CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT IN RETAILING FOR RETAIL PATRONAGE

Dr. Sanjiv Mittal*

Akanksha Gupta**

Abstract:

The retailing sector is growing with the opening up of the sector by the government, as more and more FDI's is permitted in the retail sector. The customer experiences and their mapping are very important for every retailer because the strength of their business is dependant on the experiences given by the retailer. Different customers have different expectations from these retailers and therefore to understand the nature of experiences met by the customers is important to be studied.

The article is focusing the customer experiences of the customers at various grocery retail stores. These have been divided into categories like- product related and market related factors which influences the consumer perception about the retailers. This will also help in understanding the retail patronage by the consumers. The results have highlighted the importance of Aesthetics, Competence and Conformance as the important factors influencing the consumer experiences and increasing retail patronage.

Keyword: Customer Experience, Customer satisfaction, service quality.

* Professor, University School of Management Studies, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075.

** Research Scholar, University School of Management Studies, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075.

Introduction:

The study of consumer experience in a way is related to the study of consumer behaviour but only relates to in store and after purchase behaviour. The retailing being more service oriented hence, gives various types of experiences to the customers as they visit them and specifically in case of grocery products. The experiences are the perceptions which the customers have about the service quality offered by the retailers to them. Different retail formats add to different customer experiences. The understanding of these experiences is of critical issue for retail managers because it helps them to understand the patronage behaviour also. Research focused on differentiating customer behavior of food retailing formats would be highly beneficial to academics, practitioners, audiences for several reasons. One reason, in particular, is that food retailing presents different challenges to understanding customer behavior because not all customers enjoy grocery shopping. While shopping, in general, is stressful for consumers as studied by Fram and Axelrod (1990), whereas Aylott and Mitchell (1999) found that customers associated more stress with grocery shopping than with other forms of shopping. Further, the food industry is changing rapidly as new retail formats have developed e.g. warehouse club stores which has captured market share from traditional formats. Finally, expansion of new product categories e.g. organic/natural food, growth of relatively new food retailing players e.g. Wal-Mart and Carrefour have created more customer choices.

Carpenter and Moore (2006) acknowledge that the changing competitive landscape within the grocery industry makes it critical for retailers to better understand grocery customers. This includes an attempt to examine customer choice with respect to store format and the store attributes that drive that choice. Popular management books (e.g., Pine and Gilmore 1999) have emphasized that it is important for firms to focus on customer experience, claiming that differentiation strategies based on service and price are no longer sufficient. However, direct empirical evidence supporting these claims is scarce. Marketing strategy research has shown that firms with a revenue emphasis, focusing solely on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, have the best performance Rust, Moorman, and Dickson (2002). Recently, Mittal and Banwari (2005) find that efficient firms with satisfied customers outperform other firms.

Further the dynamic nature of the retail market has created conditions whereby traditional marketing has diminished in effectiveness McKenna (1991). It has become increasingly difficult to satisfy customers, whose expectations are higher and loyalties more transient Colletti and Murray (1990); Scaaf and Zemke (1991). Consumers have become progressively more selective and informed and have higher expectations of the standard of retailing owing to the increase in competition and thus the greater range of retail activities which are offered to the consumer Ferguson and Zawacki (1993). This result in a consumer who is more informed about the product, in terms of its specific qualities, its substitutes, alternative supplies and price. These represent fundamental changes in the retail environment and significant challenges to the retailer who must address such issues and develop the means by which to tackle them McKenna (1991). As theoretical work in consumer behaviour becomes more advanced therefore retailing must keep pace and remain vigilant in the pursuit of deeper customer understanding therefore, we proposed a framework where factors like- Product availability & quality, Retail Brands, Pricing, Retail Atmosphere, Fast Checkout, Convenience etc., plays an important role in giving positive shopping experience to consumers.

Literature Review:

Gentile, Spiller, and Noci, 2007, "the customer experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer's involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, and spiritual)".

Meyer and Schwager, 2007, a second and related definition is that "Customer Experience is the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company. Direct contact generally occurs in the course of purchase, use, and service and is usually initiated by the customer. Indirect contact most often involves unplanned encounters with representatives of a company's products, service or brands and takes the form of word-of-mouth recommendations or criticisms, advertising, news reports, reviews and so forth".

Schmitt 1999, experiential marketers focus on creating experiences for their customers. Pine and Gilmore (1999), strategically, experiences have become the means for competitive differentiation

as goods and services become increasingly commoditized. Schmitt (2003), Consumers want to be sold on more than just attributes; they want to be "entertained, stimulated, emotionally affected and creatively challenged". In order to appeal to the emotions of the consumer, the experience must be conveyed. Grewal, Dhruv, Julie , Michael and Glenn. (2003), Understanding and enhancing the customer experience is important, most marketing executives in consumer packaged goods, manufacturing and retailing fields consider it important and thus an area for academic research.

Schmitt 1999, Current observers of the customer experience phenomena could be forgiven for considering it to be a new 21st century break through concept when faced with book titles such as 'Customer Experience Management: a Revolutionary Approach to connecting with your Customers' Pine (1999) over the last eight years, a plethora of other management books covering the topic of customer experience and its management have also been published. Pioneering researchers in this field, Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) have been investigating experiential consumption for over two and a half decades. Recent research in service dominant logic by Vargo and Lusch (2004) emphasizes the importance of co-creation where the customer is always a co-creator of value. Co-creation has an important role to play in seeking to develop an outstanding or perfect customer experience. Other researchers have also contributed in the exploration of the field.

Berry, Carbone and Haeckel (2002) Points out that an organization's first step toward managing the total customer experience is recognizing the clues it is sending to customers. Companies that sense trouble—in the form of falling customer satisfaction scores or new competitive threats would do well to consider undertaking the focused, comprehensive management of all the clues that give off signals to people. The clues that make up a customer experience fit into two categories. The first concerns the actual functioning of the good or service. Clues relating to functionality are interpreted primarily by the logical circuitry of the brain. Did the plumber fix the leak? Did the rental car start when I turned the key? Similarly did the retail store provide me the expected goods I am looking for etc. The second category concerns the emotions and includes the smells, sounds, sights, tastes and textures of the good or service, as well as the environment in which it is offered. The feel of product purchasing comfort, the sound and smell of a product in the store, the tone of voice of the person answering the customer-service line are

all clues that envelop the functionality of a product or service. Such clues tend to address emotions rather than reason, as people consider whether to buy or move on.

Literature on the retail experience has typically focused on the retail environment's atmospherics. For example, research has shown that music (Cameron et al. 2003; Grewal et.al. 2003); Milliman (1982), scent (Bone and Ellen 1999; Mattila and Wirtz 2001; Spangenberg et al. 1996), and color (Bellizzi and Hite, 1992) influence consumers' affective response and patronage likelihood in the context of retail experiences. A stream of research in marketing has also provided support for the notion that retail environments impact consumers' perceptions of interpersonal service quality, merchandise quality, time/effort costs, and psychic costs (e.g., Baker, Julie, Parasuraman, Grewal and Glenn 2002).

Puccineli, Nancy, Goodstein, Grewal, Robert, Priya and David 2009, another area of research pertains to how people encode, retain, and retrieve retail information from memory. As per Craik and Lockhart 1972, the level of information encoding depends on the level of information processing undertaken by the consumer, and the level of processing appears contingent on motivation, opportunity, and ability (e.g., MacInnis and Jaworski 1989). Retailers should utilize the rich memory research to devise strategies (e.g. signage) to aid consumers in making quicker associations, ranging from helping them to choose the store to shop for inexpensive toys to informing them where the toys are within the store to providing salient cues that highlight their price savings (Grewal et al 2003).

Sheth, Mittal, and Newman, (1999) argue that a combination of three factors help shape a consumer's attitude to an event:

1. Stimulus characteristics – people perceive a stimulus differently according to its sensory characteristics and information content. Stimuli that differ from others around them are more likely to be noticed (Solomon, 1999).

2. Context – in perceiving stimuli with a given set of characteristics, individuals will also be influenced by the context of the stimulus (Biswas and Blair, 1991).

3. Situational variables in which the information is received, including social, cultural and/or personal characteristics – perceptions are greatly influenced by individual characteristics, including prior experience with a particular product or service offering.

In retail sector, several trends tend to characterize modern retailing stores and shopping malls, as they are all similar (Wakefield and Baker, 1998); product offer and prices are comparable and, as such, can no longer represent a competitive advantage (Groeppel and Bloch, 1990); individual consumers' store patronage has decreased and shopping time has been reduced (Reynolds Ganesh, and Luckett, 2002).

Pan & Zinkhan (2006) discussed the three antecedents that made an effect on the retail patronage. They are: (1) Product- relevant factors, which pertain to product feature and attributes, such as product quality, price and selection/assortment; (2) Market-relevant factors, which pertain to the retailer of interest, such as convenient parking facilities, convenient location, convenient opening hours, and friendliness of salespeople, service quality, store image, store atmosphere, and fast checkout. (3) Personal factors, which pertain to consumer characteristics, such as demographics, which includes- Store type attitude, Gender, Income and Age.

Objectives of the study:

The objectives of this research are three folds- (1) To find out the factors having impact on customer experiences, (2) To find out the relationship between factors identified and personal characteristics of respondents, (3) To find out areas of concern for the retailers, where they should work on in order to give more value to the customers and as a consequence increase retail patronage.

Variables for the study:

It had therefore become necessary to identify what observable and unobservable attributes of a store could serve as a basis for an accurate, truly differentiating strategy. This understanding is important for the retailers to increase their retail patronage and give positive customer experiences which will help in increasing their sales.

The same variables from Pan & Zinkhan (2006) study are taken by researchers, where, under the Product Relevant Factors like- quality, price, private brands etc. are important, similarly under the Market Relevant Factors, like- ambience, store atmosphere, friendliness of store people, fast

checkout, store image, convenience of shopping etc. are of importance .Also the Personal Factors, like- Gender, Income, Age etc. has relationship with retail patronage for example frequent patrons tend to be slightly to be younger, better educated shoppers with high incomes and professionals. All these things are to be researched through the study. The detailed description of the variables under study and their importance by different researchers in the field of managing customer experience and retail patronage are as follows-
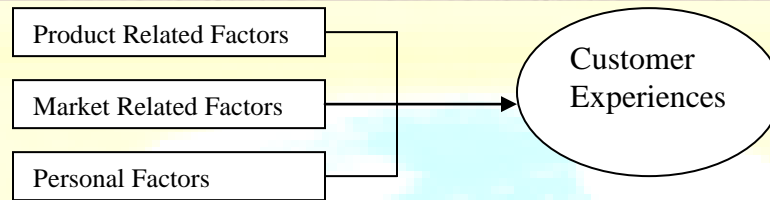

Fig: 1 Conceptual Framework of Customer Experience

Descriptions of the variables under study:

Product Relevant Factors

Product Quality- Darley and Lim 1993; Jacoby and Mazursky 1985; Olshavsky 1985 points out that consumer's perception of the quality of a store's merchandise relates to the patronage of that store. Grewal et al. 2003, says that an important component of store evaluation, merchandise quality has a positive link to merchandise value. In brief, merchandise determines a retailer's reputation and influences consumers' choice at stores.

Pricing- Bell and Lattin (1998) says that, grocery pricing strategy, for example high-low (HILO) pricing, has a direct effect on customer purchase behavior in conventional grocery stores: large basket customers prefer a store which offers an EDLP format, while small basket shoppers prefer a store that offers a HILO format . Baltas and Papastathopoulou, (2003), People who shop for economical brands also tend to select "economical" store formats. Arnold, Stephen, Oum and Douglas (1983) found low prices to be the second most important store characteristic for supermarket shoppers; store location was first. As per the study of Arnold et al., (1983)

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supermarket shoppers ranked product variety third behind location and price as determinants of store patronage.

Further empirical studies suggest that price, as a determinant of satisfaction, varies by store format. For example, overall price image of a store affects store choice. Price image has implications for store patronage, and strategic decisions related to selecting a target customer base and creating in-store environments (Desai and Talukdar, 2003).

Retail Brands- In an attempt to understand how the customer experience is created, a third facet which is important to consider is the interaction between the brand and the customer experience. The customer comes to a retailing environment with perceptions about two types of brands: the retail brand or store own brands. e.g., Reliance Select (Reliance), Tasty Treat (Pantaloon's) etc. The other kinds of brands are manufacturer or service brands that are sold in the retail stores. e.g. - Pepsi, Coke etc. Here, we consider both kinds of brands. Customers' brand perceptions may influence their customer experience. Recent research has begun to investigate new aspects of this relationship. Specifically, Fitzsimons, Chartrand, and Fitzsimons (2008) found that the type of brand and consumers' perceptions of the brand can influence their behavior.

Assortment-Finn and Louverie (1996) showed that among a nine store image attributes wide assortment and low price accounted for 86 percent of the variance in share of choice. Hansen Robert and Deutscher (1977) found that while high product quality and freshness of products were ranked by specialty food stores consumers at the first two places, assortment was number three. Providing customers with choice is the same as altering the breadth and depth of the assortment. However, since assortment size strictly depends on the available surface area in the store, a volume retailer will partially or fully meet consumer expectations, depending on outlet area. As a result, the smaller the outlet area, the more the retailer has to choose between either providing a broad offering, meeting different types of needs with few varieties within each type or having a more limited assortment with many choices within each type of need. In these, conditions the assortment range becomes a decisive factor of perceived positioning and, as a result, of retail outlet patronage.

Market Relevant Factors:

Retail Atmosphere- This variable includes the retail atmospherics of the retail store, i.e- the inside and outside environment of the retail store. Generally, studies have focused on one aspect of store atmosphere, such as music (Milliman, 1982; Spangenberg et al., 1996), colours (Belizzi et al., 1983), lighting , clutter and cleanliness (Bitner, 1990).

Store Image- It is the way in which the store is perceived by the shopper, it also refers to retail store environment which are multitude of stimuli that helps the consumers in term of providing cues to the positive customer experiences and make judgment about the store. They refer to display, ambient design, layout etc. (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006)

Convenience-A convenience orientation is a key benefit that shoppers seek in the modern environment. In this sense, consumers' perceptions of convenience (e.g., opening hours, location, parking) will have a positive influence on their satisfaction with the service (Berry et al. 2002). Consumers' perceived expenditure of time and effort interacts to influence their perceptions of service convenience (Berry et al. 2002), and retail facilities can be designed to affect those time and effort perceptions. For example, a central location can reduce the transaction costs associated with shopping (e.g., transportation cost, time spent). In addition to a convenient location, other convenience incentives provided by retailers, such as longer operating hours or ample parking, can draw patrons to a store (Hansen and Deutscher 1977).

Fast checkout-The time pressures that many people experience are having a major effect on consumer behavior; they perceive their discretionary time available as insufficient to accommodate all their desired uses of it. The results are continual choices among various activities and the pursuit of efficiency-producing behaviors. Retail stores are devoting more resources to time-saving services, such as fast checkout (Lambert 1979). Time savings for consumers are readily recognized and therefore likely to influence their retail choice.

Service Interface – This variables talk about the interactions of the service personnel with the customers of the retail stores as this has an impact on the customer experiences from the retail stores. This is further supported by (Gagliano and Hathcote, 1994) study, which says that, sales associates play a pivotal role in a customer service situation, with the most important attributes being store clerk attitude and treatment of customers.

Personal Factors/Demographic Variables- A considerable body of empirical research on shopping behavior suggests that consumer demographic variables like- Age, Gender, Occupation, Income may be related to retail store patronage (e.g., Bellenger et al. 1976–1977; Korgaonkar et al. 1985; Samli 1975).

Table-1: Details of Product & Market Relevant Factors

Product Relevant Factors	
Product availability and quality	The product at this store is of good quality
Pricing	The products at this store are cheaply priced
Retail Brands	This store has good own store brands
	This store has many well known brands
Assortment	All the products and brands you were expecting to buy are available

Market Relevant Factors	
Retail Atmosphere	This store has Clean and tidy environment
	The atmosphere (inside and outside the store) is pleasant at this store
Store Image	The stock displays are visually appealing
	The store layout of this store makes it easy for customers to find what they

	need
	All the products are easy to reach (neither too high, nor too low)
	The store has good promotional schemes
Convenience	The store has operating hrs convenient to all their customers
	The store is conveniently located
Fast Checkout	This Store has fast checkout (requires less time at billing)
Service Interface	The staff are welcoming
	Staff are available and quick to help
	The employees here are friendly
	Employees of this store are able to handle customer's complaints directly and immediately

Research Methodology:

The research study is descriptive in nature where attempt has been made to study the impact of product related, market related and personal factors on the customer experiences and retail patronage. The survey was confine within the Delhi & NCR region. For data collection, Structured, closed ended questionnaire was personally administered over a period of eleven months from December 2008 to October 2009 with the consumers of select grocery retail outlets. Validation of the survey instrument was done by taking the experts opinion on the appropriateness of the variables used. 5 academicians and 5 retail experts were consulted to check the content validity. To construct the final scale for data collection, an instrument that contains 18 statements of store experiences variables were finally identified and evaluated on a five point scale, which varies from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The questionnaire consisted of only 18 statements, due to the fact that it is convenient for the shoppers to fill the same.

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Consumers were contacted at the time when they had made their purchases, sampling was done using convenience sampling method. One thousand customers were contacted in 190 stores out of which 950 gave their responses, making a response rate of 95 %. The demographic profile of the sample is furnished in Table- 2

Table-2: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	466	49.1
	Female	484	50.9
	Total	**950**	**100.0**
Occupation	Student	122	12.8
	Salaried Employee	424	44.6
	Businessman	74	7.8
	Others	330	34.7
	Total	**950**	**100.0**
Age Group	Below 25 yrs	150	15.8
	25-35 yrs	290	30.5
	35-45 yrs	307	32.3
	45 yrs and above	203	21.4
	Total	**950**	**100.0**
Qualification	Upto Higher Secondary	234	24.6
	Graduation	468	49.3
	Post Graduation	248	26.1
	Total	**950**	**100.0**

Income	Less than 30,000	153	16.1
	30,000-60,000	301	31.7
	60,000-90,000	272	28.6
	90,000 and above	224	23.6
	Total	**950**	**100.0**
Frequency	Never	63	6.6
	Rarely	145	15.3
	Sometimes	258	27.2
	Often	306	32.2
	Very Often	178	18.7
	Total	**950**	**100.0**

Data Analysis:

Factor analysis was used to identify the factors having an impact on customer experiences and retail patronage. This will help us to get answer to our first objective regarding the variables/ factors that have impact on the experiences of customers and therefore retail patronage. Before proceeding for the factor analysis appropriateness of factor analysis needs to be assessed, two tests are performed to ensure that the data is suitable for the factor analysis: The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) measure for sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's Test of /sphericity (Pallant, 2007). KMO value greater than 0.6 can be considered as adequate (Kaiser and Rice, 1977). The Table-3 provides the output of data for factor analysis.

Table-3: KMO and Bartlett Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.902

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	4.989E3
df	153
Sig.	.000

KMO stands for Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criteria, where high KMO values signify high co-relation among the variables. KMO- the measure of sampling adequacy was used to measure the adequacy of the sample for extraction of factors. MSA is the Measure of Sample Adequacy criteria, where low values of the variables indicate that they are not sufficiently co-related to other variables in the model. From the table it can be seen that KMO value was found to be .902 which was acceptable and which is indicative of a data set considered to be highly desirable for factor analysis (Kim and Jin, 2002).

The Bartlett test for sphericity was used to test the multivariate normality of the set of distributions. This procedure also tests whether the co-relation matrix is an identity matrix because factor analysis would be meaningless with an identity matrix. A significance value of p=0.00 indicates that the data do not produced in identity matrix or differ significantly from identity (George and Mallery, 2000). The analysis focusing on the Bartlett's sphericity test allowed rejecting the hypothesis according to which the matrix would be unitary, where chi-square value is 4.98 , df = 153, p= 0.000. The results implies that the data is approximately multivariate normal and acceptable for factor analysis.

The most common method of factor analysis is a principal component analysis (Kinnear & Gray, 2010; Cooper & Schindler, 2008) and the most common method of factor rotation is the varimax rotation. (Kinnear & Gray, 2010; Zikmund et al, 2010). Principal component technique looks at the correlation of different variables to reveal the relationship between them, and then reduces the variables by empirically summarizing them or combining them into small number of factors under common themes (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Usually, a few components will account for most of the variations, and these components can be used to replace the original variables.

The mathematical technique for simplifying the results of the factor analysis results is called factor rotation (Zikmund et al, 2010). Varimax rotation was favored since it minimized the

correlation across factors and maximized within the factors. This helped to yield clear factors (Nunnally, 1978).

The Product related and Market related factors in the form of 18 statements were tested using principal component factor analysis and varimax rotation. The commonalities for the 18 statements were derived. The commonalities values of .5 and above are being accepted by most of the studies using factor analysis, so we have also followed the same trend. (Stewart, 1983). Since extraction communalities values were all greater than or equal to 0.5 suggesting that the data set was appropriate for further analysis.

Table-4: Principal Component Analysis table of communalities of the variables

Coding of the variables	Variables	Initial Communality	Extraction
I1	The atmosphere (inside and outside the store) is pleasant at this store	1.000	**.547**
I2	This store has Clean and tidy environment	1.000	**.592**
I3	The stock displays are visually appealing	1.000	**.708**
I4	The staff are welcoming	1.000	**.766**
I5	Staff are available and quick to help	1.000	**.813**
I6	The employees here are friendly	1.000	**.772**
I7	Employees of this store are able to handle customer's complaints directly and immediately	1.000	**.622**
I8	All the products and brands you were expecting to buy are available	1.000	**.700**
I9	The store layout of this store makes it easy for customers to find what they need	1.000	**.573**

I10	All the products are easy to reach (neither too high, nor too low)	1.000	.500
I11	The products at this store are economically Priced	1.000	.820
I12	The products at this store is of good quality	1.000	.595
I13	The store has operating hrs convenient to all their customers	1.000	.601
I14	This store has many well known brands	1.000	.659
I15	This store has good own store brands	1.000	.501
I16	This Store has fast checkout (requires less time at billing)	1.000	.748
I17	The store has good promotional schemes	1.000	.553
I18	The store is conveniently located	1.000	.502

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Table-5: Factor analysis for the variables of customer experiences

Variables	Initial Eigenvalue
I1	5.722
I2	1.483
I3	1.394
I4	0.984

I5	0.919
I6	0.827
I7	0.802
I8	0.750
I9	0.680
I10	0.655
I11	0.599
I12	0.554
I13	0.543
I14	0.516
I15	0.475
I16	0.410
I17	0.378
I18	0.309

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

With principal component analysis three factors were extracted depending on eigen values and variance explained. Eigen value represents the total variance explained by each factor. The standard practice normally used is that all the factors with an eigen value of one or more should be extracted, in our case three factors comprising 18 items all having an eigen values of unity and above were extracted.

The inclusion of the item in the factor was determined by their factor loading. Rotated component matrix shows the loading of each variable on each of the extracted factors. The objective of this matrix is to find variable which have high loading on one factor, but low loading on other factors. Table-4 is the rotated component matrix which clearly demonstrates that Factor-1 is the linear combination of variables no's I1, I2, I3, I9, I10, I12, I13, I14, I15 with total eigen

values 5.276 .Factor -2 is the linear combination of variables no's I4, I5, I6, I7, I17, I18 with total eigen values 4.028. Factor -3 is the linear combination of variables no's I8, I11, I16 with total eigen values 2.268.

After the number of extracted factors is decided, the next task is to interpret and name the factors. This is done by the process of identifying the factors that are associated with the original variables. The rotated component matrix is used for this purpose.

Naming of the Factors:

All the factors have been given appropriate names according to the variables that have been loaded on factor. The three factors which were identified from factor analysis with acceptable factor loading are-Aesthetics, Competence and Conformity. Table-6 has discussed the factor loading of all the identified factors.

Table-6: Factors identified through factor analysis

	Variables	Factors Loading
Aesthetics	The atmosphere (inside and outside the store) is pleasant at this store	.547
	This store has Clean and tidy environment	.592
	The stock displays are visually appealing	.708
	The store layout of this store makes it easy for customers to find what they need	.573
	All the products are easy to reach (neither too high, nor too low)	.499
	The products at this store is of good quality	.595
	The store has operating hrs convenient to all their customers	.601
	This store has many well known brands	.659
	This store has good own store brands	.498
Competence	The staff are welcoming	.766
	Staff are available and quick to help	.813
	The employees here are friendly	.772
	Employees of this store are able to handle customer's complaints directly and immediately	.622
	The store has good promotional schemes	.453
	The store is conveniently located	.400
Conformance	All the products and brands you were expecting to buy are available	.700
	The products at this store are economically priced	.820
	This Store has fast checkout (requires less time at billing)	.748

Factor-1: Aesthetics

This refers to a product's look, feel, taste, and smell as per the Garvin (1987). As the attributes which came out to be part of this component are related with the looks of the store in terms of store environment, cleanliness of the store, appearance of the store; Quality of the store, manufacturer brands and store own brands; store layout in terms of reach ability of the customers to the shelf, finding the products with ease and; feeling of the convenience in terms of stores operating hours. All these parameters make the store aesthetically good for the store customer, which gives positive customer experience and adds to store patronage.

Factor-2: Competence

Factor-2 comprises of six items that relate to the possession of required skills and knowledge to perform the service, Parasuraman (1985). Under this all the attributes that characterize the knowledge and skills of the retailers were tested for generating maximum output or returns. Here retailers are tested in three areas: 1) Knowledge and skills of the staff in entertaining and satisfying the customers, 2) Retailers knowledge of different types of promotional tools/ schemes and skills in using them effectively at the right time and with right type of customers, 3) Knowledge of different types of store location and skills in positioning their store as convenient store within the reach of the customers so as to make it a destination place for purchasing their grocery.

Factor-3: Conformance

The third factor conformance is designed by three items showing the degree to which a product's design and operating characteristics of store meet the established standards, Garvin (1987). Attributes like- how the store operations are performed in the store, till what extent they are meeting the set standards/norms while taking consumers needs into consideration. It is checked whether all products and brands are available needed by the consumers, whether pricing of the product is economical, and the last was whether the billing was fast to reduce the customers queuing time.

Reliability Testing

Once the factors were identified reliability of the instrument was also checked through internal consistency method, as this method is considered to be the most general form of reliability estimation (Nunnally, 1978). In this method, reliability is operationalized as internal consistency, which is the degree of inter correlations among the items that constitute a scale. Internal consistency is estimated using reliability co-efficient called Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951). An alpha value of 0.70 and above is considered to be the criteria for demonstrating the internal consistency of the research instrument used. The results can be seen from the Table-7 below that the alpha value for all the three factors is as per the required standard, so we have accepted the scale as it is.

Table-7: Reliability Analysis of the variables

Factors	Cronbach's alpha	No. of Items
Aesthetics	.810	9
Competence	.783	6
Conformance	.707	3

Identification of relationship between retail patronage factors and respondents characteristics:

Personal factors like- Gender, Age, Occupation, Income and Qualification relationship with factors of store patronage/customer experiences attributes was tested using various statistical tests.

1. Gender

T-test was undertaken to see the significant differences between the male and female group in analyzing the three factors identified. As can be seen, from the Table-8 that there is a significant relationship between male and female group in aesthetics and competence factors as they are

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significant at .05 level and .01 level, while there is no significant difference among male and female group in third factor which is conformance.

This tells us that there is a difference in perception of two groups for the same attributes of the customer experiences, further if we see the mean values then this also tells us that female in comparison with male group rate the attributes more positively. This indicate female group are the ones who looks for the customer experience more seriously and can be attracted easily towards the store if retailers will provide all those attributes of customer experience.

Table-8: Customer experience attributes for factors identified among male and female group

Factors	Male (N=466)		Female (N=484)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Aesthetics	3.71	0.53	3.79	0.56
Competence	3.43	0.65	3.57	0.64
Conformance	3.39	0.73	3.47	0.80

T-Test

Factors		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Aesthetics	Equal variances assumed	1.031	0.31	-2.182*	948	0.029

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| Competence | Equal variances assumed | 0.003 | 0.96 | -3.308** | 948 | 0.001 |
| Conformance | Equal variances assumed | 3.27 | 0.071 | -1.559 | 948.000 | 0.119 |

*Significant at .05 level,   ** Significant at .01 level

2. Occupation

Analysis of Variance (ANNOVA) test was used to see the relationship between customer experience attributes and occupation of the respondents.

It can be seen from the Table-9 that for Aesthetic factor all four occupational groups are significantly related and all four give importance to aesthetics factors. However for Competence and Conformance factors all four occupational groups do not have any significant relationship. This shows that the Aesthetics of the store are more important for all types of occupations like-Students, Salaried Employees, Businessman and All others. Competence and Conformance factors are of not much significance when seen from occupational stand point of view of the respondents. Hence more importance needs to be given to the Aesthetic factor by the retailers to increase store patronage.

Table-9: Customer experience attributes for factors identified among four occupational groups

Factors	Student (N=122)		Salaried Employee (N=264)		Businessman (N=424)		Others (N=140)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Aesthetics	3.63	0.55	3.82	0.55	3.77	0.58	3.70	0.52
Competence	3.45	0.66	3.49	0.59	3.52	0.76	3.53	0.69
Conformance	3.36	0.74	3.40	0.70	3.48	0.80	3.49	0.85

One Way ANNOVA

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Factors		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Aesthetics	Between Groups	4.812	3	1.604	5.429**	.001
	Within Groups	279.489	946	.295		
	Total	284.301	949			
Competence	Between Groups	.753	3	.251	.592	.620
	Within Groups	401.468	946	.424		
	Total	402.222	949			
Conformance	Between Groups	2.268	3	.756	1.283	.279
	Within Groups	557.410	946	.589		
	Total	559.678	949			

** Significant at .01 level

3. Age

ANNOVA Test was used to see if there is any significant relationship between the customer experience attributes/factors and different age groups. Table-10 revealed that there is no significant relationship between the Aesthetics and Competence factor with respect to different age groups of the respondents. However, for the Conformance factor respondents with different age group were found to be significant at .01 level. The reason could be that all the people of the age group, 25-35 yrs, and 35-45 yrs have higher means in case of Conformance and therefore look for more Conformance factors in building positive experiences. Therefore, retailers need to ensure availability of brands, fast checkout and price benefits for the customers in order to increase their store patronage and this is true also since most of the customers visiting the store are in the age group of 25-45 years.

Table-10: Comparison of customer experience attributes for factors identified among four age groups

Dimensions	Below 25 yrs (N=150)		25-35 yrs (N=290)		35-45 yrs (N=307)		45 yrs and above (N=203)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Aesthetics	3.68	0.56	3.79	0.56	3.75	0.55	3.74	0.52
Competence	3.45	0.68	3.46	0.57	3.50	0.62	3.59	0.77
Conformance	3.37	0.77	3.52	0.72	3.46	0.74	3.31	0.85

One way ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Aesthetics	Between Groups	1.143	3	.381	1.273	.282
	Within Groups	283.158	946	.299		
	Total	284.301	949			
Competence	Between Groups	2.368	3	.789	1.868	.133
	Within Groups	399.853	946	.423		
	Total	402.222	949			

Conformance	Between Groups	6.375	3	2.125	3.633**	.013
	Within Groups	553.303	946	.585		
	Total	559.678	949			

** Significant at .01 level

4. Qualification

Similarly for the fourth personal factor qualification One way ANNOVA Test was again used. The results seen from the Table-11 reveal that there is a significant relationship among consumers of different qualification with respect to factors of Competence and Conformance. Aesthetics was not found to be significantly related with the different qualifications of the respondents. Looking at the mean score among the qualifications of the respondents it was found that post graduates were more concerned having higher means than the rest. Therefore, the retailers have to be vigilant for people with higher qualifications with respect to Competence and Conformance factor and all attributes related to it.

Table-11: Comparison of customer experience attributes for factors identified among three qualifications.

Dimensions	Upto Higher Secondary (N=234)		Graduation (N=468)		Post Graduation (N=248)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Aesthetics	3.76	0.58	3.72	0.54	3.79	0.52
Competence	3.55	0.70	3.44	0.67	3.56	0.55

Conformance	3.45	0.78	3.36	0.77	3.55	0.73

One way ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Aesthetics	Between Groups	0.772	2	0.386	1.289	0.276
	Within Groups	283.529	947	0.299		
	Total	284.301	949			
Competence	Between Groups	3.018	2	1.509	3.579*	0.028
	Within Groups	399.204	947	0.422		
	Total	402.222	949			
Conformance	Between Groups	5.59	2	2.795	4.777**	0.009
	Within Groups	554.087	947	0.585		
	Total	559.678	949			

*Significant at .05 level,** Significant at .01 level

5. Income

To see the relationship between Income as a personal factor and attributes of customer experience like- Aesthetics, Competence and Conformance One way ANNOVA Test was used. The results can be seen from Table-12. It is found that there is significant relationship between Aesthetics and Conformance with different income groups. However, no significant relationship is found for Competence factor with respect to different income groups. Looking at the means scores of all income groups it can be concluded that attributes like- store cleanliness, its layout, convenient timings, economical prices etc. are found to be more significant to increase store patronage. Retailers therefore have to give more importance to all these attributes of Aesthetics and Conformance factors.

Table-12: Comparison of customer experience attributes for factors identified among four incomes (in `)

Dimensions	Less than 30,000 (N=153)		30,000-60,000 (N=301)		60,000-90,000 (N=272)		90,000 and above (N=224)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Aesthetics	3.90	0.53	3.67	0.53	3.75	0.50	3.76	0.61
Competence	3.54	0.72	3.47	0.65	3.51	0.65	3.49	0.61
Conformance	3.57	0.89	3.36	0.74	3.35	0.75	3.54	0.71

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Aesthetics	Between Groups	5.375	3	1.792	6.076**	.000
	Within Groups	278.926	946	.295		

	Total	284.301	949			
Competence	Between Groups	.561	3	.187	.441	.724
	Within Groups	401.661	946	.425		
	Total	402.222	949			
Conformance	Between Groups	8.686	3	2.895	4.971**	.002
	Within Groups	550.992	946	.582		
	Total	559.678	949			

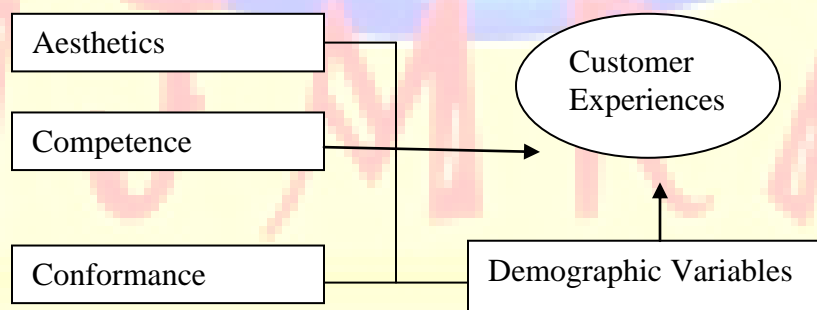** Significant at .01 level

Findings and Discussion

Fig-2: Factors leading to Customer Experiences

As per the results of the study all the three factors plays an important role in effecting customer's experiences. They are significantly related at different point of time with the characteristics of the customer's experiences as reported in the findings.

Aesthetics factors- Aesthetics factors, which talks about the retail store atmospherics and looks of the store are positively rated by the female group, all four occupations groups (including, student, salaried employee, businessman and others) and all income groups (including people with income less than ``30,000, ``30,000-60,000, ``60,000-90,000 and ``90,000 and above. Common sense as well as empirical evidence (Bloch et al. 2003) suggests that consumers who are more sensitive to aesthetics weigh the aesthetic aspects of designs more heavily than consumers who are less sensitive to aesthetics. Yet, the relevance of aesthetic design extends to other consumer-related concepts, for example his or her involvement in the shopping process. Involvement is reflected in the amount of effort and elaboration consumers put into this process. The ELM predicts that aesthetics would have a positive effect as a peripheral cue under low involvement conditions like- shopping for grocery items. Therefore, an argument can be made that the more aesthetic the retail store, the better.

Competence factor-Competence factor, which talks about the staff competitiveness, promotional schemes of the retail outlet and convenient store location, has found to have significant relationship with the gender of the customers and qualifications. (Merrilees and Miller, 1997) says that to create a satisfying customer experience, the merchandise had to speak for itself, the so-called customer merchandise interaction, and the customers had to identify features and benefits for themselves, or aided by some in-store promotion. So-called service points were created with signage such as "pay here" or "sales desk" so to give the more visibility to the customers of the retailer efforts.

Conformance factor- Conformance factor talks about the operational standards of the store and delivering of the expected services to the customers as per promise. This factor has found to have significant relationship with people of different age groups, qualifications and income groups.

(Merrilees and Miller, 1997) identified the ability to meet the needs of time-poor consumers seeking a convenient, one stop way of shopping as the critical success factor for retail store. Retailers should keep the merchandise in their stores as per the requirement of their customers, fixing up the appropriate pricing for their merchandise and to place the appropriate number of checkout counters so to provide the customers a complete and pleasurable shopping experience.

Conclusion and implications for management:

Grocery leaders who build customer advocates can develop a new competitive advantage that does not rely on the same old levers of being bigger or being cheaper. Rather, it capitalizes on the fact that creating a satisfying experience for customers leads to loyalty. The retailer needs to develop a deep understanding of customers, identify what matters most to them and then create shopping experiences with the features that bond consumers to stores and the retail brands.

A common theme is the use of consumer insights to drive business operations and prioritize investments in improving the customer experience. By sensing and responding to the needs of individual customers across shopping trips, product categories and channels, the retailer can increase the frequency of purchase, average basket size and share of wallet. Technology can support these efforts by capturing customer feedback, targeting personalized messages and promotional offers, providing detailed product information, enabling multi channel execution, managing product assortments and inventory, training and supporting staff, and accelerating the checkout process. If retailers apply these learning's to their businesses, they have the opportunity to survive and thrive in the rapidly changing grocery industry.

As per the conclusion we can say that our retailer should become more customer focus so to deliver the good customer experiences. Customer focus is the strategic discipline retailers should take to improve their operations in order to drive better customer relationships. Customer focus typically leads to greater retention and loyalty, increased share of wallet and market share, increased customer trust, give good customer experience/increase retail patronage and ultimately superior financial results. Some of the key competencies that characterize a strong customer focus include being able to (Badgett et al.):

Understand customer needs and expectations from the outside in: Place high priority on having deep insights into shopping preferences and needs to create a satisfying shopping experience for core customer segments across all channels and shopping venues.

Use customer insights to drive business operations: Drive these insights across the business to optimize all key decision making, including buying merchandise, pricing and promoting products and services, serving customers, marketing and communicating to customers. So to entertain the customers of each group type, including income of ` 30,000, ``30,000-60,000, ``60,000-90,000 and ``90,000 and above.

Break traditional design constraints: Design processes based on how customers interact with the grocer, not how the grocer wishes to interact with customers. Incorporate relationship and communication skills in the learning and development of staff and leaders. As qualified customers place more importance on this part as per the research findings.

Adopt a transformational change mindset: Embrace the notion of becoming customer focused. Measure what's important to the customer and share results companywide, restructuring as needed to align management and incentives to embrace customer knowledge and reward advocacy.

Prioritize investments based on what really counts: Prioritize investments based on criteria that define a successful shopping experience for the company's best customers. One category under this could be- female group as they have rated all three factors and attributes more favorably than their male counterparts.

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