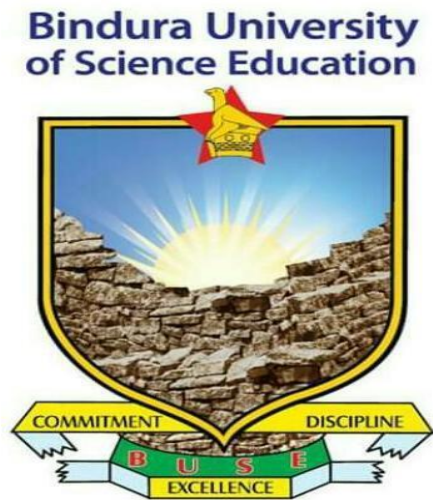


BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING



FACULTY OF COMMERCE

DISSERTATION RESEARCH PROJECT

**INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF RETAIL ATMOSPHERICS AND CUSTOMER
EXPERIENCE ON RETAIL STORE PATRONAGE: A CASE STUDY OF TM PICK
'N' PAY**

BY

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE BACHELOR OF COMMERCE HONORS DEGREE IN MARKETING OF
BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION**

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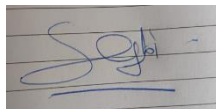
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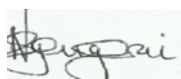
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DEDICATION

I would like to thank the Almighty for his grace throughout. I dedicate this research to my loving parents Mr and Mrs Chibi for their unwavering support that kept me strong.

ABSTRACT

The study serves to explore the effect of retail atmospherics and customer experience on retail store patronage in respect to customer of TM Pick ‘n’ Pay in Zimbabwe. With competition intensifying in the retail sector, supermarkets remain under pressure to remain to differentiate their brand through attractive store environments and superior shopping experiences, despite offering similar products and prices. The research seeks to ascertain how retail atmospherics and customer experience dimensions contribute towards customer’s willingness to patronize the store. The researcher used a casual and quantitative research so as to ascertain the relationship between retail atmospherics, customer experience and retail store patronage. A sample size of 384 customers were used, determined using Cochran’s formula. The researcher used a structures questionnaire in collecting data, using measurement scales for retail atmospherics, customer experience and retail store patronage. The data was analyses using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) as the inferential statistical method on the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and SPSS AMOS. Results obtained were presented in the form of tables. Hypothesis testing revealed that there is a positive relationship between retail atmospherics and retail store patronage. The three customer experience dimensions, moments of truth, peace of mind, and outcome focus on customer service do not have a positive impact of retail store patronage. The researcher recommended the need for TM Pick ‘n’ Pay management to invest in improving the physical store environment. This helps in enhancing customer perception and encouraging repeat patronage. Continuous staff training on product knowledge, communication, and customer care also plays a role in completing the store atmosphere and maintaining a positive retailer reputation

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My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor and all the marketing department team who provided me with direction throughout the research project. I am also grateful to my parents who provided me with financial resources and emotional support during the course of the research. Special mention goes to my best friend Simbarashe Wiziye, and my mentor Mrs Matimba who had my back throughout as support pillars in the completion of this research, their love is unmatched.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This research seeks to explore the effect of retail atmospherics and customer experience on store patronage with reference to TM Pick 'n' Pay retail stores. This study aims to analyse to what extent retail store atmospherics have an influence on customer satisfaction which will then increase patronage in the store. This section incorporates the background of the study, paving way for the section that looks into statement of the research problem. Hypothesis development and objectives of the study are also stressed in the chapter. It is later that it touches upon the purpose of the study, assumptions of the study, delimitations, definition of key terms and limitations of the study. Finally, this chapter presents the organization of the study and a summary of the chapters.

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

In the changing retail landscape, today people's expectations are no longer just about selling products and pricing. Retail has come a long way, and there's a greater focus on crafting a more immersive and engaging shopping experience. Elements like lighting, music, scents, layout, cleanliness and overall ambiance have a significant impact on customer behaviour and perception, collectively known as retail atmospherics. These sensory inputs are thoughtfully created to build up feelings, increase joy and of course their choice to visit a shop.

Customer experience is, however, the overall impression that a shopper has of the retail space, its employees, its products and its services. Positive critical incidents and a calm state of mind during customer service possess a high potential of building trust, increasing dwell time and generating repeat visits; negative critical incidents can have a negative impact on future customer visits. It was alluded that 89% of retail customers left after a onetime poor experience while, 86% preferred to spend more following a better experience Hishaw (2014).

TM Pick 'n' Pay is one of the leading retail supermarket brands in Zimbabwe, being a hybrid brand that combines the legacy of the Zimbabwean supermarket brand TM Supermarkets and the operational expertise and brand of Pick 'n' Pay, South Africa's retail giant. The JV was supposed to provide Zimbabwe with a unique experience and a world class shopping experience by modernising the retail market.

TM Pick 'n' Pay has matured to become an excellent retail chain, combining local market expertise with world class retail standards. It aims to understand the environmental factors that

have the greatest influence on consumer behaviour and their contribution when coupled with service quality and emotional involvement on subsequent visitation and preferences. It is perceived that customers behaviour towards their purchase are triggered by what they see and feel within the store.

A considerable number of customers mentioned that while the store has a range of products at relatively low prices, some outlets take great concern towards the attraction of the store, (Mouri, Bindroo and Ganesh 2015). They then went on to assert that certain retail outlets promotes peace and happiness while others do not. Therefore, customer experience is significant in the retail industry.

This research therefore, seeks to investigate to what extent does retail atmospherics and customer experience influence the willingness of customers to patronize a store and to ascertain whether a positive relationship exist between retail atmospherics and customer experience on store patronage

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

TM Pick 'n' Pay is facing a growing dilemma to differentiate its brand by offering customers better shopping experiences and attractive store experiences. Although there has been considerable investment in the design of stores, their layout, and delivery of services, most studies have been conducted on clothing stores or luxury stores and little effort has been made to revisit a store, with limited empirical understanding of how retail atmosphere and customer experiential factors directly affect the choice to patronize a store, (Nell,2017; Roschk et al.,2017).

However, many retail establishments in Zimbabwe still practise conventional merchandising techniques and fail to consider the psychological and emotional stimuli to which today's consumers react. This makes it difficult to retain customers, and despite offering the same type of product, the foot-traffic can vary. TM Pick 'n' Pay is a hybrid brand; a blend of local and international retailing concepts, and presents an interesting case study of how retail atmospherics and customer experience is affecting consumer loyalty.

Product availability and product prices are no longer the only factors affecting Zimbabwe's competitive retail environment, customer loyalty and continued patronage. This study thus

seeks to solve the problem statement by examining how retail atmospherics (lighting, music, layout and scent) and customer experience affect customer patronage at TM Pick 'n' Pay.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary goal of the study is to explore the impact of Retail atmospherics and customer experience on retail store patronage on TM Pick 'n' Pay.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the influence of retail atmospherics on retail shop patronage
2. To determine the impact of moments of truth on customer service on retail shop patronage
3. To determine the influence peace of mind on customer service have on retail shop patronage
4. To determine the impact of outcome focus on customer service on retail shop patronage

1.5 HYPOTHESIS STATEMENT

H1: A positive relationship exists between retail atmospherics and shop patronage

H: Moments of truth on customer service has a positive and significant relationship on retail shop patronage

H3: A positive relationship exists between peace of mind in customer service and retail shop patronage

H4: Retail store patronage is positively influenced by outcome focus on customer service

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to examine the effect of retail atmospherics and customer experience on retail shop patronage. The results are considered to improve the current knowledge in the retail field by offering new information.

1.6.1 To the researcher

The findings of this research will provide the researcher with a better understanding on the key retail concepts like atmospherics, customer experience and consumer behaviour. It will also

enable the researcher to gain proficiency in the process of academic research, data analysis and problem-solving in an actual business environment. This study will also allow the researcher to develop skills in retail and customer experience that can be transferred to a career in marketing, retail, or business consulting.

1.6.2 To the University

For the university, this research adds on to academic literature within the marketing and retail management. It can be referred to by future students and researchers who are interested in Retail strategies, consumer experience and customer retention particularly in a growing market such as Zimbabwe. It also provides opportunities for collaborations with retail enterprises such as TM Pick ‘n’ Pay for internships, joint research and student projects.

1.6.3 To TM Pick ‘n’ Pay

This study offers practical implications on the effects of retail atmospherics and customer experience on customer patronage. The results can assist TM Pick ‘n’ Pay in determining what features of the store help to attract, satisfy and retain customers, and how the store's design, customer service and marketing can be improved to remain competitive in the retail industry. This will also improve TM Pick ‘n’ Pay's reputation as a customer-centric retailer in Zimbabwe's changing landscape.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is done for a few selected branches of TM Pick ‘n’ Pay Zimbabwe. It was ideal to include all the stores in this research, however, due to financial and time constraints the researcher was not able to reach all the customers in Zimbabwe. The research is thus restricted to a specific academic year, and is based on customer perceptions and behaviours within that time frame.

1.8 STUDY LIMITATIONS

The findings of the study may not be representative of all TM Pick ‘n’ Pay branches across the country or of other retail chains as only a few selected TM Pick ‘n’ Pay branches have been studied. In the future, research has to be carried out that will involve all branches in Zimbabwe.

1.9 DEFINATION OF TERMS

Retail atmospherics- According to Kasi Raman et al (2021), retail atmospherics are the space inside and outside created to affects the customer's perception and buying behaviour. These dimensions encompass colours, smells and sounds.

Customer experience – Jyro B Trivino 2022 says that customer experience is a combination of touchpoints, emotions and particular context that influence customers' perceptions.

Shop patronage – Pan & Zinkhan (2006) has defined shop patronage as store choice and frequency of visiting a particular store depending on the service quality, product selection and store image.

Outcome focus – Relies on the end results or impact of a service as opposed to simply the process. An outcome is something you want to happen and how you assess the difference – Ailsa Cook (Matter of focus)

Moments of truth- Moments of truth are key critical interactions were a customer forms, or develop lasting impressions about a specific service or brand.

Peace of mind – When the customer feels that he has been assured a sense of trust, safety and emotional assurance. Peace of mind is achieved by treating a customer with respect, empathy and assurance during the interaction, Robert W. Lucas asks.

1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Framework of this research was outlined in this chapter. The research problem, background of the study, objectives and key definitions that guided the researcher and the hypotheses was also tackled by the chapter. A summary of the limitations and delimitations of the study and of its significance was covered in this chapter. The next chapter focuses on literature review relating to the topic under scrutiny.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Literature review that covers theoretical basis, conceptual framework and empirical studies is presented in this chapter. The chapter will start from theoretical review that will include the review of various theories of retail atmospherics and customer experience and continue with conceptual framework that seeks to explain the significance between the variables. The Penultimate is an empirical review of literature that includes the theoretical foundation of the study followed by Chapter summary.

2.1 THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.1.1 RETAIL ATMOSPHERICS

Retail atmospherics, also called buying environment, is a collection of elements deliberately designed to elicit certain emotional responses that increase and/or shape consumers' intentions and likelihood to shop at a particular retail store, Li et al (2009). Retail environments play a key role to and clearly communicate the identity of a brand and the store's image to customers in both explicit and implicit ways. The recent emergence of retailing conditions to a greater extent have created uncertainty for both retailers and customers with no idea as to what may

add value for long term growth and profitability Sinha and Banerjee, (2004). Retail store atmospherics—retail interior design, interior décor—has a profound impact on the crafting of an amazing experience for customers.

Today's customers' expectation of the shopping experience is higher where they want to engage their senses in a more amazing and fun way. Customers are more concerned of how they feel after purchasing their products, hence they take consideration in what they buy and where they purchase it from. Thus, it is the task and duty of the retail management to try their best to make customers satisfied while shopping, Chen & Hsieh, (2011). The goal of store atmosphere is to stimulate customer's emotions, so that they will return to the store again and again, as Bagdare (2015) states.

2.1.2 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

One of the biggest priorities for all retailers is to offer excellence and outstanding customer experience. Hinshaw (2014), found out that 89% of retail customers left after a single poor experience, while, 86% were likely to spend more with an excellent experience. Because of this, retailers transformed from generally displaying products or services but also on creating memorable shopping experience to retain customers to the store again.

2.1.2.1 Outcome focus on customer service

The presence of "outcome focus" in the retail sector is all about changing a narrow focus on customer service to providing measurable and profitable outcomes to the customer. This can result in a more personalized and effective experience, but could also have a detrimental impact if not backed up with an understanding of process efficiency. Sheth et al (2020) alluded that with the emergence of hypercompetitive markets customer support service is critical for the success of a business. After a positive customer experience with support services, 90% of customers are more likely to return to the store and refer/encourage others to visit the store (Salesforce Research, 2021).

2.1.2.2 Peace of mind on customer service

Klaus & Makina, (2013), points out that peace of mind on the customer service will lead to emotional benefits which customers will receive in accordance to what they believe the service provider will offer them. Deshwal and Krishna (2016), went on to indicate that the concept implies to customer's evaluation of how the service operate daily. Various types of emotions can be elicited, Emotions are groups in various ways and they interpret proper information on how customers will ultimately evaluate the quality of the service customers experience (Choo et al.,2018).

2.1.2.3 Moments of truth of customer service

Moments of truth on Customer Service are defined by De Jong & De Ruyter as cited in Klaus & Maklan (2012) as the service provider's influence on the customer that will induce the customer to reconsider his buying of service provider's products at the specific store following service failure. In these critical points, a customer forms an opinion which will help them to choose a store to patronize in the long run Ko, (2020). According to Roy (2018) service critical incidents highlights the importance of service provider's reaction on service recovery when problems occur.

2.1.3 Retail Patronage

Chen and Hsieh (2011) confirm that customers' decisions to patronize a store is influenced by how the service provider treat the customer. Leenders et al. (2019) went on to suggest that service providers should take into consideration the design of the store to trigger certain emotions in customers. When they are in a happy and excited state, customers are more likely to return to the store. Retailers that care about sustainability adopt strategies that will not only keep their customers coming in but also help them attract potential customers, such as through strategies that encourage customers to come back to the store (Singh et al. 2019).

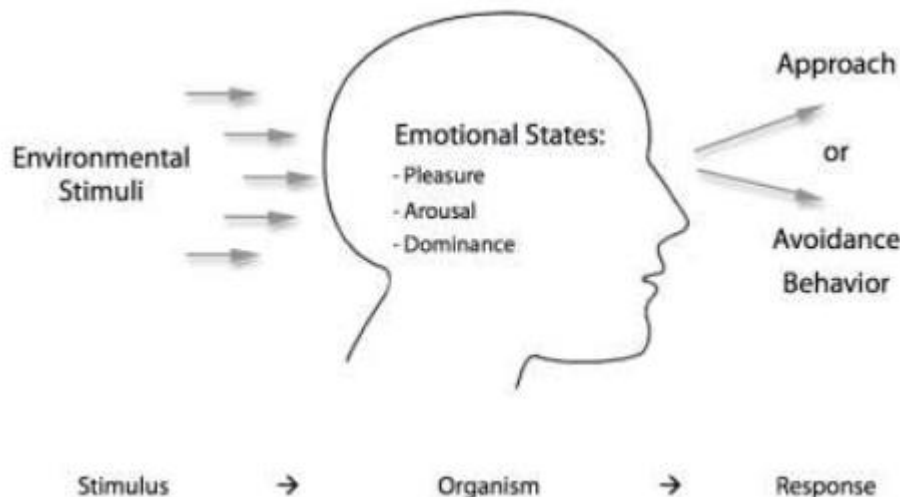
2.2 THEORETICAL LITERATURE

2.2.1 STIMULUS ORGANISM-RESPONSE THEORY

Mehrabian and Russel (1974) proposed the Stimuli- Organism-Response theory which suggest that customer's internal emotions are triggered by the by the external environment. This internal stimulus processing may be conscious or unconscious and perceptions affect the feelings and decisions of the customers. This theory gave rise to the study of the behaviour of consumers according to the retail sector. The S-O-R model formed the basis to analysing the behaviour of customers in the three aspects that is external environment (S), customer evaluation of atmospherics (O) and avoidance behaviour (R) (Mehrabian & Russel (1977)).

This is because there is no competing framework identifies, and as such, this model has been adopted widely to explain how atmospherics impact customers' behaviour and emotions.

Figure 1: Stimulus Organism –Response Model



Source: Donovan and Rosstiter,1982

The figure illustrates the significance retail atmospherics has on customer's emotions which then determines their purchase or ignorance. Pleasure refers to the feeling that arouse in customers after a particular situation. Approach behaviour refers to a customer's willingness to participate and engage. In contrast, avoidance behaviour indicates a negative experience where a customer is annoyed and frustrated with the whole experience. Donovan and Rositer, (1982) alluded that the overall emotion state is therefore influenced by a combination of pleasure together with arousal, plus a third dominance to some degree.

- Stimulus refers to the authentic customer emotions which are triggered by the overall store atmospherics.
- Organism refers to how customers evaluate and assess the entire experience.
- Response deals with the ultimate response or the result of the customer's behaviour

2.2.1.1 The influence of Stimulus Organism-Response theory on Retail patronage

Stimulus

Hope (2014) alluded customers expect that retailers should arrange their stores in a way that matches with their lifestyles. Organising stores in alignment with customer's feelings becomes crucial and retailers must keep it in mind to adhere to the trends and patterns of the developments in the industry. This is to ensure customers experience a pleasant and amazing time in the store, (Dooley, Jones, Iverson, 2012).

It is therefore of great significance for retailers to take into consideration the overall atmospherics of a store to stimulate customer's emotions and behaviour towards the store, Krishna (2012). Aboiron & Aubin, (2016) went on to suggest that it is the responsibility of retailers to create a pleasant shopping environment for customers.

Organism

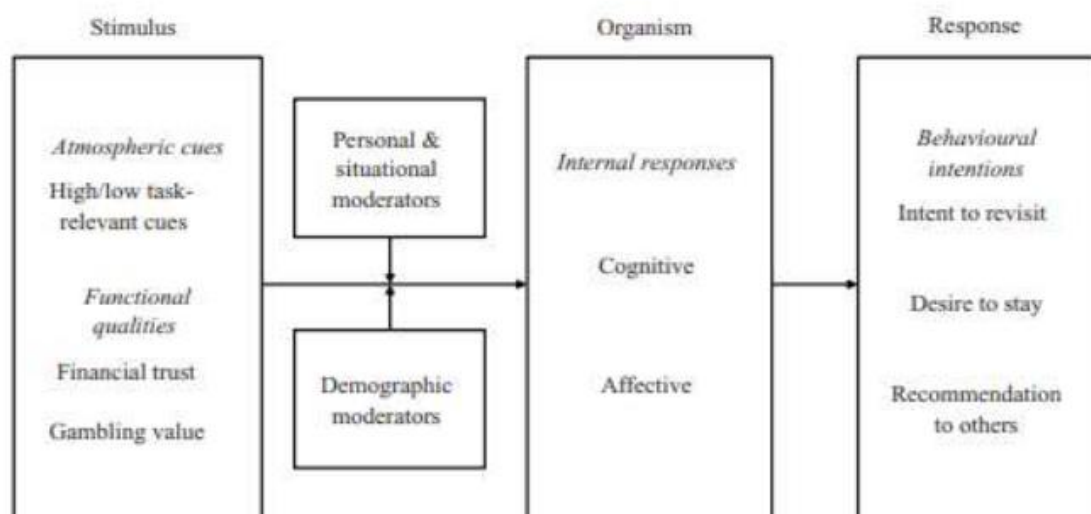
Ariningsih, Nainggolan, Sandy, & Widyasti (2016) has suggested that the environmental atmospherics in a store can significantly cause retailers to influence the behaviour of customers.

Turkay, Golab and Podnar (2013) agree stating that customer's perception of the store quality influence their ability to patronize the store.

Response

Response refers to how customers behave after the shopping experience which can either be an approach or avoidance. In essence, the behavioural intentions of the customers are influenced by stimuli and organism (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Ishar & Roslin alluded that since retailers often offer similar products any amount of dissatisfaction causes an emotional reaction that shapes the way customers will perceive the store. Harun, Wahid, Rashid and Kassim (2018) went on to add that customers behaviour towards the layout of the store highly impacts their intention to revisit the store.

Figure 2: Model of consumer responses to retail atmospherics

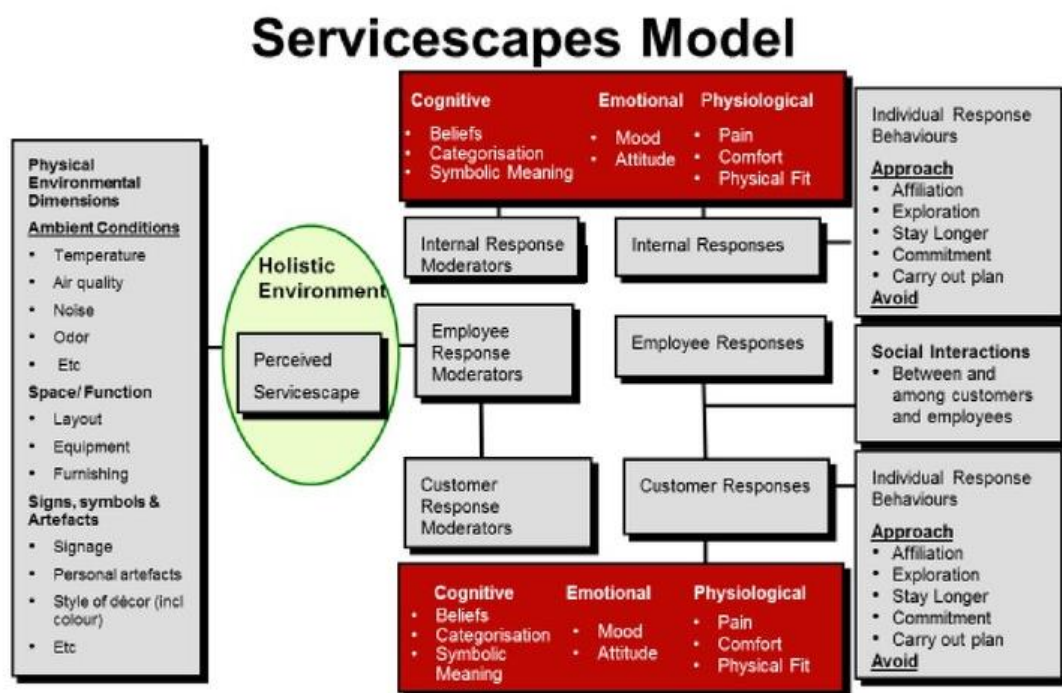


Source: Abarbanel, 2013

2.2.2 SERVICESCAPE THEORY

Servicescape model is a framework which explores how the physical environment influence employee and customer's behaviour especially the desire to stay or leave. Baker (1987) and Bitner (1986) indicated that the ability of physical environments to attract customers and to create a pleasant experience is particularly apparent for service business like hotels, restaurants, banks and retail stores. Berry and Clarke (1986), alluded that even before a purchase, customers commonly take into consideration the cues of the store's quality. Kim, M., & Lee (2023) suggests that ambient factors of a store directly impacts and triggers customer's emotions which as a result drives patronage

Figure 3: Servicescape model



2.2.3 EXPECTANCY DISCONFIRMATION THEORY, OLIVER 1980

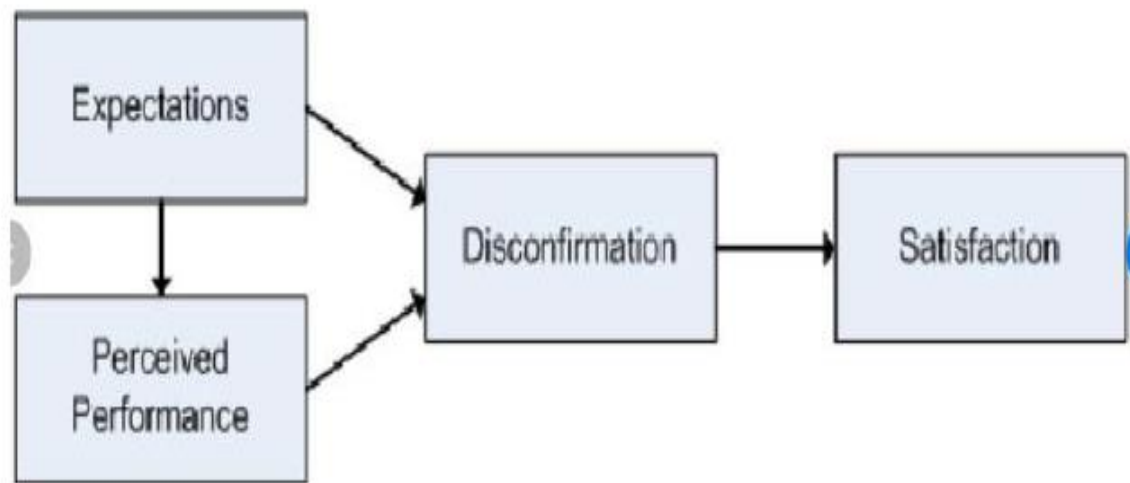
Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) explains that customer satisfaction arises due to a cognitive process comparing customer's expectations with perceived performance, Richard Oliver (1980). While Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory focuses on product or service performance, it can be directly applied to the sensory stimuli of retail atmospherics to explain how store environments impact customer satisfaction, hence store patronage

2.2.3.1 Key concepts of EDT applied to retail atmospherics

- **Expectations:** Before entering a store, customers have pre-purchase expectations based on past experiences, reputation, advertising, and word-of-mouth. These aren't just about the products, but also about the store's "atmosphere," including how they expect it to look, feel, and sound.
- **Perceived performance:** This is the customer's actual experience of the store's sensory environment, including lighting, music, scent, layout, and cleanliness. It's how the retail atmospheric elements perform in reality.
- **Disconfirmation:** This is the psychological result of comparing expectations with perceived performance. The outcome can be one of three types:
 - **Positive disconfirmation:** This refers to a situation where the store environment exceeds the customer's expectation which causes satisfaction and more delight. For example, a customer might expect a pleasant but typical store experience but is delighted by the engaging music, unique layout, and distinctive scent.
 - **Negative disconfirmation:** The store atmosphere falls short of expectations, leading to dissatisfaction. For instance, a customer who expects a clean, well-organized store may be displeased by poor lighting, clutter, and an unpleasant odour

The figure indicates the paradigm

Figure 4: Expectation disconfirmation theory



Source: *Anic and Radas (2006)*

The theory therefore assumes that a positive relationship exists between retail atmospherics and customer satisfaction which will lead to retail patronage

2.2.4 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE FRAMEWORK, SCHMITT (1999)

Providing an outstanding retail customer experience happens to be one of the key objective for many retailers. If retailers successfully deliver a pleasant customer experience that triggers customer behaviour, customer's intention to purchase at the store arises, hence store patronage. Abbott (1955), posits that people do not really desire mere products but satisfying experiences. The theory was notably implemented and formalized by Berd Schmitt in 1999, who suggested the use of strategic experiential modules(SEMs) to target specific customer's experiences, including sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational modules.

2.3 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.3.1. Retail atmospherics and retail patronage

Das (2026) said that a wider variety of products are more likely to draw and keep customers at retail outlets. But diversity of merchandise is by itself not enough to ensure customer loyalty. Another key factor that influences shopper loyalty is the hospitality given to them when they are in the shop. According to Chen and Hsieh (2011) the way that customers are treated, in terms of being warm, respectful and attentive, is a key driver of their intentions to return to a

store. In order to do this, retailers need to provide warm service events that will make the customer feel appreciated during the shopping experience.

Appearance of the store is essential as well. From the outside to the inside of the store, customers are making impressions. Factors like the exterior look, interior layout, decoration, layout and general appearance should be adequately crafted to grab and hold customers' attention. If the retail environment is appealing and engaging then there is more positive shopper response, more shopper time spent in the outlet and a stronger intention to return. According to Anderson (2007), an appealing store design can elicit positive approach behaviour such as greater interest in return visits to the store.

Likewise, Chang, Cho and Turner (2015) argue that atmospheric cues impact customers' emotional and psychological response to a retail setting. Good conditions in the environment could create positive emotions, excitement and satisfaction for the shoppers. This positive emotional reaction then can reinforce the customer's bond with the outlet and enhance the likelihood that they will return. Thus, at least in part, store patronage is a behavioural reaction to the feelings engendered by the retail environment.

Retailers have to therefore incorporate well thought-out atmospheric tactics that stimulate the senses and emotions of their clients. This can include making changes to the store's layout, product display, lighting, cleanliness, décor, scent, music and quality of customer interaction. Velasco Vizcaíno (2018) proposes that these environmental and experiential properties may capture customers' interest and draw their attention to return to a specific retail outlet.

The literature reviewed in sum shows that the retail atmospherics have a distinct impact on customers' perceptions, emotional responses and behavioural intentions. A positive retail environment will most likely promote repeat visits and build store loyalty. The study is based on the following hypothesis:

H1: Retail atmospherics are positively related to store patronage.

2.3.2 Moments of truth and store patronage

Moments of truth on customer service can significantly impact customer behaviour in a retail set up. Such interactions possess authentic information and seamless experience, which then lead to customers having positive perceptions of the retail store. It is assumed that customers are willing to spend more time in a store with a favourable experience. However, the degree to which customers' perceive the store's service are not solely clear. Retailers are therefore obliged to work and keep with the standards to please customers, Berman & Evans, (2010).

If some critical incidents do not meet customers' baseline expectations, dissatisfaction and negative feedback. It is difficult for a retail store to track all interactions within the store either they can be recurring experiences. Ensuring consistency and quality across these interactions is therefore of great significance to increase patronage of a store. In essence to this relationship, the following hypothesis is formed:

H2: There is a positive relationship between moments of truth on customer service and retail patronage

2.3.3. Peace of mind on customer service and store patronage

In psychology, peace of mind is usually considered as psychological status free from worry, stress, and emotional uneasiness (Lee et al., 2013). Customer satisfaction is a crucial goal for businesses as it leads to repeat customers, positive word of mouth and higher profits. Customers may not remember specific interactions or actions, but they will remember the emotions that they felt during their experiences, as stated by Angelou and Wirts (2013). Thus, managing customer experiences in multiple customer service encounters becomes critical. Indeed, many service situations are characterized by direct customer-frontline worker interaction, and how

these interactions are carried out is a major determinant of customer perceptions and the likelihood of their future behaviour.

Comfort, trust, and decreased anxiety are all factors that increase customer satisfaction during service interactions and encourage positive attitudes toward the company and repeat business. Based on this theoretical point of view, the following hypothesis is put forth:

H3: There is a positive correlation between peace of mind in customer service and shoppers' patronization.

2.3.4 Outcome Focus in Customer Service and Store Patronage

Klaus and Maklan (2012) state that outcome focus is linked to the reduction of effort, time and costs for customers to hunt for and evaluate service providers. This dimension emphasises the importance of customer experiences that are centred on achieving desired goals and obtaining solutions that effectively meet customer needs (Roy, 2018). Outcome focus can also be understood as the capacity of the firm to provide a meaningful value to its customers through the service experiences, which in turn, leads to positive customer responses and memorable service experiences.

One of the major goals of service delivery with outcomes is to minimise transaction costs. Hsu and Lin (2020) defined transaction costs as all the costs, monetary, temporal, and psychological, that consumers experience when making a purchase. According to Fletcher and Gbadamosi (2022), consumers make ongoing evaluations of such costs when they are obtaining and evaluating information about a product/service. If organisations are able to achieve this reduction in costs, and ease the purchasing process, customers will see more value and convenience. Such positive attitudes are likely to lead customers to stay longer and become more loyal to the shop and continue to patronize the shop in the long run.

With reference to the above discussion, the following hypothesis is presented:

H3: This positive relationship is the following hypothesis: **H4:** Outcome focus in customer service is positively related to store patronage.

2.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Within the conceptual framework, retail atmospherics, peace of mind, moments of truth and outcome focus on customer service are found to influence retail store patronage

2.4.1 Independent variables

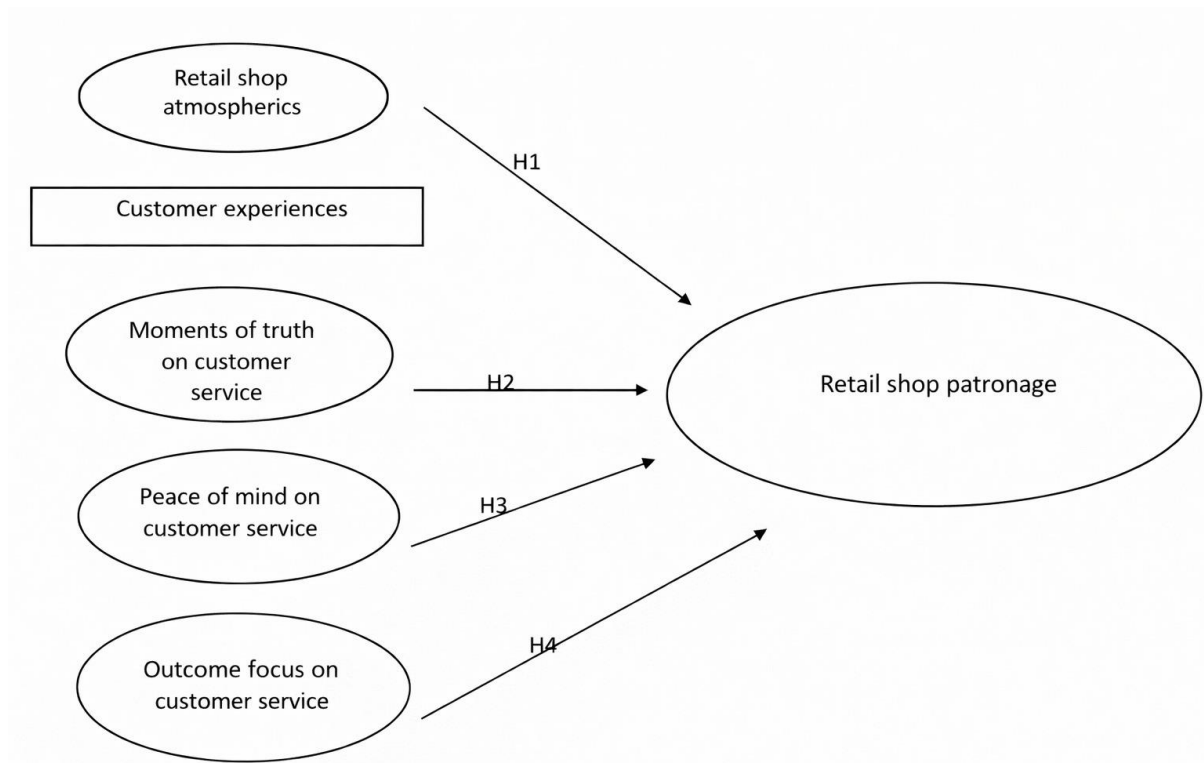
- Retail store atmospherics
- **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**
- Peace of mind on customer service
- Outcome focus on customer service
- Moments of truth on customer service

2.4.2 Dependant variables

- Retail store patronage

This research is based on the following framework:

Figure 5: Conceptual framework



In the above conceptual frame work, it is depicted that this research is much dependent on understanding the role of retail atmospherics and role of customer experience (represented by three sub contracts) in influencing the retail shop patronage. The essence to the proposed framework was four hypotheses were formulated and aimed at understanding each construct.

2.4.3 Hypothesis statements:

H1: There is positive correlation between retail shop atmospherics and retail shop patronage.

H2: Relationship between service' moments of truth and retail shop patronage exists.

H3: A positive relationship exists between the peace of mind on customer service and retail shop patronage.

H4: There is a positive correlation between outcome focus on customer service and retail shop patronage

2.5. RESEARCH GAP

Existing knowledge body displays findings of different research. Although a lot of research has been conducted in the area of store atmosphere, store design and customer service, most of the research has been carried out in clothing or luxury goods industries and there is little research in grocery stores and non-purchase related behaviours such as time spent in the store and intentions to revisit the store, which indicates limited empirical knowledge of the direct link between store atmosphere and customer service, and shop patronage behaviour.

Further, there are many shops in Zimbabwe that still use traditional merchandising methods, which do not consider the psychological and emotional motivators that are needed to stimulate action by modern consumers. This gave the researcher the nerve to carry out this investigation and broaden the knowledge from a single supermarket retail outlet.

2.6. CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter we have been working on linking the study topic to relevant literature. The knowledge base of the subject area was revised according to the existing situation. Information in huge detail regarding aspects on store atmospherics were covered in this chapter and their interconnections. Some concepts that are presented to illustrate the aspects mentioned were included to illustrate their complexity and potential interconnections between them. The theoretical base for this study was provided in this chapter including explanations of the major research variables, and findings from empirical studies. The next chapter is a description of the research methodology used by the researcher in collecting the data that he will need to answer the research question.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

A discussion of the research design, population, sample, sampling procedure, research instruments, and data collection procedure, validity and reliability issue is presented in this chapter. It examines on different types of techniques and methods used in collecting information and data from the respondents. All the above mentioned makes up the methodology to be used in the study.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design refers to the concepts and techniques proposed by a researcher in a particular study. It is a master plan that outlines the steps and procedures used for gathering and analysing data. the procedures and methods for gathering and analysing the required data. The study adopted a casual research design. To have an overview of how independent variables influence the dependant variables, adopting a casual research design can be appropriate. The independent variables are retail atmospherics and customer experience, while the dependant variable is retail patronage This implies the aim of the of the research was to establish whether store atmospherics and customer experience significantly influence customer's decisions to patronise TM Pick 'n' Pay

A quantitative research design was also employed. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, alluded that quantitative research make use of measurable data to develop facts and expose patterns in research. This approach was appropriate as the required statistical testing of hypotheses using structured questionnaires and inferential statistics. The researcher used questionnaires in carrying out the study.

3.2 TARGET POPULATION

Target population is defined as a set of group of individuals where the researcher will obtain information from, Polit and Hungler (1999). The target population for this research constituted customers who shop at TM Pick 'n' Pay and these include regular shoppers, occasional shoppers and walk in customers. The study focused on customers aged 18 years and above who had previously shopped at the store as they are capable of evaluating the store's atmosphere and their overall shopping experience.

3.3 SAMPLING FRAME

The sampling frame comprised customers who were physically present at the store during the data collection period and regular shoppers who had an experience with TM Pick 'n' Pay. Since obtaining a complete customer database was not feasible, customers exiting the store were approached to participate. This ensured the researcher with accurate data as customers could provide accurate responses.

3.4 SAMPLE SIZE

Kothari (2004), explained sample size as the number of people to be selected to represent the total population. It therefore translates to the number of items drawn from a population to ensure accurate results. Due to financial constraints and time the whole population cannot be observed. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2005), alluded researcher's requirements should be in alignment with the sample size in essence of confidence level and preferred error rate. Below is a table of sample size by Saunders.

Table 1: Sample size for various population sizes at 95% level of certainty

POPULATION	5%	3%	2%	1%
50	44	48	49	50
100	79	91	96	99
150	108	132	141	148
200	132	168	185	196

250	151	203	226	244
300	168	234	267	291
400	196	291	434	384
500	217	340	414	475
750	254	440	571	696
1000	278	516	706	906
1200	300	578	810	1071
2000	322	696	1091	1655
5000	357	879	1622	3288
10000	370	964	1936	4899
100 000	383	1056	2345	8762
1 000 000	384	1066	2395	9513
10 000 000	384	1067	2400	9595

Source: Saunders et al (2005, p 67)

As the total number of TM Pick ‘n’ Pay customers is large and fluctuates daily, the researcher adopted the **Cochran’s formula** to determine the sample size for data collection.

$$N = Z^2 * p * q / e^2$$

Where:

n= sample size

Z=Z-value at 95% confidence level (1.96)

P=estimated proportion of the population (0.5 used for maximum variability)

q=1-p

e=margin of error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5) (0.5)}{(0.5)^2}$$

$$n = 384$$

Thus, the recommended sample size was 384 respondents.

3.5 SAMPLING PROCEDURES

According to Ogula (2005), sampling is a method of selecting a smaller group of subjects to represent greater group. It's about selecting a suitable number of people, whose answers will give reliable answers about the whole study population. In this research, a probability sampling method was used namely systematic sampling. This was done by inviting every kth customer who left each selected TM Pick 'n' Pay branch to participate under this procedure. This reduced sampling bias and increased the chance that the sample was a true representation of the broader customer population, as a predetermined selection interval was employed, which limited the researcher's personal influence on the selection of participants.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

Data collection instruments are the tools and procedures used in collecting and measuring the variables being studied in a research. Research instruments provide a way for researchers to measure and operationalise constructs like retail atmospherics, customer experience and store patronage as noted by Takona (2002). Empirical research is carried out by using instruments such as questionnaires and interviews to collect information from the subjects in the research. Then the respondents of primary data were chosen to be questionnaire for present study.

3.6.1 QUESTIONNAIRE

A structured questionnaire was used to get the information from the selected respondents first hand. According to Babbie (2001), questionnaire is an organised research instrument that

contains series of carefully formulated questions with which the respondents are expected to answer information relevant to a specific research study.

The questionnaire is designed based on the objectives of the study, and each section gave information needed to answer the research questions. It was broken up into different sections. The first part collected the demographic information of the respondents. The second section consisted of 16 statements to gauge the customers' perception of the retail atmosphere. The third section contained six statements measuring peace of mind as an aspect of CX. The fourth section comprised of five items that focused on moments of truth between customers and service employees. The last section had 4 outcome focus statements. A complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

The questionnaire was deemed as appropriate since it converted the research objectives to specific questions which were understandable by the respondents and could be responded to the same questions. The fact that it was structured allowed to gather comparable information from a relatively high number of customers. The standardised responses also reduced the coding, statistical analysis and data comparison from one participant to another. In addition, the instrument provided respondents with an organized forum in order to voice their opinions regarding the key variables included in the study.

3.6.2 MEASUREMENT SCALES

3.6.2.1 Retail Atmospherics

A measurement scale was created based on the study on Retail Store Patronage of Supermarkets in Emerging Economies to assess retail atmospherics. It was developed in 2020 by Charles Dokcen, Vincent Obedgiu and Gideon Nkuruziza. Each statement was rated by the respondents on a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). There were 16 items measuring three general aspects of the store environment: ambient conditions, store design, and customer service.

3.6.2.2 Customer Experience

Customer experience was assessed by means of an instrument that was adapted from the Klaus and Maklan research article 'Towards a Better Measure of Customer Experience' (International Journal of Market Research). There were three dimensions that were measured when it came to customer experience: peace of mind, moments of truth, and outcome focus. Each statement was rated by the participants on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 - Strongly Disagree to 7 - Strongly Agree.

The reported reliability coefficients of previous evaluations of the scale were strong (0.92 – 0.97). The instrument was also found to have satisfactory convergent and discriminant validity. The results of these psychometric properties showed that the scale had the ability to be consistent in measuring the dimensions of customer experience that were intended to be measured and was found to be suitable for use in this study.

3.6.2.3 Retail Store Patronage

Patrons' retail store patronage was measured using a scale from the study by Flavio Bizarrias et al. (2011), Perception of Quality and Retail Service Environment and Its Impact on Patronage Intention. Participants were asked to mark their agreement or disagreement on a 7-point Likert scale. The answer choices were numbered from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

Previous to the present study, the instrument has achieved reliability coefficients of 0.92 to 0.97 which indicate that the instrument is internally consistent. Acceptable convergent and discriminant validity was also found. These findings justified the appropriateness of the scale to capture the customers' intention and behavioural tendency to continue using the retail store under study.

3.7 PILOT STUDY

The study was undertaken with 20 customers of TM Pick 'n' Pay who were regular customers of the store. The people involved in the pilot exercise were not part of the final sample. The pilot study was conducted to ensure that the items on the questionnaire were clear and

understandable and relevant to the study. It also aimed to target questions that may have multiple interpretations, approximate the time to respond to the instrument and make an initial determination of the reliability of the measurement scales.

The feedback given in the pilot exercise showed that the respondents generally understood the questionnaire and were able to complete the questionnaire with no major problems. However minor revisions have been made for the better clarification of some words and phrases. The average time it took for respondents to complete the questionnaire was about 10 minutes. This completion period illustrated the instrument's feasibility and its ability to be completed during the period of major data collection without an undue burden to the respondent.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The researcher first requested the management of TM Pick 'n' Pay to grant permission to conduct research in the selected branches by sending a formal request for the permission before collecting the data from customers. After obtaining permission, questionnaires were handed to sampled customers upon completing their shopping. Data collection was done in 2 weeks.

The respondents' willingness to participate in the investigation was the only criterion for participation. No customer was forced to fill in the questionnaire, and it was ensured that the identity of the customers participating in the study was kept confidential throughout the study. Ethical measures were followed in all respects to ensure that the respondents were approached and treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

3.8.1 PRIMARY DATA

The main source of data was the TM Pick 'n' Pay customers themselves and questionnaires were administered to them after obtaining the necessary permission from the store management. The data collection from the respondents allowed the researcher to get data in relation to the objectives and the variables of the study.

One of the key strengths of primary data was that it gave up-to-date and problem-specific information about the research. This made the information more relevant and bolstered the

usefulness of the information in relation to the study objectives. But the researcher was aware of the challenging situation of primary data collection as it involves a huge amount of time, labour, logistics and cost.

3.9 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

3.9.1 Validity

Validity refers to the amount to which the research instrument measures the concept that it was designed to measure and not an unrelated concept. According to Bryman and Cramer (2011) and Lancaster (2005) validity is connected with the accuracy, credibility and appropriateness of the measurements that a research instrument produces.

The focus of this investigation was on construct validity that is, whether the questionnaire is representative of the variables identified in the conceptual framework. To do so, the questionnaire was divided into sections, which measured each specific construct from the research objectives. Any weaknesses in the wording or ordering of the measurement items were modified to better represent the variables to be measured.

The Average Variance Extracted was used for the convergent validity. AVE value of more than 0.50 for an item was considered acceptable indicating that the items accounted for an adequate amount of variance of that item. Discriminant validity was tested by comparing the AVE values with the squared correlation between the constructs. For each variable, the AVE was higher than the respective squared inter-construct correlations. This indicated that the constructs were empirically distinguishable, and that each scale represented a concept that was different enough from the other scales.

3.9.2 Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which a research instrument is able to give stable and consistent measurements. Saunders et al. (2005) state that a reliable instrument is one that will produce consistent results when used in similar conditions.

Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the retail atmospherics, customer experience and retail store patronage scales. The coefficient can vary between 0 and 1, with the higher the coefficient, the more homogeneous the items in a scale. Reliability testing was then conducted to establish if the items used in the questionnaire were coherent in measuring each of the constructs and the data collected were sufficiently reliable to use in subsequent statistical analysis.

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION PROCEDURES:

According to Shamoo (2003), data analysis is a systematic procedure that includes the statistical and logical analysis, organization and interpretation of data collected. The questionnaires were completed after which the responses were checked, coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 20 for processing and analysis.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were summarised using descriptive statistics obtained from SPSS. Frequency distributions and tables gave an organised presentation of the data and allowed important patterns in the responses to be easily understood. The presentation in these forms also enhanced the clarity and accessibility of the results.

To assess the internal consistency of measurement scales, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated. Then, using the framework of the study, the structural equation modelling was used to investigate the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. This method allowed the researcher to examine the proposed relationships of retail atmospherics, customer experience and retail store patronage.

3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Polit and Hungler (2006), research ethics is moral duties and professional standards governing the actions of a research as it is planned and as results are reported. Formal permission was received from the University and management of TM Pick n Pay prior to beginning the research. Institutional and organisational approval ensured the investigation was done within the appropriate ethical and administrative parameters.

The study did not require very sensitive personal data from the respondents. Participants were contacted appropriately and told that their participation was an optional one. They were also informed that the information provided would remain confidential and for academic purposes only. Anonymity and the privacy of the respondents were safeguarded when administering the questionnaires, storing the data, analysing and presenting the data. These procedures ensured the rights, dignity and welfare of the participants were respected throughout the research process.

3.12 SUMMARY

This chapter presented and explained the methodology used in the investigation. It explained the research design, target population, sampling procedures, sample size and sample data collection. Based on the results, a structured questionnaire was considered the main instrument since it allowed the collection of standardised information from TM Pick 'n' Pay customers. The chapter also described the scales of measuring retail atmospherics, customer experience and retail store patronage. Methods of analysing and presenting the data were also presented which included use of descriptive statistics, Cronbach's Alpha and Structural Equation Modelling. Reliability and validity were taken care of to show the consistency and appropriateness of the measuring instrument. Prior to the main survey, a pilot survey was performed to assess the clarity and practicality as well as the reliability of the questionnaire. Some minor changes were then made to enhance the instrument. The chapter also presented the ethical considerations that were used in the study such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, institutional approval and respect for respondents. The findings of the data collection process are presented, analysed and interpreted in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter focuses on analysing and presenting all data retrieved from customers that shop at TM Pick 'n' Pay. Data obtained from distributed questionnaires during the research was analysed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). To begin with, the chapter indicates the rate at which customers participated in the research clearly followed by the demographic data of respondents. The study seeks to analyse the influence retail atmospherics and customer experience have on encouraging customers to patronize the store. After data collection, results obtained were closely linked to the objectives of the study which includes, the relationship between retail atmospherics and retail patronage, moments of truth on customer service and retail patronage, peace of mind on customer service and retail patronage, outcome focus on customer service and retail patronage. The researcher used a sample size of 384 respondents and SPSS AMOS was used to analyse the data.

4.1 QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE RATE

384 copies of questionnaires were distributed to both regular customers and walk-in customers during the data collection period. Out of the distributed questionnaires, 332 were successfully completed and returned whilst 53 questionnaires were ignored. Having this, a response rate of 86% was obtained which is highly favourable.

Table 2: Questionnaire response rate

QUESTIONNAIRES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Administered	384	100%
Collected and returned	332	86.6%
Not returned	52	13.4%

Source: Primary data

The response rate of 86.4% was considered satisfactory for the study. This is supported by Birkman (2014) who alluded that any response rate that exceeds 70% is adequate for a quantitative research. High response rate was attributed to customers who volunteered to participate in the research as well as the researcher's direct administration of questionnaires within the retail stores, which increased participation and reliability of responses.

4.1.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

This section unpacks the demographic information of respondents that participated. The characteristics under demographics include gender, age, marital status, education level, occupation, monthly income, household size, approximate distance and mode of transport.

TABLE 3: PROFILE OF DEMOGRAPHICS

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage of frequency %
----------	----------	-----------	------------------------------

Gender	Male	146	44
	Female	186	56
Total		332	100
Age	Below 19 years	13	3.9
	20-29 years	80	24.1
	30-39 years	94	28.3
	40-49 years	91	27.4
	50-59 years	54	16.3
Total		332	100
Marital status	Single	111	33.4
	Married	154	46.4
	Widowed	47	14.2
	Separated	20	6.0
Total		332	100
Education level	Secondary	48	14.5
	Diploma	84	25.3
	Undergraduate degree	109	32.8
	Master's degree	57	17.2
	PhD	34	10.2
Total		332	100
Occupation	Housewife	27	8.1

	Paid employment	143	43.1
	Business person	77	23.2
	Retired civil servant	51	15.4
	Student	33	9.9
	Other	1	3
Total		332	100
Monthly income	Less than 99	30	9.0
	100-149	29	8.7
	150-199	45	13.6
	200-1200	158	47.6
	1210-1500	55	16.6
	Above 1 500	15	4.5
Total		332	100
Household size	1-3	101	30.4
	4-6	158	47.6
	7-9	65	19.6
	10-12	8	2.4
	13-15	0	0
	Above 15	0	0
Total		332	100
Approximate distance	Less than 1 Km	30	9.0
	1-2Km	130	39.2
	3-4Km	124	37.3

	5-6Km	39	11.7
	Above 6Km	9	2.7
Total		332	100
Mode of transport	Two wheeler	9	2.7
	Public transport	147	44.3
	Personal Car	122	36.7
	Company Car	40	12.0
	Other	14	4.2
Total		332	100

Source: Primary data

The above table clearly shows that out of 322 questionnaires received from the customers, females were majority of the respondents (56%) while males (44%). The result revealed that the women are the predominant shoppers at TM Pick 'n' Pay stores. The age group 30-39 years old made up the majority (28.3%) of the respondents. This was followed closely by the respondents in the age group 40-49 years (27.4%). 24.1% of the respondents were aged 20-29 years and 16.3% were aged 50-59 years. The least represented age group were respondents of less than 19 years (3.9%). The results implied that majority of customers visiting TM Pick 'n' Pay were economically active adults who were independent and often involved in retail shopping activities. The middle aged customers seem to dominate the data, indicating that they make up the bulk of the retail store's clientele.

The findings show that majority are married respondents (46.4) followed by single respondents (33.4%). Widowed (14.2%) and separated (6.0%) were least represented group and accounted for 14.2% and 6.0% of the respondents respectively. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that married people have the highest percentage of customers at TM Pick 'n' Pay. This could be because married consumers tend to buy house hold groceries in bulk and drive a lot to the retail outlets.

The level of education of customers is indicated in the table above. The majority of the respondents were undergraduate (32%). This was followed by close by respondents with diplomas (25.3%) and those with master's degree (17.2%). Those with secondary education made up 14.5% while those with PhD made up the smallest group at 10.2%. The results show that the customers of TM Pick 'n' Pay are mainly educated people. There may be some impact of higher educational qualifications on customers' expectations in terms of store atmospherics, customer service, and overall shopping experience. The majority of those responding to the question of occupation were employed, 43.1%. Retired civil servants made up 15.4% and business people 23.2%. Students accounted for 9.9% while housewives made up 8.1%. This means that the majority of customers are employed people.

The highest percentage of respondents was in paid work (43.1%). There were 23.2% business people and 15.4% retired civil servants. Students was 9.9% and housewives was 8.1%. These results suggest that the employed people are the majority among the customers of TM Pick 'n' Pay. This may be because employed people have stable incomes and have a greater purchasing power so they can buy more often in formal retail outlets.

47.6% of the research participants had a monthly income of 200 – 1200. Those with 1210-1500 income accounted for 16.6%, and those with 150-199 income accounted for 13.6% of respondents. The percentage of those earning between 100 and 149 was 8.7% and those earning below 99 were 9.0%. Above 1500 were the least represented group, at 4.5%. The results obtained clearly points that the majority of TM Pick 'n' Pay customers belong to the middle-income group. This in turn indicates that the retail store primarily attracts customers with a moderate purchasing power, looking for affordable products, convenience and a pleasant shopping experience.

The results further showed that majority of the respondents had household size of 4-6 persons (47.6%). This was closely followed by the households that contains 1-3 members representing 30.4%. The household size of 7-9 member was represented 19.6% of respondents while 2.4% was formed by respondents that belongs to a household size of 10-12 members. This means that majority of the customers of TM Pick 'n' Pay stores are from the medium sized household. The prevalence of medium-sized households could thus have positive effects on retail store patronage because of regular shopping habits.

The table subsequently lists the approximate distance people have to cover to get to any TM Pick ‘n’ Pay store. The results acquired from this indicate that most of the customers lived in a range of 1-2 kilometres from the retail outlet and constituted 39.2%. These were followed by those who lived 3-4 kilometres away (37.3). Respondents who lived 5-6 kilometres away were 11.7% and those living less than 1 kilometre were 9.0%. The least represented group represented 2.7% of the people who responded at more than 6 kilometres from the store. The results indicate that the majority of the customers reside in the vicinity of TM Pick ‘n’ Pay. This therefore means that accessibility and convenience of a store highly impacts the perception to customers to revisit the store. Retail locations within convenient distances are more likely to gain customers' regular patronage.

Lastly the table depicts the percentage of the mode of transport used by respondents. The results indicate that most customers (44.3%) are using public transport. This then followed by respondents who uses their own cars to the store and were represented by 36.7%. The findings indicate that the majority of customers use public transport to get to TM Pick ‘n’ Pay stores. The relatively high percentage of customers using personal cars imply that convenience such as parking facilities and accessibility may influence customers' shopping experience and decisions to revisit the store.

4.2 MEASUREMENT VALIDATION

The measures were validated by testing for uni-dimensionality, convergent validity, discriminant validity and composite

4.2.1 Uni-dimensionality

The study carried a uni-dimensionality test to determine if the measurement items used in the questionnaire were measuring one construct. Uni-dimensionality of constructs were evaluated using indices gained from response patterns, reliability, validity and certain principle components. The uni-dimensionality test was carried out using factor analysis in SPSS and AMOS. The test was carried out on the 5 constructs, and items with notable loadings were included in the model.

4.2.2 Composite Reliability

Results showed that each of the constructs had a Composite Reliability value above the cut-off point of 0.70. Composite Reliability was used to ensure that the indicators corresponding to each latent construct functioned as a single scale. The coefficients obtained were consistent with results of dependable measurement items and represented the theoretical concepts they were designed to measure.

4.2.3 Convergent Validity

Average Variance Extracted criterion was used to test convergent validity. All constructs obtained AVE values that were higher than the 0.50 benchmark. This result indicates that enough variance (adequate) was captured in the latent variables by their observed indicators. The results hence indicate that the convergent validity was obtained across the measurement model

4.2.4 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant Validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion by comparing the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct to the shared variance between constructs to the shared variance between constructs, as recommended by Hair et al. (2019) The findings revealed that the AVE values were greater than the corresponding shared variances, indicating that the constructs were empirically distinct from one another. Therefore, sufficient evidence of discriminant validity was established.

Table 4: Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted

Construct	Number of items	Composite reliability	Validity (AVE)	Shared variance				
				RA	PEA	MOM	OUT	RSP
Retail atmospherics	16	0.95	0.522	0.722				
Peace of mind	6	0.9	0.609	.621	0.780			

customer service								
Moments of truth on customer service	5	0.87	0.578	.549	.643	0.760		
Outcome focus on customer service	4	0.93	0.77	.484	.567	.543	0.877	
Retail store patronage	5	0.85	0.547	0.0032	0.0017	0.0013	0.0529	0.739

4.3 MEASUREMENT MODEL

The measurement model was evaluated to determine the accuracy and consistency of measurement of the constructs included in the investigation. This assessment was needed to ensure that the observable indicators were an adequate empirical representation of the latent variables in order to proceed with the assessment of the structural relationships.

All of the measurement indicators loaded significantly onto their specified constructs in the measurement model below. This validates the meaningfulness of the association of the individual items with the concepts they were designed to measure. The meaning of the factor loadings also substantiates the quality of the indicators and offers further indication of convergent validity.

Reliability coefficients varied between 0.89 and 0.95, which were all above the minimum acceptable value. These findings indicate good internal consistency of the items that belong to each construct. Likewise, the coefficients of convergent validity for all items were above the recommended 0.50 and ranged from 0.52 to 0.77.

Overall, the results support the reliability and validity of the measurement model. Based on this, the constructs and indicators were deemed adequate to proceed with the structural model assessment and statistical examination and hypothesis testing.

Figure 6: Measurement model

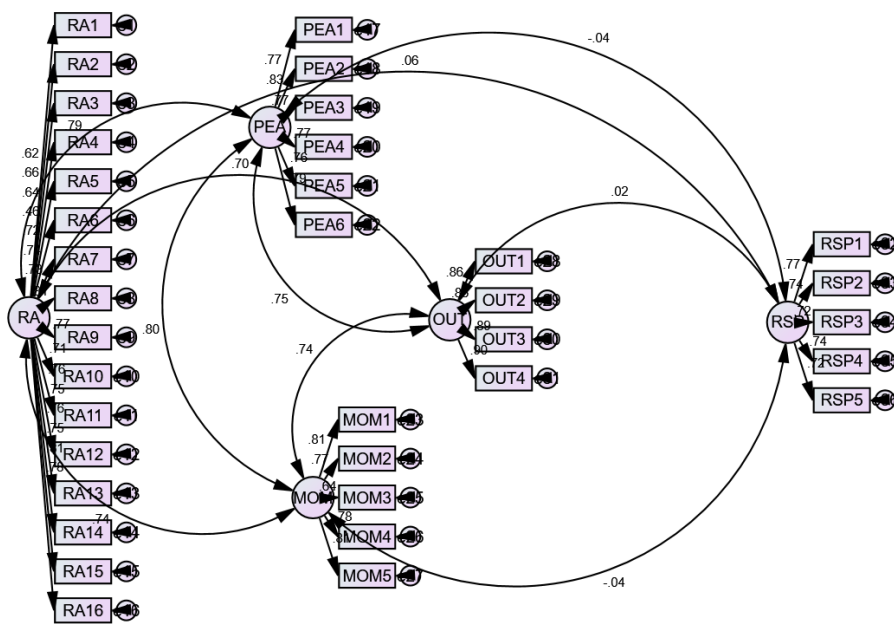


Table 5: Goodness of fit results for measurement model

Goodness of fit statistics	Desired range of standards for good fit	Value for the study
Incremental fit Index (IFI)	>0.90	0.997
Normal fit Index (NFI)	>0.90	0.920
Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	>0.90	0.996
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	>0.90	0.997

Root-Mean Error Square of Approximation (RMSEA)	<0.08	0.013
Chi-Square (CMI/DF)	<3.00	1.04

Source: Amos Output

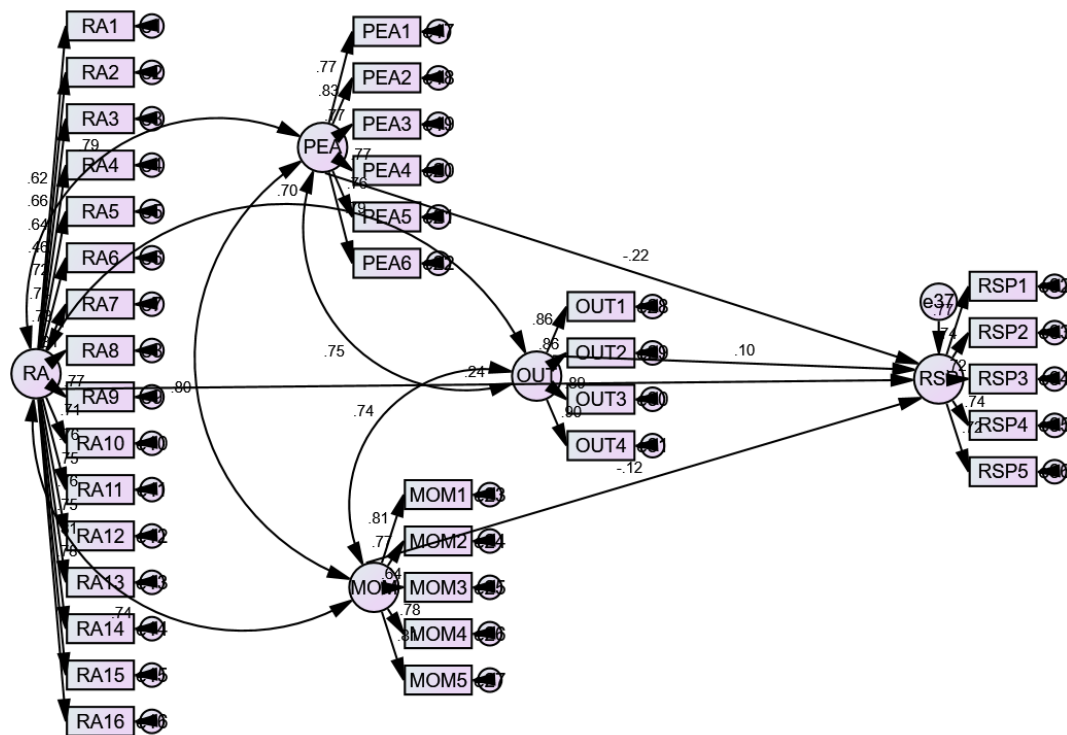
The measurement model showed an excellent fit to the data. The chi square to degrees of freedom ratio (CMIN/DF =1.04) was within the recommended threshold of 3.0.

The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value was 0.013, which is regarded below the maximum acceptable threshold of 0.0. This shows a very small approximation error and therefore an excellent fit model

The Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) value of 0.996 and the Comparative Fit Index value of 0.0997 were obtained which were significantly higher than the threshold of 0.90. These results suggest that the variables have a strong overall fit.

The Incremental Fit Index (IFI) value of 0.997 was obtained which happens to be higher than the recommended threshold of 0.90 indicating that the proposed model gives a substantially better fit than the null model. The Normal Fit Index value of 0.920 came out higher than the accepted level of 0.90, showing a satisfactory between the model and the data

Figure 7: Structural Equation Modelling



4.4 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was adopted in this study for hypothesis testing. The purpose of analysis was to assess the impact of retail atmospherics and customer experience on customer's willingness to patronize a store.

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing

	Hypothesis Statement	Beta	T-Value	P-value	Decision
H1	Retail store patronage → Retail atmospherics	0.228	0.105	0.034	Accepted

H2	Retail store patronage → Moments of truth	-0.1	0.249	0.37	Rejected
H3	Retail store patronage → Outcome Focus	0.79	0.382	0.338	Rejected
H4	Retail store patronage → Peace of mind	-1.89	0.093	1.4	Rejected

The first hypothesis of the research states that retail atmospheric have a positive influence on store patronage. This hypothesis was supported by empirical testing as the Beta coefficient was 0.228 and the p-value was 0.034. Since the p-value obtained is below the suggested threshold of 0.05, the relationship of the variables becomes statistically significant. This implies that customers well pleased by retail atmospherics perceive the store to be of high quality and will therefore patronize the store.

The second hypothesis of the research, indicated by the table states service moments of truth has a positive impact on retail store patronage. It is unfortunate that this hypothesis was not supported and was therefore rejected. The regression coefficient was -0.1 and the p-value was 0.371, which is above 0.05. The relationship that exist between the two variables is not statistically significant. It therefore implies that customer's decision to patronize a store repeatedly are not necessarily improved by their evaluation of critical service interactions or moments of truth.

The third hypothesis tested customer service positively influence the patronage of a store. This hypothesis was rejected as the results showed a Beta value of 0.79 and a p-value of 0.038. Since the p-value exceeded 0.05, the effect became insignificant. This means that the final outcome or results of the overall shopping experience does not significantly influence the customer's decisions to patronize a store.

The fourth hypothesis examined if peace of mind on customer service directly impacts store patronage. This hypothesis was rejected based on a beta of -0.189 and a p-value of 1.4. The p-value is far above 0.05, indicating no statistical support. This suggests that customers' patronage behaviour does not translate into increased feelings of comfort, trust or peace of mind during their shopping experience in this context

4.5 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.5.1. Relationship between retail store patronage and retail atmospherics

The results revealed a significant relationship between retail store patronage and retail atmospherics since $p < 0.05$. This suggests that retail atmospherics has a significant impact on customer's decision to patronize a store. The results reveals that elements such as lighting, layout, music, and overall ambiance play a crucial role in attracting and retaining customers. Retailers should therefore aim to create a pleasant and comfortable physical environment to enhance customer patronage behaviour.

4.5.2. Relationship between retail store patronage and moments of truth on customer service

The empirical testing showed a non-significant relationship between retail store patronage and moments of truth. This was evidenced by a p-value of 0.037 which is greater than 0.05. The results suggest that critical service encounters with staff do not significantly influence whether customers choose to patronize the store. This implies that there are other factors beyond immediate service interactions that may be stronger determinants of patronage

4.5.3. Relationship between retail store patronage and outcome focus on customer service

The results indicated a non-significant association between retail store patronage and outcome focus, a p-value of 0.038 was obtained which happens to exceed the threshold of 0.05. This implies that customer's focus on the final outcome of their shopping trip does not significantly affect their patronage of the retail store. It appears that outcome oriented customers may base their choice on other variables not captured in this model

4.5.4. Relationship between retail store patronage and peace of mind on customer service

The empirical testing demonstrated a non-significant relationship between retail store patronage and peace of mind. The p-value of 1.4 was obtained which is far beyond the 0.05 threshold, indicating zero statistical support. This implies that customer's feelings of comfort, security and peace of mind while shopping do not necessarily lead customers into patronizing the store. Other psychological or situational factors may better explain this relationship

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter was used to present and critically discuss the empirical evidence from the study participants. First, it described the demographic characteristics of the respondents to determine the sample characteristics. Demographic data showed that both male and female respondents were in fairly equal numbers, affording cross section of both groups. The collected data were subjected to a number of statistical procedures. Factor analysis was performed using SPSS AMOS to determine the extent to which the measurement scales measured the research constructs. Measuring the validity and reliability of the instruments used to measure retail atmospherics, customer experience and retail store patronage were also taken into account. The relationships between the explanatory variables and store patronage were then estimated using Structural Equation Modelling and to find out whether the hypotheses formulated in this study were satisfied or not by the empirical evidence. The statistical results showed a positive and significant effect of retail atmospherics on the retail store patronage. This indicates that positive physical and environmental dispositions can enhance customer's shopping intention to revisit the outlet. Conversely, the three customer experience dimensions analysed in the study (outcome focus and peace of mind and moments of truth) did not have a significant impact on

store patronage as per the context examined. The findings were analysed in the light of the problem identified by the specific objectives of the study and compared with findings of other studies reviewed. Agreements and disagreements with previous studies were also discussed. The next chapter summarises the key findings, analyses the empirical findings, suggests actionable recommendations, spells out the study's unique contribution to knowledge and identifies areas for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the key findings of the study, conclusions from the empirical evidence and areas that need further scholarly work. The overall aim of the research was to find out the role of the retail atmospherics and customer experience as it relates to store patronage in the retail sector with a specific focus on TM Pick ‘n’ Pay supermarkets in Zimbabwe.

5.1 SUMMARY

The findings of the research have been summarized below.

The research studied how retail atmospherics and customer experience influence consumers' choice of entering a store and staying loyal to it. It examined multiple factors that can impact customers shopping preferences, their repeat purchase intention and loyalty towards a supermarket.

Specifically, the researchers determined if there was a positive relationship between favourable retail atmospherics and store patronage. It also explored how the moments of truth that occurred in the customer-service-employee interaction affected customer intentions for outlet re-visitation. In addition, the authors assessed the correlation between the customer service orientation directed towards the outcome and the patronage of the store. The final objective investigated if the peace of mind that the customers' service interaction provided, created a greater willingness to continue shopping at TM Pick ‘n’ Pay. Together, these goals offered insight into the factors the environment and experience might influence customer behaviour in a retail context.

The theoretical, conceptual and empirical literature on retail atmospherics, customer experience and customer patronage behaviour was used to guide the investigation. The study was designed as causal and it was planned to collect 384 respondents. Structured questionnaires with items measured on a seven-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree, Strongly Agree) were

used to obtain primary information. The collected answers were then analysed using SPSS version 20 and further analysed in AMOS using structural equation modelling.

A total of 332 questionnaires were completed and returned of the 384 sent out. This gave a response rate of 86.4% which is above the generally accepted minimum of 70% in the quantitative research. The high response rate offered adequate statistical grounds for analysis and interpretation.

Demographic results indicated that there were 56% female respondents and 44% male respondents, which means that more of the respondents were female. The age group 30-39 years had the highest number of respondents accounting for 28.3% of the respondents. Forty-six percent of those who responded were married, and 32.8% had a bachelor's degree. As regards employment, 43.1% were employed in paid work.

The income distribution revealed that 47.6% of the respondents were in the income range of 200 to 1200 per month. In terms of the locations of the selected stores, 39,2% of the respondents were living or working within 1-2 km from a TM Pick 'n' Pay outlet. The most commonly used mode of transportation to the store was public transportation (44.3%).

Data was analysed on SPSS version 27 and AMOS version 26. Uni-dimensionality, Convergent Validity, Composite Reliability and Discriminant Validity were used to check measurement validation. The results obtained indicated that all constructs met the reliability and validity criterion. The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed for hypothesis testing.

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The four hypotheses that were proposed in the study were tested using the method of Structural Equation Modelling. The first hypothesis was that there was a positive relationship between the retail atmospherics and retail store patronage. The p value obtained from the relationship was less than the significance level of 0.05 (p value = 0.034), supporting this hypothesis. This showed that the physical and environment of the store were positively correlated with the patronage of the customers.

The second hypothesis stated that there was a positive relationship between moments of truth in customer service and retail store patronage. The recorded p value was not less than 0.05 and so this hypothesis was rejected. The results thus showed that in the environment examined, there was no direct significant impact of service encounters on the patronage.

The third hypothesis indicated that there was a positive relationship between outcome focus in customer service and retail store patronage. This proposition was also rejected since the result was not statistically significant at the 5%. While customers might appreciate the service outcomes, evidence did not show that this is an outcome that had an independent effect on the customers' decision to continue shopping at TM Pick 'n' Pay.

Peace of mind in customer service was hypothesized to be positively related to retail store patronage. This hypothesis was also rejected as the P value was greater than 0.05. The findings indicated that the sense of reassurance, confidence, and decreased anxiety that was uncovered during the service encounters was not directly related to customers' patronage intentions in the retail outlets studied.

As a whole the results indicated that only retail atmospherics exerted a positive and significant effect on store patronage. Three dimensions of customer experience (namely moments of truth, outcome focus and peace of mind) did not show direct significant impact on patronage behaviour.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The formal retail sector in Zimbabwe has been growing and there has been an increase in the number of supermarket chains like TM Pick 'n' Pay in the major urban centres. This has created a greater competitive landscape for retailers and made it all the more significant to comprehend the elements that draw visitors, keep them shopping and make them return.

The study concludes that retail atmospherics is important with regard to retail store patronage. The physical and sensory aspects like store layout, lighting, music, cleanliness, ambience, merchandise presentation and employee behaviour have an impact on customers' intentions to return to a particular store. An appealing, easily accessible and comfortable retail setting is more likely to instigate positive attitudes and approach behaviour from the shopper.

This finding reinforces the results of previous research which shows store atmosphere to be a significant factor in predicting consumer behaviour. Customers get immediate and tangible clues about the quality, convenience and professionalism of the retailer from the physical environment. This means that good weather can lead to customers having a more positive view of a shop and hence, encourage them to return to the store.

Conversely, moments of truth, outcome focus and peace of mind in customer service did not result in statistically significant relationships with store patronage. It does not mean that these dimensions are unimportant, however. They still can play a role in satisfaction, trust and overall shopping experience. But in the case of TM Pick 'n' Pay, they were not the key determinants that would result in customers continuing to shop at the stores.

The customer experience results were not significant, indicating that perhaps other pragmatic factors are more influential in determining patronage behaviour. When choosing which stores to shop at, customers might look for availability of the product, price, accessibility, convenience, promotional offers, and proximity. A customer could thus be pleased with the service he receives while still opting to visit another retailer that provides better price, location or product offerings.

Thus, the research here leads to the conclusion that the physical retail environment is a tangible and controllable element that retailers could use to impact the behaviour of their

customers. Management can make direct changes to features like store organisation, cleanliness, lighting, accessibility, product arrangement and the conduct of employees that interact with customers.

Spending on these factors could also yield more short-term gains on store traffic.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 Boost retail atmospherics investment

Management of TM Pick 'n' Pay should focus on improving the physical environment of the stores, given that retail atmospherics was the only variable that created a statistically significant effect on store patronage. Investment in lighting, cleanliness, background music, signage and merchandise presentation, store layout and ventilation.

The layout of the store must enable customers to flow freely between sections and be able to find the items in the store without great difficulty. Lighting should make the product visible and to make the atmosphere comfortable. All merchandise displays should be neat, attractive and well-stocked. A clean and effective environment that is visually appealing can help to enhance the customer's perception of an outlet and encourage repeat customers.

5.3.2 Improve Customer Service Touchpoints

While there were no statistically significant direct relationships between moments of truth, outcome focus, and peace of mind, service quality does have a significant impact on customer satisfaction and retailer's reputation. So there's a need to continue enhancing the relationship between staff and client.

Product knowledge, professional communication, handling complaints and customer care should be covered as part of regular training for employees. They should be able to answer the questions correctly, solve the service issues quickly and respect the customers. Good customer service experiences can overcome dissatisfying attributes, and they can enhance the physical store environment changes.

5.3.3 Undertake Further Customer Experience Assessments

The non-significant relationships between customer experience dimensions and store patronage may be an indication that more work may be needed to adapt measurement scales to the Zimbabwean retail context. It can also indicate the presence of moderating or intervening variables not studied in the current study. Customer satisfaction surveys, exit interviews and other means of obtaining feedback should be conducted regularly by TM Pick ‘n’ Pay management. Qualitative data would be beneficial for understanding why customers select certain stores, as well as what turns customers away from the stores and what they appreciate the most about the service. Qualitative feedback, in conjunction with quantitative results, would help management to determine the specific weaknesses of the operation and to make more specific changes. In terms of demographic findings, it is evident that significant numbers of TM Pick ‘n’ Pay customers were adults, between 30-49 years old, employed and married. A moderate number of respondents had moderate incomes and lived or worked reasonably near the stores selected. This information should be used by management for the retail marketing mix. This customer segment should be considered when choosing product assortment, prices, promotions, and loyalty programs. For instance, the retailer might offer promotions that are family friendly, useful household items, value for money promotions timed to when customers are working.

The retailer should also explore how customers that rely on public transportation can access the store and how they will get their goods from the store. Operating hours and product packaging & promotions should be timed according to the shopping habits of commuters between work, home and retail establishments.

5.4 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study only covered supermarket retailing. The future studies should be conducted to find out whether retail atmospherics and customer experience affects patronage in other types of retail stores such as clothing outlets, electronics outlets, pharmacies, furniture outlets and informal market. Research on a variety of retail categories would provide a comparison to determine if the relationships found in this study are unique to supermarkets or representative of the retail industry as a whole.

Qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions should be included in further investigations. These would enable researchers to delve deeper into customers' experience and their motivations and shopping decisions. Qualitative evidence may present the context, which may not be appropriately captured in structured questionnaires.

Future research should also take into consideration other factors which could explain retail patronage. This can range from perceptions of the price, availability of the products, to loyalty programmes, brand image, perceived value, promotions, to access of the store and trust in the retailer. Researchers might assess if these factors mediate or moderate the relationship between the retail atmospherics and customer experience and store patronage.

Comparative research from various supermarket chains and geographical locations would also be beneficial. It would be interesting to review the customers across several stores and locations for the generalisability of the results, and to determine if there are differences based on retail or customer characteristics and /or local market conditions

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APENDIX: CODED QUESTIONNAIRE

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION



FACULTY OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING

My name is Samantha Chibi. I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education, currently undertaking a Bachelor of Commerce in Business Studies (Honours) Degree in Marketing. I am conducting a study titled: "Investigating the impact of retail atmospherics and customer experience on retail store patronage" A case of TM Pick 'N' Pay

The research is being carried out in partial fulfilment of the requirements for my degree program. The purpose of this study is to examine how retail atmospherics and customer experience impact patronage behaviour towards Tm Pick 'n' Pay.

Your participation is very important to the success of this study. I kindly request you to assist me by completing the attached questionnaire honestly and carefully. All responses will be kept strictly confidential and will be used solely for academic purposes

Contact Details

Phone number: 0782 821 486

Email: Samanthachibi2003@gmail.com

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Kindly tick in a box corresponding to your answer
2. For clarity do not hesitate to ask
3. All answers you will provide are neither right nor wrong.

SECTION A: Demographic Information

A1. Gender

1	Male	
2	Female	

A2. Age

	Below 19 years	
	20-29 years	
	30-39 years	
	40-49 years	
	50-59 years	

A3. Marital Status

1	Single	
2	Married	

3	Widowed	
4	Separated	

A4. Education Level:

1	Secondary
2	Diploma
3	Undergraduate degree
4	Master's degree
5	PhD

A5: Occupation

1	House wife
2	Paid employment
3	Business person
4	Retired civil servant
5	Student
6	Other

A6. Monthly income

1	Less than 99
2	100-149
3	150-199
4	200-1200
5	1210-1500
6	Above 1500

A7. Household size:

1	1-3
2	4-6

3	7-9
4	10-12
5	13-15
6	Above 15

A8. Approximate distance

1	Less than 1Km
2	1-2 Km
3	3-4 Km
4	5-6 Km
5	Above 6 Km

A9. Mode of transport

1	Two wheeler
2	Public transport
3	Personal car
4	Company Car
5	Other

SECTION B: Retail atmospherics

Using the Likert scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements by using a scale of 1-7 where 1=Strongly Disagree (**SD**), 2=Disagree (**D**), 3=Neither Disagree (**ND**), 4=Neither Agree (**NA**), 5=Neutral (**N**), 6=Agree (**A**) and 7=Strongly Agree (**SA**)

		SD	D	ND	NA	N	A	SA
RA1	The size of corridor in the store facilitates my free and easy movement within the shelves							
RA2	The size of the store encourages me to buy here							
RA3	A safe store environment influences me to shop							

RA4	The parking space here influences my shopping at this retail store							
RA5	The store has creative display of merchandize that attracts me to shop here often							
RA6	The store lighting increases my attraction to goods in this supermarket							
RA7	The background music at this store is cool and influences my choice and continued coming							
RA8	Retail store décor influences my purchase decisions in this store							
RA9	The store has uniform levels of lighting that enable me to examine products and sales staff well							
RA10	The store's atmosphere influences my impulse buying							
RA11	Pleasant store smell (ambience)attracts me to this store							
RA12	Store employees act in a mutually acceptable manner							
RA13	A shop environment that relates to my esteem							
RA14	Staff here have integrity that in handling my needs							
RA15	The staff in this retail store offer me personal attention							
RA16	The store people are courteous, greet me, bid farewell, and ask me to come again							

SECTION C: Peace of mind on customer service

Using the Likert scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements by using a scale of 1-7 where 1=Strongly Disagree (**SD**), 2=Disagree (**D**), 3=Neither Disagree (**ND**), 4=Neither Agree (**NA**), 5=Neutral (**N**), 6=Agree (**A**) and 7=Strongly Agree (**SA**)

		SD	D	ND	NA	N	A	SA
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PEA1	I am confident in TM PICK 'N' PAY's expertise							
PEA2	The whole process with TM PICK 'N' PAY was easy							
PEA3	TM PICK'N' PAY will look after me for a long time							
PEA4	I stay with TM PICK 'N' PAY because of my past dealings with it							
PEA5	I have dealt with TM PICK'N' PAY before so getting what I needed was really easy							
PEA6	TM PICK'N' PAY give(s) independent advice							

SECTION D: Moments of Truth

Using the Likert scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements by using a scale of 1-7 where 1=Strongly Disagree (**SD**), 2=Disagree (**D**), 3=Neither Disagree (**ND**), 4=Neither Agree (**NA**), 5=Neutral (**N**), 6=Agree (**A**) and 7=Strongly Agree (**SA**)

MOM1	TM PICK 'N' PAY was flexible in dealing with me and looked out for my needs							
MOM2	TM PICK 'N' PAY keeps me up to date							
MOM3	TM PICK 'N' PAY is a safe and reputable company							
MOM4	The people TM PICK 'N' PAY have good people skills							
MOM5	TM PICK 'N' PAY deal(t) with me correctly when things go (went) wrong							

SECTION E: Outcome focus on customer service

Using the Likert scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements by using a scale of 1-7 where 1=Strongly Disagree (**SD**), 2=Disagree (**D**), 3=Neither Disagree (**ND**), 4=Neither Agree (**NA**), 5=Neutral (**N**), 6=Agree (**A**) and 7=Strongly Agree (**SA**)

		SD	D	ND	NA	N	A	SA
OUT1	Staying with TM PICK 'N' PAY makes the process much easier							
OUT2	TM PICK 'N' PAY gives me what I need swiftly							
OUT3	I prefer TM PICK 'N' PAY over an alternative provider							
OUT4	The people at TM PICK 'N' PAY can relate to my situation							

SECTION F: Retail store patronage

Using the Likert scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements by using a scale of 1-7 where 1=Strongly Disagree (**SD**), 2=Disagree (**D**), 3=Neither Disagree (**ND**), 4=Neither Agree (**NA**), 5=Neutral (**N**), 6=Agree (**A**) and 7=Strongly Agree (**SA**)

		SD	D	ND	NA	N	A	SA
RSP1	I intend to buy from this retail store again							
RSP2	I intend to revisit this retail store in the future							
RSP3	I would prefer this retail store over competitors							
RSP4	I intend to maintain a relationship with this store							
RSP5	I would recommend this retail store to other people							

Thank you for your participation!!

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