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The Role of Retail Environmental Cues in Developing Customer Experience in Retail Stores: A Comparative Study Between Egypt and the United Arab Emirates(UAE)

Abstract

Retail stores are increasingly competing on developing customer experience through improving the retail environment. In order to develop emotional bonds with brands, retailers have turned their attention to develop customer experience. Regardless of the importance of the physical environment, very few customer behaviour researches have been performed to test some of the basic relationships between the physical environment and Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) environmental psychology model. This research has attempted to enhance existing knowledge in the field of customer experience in retail stores and identify the impact of store atmospherics on consumers' emotions and purchasing behaviour. Concern about the retail shopping experience is affected by functional and emotional factors leading to a specific customers' approach behaviour. A multiple-item scale has been developed to measure the overall conceptual framework of store at mospherics in retail store settings.

The researchers adopted a quantitateve approach using a conclusive research where non-probability sampling was used. The questionnaire was the primary method of collecting data. It included surveying people living in Egypt (Alexandria and Cairo) and in United Arab of Emirates (UAE) (Abu Dhabi and Dubai) about their retail shopping experiences. In total, 408 useable surveys were collected from Egypt and 404 from UAE. Results provide insights to retailers about the effect of functional and emotional factors on consumers' feelings of pleasure and arousal, which in turn affect consumers' approach behavioural intentions. They indicated that there is a significant impact of customer pleasure and arousal on customer's approach behavioural intentions to purchase in retail stores in both Egypt, and UAE.

Keywords: Store atmospherics/ retail environmental cues, retail environment, customer experience, retail stores, pleasure, arousal, and customer approach, and purchasebehaviour/behavioural intentionns/ responses.

دور الدلالات البيئية للبيع بالتجزئة فى تطوير تجربة العميل فى متاجر البيع بالتجزئة: دراسة مقارنة بين مصر والإمارات العربية المتحدة.

ملخص البحث

تتنافس متاجر التجزئة بشكل متزايد على تطوير تجربة العملاء من خلال تحسين بيئة البيع بالتجزئة. فى سبيل تطوير روابط عاطفية مع العلامات التجارية الشهيرة، يولى تجار التجزئة كل انتباههم لتطوير تجربة العملاء. وبغض النظر عن أهمية البيئة المادية، تم إجراء عدد قليل جدًا من أبحاث سلوك العملاء لاختبار بعض العلاقات الأساسية بين البيئة المادية ونموذج علم النفس البيئي الذي وضعه مهربيان وراسل (١٩٧٤). لذلك حاول هذا البحث تعزيز المعرفة الحالية فى مجال تجربة العملاء فى متاجر البيع بالتجزئة وتحديد تأثير المناخ العام (البيئة المادية) لمتاجر التجزئة على مشاعر المستهلكين وسلوك الشراء. تم تطوير مقياس متعدد العناصر لقياس إطار مفاهيم شامل للمناخ العام والبيئة المادية في تجهيز متجر البيع بالتجزئة. قام الباحثان بإجراء بحث استنتاجي حيث تم استخدام عينات غير احتمالية. كان الاستبيان هو الطريقة الأساسية لجمع البيانات. وقد شمل المسح أشخاص يعيشون فى مصر (الإسكندرية والقاهرة) وفى دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة (أبو ظبي ودبي) وتجاربهم في التسوق بمتاجر التجزئة. فى الإجمالي، تم جمع ٤٠٨ استبيان قابل للاستخدام من مصر و ٤٠٤ من دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. تقدم النتائج رؤى لتجار التجزئة حول تأثير العوامل الوظيفية والعاطفية على مشاعر المستهلكين من المتعة والإثارة، والتي بدورها تؤثر على نوايا المستهلكين السلوكية. وأشارت النتائج إلى وجود تأثير كبير للمتعة والإثارة التى يشعر بها العملاء على النوايا السلوكية لهم فى الشراء من متاجر البيع بالتجزئة فى كل من مصر والإمارات العربية المتحدة.

الكلمات الدالة: المناخ العام (البيئة المادية) لمتاجر التجزئة والدلالات البيئية – تجربة العميل – متاجر التجزئة – متعة – إثارة – توجه العملاء – السلوك الشرائى / النوايا السلوكية.

1. Introduction

Customer experience has become a critical source for differentiating and branding retail stores. In order to improve consumer emotional bonds with the brand, store marketers focused on developing memorable retail experiences, which fulfil both consumers' physical and psychological needs and values (Adeosun and Rahim, 2012). Marketing managers of retail stores have adopted the customer experience orientation and emphasized it in their mission and strategies (Verhoef et al., 2009). This is because the value created by unique customer experiences and emotions exerts a significant impact on organisational performance in terms of customer satisfaction, retention and loyalty (Adeosun and Rahim, 2012). Creating a branded customer experience is increasingly becoming a success indicator in the contemporary retailing environment. Marketing managers have a growing interest in exploring the impact of environmental cues on consumers' emotions and purchase behaviour (Bitner, 1992).

However customer experience is a prominent area in the retailing field, there is a lack of a clear conceptualization of customer experience and a scarcity of a holistic perceptive of its application in the retail industry (Petermans et al., 2013). Experiential marketing is a contemporary thought that employs both rational and hedonic aspects of consumption in a complete experience (Adeosun and Rahim, 2012). Therefore, there is a need to understand critical retailing issues in the rapidly expanding retail landscape, especially as consumer needs and values remain the main drive for their purchase decisions.

To succeed in today's retail environment, retailers must offer the value sought by their customers, and should create deep customer engagement. This holistic ap-proach is more relevant to store designers and retail marketers, because unlike an experimental design, a holistic examination allows for the assessment of many atmospheric cues and their interactions simultaneously (Ballantine et al., 2010). This study is conducted ac-ross two different countries in the Arab world namely: Egypt and UAE to help retail store marketers better analyse their target audiences' needs, values, and sought experiences.

According to Ramzy et al. (2011), Egyptians used to buy from small retailers but now this purchasing behaviour has been shifted to large retailers due to the wide variety of products and services and the lower prices they offer than the small retailers do. Although there was a period of political disorder in 2011 and 2013, there is an increasing purchasing power, the retail growth is predicted to increase if economic, and political conditions remain stable. Egypt is considered the biggest consumer market in the Arab world where Egypt's retail sales is predicted to reach \$ 98 billion by 2020. This makes Egypt one of the most influential retail markets in the Middle East (Samir, 2017).

Both Egypt and UAE are in the Arab world context and they enjoy an increasing growth in the retail sector. UAE is considered to be a developed country while Egypt is a developing country in the Middle East. The United Arab Emirates is the most multicultural and westernized country in the Middle East.

This country has much to offer in terms of lifestyle and career development. Dubai is positioned as an economic centre for the Gulf area, with a history of both political and social stability (Miller, 2011). UAE has common characteristics with some Arab countries. It has specific features, partially resulting from the British occupation and historical influences, and partly influenced by the invasion of emigrants from a large number of foreign countries, have given the UAE a unique place in the Arab world. Emigrants have brought a significant amount of cultural diversity (Al Mazroue and Pech, 2015). The last few years have witnessed an accelerating increase in the United Arab Emirates retail sector. UAE residents and visitors can easily notice a growing movement in establishing shopping malls all over the country (El-Adly, 2007; Madichie and Blythe, 2011). The UAE has a multinational population (Al Mazroue and Pech, 2015). As the economy diversifies in accordance with Dubai Plan 2021, the GDP growth has been predicted to grow 3.2% in 2017 and to strengthen in 2018 to 3.5%. Although there is a growth of the online retail sector in the UAE in the form of Amazon (Souq.com) and Noon, there is a continued increase in in-store promotions. There is a strong desire from international brands to open stores in the UAE. The UAE is ranked the seventh most prevalent destination of choice for international retail market expansions. The retail demand in Dubai continues to be strong with more large retail centres working at approximately %100 occupancy (Knight Frank Research, 2017).

In the future of marketing retail stores, store environmental cues and customers buying decisions remain to be critical issues. Thus, this study focuses on the effects of consumers' perceptions of the physical environment on their emotions and contributes to the body of knowledge by providing a conceptual framework for how the store environmental cues influences customers' behavioural intentions (Customer approach) in Egypt and in the United Arab Emirates using a large sample of real customers. Therefore, this research adds to international marketing theory concerning customer experiences in retail stores. In addition, the findings of this study will help retail managers provide a more comprehensive picture for multinational retailers to better understand the similarities and dissimilarities in customer enjoyment of the shopping experience in both countries' retail settings, and how to induce enjoyable shopping experiences and create competitive advantages.

This research provides a review of literature of the effect of store atmospherics on consumers' behavioural intentions/responses (represented by only customer approach) and the importance of developing the customer experience in retail stores. Research methodology follows the conceptual model to discuss research objectives, questions, and hypotheses, research design, population and sampling, method of data collection, and variables measurement. Data analysis shows the type of statistical tests used in this study. The Model fit indices of the SEM are discussed and finally, discussion and conclusion, implications, limitations and future research are provided.

2. Literature review

Over the years, the marketing management theory has undergone many changes. Creating customer loyalty by repeat purchase or recommendation and by developing rich relationships with customers followed the marketing concept, which aimed at reaching customer satisfaction by concentrating on transactional exchange. The customer experience is a holistic construct that encompasses consumers' cognitive, emotional, social and physical responses to the retail store (Verhoef et al., 2009). Schmitt (2003) defined CEM as the process of managing the customer's whole experience with a product/a brand or a company. Bagdare and Jain (2013) indicated that the retail customer experience includes cognitive, emotional, sensorial, and behavioural responses produced during the entire purchasing process and which embraces the interaction with people, products, processes and store environmental cues in retailing.

Traditionally, companies relied on offering more services to customers to provide in-store customer experience. Levy and Weitz (2012) argued that delivering customer experience better than that delivered by competitors is a key to differentiation. Customer experience is influenced by some elements that the retailers can control such as the store environmental cues. Improving store atmospherics is growing in importance for retailers in an attempt to develop customers' in-store positive emotions, which in turn affect customers' satisfaction and experience (Terblanche, 2018). Schmitt (1999) argued that companies should understand how customers sense, feel, think and act towards a store if they want to create positive customer experiences. In support of this view, Solomon (2016) mentioned that marketers might affect consumers' perceptions through one or all of the five sensory receptors (vision, hearing, touch, taste, smell) to develop their attitudes and create in-store experiences. Consumers desire a multi-sensory and holistic experience that entertains and emotionally affect them. This could take place by designing store atmospherics that positively affect consumers' intentions to approach the retail sores and impact customers' loyalty (Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al., 2009).

The buying process in a retail environment is triggered whenever customers discover unfulfilled need and want. Especially when shopping for fun, the decisions to enter a particular store, how much time to spend inside, and whether to buy or not to buy are heavily influenced by the shopping environment and its effect on customers' emotions. Consequently, retailers design their shops so that customers are attracted, can locate merchandise easily, motivated for unplanned purchases, and offered a satisfying shopping experience (Levy and Weitz, 2012). According to Schmitt (2011), people integrate with brands and products in experiences. An experience refers to knowledge, emotions and thoughts about products and brands. Shopping's hedonic value stems from pleasure and entertainment, while its functional value is derived from the basic utility and features of the product (Solomon, 2016). The store environment has the potential to be an effective marketing tool if retailers better understand how to utilize it. Most of store atmospherics research has been conducted in hospitals, offices and schools and little has focused on studying

the effect of store environments on consumer behaviour (Baker et al., 1992). In environmental psychology, the difficulty is that every person experiences an environment differently and individually. Therefore, what is good for one person is not necessarily good for the other. It is necessary to elaborate on the store atmospherics and their influence on customers' emotions and approach towards purchasing in retail stores.

Consumers' behavioural responses to store atmospherics and emotional state were known as customers' approach and customers' avoidance (Mehrabian and Russell 1974; Solomon 2016). One source of motivation, which could be positive, negative, or both may drive a purchase decision. When a consumer tends to approach or choose a retail store this is represented by the customer approach as the behavioural intention /response. In customer approach, consumers direct their behaviour towards stores that they value positively and intend to purchase from them. On the other hand, when consumers direct their behaviours away from the retail store and intend to avoid visiting it because they value it negatively this is known as customer avoidance, which is considered to be the behavioural intention and response. This study is focusing only on customer's approach as the behavioural response/ intentions towards the retail store.

Environmental psychology that studies the interactions between people and their environment emphasizes examining the effects of store atmosphere on customers' cognitive and emotional responses (Turley and Milliman, 2000), and customers' behavioural response (Mattila and Wirtz, 2008). Several environmental psycholo-

gists and researchers employed the Stimulus Response Organism (S-O-R) Paradigm of Donovan and Rossiter (1982) which was reliable to be used in various retail contexts. This study developed a conceptual framework for how consumers' perceptions of the physical environment influence customer approach through emotions. Figure 1 includes the relationships between environmental cues, emotional states, and behavioural intentions and which is adapted from the Donovan and Rossiter (1982) model and Mehrabian & Russell's (1974) model known as the Pleasure Arousal Dominance (PAD) Model with an emphasis on the hedonic valence, pleasure and arousal rather than consumers' facets of control/power. This study does not include power in the measurement of emotions as power is considered to be a personality trait, which is not ascertained for studying consumer behaviour in the retail settings of this study. According to the previously mentioned models, environmental stimuli lead to two opposing consumer behavioural responses known as customer's approach and avoidance. These responses are generated by customers' perceptions of store ambience, design and social factors. Favourable perceptions of store environmental cues lead to customer approach as a behavioural response where customers have a desire to stay or explore the store. On the other hand, unfavourable perceptions of store environmental cues lead to customer avoidance as a behavioural response where customers have unpleasant feelings towards the store and do not want to stay in it (Solomon 2016; Turley and Milliman, 2000). This study focuses only on the customer approach as the customers' behavioural response or behavioural intentions to purchase in retail stores.
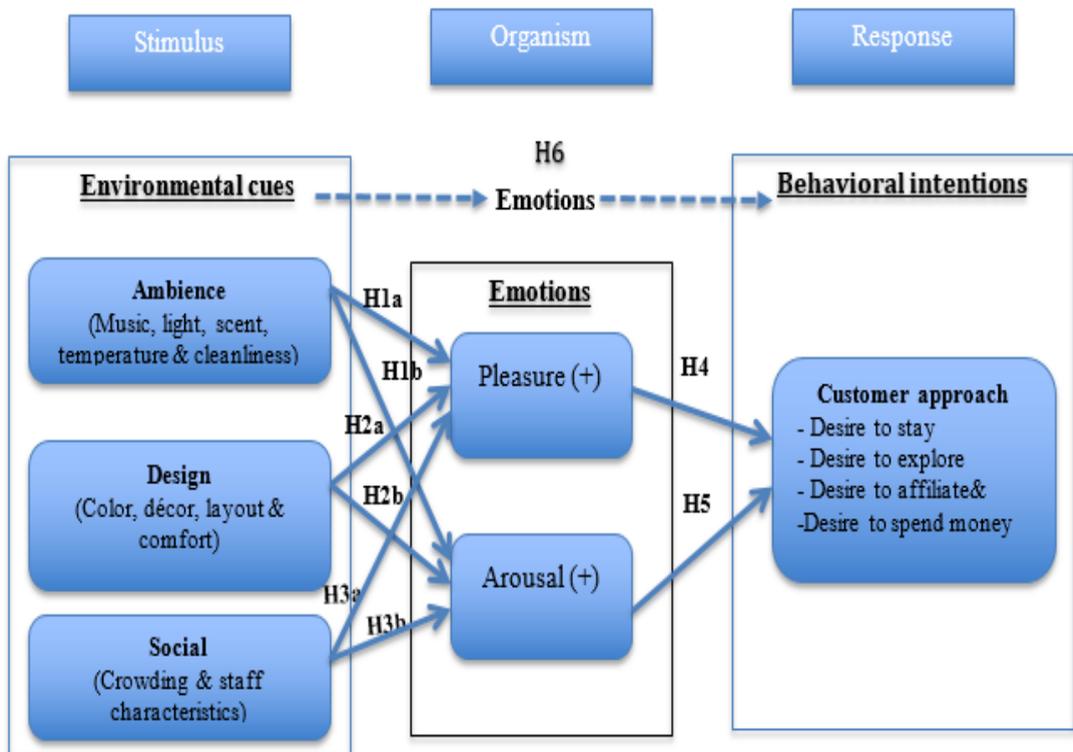
Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

A feeling arises as the consumer mind interprets emotions. Feelings are mental associations and experiences and reactions to emotions. They are influenced by consumers' experiences, beliefs, and memories (Damasio, 2000). A feeling is a mental representation of what is going on in the consumer body when he or she has a specific emotion after being subjected to external stimuli (Damasio, 2000; Solomon, 2016). Kotler (1973) used the term "atmospherics", to describe what consumers interact with throughout their shopping experience. Marketers understand that a store's distinguishing environment is a vital delivering customer experience. Thus, it can

be certainly designed to evoke feelings and emotions, which will influence consumers' behavioural response/intention to buy or revisit the store. Solomon (2016) mentioned that odours and sound or music might create moods that develop and affect customers' emotions towards the stores. Baker (1986) first introduced the categorization of in-store atmospherics into three groups: design factors (layout, colour, décor), social factors (employees and shoppers), and ambient factors (visual and non-visual elements, music, scent, and lighting which sets the mood and tone of an environment). This study applies Baker's (1986) design, social, and ambient cat-

egories and considers them as the independent variables.

Ambient factors are typically descryibed as intangible background characteristics, which tend to affect the non-visual senses and may have a subconscious effect, which set the mood and tone of an environment, such as music, scent, temperature, cleanliness and lighting. Usually customers do not even notice these factors unless they exceed an acceptable limit, such as when the music becomes too loud, or when lightening is too bright (Baker, 1986; Baker et al., 1992). Design factors are elements of the store environment that are visual in nature and include functional and aesthetic elements such as colour, layout, décor and style (Baker, 1986). Architectural design had the strongest positive influence on excitement, while interior decor had the strongest positive effect on desire to stay (Wakefield and Baker, 1998).

The social factor indicates the human component; it represents people. Human variables in the environment include dimensions such as customer crowding or density, customer characteristics, employee characteristics, and employee uniforms (Turley and Milliman, 2000). A professional employee uniform may effectively convey an organization's image and core values in a very up-close-and-personal way. In a hedonic consumption situation, customer reactions to the service environment are associated more to the emotional states than cognitive perceptions. Ryu and Han (2010) and Ryu and Jang (2007) supported the strong influence of employees on customers' pleasure and arousal states. Most marketing scholars studying retail atmospherics followed the pleasure/arousal view of Mehrabian and

Russell (1974), which emphasizes that emotions play a mediating role between environmental cues and behaviour. Ambience elements include music/sound, odours, temperature, cleanliness and lighting. Store design elements include store aesthetics such as colour, décor, layout and style (Baker, 1986) and the social factors indicate the human component; it represents people such as customer crowding or density, customer characteristics, employee characteristics, and employee uniforms (Turley and Milliman, 2000).

3. Research Methodology

This part of study includes the research objectives, questions and hypotheses, research approach and design, population and sampling technique and method of data collection and statistical tests used for analysing data.

3.1 Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to measure the impact of store atmospherics including ambience, design and social elements on customers' emotions and customer approach (as the behavioural intentions) through a multiple-item scale. This study is comparative in nature. It intends to test the mediating effect of customers' e-motions between store environmental cues and customers' behavioural intentions and explore the differences of retail store experiences between two different countries in the Arab world, namely Egypt and UAE. Cross-cultural marketing research should be conducted across nations or culture groups, rather than across provinces or ethnic groups. It has assumed great importance in the academic and business worlds (Malhotra et al., 1996) and provides more insights and interpretations

of factors under study (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

3.2 Research questions

In accordance with these objectives, four main questions have been raised as directive guidelines for the whole research:

Question one: Will a favourable store environment lead to positive emotions?

This question tries to explore whether the favourable perception of store atmospherics (ambience, design and social) will influence emotions the feelings of pleasure and arousal)

Question two: will feelings of pleasure influence customer purchase behaviour (represented by the customer approach behavioural intentions)?

This question investigates whether or not the high levels pleasure will affect customer behavioural intentions to purchase in retail stores (make them more attached to stay, browse, accompany others and spend money in the store).

Questions three: Will feelings of arousal influence customer purchase behaviour (represented by the customer approach behavioural intentions)?

This question investigates whether or not higher levels of arousal will affect customer purchase behaviour (make them more attached to stay, browse, accompany others and spend money in the store).

Questions four: Which store atmospherics in a retail environment create a positive experience for Egyptian compared to United Arab Emirates customers?

This question addresses the main objective of the study: which store atmospherics create a positive customer experience, and whether or not there is a difference in the way these factors influence customers emotions and behavioural intentions of Egyptian versus UAE customers.

3.3 Research hypotheses

The proposed framework will serve as a foundation of this study. Several primary hypotheses were proposed to explore the relationships between environmental cues and behaviour in which emotion is a mediating factor (Chebat and Michon, 2003). The proposed model in this study consists of three main components, which are store environmental cues, customers'' emotions and customer approach as the behavioural response/ intention towards the store. It should examine how the independent variables, the store atmospherics, will have an impact on the mediating variables of customer experience which are feelings of pleasure and arousal and the dependent variables, customer behavioural intentions (represented by only the customer approach) when they visit retail stores. Based on these arguments, the following hypotheses are tested.

Hypothesis One

Retailers have started to believe that ambient/environmental cues (music, lighting, scent and cleanliness) influence customer's evaluation of the store (Spangenberg et al., 1996). Lighting and temperature are environ-mental elements that are not noticed by consumers unless they exist at unpleasant levels (Baker, 1986). For example, temperatures that are unpleasantly high or low may be noticed, while com for table temperatures will not be noticed. This would suggest that management must ensure that lighting and temperature levels are kept within the realm of

comfort for consumers (Wakefield and Baker, 1998).

Music is an environmental cue that create moods, evokes emotions, and affect consumers' attitudes and behaviours in the shopping environment (Eroglu et al., 2005; Solomon, 2016; Turley and Milliman, 2000). Lighting highlights the products and influences a customer's perception of form, colour and texture of (Lin, 2010). Ambient odours might also influence a consumer's mood, emotion or feelings (Ryu, 2005; Solomon, 2016; Spangenberg et al., 1996). The physical appearance and cleanliness of a firm's premises can have a positive effect on customer attribution and satisfaction. A study evaluating service companies showed that neat, well-kept, organized customer service areas achieved higher satisfaction ratings by customers after a service failure occurred (Bitner, 1992).

Therefore it is hypothesized that:

H1: Favourable perceptions of store ambience (music, light, scent, temperature and cleanliness) influence customer emotions.

The previous hypothesis is split/ divided into two main sub-hypotheses because customer emotions include both pleasure and arousal.

H1a: Favourable perceptions of store ambience influence customer pleasure.

H1b: Favourable perceptions of store ambience influence customer arousal.

Hypothesis Two

According to Wakefield and Baker (1998), store design, display and décor may affect customers' emotions. Colour is a strong visual component of the physical setting that stimulates emotional responses (Bellizzi et al., 1983). Harmony between colour and decor makes the experience more pleasant (Soo Cheong and Namkung, 2009). Spatial layout makes people feel constrained and has a direct effect on customer perceptions of quality, excitement levels, and on their desire to return (Ryu and Han, 2010**). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:**

H2: Favourable perceptions of store design (colour, décor, layout and comfort) influence customer emotions.

This hypothesis is split into two main sub-hypotheses because customer emotions include pleasure and arousal.

H2a: Favourable perceptions of store design influence customer pleasure.

H2b: Favourable perceptions of store design influence customer arousal.

Hypothesis Three

The physical and behavioural characteristics of salespeople and the level of crowding in a store were found to be powerful in evoking customer pleasure and arousal (Machleit et al., 2000). A greater number of friendly employees and a more active and arousing store environment, result in a more pleasant shopping experience (Baker et al., 1992**). Thus it is proposed that:**

H3: Favourable perceptions of the people in a retail store (crowding, staff characteristics) influence customer emotions.

This hypothesis is split into two main sub-hypotheses because customer emotions include both pleasure and arousal.

H3a: Favourable perceptions of the people in a retail store influence customer pleasure.

H3b: Favourable perceptions of the people in a retail store influence customer arousal.

Hypotheses Four and Five

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) developed their model to explore the environmental stimuli within retail environments and their influence on the consumer. They proved that emotions, evoked by store environments, are related to consumers' behavioural responses. These responses may create cognitive dissonance in the mind of the consumer leading to conflicting desires to stay or not to stay in a store (Chebat and Michon, 2003). According to Eroglu et al. (2001, p.181), "pleasure and arousal can adequately represent the range of emotion showed in response to environmental stimuli". Only customer approach as the positive responses rather than customer avoidance behavioural intentions are considered in this study. **Therefore, it is hypothesized that:**

H4: Customer pleasure has an impact on customers' approach behavioural response

H5: Customer arousal has an impact on customers' approach behavioural response

Hypothesis Six

Most marketing researchers studying retail atmospherics used Mehrabian and Russel's (1974) pleasure/arousal research findings in which emotions play the mediating role between environmental cues and behaviour. Some previous studies such as Donovan and Rossiter (1982), Wakefield and Baker (1998) and Chebat and Michon (2003) have assumed a mediating effect of mood on consumers' cognition and behaviour**. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated as follows:**

H6: Emotions mediate the relationship between environmental cues and customer approach behavioural response.

3.4 Research design

This study is deductive in nature. It includes a mono method quantitative research to measure the impact of store environmental cues on customers' approach behavioural intentions, mediated by emotions. The research is a descriptive one in which data was collected using a questionnaire that is distributed across two countries in the Arab region. Accordingly, a larger group of respondents have been considered for a structured survey instrument, piloting and then distributing a large-scale questionnaire across Egypt and UAE was conducted. Data collection, coding and finally statistical analysis using SPSS, and AMOS for Structural Equation Modeling methodology has been used. This study is based on a comparative research design. The purpose is to examine how store atmospherics affect customer purchase behaviour in retail stores of Egypt and UAE. The results determined if and to what degree the store environments of experiential retailers affect the desire of customers to stay, affiliate, explore and spend money. The study proposes that store environments affect the emotional state of consumers, which influences customer approach behavioural response.

3.5 Population and sampling

According to Bryman and Bell (2015), when a sample is very heterogeneous, like a sample of a whole country or city, the population is likely to be highly varied. The population for this study is customers of hypermarkets in Egypt and UAE. Male and female consumers were of different age groups (youth, middle age and elders), of varying income levels (low, medium, and high

levels), and of various educational levels (high school, diploma, university graduate and postgraduate or professional degree). They were from different social classes (low, middle, and high classes), have different marital status, number of children, household size, and residence (Egypt and UAE).

The population in both Egypt and UAE is highly varied and the same sampling technique was used in both Egypt and UAE in attempt to ensure sampling equivalence. Due to the lack of a sampling frame and the need for extensive study for which the geographical focus area ranged over two countries, the researchers employed non-probability sampling through convenience sampling technique. According to Market force Information (2016), customer intercept survey can be used to assess consumers' reactions to store atmospherics, reasons for shopping, purchase intentions, and actual behaviours. Customer intercept survey may answer research questions which link the intercept data to other location level data such as customer experiences in stores. Researches intercepted customers at various retail stores and asked them to complete the questionnaire based on their convenience. Convenience sampling is less expensive and quick to apply. It includes the most easily and accessible members. Therefore, results cannot be generalised to the entire population of Egypt and UAE. The sampling time-frame was over six months (three months in Egypt and three months in UAE). The structured questionnaire survey was distributed over 1600 consumers in both Egypt and UAE (800 each) to ensure sampling equivalence. The response rates in both countries were approximately close to each other. 408 useable surveys were collected from customers of hypermarkets in Egypt with a response rate of 51% and 404 useable surveys were collected from customers of hypermarkets in UAE with a response rate of 50.5%. In total, it yielded a response rate of 50.75% with 840 that were completed questionnaires from both Egypt and UAE.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire of the present study was developed, revised and approved by the marketing professors who are interested in the field and other professors who are experts in r-esearch methodology. The survey instrument was written in both Arabic and English languages since a considerable percentage of residents in the UAE are non-Arabic speaking (El-Adly, 2007) and the native language of Egyptians and Arabs is Arabic in Egypt. To ensure the equivalence of survey data the questionnaire instrument was developed in English and then translated by professional translators into the Arabic language. To validate the instrument and ensure the precision and fit of sentences and wordings to the culture of both Arab countries, scale items written in Arabic were reviewed and back translated into English by a bilingual expert. The questionnaire survey was then piloted with a small sample priortothe main including 60 participants from the researcher's colleagues, faculty members and staff of the Arab Academy, in addition to family members and friends.

Some negatively worded (reverse coded) statements were included in the customer behaviour scale in order to overcome and minimize the bias as a result of a respondent tendency to automatically select the items towards one end of the scale (Sekaran and Bougie, 20-

16). The questionnaire was personally administered. The researcher with a research team (including the researchers' colleagues) distributed it across Egypt (Alexandria and Cairo) and UAE (Dubai and Abu Dhabi). The survey is divided into two sections. Section one encompasses the customers' perceptions of store environmental elements; customers' emotions and customers' approach as the behavioural intentions. Section two surveys the socio-demographic information of respondents, which includes gender, nationality, place of residence, age, education level, occupation, size of household, marital status, and frequency of shopping, were asked. Monthly income was also requested for Egyptians in Egyptian pounds, and those for residents in United Arab Emirates, in dirhams.

3.7 Variables Measurement

Variables and measurements in this study include the following:

3.7.1 The independent variables- Perception of store environmental factors

Customer perception about the physical environment encompasses perceptions about the store atmospherics, which include ambient, design, and social factors. Store Environmental Factors. The first section of the questionnaire was designed using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = extremely disagree, 7 = extremely agree) to ask the participants about how they judge the store environment where they made their most recent purchase. Store environmental factors studied included ambient, social, and design variables. They were sub-divided into several major variables including store music, lighting, cleanliness, scent, temperature, interior colour,

décor, store layout employee abilities and tidiness, the presence of other customers and crowding. This section consisted of 28 items. All of them were drawn directly or modified from previous studies concerning assessing the retail store environment.

Ambient Factors

Five items were drawn from Baker (1986), including 'Background music relaxes me'; 'Background music is pleasing'; 'Lighting cr-eates a comfortable atmosphere'; 'Li-ghting creates a warm atmosphere'; and 'Scent in this store is tempting'. Three items were drawn from Wakefield and Baker (1998) and Zeeshan (2013) including 'The store plays music that I like'; 'The store music is played at an appropriate volume'; 'The store lighting is appropriate'. Three items were drawn from Ryu (2005) about the store lighting, cleanliness and temperature. The final item was drawn from Spangenberg *et al.* (1996), which was about the scent in the store.

Design Factors

Six items were drawn from Ryu (20-05) about colours and their effect on the atmosphere, the flooring, the attractiveness of the décor and the other four items were drawn from Wakefield and Baker (1998) to include the general store design attractiveness.

Social Factors

Three items were drawn from Baker (1986), which include 'Employees are neat and well dressed'; 'Employees look good and professional'; and 'Enough number of employees makes me feel cared for.' Two items were drawn from Mattila and Wirtz (2008), they were 'The store seemed very crowded'; and 'The store was a little too busy.' The final item was drawn

from Machleit et al. (1994),'There were a lot of shoppers in the store'.

3.7.2 The mediating variables-Customer emotions

Emotion scales include both feelings of pleasure and arousals are considered to be the mediating factors between store atmospherics and customer approach behavioural response. This part required the respondents to indicate their emotional states as they shopped in the environment. Eleven items measured by a 7-point semantic differential scale that includes contrasting emotions were adapted from Donovan *et al.* (1994) scale. They were used to assess emotions, feelings and mood at the retail stores.

3.7.3 The dependent variables-Behavioural Intentions/Customer approach

The dependent variable in this study is behavioural intentions, which is measured by only customer approach as the main consumer behavioural response. This part was designed to measure the seven approach items on a 7-point likert scale with varying agreement levels, four items were drawn from Donovan and Rossiter (1982) about spending time and money in stores, enjoying shopping in this store and feeling friendly and talkative to a stranger in the retail store. The other three items were drawn from Wakefield and Baker (1998) about staying and spending time in store and having favourable attitude towards the retail store.

4. Data Analysis

The empirical study and findings were obtained by testing and analysing the data under study collected from Egypt and UAE for the purpose of comparing both countries. The analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) – version 22, as well as AMOS 18.

4.1 Descriptive statistics of the sample

The sample of this study yielded 408 respondents from Egypt where 51.3% were females, 48.7% males and 57.8% were married, and 42.2 were single. Unlike Egypt, the 404 respondents from UAE were more males (77.5%) than females who represented only 22.5%. Almost similar to Egyptian respondents' marital status, UAE respondents were 54% married and 46% single. The majority of respondents in Egypt were of Egyptian nationality representing 94.6% and only 6.4% were of other nationalities. In addition, the majority of respondents in UAE were Emiratis representing 95.8% and only 4.2 were of other nationalities. In Egypt, the majority of respondents were of the 21-30 years old and 31-40 years old age groups representing 28.9% and 41.7% respectively. Lower response rates were from the 41-50 years old, above 50 years old and below the 21 years old age groups representing 19.4%, 8.1%, and 1.9% respectively. Like Egypt, higher response rates in UAE were from 21-30 years old and 31-40 years old age groups representing 38.9% and 36.9% respectively. Lower response rates were from the 41-50 years old, above 50 years old, and below 21 years old age groups representing 14.9%, 5%, and 4.3% respectively.

In Egypt, respondents had different levels of average monthly income. The majority of respondents had an average income level ranging from L.E. 1,000 to 5,000 representing 55.4% of respondents, followed by respondents with income level L.E. (5,000-10,000)

representing 22.1%, respondents with income level L.E. (10,000-15,000) representing 10.5%, respondents with income level more than L.E. 15,000 representing 6.4% and respondents with income level below L.E. 1, 000 representing 5.6%. In UAE, the majority of respondents had an average monthly income (in dirhams) ranging from 10,000 to 20,000 representing 35.4%, followed by respondents with income levels Less than 10, 000, (20,000 - 30,000), (30,000 - 40,000), more than dirhams 40,000 representing 31.4%, 15.1%, 12.3%, and 5.8% respectively. In addition, in Egypt, respondents were with varying educational levels. The majority of respondents were university graduates representing 56%, followed by postgraduates (23%), holders of technical diploma (10%), others (students, retired, housewives…etc) (5-.1%), holders of two years diploma (3.9%), and finally basic school education respondents (2%). Similar to Egypt, the majority of UAE respondents were university graduates representing 54.2% however, followed by basic school education respondents (19.6%), holders of technical diploma (9.2%), holders of two years diploma (7.9%), postgraduates (6.9%) and finally others (students, retired, housewives…etc) (2.2%).

4.2 Results of Reliability Test

Data were collected from 408 users of markets in Egypt, and 404 users in UA-E. Data collected were analysed first by testing validity and reliability after constructing the measurement model for both samples of Egypt and UAE. Reliability refers to the internal consistency between items supposed to measure one variable. If Alpha coefficients are greater than or equal to 0.7, it implies that the scale used to measure the variable is reliable (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Table (1) illustrates the results of the reliability test of variables in both Egypt and UAE. The table shows that the reliability results are greater than 0.7, which indicates adequacy of reliability of the research variables for both Egypt and UAE samples.

Table 1- Results of Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha value Egypt	Cronbach's Alpha value UAE
Favourable perceptions of Ambient factors	0.904	0.883
Favourable perceptions of store design factors	0.934	0.841
Favourable perceptions of store social factors	0.885	0.885
Customers' emotions-pleasure	0.929	0.853
Customers' emotions- arousal	0.858	0.807
Behavioral Intentions- customer approach	0.900	0.842
Overall Reliability of the instrument	0.958	0.845

4.3 Results of convergent validity

According to (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016), validity refers to the degree to which variables under study are measured by items (statements) of the questionnaire in the anticipated manner. Validity forms how well a method, tool, or process measures a specific concept.

Validity is measured by the two main factors. First, the average variance extracted (AVE); it represents the average community for each latent factor. The (AVE) result should be greater than 0.5 to imply adequate validity. Second, the factor loading for each item (statement) that should be greater than or equal to 0.4 (Hair et al., 2010). Table (2) shows the convergent validity test of Egypt variables. The results imply that KMO values are greater than 0.5, which implies the adequacy to use factor analysis technique. (AVE) for each item is greater than 0.5, each item factor loading is greater than 0.4 which indicates the adequate convergent validity of the research variables for Egypt.

Table 2- Results of Convergent Validity and Composite Reliability tests forEgypt

Country	Research Variables	Items	KMO	AVE	FL	CR	P-value
Egypt	Ambience	Ambient12_1	0.860	60.5%	1.000		
		Ambient11_1			0.914	16.770	***
		Ambient10_1			0.948	16.896	***
		Ambient9_1			0.942	16.155	***
		Ambient8_1			0.935	14.617	***
		Ambient7_1			0.809	12.834	***
		Ambient6_1			0.787	12.048	***
		Ambient5_1			0.894	12.907	***
	Design	Design10_1	0.902	84%	1.000		
		Design9_1			0.970	14.278	***
		Design8_1			0.985	14.204	***
		Design7_1			0.942	14.466	***
		Design6_1			0.959	13.706	***
		Desihn5_1			0.910	13.515	***
		Design4_1			0.929	14.013	***
		Design3_1			0.998	14.613	***
		Design2_1			0.951	14.158	***
	Social	Social3_1	0.689	82%	1.000		
		Social2_1			0.497	17.243	***
		Social1_1			0.429	17.018	***
	Pleasure	Pleasure1_1	0.911	74.5%	1.000		
		Pleasure2_1			0.821	18.349	***
		Pleasure3_1			0.806	18.127	***
		Pleasure4_1			0.885	19.002	***
		Pleasure5_1			0.861	17.504	***

Country	Research Variables	Items	KMO	AVE	FL	CR	P-value
		Pleasure6_1			0.999	17.145	***
	Arousal	Arousal5_1	0.816	71%	1.000		
		Arousal4_1			0.965	16.264	***
		Arousal3_1			0.935	15.041	***
		Arousal2_1			0.981	14.246	***
	Approach	Approach1_1	0.859	67.2%	1.000		
		Approach2_1			0.838	13.543	***
		Approach3_1			0.965	20.160	***
		Approach4_1			0.940	20.216	***
		Approach5_1			0.933	19.887	***
		Approach7_1			0.659	12.475	***

Table (3) shows the convergent validity test of UAE variables. The results imply that KMO values are greater than 0.5, which implies the adequacy to use factor analysis technique. AVE is greater than 0.5, and factor loading is Greater than 0.4 which indicates the adequate convergent validity of the research variables for UAE.

Table 3- Results of Convergent Validity and Composite Reliability tests for UAE

Country	Research Variables	Items	KMO	AVE	FL	C.R.	P- value
UAE	Ambience	Ambient4_1	0.808	74.6%	1.000		
		Ambient3_1			0.847	14.326	***
		Ambient2_1			0.802	18.920	***
		Ambient1_1			0.951	17.773	***
	Design	Design10_1	0.791	62%	1.000		
		Design9_1			0.471	14.520	***
		Design8_1			0.776	13.525	***
		Design7_1			0.902	12.506	***
		Design6_1			0.657	7.963	***
	Social	Social6_1	0.745	81.4%	1.000		
		Social5_1			0.990	19.395	***
		Social4_1			0.942	18.940	***
	Pleasure	Pleasure1_1	0.774	64.2%	1.000		
		Pleasure2_1			0.530	11.582	***
		Pleasure3_1			1.76	10.435	***
		Pleasure4_1			1.641	12.021	***
		Pleasure5_1			1.286	11.026	***
		Pleasure6_1			1.438	10.323	***
	Arousal	Arousal4_1	0.676	68.5%	1.000		
		Arousal3_1			1.055	11.609	***
		Arousal2_1			0.704	10.484	***

Country	Research Variables	Items	KMO	AVE	FL	C.R.	P- value
		Approach1_1			1.000		
		Approach2_1			.868	9.616	***
		Approach3_1			1.152	14.095	***
	Approach	Approach4_1	0.851	64.2%	1.247	16.870	***
		Approach5_1			1.219	16.504	***
		Approach6_1			0.873	12.993	***

4.4 Results of Discriminant Validity

Table (4) illustrates the discriminant validity result of Egypt research varia bles where the numbers on the diagonal represents the square root of average variance extracted (AVE).

Table 4- Results of Discriminant Validity for Egypt

	Ambient	Design	Social	Pleasure	Arousal	Approach
Ambient	(.778)					
Design	.680**	(.916)				
Social	.564**	.595**	(.905)			
Pleasure	.393**	.433**	.403**	(.863)		
Arousal	.344**	.396**	.344**	.707**	(.843)	
Approach	.483**	.520**	.442**	.409**	.443**	(.820)

It was found that the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) of a certain construct is greater than the corresponding correlations between this construct and others. For instance, the square root of AVE for "Ambient" is 0.778 while the corresponding correlations between "Ambient" and other constructs are all less than 0.778. This implies adequate discriminant validity of the research variables for Egypt sample. Table (5) illustrates the discriminant validity result of UAE research variables where the numbers on the di agonal represents the square root of average variance extracted (AVE). It was found that the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) of a certain construct is greater than the corresponding correlations between this construct and others. For instance, the square root of AVE for "Ambient" is 0.864 while the corresponding correlations between "Ambient" and other constructs are all less than 0.864. This implies adequate discriminant validity of the research variables for Egypt sample.

Table 5- Results of Discriminant Validity for UAE

	Ambient	Design	Social	Pleasure	Arousal	Approach
Ambient	(.864)					
Design	-.018	(.790)				
Social	.107*	.031	(.902)			
Pleasure	.103*	.185**	-.007	(.801)		
Arousal	.180**	-.064	.061	.381**	(.828)	
Approach	.178**	.290**	-.057	.400**	.343**	(.801)

4.5 Testing Model Fit Indices for Structural Equation Modeling

The researchers adopted a structural equation modeling (SEM) methodology (using AMOS 18) to estimate the direct and indirect effects of independent variables on the dependent variables.

Table 6 Fit Measures of the Structural Equation Modeling

Region	Measure	Model Results	Threshold
Egypt	Chi-square/df (cmin/df)	1.627	< 3 good; < 5 sometimes permissible
	p-value for the model	0.000	< 0.05
	GFI	0.750	> 0.80
	NFI	0.544	> 0.90
	TLI	0.691	> 0.95
	IFI	0.756	> 0.95
	CFI	0.738	> 0.95 great; > 0.90 traditional; > 0.80 sometimes permissible
	RMSEA	0.066	< 0.05 good; 0.05-0.10 moderate; > 0.10 bad
UAE	Chi-square/df (cmin/df)	1.512	< 3 good; < 5 sometimes permissible
	p-value for the model	0.000	< 0.05
	GFI	0.841	> 0.80
	NFI	0.788	> 0.90
	TLI	0.862	> 0.95
	IFI	0.921	> 0.95
	CFI	0.875	> 0.95 great; > 0.90 traditional; > 0.80 sometimes permissible
	RMSEA	0.042	< 0.05 good; 0.05-0.10 moderate; > 0.10 bad

Finally, a comparison was constructed between dimensions under study between Egypt and UAE. Amos 18 program is used to test the hypothesis of the current research based on the maximum likelihood for the research variables. Table 6 displays the model fit indicators of CFA, which are the minimum discrepancy (CMIN), goodness of fit index (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and root mean square of approximation (RMS-EA). All fit indices are within the acceptable level, implying a good fit for the model conducted.

As mentioned by Hoelter (1983), the minimum discrepancy (CMIN) provides an indicator as to whether or not the estimated and observed matrices are different from each other. The GFI is a measure of the relative amount of variance and covariance in the sample covariance matrix that is jointly explained by the population matrix. It offers an estimation of the fit of the proposed model against that of a baseline model. TLI, GFI, CFI are other indices that compare the proposed model to the baseline model and their values could be within a range from zero to one. If the values of these indices are close to one, they represent a good fit. The RMSEA is among the most informative dimensions in covariance structure modeling because it measures the amount of error present when attempting to estimate the population. In the current research, SEM is employed in testing the hypotheses beside the overall model, represents the summation of scale indicators. It was found that the values of the above-mentioned indicators are almost close to one; all are within the acceptable range. Therefore, the relationships presented in the proposed model are true and exist.

4.6 Model Fit through SEM in Egypt

The following figure shows the model according to the structural equation modeling in Egypt.
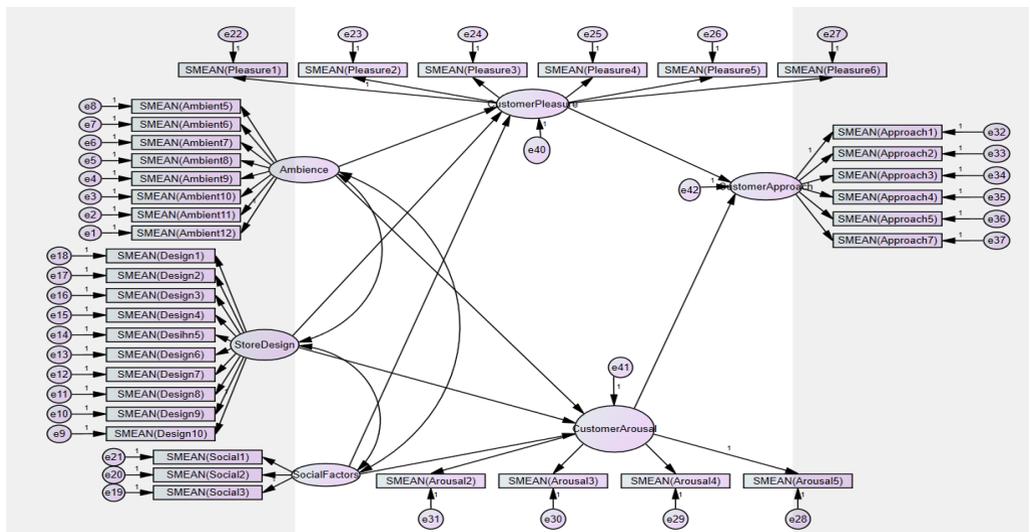

Figure 2 The Structural Equation Model diagram for Egypt

Results in table 7 show that the critical values of the standardized regression weights were examined for significance of the path between variables at a 95% confidence interval (significance level of 5% for a two-tailed test), where it was found that there is a significant impact of store ambience, design and social factors on customer pleasure (P-value < 0.05). In addition, it was found that there is a significant impact of store ambience and store design on customer arousal (P-value < 0.05). In addition, it was found that there is a significant impact of customer pleasure on customer approach (P-value < 0.05). Finally, it was found that there is a significant impact of customer arousal on customer approach behavioural intention (P-value < 0.05). Regarding R square, it could be claimed that the research variables explain 23.2% of the variation in Customers' Approach in Egypt. This is considered as a relatively low percentage implying the fact that there may be other factors that could explain the Customers' approach in Egypt and they are not included in the model.

Table 7 Model Estimates of the Structural Equation Modeling in Egypt

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	R Square
Store Ambience <--- Customer Pleasure	.163	.040	4.091	***	
Store Design <--- Customer Pleasure	.222	.050	4.452	***	
Social Factors <--- Customer Pleasure	.222	.050	4.452	***	
Store Ambience <--- Customer Arousal	.289	.045	6.404	***	0.232
Store Design <--- Customer Arousal	.160	.030	5.389	***	
Social Factors <--- Customer Arousal	.006	.009	.708	.479	
Customer Pleasure <--- Customer Approach	.131	.033	4.008	***	
Customer Arousal <--- Customer Approach	.086	.037	2.314	.021	

Source: AMOS calculations by researcher

4.7 Model Fit through SEM in UAE
The following figure shows the model according to the structural equation modeling in UAE.
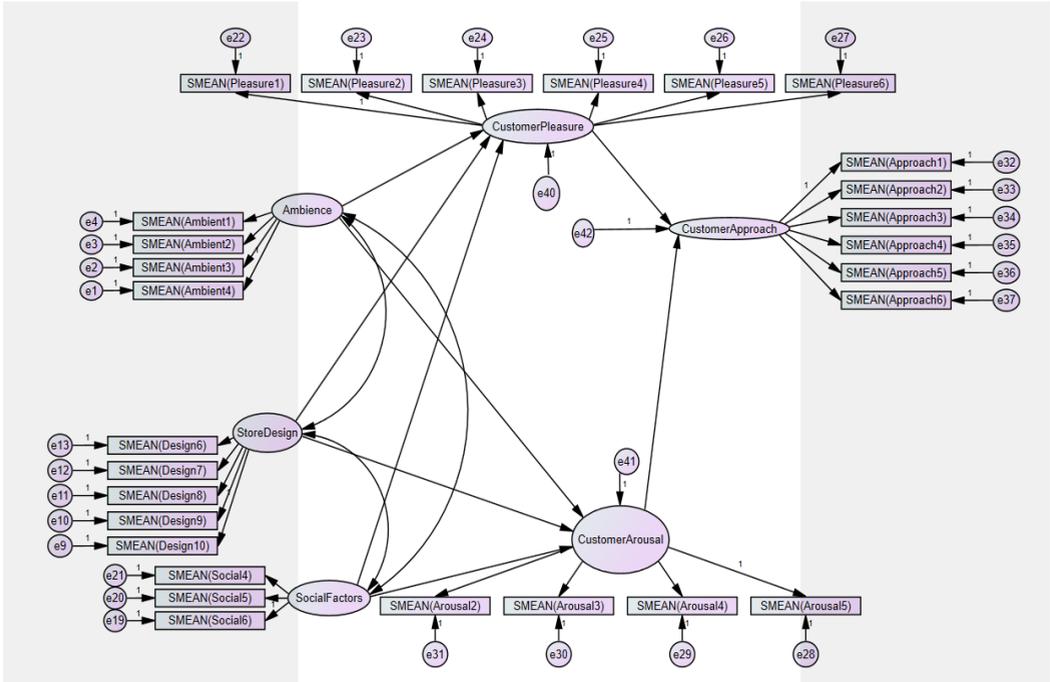
Figure 3 The Structural Equation Model diagram for UAE

Results in table 8 show that the critical values of the standardized regression weights were examined for significance of the path between variables at 95% confidence interval (significance level of 5% for a two-tailed test), where it was found that there is a significant impact of store ambience and design on customer pleasure (P-value < 0.05).

Also, it was found that there is a significant impact of store ambience on customer arousal (P-value < 0.05). In addition, it was found that there is a significant impact of customer pleasure on customer approach and (P-value < 0.05). Finally, it was found that there is a significant impact of customer arousal on customer approach (P-value < 0.05). Regarding R square, it could be claimed that the research variables explain 26% of the variation in Customers' Approach in UAE. Again, this is considered as a relatively low percentage implying the fact that there may be other factors that could explain the Customers' approach in UAE and they are not included in the model. Also, it could be noticed that the R square obtained in both models are considered almost close to each other. This could be referred to the fact that both countries are described with the Arab culture having almost close atmospherics.

Table 8 Model Estimates of the Structural Equation Modeling in UAE

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	R Square
Store Ambience <--- Customer Pleasur	.015	.007	2.100	.036	
Store Design <--- Customer Pleasure	.493	.220	2.243	.025	
Social Factors <--- Customer Pleasure	.002	.011	.174	.862	
Store Ambience <--- Customer Arousal	.240	.047	5.152	***	
Store Design <--- Customer Arousal	.112	.061	1.823	.068	0.260
Social Factors <--- Customer Arousal	.014	.020	.683	.495	
Customer Pleasure <---Customer Approach	.107	.036	2.972	.003	
Customer Arousal <--- Customer Approach	.084	.037	2.298	.022	

Source: AMOS calculations by researchers

4.5 Summary of findings

A summary of the outcome of hypotheses testing is presented in Table 9. It is noted that the two samples are similar in several results, like the impact of store ambience on customer emotions, as well as the impact of store design on pleasure and the impact of social factors on arousal. Moreover, they are the same in results of the fourth, fifth and sixth hypotheses of the study. On the other hand, both samples are different in the impact of store design on arousal as well as the impact of social factors on pleasure. Also, there was found a mediation effect of customer arousal between environmental cues and customer approach in the Egyptian context only, while this was not the case in the UAE.

The effect of store ambience on customers' emotions

The store ambiencehas an effect on both pleasure and arousal in both Egypt and UAE. In Egypt, all store ambient elements (light, scent, temperature and cleanliness) except music affect customers' pleasure and arousal. In UAE, only music has the major effect on both customer pleasure and arousal

Table 9 Overall Results of the Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis		Results of Testing the Hypothesis in Egypt	Results of Testing the Hypothesis in UAE
H1: Impact of store ambience on customer emotion	H1a: Impact of store ambience on pleasure	Supported	Supported
	H1b: Impact of store ambience on arousal	Supported	Supported
H2:Impact of store design on customer emotion	H2a: Impact of store design on pleasure	Supported	Supported
	H2b: Impact of store design on arousal	Supported	Not supported
H3: Impact of social factors on customer emotion	H3a: Impact of social factors on pleasure	Supported	Not supported
	H3b: Impact of social factors on arousal	Not Supported	Not supported
H4: Impact of customer pleasure on behavioural intentions	H4a: Impact of customer pleasure on approach	Supported	Supported
H5: Impact of customer arousal on behavioural intentions	H5: Impact of customer arousal on approach	Supported	Supported
H6: Emotions mediate the relationship between environmental cues and behavioural intentions	H6a: Mediation effect of customer pleasure between environmental cues and customer approach	Supported	Supported
	H6b: Mediation effect of customer arousal between environmental cues and customer approach	Supported	Not supported

Source: Adopted by the researchers

The effect of store design on customers' emotions

In Egypt, the results show that there is a significant effect of store design on customer pleasure and there is a significant impact of store design on customer arousal. In UAE, the results show that there is a significant impact of store design on customer pleasure but there is an insignificant effect of store design on customer arousal.

The effect of social factors on customers' emotions

In Egypt, the results indicate that there is a significant effect of social factors on customer pleasure however there is an insignificant impact of social factors on customer arousal. In UAE, the results show that there is an insignificant impact of social factors on both customer pleasure and arousal.

The effect of customer pleasure on approach

In both Egypt and UAE, the results show that there is a significant effect of customer's pleasure on customers' behavioural intentions to stay, affiliate, explore and spend money.

The effect of customer arousal on approach

In both Egypt and UAE, the results indicate that there is a significant effect of customer's arousal on customers' behavioural intentions to stay, affiliate, explore and spend money.

The mediation effect of emotions

In Egypt, the results show that there is a partial mediation of customer pleasure between environmental cues and customer approach and there is a partial mediation of customer arousal between environmental cues and customer approach. In UAE, the results show that there is a partial mediation of customer pleasure between environmental cues and customer approach and that there is there an insignificant impact of environmental cues on customer arousal, i.e. no mediation of customer arousal between environmental cues and customer approach. In summary, the feeling of pleasure was the most powerful emotion that may lead customers directly to various positive behavioural intentions, and the feeling of arousal is another important emotion that favourably affects customers' approach.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study has been conducted with the main objective of identifying consumer behaviour towards retail stores in both Egypt and UAE. More specifically, it examined the impact of environmental cues on pleasure and arousal and the influences of pleasure and arousal on customers' behavioural intentions to affiliate, stay, explore and spend money at the retail stores. A model based on the Mehrabian and Russell's (1974), was proposed and tested in retail stores in both Egypt and UAE using customer intercept survey. This research provides some exploratory insights about store atmospherics in retail stores. From the practical perspective, the main contribution of the study is that it help retail store managers identify and prioritize store environmental factors that have the greatest impact on customer emotions, and consequently on their approach behaviour. Therefore, managers can incorporate such practices while developing their marketing strategies and allocate their resources accordingly. Results supported the ma-

jority of previous studies and indicated that a store atmosphere that evokes pleasure can increase consumer-spending, time spent in the store, and the desire to explore and affiliate with others.

The first hypothesis that is related to the influence of store ambience on customers' emotions has been accepted. The results show that there is a significant impact of store ambience on the specified components of emotions: pleasure and arousal in both settings of Egypt and UAE. This is consistent with the findings of the majority of previous studies such as of Baker (1986), Baker et al. (1992) and Bitner (1992). It indicates that store atmospherics affect consumers' experience and emotions in retail stores and that better environemntal cues create consumers' feelings in favor of the retail store.

The second hypothesis of store design influence on customers' emotions has been accepted in Egypt but not fully supported in UAE. The results show that there is a significant impact of store design on customers' feelings of pleasure in both Egypt and UAE; however, there is a significant impact of store design on customer arousal in Egypt but not in UAE. This indicates that hypothesis two was fully supported in the Egyptian context but partially supported in UAE. Results related to the influence of store design on customers' em-otions in Egypt and influence of store design on pleasure in UAE are in line with the findings of Bitner (1992). They indicated that physical design is able to evoke people's feelings, while Pine and Gilmore (1998) believe that an effective physical design is captivating, and appealing to all the senses. On the contrary, some studies argued that the design

factor has a minor or almost no role in affecting customer experience. The results related to the influence of store design on customer arousal in UAE, are in line with the findings of (Cronin and Taylor, 1992), who also determined that design has only a limited influence on customer perceptions. This might be due to the differences in customers' preferences and thoughts of the relative importance and effect of environmental cues in the retail shopping experience in Egypt versus UAE.

The third hypothesis, which tests the influence of social factors on customers' emotions, has been partially supported in Egypt and rejected in UAE. The results show that there is a significant effect of social factors on customers' feelings of pleasure but insignificant impact of store social cues on customer arousal in Egypt and that there is an insignificant impact of social factors on both customers' feelings of pleasure and arousal in UAE. In Egypt, the result of this hypothesis is consistent with Ryu and Jang (2007), who stated that employees are influencing customer feelings of pleasure and consistent with the findings of Eroglu and Machleit (1990), who found that in a crowded environment, enhanced perceptions of personal control are related to increased pleasure. But the results of the insignificant impact of social factors on customer arousal in Egypt and UAE are dissimilar to the findings of Baker *et al.* (1992) who indicated that the more the store social cues (number/ friendliness of employees), the higher customers' feelings of arousal. This indicates that store ambience and design are more important than social factors in affecting customers' approach behavioural intentions in both Egypt and UAE.

The fourth and the fifth hypotheses that test the impact of customers' emotions on customer approach behavioural intentions were fully supported in both Egypt and UAE. Findings indicated that there is a significant impact of customers' feelings of arousal and pleasure on customers' behavioural intentions to purchase in retail stores. The results are consistent with the findings of Baker *et al.* (1992) and Obermiller (1984), who showed that consumers have positive views about products and services in pleasant store experiences than they do in unpleasant store experiences. The results are in line with Donovan and Rossiter (1982) and Mehrabian and Russell (1974), who showed that in a pleasant environment, the higher the level of arousal and the greater the approach behaviour. The feelings of pleasure was the most powerful emotion that can lead shoppers directly to various positive shopping behaviours and the feelings of arousal is yet another important emotion. Therefore, both arousal and pleasure feelings affect consumers' shopping behaviour.

The sixth hypothesis that tests the mediation effect of Customers' emotions between store environmental cues and customer approach was fully supported in Egypt and partially supported in UAE. The results show that in Egypt, there is a mediation effect of customer pleasure and arousal between environmental cues and customer approach. However, the results show that in UAE there is an insignificant impact of environmental cues on customer approach through emotions especially the feelings of arousal has no mediation effect. Results are consistent with the findings of Donovan and Rossiter (1982) and Wakefield and Baker (1998) that pleasure is a powerful determinant of approach–avoidance behaviours within stores, including spending more than anticipated. Pleasure mediates between store atmospherics and customer approach (the desire to stay in a setting, affiliate with others and willingness to spend time or money). However, results are inconsistent with the previous mentioned studies and Baker *et al.* (1992) who found that feelings of arousal mediate the relationship between store environmental cues and customers' behavioural intentions.The results in UAE showed that only 'pleasure' mediates between environment cues and customer approach. The positive relationships between positive emotions and customer approach in the two settings are similar to the findings Wirtz and Bateson (1999) applied on banks and to the results of Bigné *et al.,* (2005) applied on entertainment. The findings confirm the importance of emotions in the formation of customer satisfaction and behavioural responses to retail settings.

Academic and practical implications

With the respect to the matter of the store physical environment, this study has attempted to explain the effects of environmental cues on customer approach based on environmental psychology and retail marketing literature. The results support the general contention of this study, that there are positive relationships among customers perceptions about the retail atmospherics, customer emotions, and customer behavioural intentions in retail stores, and that these relationships are consistent in both countries under consideration.

The main contribution is that this research has been economically applied on two different countries. Research

studies, especially empirical ones comparing customer experience in retails stores and its influence on customer's approach in a developing and a developed country, are rather scarce which adds to the body of knowledge. The positive relationships among positive emotions and customers' approach are unsurprising, as is their strength in the two settings. The findings confirm the importance of emotions in the development of customer experiences and responses to retail settings. This implies that marketers should focus more on the power of emotions and its different facets in shaping customers' experiences. Although, the sampling process followed by researchers fits the nature of this study in intercepting people at retail stores to inquire about their experiences towards retail stores, results cannot be generalized. This implies that researchers should use probability-sampling techniques to better explain the effect of store atmospherics on emotions and to reflect the change of this effect across the different phases of the shopping and buying processes.

While the two countries in this research were in the context of the Arab world, findings revealed some differences in the effect of consumers' (in UAE and Egypt) perceptions of store atmospherics on emotions and behavioural intentions towards the retail stores. Findings show the relative importance of the physical retail environment in retaining customers. It is evidently in the retailer's interest to encourage positive emotions among customers by means of suitable atmospherics such as music, scent, colour lighting, décor, and good temperature. Present findings reveals that consumer perceptions about the internal atmospherics (scent, temperature and lighting) have a positive effect on emotions in retail stores in Egypt, however music did not have any effect, and some consumers did not even notice that music was played. This may be because in a developing country like Egypt, consumers are more concerned with appropriate lighting, temperature and pleasant scents. On the other hand, music was the only ambient factor, which had a positive effect on emotions in UAE. This could be because UAE is a developed country and consumers consider pleasant scent, appropriate lighting and temperature as a necessity, and accordingly they are concerned with the type, tempo and volume of the music being played.

In Egypt, the store ambience, design and social factor have a significant impact on customer pleasure and store ambience and design have a significant impact on arousal, and pleasure and arousal have a significant role in determining behavioural intentions towards retail stores. Generally, marketing managers should allocate resources primarily for store ambience, design and social factors in retail stores. It is central to notice that retail marketers can control the physical elements (aroma, temperature, lighting, and cleanliness) to a great extent, and it is probably one of the least expensive ways to enhance customer perceptions of physical surroundings. Ambient odours influences how long consumers remain in a store influence a customer emotion and induce sales in stores where it naturally exists, such as in coffee shops. Managers of stores having products not possessing an intrinsic scent should add artificial floral scents to please consumers, who are then more likely to stay, purchase

and spend more money in the store. Based on this research, it is recommended that retail marketing managers and retail owners should consider the cleanliness of the store as one of the most essential factors determining how customers judge the physical characteristics and appearance of stores. Proper lighting is similarly advised for products visibility. Thus, retail managers should consider physical elements related to ambience as marketing and operational tools.

In UAE, the store ambience and design factor have a significant impact on customer pleasure, and store ambience has an impact on arousal. Pleasure and arousal have a significant role in determining approach behaviour. In general, retail store management should allocate resources principally for store ambience and design. Also, this study showed that one of the most significant factors affecting customers' pleasure and arousal is ambience music, as it can be a more highly controllable physical element than other physical elements while costing a little. Managers in retail stores can easily control background music, by varying its volume, type, and tempo based on the customer preferences, to help them feel pleased and/or relaxed.

In addition to the effect of ambience, the other major environmental factor directly influencing customers' pleasure and arousal is the design factor (colour, décor, and layout). Managers of retail stores should take into consideration in using cool colours that are associated with physical attraction, and accordingly lead to more purchases, and provide a stronger feeling to shop and browse in stores. Product display should be made convenient for customer examination.

Retailers should create a pleasant and stimulating atmosphere, with appropriate floor layout design and physical arrangement of features.

The social factor can be an important dimension of a retail stores. The employees should maintain this important factor until the completion of the service delivery process. Since there is evidence supporting the strong influence of the social factor (employees) on a customer pleasure, any service organization wanting to enhance customer pleasure and arousal must choose the right style for its employees. This style can be achieved in two ways: professional appearance and attractiveness in order to maximize the effect upon customer perceptions. The findings showed that there was no impact of human crowding on customer shopping behaviour, which is somewhat different from previous studies. However, the lack of significant findings regarding the effects of store crowding on consumer behaviour should be verified with various store designs. This implies that the impact of crowding on consumers' approach may vary in different store designs (Machleit et al., 2000; Turley and Milliman, 2000), since consumer shopping motives, shopping experiences, and products and services offered may vary with different retail layouts.

Limitations and future research

After the analysis, the research has provided a refined set of items for measuring customer experience in retail stores. This set can be used both in future studies and in practice. The research has also developed a questionnaire that was tested for validity and translated into Arabic; therefore, future researchers can use it when conducting

related studies. The research has some limitations potentially restricting the generalizability or accuracy of its results because the data collected was limited to only samples from Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the UAE, and from Alexandria and Cairo in Egypt. Although the instore intercept surveys give fast feedback on customers' experiences, the possibility of researcher-customer interaction bias exists and there is a lack of accessibility to propability sampling techniques (Eckman et al., 1990). Therefore, data can not be generalized to the entire population of the two countries under study.

The absence of a measure of actual buying behaviour is another limitation. However, to get the acceptance of management in shopping centres to conduct this research, the researcher was required to ensure that customers were not significantly disturbed by the survey. In particular, management was concerned that shoppers did not feel obliged to reveal specific personal information regarding what they had bought or how much money they had spent inside a given store. In subsequent studies, an attempt could be made to include some empirical measures of customers' specific buying patterns in retail stores. With respect to the measures, there is a need to refine scales used for arousal emotion and social factors in this research, because customers in UAE did not report the mediation of arousal between environmental cues and their approach as a behavioural response towards the retail stores.

Especially in consumer behaviour research, it is a crucial role for retail marketers to understand customer experiences. Still, the conceptual and operational definitions of customer experience are not clearly established as other concepts such as customer satisfaction and brand equity in consumer and marketing studies. Future research should explore how customer experiences differ from other established constructs and provide practical frameworks for managing experiences. Moreover, customer experience may exist pre-purc-hase, during purchase and after purchase (Solomon, 2016). This study just focused on customer experience in the store-environment. Thus, future studies may include evaluating customer experience during the pre-purchase and post purchase phases.

A positive evaluation of the external atmospherics by consumers has a direct positive effect on consumer emotions, partonage intentions, and the desire to remain longer in the shopping area. According to Solomon (2016) and Mehrabian and Russell (1974), behavioural intentions are represented by the positive valence (customer approach) and/or negative valence (Customer avoidance). This study focused only on customer approach. It emphasised the impact of the environmental cues and emotions on the positive customer behavioural intention to visit the store. Therefore, future researchers may explore the customer avoidance to provide a wider picture of customer experience in retail stores and what factors may lead customers move away from/ avoid the retail store. This study focused only on the customers' emotional reactions related only to the current state of the store. A shopper's preexisting mood could be important, affecting the emotional state during shopping. A measurement of pre-shopping mood could be done before a consumer enters the store, so that researchers can compare the results with the post-shopping mood to understand the impact on consumer emotions by store environments. Researchers could approach potential respondents just before they enter a store, and ask if they are willing to fill in both a preshopping and post-shopping questionnaire.

Future research may examine the impact of other external store atmospherics on customers' emotions and approach, such as accessibility of the shopping environment and parking facilities and other instore factors such as services provided, social interaction with staff members, and variety of products and presence of other customers. In addition, future research could assess the potential benefits in terms of consumer satisfaction of carrying out regular changes in the atmospherics of a shopping area to surprise consumers continuously, and to compare the benefits and the costs of such policy. Although Egypt and UAE are both Arab countries, due to the fact that The UAE has a multi-national population consisting of only 8% locals (Emiratis), 7% other Arab and 85% expatriates mainly from Asia (Al Mazroue and Pech, 2015), data collected in the two countries might be affected by the way in which consumers in each country answer a questionnaire. Future research could thus focus on how cultural differences influence the main constructs analysed. Therefore, it is worthwhile to consider conducting a longitudinal study to capture the change in customers' behaviour in different retail settings and to better explain the differences in customers' experiences especially in comparative research. For example, future researchers may explore how customers' views and evaluations of the store environmental cues may holistically change over time in their effect on emotions and purchase intentions in different contexts.

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