

The effect of ambient scent on time spent in retail stores

The mediating role of consumers' shopping mood

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Introduction

Because of the changing retail environment, where consumers want a sensory experience while shopping, retailers and marketers are interested in the use of sensory cues.

→ **Ambient scent** = most challenging sensory cue:

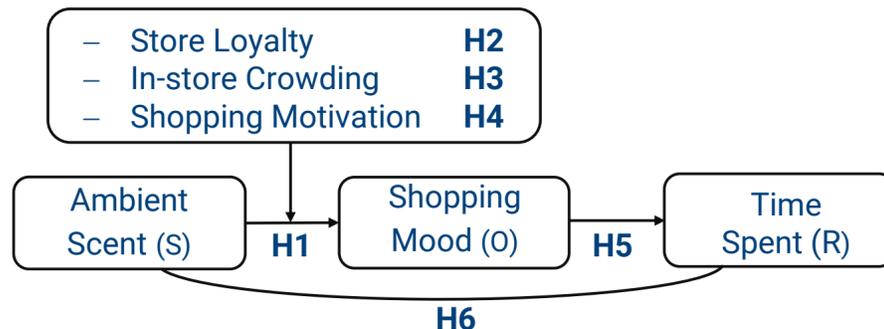
- Sense of smell = strongest
- Difficult to observe and describe

Previous research = based on **S-O-R paradigm**

= stating that ambient scent affects consumers' responses through their mood state while shopping
 In extant literature, there is a gap considering:

- Effect on actual shopping behaviors
- Field studies (instead of lab experiments)

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Aim

I aimed to examine whether the presence of an **ambient scent increases the time spent** in store, and if this relation was **mediated by shopping mood (+)**.

Three **moderators** were considered that could possibly alter the effect of ambient scent on the shopping mood of the consumer:

Store loyalty (-), In-store crowding (-), and Hedonic shopping motivation (+)

→ This is worth studying because of the existing inconsistencies about mediating role of mood

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Data collection & method

- In-store **field** study
- Two weeks: **Control versus scented store**
 → N = 125 (C = 65; S = 60)
- Vanilla scent = **congruent** with store (coffee – and lunch bar)
- Survey
- Measures:
 - Shopping mood (PA(D); 7-point semantic differential scale; 12 items)
 - Store loyalty (7-point Likert scale; 3 items)
 - In-store crowding (7-point Likert scale; 4 items)
 - Shopping motivation (7-point semantic differential scale; 8 items)
 - Time spent (1 item; observed)
- Hypotheses tested using **regression analyses**, + Baron & Kenny method for mediating effect (SPSS)
- Covariates: age, gender, eat/drink/shop, morning/lunch/afternoon & money spent

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Key results

- Ambient scent → Shopping mood (H1) **X**
- No moderating effects of store loyalty, in-store crowding and hedonic shopping motivation on the relation: scent → mood (H2, H3, H4) **X**
- Shopping mood → Time spent (H5a) **X**
- Mediating role of mood (H5b) **✓**
- Ambient scent → Time spent (H6) **✓**

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	Time spent in store		Shopping Mood	
	β	SE	β	SE
Step 1				
Ambient scent	12.702*	5.160	2.537*	1.185
Step 2				
Ambient scent	18.494***	5.113		
Step 3				
Mood	.779	.396		
Step 4				
Ambient scent	17.131**	5.188		
Mood	.537	.388		

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

H6 was tested using a multiple regression analysis

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Conclusions

- Direct effect (H6) = important for retailers/shop-owners
- Mediating role of mood rather **ambiguous**, since adding moderating variables fades out the effect of ambient scent on mood
- Covariates: 'Eating' was a significant variable but can be associated logically to the time spent in store (time: eat > drink/shop)

Further research:

- Small local shop (~hospitality industry): **Generalizable?**
- Isolated one ambient factor/sensory cue: **Combination?**

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References

Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The Moderator-Mediator Variable Distinction in Social Psychological Research: Conceptual, Strategic, and Statistical Considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 1173–1182.

Leenders, M. A. A. M., Smidts, A., & Haji, A. E. (2016). Ambient scent as a mood inducer in supermarkets: The role of scent intensity and time-pressure of shoppers. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*

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