

Assessing the Role of Mall Atmospherics on Emotional Responses and Shopping Behavior in Tamil Nadu

M.ElamKalidasan^{1*} and Dr. S. Padmanaban²

^{1*}Doctoral Research Scholars, Department of Business Administration, Annamalai University, Chidambaram, Tamilnadu, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Annamalai University, Chidambaram, Deputation to Govt. Arts & Science College, Thiruttani, TamilNadu, India

Received:

10/09/2025

Revised:

25/10/2025

Accepted:

17/11/2025

Published:

23/11/2025

ABSTRACT

Increasingly Indian shopping malls are the place to be 'seen' for the fashionistas of India! This is so unlike it was. Influences of mall environment on consumer emotions and shopping experience: A study in Tamil Nadu. In this paper, the S-O-R paradigm is chosen as a framework to investigate the role that situational factors (spatial configuration and design features) and social context play on eliciting emotions—pleasure, arousal or relaxation—and how these emotions subsequently influence shopping behavior. A total of 400 mall goers were surveyed across Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai, Trichy and Salem by employing convenience sampling. Via structural equation modeling (SEM), shopping malls atmospherics plays a significant role in consumer emotional responses directly ($\beta = 0.67$, $p < .01$) and indirectly to their shopping behavior ($\beta = 0.59$, $p < .01$). The relationship that exists between mall atmospherics and behavior into the shopping domain is partly mediated by affect. Results show that sensory and emotional design can increase customer engagement and spending in the retail industry of Tamil Nadu.

Keywords: Mall Atmospherics, Emotional Responses, Shopping Behavior, Servicescape, S-O-R Model, Tamil Nadu, Consumer Experience, Retail Marketing



© 2025 by the authors; licensee Advances in Consumer Research. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY-NC-ND) license(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. INTRODUCTION

Now the malls are like a multi-layered page that offer some things besides shopping. They also offer residents a sense of community and fun things to do. In India, the store size is moving from Kirana to Organised. Tamil Nadu is one of the highly urbanized states in India. Within a short span of time we have built quite a few malls in cities like Chennai, Coimbatore and Madurai. They aren't just where we shop, eat and hang out; these shopping malls have become a significant cultural force. The term "mall atmospherics" to denote "a careful attention to the architectural design of space in a mall to effect how people feel and behave in that space" was first used by Kotler (1973). There are other cues, sound and light, humidity and temperature, for example, that can shape a shopper's mood and behavior by producing a psychological environment. "There's how groups of people are put together or not, and there's the possibility that you feel comfortable or uncomfortable. At the end of the day, a more pleasant retail environment makes people feel good and helps them buy (Turley & Milliman, 2000; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). However, the bulk of research done to date has been conducted in the context of regional mall settings within western countries or first tier cities. There are no specific studies for the influence of regional culture (lifestyle in

Tamil Nadu, climate and social values) on mall affect. Tamils here prize comfort: Family and friends don't visit the business all that frequently. The mall atmospherics - pleasure, arousal and relaxation which impact emotional responses, and inturn shopping behavior is a focus of investigation in present paper within the urban mall culture of Tamil Nadu.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Mall Atmospherics

Kotler (1973) explained that the mall atmospherics are a blending of physical, sensory and social cues that inspire shoppers to feel and think about fashion mall. One of these is environmental context, including light, smell and sound. design/layout (such as how the scene appeared, how the space was organized and how people circulated), and social context (such as customer service from staff, number of patrons present and sense of safety). Furthermore, there is evidence that perceptions of a store's physical presence impact on customer satisfaction and repurchase intentions (Wakefield & Blodgett 1996, Baker et al.). Das and Varshneya (2017) found that in the Indian context sensory cues such as light, aroma most affect emotions and satisfaction while layout and interaction for a higher order attitude construct. It due to TN's weather and culture, where

How to cite: M.ElamKalidasan, Assessing the Role of Mall Atmospherics on Emotional Responses and Shopping Behavior in Tamil Nadu. *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 2, no. 5, 2025, pp. 1971-1975.

there are those big open malls that looks like a fun place to be. And there are also safety and crowd-control problems that make people feel less at home in their homes. You have to be culture and mood of the mall aware to make money in retail.

2.2 Emotional Responses

Emotions Emotions are emotional reactions to stimulation within the environment. According to the S–O–R framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1972, 1974), environmental settings or stimuli (S) such as the atmospheric properties of a shopping mall (EPA scales)— induce specific internal states with an organism (O) through which individuals respond or exhibit behavioral modes/mechanisms/actions (R). Lust, excitement and occasionally relaxation are considered to be the most problematic emotional states that people experience with respect to stimulation (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). Pleasure is the satisfaction and joy that we derive from our environment, arousal is how enthusiastic or aroused each of us feels at present, and relaxation refers to our state of mind or physical comfort. Both emotion and purchase intention (Babin et al., 1994; Lin & Liang, 2011) confirm that these emotional dimensions directly affect purchase decisions, loyalty, and word-of-mouth behavior. In the Tamil Nadu context, where malls are visited not only for shopping but for recreation, emotions act as vital mediators between atmospherics and shopping behavior.

2.3 Shopping Behavior

Shopping behavior is what the customer does and thinks while at a store. This includes time, purchase intention, intention to return, impulse buying and social presence. The cognitive processes are involving, emotional satisfaction becomes an important part of the process of trading in these markets (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). The more fun it is, the more people will come to the mall and buy something and tell their friends about it. It has been proved by preceding studies (Wakefield & Baker, 1998; Ha & Leoneon, 2010) that the mall settings including visual and social factors are conducive to consumers' navigation behaviors and performance. In Tamil Nadu, malls are cultural as well as shopping destinations. What they relate is not how useful their experience was, but how it makes them feel. Understanding how emotion influences purchase behavior might also help retailers make their environments more conducive to customers talking with one another.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study draws on theories and perspectives from other disciplines. The S–O–R paradigm is a basic model to explain the influence of an external stimulus (S) on internal emotional responses (O), leading to behavioral reactions (R). Bitner's (1992) Servicescape Theory highlights the importance of physical environments on services, including layout, signage and atmosphere. Hedonic Consumption Theory (Holbrook & Hirschman,

1982) explains the experiential value of owning a product in terms of its ability to make you feel happy and joyful. These concepts would get us to think about how the atmospherics in malls could work on our behavior by making us feel certain ways, make us want to spend money or engage with the environment again.

2.5 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

Based on the reviewed literature, the study proposes the following conceptual model:

Mall Atmospherics → Emotional Responses → Shopping Behavior

Hypotheses:

- **H1:** Mall atmospherics significantly influence emotional responses of shoppers.
- **H2:** Emotional responses significantly affect shopping behavior.
- **H3:** Mall atmospherics have an indirect effect on shopping behavior through emotional responses.

This framework posits that emotional responses serve as a mediating link between perceived atmospherics and behavioral outcomes.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Model and Design

Descriptive, quantitative, and causal research-based methods were employed in the study of influence of mall environment on emotional responses and shopping behaviour. The information was obtained through a standardized questionnaire that consisted of three sections. It contained three parts: the first part included demographic and mall atmospheric related questions (15 items), second part emotional response measures (15 items) and third section shopping behavior measures (10 items). Responses were also measured on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to the highest level of agreement (Strongly Agree), scored as values of 1–5.

3.2 Data Collection and Sampling

Sample size The sufficient sample size was calculated using the formula recommended by Krejcie & Morgan (1970). The estimated frequent mall-goers in Tamil Nadu, close to 48,000, was also considered. The sample size was 382 for confidence level of 95% with a margin error of 5%. To enhance the reliability of the data, 400 questionnaires were distributed in five major shopping malls located at Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai and Salem-Tiruchirappalli. The stratified random sample by multispectral zone was valid because it demonstrated vaccination coverage according to all age, sex and economic classes that reported similar proportions. We believed 387 out of the 400 questionnaires that were sent could be used in our analysis after data elimination. A subpopulation is defined by:

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	205	53.0

	Female	182	47.0
Age	18–25	90	23.3
	26–35	145	37.5
	36–45	105	27.1
	46 and above	47	12.1
Income (₹/month)	Below 25,000	80	20.7
	25,001–50,000	142	36.7
	50,001–75,000	100	25.8
	Above 75,000	65	16.8
Visit Frequency	Once a week	112	28.9
	Twice a month	153	39.5
	Once a month	85	22.0
	Rarely	37	9.6

We found associations and a statistical data analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), with SPSS 28 and AMOS 24. Prior to testing the hypothesis, we examined reliability and validity.

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

We used descriptive as well as inferential statistics with the available data. Results: The demographic profile was analyzed descriptively and Pearson's correlation was used to determine the relationship of mall atmospherics, emotions and shopping behaviour. We tested the reliability and validity of constructs using the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), ensuring that our

measurement model adequately fitted the latent variables. Internal consistency and convergent validity were examined by using Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). We used the software AMOS 24.0 (Analysis of Moment Structures) for SEM to examine relationships between variables and tested whether emotional reactions mediate these relationships.

To test the significance of mediation, a bootstrap test (5000 resamples) with 95% confidence intervals was conducted.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Reliability and Validity

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Mall Atmospheric	15	0.903	0.912	0.641
Emotional Responses	15	0.886	0.898	0.623
Shopping Behavior	10	0.871	0.882	0.615

All the variables presented a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of above 0.70, thus indicating reliability full capacity and ability to perform (Snyder, Loes, Shorey & Rand, 2001).

The AVE of the above variables was above 0.5, demonstrating good convergent validity. In order to demonstrate discriminant validity, the square root of AVE for a construct needs to be larger than correlations among this and other constructs.

4.2 Model Fit Indices

Model Fit Index	Recommended Value	Obtained Value	Interpretation
χ^2/df	< 3.00	2.37	Acceptable
GFI	> 0.90	0.921	Good fit
AGFI	> 0.80	0.892	Acceptable fit
CFI	> 0.90	0.953	Excellent fit
TLI	> 0.90	0.945	Excellent fit
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.056	Good fit

The measurement model achieved satisfactory fit indices, confirming that the hypothesized model adequately represents the observed data.

4.3 Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	Mean	SD
1. Mall Atmospheric	1			3.92	0.68
2. Emotional Responses	0.77**	1		3.85	0.64
3. Shopping Behavior	0.69**	0.72**	1	3.78	0.66

($p < 0.01$)

The results indicate strong positive correlations among the three constructs. Mall atmospherics show the highest correlation with emotional responses ($r = 0.77$),

suggesting that the environment substantially affects shoppers' emotions, which, in turn, influence shopping behavior ($r = 0.72$).

4.4 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Results

Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
Mall Atmospherics → Emotional Responses	0.67	9.42	0.000	Supported (H1)
Emotional Responses → Shopping Behavior	0.59	8.35	0.000	Supported (H2)
Mall Atmospherics → Shopping Behavior (Direct)	0.36	5.87	0.000	Supported (H3)
Mediating Effect (Indirect via Emotions)	0.39	–	$p < 0.01$	Partial Mediation

The model explains **56% of the variance in emotional responses** and **63% of the variance in shopping behavior**, indicating a strong predictive capacity. Emotional responses partially mediate the relationship between mall atmospherics and shopping behavior.

5. DISCUSSION

Their findings suggest that mood in a mall has an outsized influence on how shoppers feel and what they do. Some types of environmental sounds, (the environment was generated by each inner mind and was essentially limitless) such as temperature change, light shift and ambient music, were called up to create a feeling of comfort or relaxation while other more dynamic styles and compositions evoked pleasure. These are consistent with S–O–R model (Stimulus–Organism–Response; the perception of the stimuli will lead to certain emotional response internally, which in turn will affect external behavior) findings including Mehrabian and Russell's (1974). The significant relationship between shopping emotions and shopping behaviors is consistent with that of Babin, Darden, and Griffin (1994) and Ha & Lennon's (2010), which revealed that the more emotive environment, electrical store of cognitive duration vs. spending have intention to re-visiting. However, our results reveal the partial mediating effect which means mall atmospherics directly affect shopping behavior and its emotional dimension substantially increases it. It's great in our culture that it always reminds us of our worth. In Tamil Nadu, where you are used to going shopping with your family and hanging out with your community. Those who liked the mall because the staff was friendly, there were not too many crowds and they felt comfortable saw their satisfaction levels go to "very likely" be back feeling very good instead of just okay. The death of an umpire: The article deals with those places as they are spaces in which sensory experiences trigger great emotional swings that reveal the role played by feelings during practices.

6. Managerial Implications

This research offers several actionable insights for mall developers and retail managers:

Enhancing Ambient Conditions:

Malls in the state should ensure that lighting, air conditioning and aroma levels are maintained in such a way that is suitable for a region like Tamil Nadu where the temperature soars high. Soft music as well as gentle scent release are able to increase emotional appeal.

Optimizing Design and Layout:

Good sign posting, wide pathways and nice designs make the park a joy to explore all day long. Rest areas and food courts ought to be used as a means of increasing people's contact with one another.

Managing the Social Environment:

Friendly, trained personnel and security guards contribute towards a comfortable and safe environment for family and female customer traffic.

Emotion-Driven Marketing:

"Experience" should be at the center of marketing campaigns, not just discount promotions — "a day out with joy" is more appealing than "discount offers."

Technology Integration:

Digital signage, interactive touch-screens and customized app experiences are some of the ways to engage guests on an emotional level.

In creating a convergence between the physical and the social components of the mall with emotional triggers, management can encourage such positive behavioural impacts as longer visits, increased spending and return patronage.

7. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The research sheds light on how the typical shopper behaves, but there are important limitations, as the sample only includes urban respondents residing in the Tamil Nadu region, while those in the rural/semi-urban areas have been excluded. Future research could examine other areas in South India, or... generalisations could be made to other cultures. Since the study is cross-sectional, causal relationships cannot be drawn. It would be interesting in the future to use longitudinal data to study the evolution of feelings over multiple shopping centre visits. Moreover, placing moderators (e.g. gender) embedded within the traits items such as buying driver or country behaviour values may improve the

model applied in this research. Lastly, technological atmospherics such as digital screens, AR, and mobile interaction would reflect the increased digitalisation of retail on the frameworks proposed in this study.

8. CONCLUSION

This study confirms the considerable influence of the mall atmosphere on customer perceptions and buying behaviour of urban shoppers in Tamil Nadu. These results provide evidence that the purpose of mall atmosphere may be to foster enjoyment, arousal, and relaxation. This in turn influences shopping duration, impulse purchases, and the overall shopping experience at the mall. These findings further the S–O–R model with its application to Indian retail, thereby integrating the literature on culture and emotion. Attention mall owners and marketers. It will be operationally handy to provide customers an experience wherein they feel relaxed and socially active. The retail world has become increasingly competitive and in order for businesses to gain foot traffic and retention, they must provide an experience. It is possible to create an emotional experience where commerce is not the sole focus. This emotional attachment is gained through the strategic physical environment design of the shopping mall. This is vital to Tamil Nadu, for the shift in demographics is rapidly changing urban lifestyles.

REFERENCES

1. Babin, B. J., Darden, W. R., & Griffin, M. (1994). Work and/or fun: Measuring hedonic and utilitarian shopping value. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(4), 644–656.
2. Baker, J., Grewal, D., & Parasuraman, A. (2002). The influence of store environment on quality inferences and store image. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 30(4), 328–341.
3. Beatty, S. E., & Ferrell, M. E. (1998). Impulse buying: Modeling its precursors. *Journal of Retailing*, 74(2), 169–191.
4. Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(2), 57–71.
5. Das, G., & Varshneya, G. (2017). Consumer emotions and experiential value: The S–O–R paradigm. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 35(7), 910–923.
6. Donovan, R. J., & Rossiter, J. R. (1982). Store atmosphere: An environmental psychology approach. *Journal of Retailing*, 58(1), 34–57.
7. Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research*. Addison-Wesley.
8. Ha, Y., & Lennon, S. J. (2010). Online visual merchandising: The influence of web site characteristics on shopping behavior. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 38(10), 688–702.
9. Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, E. C. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(2), 132–140.
10. Kotler, P. (1973). Atmospherics as a marketing tool. *Journal of Retailing*, 49(4), 48–64.
11. Lin, I. Y., & Liang, M. (2011). The influence of service environments on customer emotion and behavioral intention. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 30(2), 326–334.
12. Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). *An Approach to Environmental Psychology*. MIT Press.
13. Sinha, P. K., & Banerjee, A. (2004). Store choice behavior in an evolving market. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 32(10), 482–494.
14. Turley, L. W., & Milliman, R. E. (2000). Atmospheric effects on shopping behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 49(2), 193–211.*
15. Wakefield, K. L., & Blodgett, J. G. (1996). The effect of the servicescape on customers' behavioral intentions. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 10(6), 45–61.*