

Measuring Impact Of Retail Store Layout On Consumer Buying Behavior – An Investigation Review

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ABSTRACT

Retailing in India is growing at a very fast rate. Organized retail sector has been able to attract Indian consumers and has drawn them into retail stores in huge numbers. Retailers are offering newer and newer services to provide unique shopping experiences to the consumers. However, whether consumers are able to perceive newer service dimensions in a positive way or not, has still remained unanswered. Retail Store layout is an important factor affecting consumer behavior and a critical factor that creates store image. A well designed store layout has a great influence on in-store movement patterns, shopping experience, buying behavior and operational efficiency of store. When a consumer feels dissatisfied concerning these elements he/she may move on to another store that offers these elements better. This article attempts to find the relationship between retail store layout and consumer's buying behavior through in-depth investigation of literature available. The article also tries to identify research gap for the said investigation, so that concrete inference can be drawn for future studies in this context.

Keywords: Hypermarkets/Supermarket, Retail Store layout, Store Image, Consumer Buying Behavior

1. INTRODUCTION

Retailing is a business activity that adds value to the products and services sold to customers. There is misperception among people that retailing involves only sale of products in store, but retailing is also about selling services (Levy Michael et. al. 2010). A retailer sale good to final consumer and deals with variety of product ranging from cars to apparel, from food to movies and so on. The retailer is considered to be the last stage in distribution process of goods and services (Berman Berry et. al. 2011). A retailer, besides selling goods and services to consumer performs variety of other important function which is considered to be important in distribution. These functions include assortment of products and services, breaking bulk, inventory management and providing value added services to consumers (Levy Michael et. al. 2010).

Retailers communicate with both consumers and manufacturer. They also provide support to small manufacturer by transporting, sorting, advertising and completing transactions with customers. Due to this reasons manufacturer prefer to sell their goods and services through retailers. Retail firms may be independently owned, chain owned, franchisee operated, leased and consumer owned (Berman Berry et. al. 2011).

Independently owned retail firm: It is one retail unit with no paid workers also called Kirana stores in India. The chief characteristic of such retail format is: it is easy to enter into such business due to low capital requirements and no/simple licensing provisions. It also gives flexibility for location decisions. The major drawbacks of such retail firm are less bargaining power compared to manufacturer, financial constraints, lack of technological advancement etc. (Berman Berry et. al. 2011).

Retail Chain: Chain retail handles more than one outlets or store units under common ownership. The

decisions making and purchasing process is generally centralized or coordinated. Main advantage of such chain is their bargaining power against suppliers, cost efficiency, technological advancement and long run planning. While major disadvantages includes limited flexibilities, more capital investment complex managerial control, delays in decisions making because of communication problems etc. (Berman Berry et. al. 2011).

Franchisee operated retail firm: Franchising is a contractual agreement between a franchisor and a retail franchisee, which allows the franchisee to conduct business under an established name and according to a given pattern of business. Here a franchisee pays initial fee and a monthly percentage of gross sales to franchisor. Small business benefits by franchising as they become part of a large chain type retail firm. Some of the benefits of franchisee are relatively small capital investment, acquired goodwill because of well-known names, standard operating procedures and management skills, co-operative marketing efforts and low cost purchasing. However, major limitations of franchising are oversaturation of franchising in one geographical area, locking up into a contract requiring purchases from certain vendors, short lives, royalties, constrained decision making etc. (Berman Berry et. al. 2011).

Leased Department: A leased department is a department in a retail store-usually a department, discount or specialty store-that is rented to an outside party. Such arrangement is used by store based retailers who deals with shoe, jewelry, cosmetics, watch etc. The benefits of such arrangement are enlarged market because of one stop customer shopping, reduced store costs, less human resource requirement etc and the pitfalls includes conflict with leased department, adverse effect on store's image due to lessees (Berman Berry et. al. 2011).

Consumer Cooperative: A consumer cooperative is a retail firm owned by its customer members. A group of customer invests, elects officers, manages operations and shares the profit. The reason for existence of such consumer cooperatives are: some consumers believe that they can operate stores better than traditional retailer, they think that existing retailers are not able to provide healthful, environmentally safe products and they also believe that traditional retailer make excessive profit and they can sell merchandise at lower price. (Berman Berry et. al. 2011).

Types of Retailers/ Retail formats

Retailer can either be classified as Food-oriented or General Merchandise retailer (Berman Berry et. al. 2011). A food retailer is a firm that sells grocery items and day-to-day need items and General merchandise stores are defined as retail stores that sell a number of lines, such as dry goods, apparel and accessories, furniture and home furnishings, small wares, hardware, and food.

A food retailer can further be sub-classified into Supermarkets, Supercenters, Warehouse clubs, Combination store/Hypermarket, Convenience store. (Berman Berry et. al. 2011).

Supermarkets: A conventional supermarket is a self-service food store offering groceries, meat and produce, with limited sales of nonfood items, such as health and beauty products and general merchandise (Levy Michael et. al. 2010). It is a departmentalized food store with variety of food and related products. The chief characteristics of such markets are its high inventory turnover, low profit margin (Berman Berry et. al. 2011). Supermarkets emphasizes on fresh perishables, targeting health conscious and ethnic consumers, better in-store experience and offering more private label brands Supermarket tries to differentiate by creating an enjoyable shopping experience through store ambiance and customer services (Levy Michael et. al. 2010).

Supercenters: It is the fastest growing retail category and fall in the category of large stores (1, 50,000-2,20,000 square feet) which combines a supermarket with a full-line discount store. They offer one-stop shopping experience to customers, due to this customers are ready to go far to shop at these stores. Impulse buying for general merchandise can be seen in such stores. Even general merchandise are sold at higher margin, due to which supercenter sells food items at lowest price. The only limitation is customer feels inconvenient to shop from such store as long time is required to find the items they need to buy (Levy Michael et. al. 2010). In India, supercenters are hardly seen. One example of such super center is 'Big Bazaar Supercenter' operated by Future group at Bangalore (Berman Berry et. al. 2011).

Warehouse clubs: Warehouse club often called warehouse store is a food based retailer that offers less number of food items (Berman Berry et. al. 2011) and little services at lower prices to consumers and small businesses (Levy Michael et. al. 2010). The main focus of such retailers is on limited popular brands, with

cut-case display and location in secondary sites (Berman Berry et. al. 2011). Warehouse clubs are large in size (1,00,000-1,50,000 square feet) and generally they are located in low rent areas. There is no element of attractive ambiance in warehouse store. They purchase merchandise opportunistically (Levy Michael et. al. 2010). Many time there is situation of out of stock of many brands due to which consumers do not prefer such store to shop from (Berman Berry et. al. 2011).

Hypermarket/Combination store: It is an unique combination of supermarket and general merchandise store. The format began in late in 1960s and early 1970s. They are large in size (30,000-1,00,000 square feet or sometimes even more) and enjoys operating efficiency and cost savings (Berman Berry et. al. 2011). They keep less SKUs compared to supercenters and stocks items ranging from groceries, hardware, sports equipments, furniture, appliances, computers and electronics. In one sense they are much similar to supercenters, but they differ in a sense that a hypermarket carry more proportion of food item than supercenters while supercenter emphasizes on non-food items (Levy Michael et. al. 2010).

Convenience Store: A convenience store is a well-located, food-oriented retailer that is open for long hours and carries moderate number of items. They are very small compared to a supermarket (2,000-3,000 square feet) (Berman Berry et. al. 2011). They offer quick purchase to consumer by small store size and less waiting at checkout line. Due to smaller size they receive delivery of inventory every day (Levy Michael et. al. 2010).

There is another category in retail format that is General Merchandise Retailer. General Merchandise Retailer can further be sub-divided into Department stores, Full-line discount store, Specialty stores, Drugstores, Category specialists and off-price retailers (Levy Michael et. al. 2010).

Department Stores: A department store offers a broad variety and deep assortment to consumers. They focus on customer service and the stores are divided into separate departments for displaying merchandise. They attract customers by pleasing ambience, focused services and wide assortment under one roof. The performance of department store is related with the brands they carry. To differentiate their offering they try to have exclusive tie ups with recognized brands. They also emphasize on developing their own private labels. (Levy Michael et. al. 2010). Customer services of department stores range from sales help to credit to delivery and so forth to high level (Berman Berry et. al. 2011).

Full-line Discount Store: It is a retailer that offers a broad variety of merchandise with limited services and lower prices. They sell both private labels and national brands, but these brands are less fashion oriented. They experience intense competition with specialty stores (Levy Michael et. al. 2010). Their focus is on middle-class and lower middle-class shoppers looking for good value. They offer popular brands of average to good quality merchandise at lower prices. Full-line discount stores often prefer to locate in small town because of less competition prevailing there in that particular segment. (Berman Berry et. al. 2011).

Specialty Stores: A specialty stores focuses on selling one good with deep assortment in the chosen category. Such stores offers any one of most popular categories like apparel, personal care, home furnishings, electronics, toys, books, jewelry, sporting goods etc. consumers prefer such format because of variety of choices within the given category and better customer services. A specialty store concentrates either on one category of product or a segment of customers or a combination of both of them (Berman Berry et. al. 2011). The major problem with such store is as they deal with specific market segment there is high level of vulnerability in business because of shifting consumer's taste and preferences. (Levy Michael et. al. 2010).

Drug Stores: Such retail stores concentrate on health and personal grooming related products. The major sales and considerable profit comprises from pharmaceuticals sales. Drug stores tries to utilize pharmacist services on a more personalized manner. In India, drug retail market is of size ` 32,000 crore. Organized pharmacy retail is about 3-4% of total market size, is expected to grow at 25% per year (Levy Michael et. al. 2010).

Category specialists: This format is a big box discount store that offer narrow but deep assortment of merchandise. They are also considered as discount specialty stores. Most of them follow self-service approach for customers. As they offer deep assortment in one category at low prices they are often called Category Killers. They face lot of competition from department stores and discount stores, this leads them to cut price, which results in reduction in cost through operating efficiency. (Levy Michael et. al. 2010).

Off-Price Retailers: They offer inconsistent assortment of brand name merchandise at low price. Most of

products are purchased opportunistically from producers or other retailers. The products are generally odd in size and unpopular in colors and styles. The product is purchased at 20-25% of normal wholesale price. They can purchase product at low price but cannot expect advertising allowances, return goods handling or delayed payment services from suppliers. A factory outlet is one of the example of off-price retail store. Such outlets are owned by the producer and found more in malls. (Levy Michael et. al. 2010).

Beside above discussed formats, retail stores can non-conventionally be classified into Non-Store retail store. Some of the examples of Non-store retail stores are Electronic retailer, Direct selling retailer, Television Home Shopping, Vending Machine Retailing etc. (Levy Michael et. al. 2010).

Retailing in India

Indian retail one of the fastest growing markets in the world due to economic growth. Retail market in India is projected to grow from an estimated US\$ 672 billion in 2017 to US\$ 1,200 billion in 2021. Retail industry reached to US\$ 950 billion in 2018 and is expected to reach US\$ 1.1 trillion by 2020. (India Brand Equity Foundation Report August 2020)

In India, Retailing is the basic foundation for economy and accounts for 14 to 15% of its GDP (ASA & A Associates, 2012). Indian retail industry is the second largest employer after agriculture employing more than 35 million people (Big Strategic Management Consultants, 2012). Conventionally Indian retail sector is dominated by owner manned small shops that accounts for 90% of total retail stores. In 2010, modern retail formats like supermarkets, hypermarkets, convenience stores etc. accounted only for 4% of total number of retail stores in India and they were present only in larger urban areas (ASA & A Associates, 2012).

Indian retail industry is divided into Organized retailing and Unorganized retailing. Organized retail - Organised traders/retailers, who are licensed for trading activities and registered to pay taxes to the government and Unorganized retail – It consists of unauthorized small shops - conventional Kirana shops, general stores, corner shops among various other small retail outlets - but remain as the radiating force of Indian retail industry. Competitive landscape of Indian organized retailing is created by Departmental Stores, Hypermarkets, Supermarkets, Convenience stores and Cash & Carry stores. The major player in the field are Pantaloons, Lifestyle, Reliance, Big Bazaar, D-Mart, Vijay Sales, Trent etc. In FY19, traditional retail, organised retail and E-commerce segments accounted for 88 per cent, 9 per cent and 3 per cent of the market, respectively. The organised retail market in India is growing at a CAGR of 20-25 per cent per year. (India Brand Equity Foundation Report August 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Number of researchers has done exploratory as well as descriptive research on finding impact of store layout on consumer buying behavior.

Danovan & Rossiter (1982) found that store layout has impact on consumer's buying behavior, especially store environment influence consumer's willingness to buy. They also suggested that if retailers control number of employees, and their behavior modified in positive manner, will create arousing environment. However, the study was conducted not specifically for super/hyper market formats.

In their study "An experimental approach to making retail store Environmental Decision" (1992), Julie Baker, Michael Levy and Dhruv Grewal explored that ambience of retail store creates arousal and pleasure among consumer and ultimately results in increased willingness to buy.

Some empirical studies of store layout (Groepel-Klien (2001), Groosbart & Rammohan (1981), Sommer & Aitkens (1982)) have proved that there is significant correlation between store layout and shopping behavior.

The research of Levy & Weitz (1995) says that retailers acknowledge the importance of store environment as a tool for market differentiation. The study was more generalized and overruled the type of retail format.

According to Elaine Sherman, Anil Mathur and Ruth Belk Smith (1997) the environment in the store and the emotional state of consumers can be the major factors of purchase behavior reflected the amount of money spent, time spent in the store, and the number of items purchased in the store. The study was conducted on departmental store, discount stores and fashion retail stores.

According to McGoldrick, 1990; and Marsh 1999, as a means of differentiating itself with others, retailers through store atmospheric elements such as flat screen videos of graphics, music, smells, and lighting excite

the senses of shoppers.

Graeme Baldwin (1998), in his research found that there is no strong relationship between complexity of store layout and patronage turnover of the store but that is based on hypothesis of familiarity of store due to frequent visits by consumers. The study was confronted only to fashion retail stores so the findings of the study has a question of reliability in case of supermarket/hypermarket format.

The study on *The Effects Of Store Environment On Shopping Behaviors: A Critical Review* (2001) by Shun Yin Lam states that ambience and design condition creates prime image of store in the mind of customer and they tend to interact more with employees and spend more time in store. However, the study was more generalized in nature and overruling any specific retail format.

Mihic Mirela (2004) in her research paper *Croatian Supermarket Shoppers' Preferences In Terms Of Store Design And Their Implications On Retailers* found that that the shoppers give highest importance to cleanliness and tidiness of store, visibility of price tags, opportunity to freely browse and tidiness as well as good layout of store. The study especially established a clear relationship between store layout and buying behavior with specific reference to supermarkets.

In one of the doctoral research titled “The effects of store physical environment on perceived crowding and shopping behavior”, that was conducted in Taipei, Taiwan with specific reference to hypermarket, Jiunn-Ger Li (May 2004) concluded that spatial crowding created because of store layout creates negative feelings and less satisfaction and will result in adverse effect on buying behavior.

A case study written by Seyed Mohamoud Aghazadeh (2005) titled “Layout strategies for retail operations”, concluded that there are lot of opportunities for supermarket retailers if they improve their store layout as it has a positive impact on consumer buying intentions.

The research done by Sandra Liu, Robert Melara and Raj Arangarasan (2007) stated that store environment has impact on shopping motivation and product familiarity. In fact, it can create tendency to make unplanned purchases. However, the study did not focus on supermarket/hypermarket format only. This gives further scope of study for identifying relationship between consumer buying behavior and store layout for supermarket and hypermarket.

The study done by Prokopolis Theordordis and Kalliopi Chatzipanagiotou (January 2008) identified that in Greece, consumers are highly influenced by store environment that constitutes store layout with specific reference to supermarkets.

In June 2008, Sandra Liu, Robert Melara and Francesco Massara in their research of signal detection theory that propounds store layouts identified that consumer's can locate the product easily through effective supermarket layout and they experience convenient shopping.

The study done by Adrea Groeppel-Klien and Benedikt Bartmann (2008) found that store layout can induce consumer to spend more money and they perceive value for their money. Beside this they found that spatial information (knowledge of location of product) can be a key success factor for retailing success as it creates positive image of store in shopper's mind.

In his research project “Optimal grocery store layout to maximize impulsive item revenue”, Shrideep Sathale (February 2009), identified that right and visible placement of item within a store which is a part of store layout has contributing impact on impulse buying.

Study of Tshepo Peter Tlapana (August, 2009) suggests that store layout is a critical success factor for retailer; it gives competitive advantage by creating and adding customer value.

However, in his research thesis titled “The roles of store attributes in consumer-retailer relationship building with reference to department stores” Chiu-Han Wang (August 2009) found that there is no significant impact of store environment on consumer-retailer relationship building, which ultimately lead to relationship loyalty.

In the research conducted by Miao-Que Lin and Yi-Fang Chiang titled “The influence of store environment on perceived experimental Value and Behavior Intention” (October 2009) it was found that ambient cues and design cues of the store has significant impact on emotion of consumer which is reflected in their behavior intentions.

L W Turley and Jeans Charles in their research paper (February 2010) titled Linking Retail Strategy, Atmospheric Design and Shopping Behaviour, explored that , the surroundings in the retail store created by managers can be a significant strategic variable. The article stated that retail managers shall keep store environment in mind before creating a store design as the retail environment can bring out a wide range of shopping behavior from consumers.

In their research paper ‘Key retail store attributes determining consumer’s perception: An empirical study of consumers of retail store located in Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Riteshkumar Dalwadi, Harischandra Singh Rathod and Atul Patel (April 2010) found that comfort and elegance in the store which ultimately is created because of effective layout, significantly influence consumers and consumers have positive perception towards the store.

In their research En-Chi Chang and Bo Luan (July 2010) found that out of many hypermarket store attributes like low price, product assortment, service attitude, convenient location, store layout etc. that are responsible for creating positive store image store layout is also one of the significant store attribute.

In the study The Effect Of Store Environment On Consumer Evaluations And Behavior Toward Single-Brand Apparel Retailers (August 2010) Archana Kumar found that store design elements were found to have significant effect on buying behavior toward single-brand apparel retail store. This study suggested that single-brand apparel retailers focus on improving consumer perceptions toward social and ambient cues.

The findings of the study conducted by Hemraj Verma and Dr. Pankaj Madan (January, 2011) suggested that Stores Overall Visual Appeal (representing Store displays carrying Information, Store Layout, Display of cloths, Store's outside and inside appearance) too has been found to have a sizable impact on Store’s Image.

Thomas J. (2011) in his research article On Store Design and Consumer Motivation: Spatial Control and Arousal in the Retail Context, found that motivation of an individual can interact with surrounding factors. He found in his study that task-oriented buyer prefers shopping in bigger stores, while leisure seeking buyers prefer high-exciting store environment. These findings concluded that store managers can increase excitement level within the store by ambient store layout elements, such as colored illumination, for shoppers who are recreation oriented and provide spacious environments to tap task-oriented shoppers.

In February 2012, in their research paper Rodney Runyan, Jung-Hwan Kim and Julie Baker ‘The mall as bazaar: How kiosks influence consumer shopping behavior’ found that kiosks in the stores can result in consumers' emotional reaction and shopping behavior towards the mall however, absence of has no negative impact on consumers' emotional reaction and shopping behavior.

In their research paper titled “Impact of store environment on impulse buying behavior” (April 2012), Geetha Mohan, Bharahwaj Sivakumaran and Piyush Sharma found that store environment that includes store layout attributes can drive impulse buying through positive effect.

In one of the literature review article “Store atmosphere: Conceptual Issues and it’s impact on shopping behavior”, Meda Roxana, Jaafar EL-MURAD and Ioan PLAIAS (2012) found that there is significant impact of store atmosphere which includes store layout, on consumer buying behavior. They studied this relationship through SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model.

Paurav Shukla and Barry Babin (March 2013), in one of their research paper found that there is significant relationship between store ambience and utilitarian shopping value, which ultimately lead to store switching.

Lizhu Davis (2013) in his research paper “Let us go shopping: exploring northwest Chinese consumer’s shopping experiences” concluded that retail store attributes like store design, store environment and customer services have a significant impact on shopping behavior of northwest Chinese consumers.

Mohammed Odeh and H. Abu-Rehman (May 2014) in their research paper “The impact of Jordanian Shopping Mall’s physical surrounding on consumer buying behavior: Field study” found that when consumer pays more attention to the physical surroundings, it will be reflected in their buying behavior through unplanned shopping, spending more time and they feel satisfied.

In their study “Visual Merchandising in retailing: influencing consumer buying behavior towards apparel with specific reference to Pune city in India” (May 2014), Prashant Vilas Chaudhary and Rahul Jadhav

found that visual merchandising techniques like signage, fittings, lighting and space organization have considerable impact on buying behavior of consumers.

In 2014, Maria Pecoraro and Outi Uusitalo, in their research found that store layout can establish social relationship with consumer which is found rather more in conventional store than supermarkets.

Ahmed Alwadhhi and So-Yeon Yoon (June 2016) in their research paper titled Shopping Behavioral Intentions Contributed by Store Layout and Perceived Crowding: An Exploratory Study Using Computer Walk-Through Simulation found that there is a significant mediating role of perceived crowding on the relationship between the store layout and shopping intentions. The findings confirmed that there is critical effect of store layout on perceived crowding which ultimately can influence customers' buying intentions.

A research paper The effects of retail store characteristics on in-store leisure shopping experience (October 2017) by Amalia Triantafillidou, George Siomkos and Eirini Papafilippaki explored that not all store characteristics impact the various dimensions of buying experience. Product quality and in-store music were found to be the most important in-store characteristics that influenced the shopping experience dimensions. Other important store characteristics that come into view were store layout and ambient scent.

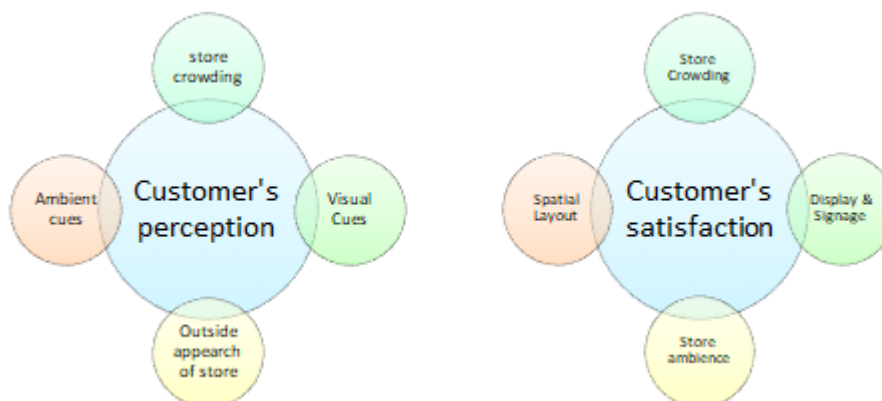
In the research article titled Store artification and retail performance (March 2019), Ana Vukadin, Jean-François Lemoine & Olivier Badot found that store ambiance and design may result in increased store apparent delineation, perceived value of the offering, customer satisfaction, and enhances store and product image. However, it may not affect store commercial performance.

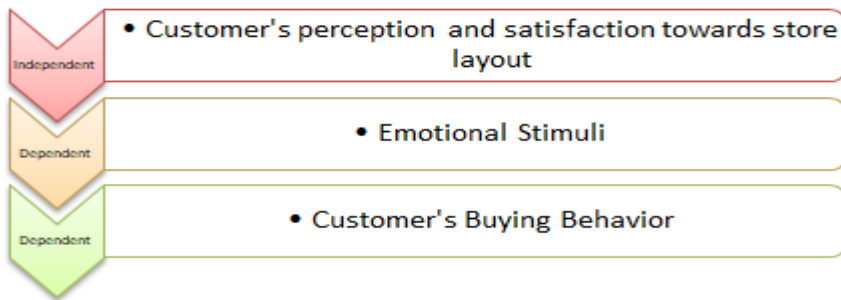
The article by Hugues Audouard on “Store Planning: art, science of popular myth”, says that product categorization and visibility of products outside the store increases footfalls in the entry.

Research Gap

In competitive business environment, it is utmost important for a retailer to look into opportunities where there is scope to motivate and delight consumers by innovative and consumer oriented business practices, that ultimately can result in positive shopping behavior reflected by consumers. Majority of past and current research have tried to identify the relationship of store layout and shopping behavior, and significantly it has been found positive relationship between them. However, the major studies are done with reference to foreign countries retail environment and specifically limited to grocery stores, convenience stores, fashion stores and discount stores only, the comprehensive focus on supermarket and hypermarket was missing in foreign studies. Apart from this very less study has been conducted on measuring impact of store layout on consumer buying behavior with reference to supermarkets and hypermarkets in Indian context and noticeably in Gujarat state. This gives scope for this study in India as far as supermarket and hypermarket retail format is concerned. As India is also emerging as a biggest retail market, it is the call of time to identify whether supermarket/hypermarket's layout has any impact on buying behavior of consumer or not.

Conceptual Framework based on Investigation





CONCLUSION

It is ultimate goal of a retailer to attract maximum consumer to the store in commercial point of view, on the other hand they are concerned that the consumer has positive perception about the store offerings. Layout of store can contribute in creating positive perception among consumers, which ultimately will benefit the retailers and the consumers as well. Through extensive literature review it has been found that irrespective of the type of retail format and irrespective of geographical location, there is a strong and positive relationship between retail store layout and the shopping behavior reflected by the consumers. So the study will try to explore the relationship between store layout and consumer's buying behavior in Indian context, especially with reference to Gujarat state consumers. The study will be conducted for supermarket and hypermarket retail format in Gujarat state.

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