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Visual Merchandising to the Maxx: Balancing Calm and Chaos in a Discount Department Store.

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Abstract
The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of the visual merchandiser at a UK (United Kingdom) discount department store and how they create calm out of chaos. By focusing on bath, body and homewares products, the paper will demonstrate how the visual merchandiser makes important product display decisions with the customer in mind. The retailer is TK Maxx, well known for its treasure-hunting shopping experience and mantra of '*value, volume and variety*,' which means they have a broad assortment of products, often with small quantities of each. Shelf display and presentation techniques based on size, colour, shape, and type, are implemented by the visual merchandiser, to contribute to retail atmospherics which promote calm out of potential chaos. This avoids sensory overload and provides an experience which does not overwhelm and where shoppers are likely to feel calm and to buy.

Keywords: Retail Experience. Visual Merchandising. Product Display. Department Stores. Physical Retail. Retail Atmospherics.

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1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the placement and positioning of products in the retail environment and how this contributes to perceptions of calm or chaos. As expressed by Basu et al (2022:12) there is a need for "greater clarity on treating visual merchandising (VM) as a product-driven display function, as opposed to store atmosphere as a store-wide display function." Furthermore, despite its prominence in retail experience and marketing today (Wu et al 2015), visual merchandising is a neglected area in the academic literature. Most existing papers focus on two areas: the atmospherics of the sensory retail environment, and the responses of consumers to in-store stimuli and marketing messages (Basu et al 2022). Past research has adopted a consumer perspective, to analyse how VM influences the attention, interest, desire, and action (Bastow-Shoop et al 1991), of shoppers, rather than what visual merchandisers do.

When searching for 'visual merchandising' literature on Google Scholar, the first ten papers listed are about the influence of visual merchandising on consumers' choices (Wanninnayake 2007), buying behaviour (Thomas et al 2018) and willingness to purchase (Mondol et al 2021). There is minimal research on specific product presentation techniques. Furthermore, scant literature has been identified which sheds light on the discount sector, specifically the discount department store. Home, bath, and body products are also neglected, with fashion and apparel dominating VM academic research (Jang et al., 2018, Park et al 2015), with occasional mention of food (Kpossa and Lick 2020).

By focusing on TK Maxx as an illustrative case to demonstrate how the visual merchandiser creates calm out of chaos, this paper addresses these gaps. TK Maxx is known as a maximalist Aladdin's cave where serendipity and excitement rule. Their loyalty scheme is called 'Treasure' and their state their "*rapidly changing assortments create the treasure hunt experience that our customers love*" (TKMaxx.com 2023). As an off-price retailer, TK Maxx offers an ever-changing selection of merchandise at 60% off the price. This includes clothing, accessories, beauty, gifts, home, bath, and body. TK Maxx emphasise the diversity of their ranges and their wide assortment; *'Our buyers choose many different colours, styles and fabrics so there is always a great choice for you.'* According to their website, the stores are flexible because they do not have walls between departments, so they can easily expand and contract merchandise categories in response to the newest trends and changing customers' tastes (TKMaxx.com 2023).

This article is written from the perspective of two passionate visual merchandisers; one who creates innovative educational programmes in retail marketing and VM at Leeds Business School at Leeds Beckett University, and another who currently studies at the Business School and works at TK Maxx, as a visual merchandiser.

1.1 Definition of VM

Visual merchandising (VM) is defined as the strategies and techniques used in physical retail environments, which include floor layout, store design, windows, mannequins, lighting, product co-ordination and atmospherics, all of which act as 'silent selling' (Bell and Ternus, 2017). Dating back to the earliest department stores of the 1800s (Morgan 2016), VM is used to communicate product concepts in order to achieve sales (Pegler 2001), gather positive consumer responses (Kotler, 1973), gain loyalty, and affirm brand image (Bailey and Baker 2014). But it was only in the late 1990s (Lea-Greenwood 1998), that the term 'Visual Merchandising' replaced what was previously called 'display'. The term now encapsulates not only the visual sense but also the entire atmosphere of the store (Berman and Evans 2001; Morgan 2016), including the olfactory, haptic, aural, and even gustatory senses. The term visual merchandising is evolving again today, to describe the design and layout of online retail environments, as well as bricks and mortar (Jang et al 2018). What all definitions have in common, is that VM is seen as a marketing stimulus to influence customers' satisfaction and hence increase sales (Basu et al 2022).

The framework below is adapted from Basu et al (2022) and shows the behavioural psychology model of stimulus-organism-response in the context of visual merchandising. This demonstrates that visual merchandising is one of the stimuli on the consumer, which results in a behavioural response.

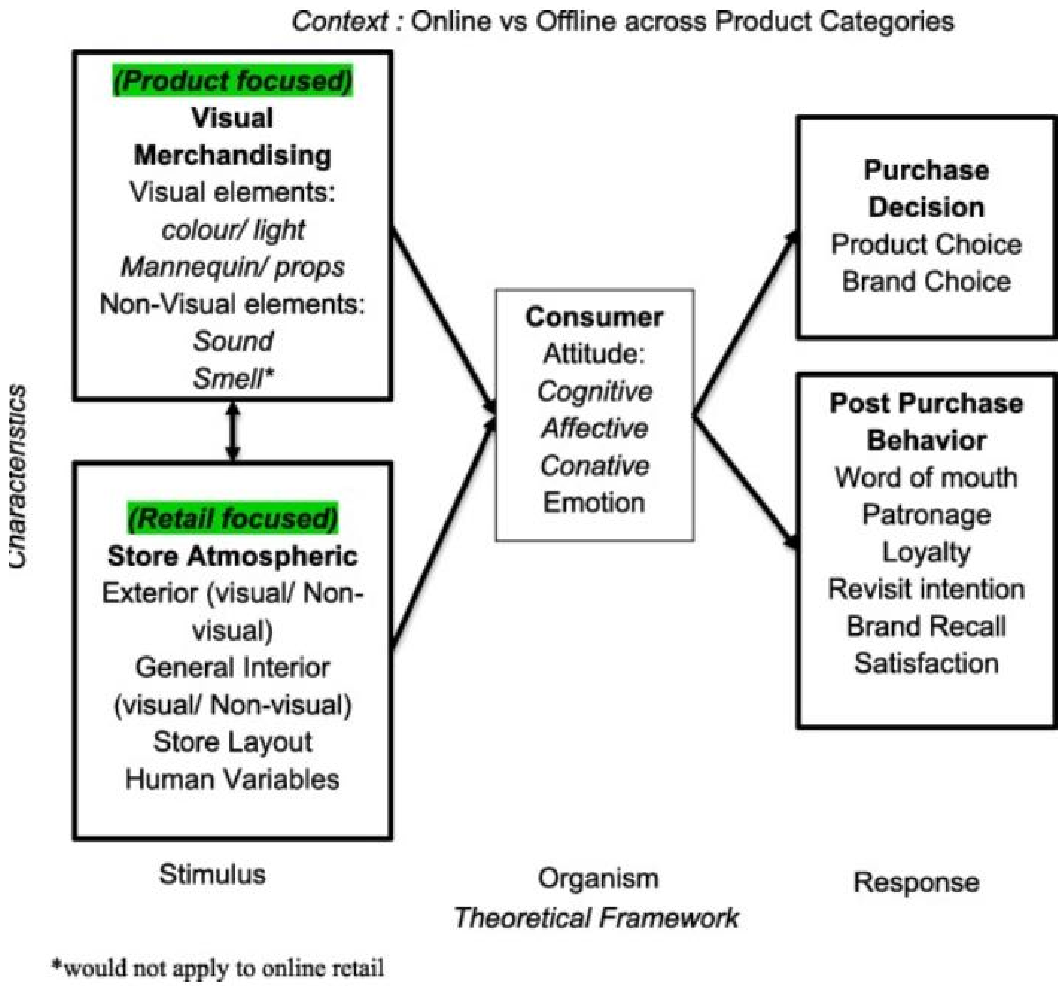


Fig.1 An integrated framework for research in visual merchandising (Basu et al ,2022).

1.2 The role of the visual merchandiser

According to Bell and Ternus, (2006), it is the visual merchandiser's responsibility to design and execute product displays and devise workable layouts, which communicate the store's mission statement. To create calm, sometimes a potentially hectic sensory environment needs to be moderated, and the clever techniques of the visual merchandiser can achieve this. Whilst its brand characteristics make TK Maxx an exciting place to shop for some, for others it can seem chaotic. The ever-evolving, highly changeable, and wide assortment at TK Maxx, with the diverse colours, textures, shapes, and sizes of products, also make it a challenge for the visual merchandiser. From the multitude of products available, it is their responsibility to create order, by using a toolkit of principles and techniques and applying artistry and knowledge which maintains an orderly store appearance, which is accessible to customers. Due to the unpredictability of the TK Maxx environment and the uniqueness of each branch, the visual merchandiser cannot simply follow photographs and directives sent out by head office but must think for themselves about what will be the most effective way to merchandise products in their unique setting and situation.

2.Visual Merchandising to Create Calm out of Chaos.

Ramroop (2021), highlights the anxieties which affect large proportions of the population and how relaxation, neutral tones, greenery, and even soft surfaces, are being implemented to promote wellbeing in retail environments. 'Calm Commerce' (Bell 2022), is a trend in branding and marketing which optimises therapeutic sensory stimuli. These are the retail environmental acknowledgement of the prevailing mental disorders which affect large swathes of the population. Neurodivergence (autism and ADHD) affects 20 to 30% of the global population (Phillips-Mason 2023). Furthermore, WGSN (2022) in the report, '*Future Consumer*', highlighted the level of anxiety and fear which affects many people today, leading them to be susceptible to feeling overwhelmed in all aspects of life. This state of being overwhelmed can impact their enjoyment of shops and shopping, sometimes alienating them from these experiences.

Many of the established 'visual merchandising rules,' according to Morgan (2016), such as making sure products are stacked at levels which can be reached, and making sure there is adequate space between fixtures for wheelchairs and prams, link to concepts of inclusivity. Bell and Ternus (2006) also link VM to inclusivity, noting the necessity to cater for ageing customers who may struggle to reach certain items. However, less visible customer characteristics such as neurodivergence recently appearing in the visual merchandising debate (Ramroop, 2021).

When it comes to creating calm out of chaos, Bell, and Ternus' (2006) principles of design, focuses on the visual sense: Unity, harmony, repetition, balance, rhythm contrast, emphasis, surprise, balance. It is about creating displays that are pleasing to the eye. By arousing positive emotions in consumers, retailers can encourage impulse purchase (Sundstrom et al., 2019). This is seen in Mehrabian and Russel's Stimulus, Organism Response model, below.

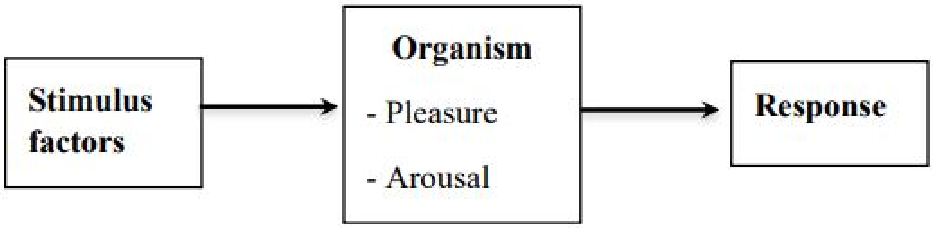


Fig. 2 Stimulus-organism-response model was developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974)

At TK Maxx, due to the quantity of product types, there is a danger that the stimulating environment creates unpleasant responses, such as 'sensory overload' or 'information overload' (Ketron et al 2016). These are exacerbated because there are no walls separating the different areas of the store, and in addition to the volume and variety of product, the shop can be noisy and crowded. This could lead to excessive arousal, triggering sensory overload (Spence 2022). Sensory overload refers to a situation where individuals are unable to process the input stimuli, leading to confusion, frustration, and withdrawal (Malhotra, 1984). The consumer would attribute these to the brand environment (Schwarz, 2022), and they would avoid visiting the store.

Stevens et al (2019) examined the effect of sensory overload in Hollister. They described the store as a '*sensory assault'* due to the store's intense scent, loud music, dim lighting, and tactile dimensions. Hollister have, in 2023, introduced a new shopfit which is light, bright and quiet; a noticeable departure from their previous brand identity. The pictures below show the before and after of the store in Liverpool One, which has shed the dark and intense ambience, and literally 'come out of the shadows' (Pugh 2023).

Fig. 3 and 4, Hollister, before and after.

3. Visual Merchandising Illustrative Examples

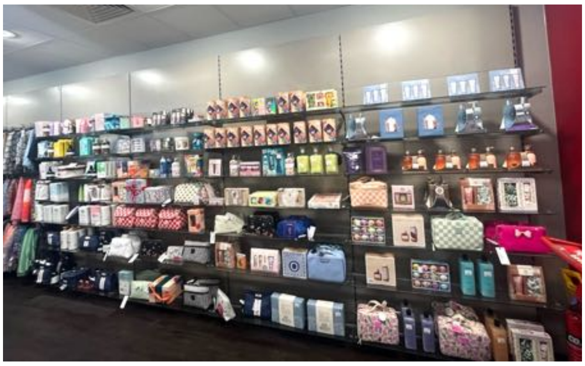
In the forthcoming section, Tyla Hockey, a visual merchandiser at TK Maxx discusses her role, and the daily decisions she makes to create calm out of chaos. Her own words and photographs are used to illustrate.

'Visual Merchandising' at TK Maxx can be tricky for multiple reasons. Firstly, we may only get one of a product that comes in. So, rather than lots of the same product displayed in a linear and profiled way which you may see elsewhere, at TK Maxx, shelving displays are usually filled with multiple assorted brands and products. This can be overwhelming and could create a

sense of chaos in customers eyes. However, key visual merchandising fundamentals help to keep some structure and order."

"The TK Maxx mantra of 'Value, Volume and Variety' is supposed to be apparent to customers when they first enter the store. If the front of the store is filled with a uniform, boring and sparse display of the same product, the brand ethos is not communicated and furthermore, customers may not be tempted into the rest of the store. In Body and Bath for example, I recently created a gifting wall feature. Because it was not possible to organise by specific product type, because there were too few of each, I displayed by colour and product type. Figure 1 below illustrates the before and after".

Before



After

Fig. 5 and 6. Bath and Body Before and After at TK Maxx Keighley.

"In the before photo there are some shelves that are too full and others too empty. There is little coordination, and the same stock is positioned side-by-side. This may create sensory overload and confusion for customers. By firstly organising colour, this creates calm for the customer and what I see as a visual journey. This is apparent in the after picture, beginning on the left of the wall with white, continuing through yellow, orange, pink, purple, green and blue. Customers can start at one colour and work their way through with their eyes. Additionally, instead of lining the same product up next to each other, I have dispersed these with other products using something we call 'landscaping' which creates a staggered effect with goods positioned at intervals. I have also maintained a sightline (the name we give to a straight line) on the top shelf by aligning smaller products, leaving larger products to the bottom. It is said that the customer's line of vision goes to the top of the fixture, and we aim to create a neat line here, avoiding leaving gaps and 'selling air.' Depending on the season, colour choices will change, in Summer we organise by colour from light to dark, and winter we will organise by dark to light."

"*Colour is not the only factor I consider. I also endeavour to get into the customer's psyche when displaying the product. As an example, electricals were crammed onto a back wall and were becoming hard to shop. Sales reports told us these goods were not selling but I was sure this was due to the fact they could not be seen clearly, not the products themselves. Something needed to change. In the below photographs it is possible to see the visual merchandising changes I actioned"*:

Before **After**

Figs. 7 and 8. Electrical goods before and after at TK Maxx, Keighley.

"To improve this, I moved this to the front of body and bath (near the store entrance). Due to the end use of these products, this is a logical product adjacency. I organised by product type and size and added 'Electricals' signage to make it more visible. By doing this, the department is more visible to customers, and it is one of the first things they see as they enter the store. In the following week, we saw an increase in sales in this category."

"Another example is a haircare feature. The remerchandising of this feature demonstrates that as well as colour, there are other criteria I always have in mind: brand, product type and size. This feature looked neglected and stock from other departments had been languishing there. It needed a refresh as it was not inviting to customers." The before and after can be seen in figures 9 and 10 below.

Before **After**

Fig. 9 and 10. Before and After Haircare Feature.

"*To break down the complex problem-solving of the visual merchandiser, I have broken down into stages, with photographs, my method for creating this improved display".*
Step 1- "*I identified the stock on the feature that did not belong there and removed it. This helped me to see what space was available*".

Fig. 11 Original haircare fixture.

Step 2- "*I consolidate product of the same brand together and look at the quantity of each. If there is a brand with only a few products or too much of I will remove them and put them back into the main flow".*

Fig. 12. The product removed from feature.

Step 3- ”*I go back to the main wall and select other brands while keeping in mind value, volume, and variety so that customers are faced with choice and change”*.

Fig. 13. Main wall haircare.

Step 4- *“I will put the stock I have chosen into a basket and take it to the feature”.*

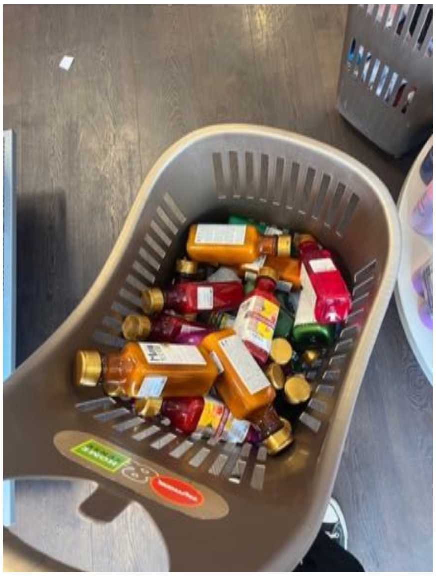


Fig. 14. Haircare Replenishment

Step 5- “I will arrange all the products on the shelf either by brand, colour, product type or size, starting with smallest at the top into largest at the bottom”.

Fig. 15. Haircare Fixture After.

Tyla further explains: "*These examples demonstrate the problem-solving of the visual merchandiser when dealing with complex displays with multiple products, brands, colours, shapes, and sizes. Price is also a key factor as we use price points to display certain products such as £19.99 and below or £9.99 and below to highlight assorted products in different price bands. Compared to the before images, the 'after' images show consolidated and shoppable areas which will act as positive stimuli, encouraging purchase, loyalty and return visits".*

"*Another difficulty with visual merchandising at TK Maxx",* says Tyla, *"is that there is no specific job role. Associates and managers must carry out visual merchandising as part of their day-to-day duties. For example, they may be tasked with maintaining a certain department, for example, body and bath, alongside operating tills, so they have to multi-task*."

"TK Maxx is also a business largely 'working in the grey", goes on Tyla. *"For example, stock in a specific department in one store may slowly deplete over time so you would reduce the size of the area. Then a week later we may get a sudden influx of product and must expand an area again (meaning taking space from another department.) we never know what stock we will be receiving until it arrives on the day. The layout and fixtures within the store are constantly changing to avoid an area looking too empty or too dense and unstoppable. it is all about keeping balance".*

4.Conclusion and Future Direction

This paper has defined VM as an in-store stimulus to create a cognitive, emotional, and behavioural response from customers. It has multiple purposes, but it needs to create a pleasant shopping environment, which is not overly stimulating and meets the needs of shoppers. At TK Maxx, with its mantra of '*Value, Volume and Variety',* there is potential for sensory overload; but the methods used by the visual merchandiser mitigate this by organising products in such a way that 'calm' is created.

What is not known is why some consumers are exhilarated by overtly sensory environments and some are frustrated and overwhelmed. Another area ripe for investigation is the experience of neurodivergent shoppers who make up an increasing percentage of the population. Other disabilities too, such as hearing and sight impairments, are neglected in the VM literature. The power of visual merchandising as a means to promote inclusivity and diversity would be an interesting are to study. Further academic research could address these questions.

On a practitioner level, the visual merchandiser at TK Maxx has discussed the methods and techniques they use, to create calm out of chaos. However, she did not overtly mention neurodivergence or anxiety, or any specific disabilities as criteria. There is an opportunity for visual merchandising to target its efforts towards providing sensory shopping environments which meet their specific needs, which would both attract these customers and create a market differentiation.

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E-commerce - Studying the impact and responses of small retailers

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Abstract

This study aims to understand how small retailers are impacted by the disruption caused by e-commerce companies and how small retailers are responding to the challenges. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and the transcripts were examined using MAXQDA 2020 Analytics Pro to identify the internal motivating factors of small retailers that lead to their response behaviour. Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework has been used to map the external stimuli, internal factors, and their responses. The analysis suggests four types of different retailer behaviour. The major share retailers perceive the e-commerce companies as competitors and want to compete with them by improving their operations. The second group of retailers considers the e-commerce companies collaborators, and future collaboration is a means to enhance their business operations. Some retailers perceive e-commerce companies as competitors and collaborators, whereas a small group of retailers do not consider it an overall threat. This study provides significant implications for small retailers' business survival and possible factors contributing to future collaborative opportunities with e-commerce firms. The government's role in protecting small retailers' interests must also be examined.

Keywords: Small retail, e-commerce, SOR, emerging economies

1. Introduction

The e-commerce industry in India has been becoming a great disruptor in the retailing sector. As per the IBEF (2022) report, the social commerce industry in India can experience a market of US$16-20 billion by the year 2025, with a CAGR of 55-60%, whereas the potential reach of only the e-commerce market in India has been projected as US$ 111 billion by 2024, US$ 200 billion by 2026, and US$ 350 billion by 2030. This growth hugely impacts the traditional retail scenario in India, where online retail penetration is expected to reach 10.7% by 2024 compared with 4.7% in 2019.

In many developed as well as emerging economies, organised retail has disrupted the small retail industries (Goswami and Mishra, 2009). However, in India, small retailers could survive this threat for multiple reasons, such as competitive response, retail strategy and performance (Ramakrishnan, 2010), and policy regulations (Dabas *et al.*, 2012; Mukherjee, 2011). The same does not apply to e-commerce. Moreover, e-commerce holds several advantages in the supply chain (Johnson and Whang, 2002) compared to its small retail counterparts (Chen *et al.*, 2019). Events like the pandemic and lockdowns also changed consumer behaviour, where consumers are now favouring quick commerce and e-commerce and moving away from small retailers (Beckers *et al.*, 2021; Guthrie *et al.*, 2021). Existing studies have looked into the resilience of unorganised, small retailers in facing disruptions such as the pandemic (Samanta and Aithal, 2023). However, the impact of e-commerce and the responses of small retailers have remained an unexplored topic.

Looking at this steep rise in the e-commerce market and the present gap in the literature, the primary aim of this study is to understand how e-commerce impacts small retail in an environment where consumer preference is also switching towards online retailing. The study aims to look at the business strategy of small retailers – how their business can maintain sustainability against the disruption created by e-commerce and achieve a maintainable competitive advantage within the retail industry. We want to explore the factors contributing to small retailers' survival against the disruption caused by e-commerce and to what extent the measures impact the performance of small retailers. This also leads us further to look into the competitiveness between traditional retail and e-retailing – whether technology and e-commerce are competitors or an opportunity for small retailers.

By identifying the factors contributing to small retailers' survival and business continuity, this study aims to empirically validate them and help build the resilience of the unorganised small retail community. It also seeks to explore the nuances of small retailers' business and functional strategies in facing such disruptions.

1.1 Research Objectives

The study primarily looks at the following objectives:

RO1: to comprehend how small unorganised retailers were affected by the disruption caused by e-commerce

RO2: to detect how the small retailers responded to the disruption

RO3: to identify the factors that contributed to the survival and business continuity of small, unorganised retailers

The study has been structured in the following manner. The next section showcases a literature review of the study context, including the theoretical framework. The section after that demonstrates the methodology used and provides the analysis details. Methodology is followed by a brief discourse on the findings and discussion, followed by the managerial implications of the study.

2. Stimulus-Organism-Response Framework

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974) explains the small retailers' response behaviour in coping with the threat from e-commerce. Stimulus (S) denotes the external factor influencing the decision maker's affective and cognitive processes. Organism (O) signifies the internal state of the decision maker, as impacted by the affective and cognitive stimuli. In contrast, the reaction to those stimuli comes in the form of Response (R). In the context of the present study, the external disruption caused by the incremental effect of e-commerce acts as the stimulus for the small, unorganised retailers, and their reactions in the forms of competition or collaboration expressed their behavioural responses.

3. Methodology

To explore the research objectives, data was collected in the form of qualitative semi-structured interviews. A qualitative approach was taken because of the investigative features of the study (Creswell, 2007), whereas semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture broader exposure of the subject matter and openness of the conversation (Sampson, 1972). Initial five interviews were conducted as pilot studies, with an unstructured questionnaire developed by focusing on the theoretical lens and the subject matter. Based on the outcome of the initial studies, the questionnaire has been further developed to form a logically structured questionnaire that promotes open-ended conversations. A total of 26 interviews were conducted in multiple outings. The final four to five interviews indicated data saturation, and thus, the interview process was concluded after 26 interviews. The interactions happened in the urban and semi-urban areas of Lucknow, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh in India. Each interview lasted around 45-50 minutes, and the conversation happened in Hindi (local language). All necessary measures were taken to ensure the information's credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity.

In the second stage, interview transcriptions were further examined using MAXQDA Analytics Pro software. Both researchers individually coded the verbatims, and subsequent reconciliation resulted in the agreed final themes. Following a 4-step data analysis process suggested by Tutty *et al.* (1996), first codes were generated. Then, similar codes were grouped. Next, themes were created based on the similarity of the groups, and finally, resultant factors were identified using the grouped hierarchical themes.

4. Findings and Discussion

Small retailers react to different disruptions in various ways, resulting in multiple ways of their responses. The present study identifies four different ways small retailers respond to the disruptions of e-commerce.

A small proportion of retailers do not consider e-commerce a long-term disruption. Traditionally, small retailers have been operating for a much longer duration compared to organised retailers. E-commerce, a newer phenomenon, has come into operation much later than traditional small retailers. The age-old operation of small retailers has established a loyal customer base, which gives them the confidence to continue their operation without considering any perceived risk from e-commerce and quick-commerce. A reliable supply-chain network also reinforces their decision to maintain the status quo.

The second category of retailers considers e-commerce as a potential competitor, and by number, this category holds the share of the largest number of small retailers. Their competitive behaviour has been supported by several measures, such as adopting advanced technological applications, diversifying their operations, investing in additional advertising and promotional activities, and looking for other procurement sources. This group of retailers perceive that e-commerce is surely capturing their customer base, and without any additional effort, they will be losing their business very fast.

The third category of retailers considers e-commerce not as a competitor but a potential collaborator. They want to use e-commerce as an alternate channel for sourcing and procurement, whereas they can share their space with the e-commerce companies as warehouses. Even though the number of retailers in this group is lesser than those who perceive the e-commerce option as a competitor, a significant number of retailers believe in the option of collaboration.

Finally, there is a fourth category of retailers, who perceive the e-commerce sources as competitors and potential collaborators. These retailers are apprehensive of their choice and want to explore both sides as possible options.

5. Implications of the Study

The study provides a significant contribution to multiple stakeholders. Firstly, small retailers' survival and growth are directly related to their co-existence with e-commerce firms. Thus, it is imperative to know how small retailers perceive the disruption of e-commerce. For e-commerce firms, it is an extended business opportunity if they can collaborate with local retailers. It will increase their reach and provide options for last-mile delivery and access to local warehouses. The technology firms that offer support to both stakeholders also have a big role to play in facilitating their services and optimising their operations. Finally, from the policy perspective, the government needs to look at the overall operation as the e-commerce firms are heavily cash-rich, and their aggressive expansion strategy might hurt the survival of small retailers in the long run.

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Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: The impact of gender stereotyping, conveyed through retail servicescapes, on consumer self-symbolism.

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the effects of gender stereotyping in a servicescape context, addressing the research question: What is the impact of gender stereotyping, conveyed through the design of fashion retail environments, on consumer self-symbolism? Adopting an interpretivist, inductive approach qualitative research methods used employ content analysis of secondary data, with case study analysis using servicescape semiotics. The key findings include the identification of harmful and restricting stereotypes within the servicescape, indicating negative influences upon identity construction through self-symbolism. Isolated aspects perceived as acceptable could reinforce and amplify the explicitly stereotypic content. This research develops a new framework to formally categorise and analyse servicescape stereotypic content, and enhances the theoretical understanding of the impact of servicescape design relevant to negative gender stereotyping. Brands and designers should consider the impact of their servicescape proposals in the wider context of consumer wellbeing.

Keywords:

Gender Stereotyping, Servicescape, Self-symbolism, Fashion Retailing, Semiotics

1. Introduction

Gender stereotyping is prevalent across advertising, product development, workplace culture, education, societal attitudes and behaviours and wider cultural norms (Parker, 2017; Tan et al., 2002; Tsichla and Zotos, 2016). It continues to be an influential aspect of life despite society's intolerance, cultural developments and significant attitudinal change (Cunningham and Macrae, 2011; Verhellen et al., 2016; Matine, 2016). This paper draws together the theoretical foundations from the servicescape literature, gender stereotyping in advertising and consumer behaviour in the context of self-symbolism. Highlighting a research gap regarding the effects of gender stereotypic content within the servicescape, upon the consumer (Lunardo and Mbengue, 2013; Kaltcheva et al., 2011; Rodhain and Aurier, 2016; Santos et al., 2012; Isaksen and Roper, 2012). Adopting an interpretivist, inductive approach, using qualitative research methods, an investigation is presented in to the effects of gender stereotypic content, focused on the UK fashion servicescape and its younger consumer base in terms of wellbeing and identity construction. Specifically addressing the research question:

What is the impact of gender stereotyping, conveyed through the design of fashion retail environments, on consumer self-symbolism?

This research enhances the theoretical understanding of the topic area and informs design policy and strategy practices. Through the development of a conceptual framework, formal categorisation and analysis of stereotypic content within the servicescpae environment is presented.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Gender Stereotyping in Advertising

The impact of negative stereotyping has received much criticism particularly regarding children's products through gender-specific colour and limited role diversity (Tan et al., 2002; Tsichla and Zotos, 2016) and the creation of automatic associations and behaviours entrenched in common cultural beliefs that have longstanding affects (Cunningham and Macrae, 2011). Research has explored the influence of gender stereotypic content in determining effective and influential advertisements, (Avery, 2012; Brough et al., 2016; Christofides et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2011; Zawisza and Cinnirella, 2010), yet it has been shown to be ineffective (Friedmann and Lowengart, 2018). Others have continued to highlight the incongruence between ad content and societal attitudes (Knoll et al., 2011; Verhellen et al., 2016), indicating a strong presence of restrictive and submissive female roles in advertisements. Harmful gender roles portrayed within advertising content is a consistent discussion point defining the use of decorative roles, being unrealistic, under-representative and negatively restrictive with potentially harmful effects, alongside hostile and benevolent sexism via explicit and implicit stereotypic content (Courtney and Lockeretz, 1971; Wagner and Banos, 1973; Belkaoui and Belkaoui, 1976; Ferguson et al., 1990). The influence of this content effects consumption behaviour, individual self-perception and the creation/maintaining of their self-concept (Brough et al., 2016; Elliott and Elliott, 2005). This can be negatively restrictive, compelling an individual to conform to the assigned stereotypical definitions

(Cunningham and Macrae, 2011), increasing anxiety levels and affecting wellbeing (Lee et al., 2011), relationships and interactions with others (Christofides et al., 2009).

2.2 Servicescapes and Store Atmospherics

The physical retail environment is a persuasive brand tool influencing behaviour, emotions, judgements, expectations and interactions (Bitner, 1992; Breazeale and Ponder, 2013; Kotler, 1973-74; Johnstone, 2012; Pecoraro and Uusitalo, 2014; Russell and Mehrabian, 1978). Conveying the brand image, values, tone and message providing an all-encompassing experience for maximum engagement and financial benefit (Brengman and Willems, 2009; Jang et al., 2018; Parsons, 2011). Both the curated static and kinetic store attributes influence perception and behaviour (Bonnin and Goudey, 2012), creating a dynamic experience effecting decision-making, satisfaction levels and engagement (Garaus, 2017), with atmospheric cue - consumer self-concept congruency being an important factor (Ballantine et al., 2015; O'Cass and Grace, 2008). Lunardo and Mbengue (2013) do note servicescapes can also be negative manipulative tools used for commercial gain. A research gap is highlighted regarding the impact of negative gender stereotypes within the servicescape, as it is conceivable that there is a difference between the brand's intention and consumer's perceived interpretation (Kotler, 1973-74).

2.3 Consumer Behaviour and Self-symbolism

An individual's identity both influences and is influenced by their surrounding environment, which can be exploited (Elliott, 1997; Harmon-Kizer et al., 2013; Kaltcheva et al., 2011). The consumer experience is complex, especially impressionable teenagers, whose curation and expression of their dynamic identities draws upon consumption practices, influencing behaviour, confidence, interactions, relationships, self-esteem and self-monitoring, simultaneously portraying both conformity and individualization (Belk, 1988; Souiden and M'saad, 2011; Doster, 2013; Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; Millan and Reynolds, 2014). Brands can manipulate content using congruent symbolic references, appealing to the perceived consumer's emotional state, yet this can lead to negative psychological reactions due to misinterpretation of message appeals (Avery, 2012; Rodhain and Aurier, 2016; Santos et al., 2012). The commodification of identity and self-esteem focused on materialism has become an identifier of self-worth (Isaksen and Roper, 2012) and a sense of inadequacy can develop (Elliott, 1997) through comparison, enhancement and reinvention, particularly for teen consumers being susceptible during a transitional life stage (Doster, 2013; Santisi, et al., 2014). This highlights a research gap regarding impact of concealed negative gender stereotypes within the brand servicescape.

3. Methods

3.1 Part 1: Harmful vs acceptable message appeals that promote gender stereotyping

Qualitative content analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994) was adopted to identify harmful or acceptable gender stereotypic message appeals. This enabled the development of a conceptual framework then applied within part two, as it is conceivable that the message appeals used within advertising to convey harmful and restricting stereotypes are also commonplace in different consumer-brand touch points, such as servicescape environments. The secondary data source used originates from GFK (2017a).

3.2 Part 2: Servicescape attributes that reinforce negative gender stereotyping

A case study analysis of a UK fast fashion high street store was selected due to its female, Generation Z core customer base (Wood, 1996). Analysis of secondary data (publicly available press photographs of the store environment and researcher's own site photographs and site visit field notes), allowed the store's dynamic gestalt qualities to be examined identifying aspects that reinforce negative gender stereotyping. Drawing upon servicescape semiotics (Oswald, 2015), the material, conventional, contextual and performative dimensions were reviewed, considering the cultural and strategic functions (Oswald, 2012, p.151). The conceptual framework developed in part one formed the peripheral categories used to compare and identify the emergent spatial codes from the servicescape (Oswald, 2015).

3.3 Part 3: Attitudinal impact of the environmental gender stereotyping on consumer self-symbolism

Qualitative content analysis (Miles and Huberman; 1994) was adopted to investigate the potential attitudinal impact of environmental gender stereotyping on consumer self-symbolism. The secondary data source used originates from Girlguiding (2017). Cultural and symbolic messages are transmitted via servicescape atmospheric cues that can shape an individual's reaction, attitude and wellbeing (Pecoraro and Uusitalo, 2014), therefore, by analysing this data through the lens of the present study it enabled the development of a conceptual framework correlating the trends and relationships between the adolescent attitudes and environmental gender stereotyping.

4. Results

4.1 Part 1: Harmful vs acceptable message appeals that promote gender stereotyping

The advertisement analysis revealed the predominant stereotype concern focused on appearance, whilst the perceived influence was equally split across harmful, questioned and acceptable levels. Harmful content (see Figure 1) includes a high female presence, is focused on appearance and contains sexual, degrading, contradictory and uncomfortable viewing message appeals resulting in some form of discomfort. Questioned content (see Figure 2) includes a high female presence, is focused on appearance and contains uninspiring, sexual, glamourizing, contradictory and conformity promoting message appeals, portraying limited aspirations. Acceptable content (see Figure 3) includes both female and male/female presence, is equally focused on appearance and role diversity and whilst it contains message appeals that are seen within harmful and questioned content it also includes appeals used to portray humour, challenge stereotypes and aim to improve self-confidence and be aspirational.

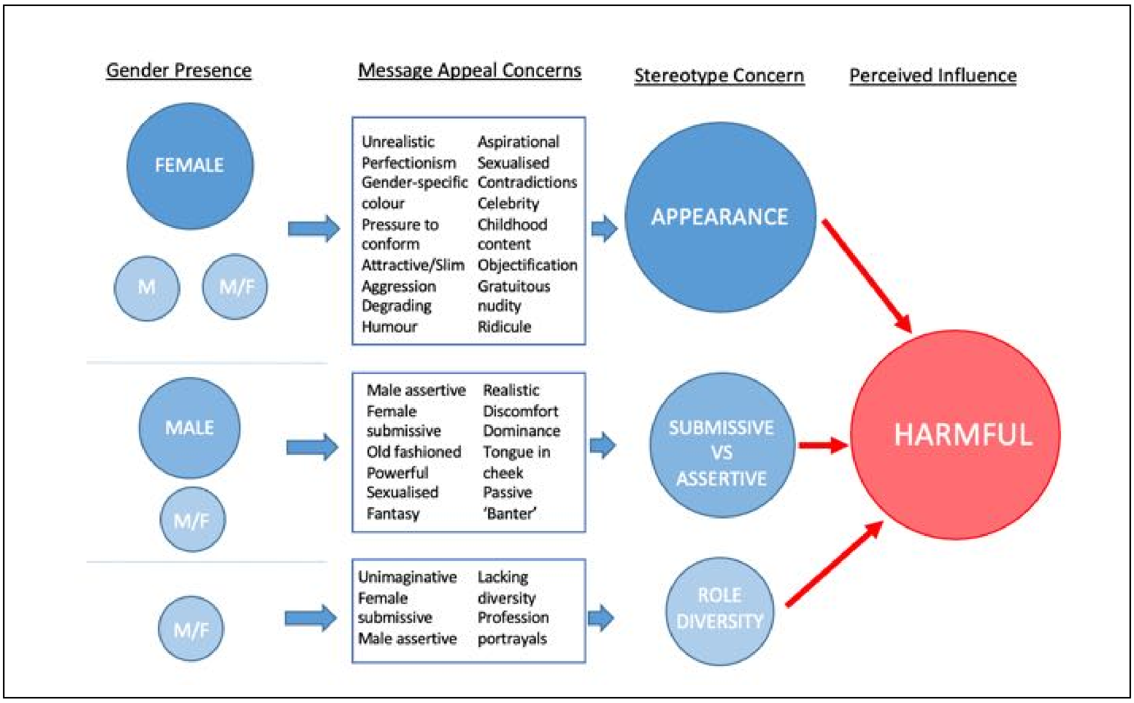

Figure 1: Message Appeal Relationships – Harmful Content

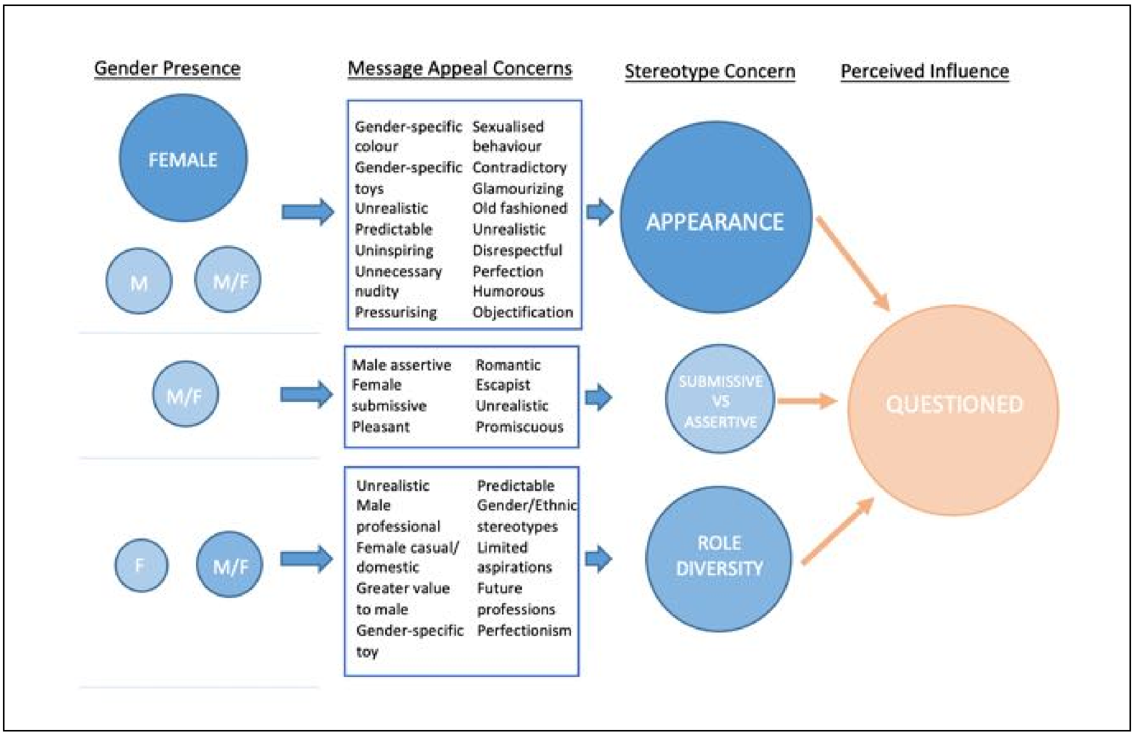

Figure 2: Message Appeal Relationships – Questioned Content

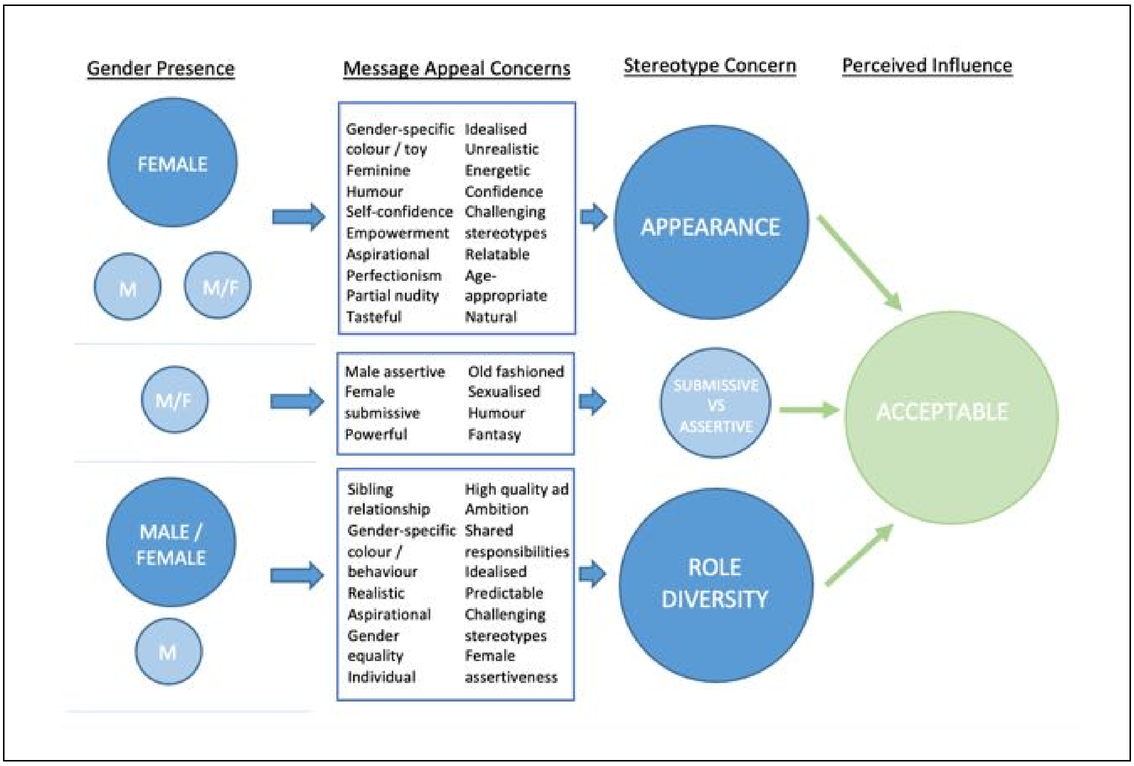

Figure 3: Message Appeal Relationships – Acceptable Content

Table 2 presents a gender stereotypic message appeal framework in context to harmful, questioned or acceptable content. This is used to inform the semiotic analysis peripheral categories; allowing comparison and identification emergent spatial codes from the case study servicescape (Oswald, 2015).

Table 2: Associated Peripheral Categories Conceptual Framework

GENDER STEREOTYPE	Primary stereotype concern	Secondary stereotype concern	Primary gender presence	Key message appeal concerns			
HARMFUL	Appearance	Submissive vs. Assertive	Female	Unrealistic Attractive/ Slim, Humour, Contradiction, Objectification, Male, Assertive, Old fashioned	Perfectionism, Aggression, Degrading Aspirational, Childhood content	Gender-specific colour, Sexualised, Gratuitous nudity	Pressure to conform, Celebrity, Ridicule, Powerful, Female submissive
QUESTIONED	Appearance	Role Diversity	Female	Unrealistic, Predictable, Uninspiring, Contradictory, Old fashioned, Objectification	Unnecessary nudity Pressurising, Sexualised behaviour	Gender-specific colour/toys, Limited aspirations	Glamourizing, Disrespectful, Perfection, Humorous, Future professions
ACCEPTABLE	Appearance + Role Diversity (equal)	-	Female + Male/ Female (equal)	Feminine, Self-confidence Empowerment, Age-appropriate, Gender equality, Shared responsibilities	Perfectionism, Partial nudity, Challenging stereotypes, Predictable, Female assertiveness	Gender-specific colour/toys, Confidence, Relatable, Aspirational, Ambition	Humour, Tasteful, Idealised, Unrealistic Energetic, Natural

4.2 Part 2: Servicescape attributes that reinforce negative gender stereotyping

The servicescape semiotic analysis (see Table 3) revealed questioned and harmful content across the material, conventional and contextual dimensions. The primary stereotype concern focused on appearance, with questioned and harmful signs (mostly) carrying a secondary concern of role diversity or submissive versus assertive. The harmful sign types typically carried sexualised, perfectionist, conformist and contradictory message appeal concerns with stereotypical colour assignment and unattainable attractive appearances. Cultural change in context to youth culture is strongly influenced by social media and celebrity pushing an agenda of conformity and perfectionism (Campbell, 2017; Advertising Standards Authority, 2017), with sexualised imagery providing conflicting messages informing cultural meaning (Ferguson et al., 1990). However, numerous acceptable signs due to, in isolation, not representing any direct stereotypic concern, could collectively reinforce and amplify other harmful sign types. With similarities in message appeal concerns with the data in part one, it is conceivable to deduce that the store attributes could have similar negative impacts, such as pressure to conform, inciting negative personal emotions regarding appearance and creating unrealistic expectations of gender roles, presumed behavioural traits and the desire to emulate these (GFK, 2017b).

Table 3: Semiotic Servicescape Summary

ANALYSIS TYPE	DIMENSION	SIGN TYPE (STORE ATTRIBUTE)	ASSOCIATED PERIPHERAL CATEGORY
Material	Architecture	Shop Front Structure; Layout / Flow; Spatial Volume	ACCEPTABLE
	Décor	Colour Scheme; Lighting; In-store Imagery; Surface Texture	QUESTIONED ACCEPTABLE HARMFUL
	F&F	Shopfitting Kit; Cash Desk; Fitting Room Desk and Seating	ACCEPTABLE
	Signage and VM Cues	Signage and Messaging; Mannequins; Props; Feature Detail	HARMFUL QUESTIONED
	Technology	Video and In-store Customer-generated Social Media Content	ACCEPTABLE
Conventional - Spectacle	Proscenium	Shop Front / Cash Desk	ACCEPTABLE
	Circus	Product Display	ACCEPTABLE
	Carnival	Props / Mannequins / In-store Customer-generated SM Content	ACCEPTABLE
Conventional - Category	Function	Layout / Flow / Facilities	ACCEPTABLE
	Brand Aesthetic	Colour Scheme / Signage / Imagery / Props	QUESTIONED
	Industry	Shopfitting Kit	ACCEPTABLE
	Consumer Actions	Colour Scheme / Signage / Imagery / Props / Shopfitting Kit / Layout / Function / In-store Customer-generated SM Content	ACCEPTABLE
Contextual	Cultural Change	Layout / Signage / Imagery / Props / In-store Customer-generated SM Content	QUESTIONED
	Category Trends	Function / Signage / Imagery / Props	ACCEPTABLE
	The External Environment	Shop Front	ACCEPTABLE
Performative	Management Actions	Colour Scheme / Signage / Imagery / Props / Shopfitting Kit / Layout / Function	ACCEPTABLE
	Consumer Actions	Colour Scheme / Signage / Imagery / Props / Shopfitting Kit / Layout / Function / In-store Customer-generated SM Content	ACCEPTABLE

4.3 Part 3: Attitudinal impact of the environmental gender stereotyping on consumer self-symbolism

The secondary data analysis revealed four stereotype categories including restriction, expectations, pressure and harassment. The main impact of the individual's experiences were negative, resulting in the internalisation of the perceived messages, altering their behaviour and appearance to conform, contributing to anxiety, anger, confusion and reduced confidence. However, there was a sense of positivity revealed in the presence of attitudes such as resilience, determination and confrontation of negative gender stereotyping. Due to correlation of recurring themes with part one and two discussed earlier, it is conceivable to deduce that the attitudinal impacts discovered would translate over to the servicescape negative gender stereotyping. When considering the relationships across each data set (see Figure 4) there is a predominant focus around the concern of appearance with negative gender stereotyping (restrictions, expectations and exerting pressure on the consumer) conveyed through the material, conventional and contextual dimensions.

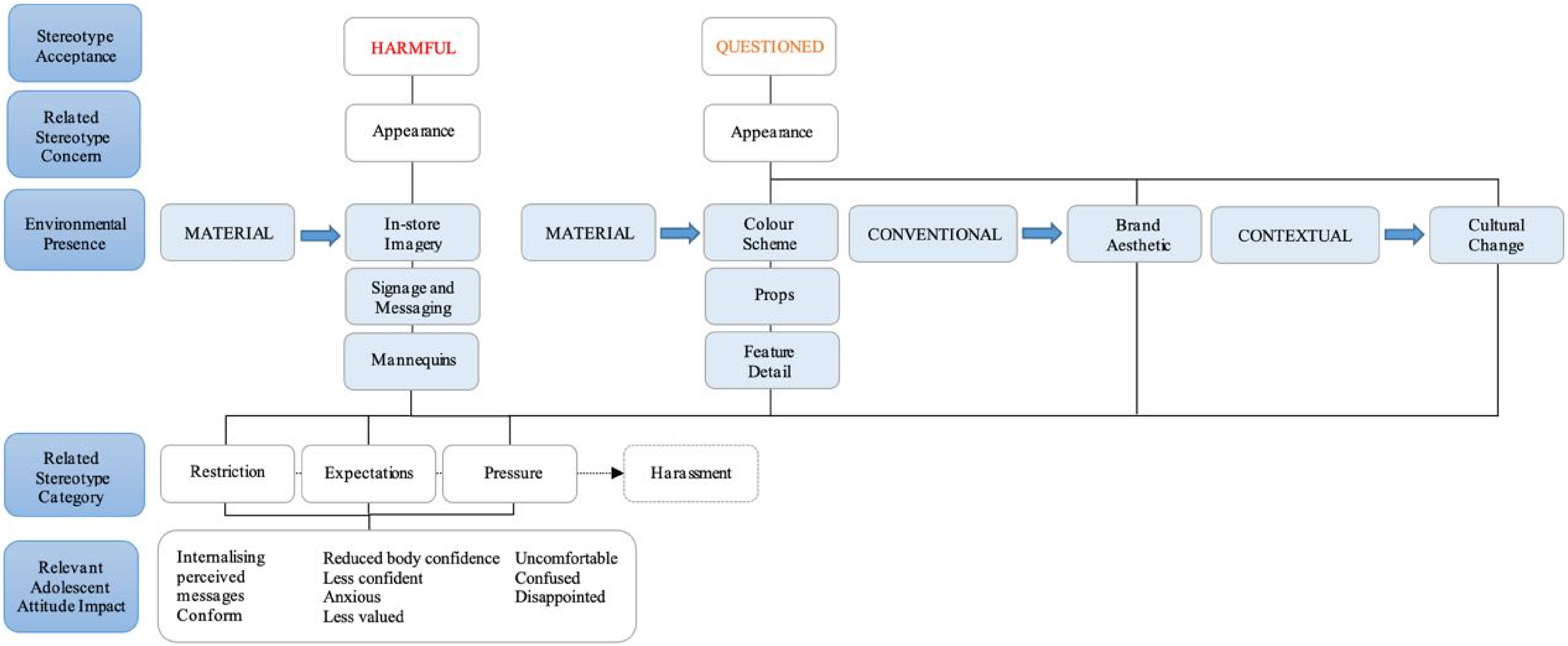

Figure 4: Relationship Analysis

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1 Theoretical Contribution

The present study extends the academic literature regarding the effects of gender stereotyping in to new territory relating to servicescape design and its impact on consumer self-symbolism. The findings support previous advertising research highlighting brand content - societal attitude incongruence (Knoll et al., 2011; Tan et al., 2002; Tsichla and Zotos, 2016; Verhellen et al., 2016) but in a retail store context. The notion of the all-encompassing brand experience retail environment in which the gestalt perspective is highly influential is also supported (Bitner, 1992; Parsons, 2011), effecting cognitive processes, inciting emotional reactions, influencing behaviour and perception (Kotler, 1973-74) and inducing both positive and negative experiences (Lunardo and Mbengue, 2013). The relationship analysis concludes that the stereotype categories present have the potential to create negative attitudinal impacts that can effect an adolescent's anxiety and confidence levels, in turn influencing their identity construction through the act of self-symbolism (Christofides et al., 2009; Cunningham and Macrae, 2011; Lee et al., 2011; Brough et al., 2016; Elliott and Elliott, 2005).

Further contribution is presented via semiotic analysis categorising for the first time gender stereotypic content in the servicescape. The findings postulate that whilst some aspects individually (such as the conventional and performative dimensions) can be interpreted as acceptable and appealing, they can collectively contribute to implicitly reinforcing and amplifying negative gender stereotypic meaning representing aspects such as perfectionism, pressure to conform, objectification and sexualised behaviours. This can inform a consumer's understanding of their wider environment, relationships and expectations (Johnstone, 2012; Pecoraro and Uusitalo, 2014) and negatively impact their identity construction through symbolic consumption (Belk, 1988; Kaltcheva et al., 2011; Rodhain and Aurier, 2016; Santos et al., 2012).

5.2 Practical Implications

Careful consideration should be taken in relation to the interpretation of the store's symbolic qualities (Kotler, 1973-74). Brand managers and designers should consider their servicescape proposals in the wider context of consumer impact and integrate appropriate ethical policies and design strategies actively addressing this issue (Matine, 2016).

5.3 Limitations

It is acknowledged that the research was limited to a single UK fast fashion brand and secondary data only. The research only considers gender in context to male and female roles, whilst it is a variable concept, exists on a spectrum and is unique to any individual, which this research does not address.

5.4 Further Research

Further research should consider the aspect of gender more widely (as highlighted above) and employ primary data to test the conceptual framework developed. Other brands and industries should be considered, along with differing cultural influences. Finally young male consumers should be considered due to increasing mental health and wellbeing concerns (Elliott and Elliott, 2005).

6. Conclusion

Overall, this paper highlights the presence of harmful and restricting gender stereotypes within the servicescape, with the potential to effect consumer wellbeing and identity construction through the use of self-symbolism. Aspects perceived as acceptable in isolation could also reinforce and amplify the harmful messages being portrayed in explicitly stereotypic content.

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Shopping around: Observations on shopping preferences and green purchasing behaviour

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Abstract
Businesses facing the challenge of improving the sustainability of its products and packaging need to understand consumer intentions relating to purchasing and recycling. Previous research suggests that, very broadly, consumers are segmented into those who are willing, unwilling and occasionally willing to shop sustainably. This paper investigates the relationship between preferred shopping behaviours and consumer actions relating to the environment. Exploratory analysis of a survey of more than 1000 UK adult consumers identified general attitudes to shopping and the environment as well as engagement in pro-environmental shopping behaviours. No specific shopping styles – such as a preference for shopping online or in stores or taking pleasure from shopping or wanting to get it done quickly - indicate any greater tendency towards environmentally friendly shopping. However, those more willing to spend time looking for such products were found to be more likely to value aspects of shopping, such as inspiring displays and seeing what's new, that suggest time being taken gather information on what is available. While the analysis does not find any clear patterns about the shopping styles and preferences of pro-environmental and non-environmental shoppers, it does confirm that there is diversity in behaviour within both groups.

Keywords: Sustainability, packaging, shopping behaviours, attitudes to shopping and the environment.

1. Introduction and rationale

If businesses are to transition to more sustainable products and packaging materials while maintaining their general business model and profitability, they must help consumers to choose such goods without a significant impact on prices or convenience. Therefore, businesses facing the challenge of improving the sustainability of its products and packaging need to understand consumer intentions relating to purchasing and recycling. Previous research suggests that, very broadly, consumers are segmented into those who are willing, unwilling and occasionally willing to shop sustainably (Ross and Milne, 2021; McCarthy and Wang, 2022; Lendvai et al, 2022). While consumer interest in sustainability is growing due to greater awareness of environmental problems, there are many other pressures to consider in the choice of fast-moving consumer goods. Price and convenience might be more important for some consumers, at least some of the time.

This paper investigates the relationship between preferred shopping behaviours and consumer actions relating to the environment. It seeks to understand whether enjoyment of shopping or willingness to spend extra time searching for products correlates with behaviours relating to seeking and choosing to purchase products perceived as being environmentally friendly (EF) in some way. The study is primarily based on a survey of more than 1000 UK adult consumers. The research is exploratory in the sense of identifying potential areas for further study with the expectation that findings were always likely to be complex and nuanced.

2. Literature review

The intention-behaviour gap (Casais and Faria, 2022), also described as an attitude-behaviour gap (Kamalanon et al., 2022), a value-action gap (Boz) and, relatedly, an attitude-intention gap (Chatterjee et al., 2022), is an observed phenomenon relating to consumer environmental attitudes and their purchase behaviour. Understanding this gap – where intentions to consume sustainability are not (always) converted into purchase behaviour – is important for developing sustainable packaging strategies. Studies addressing this issue use multiple theories and concepts to identify the factors that determine consumer behaviour.

The theoretical basis of many papers in this field is the theory of planned behaviour (TBH) (Casais and Faria, 2022; Coskun et al., 2022; Chatterjee et al, 2022), a cognitive theory that focuses on an individual’s intentions and the antecedents of those intentions (Azjen, 1985). Studies on sustainable consumption using this theory suggest that attitudes and perceived behavioural control (PBC) are more significant in determining consumers’ intentions to shop sustainably (Kamalanon et al., 2022). However, subjective norms – how the ideas of others influence behaviour – are less significant for purchasing behaviour but more important in determining recycling behaviour (Widayat et al., 2022).

Consumers have been found to be much more likely to buy green products when they had sufficient environmental concern, they believed in the value of the product and the authenticity of the company’s green claims and were confident that the choice would make a difference in solving an environmental issue (Kamalanon et al., 2022). However, social norms are less associated with green purchases as individual factors appear to be more significant, although they are linked to post-consumer behaviours such as recycling (Widayat et al., 2022). Nonetheless, individual factors like attitudes or personal preferences could still be influenced by contextual factors such as opportunity and access to information and could change over time as people gain greater awareness of environmental issues and actions they can take as consumers (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Sreen et al., 2018).

Consumer segmentation according to lifestyle, or general consumer type, helps to characterise people according to their likelihood of engaging in environmental shopping behaviours (McCarthy and Wang, 2022; Ross and Milne, 2021; Lendvai et al., 2022). Such approaches have confirmed that there is a significant non-sustainable consumer segment, which tends to be sceptical about sustainable products and packaging and prioritise other functions such as price, convenience and other utilitarian and hedonic attributes. Those who do present some pro-environmental behaviours have been distinguished between those completely committed to all aspects of sustainable consumption and those who are more occasional or selective in such behaviour (Lendvai et al., 2022).

From a sustainable marketing perspective, understanding what works for each group is an avenue for further investigation. Part of that might involve establishing how each consumer type assesses the trade-off between price, quality and sustainability attributes (Ross and Milne, 2021) People are likely to have different reasons for their sustainable consumption as some are better informed while others are more emotionally committed or have a lifestyle more suited to such behaviour (Lendvai et al., 2022). Considering the nature of decision making in a grocery retail or FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) context, the time to develop knowledge of products is likely to be limited. Testa et al. (2020) highlight the importance of information seeking in making choices that fit with circular economy principles.

Finally, the role of modes of shopping in the intention-behaviour gap has been studied in relation to whether ethical shopping was conducted in an effortful, spontaneous or rapid manner (Casais and Faria, 2002). Although no moderation effects were found for modes of shopping, shopping modes or preferences could be investigated further to identify any specific relationships between willingness to take time of over shopping choices and a tendency to seek out and purchase sustainable products.

3. Method

A survey of more than 1000 UK consumers investigated sustainable consumer behaviour and general shopping preferences. The data was analysed in two parts. Firstly, by generally summarising the responses of the whole cohort to demonstrate what is broadly typical for this sample. The second part involved a more detailed analysis that attempted to identify any patterns in relation to shopping habits and environmental purchases.

3.1 Findings 1 –summary of shopping preferences and pro-environmental behaviours.

Figure 1 provides an indication of UK consumers' different feelings about shopping. Participants were asked to choose the three items that they valued most when shopping in stores. Responses were spread across the nine options. A significant proportion (32%) value efficiency in terms of things being easy to find or getting it done quickly (25%). However, similar numbers value the social aspect (32%), inspiring displays (25%) and the escape from everyday life (19%). The need to touch products was the factor that the most people (55%) valued. This applies as much to grocery shopping as it does in, for example, a fashion context. For example, people use their sense of touch to evaluate the quality or freshness of fruit and vegetables.

Figure 2 indicates that some pro-environmental behaviours are embedded in the sense that well over half the population does them at least sometimes with over a quarter saying they do them whenever they can. This includes choosing products according to the way they are packaged (30% always and 37% sometimes) and examining information about the environmental attributes of products/packaging (27% and 34%). In addition, 46% said that they always recycle packaging that is not collected curb side (29% sometimes). These results also indicate that there is about a quarter to one third of population for whom environmental issues barely touch their lives. For instance, 37% said that they rarely (26%) or never (10%) talk to others about these issues.

Figure 1: what people value about shopping in stores

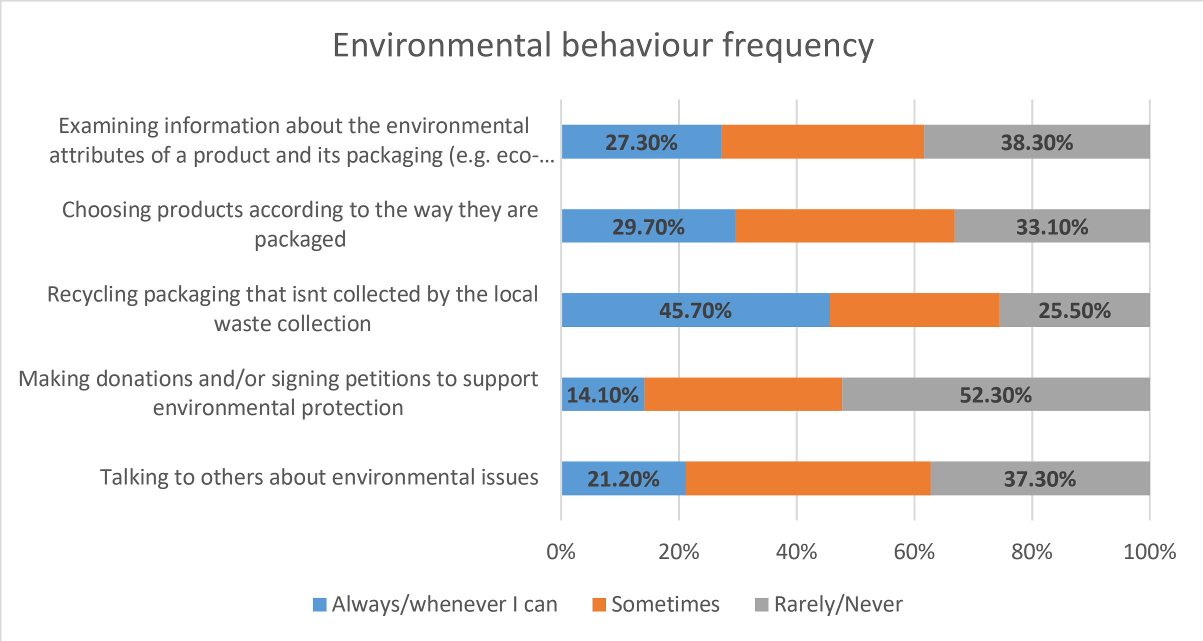

Figure 2: environmental behaviours

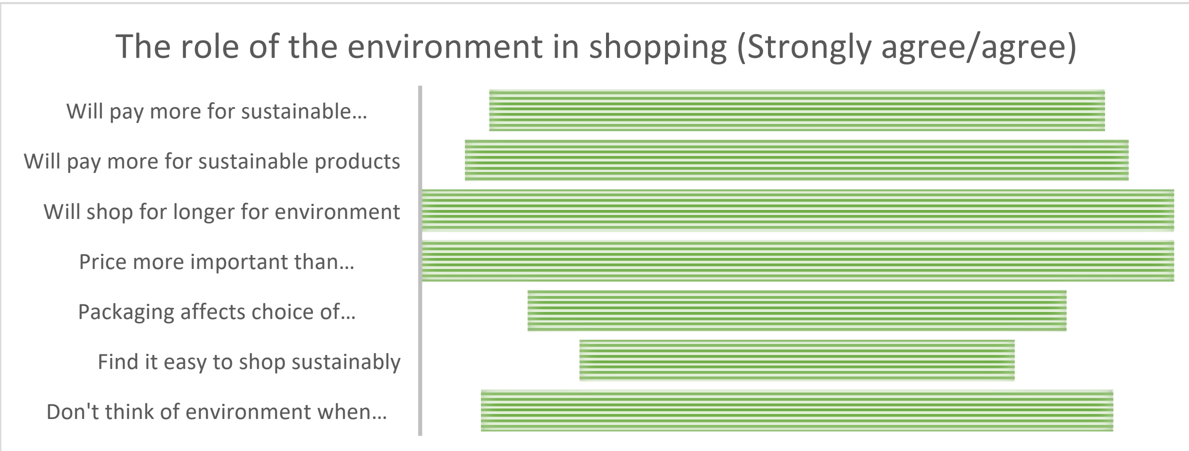

Figure 3: environment in shopping

In addition to these behaviours, we can see how important the environment is in relation to other factors, such as price (figure 3). While 45% agreed or strongly agreed that they were willing to pay more for sustainable packaging, 55% suggested that they were willing to spend more time shopping to find more environmentally friendly products. However, a similar number (55%) acknowledged that price was a more important factor than the environment and 46% agreed or strongly agreed that they don’t think of the environment when shopping.

3.2 Findings 2 – shopping preferences and environmental actions.

Two types of shopping preferences were analysed in more detail. Firstly, a comparison was made relating to both those who agreed or disagreed on whether they try to shop online as often as possible and relating to those who agreed or disagreed on whether they prefer shopping in physical stores to shopping online. This was done for five different questions about environmental shopping (see table 1).

For the question relating to shopping online as often as possible, several significant relationships were found. When asked how often they examine information on environmental attributes, there was a greater likelihood of doing so among the more regular online shoppers (69%), although just over half (51%) of the other group (disagreeing with the shopping online as much as possible statement) also said that they examined such information at least sometimes.

Responses to two questions on willingness to pay for a) products with environmentally friendly (EF) packaging and b) EF products showed that those who agreed about shopping online as often as they can were more likely to also agree about their willingness to pay for EF products/packaging. There was no significant difference between the online respondent groups on the question of whether price is more important than the environment, with more than half of both groups agreeing with that premise. Finally, there was a greater likelihood among those who agreed that they tried to shop online as often as possible also agreeing that 'don't tend to think about the environment when shopping'. This goes slightly against the other findings that indicate a greater likelihood to engage in green shopping behaviours among those who favour shopping online.

Regarding responses on preference for shopping in physical stores (the right half of table 1), there was a similar pattern of response on environmental shopping, although differences between the agree/disagree groups were slightly smaller than the differences in the agree/disagree groups for shopping online. Those who agreed that they prefer shopping in physical stores were more likely to examine information on environmental attributes (always, often or sometimes) and were also more likely to be willing to pay for EF packaging/products. They were also more likely to agree that they don't tend to think about the environment when shopping.

These results suggest that those who positively (i.e., respond agree/strongly agree) prefer shopping in stores or positively agree that they shop online as often as possible are more likely to give a positive response on the other questions. However, the admission that they 'don't tend to think about the environment when shopping' suggests that good intentions relating to the environment do not always translate in action simply because people are more likely to be thinking other factors when they are shopping, such as finding that right product, at the right price and completing the task quickly.

Table 1: online vs physical stores and environmental shopping attitudes and behaviours

Environmental shopping views/actions	**I try to shop online as much as I can**		**p-value**	**I prefer shopping in physical stores to shopping online**		**p-value**
	SA/A	SD/D		SA/A	SD/D	
Examining information on environmental attributes (A/O/S)	**66.7%**	**51.4%**	0.9999	**63.6%**	**55.5%**	0.9763
Examining information on environmental attributes (R/N)	**34.9%**	**48.6%**	0.0003	**36.4%**	**44.5%**	0.0257
WTP more for a product with EF *packaging* (SA/A)	**56.6%**	**32.2%**	1.0000	**52.6%**	**36%**	1.0000
WTP more for a product with EF *packaging* (SD/D)	**22.7%**	**43.9%**	0.0000	**23.9%**	**42%**	0.0000
WTP more for an EF *product* (SA/A)	**58.2%**	**38.3%**	1.0000	**56.3%**	**37%**	1.0000
WTP more for an EF *product* (SD/D)	**20.9%**	**41.1%**	0.0000	**23.7%**	**38.5%**	0.0001
When shopping, price is more important than environment (SA/A)	59.89%	54.2%	0.9181	59.9%	58.5%	0.6373
When shopping, price is more important than environment (SD/D)	**12.8%**	**21%**	0.0040	14.4%	16.5%	0.2425
Don't tend to think about the environment when shopping (SA/A)	**52.8%**	**41.6%**	0.9977	**52.3%**	**41%**	0.9972
Don't tend to think about the environment when shopping (SD/D)	**23.9%**	**36.9%**	0.0003	25.7%	32%	0.0477

WTP = willing to pay
EF = environmentally friendly
A/O/S = always/often/sometimes
R/N – rarely/never
SA/A = strongly agree/agree
SD/D = strongly disagree/disagree
*Figures in **bold** show a statistically significant difference

Table 2: Valued aspects of shopping and environmental shopping attitudes and behaviours

Environmental shopping views/actions	**Which of the following aspects of shopping in stores do you value the most? (please tick up to 3)**								
	Displays	Friends	New fashion	Touch products	Hunt excitement	Done quickly	Escape	Easy to find	Atmosphere
Don't think about environment when shopping (SA/A)	26%	**33.80%**	19.80%	**54.30%**	13%	24.70%	19.10%	**28.70%**	**6.60%**
Don't think about environment when shopping (SD/D)	22%	**26.90%**	16.80%	**64.70%**	14.30%	28%	19.20%	**38.50%**	**14.30%**
p-value									
Will take more time to ensure purchases are EF (SA/A)	**30.80%**	**34.60%**	**21%**	**53.70%**	16%	**22.50%**	20.30%	**29.20%**	10.20%
Will take more time to ensure purchases are EF (SD/D)	**16.40%**	**24.40%**	**11.40%**	**66.20%**	11.40%	**35.30%**	18.90%	**40.80%**	7.50%
p-value	1	0.9975	0.9997	0.0008	0.9541	0.0004	0.6688	0.0018	0.8847
Willing to pay more (products or packaging) (SA/A)	**31.50%**	**38.10%**	**23.20%**	**50%**	15.60%	24.60%	20.50%	**26.60%**	9%
Willing to pay more (products or packaging)	**18.30%**	**22.60%**	**12.10%**	**67.30%**	12.80%	29.20%	19.80%	**42%**	8.60%

(SD/D)									
p-value	1	1	0.9999	0	0.843	0.0998	0.58	0	0.5818
When shopping, price more important than environment (SA/A)	27.80%	33%	20%	**53.70%**	14.60%	24.40%	21.80%	32.40%	**16.20%**
When shopping, price more important than environment (SD/D)	22.60%	31.50%	19.50%	**62.30%**	15.10%	27.70%	19.50%	34.60%	**12%**
p-value	0.1897	0.6427	0.5521	0.0247	0.4408	0.2072	0.7345	0.3069	0.0195
Examining environmental attributes information (A/O/S)	**29.60%**	**34.40%**	**22%**	52.80%	14.60%	**23.30%**	20%	**29%**	9.50%
Examining environmental attributes information (R/N)	**16.60%**	**28.40%**	**12.50%**	58.60%	12.80%	**28.90%**	18.20%	**35.80%**	7.90%
p-value	1	0.9786	1	0.0345	0.7927	0.0244	0.764	0.0122	0.8104

WTP = willing to pay; EF = environmentally friendly
A/O/S = always/often/sometimes; R/N – rarely/never
SA/A = strongly agree/agree; SD/D = strongly disagree/disagree
*Figures in **bold** show a statistically significant difference

The second area of detailed analysis focused on what people value about shopping in physical stores. Table 2 shows responses to six questions on environmental actions (with the questions on product and packaging willingness to pay merged for this analysis), analysed according to responses on what people value when they are shopping in stores (see also figure 1). Significant differences were found in the percentages of consumers who valued a certain aspect of shopping, based on whether or not they demonstrated a pro-environmental attitude or behaviour. As noted in figure 3, the most popular (55%) response to the question of what people value when out shopping was being able to touch the product to evaluate its quality. There is no obvious pro-environmental pattern among those that selected the 'touch products' value.

There is a similarly mixed profile of environmental behaviours when considering each individual response on what people value about shopping in stores (looking down the columns in table 2). For example, among those who said that they value being able to see inspiring displays in the shops (‘displays’), there were significantly more who said that they were willing to take more time to find EF purchases and to pay more for such products. There was also a larger proportion of this groups who said that they examined environmental information on products than those that said they never did so (or rarely). However, there was not a pro-environmental finding among the ‘displays’ value group for the questions of whether they think about the environment or if price is more important.

When looking at each environmental shopping question separately, it is possible to form a profile of what they value about shopping in stores. Selecting only the pro-environmental groups of respondents, this can be summarised as follows:

- Disagree/Strongly disagree that they *don’t* think about the environment when shopping:
    - Less likely to value shopping with friends
    - More likely to value touching products
    - More likely to value when things are easy to find
    - More likely to value the atmosphere in store
- Agree/strongly agree that they are willing take more time to ensure purchases are EF:
    - More likely to value inspiring displays
    - More likely to value shopping with friends
    - More likely to value seeing what’s new or in fashion
    - Less likely to value touching products
    - Less likely to value getting it done quickly
    - More likely to value when things are easy to find
- Agree/strongly agree that they are willing to pay more for both EF products and packaging:
    - More likely to value inspiring displays
    - More likely to value shopping with friends
    - More likely to value seeing what’s new or in fashion
    - Less likely to value touching products
    - Less likely to value when things are easy to find
- Disagree/strongly disagree that price is more important than the environment when shopping:
    - More likely to value touching products
    - Less likely to value the atmosphere in store
- Always, often or sometimes examine environmental attributes information on products:
    - More likely to value inspiring displays

- More likely to value shopping with friends
- More likely to value seeing what's new or in fashion
- Less likely to value getting it done quickly
- Less likely to value when things are easy to find

4. Discussion and conclusion

Past research has sought to understand the causes of the attitude-behaviour gap for sustainable consumption. This paper sought to analyse green product purchasing behaviour, with reference general shopping preferences and habits. Analysis of a survey of 1022 UK consumers identified general attitudes to shopping and the environment as well as engagement in pro-environmental shopping behaviours. The objective was to identify any potential relationships between shopping preferences and environmental behaviours. Exploratory observations of patterns in shopper preferences, attitudes to environmental issues and reported pro-environmental actions found few obvious patterns in behaviour. In summary, no specific shopping styles – such as a preference for shopping online or in stores or taking pleasure from shopping or wanting to get it done quickly - indicate any greater tendency towards environmentally friendly shopping.

However, the willingness to take more time when shopping could be an avenue for further study. It makes sense that those who are usually willing to shop around for the best purchase are also more willing to do so when choosing green products. Those more willing to spend time looking for such products were found to be more likely to value aspects of shopping, such as inspiring displays and seeing what's new, that suggest time being taken gather information on what is available. In addition, they were also less likely to value getting the shopping done quickly. A similar values profile was found for those that always, often or sometimes examine environmental attributes information on products.

While this analysis has not generated any clear conclusions about the shopping styles and preferences of pro-environmental and non-environmental shoppers, it does confirm that there is diversity in behaviour within both groups. It could also promote the idea that pro-environmental shoppers have the same expectations as others, meaning that they want green goods to be easy to identify but also enjoy inspiring presentations of those goods.

Finally, although the cohort was split in terms of their environmental shopping behaviour, most people expressed pro-environmental views, which means that they all have the potential to increase the amount of sustainable shopping they do. Thus, overcoming barriers such as price and convenience are priorities for retailers of sustainable goods.

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