al., 2002) offering product related information (Sharma, 2001; Seock, 2009) and addressing other consumers concerns (Darian et al., 2005). By delivering efficient services competent sales people can promote purchase incidence.

Finally, research has indicated that consumers rely on sales staff services quality as cue to establish product quality perceptions (Baker et al., 2002; Brady and Cronin, 2001; Hartline and Ferrel, 1996). Greater in-store sales services may signal high product quality which can stimulate more purchase incidences (Baker et al., 2002; Darian et al., 2005). The forgoing findings are expected to hold in retail trade shows. Therefore:

H_1. Greater sales staff services will lead to more purchase incidences.

Store Atmosphere

Scores of studies have looked at how various elements of store atmosphere influence shopping behavior. Research backed evidences indicate that the functional and the aesthetic aspects of store atmosphere exert strong influences on shopping convenience (Baker et al., 1994; Baker et al., 2002; Bitner, 1992; Grewal et

al., 2003; Seock, 2009), service quality perceptions (Baker et al., 2002; Brady and Cronin, 2001) and consumers' emotional states (Donovan et al., 1994; Spies et al., 1997). Based on these empirical evidences, it can be safely assumed that pleasant store atmosphere also facilitate purchase incidence.

First, pleasant store atmosphere increases shopping convenience by enabling easy movements of people inside the store and streamlining in-store navigations (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004; Spies et al., 1997). In addition, a well designed store atmosphere helps consumers find the product that they seek promptly which in turn buys them extra time to engage with other products inside the store (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004; Pan and Zinkhan, 2006; Spies et al., 1997). Second, evidences exist to show that consumers partly construct their product quality perceptions using the physical appearances of physical stores as cue (Baker et al., 1994; Baker et al., 2002). With great store atmosphere, consumers infer high merchandise quality which may then encourage more purchases to be effected (Baker et al., 1994; Baker et al., 2002).

Third, store atmosphere strongly influences consumers' emotional states (Babin and Darden, 1996; Donovan et al., 1994). While poorly designed store atmosphere leads to deteriorated mood states, pleasant store atmosphere leads to more upbeat mood states which in turn promote purchase incidence (Babin and Darden, 1996; Donovan et al., 1994; Spies et al., 1997). The above findings are expected to hold in retail trade shows. Therefore:

H_2. Pleasant store atmosphere will lead to more purchase incidences.

Product Assortment

Product assortment refers to the breadth and the depth of retailers' product supplies. Given that products are often the focal point of the shopping experience

and the primary reason that draws consumers to retail stores, product assortment is a crucial store feature that has garnered extensive investigations in the literature as to its influence on a variety of shopping behavior constructs (e.g., Ailawadi and Keller, 2004; Chernev 2003; Hoch et al., 1999; Pan and Zinkhan, 2006; Skallerud et al., 2009). For instance, in their meta analysis of determinants of store patronage, Pan and Zinkhan (2006) showed that providing large product assortment tend to appeal to broad consumer base and help satisfy diverse consumer preferences. Others indicated that large product selections motivate cross shopping activities while at the same time minimizing search efforts (e.g., Ailawadi and Keller, 2004; Chernev 2003; Hoch et al., 1999; Skallerud et al., 2009).

Accordingly, we expect large product assortment to stimulate purchase incidence at retail trade shows. First, large product assortment encourages cross shopping activities as consumers who find themselves in a large product assortment environment will likely come across with not only the specific product that they seek but also with its alternatives and compliments (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004; Hoch et al., 1999; Pan and Zinkhan, 2006). Second, supplying large product assortment can increase purchase incidence by stimulating impulse purchases. Because impulse buying is spontaneous buying act which arises from exposure to products, large assortment raises the odds of impulse purchases by enhancing the amount of stimuli that consumers are exposed to (Beatty and Ferrel, 1998; Rook and Fisher, 1995). Therefore:

H_3. Larger product assortment will lead to more purchase incidences.

Impulse Buying Tendency

The marketing literature describes impulse buying as an unplanned purchase made as a consequence of sudden, powerful and persistent urge to buy products immediately (Beatty and Ferrel, 1998; Rook, 1987). Impulse buying occurs after

shoppers experience spontaneous urges to buy with little or no reflection about the purchase decision and it is characterized by rapid decision making, subjective bias in favour of immediate possession and diminished regards for its consequences (Rook, 1987; Rook and Fisher, 1995). Impulse buying is also described as a form of hedonic rather than utilitarian shopping behaviour underpinned by several pervasive emotional motivations (Sharma, et al., 2010).

Consumers exhibiting higher impulse buying tendencies are likely to respond instantly to their buying impulses whereas those with weaker impulse buying tendencies are likely to temper their impulsive urges to buy products (Rook and Fisher, 1995; Sharma et al., 2010). Factors such as consumers' financial position, time pressure, social visibility and emotional states mediate the transition from felt urge to buy to actual impulse purchases (Beatty and Ferrel, 1998; Inman et al., 2009; Rook and Fisher, 1995). Impulse buying tendency is, therefore, an important psychological factor which merits consideration as potential antecedent to consumers' purchase incidence (Sharma et al., 2010). We expect higher impulse buying tendency to increase the likelihood of purchase incidence at retail trade shows (Abratt and Goodey, 1990; Beatty and Ferrel, 1998). Therefore:

H_4. Higher impulse buying tendency will be lead to more purchase incidences.

Perceived Time Pressure

Time pressure typifies consumers' perception of time required to perform planned shopping activities (Herrington and Capella, 1995; Inman et al., 2009; Parker et al., 1989). Perceived time pressure is a situational factor which shapes the level of information that consumers can process as well as the scope of their shopping activity (Herrington and Capella, 1995; Noda et al., 2007; Parker et al., 1989; Skallerud et al., 2009). We expect higher perceived time pressure to inhibit purchase

incidence in retail trade show environments. First, higher perceived time pressure can adversely affect consumers ability to retrieve from their memory relevant shopping information, such as shopping plans, product features, store settings and the like (Inman et al., 2009; Noda et al., 2007; Parker et al., 1989). With the ability to retrieve important shopping information potentially curtailed due to time pressure, failures to make intended purchases and deferrals of discretionary purchases raises (Herrington and Capella, 1995; Noda et al., 2007; Parker et al., 1989).

Second, higher perceived time pressure limits the scope of consumers shopping activities by shortening the amount of time that they can spend inside stores browsing merchandizes (Herrington and Capella, 1995; Skallerud et al., 2009). Time pressed consumers can only briefly stay inside stores with much focused shopping purposes and will do little, if any, discretionary in-store browsing (Beatty and Ferrel, 1998; Inman et al., 2009; Skallerud et al., 2009). This basically means time pressed consumers will be little exposed to in-store stimuli variables, lowering the likelihood of impulse and discretionary purchases (Beatty and Ferrel, 1998; Inman et al., 2009; Skallerud et al., 2009). Therefore:

H_5. Higher perceived time pressure will lead to fewer purchase incidences.

Methodology

Data Collection and Sample Attributes

To test the proposed hypotheses, data were collected from a sample of visitors drawn from a large retail trade show which took place at the Addis Ababa Exhibition Center. The retail trade show was carried out between August 27 and September 10 2010, two weeks prior to the Ethiopian New Year, which marks one of the busiest shopping periods in the country. The timing of the retail trade show was thus intended to take advantage of this busy shopping period. The organizers of the retail trade show reported that the event was visited by more than 262,000 people for the

two weeks it remained open. It was also reported that more than 300 retailers from different industries participated at the trade show. The population of interest to the current study was visitors who actually shopped products from the retail trade show. To reach to respondents, we utilized exit interviews whereby visitors who shopped products from the retail trade show were approached to check whether they were willing to participate in the survey. When visitors were found cooperative, they would be provided with questionnaire and asked to fill it out right away. Because visitors could purchase multiple products from multiple retailers, we asked them to answer the questionnaire thinking about the store in which they spent the largest sums of money. The reasoning was that visitors would be more mindful of the store environment where they spent large sums of money. This way, 95 workable questionnaires were collected between August 27 and September 10. Information about respondents profile is provided in table 3.1.

Measures, Reliability and Validity

Insofar as possible, measurement items were adapted from past studies. The items were, however, refined so that they could fit the retail trade show setting. All the scale items for the independent variables were scored using a five point Likert scale anchored by 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). Sales staff services was measured using three items (see table 3.2) sourced from Darian et al. (2005) and Sharma and Stafford (2000). Store atmosphere was measured using three items (see table 3.2) used in both Baker et al. (2002) and Seock (2009). Product assortment was measured with three items (see table 3.2) adapted from Skallerud et al. (2009) and Pan and Zinkhan (2006). Impulse buying tendency was measured using three items (see table 3.2) taken from Beatty and Ferrel (1998). Similarly, perceived time pressure was measured using three items (see table 3.2) taken from Beatty and Ferrel (1998). Finally, purchase incidence was measured using two items (i.e., actual

purchase quantity and actual amount of money spent) that were found in Babin and Darden (1996).

Table 3.1. Respondents Profile (N = 95)

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	53	56
Male	42	44
Age (in years)		
< 18	5	5
19 – 35	79	83
36 – 50	11	12
Annual income ($US)		
< 500	14	15
500 – 1,000	20	21
1,000 – 5,000	49	52
5,000 – 10,000	4	4
> 10,000	8	8
Education		
< high school	4	4
High school	13	14
College	68	71
Graduate school	10	11
Types of products purchased		
Apparel	33	35
Utensils and home appliances	26	27
Fashion accessories	23	24
Beauty and healthcare products	10	11
Consumer electronics products	3	3
Purchase information	Mean	St. Dev
Actual purchase quantity	1.7	1.0
Actual amount of money spent ($US)	18.1	31.3

Table 3.2. Assessment of Measurement Items

	Factor loadings (t-values)	Composite reliability	AVE
Sales staff services		.89	.72
The sales staff were knowledgeable	.94 (9.2)		
The sales staff were helpful	.91 (7.1)		
The sales staff were accessible	.70 (3.6)		
Store atmosphere		.70	.50
The store of the retailer was pleasant	.81 (3.2)		
The store of the retailer had appealing product presentation	.78 (3.1)		
The store of the retailer was spacious	.41 (1.0)		
Product assortment		.78	.54
The retailer had a wide range of products to choose from	.83 (3.4)		
The retailer had a wide range of alternative products	.71 (3.2)		
The retailer had a large stock of products	.64 (2.3)		
Impulse buying tendency		.70	.45
When shopping, I often experience sudden urges to buy a product	.88 (4.7)		
When shopping, I often buy a product that I do not need for immediate use	.55 (1.8)		
When shopping, I often buy a product that I had no prior plan to buy	.52 (1.5)		
Perceived time pressure		.76	.52
I had limited time available for shopping at the trade show	.85 (3.3)		
I spent less time shopping at the trade show	.78 (2.6)		
I am normally a busy person	.48 (1.3)		
Purchase incidence		.93	.87
Actual purchase quantity, natural log transformed	.94 (60.7)		
Actual amount of money spent, natural log transformed	.92 (47.5)		

The original measurement values were first subjected to natural-log transformation and then summed up to create a summated purchase incidence variable. The reason for the log transformation was to facilitate the summation of the two items which were originally measured using distinct units of measurement. Standardized factor loadings of the measurement items, scale reliability indicators and average variance extracted (AVE) are reported in table 3.2. Convergent validity was assessed by examining the t-values of the item loadings and their cross loadings. All but two of the t-values of the item loadings on their respective scales were significant while cross loadings were all < .4. In addition, the AVEs of all but two scales exceed .5. These two findings substantiate the convergent validity of the majority of the scales (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was examined using the recommendation of both Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Chin (1998) whereby the square root of the AVE of each scale was compared against each inter-scale correlation. The result of these comparisons supported discriminant validity as the square root of the AVE of each scale exceeded the correlation between any two scales. Descriptive statistics, correlations and square root of AVEs are reported in table 3.3.

Data Analysis

To estimate the model, we employed PLS path modeling using the SmartPLS software (Ringle et al., 2005). PLS is a prediction oriented structural equation modeling technique which is distribution free and works well with smaller data sets (Chin and Newsted, 1999; Henseler, 2010; Henseler et al., 2009; Tenenhaus et al. 2005). Evaluation of PLS structural models primarily relies on assessments of predictive power (i.e., R^2, which measures the percentage of variance explained in a dependent variable) and predictive relevance (i.e., Q^2, which measures how well observed values are reconstructed by parameter estimates). The current model explained 31% of the variance in the dependent variable and attained a Q^2 of .13.

These model fit indicators show that the data fitted the model well (Henseler et al., 2009).

Table 3.3. Descriptive Statistics and Scale Correlations

	Mean (St. Dev)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) Sales staff services	3.34 (1.1)	.85					
(2) Store atmosphere	3.36 (.9)	.25**	.71				
(3) Product assortment	3.11 (1.1)	.13	.21**	.73			
(4) Impulse buying tendency	2.92 (.98)	.12	.08	.19	.67		
(5) Perceived time pressure	3.27 (1.0)	.13	.23**	.26**	.27**	.72	
(6) Purchase incidence	5.10 (1.0)	.20**	.30**	.29**	.26**	-.23**	.93

Notes: **p < 0.05, correlations appear beneath the diagonal, square root of the AVE appear on the diagonal

Results and Discussion

The hypothesis that greater sales staff services at retail trade show will lead to more purchase incidences (H_1) was supported in a statistically significant way ($\beta = .31$, $t = 2.9$, $p < .05$). Also, the hypothesis that pleasant store atmosphere at retail trade show will lead to more purchase incidences (H_2) was confirmed ($\beta = .27$, $t = 2.4$, $p < .05$). H_3, which predicted that larger product assortment at retail trade show will lead to more purchase incidences, was supported ($\beta = .20$, $t = 2.1$, $p < .05$). Similarly, $H_{4,}$ which predicted that higher impulse buying tendency at retail trade show will lead to more purchase incidences, was supported ($\beta = .30$, $t = 2.5$, $p < .05$). Finally, the hypothesis that higher perceived time pressure at retail trade show will lead to fewer purchase incidences (H_5) was confirmed ($\beta = -.28$, $t = 2.0$, $p < .05$). These results are summarized in table 3.4.

Table 3.4. Effects of Retailer and Consumer Related Variables on Purchase Incidence.

		β -coefficients	t-values
Retailer related variables	Sales staff services	.31	2.9**
	Store atmosphere	.27	2.4**
	Product assortment	.20	2.1**
Consumer related variables	Impulse buying tendency	.30	2.5**
	Perceived time pressure	-.28	-2.0**
Model fit: R^2 = .31, Q^2 = .13			

Notes: **p < 0.05.

By juxtaposing the current findings with past research completed in mortar and brick stores, we can easily observe that store environmental cues which were demonstrated to have facilitated purchase incidences at mortar and brick stores played similar facilitative roles at retail trade show. For instance, consumers made more purchases from booth stands where superior staff service, pleasant atmosphere and large assortment were perceived; much like what consumers at mortar and brick stores would behave under similar circumstances (Baker et al., 2002; Pan and Zinkhan, 2006; Seock, 2009). Similarly, the spending effects of the consumer related variables of impulse buying tendency and perceived time pressure at retail trade show paralleled their reported effects in mortar and brick stores (e.g., Beatty and Ferrel, 1998; Skallerud et al., 2009).

It can thus be concluded – so far as the variables considered in this study are concerned – it can be concluded that the response patterns of retail trade show shoppers and that of mortar and brick shoppers are substantially overlapping (see, Baker et al., 2002; Pan and Zinkhan, 2006; Seock, 2009). This response patterns overlap is in turn suggestive of the fact that retail trade shows can be employed for

retailing purposes in ways that can compliment retailing activities at mortar and brick stores. That is, usual mortar and brick retailing activities can be extended to retail trade shows, with no substantial alterations in strategy, to produce positive sales outcomes. The only caveat retailers need to note is that retail trade shows are transient and hence they should be considered as supplementary retailing channels.

Because of their transiency, the immediate sales and promotion effects of retail trade shows tend to be short term as well. But this should not be taken to mean that retail trade shows do not have strategic performance implications. Retail trade shows can also engender strategic performance advantages by feeding primary retailing channels with long term carry over effects of brand awareness, product interest and sales leads. In sum, retail trade show platforms sustain various forms of retailing activities which we normally associate with mortar and brick stores such as selling, product promotion, advertising, in store services and even experiential events (Gopalakrishna et al., 1995; Kim et al., 2010; Tanner, 2002).

Managerial Implications

Based on the findings reported early on, here we highlight practical insights for companies interested in employing retail trade shows for retailing purposes. The finding concerning sales staff services indicate that staffing booth stands with people who are knowledgeable, helpful and accessible encouraged consumers to buy more. That staff knowledgeableness, helpfulness and accessibility are perceived to be important qualities by consumers is a testament to the fact that they expect quality interactions with booth staff. It is, therefore, important for companies to ensure that their booth stands are staffed by people who possess adequate knowledge of exhibited products as well as the entire business model. In addition, people staffing booth stands should be reminded of the need to be helpful and accessible to visitors.

The finding about store atmosphere suggests that pleasant store atmosphere promoted purchase incidence. Store atmosphere was conceptualized in terms of physical appearance, product presentation and space. This suggests that companies need to pay attention to each of these dimensions while constructing their booth stands. Booth stands can either be constructed in house or can be acquired from the market. Regardless of how they are acquired, booth stands need to be designed in an eye catching and physically attractive way. Attention should also be paid to ensure that products are presented appealingly. Booth stands need to be spacious enough to accommodate incoming visitors and allow face to face interactions. It is difficult to draw precise structural specifications of what an ideal booth stand should look like. Ultimately, managers need to experiment with different booth design and product display options until they find the one that best serves their needs.

With respect to product assortment, it emerged that consumers purchased more from booth stands where large assortments were supplied. Product assortment in the context of the current study was conceptualized as the range of alternative products supplied by retailers. Therefore, our finding about product assortment suggests that, to make more sales, retailers should supply more alternatives in the same product category. It is hard to tell from our finding exactly how many alternative products retailers should present at their booth stands. Supplying very large set of alternatives may create physical clutter and overwhelm consumers with too many choice options. Similarly, supplying very small set of alternatives may suggest that the retailer lacks breadth in its product range. How many alternative products should be presented at retail trade shows is a decision that should be made by each retailer depending on its individual circumstances.

Pertaining to the effects of the consumer related variables on purchase incidence, we found that impulse buying tendency led to more purchase incidences whereas perceived time pressure led to fewer purchase incidences. It is clear that retailers

exercise little control over the consumer related variables as these are inherent to the consumers themselves. Nonetheless, certain tactics can still be employed to achieve good retail outcomes. For instance, retailers can improve impulse sales at retail trade shows by, among others, diversifying their assortments and placing complimentary items around products that are on promotion. For time pressed consumers, retailers need to make the shopping activity efficient by presenting products in a clear and accessible way and by making the booth staff easily available.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study suffers from some methodological limitations that are worth mentioning. The first limitation relates to measurement. For instance, the AVE of the impulse buying tendency scale is .45 which is below the cut off value of .5 suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981) while the AVE of the store atmosphere scale is just .5. These low AVE values undermine the convergent validity of the two scales. In addition, two measurement items loaded somewhat poorly on their respective scales, i.e., *the store of the retailer was spacious* and *I am normally a busy person*. Readers need to be aware of these limitations while interpreting the findings. The low AVE values and the poor factor loadings point to the need for developing better items to measure the scales affected by these problems.

The second limitation relates to the data set. More precisely, we relied on data acquired from a relatively small number of shoppers who were drawn from a single retail trade show. In addition, the respondents were not selected randomly. As a result, our sample can only be considered as a crude representation of the population. Because of this, it is problematic to try to generalize the findings reported here to broader retail trade show contexts. Therefore, additional research efforts involving large number of consumers sampled from various retail trade show

contexts are required to validate and extend the model proposed here to other types of retail trade shows.

Another potentially productive research avenue will be to explore sales and patronage effects carried over from retail trade shows to primary retailing channels. Because retail trade shows facilitate introducing multichannel retailing approaches by making products available through more than one channel (i.e., the primary channel and the retail trade show), the issue of carryover effects generated from retail trade show will need to be addressed in future studies. In addition, the validation of more extensive set of antecedent variables to consumers' shopping behavior at retail trade shows should be afforded further research attention. For example, on top of the variables that we have considered, retailers pricing strategies and promotional activities can affect shopping behavior. Consumer related variables such as shopping value orientation (hedonic versus utilitarian) and risk aversion tendency can also influence shopping behavior.

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