

A close-up photograph of a microscope's objective lens and stage. The lens is in sharp focus, showing technical markings: 'UPlanFLN', '4x/0.13', and 'm. 22.5'. A small green leaf fragment is placed on the glass stage. The background is blurred, showing the rest of the microscope and some light reflections. A semi-transparent grey box is overlaid on the lower part of the image.

# REVISTA INCLUSIONES

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**A SURVEY CORRESPONDED TO ANTECEDENTS & CONSEQUENCES  
OF IN-STORE EXPERIENCES: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

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**Abstract**

Customer experience is one of the most fundamental concepts in marketing literature which results in hedonic and memorial experience for customers. In-store experiences are an important phenomenon that increasingly attracts the professional marketing experts and academics around the world and can use them as a distinctive tool in the stores. In-store experiences are challenging for the marketing managers, because they are affected by some components that retailer can control as well as the main elements that managers cannot handle them. The aim of this study is to explore the in-store shopping experiences. The data (from professional shopping stores) are collected by implementing the phenomenological method and through eighteen individual interview protocols, based on multiple purposive sampling (snowball & intensity). These interviews happened in five provinces of Iran include Tehran, Khorasan-e Razavi, Isfahan, Fars and Azerbaijan-e Sharghi. Also, three types of coding include open coding, axial coding and selective coding in ATLAS.ti software are used to determine the themes and categories. The results convey that antecedents of in-store experiences (perceived values, word of mouth, brand equity, layout and design, employee's skills, facilities) have a positive and significant relationship with consequences (shopping satisfaction, repurchase intention and window shopping).

**Keywords**

In-store experiences – Repurchase intention – Shopping satisfaction – Window shopping

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## Introduction

Customer experience is widely recognized as the internal and subjective response customers have to any interaction with a company. Companies strive to enhance customer experiences and to foster positive consumer behaviors. To achieve this experience-based differentiation, retailers provide their customers with events that are pleasant, meaningful, and memorable. In turn, these customer-optimized interactional experiences foster customer loyalty and attachment to the retailer<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, the memory connected with an experience is not commonly incorporated in marketing research studies even though the underlying construct or premise is often included in the conceptualization of such studies<sup>2</sup>. Numerous definitions of an experience prevail in the literature, which is fragmented across the discipline. Although there is no overall consensus, customer experience is often defined as a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of an organization in a specific situation, which induces reactions. Considering that customers can express different types of reaction (e.g., affective & social) during experiences, researchers consider customer experience as a multidimensional construct. Several firm-controlled and macro factors (e.g., promotion, price, & location) in retail environments can shape these customer experiences and responses. An experience is a P.O.S. interaction (Person×Object×Situation), which is divided into four major stages: 1) pre-consumption experience; 2) purchase experience; 3) core consumption experience and 4) remembered consumption experience and nostalgia experience. Undoubtedly, customer experience plays a significant role in determining the success of a company's offering. Organizations have used both tangible products and intangible services to generate unforgettable events for consumers. Over the last few decades, the researchers on retail marketing have taken a keen interest in how in-store retail environments influence the consumer experience. In general, two major groups of research can be identified in this stream. Studies on the antecedents of retail crowding examine factors such as perceived risk, expectations and personal control. Research on the consequences of retail crowding has mainly focused on affective responses and satisfaction. Bagdare and Jain<sup>3</sup> define retail customer experiences as “the sum total of cognitive, emotional, sensorial, and behavioural responses produced during the entire buying process, involving an integrated series of interaction with people, objects, processes and environment in retailing”. According to De Keyser et al.<sup>4</sup>, customer experience consists of “the cognitive, emotional, physical, sensorial, and social elements that mark the consumer's direct and indirect interaction with a (set of) market actors”. Yakhlef<sup>5</sup> added that despite the fact that retail marketing researchers have been enthusiastic in studying how in-store retail environments influence customer experience, present-day “methodologies and research designs whether qualitative, quantitative or triangulation, are unable to capture the tacit unreflective dimension of customer experience”. The main purpose of this research is to answering this

<sup>1</sup> J. J. Brakus; B. H. Schmitt & L. Zarantonello, “Brand experience: What is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty?”, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol: 73 num 3 (2009): 52–68.

<sup>2</sup> B. Antéblan; M. Filser & C. Roederer, “Consumption experience in retail environments: A literature review”, *Recherché et Applications en Marketing*, Vol: 28 mi 3 (2013): 84–113.

<sup>3</sup> S. Bagdare & R. Jain, “Measuring retail customer experience”, *Int. J. Retail Distrib. Manag.* Vol: 41 num 10 (2013): 790–804.

<sup>4</sup> A. De Keyser; K. N. Lemon; P. Klaus and T. L. Keiningham, *A framework for understanding and managing the customer experience* (Marketing Science Institute Working Paper Series 2015, Report No. 121-15). Marketing Science Institute, Cambridge, MA. 2015.

<sup>5</sup> A. Yakhlef, “Customer experience within retail environments: An embodied, spatial approach”. *Marketing Theory*, Vol: 15 num 4 (2015): 454-564.

question by consumer experience and phenomenological method: what are the antecedents & consequences of in-store experience in shopping centers and malls in Iran?

**In-store experience**

The analysis of in-store consumer shopping behavior is one of the most critical aspects to be taken into consideration regarding decisions related to the development of a standardized distribution format versus an adapted one. This analysis must be carried out carefully. The retailers need to both match their profit targets with their client’s needs and clients need to maximize their shopping activity outcome. Table 1 show the psychographic variable and shopping behaviour.

| <b>Personality perception</b>           | <b>Buying process perception</b> | <b>shopping</b>          |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Time perception shopping                | - Consumer involvement           | - Attitude towards       |
| Price sensitivity personnel             | - Risk of product changing       | - Attitude towards store |
| Quality sensitivity store/store loyalty | - Research and evaluation cost   | - Attitude towards the   |
| Explorative behaviour store atmosphere  | - Purchased goods storage costs  | - Importance of in-      |

Table 1  
Psychographic variable and shopping behaviour

In sum, in the experience literature, there is a consensus that it is useful to conceptualize experiences along multiple experience dimensions. These experience dimensions include sensory-affective, cognitive-intellectual and behavior-and-action oriented components. Moreover, because experiences are evoked by environmental cues, social and relational elements are also important aspects of experiences. From a research perspective, it is thus critical to examine the impact of experiences not only in the aggregate but to examine as well how dimensions of experiences are related with certain outcome variables. Today's consumers frequently expect a multi-sensory, interactive, and holistic shopping experience that entertains, stimulates, emotionally affects and creatively challenges them. Accenture<sup>6</sup> has also acknowledged that the improvement of customers' experience should be a priority for businesses. The integrative conceptual framework of Esbjerg et al.<sup>7</sup> that analyses customer satisfaction with shopping experiences in grocery retailing was used to inform the investigation. It is critical that a retailer's positioning is consistent with actions, both at the operational and in-store level. While retailers create in-store experiences across dimensions such as product display, providing knowledge, product trials, store layout and store-level special activities, consumers assess the in-store experience based on their motives to visit the store, time available to purchase, mood at the time of visit, and familiarity with the store.

<sup>6</sup> Accenture, Improving customer experience is top business priority for companies pursuing digital transformation. Accenture Study news release, (October 27). 2015. <https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/improving-customer-experience-is-top-business-priority-for-companies-pursuing-digitaltransformation-according-to-accenture-study.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> L. Esbjerg; B. B. Jensen; T. Bech-Larsen; M. Dutra de Barcellos; Y. Boztug & K. G. Grunert, "An integrative conceptual framework for analyzing customer satisfaction with shopping trip experiences in grocery retailing", J. Retail. Consum. Serv. Vol: 19 num 4 (2012): 445–456.

## Perceived value

The role of value is becoming an increasing concern to customers because it is one of the most powerful forces in today's marketplace. Value is being described as customer's overall appraisal of the product/service net worth based on benefits sought and costs in acquiring and utilizing the services. In another, Sheth et al.<sup>8</sup> suggested that customer choice is a function of multiple consumption situations of which the perceived value sought will differ according to different consumption situations. By looking into the shopping center, Walls<sup>9</sup> further added that customer experiences will lead to customers' perceived value of the product/services. Researchers have been studied on the impact of value towards customer satisfaction and behavioural intention. Most of the findings found that perceived value positively affect customer satisfaction, unlike the study of Pura<sup>10</sup> who revealed that behavioural intention have a significant impact on perceived value. Value judgments have been shown to have effect on satisfaction, customer loyalty, and other important outcomes. Value may be viewed as a consumer's overall assessment of product utility based on perceptions of what is received (benefits) compared to what is given (costs) in a service encounter. According to equity theory, a customer evaluates what is fair, right, or deserved for the perceived cost of the offering, including monetary payments and non-monetary sacrifices such as time consumption, energy consumption, and stress experienced by customers.

## Layout & Design

In the beginning of the 1970s, marketing research began to explore more subtle aspects of service environment design, not in the least because of Philip Kotler, who drew attention to what he called "atmospherics", or "the conscious designing of space to create certain effects in buyers"<sup>11</sup>. Since then, there have been many studies on environmental psychology and retailing that have established the importance of creating pleasant consumer experiences, conveying a desired store image, and promoting specific behaviors. The prominence of store design and layout and their implications for customer experience in the era of the Omni-channel and technology-driven shopping environments has been acknowledged in the marketing literature. Store layout has been shown to have a significant impact on consumer behavior both in traditional and online environments. An important aspect of conventional retailing is store layout. Store layout can be considered one of the most important factors affecting consumer behavior and a critical determinant in the creation of store image as well. Layout decisions in retail business also directly affect customer sightlines and need to be considered from multiple perspectives, such as price, quantity and profit. A layout problem can be considered as the assignment and arrangement of buildings and location and/or relocation of machines/departments in manufacturing facilities. Clear and well-arranged mental maps of a store and knowledge of the locations of specific products, categories, checkouts, have been found to positively influence customers' perceived shopping convenience.

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<sup>8</sup> J. N. Sheth; B. I. Newman & B. L. Gross, "Why We Buy What We Buy: A Theory Of Consumption Values". *Journal of Business Research* num 22 (1991): 159-170.

<sup>9</sup> S. Walls, *Tomorrow's Customers*. Invited address at the Women's Chamber of Commerce of Texas Monthly Meeting. 2016.

<sup>10</sup> M. Pura, "Customer satisfaction with service: putting perceived value into the equation", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol: 14 num 5 (2005): 392-410.

<sup>11</sup> P. Kotler, "Atmospherics as a marketing tool", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol: 49 num 4 (1973): 50.

## Employee's skill

In the last two decades, employers have become more demanding when it comes to new graduates' skills. Excellent academic degrees alone have become inadequate in securing a graduate job. Increasingly, higher value is placed on competence and the display of quality generic skills in the workplace as against formal academic skills development. This increased demand for skills is a response to change in technology, which has brought about globalization of markets, international competition, the drive for productivity growth, sector reforms and a change in output demand, b). These changes are so fundamental that prospective graduate employees need to develop a broad range of generic skills in order to cope with the demands of their jobs. Moreover, as noted by Tomlinson<sup>12</sup>, Newton<sup>13</sup> and Pitan<sup>14</sup>, increased and diverse graduate supply from universities without the capacity of the labour market to absorb this increase, resulting in strong competition for graduate jobs, implies that universities need to ensure that their graduates are thoroughly equipped with skills that will give them relative advantage in the congested and competitive graduate labour market. The employees' competency in performing these skills and an organization's ability to deploy them is a significant factor in determining the organization's success. The way individuals develop and acquire skills is of fundamental importance. Initially, individuals acquire skills through training and the award of qualifications. For both the individuals and the organization, these supply the core theoretical fundamentals for the work they undertake. These skills are then reinforced by practical experience. It is therefore important to acknowledge, when developing a training strategy, that skill proficiency is achieved from a combination of academic and professional training=qualification and practical experience.

## Brand equity

In recent years, the importance of branding has dramatically increased on the ground that brands have the potential to be a source of long-term competitive advantages for any businesses. Brand equity is one of the most important constructs within the field of brand management, from both academic and managerial perspectives. The content and meaning of brand equity have been debated in a number of different ways and for a number of different purposes, but so far no common viewpoint has emerged. It can be discussed from the perspective of the manufacturer, retailer, or the consumer. While manufacturers and retailers are interested in the strategic implications of the brand equity, investors are more sympathetic for a financially defined concept. Proponents of the financial perspective define brand equity as the total value of a brand which is a separable asset – when it is sold, or included in a balance sheet. Alternative definitions adopting the same perspective consider brand equity as the incremental cash flows which accrue to branded products over unbranded products. When marketing practitioners use the term “brand equity”, they tend to mean brand description or brand strength, referred to as “customer brand equity” to distinguish it from the asset valuation meaning.

<sup>12</sup> M. Tomlinson, “Graduate employability and student attitudes and orientations to the labour market”, *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol: 20 num 4 (2007): 285-304.

<sup>13</sup> J. Newton, *Learning and teaching: enhancing student achievement through employability*, Thailand European Policy Dialogue Support Facility. 2015, available at: <http://thailand-eupdsf.org/uploads/>

<sup>14</sup> O. S. Pitan, “An assessment of generic skills demand in five sectors of the Nigerian labor Market”, *Public and Municipal Finance*, Vol: 4 num 1 (2015): 28-36.

## Word of mouth (WOM)

Word-of-mouth has been found to be more effective in influencing behavior of people than other market-controlled sources and can exert a strong influence on consumer choice. The importance of WOM is greater in a service context because of the “intangible” nature of services. New, innovative, and unique products are likely to arouse interest, which could lead to greater WOM. However, the generation of WOM would depend on how satisfied the customers are with their experiences. Previous research studies have found that satisfaction leads to positive WOM about products and services.

## Convenience

Prior research highlights that consumers perceive a convenient shopping experience as a means to reduce time and effort spent in the purchasing process. Following El-Adly and Eid<sup>15</sup> convenience could be defined as anything that reduces customer time and effort; and in turn, the convenience of shopping malls can be defined as the utility derived from the mall’s ability to provide customers with the opportunity to carry out a wide variety of shopping tasks with minimal time and effort. Similarly, convenience plays a key role in attracting consumers to the mall. In addition, retailers can offer time convenience via one-stop shopping, extended trading hours, an enclosed environment and locations that are close to where customers live or work. As a consequence, today most of the shopping malls provide convenient store operating hours, parking facilities that are spacious, are located in prime locations and offer all kinds of products in a unique point of sale. So, convenience in shopping means effortless shopping, amount of time consumed in search of location, store, product and information. Shopping malls that are located in highly accessible areas to customers are likely to be perceived more favorably and to be patronized more than those less accessible malls. However, the mall convenience would not be enough in order to attract customers if the shopping mall is lacking of an easy access, meaning the adequate location of the shopping mall and the distance that customers need to travel to shop there. Anselmsson<sup>16</sup> notes that the variable access is also labelled as availability or location, and can be divided into two dimensions: the external and the internal access. The perception that customers have of the mall convenience has a strong positive influence on their level of satisfaction with the mall and on the mall visit frequency. Consequently, a convenient location and commercial incentives such as longer opening hours or parking facilities will have a positive influence on consumers’ satisfaction, attracting customers to the mall and influencing their willingness to continue shopping at the mall.

## Sales Promotion

With the growing importance of sales promotion, marketers and researchers are trying to explore the multifaceted nature of sales promotion. Although understanding the comprehensive nature of sales promotion requires multidisciplinary studies, the psychological aspect carries more importance. Prior research in retailing highlights the critical role of retailers’ communication and promotion activities as key factors for creating customer experience. Consequently, customers who perceive that the shopping mall

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<sup>15</sup> M. El-Adly & R. Eid, “Dimensions of the perceived value of malls: Muslim shoppers perspective”, *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Vol: 45 num 1 (2017): 40-56.

<sup>16</sup> J. Anselmsson, “Effect of shopping center re-investments and improvements on sales and visit growth”, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, num 32 (2016): 139-150.

engages in many promotions in order to offer more bargains will hold favorable attitudes towards the mall and are more likely to patronize the mall. The global economic recession has negatively impacted retail sales through slow growth and fickle shoppers. This has resulted in heavy discounting and substantial in-store promotions, improving sales but not. According to sales promotion has direct impact on the consumers buying behaviour, which is an action focus-promoting occasion. The word sales promotion denotes to numerous types of selling incentives and procedures which aim to yield the urgent sales effects according to Totten and Block<sup>17</sup>. Sales promotion aimed at retailers, wholesalers and sales promotion called the trade. According to Nagar<sup>18</sup>, it has been recognized in literature that only customers with repeat purchases are profitable. Is not this all repeat purchase online to engage consumers with the brand? However, consumer participation is important to repeat purchase. Sales promotion has effects on several aspect of customer's buying choices such as brand choice, buying time, quantity and brand moving & client's sympathy to price.

### **Shopping satisfaction**

Shopping is an important socialization and engagement tool that provides consumers with opportunities to interact with others, which in turn satisfies their social needs. Enhancing an understanding of social shopping is critical to retailers because the satisfaction of shoppers' social needs is associated with positive marketing and retail outcomes such as extended shopping time, increased expenditure, positive attitudes toward a store, and retail patronage. To effectively foster social shopping in retail environments and thus achieve desirable marketing and retailing goals, practitioners must understand consumers' social behaviors and underlying motivations.

### **Window Shopping**

Consumers acquire and utilize decision-relevant information as an integral part of decision making. From this perspective, window displays constitute a key source of decision-relevant information in the external retail environment. Some research suggest that consumers may seek out store windows primarily as a leisure activity, to have fun and feel good. However, because such recreational use of windows does not preclude the concurrent acquisition of information, we take an informational approaching our investigation of window displays. What information can consumers obtain from window displays? The different elements of the window display directly convey a range of store-related as well as product category-related information. Perhaps more interestingly, prior applications of cue utilization theory in the retail context suggest that consumers are likely to use these different elements, separately or in combination, as informational cues to make inferences about the product category and the store. These disparate types of meanings can be characterized along two continuous dimensions. The primary dimension reflects the substantive nature of the information. On one hand, the information can relate primarily to the retailer (e.g., retailer image). Alternately, consumers may use the window displays to obtain information about the product category. The secondary dimension captures the extent to which the information is directly evident from the window displays. Along this dimension, information can either be observed or inferred. Observed information

<sup>17</sup> J. C. Totten & M. P. Block, *Analyzing Sales Promotion: Text & Cases: How to Profit from the New Power of Promotion Marketing*, 2nd ed., Dartnell Corp., Chicago, IL. 1994.

<sup>18</sup> K. Nagar, "Evaluating the effects of consumer sales on brand loyal and brand switching segments", *VISSION-Journal of Business Perspective*, Vol: 13 num 4 (2009): 35-48.

is obtained as is from the window (e.g. promotional announcements) whereas inferred information (e.g. retailer image) refers to meanings generated on the bases of relevant informational cues.

### Repurchase Intention

Still others have considered the predictive validity of repurchase intention for subsequent repurchase behaviour. Customer retention has a significant importance in current business strategies, as it represents an opportunity to increase the value of customers and reduce costs. Retention rate encompasses a degree of fuzziness. Indeed, it is easy to calculate it in contractual settings, but difficult in non-contractual settings. Retention should be defined and calculated with regard to the business context. For example, the concept of retention in the banking industry is different from that used in the retail industry. Banking customers do not frequently buy new products.

### Methodology

This paper argues that qualitative research techniques and phenomenological method has been used with the aim of concluding based on the actual experiences of the shopping consumers. Phenomenology is a descriptive, interpretive and reflexive method to understand the essence of people's lived experience told in their own language. This study has been implemented based on Van Manen's six main steps of phenomenology. The first step includes turning to the nature in-store experience; the second step is to examine an experience as it had lived. The third step is to analyze data using hermeneutic phenomenological considerations; the fourth step is to write the hermeneutic phenomenology; the fifth step is to maintain a continuous and strong relationship with phenomenon. And finally, the sixth step is to balance in context considering universality and its components simultaneously. Denzin and Lincoln<sup>19</sup> argue that "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them". Qualitative approaches are relevant to studies such as this one as they enable researchers to generate thick description of a scenario or setting, and a richness that is derived from the qualitative researcher's preoccupation with "detail, context, emotion relationships that joins one person to another"<sup>20</sup>. Not surprisingly, Gherardi and Turner<sup>21</sup> warn that by its very nature, qualitative research can become very messy and convoluted, thus making it a time intensive process. However, it is agreed amongst qualitative researchers). In general, the characteristics of this sector are summarized in terms of methodology, as follows: Paradigm: construal; Approach: qualitative; Method: phenomenology; Accountability Strategy: inductive; Objective: to explore the relationship; Time Horizon: single cross-sectional; and Data collection method: in-depth interviews with protocol. Sample and product selection. To start the phenomenological method, based on the concept of mental involvement, the product and brand were determined on each category with the pretests. These interviews happened in five provinces of Iran include Tehran, Khorasan-e Razavi, Isfahan, Fars and Azerbaijan-e Sharghi. The qualitative research interview also

<sup>19</sup> N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln, Introduction: entering the field of qualitative research, in Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA. 1998.

<sup>20</sup> N. Denzin, *Interpretative Interactionism* (Newbury Park, CA.: Sage. 1989), 83.

<sup>21</sup> S. Gherardi & B. Turner, Real men don't collect soft data, in Bryman, A. and Burgess, R. (Eds), *Qualitative Research: Volume 1* (London: Sage, 1999).

emphasises the role of the interviewer in the collection of data. In this research, the researchers reached to the stage of theoretical saturation by conducting 18 in-depth interviews. Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 show the status of interviews in our population.

| Tehran                   |    |   |        |      |           |     |      |
|--------------------------|----|---|--------|------|-----------|-----|------|
| Number of Interviewees   | of | 5 Interviewees                          | Gender |      | Education |     |      |
|                          |    |   | Female | Male | B.A       | M.A | PH.D |
|                          |    |   | 3      | 2    | 2         | 2   | 1    |
| Total time of Interviews |    | 120 Minutes                             |        |      |           |     |      |
| Place of Interviews      |    | Kourosh Mall, Palladium, Tirazheh, Etkā |        |      |           |     |      |

Table 2  
Status of Tehran's Interviews

| Mashhad                  |    |   |        |      |           |     |      |
|--------------------------|----|---|--------|------|-----------|-----|------|
| Number of Interviewees   | of | 4 Interviewees                                | Gender |      | Education |     |      |
|                          |    |   | Female | Male | B.A       | M.A | PH.D |
|                          |    |   | 1      | 3    | 1         | 2   | 1    |
| Total time of Interviews |    | 115 Minutes                                   |        |      |           |     |      |
| Place of Interviews      |    | Almas-e-Shargh, Kian Center, Armitaj, HyperMe |        |      |           |     |      |

Table 3  
Status of Mashhad's Interviews

| Tabriz                   |    |                                    |        |      |           |     |      |
|--------------------------|----|------------------------------------|--------|------|-----------|-----|------|
| Number of Interviewees   | of | 3 Interviewees                     | Gender |      | Education |     |      |
|                          |    |                                    | Female | Male | B.A       | M.A | PH.D |
|                          |    |                                    | 1      | 2    | 2         | 2   | -    |
| Total time of Interviews |    | 120 Minutes                        |        |      |           |     |      |
| Place of Interviews      |    | Laleh Park, Setareh Baran, Kourosh |        |      |           |     |      |

Table 4  
Status of Tabriz's Interviews

| Shiraz                   |    |  |        |      |           |     |      |
|--------------------------|----|--|--------|------|-----------|-----|------|
| Number of Interviewees   | of | 3 Interviewees                                   | Gender |      | Education |     |      |
|                          |    |  | Female | Male | B.A       | M.A | PH.D |
|                          |    |  | 2      | 1    | -         | 2   | 1    |
| Total time of Interviews |    | 105 Minutes                                      |        |      |           |     |      |
| Place of Interviews      |    | Persian Gulf Complex, Zeytoun-e-Fars, Hyper Star |        |      |           |     |      |

Table 5  
Status of Shiraz's Interviews

| Isfahan                  |    |                                 |        |      |           |     |      |
|--------------------------|----|---------------------------------|--------|------|-----------|-----|------|
| Number of Interviewees   | of | 3 Interviewees                  | Gender |      | Education |     |      |
|                          |    |                                 | Female | Male | B.A       | M.A | PH.D |
|                          |    |                                 | 1      | 2    | 1         | 2   | -    |
| Total time of Interviews |    | 115 Minutes                     |        |      |           |     |      |
| Place of Interviews      |    | City Center, Qeysarieh, Kourosh |        |      |           |     |      |

Table 6  
Status of Isfahan's Interviews



## Validity

In the preceding discussion of causality, several validity issues were addressed. Many of the validity concerns in quantitative research are also the concerns for realists. For instance, the concepts of reliability and validity communicate the credibility and trustworthiness of research findings. According to Lincoln & Guba<sup>22</sup>, credibility in the qualitative research arena is the counterpart of internal validity in quantitative research. Additionally, they noted that the concept of trustworthiness in the qualitative research tradition included internal and external validity, objectivity and reliability. Maxwell (In press) noted that validity as a concept is fundamental to all research. He focused primarily on internal validity rather than external validity/generalizability or reliability. Yet, the concept of validity has been highly contested in social research among quantitative and qualitative researchers with no real consensus on what is meant by the term or its appropriateness for all types of research. It is noted that a number of qualitative researchers who do not align with realism rejected more quantitative notions of validity and instead, chose to present alternative concepts such as credibility, trustworthiness (i.e. use of methods such as prolonged engagement, member checking) and transferability to determine the quality of the research. Despite ontological differences, researchers are interested in producing findings that are significant to the field to guide practice and future research endeavors, which means findings should be usable even if they simply provide a point of comparison with other contexts rather than produce generalizable findings in the statistical sense. Thus, both qualitative and quantitative researchers have relied heavily on approaches and methods to determine the validity/ trustworthiness of research. In this regard, to achieve above mentioned criteria, we performed as following:

1. Validity (Credibility): To acquire the validity of this study, the researcher try to obtain the confirmation of research processes by several experts, as well as utilizing two types of coding for interviews and spending sufficient time for analyzing them to ensure that the coder's viewpoints are same.

2. Transferability: We consulted with three marketing management specialists, to ensure that our research findings are transferable.

3. Dependability: For research dependability, we recorded all the research details and notes in all procedures.

4. Confirmability: To confirm the research findings, all the research procedures should record accurately, which is done in this study. For Example, we can refer to the interview's texts which are available in vocal and written formats.

## Steps of analysis & Finding

To analyze, the following steps have been performed: converting voice to the text; open coding or line-by-line coding to extract concepts. In this regard, 412 concepts were extracted in this stage. Also, three types of coding include open coding, axial coding and selective coding in ATLAS.ti software are used to determine the themes and categories.

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<sup>22</sup> Y. S. Lincoln & E. G. Guba, Establishing trust worthiness, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1985).

|                    | Concepts                   | Items (Frequency)   |                     | Concepts                     | Items (Frequency)   |
|--------------------|----------------------------|---|---------------------|------------------------------|---|
|                    | <b>Perceived Values</b>    | Utilitarian Shop (41)<br>Hedonic Shop (31)<br>In-Store Experiences (39)<br>Customer Perception (13)<br>Customer Value (15)<br>Delight (9)                           | <b>Consequences</b> | <b>Shopping Satisfaction</b> | Customer Satisfaction (28)<br>After Sales Services (18)<br>Purchase Feelings (32)<br>Trust to Salespeople (19)<br>Customer Knowledge (19)                           |
|                    | <b>Design &amp; Layout</b> | Product Layout (16)<br>Product Assortments (29)<br>Shop Space (41)<br>Shop Attractiveness (29)<br>Shop Cleanliness (21)   |                     | <b>Repurchase Intention</b>  | Customer Loyalty (41)<br>Customer Retention (14)<br>Purchase Schedule (19)<br>Shop Attractiveness (29)<br>Customer Trust (22)<br>Shop Recommendation to Others (29) |
| <b>Antecedents</b> | <b>Employee Skills</b>     | Employee Knowledge (29)<br>Respect to Customer (29)<br>Employee Responsibility (18)<br>Employees Training (18)<br>Intimacy (Personal Care) (29)<br>Cleanliness (14) |                     | <b>Flaneur</b>               | Customer Club (44)<br>Customer Feelings (21)<br>Shop Location (29)<br>Shop Distance (28)<br>Entertaining Environment (11)<br>Image (24)                             |
|                    | <b>Brand Equity</b>        | New Brands (29)<br>Brand Awareness (31)<br>Brand Variety (55)<br>Brand Loyalty (12)<br>Brand Quality (29)<br>Brand Value (39)                                       |                     | <b>Sales Promotion</b>       | Customer Reward (12)<br>Customer Needs (23)<br>Discounts (62)<br>Special Events (44)<br>Pricing (19)<br>Packaging (12)  |
|                    | <b>Word of Mouth</b>       | Word of Mouth (3)<br>Billboard Advertisement (12)<br>Advertisement Messages (29)<br>Virtual Advertisements (13)<br>Free Samples (4)                                 |                     | <b>Facilities</b>            | Shop Facilities (18)<br>Cash Shopping (6)<br>Cinema (Entertainment) (19)<br>Coupons (22)<br>Security (19)<br>Product Delivery (41)<br>Availability (22)             |

Table 7  
Concepts & Items (frequency)

In Figure 1 the results suggest that the findings of this stage have consistency with the findings of other stages in predicting the antecedents and consequences of in-store experience; In sum, 10 concepts were identified for both antecedents and consequences; selective coding, which involves the integration of categories and determines the central

and core elements, represents the main theme of this research. Also, 59 items were extracted from concepts of in-store experience. 41 items were related to antecedents of in-store experience & 18 items were related to consequences of in-store experience see Table 7.

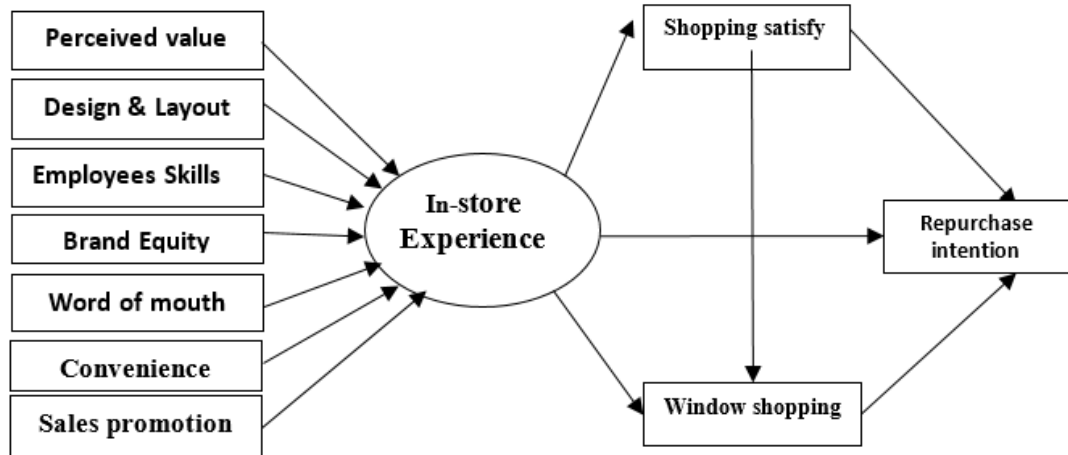


Figure 1  
Extracted Pattern

## Results and discussion

Comparison and discussion of the findings in this study with regard to the described conceptual model, provides an answer to this question: “what are the antecedents and consequences of in-store experience in shopping centers and malls of Iran?” According to the literature, different conceptual models and specialist’s viewpoints, we can conclude that the antecedents of in-store experience are comprised from seven variables: perceived values, design and layout, employee’s skills, brand equity, word of mouth, facilities and sales promotion; also, consequences of in-store experience are included: shopping satisfaction, repurchase intention and window shopping. In-store experiences of shop’s customers are classified as strengths and weaknesses of shops. Participants of this study suggested that what factors have comprised the antecedents and consequences of in-store experience in the cities of Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Shiraz and Tabriz. While customers need the desirable mix of these factors simultaneously, proper matching of them together can create a more positive and desirable in-store experience for customers. Thus, creation of positive in-store experience with utilization of these proper antecedents and consequences in all shops is possible. Some statements of interviewees are mentioned below:

In next section, our findings about variables (concepts) and their recognized relationships with each other are discussed and compared to the literature. In previous literature, in-store experience, both in operational and academic level, is considered as a most important criterion in retail marketing. Puccinelli et al.<sup>23</sup>, Kotler<sup>24</sup>, Relph<sup>25</sup>, Baker et

<sup>23</sup> N. M Puccinelli; R. C. Goodstein; D. Grewal; R. Price; P. Raghurir & D. Stewart, “Customer experience management in retailing: Understanding the buying process”, *Journal of Retailing*, Vol: 85 num 1 (2009): 15–30.

<sup>24</sup> P. Kotler, *Marketing Management*. Latest Edition 1st edition, amy. 1947.

<sup>25</sup> E. Relph, *Place & Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976).

al.<sup>26</sup> and Fan et al.<sup>27</sup>, have studied the effects of in-store experience on products and services presentation in department stores and malls; their variables were as same as ours and they achieved similar results in their studies. Babin and Attaway<sup>28</sup>, Sachdeva and Goel<sup>29</sup>, Gilboa and Villani-Yavetz and Wu et al.<sup>30</sup> have considered the effects of perceived values on in-store experience and have found a significant relationship between them. Two other variable namely hedonic and utilitarian shopping, are considered by Bloch, Sherrell and Ridgway<sup>31</sup> in the context of customer experience and have revealed a positive relationship between them. Because the design and layout are the first things that customers face, they are considered as important variables in creating an in-store experience. Building architecture, entrance windows and shopping mall's doors have significant effects on customer first impression. Hussein and Ali<sup>32</sup> and Teixeira et al.<sup>33</sup>, have studied the role of design and layout in creating an in-store experience and recognized them as a prerequisite of positive in-store experience. Stein & Ramaseshan<sup>34</sup>, Pan & Zinkhan<sup>35</sup> and Brown and Lam<sup>36</sup> have conducted a research on in-store experience in the supermarkets and focused on the impact and importance of employees' skill in creating a desirable customer experience. They concluded that there is a positive relationship between interactions, friendly behavior, employees' knowledge and specialty with creating positive in-store experience. The effect of brand equity on customer experience is considered as one of the most important variables in experiential marketing; in this regard, Chahal and dutta<sup>37</sup>, and Jones et al,<sup>38</sup> revealed in their research that brand is an important component in making an in-store experience. Totten and Block<sup>39</sup> introduced three ways to marketers in order to increase their sales. While the customers are the only resource for ROI in today's world economy, companies should focus all of

<sup>26</sup> J. Baker; A. Parasuraman; D. Grewal and G. B. Voss, "The influence of multiple store environment cues on perceived merchandise value & patronage intentions", *J. Mark. Vol: 66 num 2 (1992): 120–141.*

<sup>27</sup> K. SH. Fan; B. Merrilees; J. Richard; L. Li. Jozsa y J. Krisjanous, "In-Store marketing: a strategic perspective, *Asia PACIFIC*", *Journal of Marketing & Logistics, Vo.: 23 num 2 (2011): 165-176.*

<sup>28</sup> B. J. Babin and J. S. Attaway, "Atmospheric affect as a tool for creating value & gaining share of customer", *J. Bus. Res Vol: 49 num 2 (2000): 91–99.*

<sup>29</sup> I. Sachdeva & S. Goel, "Retail store environment & Customer experience: a paradigm", *Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management, Vol: 19 num 3 (2015): 290-298.*

<sup>30</sup> S. Gilboa & I. Vilnai-Yavetz, "Shop until you drop? An exploratory analysis of mall experiences", *European Journal of Marketing, Vol: 47 num 1-2 (2013): 239-259.*

<sup>31</sup> P. H. Bloch; D. L. Sherrell & N. Ridgeway, "Consumer search: an extended framework", *Journal of Consumer Research 13 (1986): 119–126.*

<sup>32</sup> R. Hussain & M. Ali, "Effect of store atmosphere on consumer purchase Intention", *International Journal of Marketing Studies, Vol: 2 num 7 (2015): 35-41.*

<sup>33</sup> J. Teixeira; L. Patricio; N. J. Nunes; L. Nobrega; R. P. Fisk & L. Constantine, "Customer experience modeling: From customer experience to service design", *Journal of Service Management, Vol: 23 num 3 (2012): 362-376.*

<sup>34</sup> A. Stein & B. Ramaseshan, "Towards the identification of customer experience touch point", *Journal of Retailing and consumer Services, num 30(2016): 8-19.*

<sup>35</sup> Y. Pan & G. M. Zinkhan, "Determinants of retail patronage: a meta-analytical perspective", *J. Retail. Vol: 82 num 3 (2006): 229–243.*

<sup>36</sup> S. P. Brown & S. K. Lam, "A meta-analysis of relationships: linking employee satisfaction to customer responses", *J. Retail. Vol: 84 num 3 (2008): 243–255.*

<sup>37</sup> H. Chahal & K. Dutta, "Measurement and impact of customer experience in banking sector". *Research paper, Vol: 42 num 1 (2014): 57-70.*

<sup>38</sup> Jones, P.; Comfort, D.; Clarke-Hill, C. & Hillier, D. "Retail experience stores: experiencing the brand at first hand". *Marketing Intelligence & Planning, Vol: 28 num 3 (2010): 241-248.*

<sup>39</sup> J. C. Totten & M. P. Block, *Analyzing Sales Promotion...*

their competencies and operations on customer satisfaction. Thus, today's competitive market forces all the organizations to become customer-centric. Shopping satisfaction is very important for all organization and their win or lose in the market is depended on their ability to retain customers. Successful customer retention is directly related to customer satisfaction which can be used to assess the quality of products and services.

### **Managerial implications**

This study provides several practical implications for managers in general and for managers of the shopping centers and malls specifically, with regard to how to increase customer in-store experiences. It suggests that managers must understand the importance not only of customer's experience but they must consider the antecedent & consequence of in-store experience in Iran. Theme the shopping centers and malls managers must make sure their customers are not only delighted but also satisfied by managing their physical environment, their staff and customers' interaction with others within the theme shopping center brands & clubs. Management can collect information from customers on how they perceive the dimensions of experience that may account for their selling satisfaction and customer retention. This information can ensure the identification of customer retention and the aspects that create from antecedent variables that may lead to their in store experiences. The current research offers experimental support in accordance with the actual data from phenomenology to achieve a strong and lasting link between the consumer and the in-store shopping experience categories. As a result, this results can periodically strengthen the short-term promotional stimuli and make it durable for creating customer experience. In addition, this research provides favorable support in order to achieve the desired antecedent and outcomes in terms of the in-store experience, brand equity, Flaneur are the news and important factors. According to the literature review, perceived value and layout in shopping center and malls are implies an acceptance of the customer retention and satisfaction.

### **Limitations and further research**

The findings of the qualitative section of this research have shown that a new measure can be extracted by promoting the dimensions of the in-store experience variables (Antecedents & Consequents). We suggested for other researcher to consider the out of store experience in malls and shopping centers. Therefore, the opportunity of extracting this criterion based on the phenomological methodology in the qualitative approach and its practicality were introduced. Furthermore, in the customer experience concept, the research has focused on the aspects of the in-store shopping experience. Future researchers can consider other aspects of shopping center or consumer characteristic and taste, for example, the role of digital elements & social media tools for considering antecedent or consequent of in-store experience. Attention to the other components of marketing mix as the controllable items, and introducing a new fit among them in order to achieve excellent in-store experience in shopping center and malls, will be a new topic and a supplement for the premium results. Although, in the present study, no control has been taken on the demographic factors of the sample, these factors can lead to new results. Due to a wide range of demographic factors and the existence of controlled conditions for them, considering them besides environmental and cultural components in the various location areas is a research opportunity for the future research. Additionally, the moderating role of in-store experience presents an interesting finding, while we provide seven categories for antecedents, future research could explore this variable further and offer insights into customer experience on a wider range of sampling. Lastly, while

interesting findings are reported, as this research was conducted solely within the five and biggest province of Iran, we encourage future research to extend this research by testing the bigger sampling like middle east or Muslims countries in other geographical locations with different cultural settings to conduct cross-cultural comparison of our results.

## Conclusion

This research has advanced our theoretical understanding of the in-store customer experience with systematic approach and classify to categories: antecedents and consequence factors. Qualitative research interviews were conducted with participants. Kvale<sup>40</sup> defines the qualitative research interview as an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. With the continued advancement in shopping center and malls for retailers to continually adapt to evolving consumer demands and new service/product and ways to satisfy and retention of consumer in shopping centers, this research provides managers and making decisions in this era, numerous managerial implications in relation to the in- store customer experience with their shopping centers and malls. The paper has taken the initial steps in developing a customer experience with offering a national model in Iran for first time. The key variables influencing the customer experience have been established, with utilitarian variables driving the customer experience. In contrast to antecedent and consequent of in-store experience have positive effect on the customer experience within the shopping center and malls environment, the findings of the research outline that customers are conscious of the length of time they spend in shopping center as a Flaneur.

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<sup>40</sup> N. King, Using interviews in qualitative research, in Cassell, C. and Symon, G. (Eds), *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research* (London: Sage, 2004).

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