

This issue has a distinctive distribution management and retailing emphasis with research includes papers on closed loop distribution networks, the built environment influence on the frequency of grocery shopping, how shyness and sociability impact on impulse buying tendency, customer experience quality in the Indian retail store context and sensory cues influence on products, service and store image.

The first paper by Ghadge, Yang, Caldwell, König and Tiwari considers how to find a sustainable facility location solution for a closed loop distribution network in the uncertain environment created by of high levels of product returns from online retailing coupled with growing pressure to reduce carbon emissions. A case study approach attempts to optimise the distribution centre location decision for single and double hub scenarios. A hybrid approach combining centre of gravity and mixed integer programming is established for the un-capacitated multiple allocation facility location problem. Empirical data from a major national UK retail distributor network are used to validate the model. The paper develops a contemporary model that can take into account multiple factors (e.g. operational and transportation costs and supply chain risks) while improving performance on environmental sustainability.

The purpose of the second paper by Jiao, Sharp, Moudon and Drewnowski is to ascertain how elements of the built environment may or may not influence the frequency of grocery shopping. Using data from the 2009 Seattle Obesity Study, the research investigated the effect of the urban built environment on grocery shopping travel frequency in the Seattle-King County area. Binary and ordered logit models served to estimate the impact of individual characteristics and built environments on grocery shopping travel frequency. The results showed that the respondents' attitude towards food, travel mode and the network distance between homes and stores exerted the strongest influence on the travel frequency while urban form variables only had a modest influence. The study showed that frequent shoppers were more likely to use alternative transportation modes and shopped closer to their homes and infrequent shoppers tended to drive longer distances to their stores and spent more time and money per visit. This research has implications for urban planners and policy makers as well as grocery retailers, as the seemingly disparate groups both have an interest in food shopping frequency.

The aim of the third paper by Dhaundiyal and Coughlan is to investigate how two such traits, shyness and sociability, impact on impulse buying tendency. Understanding drivers of impulse purchase, a significant source of retail sales, is important to succeed in the challenging environment that store-based retailers face. A customer intercept approach was taken to collect nearly 200 responses from two locations in a busy city centre shopping street in Dublin, Ireland and the hypotheses were tested using covariance-based structural equation modelling. The findings suggest that sociability has a significant positive effect on both affective and cognitive impulse buying tendencies whereas shyness has a positive effect on cognitive impulse buying tendencies only. Age was found to be a significant moderator of these effects. The findings suggest that retailers should factor customers' psychological traits into their decision making. Individuals with high levels of sociability and shyness are prone to buying on impulse but in different ways. Younger people are more likely to exhibit these behaviours.

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The fourth paper by Deshwal focuses on ascertaining whether and how groups based on demographic variables (age, gender, education level and family income) differs for dimensions of customer experience quality in the Indian retail store context. A 23 items instrument was distributed to retail store customers. Demographic variables were age, gender, education level and family income. Finally, the analysis was performed over 300 responses. ANOVA test was performed to find out the significant difference between the groups based on demographic variables with respect to components of customer experience quality in the Indian retail store context. The analysis revealed that some categories of demographic variables differ with respect to dimensions of customer experience quality in the Indian retail store context.

The fifth paper by Helmfalk analyses and discusses how sensory cues are preferred in relation to products, service and store image in a retail context and why retailers should consider the importance of congruence in a retail setting. Four qualitative focus-group discussions were conducted, following a semi-structured interview guide. A total of more than 20 participants discussed how and why a lighting department in an IKEA store in Sweden could be regarded as more appealing than the traditional layout. The findings indicate that congruency works as a mediator between a retail setting, sensory cues, products, service and store image. Consumers prefer, compare and categorise sensory cues in relation to the specific product in the department, the service offered by the firm and the store image. A model is developed that conceptualises congruency as a mediator in a retail setting, which provides an opportunity to further explore external influences on congruency in retail settings, both conceptually and empirically.

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