

# SOUND AND CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR: DO APPAREL RETAILERS TAKE NOTE OF THE EFFECT OF SOUND ON BUYING BEHAVIOUR

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## Abstract

The main aim of this study was to investigate the influence of sound on consumers buying behaviour in apparel retail stores. The type of research design used in this study was exploratory in nature, making use of a qualitative approach and a communicative technique of focus group interviews and naïve sketches. The data gathered was analysed by means of Tesch's inductive descriptive coding technique, better known as thematic analysis. It was found that sound has the ability to influence consumers in either a subconscious or a conscious way. This has a direct influence on the amount of time that consumers are willing to spend in-store and ultimately influencing their buying decisions and behaviour in either a positive or a negative way.

**Keywords:** Store Atmospherics; Senses; Sound; Consumer Behaviour; Approach Behaviour; Avoidance Behaviour

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## 1 Introduction and objectives

Over the past few decades, the retail industry has grown exponentially, resulting in a highly intensive and competitive market (Wanninayake & Randiwela, 2007:2; Liaw, 2007:1). Retailers can no longer rely only on their products, prices, promotions and place in order to attract customers and influence their shopping behaviour (Liaw, 2007:1; Wanninayake & Randiwela, 2007:5). It has become crucial for retailers to optimally utilize the store space in order to differentiate themselves from competitors in the retail market and in the process also to ensure that the consumers have a pleasant shopping experience.

Spies, Hesse and Loesch (1997:1) maintain that customers find some stores more attractive to shop in than others irrespective of the merchandise on offer. This attractiveness of stores have a direct correlation to the "feeling" experienced in the store – some stores impact consumers in a positive way while others provoke a feeling of irritation or discomfort. For this reason it is essential for retail stores to create a positive in-store environment, as a positive mood can easily increase the consumers' time and money spent (Spies *et al.*, 1997:1).

In order to create a positive and pleasurable in-store environment various elements such as music, scent, lighting, colours and flooring can be used by which shoppers are excited (Berman & Evans,

1998:552). According to ACP Connections ([n.d]:1), 83% of all in-store communications appeal only to one sense, namely the vision or the eyes, and only 17% are left to cater for the other four senses. The study further point out that 75% of consumers' day-to-day emotions are influenced by what they smell, and there is a 65% chance of a customer's mood being changed when exposed to positive sounds. It was found that most retailers focus primarily on sight as a sense to attract consumers into their stores, but enhances the consumers' shopping experience when sound, smell and touch are also added to the in-store shopping environment (ACP Connections, [n.d]:1).

This study aimed to obtain a holistic view of store atmospherics, with a specific focus on sound, which forms part of the total retail shopping experience. A consumer-centred response approach was followed in this study. The study could benefit apparel retailers as the influence and impact of sound on consumers' buying behaviour was uncovered. The same findings of the study can be extrapolated to apply to retailers worldwide with only minor adjustments and adaptations in order to meet local conditions and customs.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of sound on consumers' buying behaviour in apparel retail stores in Tshwane. This study aims to investigate, within the context of Tshwane:

- the influence of sound on consumers' buying behaviour.

The following section gives an overview of store atmospherics and what it is, the component sound, and consumers' buying behaviour. The empirical findings and the discussion of the findings appear in the latter part of the paper.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Store atmospherics

The aim and objective behind any retail store's design is to enhance consumer spending, to differentiate it from competitors and to enhance in-store traffic (Pradhan, 2007:347). A method to enhance this shopping experience and generating an increase in consumer traffic is through the use of store "atmospherics" – a term first introduced by Phillip Kotler (Pradhan, 2007:347). Store atmospherics is a word used by retailers to describe elements such as lighting, colour, music, aromas and so on and which is used to appeal the five human senses and in so doing contribute to the overall in-store environment or experience (Bell & Ternus, 2006:21). Bell and Ternus (2006:21) state that atmospheric elements have the ability to influence consumers' feelings about being in and staying in a retail store and that the longer consumers stay in a store, the more likely it is that they will buy.

The term "atmosphere" or "atmospherics" can be defined as the physical characteristics of a store that is used to develop an image in order to attract consumers (Berman & Evans, 2010:508). Liu and Jang (2009:495) defined atmospherics as "... the conscious designing of space to produce specific emotional effects in buyers that enhance their purchase probability". Levy, Weitz, and Beitelspacher (2012:490) describe atmospherics as the design of a store environment by making use of the five human senses. They indicate that more retail stores have come to realise that it is very beneficial to develop atmospheric elements that complement other aspects of the store, such as the store design and merchandise (Levy *et al.*, 2012:490). For the purpose of this study, the definition of store atmospherics proposed by Kotler is used as the basis for the discussion of this topic. Kotler (2001:50) defines atmospherics "...as the designing of a buying environment in which specific buying emotions are created through the use of the senses (sight, sound, scent and touch) in order to enhance the consumer's likelihood of purchasing."

A retailer's image in the market is greatly influenced by the atmosphere prevailing in the store – the psychological feeling evoked within consumers the moment they enter a store (Berman & Evans, 2010:508). Berman and Evans (2010:508) as well as Bell and Ternus (2006:36) maintain that a store's atmosphere has the ability to influence consumers' shopping experience and satisfaction, the physical

time spent browsing and evaluating the merchandise in the store, the eagerness of consumers to communicate with store personnel and to make use of store facilities such as dressing rooms, the willingness to spend more money than originally planned and the possibility of future patronage. These elements do not only contribute to the overall image of the store, but can also be used as an effective marketing tool to differentiate one store from other stores/competitors, to effectively communicate with their consumers and to attract consumers' attention (Kotler, 2001:50).

It can therefore be inferred that the atmosphere in a retail store is essential and will often determine whether or not consumers are prepared to spend more time browsing in a store. Different atmospheric elements can tactically be used to target specific consumers (Gupta & Randhawa, 2008:225). For the purpose of this study the store atmospheric element focused on and the importance thereof is sound.

### 2.2 Sound

Sound can be described as a specific feeling that is produced by the stimulation of the hearing organs through vibrations sent out through the air or any other medium, such as the sound of music (Dictionary.com, 2012). Kotler (2001:51) has classified sound in a retail sense as the volume or pitch of music that retailers use in order to create an appealing atmosphere. Hultén *et al.* (2009:67) state that "... sound affects our mood and psychological state, alerts us to danger, and promotes peace of mind for the soul". Sound has always been very important in society for both individuals as well as organisations. This is because people attach certain meanings to different types of sounds and music genres. This can be regarded as an important source of motivation and information in relation to making an association with specific organisations, stores, brands or products (Gobé, 2009:73).

Sound plays an important role in the retail environment not only in creating a pleasant in-store atmosphere, but also in communicating with consumers (Yalch & Spangenberg, 2000:140). Retailers can use sound in a number of ways:

- It can be implemented in mass marketing actions in order to communicate messages about an organisation, its products and brands, and it can also be used as an effective way of creating awareness (Hultén *et al.*, 2009:67; Krishna, 2010:137).

- It can be used to create or activate specific emotions or feelings within consumers (Hultén *et al.* 2009:74).

- It can be used to strengthen the identity and image of a specific retail store, brand or product (Ogden-Barnes & Barclay, [n.d.]:15).

- It can be used to create an effective and memorable sound experience through certain voices, jingles and music genres which can be regarded as a signature sound that characterises a particular retailer, brand or product (Daye & VanAuken, 2010:1).

It is important that retailers that are making use of sounds in advertisements or in their stores should realise that consumers react to these sounds with different feelings towards different types of sounds and specifically in the case of music genres and voices (Gobé, 2009:73). Retailers should therefore ensure that the type of music or voices used should match both the type of consumer as the style of merchandise offered (Morgan, 2008:170). Organisations should also be aware that sounds with high frequencies are normally the first sound that consumers notice. However, the type of sound can have a subconscious effect on the consumer. For instance, a continuous, low-frequency sound may have an irritating effect on the consumer and when it stops consumers may experience a huge relief (Hultén et al., 2009:68). It is also a fact that some sounds can be very disturbing to consumers resulting in them rather leaving a store than be exposed to it. From this it is clear that sound is an important element that retailers should carefully consider, as it may play a vital role in the consumers' shopping experience (Krishna, 2010:137).

Kotler (2001:51) is of the opinion that music is a very important element that retailers can use in order to contribute to the overall atmosphere generated in the store. Music as an element in the creation of store atmospherics is discussed next.

### **2.3 Music**

The role and importance of music in the establishing of store atmospherics cannot be negated. Much like colour and lighting, music can either add to or take away from a retailer's overall store atmosphere. However, unlike other atmospheric cues, music can easily be altered and changed to either create a different in-store atmosphere or to reach different consumers (Levy et al., 2012:491). This can be done in a number of ways:

- Music can be used to categorize areas in a store, for example music can be used to distinguish women's wear from children's wear (Levy et al., 2012:491).

- Using various music genres to affect the behaviour of consumers, to direct and control the pace of in-store traffic, to create a specific image and to attract consumers' attention (Levy et al., 2012:491). Classical music is for example played in many toy stores as the parents are the buyers of the products and not the children, even though the children are the ones using them. Music can be used to guide consumers in a store and to create a sense of belonging (Gobé, 2009:76).

From this brief discussion it is clear that music has the ability to help create an atmosphere that attracts different consumer groups, but then it must be ensured that the type of music is suitable for the consumer group. Playing music that does not appeal to or attract different consumer groups is as bad as using the wrong colours, lighting that is either too low or too

dark or temperature that is either too cold or too hot (Ogden-Barnes & Barclay, [n.d.]). Hultén et al. (2009:77) explain that if a retail store can manage to create the right in-store atmosphere through the use of music, the chance that consumers will be more stimulated and keen to purchase is much higher. Music can therefore positively affect their behaviour in terms of:

- time perception – music with a slow tempo in contrast with music with a fast tempo increases emotional responses and makes consumers perceive the waiting time to be shorter, thus resulting in staying longer in the store (Krishna, 2010:149)

- spending more money than originally planned (Ogden-Barnes & Barclay, [n.d.]:15); and

- positive word of mouth – recommending the store to others (Ogden-Barnes & Barclay, [n.d.]:15).

Music therefore has a direct effect on the speed of shopping, the amount of time spent in the store, the amount of time consumers are willing to spend waiting for things, as well as the amount of money they are prepared to spend (Krishna, 2010:77).

### **2.4 Consumer emotions and buying behaviour**

According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974), in-store environmental stimuli such as the human sense, sight, have a direct influence on consumers' emotions which further results in a behavioural response (Jang & Namkung, 2009:451; Kang et al., 2011:2). From the literature, it can be seen that the human senses do have an influence on consumers' emotions. The moment that consumers see a specific picture or object, past memories are immediately recalled and re-experienced and therefore specific emotions, such as happy or sad, is brought to the consumers' mind (Hultén et al., 2009:10, 57, 115).

Liao and Liaw ([n.d.]:2) define emotions as the "...oral expression of feelings and as a personal, subjective psychological state". A store's environment can elicit three types of emotions. The first emotion is pleasure, which can be described as an effectual reaction, which will indicate whether consumers find the environment enjoyable or not (Jang & Namkung, 2009:451). The second emotion is arousal, which indicates how much the environment stimulates the consumers. The third emotion is dominance which is concerned with whether consumers feel in control or not in the environment. Jang and Namkung (2009:451), however, indicate that dominance has a non-significant effect on behaviour.

It is likely that certain positive emotional reactions caused by the sense, sight, will result in increased consumer spending, but it will highly depend on the type of in-store atmosphere that is created (Kotler, 2001:54). Therefore, it can be inferred that emotional reactions (pleasure, arousal and dominance) will most likely have an influence on consumers' behavioural responses. Furthermore, Mehrabian and Russell (1974) defined the emotional state and behavioural responses

of consumers' to an environment as approach (positive) and avoidance (negative). Approach behaviours include all positive behavioural intentions that are influenced by an environment such as good lighting, pleasant music and attractive smells, whereas avoidance behaviours are the opposite which include all the negative behavioural intentions (Kang et al., 2011:3).

It can be deduced from the above literature outline that in-store atmospheric elements, and specifically sound, do have an influence on the emotions of consumers and will impact and influence their buying behaviour. The next section deals with the research methodology and the findings of the research.

### 3 Research Methodology

Qualitative research was used for this study, as a detailed explanation of *sound* and its influence on consumers' buying behaviour was needed, as well as the fact that qualitative research has the ability to discover true significance and new insights about the available data (Zikmund & Babin, 2010).

The extent to which *sound* influences consumers' buying behaviour was studied by means of exploratory research. Exploratory research is used to explore and to clarify ambiguous situations and ideas of a research problem (Zikmund and Babin, 2007:42).

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, non-probability, purposive sampling was used. Non-probability sampling is a sampling method where the samples are grouped in a process that does not give all the individuals in the population an equal chance of being selected (Tustin *et al*, 2005). Subjects in a non-probability sample are usually selected on the basis of convenience, as they are easy and/or inexpensive to reach or by the purposive personal judgment of the researcher (Hair, Bush & Ortinau, 2009:312). In purposive sampling, the researcher samples with a purpose in mind (Zikmund & Babin, 2010).

The inclusion criteria for the purposive sampling for this research study were as follows:

- Any male or female older than 18 years
- Any person who bought at apparel retail stores
- Any person who resided in the Tshwane region of Gauteng
- Any person that could understand, speak and write English

Data was collected by means of a communicative technique of interviews, and the selected methods were focus group interviews and naïve sketches. Focus group interviews which are an unstructured, free flowing interview with small groups of people, generally eight to twelve participants and naïve sketches which are an open-ended questionnaire that asks participants questions regarding the specific topic (Hair et al., 2009:161), was used to collect data from 16 participants (eight participants in each focus group and naïve sketch). Due to this, two forms of data was received and compared with one another in order to gain maximum data from each participant.

The focus groups were based on the use of visual material in order to create an atmosphere. The photographs were taken of the atmospheric themes implemented by two stores in the Tshwane region and they were included in both the naïve sketches and the focus groups. The participants were asked two questions (the same questions in both the naïve sketch and focus group interview) which were derived from the research objectives. The questions are as follow:

1. What do you understand about a clothing retail store's atmosphere?

2. When you walk into a clothing store, what is the influence of sound (what you can hear – music) used in-store on your buying behaviour?

Thematic analysis was used, since the required data for this research study was contextual in nature. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research process that involves intensive searching through data to identify any possible patterns, known as themes and categories that might occur more than once (Tesch, 1990:113). It is a process that organises and describes data in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### 4 Results

The outcomes of the questions asked in both the focus group interviews and the naïve sketches are examined in terms of three main themes and their underlying categories as outlined by Tesch's model (thematic analysis).

*Theme 1: Participants display a good understanding and awareness of store atmospherics, the "general ambience" it creates and the variety of "controllable elements" used to do so, as well as the potential it has to influence their moods and in turn their buying behaviour.*

Participants identified a store's atmosphere as consisting of a variety of controllable elements, such as lighting, music, layout, decor, temperature, smell and staff attitude, all of which create the general ambience. It was highlighted that the general ambience of a store is important, as it creates a general feeling of either being welcome or not the moment a person enters a store.

The participants also indicated that store atmospherics potentially influenced their mood, and in turn their buying behaviour. In the focus group discussion, it was found that if a store managed to use the controllable elements of lighting and colours correctly, the likelihood of the participants buying increased. However, if these controllable characteristics were used incorrectly, the likelihood that participants would rather leave a store was enhanced.

Two categories emerged from the first theme and are explained below.

*Category 1: A store's atmosphere consists of a variety of controllable elements, such as lighting, music, layout, decor, temperature, smell and staff attitude, all of which create the general ambience*

From both the focus group interviews and naïve sketches it was clear that the participants understood the term “store atmospherics” (as defined in the literature) as the controllable elements that a store can use to create a general ambience or feeling. General ambience is defined by Dunne and Lusch (2008:457) as the “overall feeling or mood projected by a store through its aesthetic appeal to human senses”. The participants indicated that a pleasant in-store environment was created through attention to detail. They further indicated that store atmospherics could be anything that affected the senses of consumers, such as sight, sound, smell and touch, and that it was important for the temperature in-store to be comfortable. They felt that it should rather be too cold than too hot.

The following quotes of the participants were taken from both the focus group interviews and naïve sketches to confirm the findings regarding the first category of controllable elements:

- “... it’s mostly all controllable elements that lead to our likes, it’s like the type of music that is playing in the background, the colours, the lighting, the scent that you get when you walk into the store, is something that retail can control ...”
- “The ‘general ambience’ of the store created by lighting, music, layout, availability of personnel and paypoints”
- “... includes mostly all the controllable characteristics that a store utilizes in order to entice the customer and influence their moods”

*Category 2: Store atmospherics potentially influenced their mood, and in turn their buying behaviour*

The participants from both the focus group interviews and naïve sketches indicated that they were far less likely to stay in a store if the music was too loud, as this had a negative influence on their mood and in turn on their buying behaviour. Three quotes were taken from the focus group interviews to substantiate the above findings.

- “... far less likely to stay in a store if it is playing loud music”
- “... if the music is too loud, it will reduce my buying behaviour, if the music is pleasant and not in your face, it will probably enhance or add to me wanting to stay longer and linger longer in the store ...”
- “... if the music is too loud or not nice then I rather just leaves ...”

*Theme 2: Store atmospherics speaks a “silent language” to participants, reinforcing niche/target market appeal and/or merchandise integrity/quality or lack thereof, either enticing them into or repelling them from a store.*

Participants from both the focus group interviews and naïve sketches were of the opinion that store atmospherics spoke a silent language, meaning that the participants did not always recognise the atmospheric elements used in-store, but if they were

unpleasant (lighting too dark) they immediately became aware of it or noticed it. It can therefore be implied that store atmospherics has a subliminal (subconscious) influence on consumers.

The participants further pointed out in both the focus group interviews and naïve sketches that store atmospherics could be context driven and therefore appeal to a specific target market or consumer group. The participants said that they would not enter some stores, because they did not feel comfortable in there and these stores did not fit in with their style and personality.

The participants also indicated that store atmospherics formed part of a store’s total product and could therefore reveal something about the quality or integrity of the product and/or service offered. It is clear that the participants felt that a store that was too dark could portray an image of dirtiness and that the store was hiding something. They further emphasised the importance of the types of atmospheric elements used fitting in with the type of merchandise that the store offered. Three quotes were taken from the focus groups to illustrate the participants’ views on all three categories.

Three categories emerged from the second theme and are explained below.

*Category 1: Store atmospherics spoke a silent language*

The participants did not always notice a specific sound or music playing in-store, but when they recognised that the type of sound or music was “out of place”, they became annoyed and left the store immediately, thus affecting their buying behaviour negatively. Two quotes were taken from the focus group interviews which justify the above findings.

- “... I tend to not notice music, if it does not irritate me, or sounds, I notice it if it irritates me but if it doesn’t irritate me, then no ...”
- “I think a lot of the music has got a lot to do with the subconscious because you are not walking into the store to go and listen to music and if it hits you and now the thing is, all twelve of us can walk into the same store, six will be irritated, two wouldn’t even notice it and the other two that likes it, yes”

*Category 2: store atmospherics could be context driven and therefore appeal to a specific target market or consumer group*

Both the focus group interviews and naïve sketches revealed that the participants felt that the atmosphere of some stores was context driven and that it appealed to a specific niche or target market. When a participant did not feel comfortable in a store, sometimes due to bad lighting, they either did not enter the store or they left shortly after entering, as they did not feel welcome there.

The following two quotes of the participants were taken from both the focus group interviews and naïve sketches to validate the findings regarding the second category of context driven:

- “I mean you walk into the Disney Store, there

is a sound of sleigh bells, there is sounds of you know, Chipmunk songs and there is Disney tunes and these kinds of things and they influence how happy the kids are because that is their target audience ...”

- “When I go into a Zoot or one of these, I don’t feel welcome anymore, the atmospherics is not right, I get the feeling it’s the young people, the young people buy there and I feel that I am not welcome, but that is obviously not true, I just don’t feel like the atmosphere is right, the music is too loud, lighting is not what I like, clothes are too cluttered, so I just, you know, me, I personally like the ambience of the stores that I frequent.”

*Category 3: Store atmospherics formed part of a store’s total product*

It was evident from both the focus group interviews and naïve sketches that the participants felt that the types of atmospheric elements used formed part of the product and/or service offered by the store. In other words, the participants felt that the type of atmospherics used in a store should fit the type of merchandise offered. The participants further indicated that a dark store projected an image of poor quality and filthiness, whereas a store with proper lighting projected a feeling of cleanliness and good quality. It can therefore be inferred from the focus group interviews and naïve sketches that a more “elegant” store should make use of good lighting in order to emphasise the quality of the merchandise. The participants furthermore pointed out that it was important for the type of music played in a store to fit in with the merchandise and services offered, in order to contribute to the overall atmosphere of the store.

The following quotes of the participants were taken from both the focus group interviews and naïve sketches to confirm the above findings regarding the third category of store’s total product:

- “too much darkness that says, okay why? ... it’s dirty, you know, they are hiding their quality they are not proud to stand up and say something, I am just saying from a psychological perspective that is what darkness would imply”

- “Whereas you know, go to Queenspark and there is some rap or something, it’s definitely not going to make you want to buy, so it’s definitely, you have to relate it to what you are selling”

- “I think the music that stores have also have to relate to the merchandise they sell”

*Theme 3: Elements of store atmospherics that move towards either extreme (for example, too hot or too cold) become salient or obtrusive to consumers, leading to discomfort and limiting or disrupting browsing time and thus lessening the chance that the product will be discovered and bought.*

The participants stated that certain atmospheric elements that moved towards the extremes, for instance too loud, too dark or too hot, led to discomfort and/or irritation, which affected their spending. It was clear from both the focus group interviews and naïve sketches that the participants did

not enter a store if they could see from a distance that the store was too dark. If the participants had, however, entered such a store, they would leave immediately if they recognised any unpleasant atmospheric elements.

The participants further indicated that unpleasant atmospheric elements decreased the likelihood that they would find something to buy, as the time spent on browsing was then immediately shortened. The participants stated that a store where the lighting was too dark would directly influence the amount of time spent in-store, which in turn affected their buying ability.

Two categories emerged from the second theme and are explained below.

*Category 1: Atmospheric elements that moved towards the extremes, led to discomfort or irritation*

The participants of both the focus group interviews and naïve sketches indicated that atmospheric elements that move towards an extreme in either direction led to irritation or discomfort and made them leave the store immediately. The participants would not enter a store if they observed from a distance that the music was too loud. Therefore, unpleasant atmospheric elements will most likely have a negative influence on the buying behaviour of consumers.

The following quotes of the participants were taken from both the focus group interviews and naïve sketches to confirm the above findings regarding the first category of elements that move to extremes:

- “... and I just couldn’t take it, he was, you know, it was too loud”

- “I don’t like loud music so I won’t go there, I would rather look for a better store”

- “... if the music is too loud, it will reduce my buying behaviour, if the music is pleasant and not in your face, it will probably enhance or add to me wanting to stay longer and linger longer in the store but it’s not a definitive, you know I will buy because of the music”

- “I don’t think that music will entice me to buy more, it will definitely, if it is not to my liking, it will rush me to get out of there and to limit the time in the shop”

- “[lighting] influences whether you go into a shop or not, I mean a dark sort of dingy looking shop, you are not going to want to enter into so it starts right at the outside of an appeal”

*Category 2: Unpleasant atmospheric elements decreased the likelihood that they would find something to buy*

The participants in both the focus group interviews and naïve sketches explained that any unpleasant atmospheric element detected in the store, whether it was too loud or too dark, had a direct influence on the amount of time that they spent browsing in the store, which ultimately influenced the likelihood of purchasing something, most probably in a negative way. The participants made it clear that

they would not tolerate any unpleasant atmospheric elements in-store and would therefore leave the store immediately. This would decrease the likelihood of buying something.

The following quotes of the participants were taken from both the focus group interviews and naïve sketches to validate the above findings regarding the second category of unpleasant atmospherics:

- "... will influence the time spent browsing and will influence whether I will try stuff on or not"
- "... but if the lighting is not, you know, to my appeal, then I am just going to spend less time there"
- "... I think it greatly has an impact on how long you spend in a store"
- "... I am not going to stay there and spend time there"

## 5 Conclusion

Sound (music or noise) was found to have a profound effect on the amount of time that the participants spent in-store. They were far less likely to stay in a store if the music was too loud, and this directly influenced their buying behaviour. Furthermore, participants indicated that they would not enter a store if they could observe (hear) from a distance that the music was too loud, as it made them feel unwelcome and would rather leave. Feeling comfortable at all times while shopping in a specific store was critical to the participants and as soon as they noticed that the music was too loud according to their preference, they were inclined to leave the store immediately, or as soon as possible.

The participants also indicated that they did not always notice sounds (music, noise) in-store. This therefore implies that sound (music) can have a subtle influence on consumers, as they do not always notice it. However, the moment that consumers do recognise any form of sound (music, noise or radio) in-store that they do not like, they will become uneasy (irritated) and possibly leave the store. This has a negative influence on their buying behaviour. Additionally, if the in-store music is pleasant and "not in your face", it will most probably enhance or add to the total time spent in-store, which might have a positive influence on the buying behaviour of consumers (making them inclined to stay longer, thus increasing the likelihood of purchasing).

In summary, it was established that sound can influence consumers' buying behaviour (in Tshwane) in a positive or a negative way. A positive influence means that the time that consumers spend in-store is increased, which can also increase the likelihood of buying more. A negative influence means that consumers will either not enter a store or will reduce the time spent in-store, thus lessening the possibility of buying. The reasons for the positive and negative influences that sound have on consumers' buying behaviour are as follows:

- Consumers will not enter a store if they can

hear from a distance that the music is too loud. This has a negative influence on their buying behaviour.

- Consumers will leave the store immediately if they notice or recognise an annoying sound or music that is too loud, as they easily become irritated. This has a negative influence on their buying behaviour.

- Consumers will leave the store immediately if a radio station is playing in the background, as they perceive a radio station as being highly annoying. This has a negative influence on their buying behaviour.

- Consumers might stay longer in-store if pleasant music is playing, thus having a positive influence on their buying behaviour.

From this, it is clear that the amount of time spent in-store is directly influenced by the sound (music or noise) in-store, which can have a direct influence on consumers' buying behaviour. Therefore it is critical that apparel retailers should give attention to the use of proper sounds in-store in order to ensure that the browsing time of consumers is increased.

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