The Effects of Mood and Physical Surroundings On Consumer Behavior

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The Effects of Mood and Physical Surroundings On Consumer Behavior

Mood can have powerful psychological consequences that can subconsciously or consciously alter both our behavior, and our attitude towards things. Similarly, the status of our environment triggers cues that can also influence our behavior and thought processes. Emotional states and environmental status are widely studied by consumer psychologists and market analysts who wish to determine just how influential the two factors are on consumer behavior. Specifically, these two factors hold the key to understanding how to manipulate buying trends, advertising techniques, and sales strategies.

Emotions affect most people's decision-making process. For example, Walther and Grigoriadis (2004) studied the influence of mood on evaluative conditioning and consumer attitudes and found that people evaluated a product based on the mood-altering stimuli presented. For example, a neutral product was rated more positively, on average, if the participant was first exposed to a positive stimulus. This research suggests that a consumer's mood prior to, and at the time of exposure to a product affects how the consumer will view that product. In addition to this, El Sayed & Farrag (2003) investigated the effects that the physical surroundings in shopping malls had on consumers' buying intentions. Their research found that crowdedness, background music, location and lighting all affected the consumers' willingness to buy. This result is evidence that environmental situations provide either positive or aversive conditions, which may affect consumer trends directly or interact with and affect mood to ultimately change a buyer's decisions.

Consistent with previous research (El Sayed & Farrag, 2003; Walther & Grigoriadis, 2004), I expect that the participants who experience a positive mood prior to consumption will purchase more than those who experience negative or neutral moods. I also expect that the environmental stimulation will have significant effects on buying trends. More specifically, I predict an interaction between mood and environment to ultimately influence the consumer's purchase amounts, with expectations that positive or neutral mood paired with a busy environment will yield higher purchases. This prediction is based on my assumption that activity level of an
environment acts as motivation towards those who are experiencing a positive or neutral emotional state.

Method

Subjects

The subjects will be 150 randomly selected men and women visiting a shopping mall.

Design

The study will use a 2 (surrounding: busy or not busy) x 3 (mood of subject: happy, sad or neutral) factorial design to explore the effect of physical surrounding and emotional state on consumer's buying behavior and purchase amount.

Procedure

The subjects will be randomly assigned to each of the six conditions (25 subjects per condition) and then will be shown emotional stimuli consistent with one of the three desired moods (happy, sad, or neutral). Subjects will then be given a sum of money ($100) to spend and will be sent to one of two designated shopping locations. One location will be full of other customers, and another will have few other people in the store. Measures of the primary dependent variable (i.e., how much money is spent) will be taken once the subjects return to the researcher's booth in the shopping mall. The subjects will turn in a receipt showing the items purchased along with the purchase amount and will return all remaining money. Each subject will be assigned a score based on the amount of money spent ($0.00 - $100.00). Upon returning, a brief manipulation check will be administered consisting of self-report of the mood experienced after experiencing the emotional stimuli.

Results

A 2 (surrounding: busy or not busy) x 3 (mood: happy, sad or neutral) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be performed on the index assessing the purchase amount of each subject. It is hypothesized that, based on previous research, subjects in a happy or neutral emotional state will purchase more than those who are in a sad emotional state. It is also predicted that differences in purchase amounts will be observed based on an interaction between
mood and environment (i.e., subjects who are sad or neutral will have lower purchase amounts in a busy environment than those who experience a happy emotional state in a busy environment). This pattern will be tested using a simple effects analysis of the mood variable separately for each type of environment. There may be a main effect of physical surroundings. (See hypothesized data table below).

References


Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothetical Results</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not busy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Research Project Design Specification

Independent variable 1:
Mood
  Level 1: Happy
  Level 2: Sad
  Level 3: Neutral
  Level 4: ________________________________

Independent variable 2:
Environment
  Level 1: Busy
  Level 2: Not busy

Dependent variable: Amount spent
  minimum score: 0  maximum score: 100