# UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
School of Business and Economics

# THE IMPACTS OF STORE ATMOSPHERICS AND STORE LAYOUT ON CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR IN A HARDWARE STORE RETAIL SETTING
## Case: Do-it-yourself store

Master's Thesis, Marketing

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# ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Comprehensive apprehension of retail establishment's atmosphere's effects on its customers' overall perceptions of the store and thus purchasing behavior is an essential goal for any retailer, yet the previous marketing literature has converged on understanding the shopping environments of mostly malls, grocery stores, furniture stores and clothing stores. A window was left open for construing a wholly different shopping environment; DIY (do-it-yourself)/ hardware/ home improvement store.

Shopping environment studies rely largely on environmental psychology theories in their attempts of deciphering the effects of environment on individuals. This study is fundamentally similar in nature, by exploiting an application of stimulus-organism-response paradigm to retail context. Understanding how the stimuli (components of surrounding environment) affect the organisms (customers) and ultimately their responses (customers' purchase behavior) are at the core of this study. This study attempts to identify the current stimuli's effects and to find possible nodes for development. Moreover, this study sheds light upon typical DIY-store customers'; shopping motives and goals, store atmospherics' (i.e. layout design, human variables, general interior) effects on customers' shopping paths, impulse buying, satisfaction and general perceptions of the store. To compile the vast stream of studies around the topic, a framework of re-applied S-O-R model is presented and thus tested in a Kodin Terra DIY store. Semi-structured customer interviews and direct observation of shopper movement were applied to explicate these phenomena.

The results reveal the similarities and contrasts with the existing literature, yet encountering the same problems as many of the previous studies do, i.e. the issue of generalizability of the results. However, the results bring about practical solutions for enhancing the shopping experience in Finnish hardware retailing sector, and in the selected case company especially.

Keywords

Store atmospherics, in-store marketing, store layout, path data, customer movement, customer behavior, impulse buying, hardware store, retail

Storage

Jyväskylä School of Business and Economics

# FIGURES

# TABLES

# APPENDICES

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT
FIGURES AND TABLES
TABLE OF CONTENTS

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research background

In-store marketing is a relatively largely studied subject within the marketing literature and it is widely accepted that the correct combination of store layout and store environment factors performs as a critical determinant in the consumer's mind-set in choosing a store, and also posits a strong influence on shopping behavior inside the store and is an active thrust for impulse purchases (Zentes, Morschett & Schramm-Klein 2011). In-store marketing as a concept denotes the information and communication-related retail marketing instruments within the retailer's establishment, i.e. the basic structure and layout of the store, allocation of space to the merchandise, presentation of the merchandise and the factors influencing the store atmosphere (Gröppel-Klein 2006). And what comes to the actual planning of the store, it should be designed to (consciously or unconsciously) usher the customer flow in a manner ensuring that the customers visit the crucial areas of merchandise displays in the store (not only from the retailer's point of view, but the customers' also). By designing the stores this way, the sales to space productivity ratios should reach their optimum, by e.g. stimulating impulse purchases. Accordingly, it is essential that the layout will be constructed sensibly so that the customers can easily comprehend and adapt the route among the aisles and store merchandise (Gilbert 2003). Accordingly, not only the layout, but the more comprehensive overview of the store's complete atmosphere with its various sub-components needs to be assessed, as the surroundings have an impact on the purchasing behavior of the store's customers. According to Turley & Milliman (2000, p.193) "marketing researchers have come to the realization that if consumers are influenced by physical stimuli experienced at the point of purchase, then, the practice of creating influential atmospheres should be an important marketing strategy for most exchange environments". Bitner (1990) phrased it even more radically, stating that atmospheric planning can be the cause or divider between a business' success and failure. Having said the previous, and assuming that the company's management's de-

sire is to enhance the functionality of the store premises and thereby better the company's lucrativeness, it is inevitable not to emphasize the importance of understanding the customers within any individual retail store context.

The object of this study is to explore Finnish hardware retailer Kodin Terra Jyväskylä's customers' in-store behavior. The commencement to conduct this study arose from Kodin Terra Jyväskylä's management's incentive, and hence it partially serves a commercial purpose, yet it comes with an academic offset. The company was interested in finding out how its customers perceive the current layout of the store, which factors entice the customers to buy different items, and perhaps more importantly; how could the management benefit from this knowledge in pursuit of serving its customers more effectively than before, to gain better customer satisfaction, contribute more centralized shopping behavior, and to ultimately increase sales. This study is also important from an academic point of view, because attempts to shed light upon in-store customer behavior in regards to store layout, shopping paths, attention capturing and store atmospherics have mainly taken place in grocery store, clothing store and mall settings. That is to say, studies in hardware/home improvement store milieus, which obviously represent utterly different kinds of purposes for shopping initiatives, have been left uncovered.

This study takes a tripartite course on examining in-store marketing, with three main avenues under contemplation; store atmospherics, path data in regards to store layout and impulse purchases. The methodological drivers and earlier research data to execute the study draw heavily from the research of Turley and Milliman (2000), as in with their comprehensive framework on the influence of retail atmospherics. Hui, Bradlow & Fader (2009) studied grocery store shopping path and purchase behavior by testing behavioral hypotheses, and left a window open for further study; to combine shopping path data with surveys collected before or after shopping trip. In addition to path data tracking, by stating shopping goals (Lee and Ariely 2006) before entering the store and comparing actualized behavior should result in unraveling how the propensity of unplanned purchase (Inman, Winer & Ferraro 2009) is related to their path behavior.

## 1.2  Research problems and questions

The driving factors of this study deal with DIY store's atmospheric stimuli, the layout especially and finding out the components that entice the customers to proceed along the store premises. Furthermore, the ultimate goal is to discover the most effective points of sale, which areas of the store get the most trafficked and what other factors might possibly come about, that effect the completion and the course of the shopping trip.

Therefore, the main research problem is:

-How do the store environment factors affect customers' shopping behavior in DIY retail context?

The assisting research problems are:
-What are the typical shopping goals and motives on an average shopping trip to a DIY store?
-How do the customers of home improvement store proceed along the store premises?
-Which are the hot spots, i.e. the most heavily trafficked aisles of the store?
-What is the most potential way to inspire impulse buying?

The method of this study is qualitative, which is suitable in an attempt to profoundly comprehend the occurring phenomena in real-life context. The empirical findings were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews at the ends of actual customers' shopping trips and by observing the customers' shopping paths inside the store.


## 1.3   Target organization in concise


Kodin Terra hardware stores are a part of a nationwide co-operative retail chain S-Group, yet this particular study takes place in a singular location and a store, Kodin Terra Jyväskylä, Finland. Under the contemplation of this study are Kodin Terra Jyväskylä's in-store premises and the company's actual customers, who were reached within the store premises at the times of their self-engaged shopping trips. Kodin Terra Jyväskylä is a relatively large hardware and home improvement store with $14\,000\text{m}^2$ floor space and about 35 000 different product items in its assortment.  It provides employment for roughly 50 staff members, the number extending up to 60 during summer season peaks. Annual turnover sets at around 15 000 000 euros, and a vague distribution of sales derived from different product categories goes as follows; constructing and renovating (surface materials, tools, everything "light construction" related) 40%, home furnishing and housekeeping (light fittings, garden machinery, grills, garden furniture, pet supplies, bathroom furniture, household appliances, etc.) 30%, "heavy" construction 20%, garden supplies (plants, soil, fertilizers) 10% (Company CEO). The store is located in the outskirts of Jyväskylä, Palokka, to be more precise (Keskimaa 2012, S-Group). The core function of the company is to provide solutions to its customers for constructing, renovating, interior decoration, gardening, and as the latest addition, pet-keeping.  Kodin Terra Jyväskylä is a part of the retail co-operative Osuuskauppa Keskimaa, which, for one, is a part of a chain of co-operatives that together form the nationwide parent company S-Group (Company Structure, S-Group). Under the same Kodin Terra brand operate 10 stores within Finland. Hereafter, Kodin Terra Jyväskylä will be referred to as Kodin Terra.

## 1.4 Research structure

This study comprises five main chapters, as indicated in Figure 1. Chapter two sheds light upon the previous literature on the topic, providing a theoretical framework of in-store marketing as a superscript and store atmospherics, store layout and impulse buying as subscripts. Chapter three submits the academic approach used to contemplate the study, i.e. the research method and the implementation of acquiring customer data. Chapter four presents the gathered results and finally the fifth chapter comes to practical as well as theoretical contributions and implications. Additionally, limitations and assessments of the study and possible avenues for further research will be discussed in chapter five.
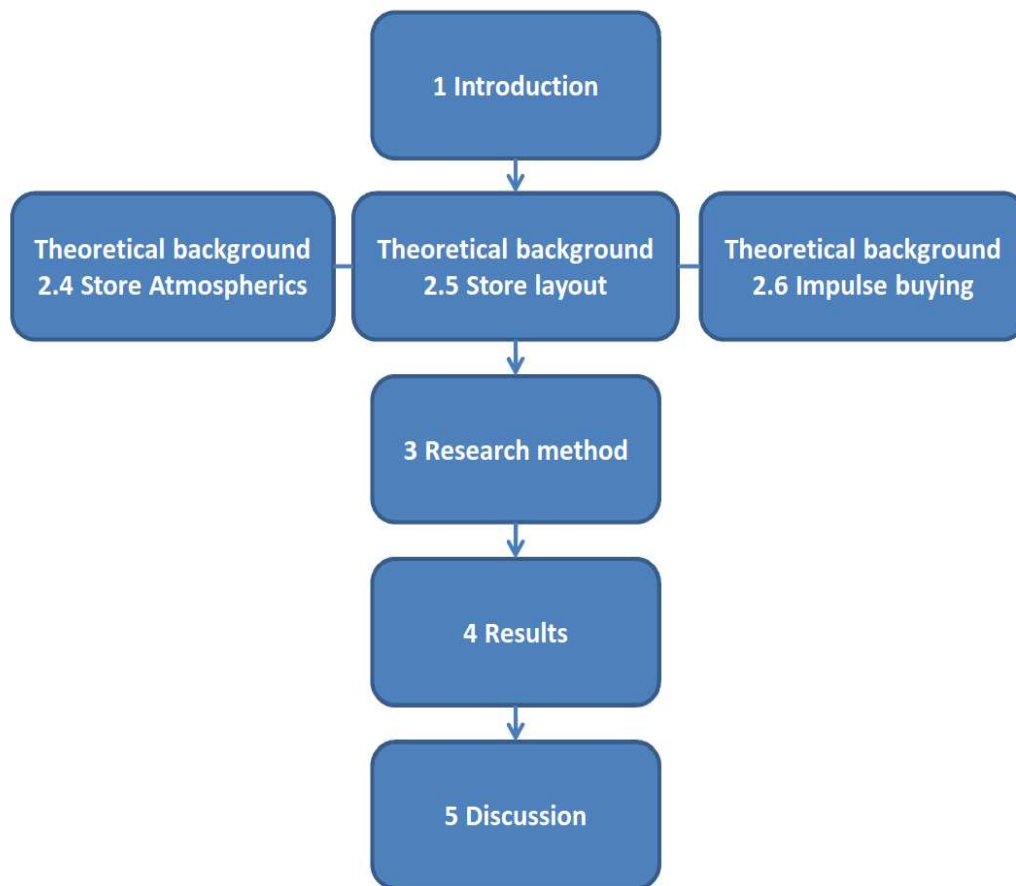
FIGURE 1 The structure of this study

# 2   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

## 2.1   The role of in-store marketing

There are two basic objectives of in-store marketing; to design the store for easy internal orientation in order to alleviate the search process for the customers, and to induce positive emotions in the customer's mind-set when visiting the store by creating a positive store atmosphere (Zentes et al 2011). Either facets serve different purposes for different kinds of task completion, different store formats, different consumer segments and different kinds of shopping motives. Kaltcheva and Weitz (2006) and Babin, Darden & Griffin (1994) differentiate two types of separate shopping processes and motives, utilitarian motives and hedonic motives. Utilitarian motives refer to pre-defined grounds to obtain products that are recognized as needed, i.e. task completion. In practice, this often denotes that the customer is task-related, rational and his/her product purchase takes place deliberately and efficiently (Babin et al 1994). Hedonic motives indicate finding recreational pleasure in the shopping process per se, i.e. by spending leisure time shopping and browsing through stores. Hedonic shopping or hedonic value that derives from shopping can be described as an activity with festive, ludic, or epicurean aspects (Sherry 1990). Hedonic shopping plays a more subjective and personal role than utilitarian shopping and derives its value more from fun and playfulness than from task completion (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982).

Zentes et al (2011) highlight the importance of store atmosphere, because even in everyday routine shopping considering task completion, the store atmosphere can indeed have an influence on the customer's mood. Conversely, sensations of security and self-confidence are focal in shopping situations, and thus easy orientation plays a critical role in recreational shopping too (Zentes et al 2011). Therefore designing a rational, impulse purchase incentive, yet at the same time an inspiring and a lucrative in-store experience and store layout is a two-edged sword. Whereas the customers executing task completion inquire easy orientation and support for their search processes, the customers with hedonic motives seek positive store atmosphere. It is for the marketer to decide

upon an apposite compound of marketing efforts to serve both aspects efficiently. All things considered, the ultimate goal of in-store marketing is to provide value for customers. Babin et al (1994) conclude that fundamental aspects of hedonic shopping value are manifested in representations of pure enjoyment, excitement, captivation, escapism and spontaneity, whereas utilitarian shopping value embody expressions of accomplishment and/ or disappointment over fulfillment or failure of completing the shopping effort. In sum, shopping value springs from to the complete shopping experience, not alone by the purchased products. Yet it is to be considered, that shopping value is always subjective in nature, and is defined by interactions between the consumer and the environment, and is "characterized by consumers' interactions with an environment, and indicated by both the event's usefulness and an appreciation of its activities." (Babin et al 1994, p.654)

The Mehrabian-Russell Model (the M-R model) has served as a baseline for multiple in-store marketing studies (e.g., Anderson 1986; Golden & Zimmer 1986; Buckley 1987; Sherman & Smith 1987; Dawson, Bloch & Ridgway 1990), and serves as a starting point for this study as well. The M-R model draws from environmental psychology paradigm, presenting a Stimulus-Organism Response model (S-O-R model) (Mehrabian & Russell 1974), which in retail context denotes that the surrounding atmosphere is the stimulus (S) that causes an evaluation process (O) in consumer's mind , and thereby causes some behavioral response (R) (Turley & Milliman 2000). Figure 2 presents an M-R model by Donovan, Rossiter, Marcoolyn and Nesdale (1994), which is an environmental psychology model drawing from the original model of Russell and Mehrabian (1974), and is to be applied to the study of store atmosphere. It describes the rationale behind the customer decision making process in relation to the effects of environmental or external influencers, which in this case represent store atmospherics. That is to say, environmental stimuli alter emotional states (e.g. pleasure, arousal, etc.), which again mediate the ultimate responses or action; to approach or to avoid (a store, or a product). Approach action refers to positive responses, e.g. to stay in a certain facility and to explore it. Avoidance responses refer to not being willing to stay in the store and to continue exploring it (Turley & Milliman 2000). Therefore, it is a truism for the marketer to understand his servicespace and the environmental stimuli it produces and to learn how to best exploit it.
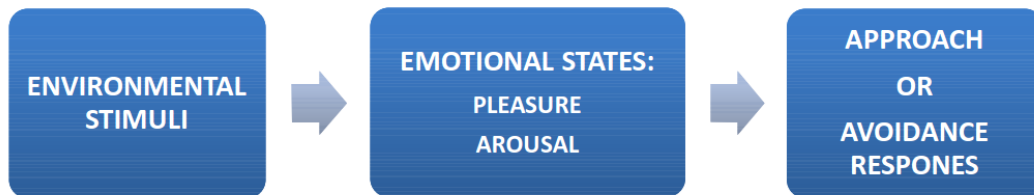


FIGURE 2 The modified Mehrabian-Russell Model (Donovan et al 1994)

Babin and Attaway (2000) extend this field of research in their study on how store's physical appearance has an impact on creating consistent purchase behavior. It is noted that ambient conditions, such as store layout, desing and signage, and employee and customer appearance, elicit varying levels of emotions among customers (Baker, Grewal & Levy 1992; Darden & Babin 1994). These emotions impact shoppers' approach/ avoidance behaviors (Donovan et al 1994), willingness to buy (Baker et al 1992), price perceptions (Grewal & Baker 1994), perceived value (Babin et al 1994), and current period purchase behavior and customer satisfaction (Babin & Darden 1996). (Babin & Attaway 2000)

Figure 3 is a framework by Babin and Attaway (2000) which illustrates how positive and negative affects influence hedonic and utilitarian shopping value and ultimately have an impact on customer share (i.e. the proportion of business a consumer gives to a specific marketer).
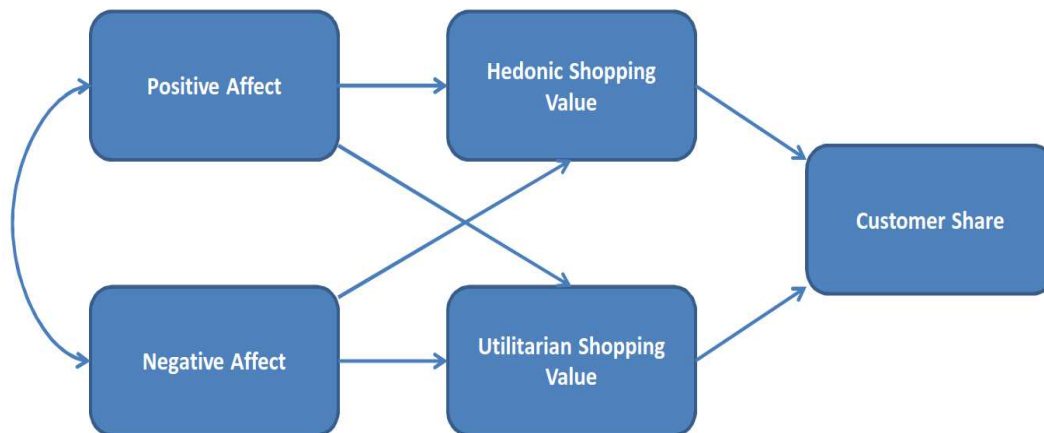


FIGURE 3 Structural model of atmospheric affect, shopping value, and customer share (Babin & Attaway 2000)

The positive and negative affects in Figure 3 refer to shopping environment's aptitude to alter consumers' emotions and thereby affect behaviors, thus driving retail and service provider performance. It has been noted that positive affects encourage shoppers to e.g.; stay longer and interact more with employees, simplify decision-making style, build positive store image and improve merchandise and service quality perceptions and it is more likely that a product purchase takes place. Negative affects, at the same time, have often been associated with e.g. crowding, which shows an increase in consumers' desire to leave, or consumers may be less patient wating for service, or the customer's involvement can lower; all ultimately leading to a decrease in likelihood of customer's desire to fullfill his/her intended purpose of the shopping trip. (Babin & Attaway 2000)

The academic contribution originated from Babin's & Attaway's (2000) research lies behind the interconnections between ambient atmospheric conditions, positive/ negative affects and customer share, i.e. ambient

atmospheric conditions building positive affect increase customer share and vis-à-vis ambient atmospheric conditions conducing to negative affect reduce customer share. Their findings on the impact of both hedonic and utilitarian value are in accordance with Berry's (1996) notion of consumers demanding more than just goods acquisition, which thereby denotes the retailer's success depends on various types of value including that received from entertainment.

## 2.2   Shopping goals

As described in chapter 2.1, customers tend to have differentiated shopping motives, and the layout must take account for these differences strategically. Taking the differentiated motives thinking further, these motives and goals need to be considered more closely in assessing the design for an optimal store layout.

In their article on shopping goals, Lee and Ariely (2006) introduce a *shopping goals theory*, which embarks upon an axiom stating how consumers' preferences are by large ill-defined and incomplete. Thus, upon the time of purchase decisions, consumers compose their preferences partially founded on their internal likes and dislikes, and partially on the current available environmental cues. This proposition stems from Gollwitzer´s (1999) mind-set theory, in which the execution of voluntary control consists of two stages. In the first stage, an individual is in an intentional mind-set and seeks to define desired performances or outcomes. In the second stage as the mind-set has shifted from intentional to implemental, the goals have already been defined and the individual strives for implementation intentions and definite responses of when, where and how, leading to goal attainment (Gollwitzer 1999). Lee and Ariely (2006) contemplate the theory in a shopping context (*two-stage shopping goals theory*), in which the initial stage of a shopping process is a stage where consumers are generally uncertain about their purchase selections and the amount of money they are willing to spend. At this stage they are thus receptive to contextual and external influences while considering different factors in the process of defining their shopping goals. Forthwith as concrete shopping goals have been composed, the customers move to a second stage characterized by goal determinism and action tenacity. In this second stage, consumers largely attach to the already set goals. Goal-attainment is the primal focus in this stage, as the customers become less susceptible to contextual and external influences such as promotions.

The findings bring about an interesting factor; the company's need to recognize, or more likely, to predict the most probable shopping path in order to best exploit the consumers' sensibility to external cues in the earlier stage of their shopping trip as the goals are more malleable and labile than in the later stage as the customer becomes more resistant to change and influences once the course of action has been selected. These cues and influences refer to attractive promotions, marketing messages and context effects within the store premises. (Lee & Ariely 2006)

## 2.3 Segmentation of shoppers

Sinha and Uniyal (2005) take the disposition of dividing customer segments solely into utilitarian or hedonic motives or ill-defined versus predefined goals a step further. In their article on observational research for behavioral segmentation of shoppers, Sinha and Uniyal (2005) review previous attempts to develop a typology of shoppers. Based on the previous categorizations of shopper typologies and on the observed customer behavior in their own empirical research of selected 828 cues (various of different kinds of customer transactions in different store types, in old and new store formats, female and male customers separately reviewed, and whether the customer was alone or accompanied), a sexpartite grouping of shopper segments was identified. At the utmost interest with an eye on the study at hand, was the distribution of shopper types in the new format type store, since Kodin Terra represents a store type of this kind. The old format store (where the layout did not facilitate customer movement), the sex or should the customer be alone or accompanied were not questions of interest in regards to this research, and are therefore overleaped.

TABLE 1 Shopper segments and their profiles (%) (Sinha & Uniyal 2005)

| Shopper type | Total share | Female | Male | Accompa-nied | Alone | New format | Old format |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Choice optimizer | 28.74 | 31.40 | 26.67 | 28.15 | 29.41 | **30.61** | 23.04 |
| Pre-meditated | 22.71 | 21.21 | 23.87 | 20.37 | 25.32 | **19.87** | 31.37 |
| Economizing | 15.22 | 14.33 | 15.91 | 16.93 | 13.30 | **17.15** | 9.31 |
| Seeking support | 13.16 | 14.60 | 12.04 | 18.76 | 6.91 | **13.94** | 10.78 |
| Low information seekers | 13.04 | 12.40 | 13.55 | 9.84 | 16.62 | **10.58** | 20.59 |
| Recreational | 7.13 | 6.06 | 7.96 | 5.95 | 8.44 | **7.85** | 4.90 |

Although Table 1 presents exact numeral data of shopper types in a study by Sinha and Uniyal (2005), it is utilized within this study to provide solely a general overview of shopper types, sex ratios among the types and whether these types are normally shopping alone or accompanied. As shown in Table 1, six main categories of shopper types were recognized. Choice optimizers represented by far the largest share of shoppers (30.61% within new format shop type shoppers). This group was found to be authoritative, brand conscious, individualistic, they also made a lot of inquiries, were involved in the shopping process, were quality conscious and sought variety. It was typical for choice optimizers to look out for information and to observe all the racks within the store. The second largest group was the pre-meditated shoppers (19.87%). They

were often family buyers, hurried, list driven and pre-decided. Maneuvering the store happened straightforwardly with specific racks and product areas targeted. Leaving the store as soon as possible was also found to be a common nominator within the group. The third largest shopper group was the economizing shoppers (17.15%). Themes such as bargain seeking, budget consciousness, and discount seeking and price consciousness were brought about when observing the group. The economizers observed merchandise which offered discount, went straight to discount section and even asked personnel for discounts. The fourth main category was the support seekers (13.94%), who were affected by the store ambience, consultative on personnel and indecisive with purchases. In regards to orientation in the store, the support seekers sought personnel immediately after entering the store, without independently strolling around. The second smallest group was the low information seekers (10.58%), which showed two types of shoppers within the category, who were either customers who were familiar with the store and moved around comfortably and freely, with clear purposes and heading to a certain rack or a part of the store, or infrequent visitors who looked around for or asked the personnel for directions and then rushed towards the shopping area or section. The smallest identified shopper type was the recreational shoppers (7.85%), seeking ambience, browsing, being expressive in their behavior and impulsive in their purchases. It was typical for the shoppers of this group; to derive recreational value out of the shopping process, to derive enjoyment of the shop atmosphere, to spend time looking at various displays and windows, to read and listen and look at almost everything on display, to make longer visits, to browse with a very relaxed approach, to not be in a buying mode and finally to be impulsive with their purchases (Sinha & Uniyal 2005).

It is safe to say the presented behavioral segmentation does not apply thoroughly in all product and shop categories and some product categories attract certain behavioral segments more than others, yet it gives a good overall level segmentation which can be rationalized to be applied in hardware/ home improvement store setting as well, since the sample in Sinha's and Uniyal's (2005) study was compiled from vastly differentiated product categories (household appliances, apparel, grocery, medicine, shoes, cards, gifts and cosmetics and books & music) into one generalized study.

The practical knowledge provided by the study clarifies the fact that a great majority of the customers rely heavily on proper signage and easy orientation within the store, and puts in perspective of how much importance should be put in creating a store atmosphere for recreational shoppers and low information seekers as they represent solely a minority of shoppers with less significant buying power. This holds true because the study highlighted that the retailers have little or no methods to alter the behavior of customers, especially with the large Pre-Meditated segment. For this segment, the derived value is often more related to specific brands than the retailer per se, i.e. bestowing more power to brand owners than the retailers. (Sinha & Uniyal 2005)

## 2.4  Store atmospherics

Differentiation is increasingly important in today's competitive retail markets to meet customers' fluctuating wants and needs, not only by merchandising factors but by convenience, pricing and also by creating pleasant and possibly exciting shopping atmospheres (Morrison, Gan, Dubelaar & Oppewal 2011). Store atmosphere refers to the visual display of merchandise, the ease of mobility within the store (Bearden, 1977; Ghosh, 1994), piped-in music, color, decorative features and lighting all bundled together in one environment (Thang & Tan 2003). In correspondence with the earlier studies (Donovan & Rossiter 1982; Westbrook & Black 1985; Sherman, Mathur & Smith 1997), Thang and Tan (2003) verified in their study on customers' store preferences that the linkage between the emotive response of consumers and the physical aspects of the store(s) exists. Subsequently, they suggested that pleasant store atmospheres providing comfort and gratifications that advance consumers' sense of wellbeing within the environment ultimately augment the quality of their visits and hence increase consumers' preferences for the stores.

There are multiple viewpoints to review store atmosphere, its components and even customer responses, but much of the conducted field studies rely on the S-O-R framework in its various, yet often modified forms. Thang and Tan (2003) exploited Donovan's & Rossiter's (1982) S-O-R framework (presented in chapter 2.1) by examining the store images on merchandizing, store atmosphere, in-store service, accessibility, reputation, promotion, facilities and post-transaction as the stimulus, influencing consumer perception (organism), which again led to preference for a store (response). Their model is presented in Figure 4.

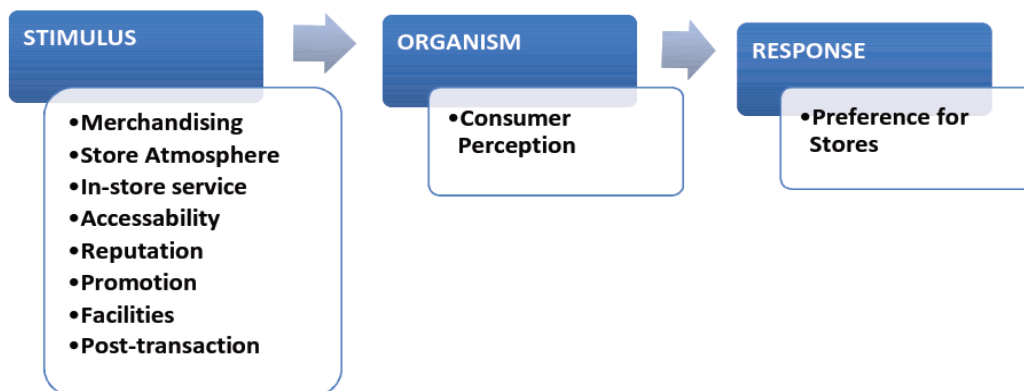| STIMULUS | ORGANISM | RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| •Merchandising<br>•Store Atmosphere<br>•In-store service<br>•Accessability<br>•Reputation<br>•Promotion<br>•Facilities<br>•Post-transaction | •Consumer Perception | •Preference for Stores |

FIGURE 4 S-O-R Model of consumer retail purchase behavior (Thang & Tan 2003)

Thang's and Tan's (2003) research was somewhat different from past studies with the S-O-R model application, in its attempt to analyze the consumer preference in term of inter-store comparison, i.e. the store's ability to attract consumers with store images on merchandizing, store atmosphere, etc., which

again lead to the previously mentioned approach or avoidance behavior. The academic contribution that stemmed from the research was the significant variables of store preference, listed in a descending order of importance: merchandising, accessibility, reputation, in-store service, store atmosphere and promotions (Thang & Tan 2003). In relation to this study at hand, and as a managerially implicative remark; though store atmosphere was not in the earlier end in the order of importance list affecting preference for stores, it is yet an interesting avenue to explore, as being perhaps one of the most viable fields to make changes to in pursuit of success in the competition of retail sector.

Turley and Milliman (2000) on the other hand have a more traditional approach on creating a comprehensive framework on the store atmosphere and its sub-sections in their review article of experimental evidence on atmospheric effects on shopping behavior. Comprehensive framework refers to the sheer volume of articles on the topic reviewed, i.e. studies from over three decades summing up to 60 empirical studies conducted. Berman's, Evans' and Banerjee's (1995) typology of atmospheric stimuli divided into four categories, the exterior of the store, the general interior, the layout and design variables, and the point-of-purchase and decoration variables. Turley and Milliman (2000) extended this classification into five categories, by adding human variables (based on the reviewed stream of literature on the topic) to complete the typology. The detailed listing of categories and the variables within is provided in Table 2. The table listing of the variables affecting the overall perceived customer experience of the store atmosphere with its 5 main components can be seen to serve as stimuli in the retail context applied S-O-R model setting. Turley's and Milliman's (2000) S-O-R based framework of the influence of retail atmospherics is presented in Figure 5. In this framework it is noteworthy that the physical surroundings (atmospheric stimuli) produce a certain response that is bound in given time and point, and given individuals, i.e. different individuals respond to the same stimuli differently, also depending on when they are exposed to these stimuli. It is also conspicuous that the store's physical surroundings affect the store employees too, who again, through their actions, inflect the customers' ultimate responses and vice versa. (Turley & Milliman 2000)

Due to the nature and purposes of this study, atmospheric stimuli presented in Turley's and Milliman's (2000) framework will be discussed in detail in the following chapters 2.4.1 (general interior) and 2.4.2 (human variables), and with special interest in store layout in chapter 2.5. The stimuli of interior displays will be presented later under the topic impulse buying, or point-of-purchase communications to be more precise, in chapter 2.6.2. In order to retain the study within its original incentives in regards to the research problems, exterior factors of the store as atmospheric stimuli will be left out of contemplation.

TABLE 2 Atmospheric variables (Turley & Milliman 2000)

| External variables | General Interior variables | Layout and design variables | Point-of-purchase and decoration variables | Human variables |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Exterior signs | Flooring and carpeting | Space design and allocation | Point-of-purchase displays | Employee characteristics |
| Entrances | Color schemes | Placement of merchandise | Signs and cards | Employee uniforms |
| Exterior display windows | Lighting | Grouping of merchandise | Wall decorations | Crowding |
| Height of building | Music | Work station placement | Degrees and certificates | Customer characteristics |
| Size of building | P.A. usage | Placement of equipment | Pictures | Privacy |
| Color of building | Scents | Placement of cash registers | Artwork | |
| Surrounding stores | Tobacco smoke | Waiting areas | Product displays | |
| Lawns and gardens | Width of aisles | Waiting rooms | Usage instructions | |
| Address and location | Wall composition | Department locations | Price displays | |
| Architectural style | Paint and wallpaper | Traffic flow | Teletext | |
| Surrounding area | Ceiling composition | Racks and cases | | |
| Parking availability | Merchandise | Waiting cues | | |
| Congestion and traffic | Temperature | Furniture | | |
| Exterior walls | Cleanliness | Dead areas | | |

**ATMOSPHERIC STIMULI**    **ORGANISMS**    **RESPONSE**

EXTERIOR
Store front
Marquee
Entrances
Display Windows
Building Architecture
Parking
Surrounding Area

GENERAL INTERIOR
Flooring/ Carpeting
Lighting
Scent
Sounds
Temperature
Cleanliness
Fixtures
Wall Coverings
Cash Register Placements

STORE LAYOUT
Floor Space Allocation
Product Groupings
Traffic Flow
Department Locations
Allocations Within Departments

INTERIOR DISPLAYS
Product Displays
Racks and Cases
Posters
Signs
Cards
Wall Decorations

HUMAN VARIABLES
Crowding
Customer Characteristics
Employee Characteristics
Employee Uniforms

EMPLOYEES

Career Objectives
Training
Personal Situation
Social Class
Stage in HLC

CUSTOMERS

Lifestyle
Shopping Orientation
Stage in HLC
Situation

EMPLOYEES

Mood
Effort
Commitment
Attitude
Knowledge
Skill

CUSTOMERS

Enjoyment
Time in Store
Items Examined
Information Acquired
Purchases
Satisfaction

FIGURE 5 The influence of retail atmospherics (Turley & Milliman 2000)

What is then the terminal reason to study S-O-R models in regards to store atmospherics in retail settings? Naturally it has to do with deeper understanding customers' purchasing behavior as the ultimate response. Spies, Hesse and Loesch (1997) studied two furniture stores' atmospheres' influences on consumers' moods and then ultimately on purchasing behavior. Drawn upon their findings on the subject, the following illustration (see Figure 6) of the relations between store atmosphere, customer's mood, satisfaction and purchasing behavior considering goal-attainment and visit of the café/restaurant (within the furniture store premises) as control variables was created.

In the study of Spies et al (1997) the store atmosphere's determinant characteristics were the condition the store was in, the information rate and how well the products were presented (the layout), which makes their study particularly useful since the main avenues and the research problems of this study at hand revolve around store layout. Spies et al (1997) were able to substantiate the question of whether a pleasant compared to an unpleasant store atmosphere

would result in higher customer satisfaction and in increased purchasing behavior; undoubtedly yes. The study was conducted by comparing customer responses to two furniture stores of the same brand (IKEA), the first furniture store, A, as a recently refurbished, with bright colors decorated facility with well-structured route with no crossings and possible shortcuts, with many striking signs in different colors, with unexpected presentation of information rate, with integration of furnishings to complete rooms and with new supplies highlighted. Whereas the second IKEA furniture store, B, embodied a deteriorated installation with dim colors, many crossings and possible shortcuts, with few signs of not very striking design as some even being hand-written, with ordinary if not expected presentation of information rate, with functional groupings of furnishings and with new supplies presented only amidst other less interesting ones. As shown in Figure 6, it came about that store atmosphere had no effect on the total amount of money spent, but solely on the amount of money spent for spontaneous purchases. In comparison with less pleasant stores, pleasant stores had the ability to make customers spend more money on spontaneous purchases (Spies et al 1997). Donovan and Rossiter (1982), Donovan et al (1994) and Sherman and Smith (1987) settled on uniform results as in finding out that positive mood would result in buying more items and spending more money than it was originally planned.
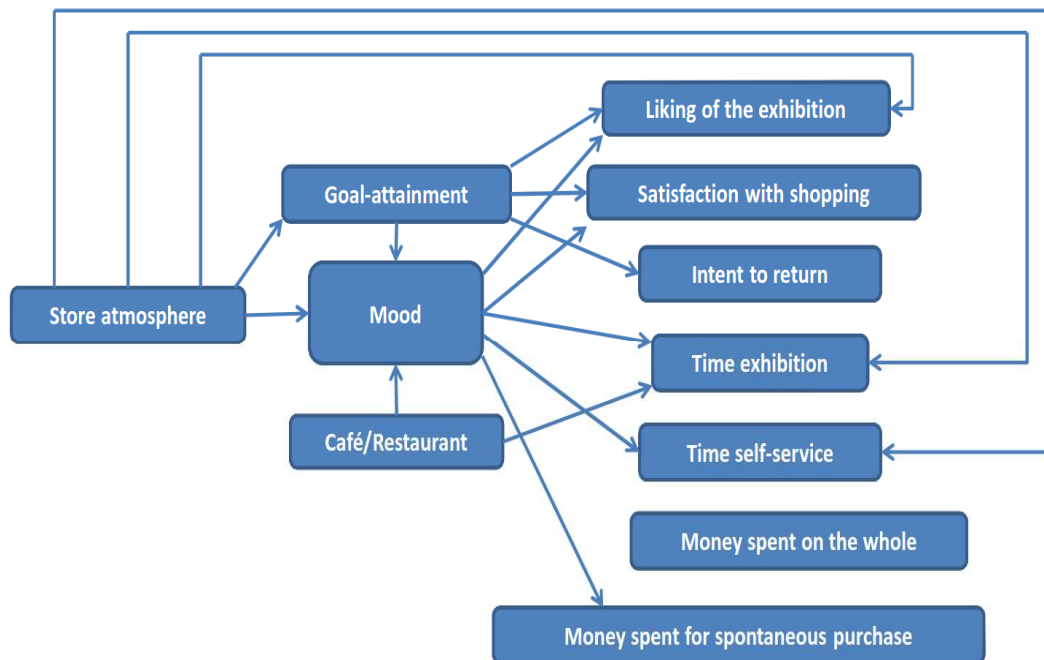


FIGURE 6 Mediators of behavioral responses (Spies et al 1997)

Spies et al (1997) studied store atmosphere's direct effect to purchasing behavior and the indirect effect of the customer's mood as a mediating factor, being the most understandable way to study human behavior since mood can-

not be a completely isolated or disregarded influencer, i.e. as in other S-O-R ty-pologies, mood was merely a natural moderator in the equation of creating responses. The third indirect way for store atmosphere to have an influence on customers' satisfaction and purchasing behavior was via goal-attainment. It became evident that general good condition of the store, careful layout design and relatively high information rate contribute to effectuation of a pleasant store atmosphere and facilitate goal-attainment simultaneously. This held true especially for customers with intentions of strolling around, getting good ideas and having a nice shopping experience. But first of all, a pleasant store atmosphere was found to improve customers' mood state which again led to greater satisfaction with the store, more time spent in the store and more money spent on spontaneous purchases they simply liked. Consecutively, their study concluded that relative to the customers' satisfaction with their shopping and intentions of revisits, the effect of store atmosphere was likely to be due to mood-change and even more to goal-attainment. Additionally, for purchasing behavior the effects of store atmosphere could be imputed to mood-effects. Depending on the type of customer reactions, different intervening variables were seen responsible for the store atmosphere's effects and ultimate responses. However, all cases clearly demonstrated the positive effect of a pleasant store atmosphere on customers' reactions. (Spies et al 1997)

### 2.4.1   General interior

In the framework of influence of retail atmospherics by Turley and Milliman (2000) a sub-section of environmental stimuli is general interior. As presented in Table 2, the listing of components within the category is comprehensive and elaborate, thus in order for the study to remain within its achievable limits, the following components and their impacts on consumer responses were selected to be under contemplation: music, scent and lighting.

According to Yalch and Spangenberg (1990) music is one of the most frequently used atmospheric factors in pursuance of enhancing the delivery of services to customers. As one section of the atmospherics variables, music is an attractive avenue to explore and to exploit in practice, due to its nature of being relatively inexpensive to provide, being easily changed, and expected to have predictable appeals to individuals on the basis of their ages and lifestyles (Yalch & Spangenberg 1993). Albeit only few shoppers consciously note the presence of music, yet the most of them respond to it psychologically (Yalch & Spangenberg 1990). Music has several implications on customer behavior, such as time and money spent shopping, pace of movement, pleasure and arousal felt by customers and general evaluation of the retail setting; all of which are related to the type, tempo and volume of the store music (Turley & Milliman 2000; Lam 2001; Garlin & Owen 2006; Andersson, Kristensson, Wästlund & Gustafsson 2012). An early study by Smith and Curnow (1966) reported how shoppers' time spent on shopping reduced as loud music was played, in comparison with soft music. Milliman (1982) perused the effects of music tempo on supermarket shoppers and disclosed the tendency of patrons to shop longer, move slower

and purchase more as the played music's tempo was slow contrasted with fast tempo music. However, the effects of music on consumer behavior are moderated by customers' age, gender, shopping motives and situational factors, and are thereby a complex field to study comprehensively (Andersson et al 2012). Andersson et al (2012) even reported that in some circumstances no-music is the most preferred aural ambience. Ideally, the music climate of the store should be designed in a department-specific manner in pursuit of the customers making more purchases and spending more money, yet taking account of the aforementioned moderators (Yalch & Spangenberg 1993). Andersson et al (2012) summarize the intricate subject to have an influence on customers, but the influence varies among different customer groups. That is to say, to avoid the risk of turning half of the clientele into unpleased and stressed customers, the retail managers should adapt aural ambiences determined by their clientele, perhaps even adjusting the type of piped-in music across different days or times of the day.

In addition to music, store scent has an impact on the overall store atmosphere and thus on consumer behavior, i.e. ambient odors are used as a stimulus in the external environment (Donovan & Rossiter 1982). The first aspect of smells within a store is the congruency with a specific store and its merchandise (Parsons 2009). The scent can be directly related to the products sold, but the customers can be similarly influenced by general pleasant scents not necessarily related to the products being sold (Miller 1993). Mitchell, Kahn and Knasko (1995) tested the previous allegation and came to conclusions that congruent ambient odors with the product class (i.e. as opposed to incongruent) resulted in subjects spending more time processing the data, being more holistic in their processing, having the will to go beyond given information and relying more on inferences and self-references. Furthermore, they discovered that the customers were more variety-seeking as the odor conditions were congruent with the products sold, as opposed to incongruent conditions. Parsons (2009) summarizes the congruency issue; if the store features a natural scent, the expected congruent scent is required. The second aspect of in-store scent as contributor to the store environment is the presence of smell (i.e. having a scent present or not) (Parsons 2009). Spangenberg, Crowley and Henderson (1996) recognized the patrons to have perceived spending less time in a scented store ambience, and vis-à-vis, the patrons in a non-scented condition perceived having spent significantly more time in the store than they actually did. The third aspect of smells within a store is the pleasantness of a scent (Parsons 2009), i.e. a pleasant scent may result in positive affective or behavioral responses, and vice versa, an unpleasant scent may cause negative affective or behavioral responses (Mitchell et al 1995). The selected type of a scent should be inoffensive in nature, in order to enhance customer reactions to the store, and interestingly the intensity and nature of the actual scent appeared to have little impact on consumer evaluations (Spangenberg et al 1996). Therefore, there is a wide array of scents for the managers to choose from, albeit the scent should be; 1) either neutral or pleasant, 2) in congruency with the merchandise, or a scent that is incapable of being interpreted as either congruent nor incongruent with any single product or category,

3) distinctive in type, as to differentiate the store in competition with other retailers and their scent ambiences (Spangenberg et al 1996).

The third factor of general interior under contemplation is store lighting, granted that only few relevant studies have been conducted on the influences of illumination on consumer behavior. Nevertheless, according to Summers and Hebert (2001) more appealing stores with better-illuminated merchandise potentially beguiles shoppers to visit the store, linger, and hopefully make purchases. Both studies of Areni and Kim (1994) and Summers and Hebert (2001) demonstrated the customers to examine and handle significantly more items under "bright" lighting conditions than under "soft" lighting conditions. Thus, as display lighting enhances customer approach behavior, it is therefore an important factor in overall retail atmosphere.

### 2.4.2   Human variables

Following the framework of retail atmospherics (Turley & Milliman 2000), and especially the sub-section of human variables, the effects of perceived crowding and the effects of employees on store patrons are discussed in detail.

According to Stokols (1972) perceived crowding refers to a psychological state caused by exceeding of demanded space commensurate with the available supply (of space). This psychological state can be a result of physical or social factors that make individuals more aware of their surroundings and cause them to anticipate actual or potential problems appearing from frugal space (Stockdale 1978). Hui and Bateson (1991) add that the relationship between perceived crowding and psychological stress is a reasonably well supported relationship. This relationship in a retail context is even more important while the (spatial) capacity is constrained by consumer's perception of crowding (Hui & Bateson 1991). Eroglu, Machleit and Barr (2005) contribute to the outlook of Hui and Bateson (1991) by making important remarks on retail crowding, first of all by making a distinction between perceived crowding and density, the latter refers solely to the number of people and/ or objects in a space. Albeit density is an antecedent of crowding perceptions, the individual will perceive the environment as crowed only when his/her goals and activities are restricted or interfered by the density. Therefore the perceptions of crowding are intrinsically always bound to an individual; two different shoppers within a same store may have different perceptions of crowding, dependent on their individual characteristics (e.g. personal tolerance levels for crowding) or situational constraints (e.g. shopping motive, time pressure) (Eroglu et al 2005). Consequently, perceived retail crowding consists of two dimensions; perceptions of crowding based on the number of individuals and the amount of social interaction (human crowding perceptions), and crowding perceptions on the volume of merchandise and fixtures and their positioning within the store (spatial crowding perceptions) (Machleit, Kellaris & Eroglu 1994). More importantly, as perceived crowding is a part of the overall store environment, it is also an important determinant of shopper satisfaction (Eroglu and Machleit 1990; Machleit et al 1994). Lam (2001) summarizes the findings of Eroglu and Machleit (1990) and

Hui and Bateson (1991) in his review article on the effects of store environment on shopping behaviors; first, consumer density (i.e. density of people inside a store) directly increases consumers' perceived crowding, and thereupon reduces pleasure, leading to reductions in approach behaviors. Second, density affects consumers' perceptions of control, yet depending on the consumers' situational goals. Third, under the conditions of high-density, task-oriented shoppers respond more to crowding and experience less satisfaction with the store environment. Fourth, under high density conditions, the perceived risk of purchases and time pressure make the perceptions of crowding more intense.

Human-related environmental stimuli causing cognitional, emotional and behavioral responses are a two-fold notion. Whereas other patrons within the store form one side of the human variables (e.g. perceived crowding), sales associates compose another side creating the aforementioned responses accordingly (Kim & Kim 2012). The following comprehensive framework on human-related environmental stimuli and responses by Kim and Kim (2012) is presented in Figure 7, which compiles the vast stream of literature around the topic (nearly 50 articles).

As the customers are affected by the store atmospherics and environment, the employees have an effect on it and are similarly affected by it. According to a study by Skandrani, Dahmane Mouelhi and Malek (2011) the employees are mainly sensitive to the following components within the store environment: presence of music, crowding, the products and their display. On the one hand, the impacts of store atmospherics on the employees can be stimulating, motivating and evoking enthusiasm, and ultimately resulting in affiliation, a desire to interact with the customer and to deliver a better service (Skandrani et al 2011). On the other hand, the atmospherics, under some circumstances, might be stressful, irritating and confusing, finally leading toward behaviors of withdrawals, disturbance, stress, collapse, employee's avoidance, etc. (Skandrani et al 2011). Additionally, as the store atmosphere plays a pivotal role altering employee satisfaction, it is essential for the store management to bear in mind that happy and satisfied employees generate better service quality, enhance customer satisfaction and profitability (Heskett & Schlesinger 1994). In sum, when speaking of human variables as a component of store atmosphere; it can be said that they have direct effects on customer responses, but indirect impacts as well, as the same atmosphere affects the store employee's equally and their responses reflect back to the customers.

Backtracking to the direct effects the store employees bring about in customers, Bitner (1992) affirms the vital role of store frontline personnel in creating value, building emotional bonds for lifetime relationships and anticipating customer expectations. The interaction between customers and employees has a significant impact on the customers' overall retail experience and satisfaction (Bagdare 2013). An earlier study by Bagdare (2012) attests, and contributes to the framework of Kim & Kim (2012), by adding that as knowledgeable, well-trained and motivated personnel provides product information, solves problems, handles grievances and carries out after sales service, a superior quality

retail experience for customers is achieved. Accordingly, the expertise, skill, attitude, body language, and behavior of personnel also influence formation and perceptions of store image (Bagdare 2013). Frontline employees (sales associates) reflect the store experience on a larger scale too, i.e. on retail chain level, as they act as brand champions supporting the brand message or possibly as brand saboteurs if their performance remittance departs from the brand (Wallace & Chernatony 2009).

**Human-related environmental stimuli**

**Other customers**
* Number of other customers
* Social relations

**Sales associates**
* Number of sales associates
* Physical attributes
- Dress
- Physical attractiveness
- Demographics (e.g. age, sex, ethnicity)
- Non-verbal cues (e.g. smiles, gestures)

* Behavioral attributes
- Sales associates' characteristics
- Sales interaction

**Responses**

**Cognitional responses**
* Attitude
* Attribution
* Credibility
* Evaluation
* Loyalty
* Perceptions
* Satisfaction
* Store image
* Values

**Emotional responses**
* Positive emotions (joy, delight, interest, happiness, confidence etc.)
* Negative emotions (anger, fear, anxiety, annoyance etc.)
* Pleasure, arousal, dominance (Donovan & Rossiter 1982)

**Behavioral responses**
* Adaptation strategies
* Approach-avoidance behaviors
* Behavioral intention
* Complaints
* Impulse buying
* Interactions
* Purchase
* Relationship
* Sales performance
* Shopping frequency
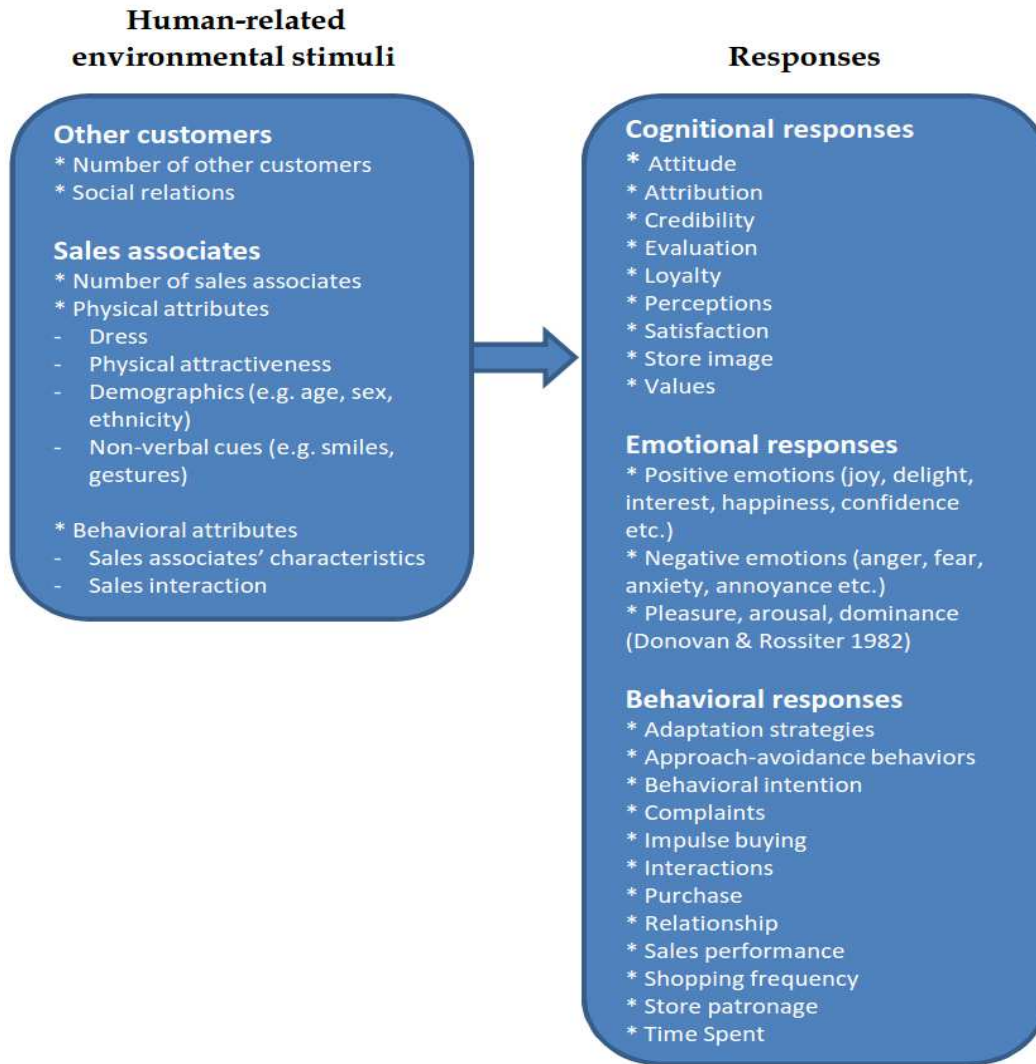* Store patronage
* Time Spent

FIGURE 7 Conceptual framework of human-related environmental stimuli and responses (Kim & Kim 2012)

## 2.5   Store layout

Store layout practically means the allocation of products, shelves, racks and product displays. More so, it means the floor plan of the entire store, the points of entrances, exits and cash registers, the width and the length of the aisles and aisle crossings. From a marketing point of view, store layout creates an interesting dilemma to explore; what is the typical customer path, i.e. what are the most optimal spots for product purchases to physically take place. By strategically arranging the store architecture, the desired behavior can be manipulated ultimately leading to greater access to merchandise and increased sales (Newman, Yu & Oulton 2002). Additionally, store layout has also indirect implications on sales. According to Huddleston, Whipple and VanAuken (2004) positive emotional responses to merchandise assortment, store facility itself, pricing and service are predictors of store loyalty intentions. One example from Yoo, Park and MacInnis (1998) demonstrates that a well-designed, low-congestion store layout is a precursor in invoking positive emotions in customers, which again influence attitudes towards a store, finally converting to loyalty outcomes. As it can be expected, Huddleston et al (2004) discovered that general cleanliness, aisle width, little congestion and a consistent layout were preferred store attributes evoking positive emotions, whereas small or narrow aisles, size of the store (e.g. too big), too busy or crowded and layout changes were considered as negative store attributes.

It has been noted that as the customers enter the store, they have a tendency not to mentally evaluate the individual aspects of the layout, nor to consciously recognize the different environmental attributes enchanting their attention. The lack of awareness for such factors brings about a thorny reality for instore marketing researchers as the interviewed customers by and large fail to provide detailed and exact answers and evaluations about their behaviors at previous points in time (Newman et al 2002). This is why the realized shopping paths need to be studied by observing first hand incidents, i.e. actual shopping trips of real customers. Interestingly there have been very few studies that describe customer movements within the store, granted that by analyzing customer movement (i.e. the routes they take within the store) the store management has the ability to improve the efficiency of store layout designs and promotional plans (Yada 2011). The reason for the lack of comprehensive studies conducted around the topic lies within the complexity of the subject, and generalizability is an issue, much due to the fact that stores vary so vastly in terms of the fields of operation, size, clientele, geographical location etc. Accordingly, Newman et al (2002) recognized similar scarcity in the existing literature, coming to a conclusion that few studies demonstrate why or how certain layout patterns work, few practical solutions are provided and a relative scarcity of information to draw on exists.

The nature of this study is inherently similar. However, as this research is a singular case-type study revolving around the detected managerial problems

at a singular store, not yielding generalizations for the entire retail sector, the grounds to execute observational method are well-founded as the study might bring about useful practical implications not only for Kodin Terra, but for the Finnish hardware retail sector as whole.

With the little that can be allegedly generalized data, the following observations can be presented; calculated changes to layouts can reduce shopping stress and thereby enhance the shopping experience (Aylott & Mitchell 1998), layout (as a part of store's atmosphere) influences shopper's mood and has an impact on how much time is spent in the store (Donovan & Rossiter 1982), clear and legible store designs reduces uncertainty often associated with large floor spaces (Newman et al 2002). Sorensen (2003) has also made interesting observations on the significance of store layout in regards to shopping behavior, stating that an average shopping trip covers only about 25% of the store and that 85% of the shopping experience is location driven. Based on the previously said, an important inference can be drawn; the store management needs to see where the customers are inclined go within the store and to place appropriate merchandise there, instead of expecting them to come to the product (Sorensen 2003).

### 2.5.1 Shopping paths

According to Sorensen (2003) the dominant movement of shoppers around the store establishment follows a counter-clockwise orientation. This is due to the location of entry in the right side of the store. As opposed to a store with an entry in the left side of the store, the customers favored a clock-wise pattern. Insignificant finding per se, but knowing that the shoppers following the counter-clockwise direction spent on average 2 USD more per trip, makes the location of an entryway a managerially interesting store design factor; it should be located in the right side of the store. (Sorensen 2003)

Spies et al (1997) concluded a similar finding with the counter-clockwise pattern, but with an addition that the customer's attention is mostly concentrated on the wall-sides. Furthermore, they add that the customers are inclined to avoid turns, and are generally averse to make deviations from their initial route. This may have to do with optimal level of complexity in regards to environmental stimuli. According to Berlyne (1971) an optimal level of complexity gains maximum level of attractiveness, whereupon deviations from the optimum (higher or lower levels of complexity) result in lower perceived attractiveness. Indications of this in an in-store retail setting are information rate (number of information units within a certain time interval, e.g. signs and visual aids) and layout as environmental stimuli. Consequently, following the previous psychological approach, it is to be assumed the information rate plays a critical role, as if it is too high the customers feel overloaded, and vice versa, bored should the information rate be too low (Spies et al 1997). They found that similar assumptions go for store layout, i.e. it should be clear but not too simple, eliciting possibilities of surprise and unexpectedness. A proper layout is therefore an issue of the ease of perceptibility, i.e. lowering the information rate by

e.g. the means of lighting. Furthermore, layout should be designed to be able to give the customer the feeling of personal control and mastery (Bitner 1992), meaning that a successful layout should be clear and help the customer to orientate and find things easily (Bost 1987).

### 2.5.2 Factors affecting customer movement

What comes to actualized and observed customer movement data, Hui et al (2009) observed it to be influenced by three situational factors; perceived time pressure, the presence of other shoppers and by the composition of shopping basket. Perceived time pressure in this instance denotes that the more the customer spends time in the store, the more (s)he starts to feel pressure to make decisions on the visit, shopping and purchases as the time reserved for the shopping trip abates. According findings were made by Thaler (1999) with the mental accounting perspective presuming a customer may enter the store with a shopping time budget and by Suri and Monroe (2003) with the finding of perceived limitation of the time available to ponder information or to make decisions. Hui et al (2009) verified these findings in their field research, and discovered that as a result of the depleted shopping time budget, the shopper appears to adapt by becoming less exploratory and more purposeful as the shopping trip advances. In other words, as the trip progresses and the perceived time pressure intensifies, the attraction of the checkout increases, the customer becomes more likely to make purposeful purchases towards the end of the trip and less liable to explore the store. An illustration is presented in Figure 8, which outlines the observations of Hui et al (2009) on how many minutes on average a shopper spends in each zone of the store (bottom left corner of the image represents the entry of the store and the large rectangle right from it represents the checkout area). As it can be seen, the first zones in the store attract the most customer attention (yet it is to be remembered that this observation took place in a grocery store setting). Another, yet solely exemplary illustration by Yada (2011) demonstrates a similar phenomenon even more figuratively in Figure 8. Yadas's (2011) illustration also represents the observational method the customer movement data in this study was recorded and analyzed. Figure 8 also visualizes rather well the customers' tendency to explore the store more in the beginning of the trip.
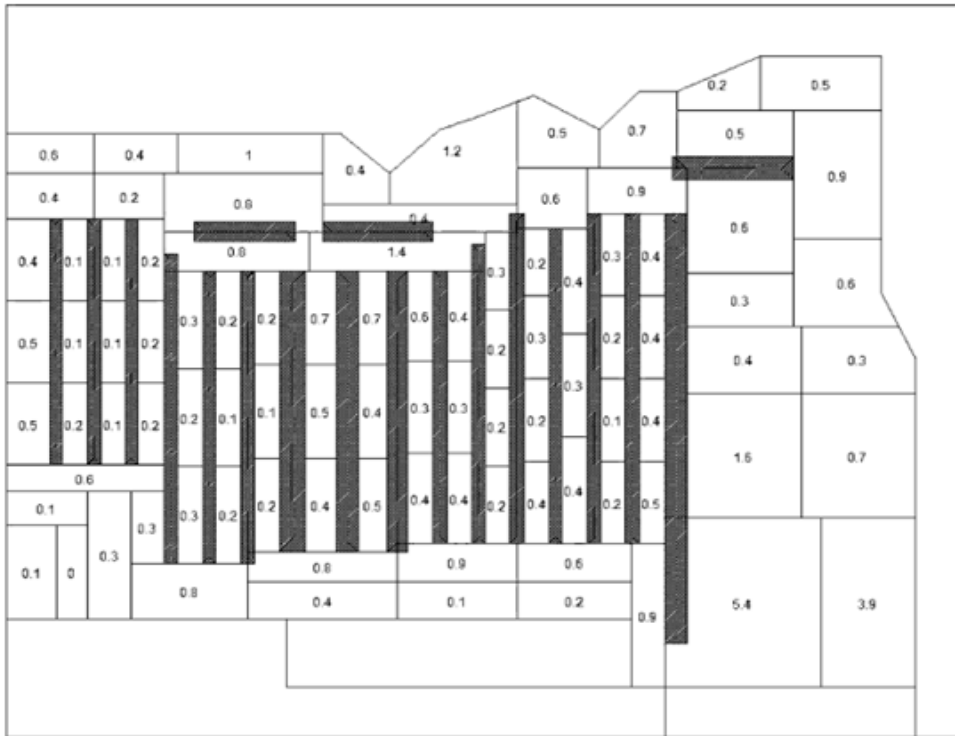
FIGURE 8 Average time a shopper spent (in minutes) in each zone (Hui et al 2009)
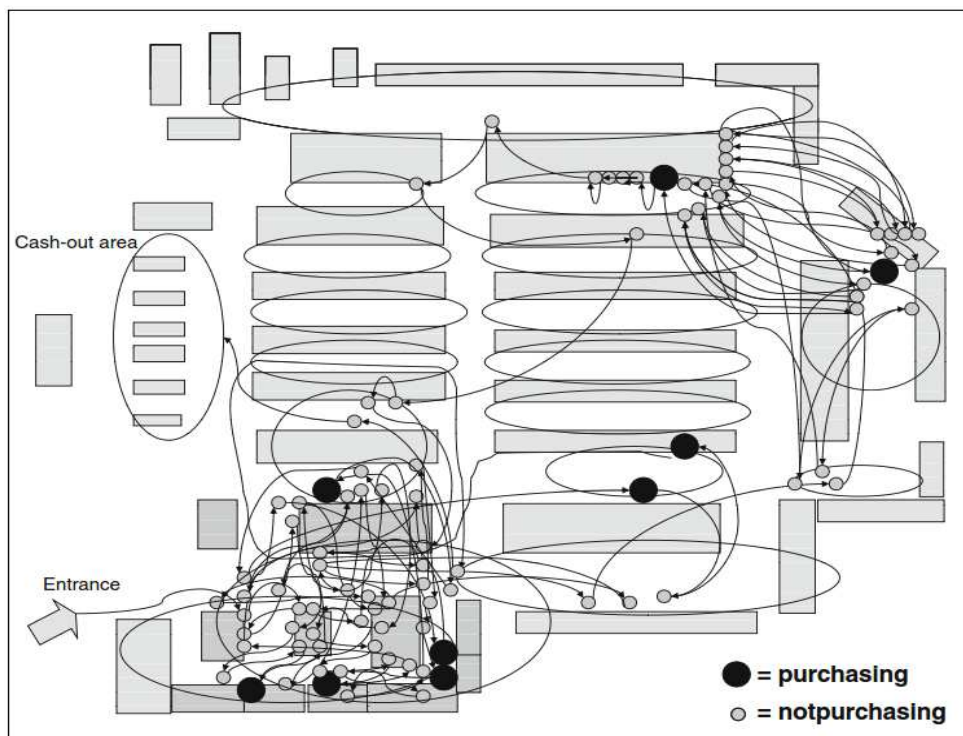


FIGURE 9 An example of customer movement data (Yada 2011)

The clustering of movement near the entrance point in Figure 9 and later in the upper corner of the illustration may not only be due to the nature of perceived time pressure. It may also have to do with the social impact of the presence of other shoppers in the store. The strength of this social impact refers to the density (number of shoppers per unit area) of other shoppers in a zone (Hui et al 2009). Then again, social impact has a different affect in three aspects of shopping; visit, shop and buy. This is in accordance with the previous literature of Argo, Dahl and Manchanda (2005) in finding that shoppers have a fundamental motivation to "belong", and a visit to a zone where other shoppers are already present, may possibly result in an initial level of social attachment leading to a positive emotional response. Harrell, Hutt and Anderson (1980) deciphered that on the one hand, shoppers are likely to follow the same shopping paths of other shoppers. But on the other hand, as the circumstances become crowded, they may behave in a less exploratory manner, i.e. delaying unnecessary purchases and reducing their shopping tendency (Harrell et al 1980). Withal, according to Becker (1991) customers may draw conclusions on the "quality" (e.g. price promotions within the zone) of the zone based on the visit behavior of other customers. In a more recent study, Hui et al (2009) ascertained similar findings, concluding that other shoppers' presence has often the ability to attract more consumers to visit the same store zone. However, as the customer enters this zone of higher shopper density, (s)he becomes less likely to actually shop there. But then again, the same study discovered the presence of other shoppers in a store zone not to have significant effects on consumers' buying behavior, once they have entered a shopping mode. Eventually, it can be said that "crowding (or more generally the social influence of other shoppers considered here) in the store environment is a two-edged sword: while it attracts shoppers to a zone to "check it out," it also reduces shopping tendency once the shopper enters that zone (Hui et al 2009, p.491)."

The final situational factor influencing customer movement within a store may be the composition of the shopping basket. More thoroughly, it refers to licensing behavior, which again denotes that once a customer makes a purchase of a "virtue" category item (e.g. vegetables) it is more plausible for him/her to shop at locations with "vice" category items (e.g. beer, tobacco). The reason behind the logic is that a purchase of a virtue item reasserts the customer's self-concept, and hence reduces the negative self-attributions related to shopping vice category items (Khan & Dhar 2006). The previous assertion applies conversely too, whereas purchases of vice categories reduce self-concept, they increase the negative self-attributions. These psychological outcomes related to different category purchases reflect on consumer movement within the store, yet the correspondence with zone visit decisions is not very significant (Hui et al 2009). Albeit the weak correspondence between licensing behavior and actual zone visits, the findings of Hui et al (2009) give a practical implication for store management; vice and virtue categories should be located sequentially in order to gain maximum exposure for different shopping zones.

## 2.6  Impulse buying

In reference to POPAI (Point of Purchase Association International) Europe (1998), up to 70% of retail purchases are unplanned and thereby it can be inferred that the customers are highly likely to be influenced by the factors within the retail environment per se (Sigurdsson, Engilbertsson & Foxall 2010). The research of Spies et al (1997) attests the allegation, by bringing out that store atmospherics indeed have an indirect effect on the amount of money spent for spontaneous purchases, with the customer's mood as a mediator. This can be observed in previously presented Figure 6.

Yet, in order to discuss the topic, the term impulse buying needs to be addressed in detail. Kollat and Willet (1967) defined impulse buying as purchase decisions that took place in the store with no prior recognition of need. Rook (1987, p.191) gave the concept of impulse buying a little more depth by defining it as follows: "Impulse buying occurs when a consumer experiences a sudden, often powerful and persistent urge to buy something immediately. The impulse to buy is hedonically complex and may stimulate emotional conflict. Also, impulse buying is prone to occur with diminished regard for its consequences." However, the behaviors of buying on impulse and making unplanned purchases needed to be distinguished (Cobb and Hoyer 1986; Beatty and Ferrell 1998; Kacen, Hess & Walker 2012). Unplanned purchases refer to situations in which the shopper recalls that an item is missing from his/her home inventory and needs restocking (making it an unplanned reminder purchase, yet it would be a planned purchase if the shopper would have remembered to write it down on an actual or mental shopping list), whereas a pure impulse purchase does not include a reminder factor (Kacen et al 2012). The distinction between these two types of shopping behaviors has important implications in retail marketing. Firstly, unplanned purchases reflect decisions made at previous points in time (Stern 1962) and are therefore affected by out-of-the-store communication. Second and perhaps more important knowledge for retailers is that genuine impulse purchases reflect at-the-moment in-store decisions, and are greatly influenced by the overall store environment and the consumer's current mood state at the time of shopping (Kacen et al 2012).

The act of buying impulsively is a three-stage process beginning with awareness of the product, continuing with an immediate desire for it and ending with the decision whether to buy the product or not. These stages are conceptually distinct, but the consumer may not be consciously aware of going through the process. A retailer should therefore exploit the three-stage process in pursuit of maximizing the likelihood of impulse purchase behavior by creating interesting product displays for product types that are the most probable to get purchased on impulse. The joint effect of both merchandising and promotional activities should significantly increase the total spend on products brought without further consideration. (Kacen et al 2012)

Merchandising and promotional activities refer to antecedents for impulse purchases and point-of-purchase communication, which will be discussed more thoroughly in the following chapters.

### 2.6.1 Antecedents for impulse buying

Rook (1987) brought about the notion of impulse buying being reactive behavior and often involving an immediate action response to a stimulus. Thence it can be said that the act of impulse buying follows the psychological stimulus-organism-response paradigm (Mehrabian & Russell 1974) presented earlier in this paper. Yet again the stimulus per se is a complex factor, since the nature of the stimulus can refer to a wide range of attributes, from external factors (such as store atmospherics and point-of-purchase communication) to the product itself. In fact, Beatty and Ferrell (1998) concluded that the reasons for impulse buying may include environmental factors such as stimuli in the retail store environment (e.g. helpful suggestions by friendly salespeople), individual factors (e.g. shopping enjoyment), and situational factors such as circumstances consumers may face when shopping (e.g. time availability). Mattila and Wirtz (2008) bestow upon the findings by shedding light on the highly stimulating and pleasant store environment's impact on enhanced impulse buying behavior. Interestingly though, the results of Kacen et al (2012) indicate the product characteristics to have a fifty percent greater influence on impulse buying than other retailing factors, yet adding that both groups of variables can enhance the probability of an impulse purchase. This is in accordance with the findings of Jones, Reynolds, Weun and Beatty (2003).

The previous literature has varying outcomes on the types of products which are typically bought on an impulse. On the one hand, Rook (1987) found the consumers to make both expensive and inexpensive impulse purchases and the items to comprise a wide range of product categories. Similarly, an early study by Wells and Lo Sciuto (1966) observed how plenty of shopping is not bound to fixed intentions of buying specific brands, and how price conscious-ness varies depending on the types of products. Then, on the other hand, Dittmar, Beattie and Friese (1995) proposed emotionally appealing products to be more likely to be bought on an impulse than non-emotionally appealing products. Emotionally appealing products in this instance refer to hedonic product (versus utilitarian products), which are bought or consumed principal-ly for their ability to induce pleasure or other hedonic value (Dhar & Wertenbroch 2000). Kacen et al (2012) investigated three product characteristic (hedonic, ready-to-use, price), also coming to a closure of products of hedonic nature to have the greatest influence on impulse buying. Price was also found to be a significant factor in inducing impulse buying behavior. Furthermore, they discovered expectedly that lower priced items in general and items on sale are more likely to stimulate impulsiveness in customer purchase decisions.

Granted that merchandising factors have a greater impact on instigating impulse buying, retail environment factors play a decisive role likewise. A study by Mohan, Sivakumaran and Sharma (2013) examined which four

elements of store environment (music, light, employees and layout) and two individual characteristics (shopping enjoyment tendency and impulse buying tendency) influence impulse buying through positive and negative affect, and urge to buy impulsively. This conceptual model is presented in Figure 10. Of the factors involving store environment, the layout was found to have the greatest influence on impulse buying. As a matter of fact, it became evident, for the store layout to have even greater influence on impulse buying than consumers' personal characteristics shopping enjoyment tendency and impulse buying tendency put together (Mohan et al 2013). The fact that a retailer has few chances to make changes in shopper's personal characteristics, but has control over the store layout and other environment factors, makes the findings of Mohan et al (2013) particularly interesting.
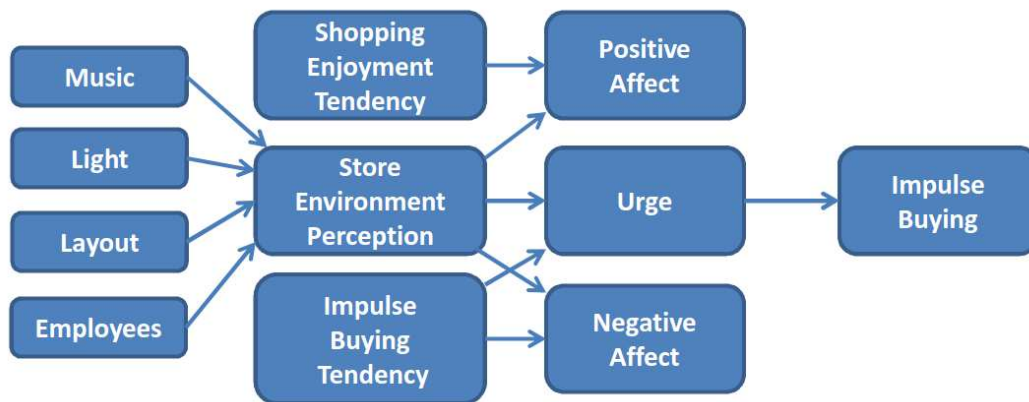


FIGURE 10 Conceptual model of store environment's and personal characteristics' effect on impulse buying (Mohan et al 2013)

Beatty and Ferrell (1998) studied the precursors of impulse buying, by putting more weight on examining the factors not dependent on the store, but the customer. Their model of the precursors of impulse buying is much like the model by Mohan et al (2013), but taking account of situational factors; availability of money and availability of time in relation to desire for in-store browsing. The model of the precursors is presented in Figure 11. In accordance with Kacen et al (2012), Jarboe and McDaniel (1987) and Beatty and Ferrell (1998) took notice how store atmospherics may lead to more in-store browsing behavior, which again may lead to increased impulse buying. As the browsing prolongs, the customer will inevitably encounter more stimuli within the shopping environment and thus will increase his/her probability to undergo more impulse buying urges. Therefore, again, it is essential for the retailers to improve store layouts in order to create environments that promote in-store browsing and hence impulse purchases (Beatty & Ferrell 1998).
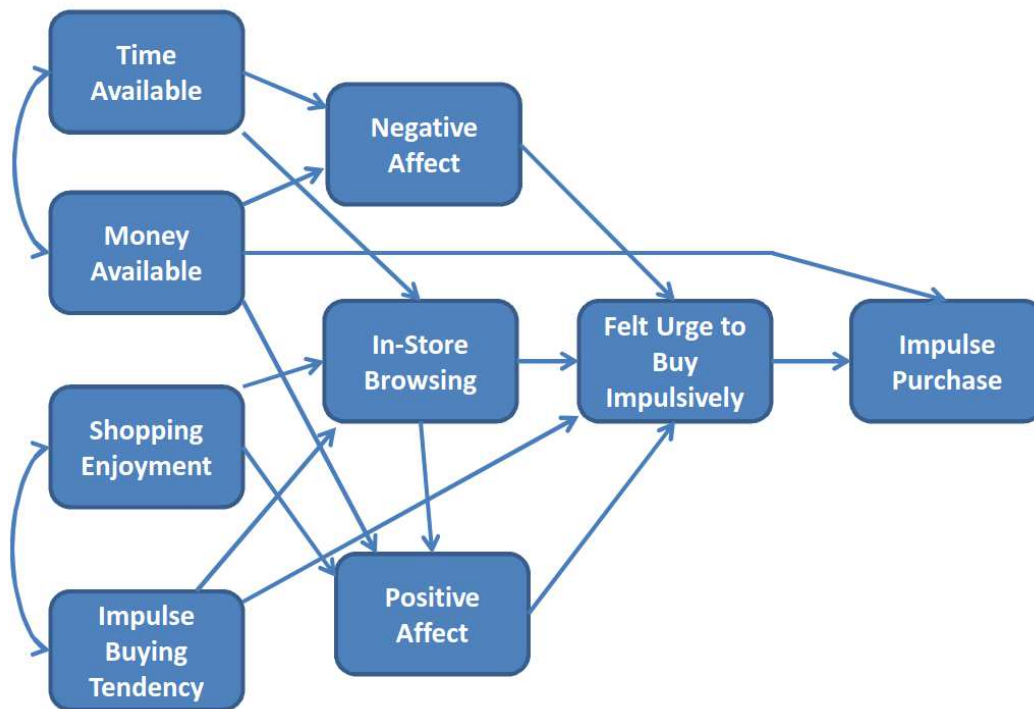
FIGURE 11 Structural model of the predecessors for impulse buying (Beatty & Ferrell 1998)

In sum, product characteristics are the most influential factor in ushering impulse purchases, as the customers favor emotionally appealing, low-priced items. But the store atmosphere is by no means to be unsung, as it acts as a direct influencer on shoppers' mood, possibly even causing overspending (Donovan & Rossiter 1982). Similarly, Rook and Gardner (1993) discovered 85 percent of shoppers to be more likely to buy on an impulse as their moods were positive. Positive moods gave the shoppers feelings of being unconstrained, higher on their energy levels and having an urge for self-rewarding (Rook & Gardner 1993). Capitalizing on the knowledge of positive shopping environment's influence on affect and browsing on urges and impulse purchases, constant development of such environments should be of focal interest for most retailers. That is to say, the managers have multiple means to encourage shoppers to browse longer and spend more, such as interesting displays and events, appropriate aromas and lighting, and helpful, friendly salespeople, etc. (Beatty & Ferrell 1998). The ultimate implication of the previous is as Kacen et al (2012) summarized; even when consumers plan their trips and purchases ahead of time, their minds are changed in the store.

## 2.6.2  Point-of-purchase communication

Whereas merchandising and atmospheric factors induce in-store browsing and therefore impulsiveness in purchase decisions, point-of-purchase communication is another critical factor in promoting such behavior. Underhill (1999)

brought forward the shoppers' tendency to consider information acquired within the store, over relying on out of the store communication. This is in accordance with the findings of Chandon, Hutchinson, Bradlow and Young (2009) declaring the superior abilities of in-store factors (in comparison with out-of-store factors) in obtaining consumers' visual attention. In-store marketing communication, or point-of-purchase communication, can be prominently important, as it has been found that owing to effective communication at the store, some product categories' sales have increased by almost 60% (POPAI 2001). Davies and Tilley (2004) contribute to the previous suggestions by accentuating displays' tendency (, i.e. under normal circumstances,) to have an influence upon increase in sales, especially when particular displays are tied to price reductions.

Point-of-purchase marketing communications channels, or in-store displays, are one way to increase sales in the retail environment (Sigurdsson et al 2010). Interestingly though, merchandising displays were found to advance impulse buying behavior primarily in planned versus impulse purchase situations (Kacen et al 2012). Nevertheless, De Pelsmacker, Geuens and Van den Bergh (2004) list five of the most common point-of-purchase communication aspirations to be; (1) capturing the attention of shoppers in order to differentiate products, (2) reminding the shoppers of previous and ongoing marketing communications stimuli, (3) informing consumers about products attributes, (4) creating images of positive associations and (5) persuading consumers towards impulse purchases.

Evidence of the effectiveness of in-store displays exists. For example, a study by Inman and Winer (1998) deciphered that by displaying a brand to the customers the second time within their shopping trip (i.e. not having the same brand only in its regular physical location, but in a secondary location too), the sales increased between 77% and 243%. Further findings by Inman and Winer (1998) indicated the location of the display as well to have significant implications in driving impulse purchases, as more unplanned purchases occurred when the display was at the end of the aisle (61.2%), or by the checkout counter (63.5%), than when the display was in the aisle (58.0%). Yet it is to be remembered that the customers do not act solely upon external cues, i.e. exposure to product categories and in-store displays. To be exposed and affected requires willingness to process the marketing communication cues (Inman & Winer 1998). Furthermore, the process of making in-store decisions is innately complex and affected by relatively indirect factors such as time pressure or similarly by internal motives (e.g. age, need for cognition, deal proneness, etc.) (Inman & Winer 1998). The following Figure 12 emphasizes the complete model of in-store decision-making, and elucidates how the exposure to categories and displays is only one factor in the overall, grander, process of making purchase decisions.
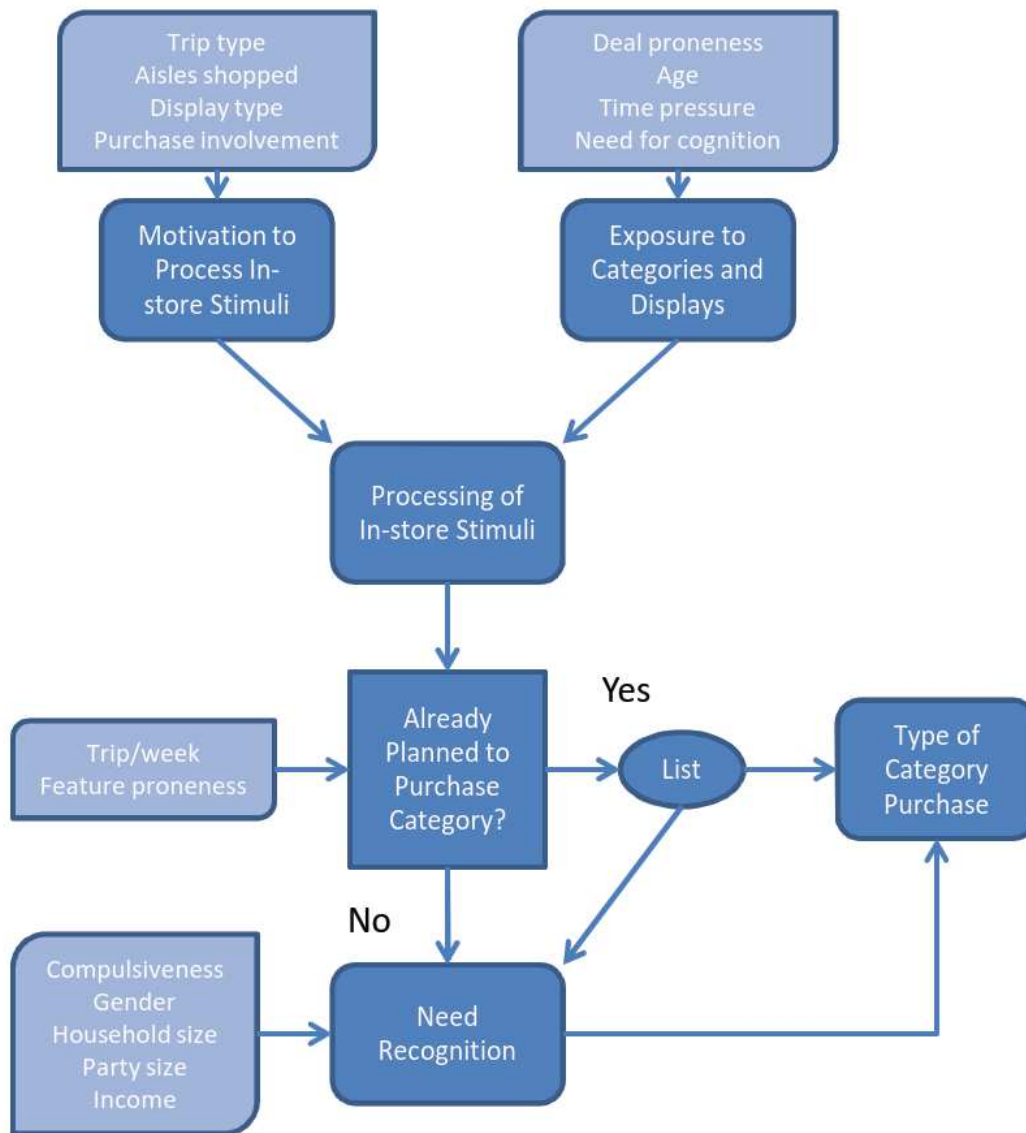
FIGURE 12 The model of in-store decision-making (Inman & Winer 1998)

Going back to the physical locations and types of displays, and the amount of optimal exposures; previous research by Davies and Tilley (2004) has made several practical conclusions. Firstly, the display space should be commensurate to merchandise on the basis of its volume of sales, i.e. should a range of merchandise result in 20% of the sales revenue, it should be accredited 20% of the selling space. That is, the more display space a product line is given, the faster the customers will purchase them. Secondly, the shelf position of a display or a product category should be located at eye level, which often shows in the effectiveness by waist level positions, to gain maximum exposure where goods sell at a fast pace. Thirdly, the design of the displays "should not be too tidy and orderly since a certain amount of planned disarrangement can be attractive to the customer (Davies & Tilley 2004, p.12)." Finally, on the placement

of product categories and displays; most frequently purchased products should not be located contiguously, but leaving space for the intervening products in between them in pursuance of maximizing the probability of impulse purchases of these intervening products. This allows a greater likelihood of customer visits to more floor space and more aisles. (Davies & Tilley 2004)

Gu and Liu (2013) add conjointly to the topic of display placement with their study on consumer fit search and retailer shelf layout. Their study stems from a predisposition of a customer to have sensations of fit uncertainty, i.e. if a certain product fits his/her needs. Having linked the previous to customer's fit search, display locations and comparison of the optimal locations of competing products, the following observations and conclusions were made; 1) displaying competing products in the same location, allows consumers to inspect various products at once, whereas placing products in distant locations, entices the customer inspect one product first and then decide whether to suffer travel cost to inspect another product in a different location, 2) the retailer gains greater profits displaying competing products with same fit probabilities in distant locations, if these fit probabilities are not too high. Though if they are, it is for the better to display competing products in the same location, 3) if products have different fit probabilities, it is more beneficial for the retailer to display competing products in distant locations with an increased fit difference between products, 4) as there is little competition from other retailers, displaying competing products in distant locations has a greater likelihood of benefiting the retailer (Gu & Liu 2013).

## 2.7   Summary of the literature review

The original incentive arising from Kodin Terra's management's initiative to conduct the study concerned path tracking in regards to the store's current layout. Yet, as the theoretical framework around the topic was starting to form, it became pellucid it would be far more interesting to investigate customer behavior from a wider perspective, i.e. store layout is solely one part of the overall store atmosphere. The literature of in-store shopping had one interesting sidepath, impulse purchases, and the linkage between the store atmospherics and impulse buying was so obvious that it was recognized to be an interesting avenue to explore within this study as well.

As described earlier in this paper, the studies around store atmosphere's impacts on customers' shopping behavior derive from an environmental psychology paradigm, stimulus-organism-response model (Mehrabian & Russell 1974), which again would translate in retailing context as follows; surrounding retail atmosphere stimulates the consumer, it causes an evaluation process, and ultimately leads to some behavioral response (Turley & Milliman 2000). Figure 5 presented a comprehensive framework (Turley & Milliman 2000) of the variables in a retail environment, and their influences on customers and employees. This framework is after all, an expanded S-O-R model (Mehrabian & Russell

1974) applied to retail context. The adapted framework below (see Figure 13), or more like a composition of propositions of this study is a simplified version of Turley's and Milliman's (2000) framework on the influences of retail atmospherics. Albeit the similarities with Turley's and Milliman's (2000) model, this framework does not take a stand on the influences of e.g. exterior stimuli, nor on the employees as organisms or on the responses in employees. Similarly, atmospheric stimuli section of the S-O-R model is not as comprehensive, but apposite for the existing research problems of this study. In sum, Figure 13 proposes the components of store layout, general interior, human variables, and point-of-purchase communications to have an effect on customers. Yet the effect of these atmospherics stimuli is mediated by the customers' personal shopping motives and/or desired shopping value. The final effects of atmospheric stimuli and intervening variables are manifested in the customers' responses, as in actualized shopping paths, occurring impulse purchases, general enjoyment of shopping, time spent in store, items examined, information acquired, materialized purchases and general satisfaction of the overall shopping experience.
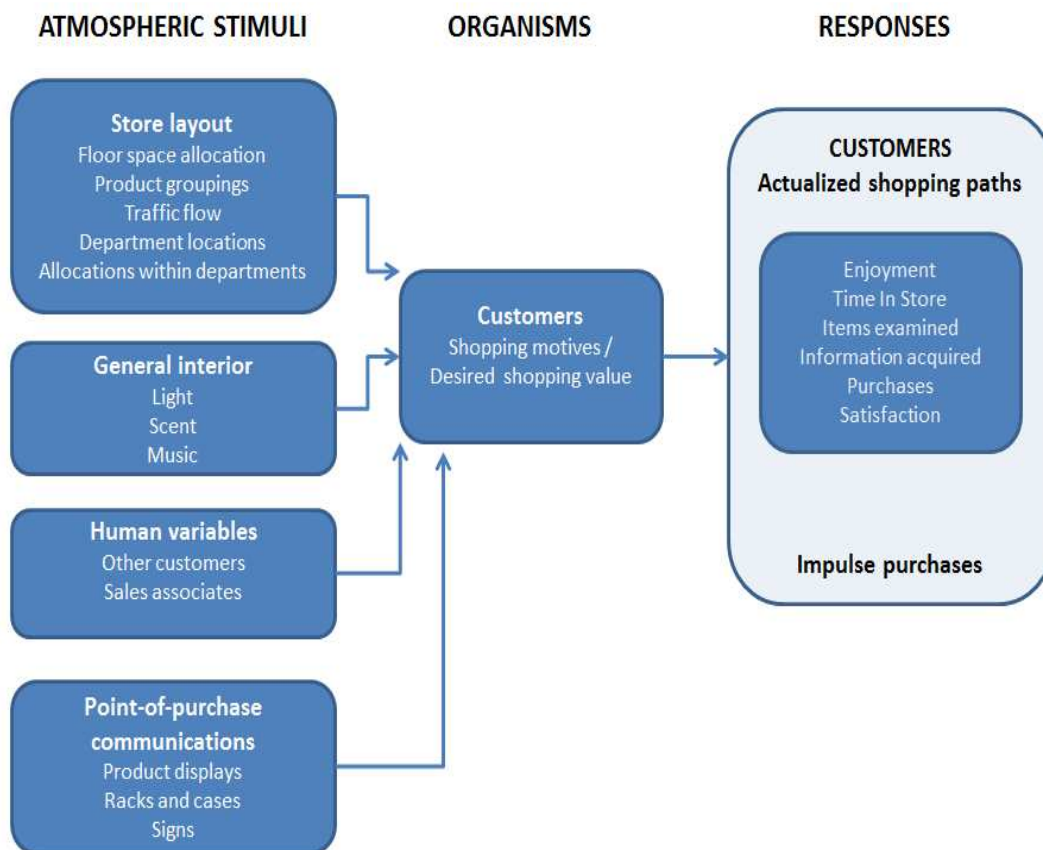
FIGURE 13 Theoretical framework of the study

# 3  RESEARCH METHOD

This study had almost fully pre-set research problems, as the research was being commenced. Accordingly, the methodological decisions were made to support the existing research problems. The methodological decisions refer to the study's overall structure, the method of acquiring information and the techniques of analyzing the material. Chapter 3 describes and validates in detail why the chosen research methods were employed.

## 3.1  Qualitative method

This study is of qualitative nature, because the objective is to illustrate actual, manifold occurrences as comprehensively as possible, comprehend the occurring phenomena in real-life context and to mirror the findings with an existing marketing theory. Yet, it is typical for qualitative research to be not able to accomplish total objectivity, since the researcher per se and what is known are inherently interwoven. Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (1997) divide the traditional research strategies into survey studies and case studies. The research strategy of this study was selected to be case study, because the topic under contemplation has elaborate and intensive information about a relatively small group of study subjects that are interconnected to one another, which again is typical for case studies in general. Yin (1994) underlines that a case study as a research methodology often examines contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the line between phenomenon and the context are not distinctly obvious, which is the case in this study as well. Additionally, due to the intractableness of measuring this type of information and the abstract nature of the subject, qualitative case study as a strategy is the only astute option to execute the research, when the direction is to portray phenomena descriptively, to focus on processes and to gather data by observing and interviewing study subjects, i.e. store patrons. (Hirsjärvi et at 1997)

Johnston, Leach and Liu (1999) suggested that case research includes typically only qualitative evidence, yet the case study data collection techniques

can combine questionnaires and other quantitative evidence. Although they add that the questionnaires are commonly evaluated alongside more detailed investigations, e.g. through observation and interviews (Johnston et al 1999). This supports the rationale (concerning data gathering) behind this research.

Furthermore, concerning the part of the study using observational method; according to Johnston et al (1999) the observation method is a widely used technique, which allows the researcher to act as an unobtrusive observer ("a fly on the wall"), and is often used alongside other methods of data collection. It offers first-hand account of events and the context of those events, yet being potentially affected by Hawthorn effects (i.e. study subjects modifying their behavior as they know they are being observed) (Johnston et al 1999). The potential for Hawthorn effects is eliminated by not having the patrons know beforehand they are being observed, and by interviewing them as their shopping trips are completed.

## 3.2   Data collecting

The field data of this study was gathered with a combination of two data collecting methods; semi-structured themed interviews and direct observation of customer movement. A semi-structured interview as an interviewing method lies midway between fully structured (e.g. filling out forms) and open interviews. Of the available interviewing methods, a semi-structured interview was recognized to be the most apposite method to conduct data gathering, as fully structured interviews would have not offered information deep enough and then again open interviews would have been laborious time-wise and it might have been burdensome to stay within the limits of the topic. It is typical for semi-structured interviews to proceed alongside pre-determined focal themes and assisting questions attached to them, as these pre-defined themes base on what is known, i.e. the theoretical framework of the study (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009). Conjointly, an important determinant in selecting an interviewing method was that, methodologically, a semi-structured interview emphasizes individuals' interpretations of phenomena, significances given by them, and how these significances develop in interaction (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001). The previously mentioned serve the study's original purpose and the research problems excellently.

In addition to semi-structured interviews, the method of direct observation was utilized and combined with the interview material. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009) direct observational method can diversify and enrich the information of the phenomenon under contemplation. More so, the observation was carried out in a manner not allowing the customers know they were being monitored, in pursuance of the customers to perform as naturally as they would in their regular shopping trips and to regard the observer as a natural member of the group (Grönfors 1982). The advantages of direct observation are indisputable: if it is done well it provides highly detailed, almost complete

records of people's actual actions, concurrently being not dependent on respondents' abilities to interpret questionnaire questions correctly, nor being reliant on respondents' perhaps poor memories of events in the past, nor influenced by tendencies to rationalize behaviors to make them appear in a better light (Wells & Lo Sciuto 1966). Observational method holds also an important advantage; it occasionally produces ideas that can be tested later (Wells & Lo Sciuto 1966). On the one hand, a semi-structured method brings out clearly the predominant norms concerning a certain occurrence and the behavior related to those norms (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009). Then, on the other hand, direct observational method may reveal the contradiction between the norms and actual behavior (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009). Or alternatively, an interview may clarify the observed behavior (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009).

### 3.2.1  Conducting semi-structured interviews

Kodin Terra's customers were interviewed at the ends of their self-engaged shopping trips. The customers were asked to participate in a study conducted by the interviewer himself, and they were informed that the respondents would remain anonymous, and the results of the study would benefit the scientific community and Kodin Terra Jyväskylä. It was also highlighted that the interviewer was a student at the University of Jyväskylä, conducting a master's thesis, not an employee of S-Group. The customers were asked roughly around 15 to 20 minutes of their time for the interview, and as a favor in return, they would be given free coffee and pastries of their selection from the Kodin Terra cafeteria, where the actual interviews physically took place also. The interviews took place in November 2014, during weekdays and a weekend in order to receive the most truthful portrayal of real-life phenomena within this particular establishment, i.e. deciphering shopping behavior in its natural form, different people carrying out their shopping trips at different times of the day and week. The questions within the interview were composed of 4 themes; shopping goals and motives and a segmentation of shoppers, store atmosphere, store layout and impulse purchases. Yet firstly, they were asked for background information of whether they were working professionals in the DIY-sector or private consumers. Only private consumers were selected for the interviews, as they represent the majority of Kodin Terra's customers, and were recognized to be more prone to impulse purchases, hedonic shopping, etc. As additional information, the interviewees were asked if they were new customers or returning customers, what their ages were, and whether they were accompanied or alone. Total number of 20 customers was reached. The following Table 3 presents the group of individually interviewed respondents in detail. As the interviews were promised to remain anonymous, the given names in Table 3 are solely exemplary and imaginary English names, yet so obvious that they indicate the respondents' sexes. All of the respondents were Finnish nationals, and the interviews were conducted in Finnish. The interviews were recorded with a laptop's recording program with a built-in microphone, allowing minimal technical fuss, and providing as relaxed interview atmosphere as possible. The voice tapes

were later transcribed and then categorized in themes that came about. The interviews yielded 37 pages of transcribed material after general chattering and other non-relevant material to the study was excluded from the literal transcriptions. Of these 37 pages of material, appurtenant comments and opinions, and recognized conjunctive themes are presented and reviewed within this study. Lastly, the direct interviewee quotations presented in the results were later translated from Finnish into English.

TABLE 3 Background information of the interviewees

| Name | Age | Accompanied/ alone | Returning/ new customer | Date | Duration |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| John | 74 | accompanied | returning | 27.11.2014 | 16 min |
| Martha | 69 | accompanied | returning | 27.11.2014 | 22 min |
| Linda | 75 | accompanied | returning | 27.11.2014 | 17 min |
| Sam | 68 | accompanied | returning | 27.11.2014 | 23 min |
| Mark | 76 | accompanied | returning | 27.11.2014 | 18 min |
| Sally | 58 | accompanied | returning | 27.11.2014 | 20 min |
| Kelly | 33 | alone | returning | 27.11.2014 | 14 min |
| Hugh | 44 | alone | returning | 27.11.2014 | 10 min |
| Cindy | 51 | alone | returning | 28.11.2014 | 11 min |
| Jenny | 39 | alone | returning | 28.11.2014 | 15 min |
| Aaron | 44 | accompanied | returning | 28.11.2014 | 11 min |
| Roger | 59 | alone | returning | 28.11.2014 | 19 min |
| Sean | 42 | alone | returning | 28.11.2014 | 12 min |
| Tim | 49 | accompanied | returning | 28.11.2014 | 13 min |
| Lisa | 50 | accompanied | returning | 28.11.2014 | 16 min |
| Jack | 65 | alone | returning | 28.11.2014 | 17 min |
| Bruce | 56 | alone | returning | 29.11.2014 | 12 min |
| Cynthia | 70 | alone | returning | 29.11.2014 | 12 min |
| Teresa | 57 | accompanied | returning | 29.11.2014 | 21 min |
| Bill | 63 | accompanied | returning | 29.11.2014 | 17 min |

## 3.2.2   Direct observation in the field

Direct observation of actual customer movement took place at two separate weekends in November of 2014. The chosen times were selected, as the compa-

ny's management had previously recognized that especially Sundays had been the busiest business days of the week (i.e. on average), and therefore, among other phenomena, measuring the potential effects of crowding would be the most optimal at this time. The findings of Hui et al (2009) and Yada (2011) emphasized the customers to browse and circulate the most at the beginnings of their shopping trips. Their findings served as a stimulus to concentrate on what is actually happening in the first sections of the store, i.e. right after the entry. This was also Kodin Terra's management's aspiration, as the first sections feature open grid layout displaying seasonal products and the products that the company finds the most probable to be bought on an impulse. Figure 14 illustrates the floor plan, the points of entries and exits, information points and cash registers. The sections of the store are divided in zones in order to maintain the ease of legibility. The zones are explained in Table 4. It is to be noted that the floor plan is by no means an exact illustration, as the zones might not even be in proportions, and number of aisles have product displays placed in them (not shown in the figure), yet the floor plan provides a general overview of the establishment. Figure 14 was the actual tool used to record customer movement manually, by individually drawing the actualized shopping paths of different customers on the map.

Because the timing of collecting customer behavior data was the beginning of winter season in Finland, the zones 1 and 2 (displaying mostly summer garden furniture, and plants) were left out of contemplation. The actual observing took place at a vantage point near the store ceiling, above section 7, giving a great lookout over the zones 3, 4, 5, 6, 19, 20, the main entry area and the checkout area. As a result of observing the customers traffic on two separate weekends, a total number of 148 customer shopping paths were recorded and analyzed. A visual illustration and remarks on the observations are provided in chapter 4.3.2, in Figure 14.



FIGURE 14 Kodin Terra's floor plan map

TABLE 4 Explanations of shopping zones

| 1 | Plants, fertilizers & soil | 20 | Light fittings and electrical supplies |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Grills, garden furniture, watering, garden ornaments & pots | 21 | Personal protective equipment and industrial protective clothing |
| 3 | Gardening tools | 22 | Fixings and fittings |
| 4 | Animal food & pet supplies | 23 | HPAC (heating, plumbing, air-conditioning) appliances and supplies |
| 5 | Greenery & pots | 24 | Fireplaces, sauna stoves and supplies |
| 6 | Decoration accessories | 25 | Lumber and sheeting |
| 7 | Ornaments | 26 | Sauna benches |
| 8 | Composting & gardening machines | 27 | Tools |
| 9 | Bathroom fittings | 28 | Doors and windows |
| 10 | Sinks and faucets | 29 | Decoration paneling |
| 11 | Large domestic appliances | 30 | Contractor and business services, house package sales |
| 12 | Kitchen furniture | 31 | Construction papers |
| 13 | Housekeeping | 32 | Sawing service |
| 14 | Wallpapers and supplies | 33 | Model kitchens and kitchen package sales |
| 15 | Paints and supplies | 34 | Shower cubicles and shower walls |
| 16 | Tiles and supplies | 35 | Countertops |
| 17 | Tile facings | 36 | Flooring |
| 18 | Cover strips | 37 | Plastic membrane and terrace carpets |
| 19 | Carpets and curtains | 38 | Pick up area for separately ordered items |

## 3.3 Data analysis

In field studies, which comprise of information congregated abreast by both interviewing and observing study subjects, the analyzing of information occurs

along the entire process of conducting the research, instead of strictly in a certain phase of the research (Hirsjärvi, Liikanen, Remes & Sajavaara 1986). According to Grönfors (1982) part of the analyzing process is revising the research problems, concepts and attributes in the field. Moreover, the researcher constructs analysis of the phenomena occurring in the field during the process of gathering information or even before it, either systematically or implicitly (Grönfors 1982). This occurred partially conducting this study withal, as the researcher had paid three visits to the store deliberately assessing the store atmosphere, layout and point-of-purchase displays before the actual field study phase had taken place. Hence, it can be said analysis at a vague level had already commenced as the research problems were yet to be composed to their final form.

Hirsjärvi et al (1986) emphasize that the method of analysis needs to be of such type that induces answers to the existing research problems the most efficaciously. Relative to this study, the most suitable method of analysis was thematic analysis, amassing the larger themes derived from the interviewed and observed information, and categorizing the results in specific themes (Toivonen 1999). The theoretical framework of this study divides into three major topics (store atmosphere, store layout, impulse buying), yet intertwining into an unified larger entirety of in-store marketing within a hardware retail complex, making thematic analysis an applicable method of analysis for this particular study.

When analyzing themed interviews, the material is often transcribed literally, but according to Toivonen (1999) literal transcriptions are not always necessary, should the core object of the interviews be submitting information not collected from other sources. In other words, as discourse analysis is not at the core of interest within this study, the problematic literal approach which often leads to arcane results is left out (Toivonen 1999). Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2009) propose that when the ultimate endeavor is to achieve the essential content of an interview answer, the role of the researcher is to deduce what to record and what to omit, i.e. to identify when the interviewee describes themes under contemplation. When the researcher knows the material well and recognizes the relevant themes quickly, the assessment for the need of recording literal dialogues or not eases (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009). As the topics of this study are relatively easy to grasp and hardware retailing as a sector is fairly familiar to the researcher, the outlining of important themes was pellucid and therefore literal transcriptions of interview material were not seen to be expedient.

# 4 RESULTS

The results of the study follow the presented theoretical background, by first segmenting the shopper types, goals and motives coming about. Consecutively, the store atmospherics and the customer responses to individual atmospheric variables are assessed (i.e. music, scent, lighting, human variables). The current layout of Kodin Terra and its implications on customer responses (i.e. actualized shopping paths and general customer opinions) are discussed. Finally, the occurred impulse purchase behavior, and more likely, the factors inducing this behavior are reviewed. The construction of the results chapter adheres to the theoretical framework presented in Figure 13, summarizing the interconnections and causalities in the S-O-R setting within Kodin Terra store. Furthermore, to improve the legibility of the study, a visual summary of the findings is provided in chapter 4.5.

## 4.1 Segmentation of shopper types and shopping motives

As explained in chapters 2.1 and 2.2, to fully understand the retail store environment, the shopper types and shopping motives needed to be first disentangled. First, the typical shopping motives and goals were discussed. Taking account of Kodin Terra's main sector of business, hardware retailing, the presumption was that most of the shoppers would arrive to shop with task-related and utilitarian shopping motives, i.e. looking for something to satisfy a consciously acknowledged, exact or vague, but pre-defined need. However, as the interviews were dated on November, right under Christmas season, recreational shopping, browsing and finding new ideas were expected shopping motives accordingly. The customer interviews proved these presumptions right. That is to say, a great majority of the respondents were guided by mental or actual shopping lists, as their initial shopping motives were driven by recognized needs or out-of-store communication, i.e. deals and offers. Nonetheless, shoppers seeking hedonic value in their shopping experience did represent a small

minority of the respondents. Their goals to shop were mainly getting new ideas, browsing and finding good deals. Notwithstanding the interviewees were mainly in search of utilitarian products, yet some products that could be described as hedonic were represented too, such as flowers and plants and esthetic or decorative items. As Lee's and Ariely's (2006) and Gollwitzer's (1999) theorizations prompted, the shoppers' goals are generally ill-defined and likely to be changed due the available environmental cues. This was partially verified in this study accordingly, as the majority of respondents related usually having a vague shopping list for their trips, but also that the exact product choices normally clarified within the store, much due to store personnel's recommendations, price reductions and available selection. However, strict compliance of shopping lists was not a rare occurrence either, i.e. out-of-store communication has its important role to play as well. Regardless, the findings of incomplete shopping goals emphasize the need for personnel's salesmanship and product related expertise.

The customers perceived their initial motives to shop at Kodin Terra (i.e. why this particular store was chosen over its competitors) to be low price levels and a wide selection of goods. Furthermore, the typology of shopping motives and thus the shopper types among Kodin Terra customers was formed. This study did not record quantitative data, but it can be roughly said that the responses in customer interviews and the observed shopper movement do support the earlier categorization and distribution of shopper types in a new format store by Sinha and Uniyal (2005) (see Table 1). Themes such as variety seeking, quality consciousness, information gathering, pre-decisiveness, straightforward maneuvering, specific product area targeting, discount seeking, budget consciousness, and especially personnel consulting were repeated within the interviews:

> **Kelly:** *"Yes, the sales clerk helped me, first of all, by finding the right aisles and racks and ultimately by helping me to pick the suitable product for my needs."*

> **Cindy:** *"No because the personnel greeted and helped me right then when I walked in, and before I even got to thinking about asking them for help. And I did get all the answers and recommendations for the products that I ended up buying too."*

Task completion and easy orientation were seen to be more important determinants of customer satisfaction within Kodin Terra, than positive or epicurean store atmosphere. Thus, the noted distribution of shopper types emphasizes the need for proper signage, maneuverable layout and availability of support for the customer's search process.

Babin's and Attaway's (2000) concept of positive and negative affects having an effect on utilitarian and hedonic shopping values and thus on customer share (see Figure 3) served as a baseline to study customers' general view of why they shop at Kodin Terra, how they perceive the store as an entirety and what kind of value they seek from the store. The previous literature suggested

overall perceptions of store layout, design, signage, employee and customer appearance etc. to elicit different emotions, and thus affect customers' approach avoidance behaviors, willingness to buy, price perceptions, perceived value and customer satisfaction (Baker et al 1992; Babin et al 1994; Darden & Babin 1994; Donovan et al 1994; Babin & Darden 1996). Generally, the customers had difficulties expressing their associations and perceptions of their visits at the store. More so, the respondents' thoughts on how the store and its atmosphere effect their mood were rather neutral. However, once again, the selection of goods and the role of personnel were emphasized to be the most important mediators of consumer emotions and affecting on how much they give their customer share to Kodin Terra:

> **Linda:** *"Well I just said to my husband how friendly the staff here is. Right when we got in, we were greeted friendly and asked if we needed any help. That was something that gave me a really positive feeling, and who knows, maybe even got us staying longer."*

> **Jack:** *"I remember when this place first opened, it was good then for a couple years. But then at some point, maybe for two years or so, I was actually annoyed to come here and I could actually feel my mood drop. It just felt like those clerks were almost like hiding behind the racks. And a lot of people agreed with me. But now things have gotten way better, and I like to come here again."*

However, iterative discounts and offers and a perceivably large range of goods were seen to positively influence customers' shopping experiences as well:

> **Teresa:** *"Yes, the presentation of inexpensive products and offers was positive to me. Just the presence of them gives me a good overall feeling about my shopping, and I tend to browse a whole lot more. We actually got here just to grab a few things, but the discounts got me in a good mood and I ended up buying some extras too."*

> **Sally:** *"Hmm… Well I guess I come here for those aha-moments, which is a positive thing! By those moments I mean the selection of goods. It's nice to come here every now and then to check out what kinds of new items they have in stock."*

Next, the respondents were inquired how the impacts of the overall store atmosphere reflect to the courses of their actualized shopping trips. The rationale to canvass this relies on the notions of customers' approach and avoidance behaviors being mediated by negative and positive affects, which again result from associations of store atmosphere (Babin & Attaway 2000; Turley & Milliman 2000). This study fully supports the previous findings, positive affects leading to increased customer share and satisfaction with shopping and similarly negative associations decreasing customer share and satisfaction. Interestingly though, as positive affects seemed to have positive influences in building cus-

tomer shares, none of the respondents recognized their patronage to ensue consciously centralized shopping behavior caused by the store atmosphere. But instead, if centralized shopping behavior did take place, it was discerned to be mostly due to perceivably low price levels, S-Group membership card's loyalty benefits and a big variety in selection of goods. The interviews yielded following answers on how the atmospheric conditions affect the respondents' shopping trips' completions:

> **Roger:** *"I'd say reaching the personnel is the key determinant of the overall shopping experience, and often has an impact on making the actual purchase or not. When you get help and recommendations, it is easier to make purchase decisions and the entire shopping trip goes smoother too. I find other influences of the overall atmosphere hard to assess, but I've probably had quite positive experiences here, because often I find myself browsing here quite long."*

> **Cynthia:** *"I think the atmosphere has a great impact on everything. For example myself, I'm one of those "aha-buyers" who reacts to the surroundings. If a hardware store could somehow have a more inspiring atmosphere, it might just be that I'd buy more. If the presentations and displays were better, it would affect my mood and behavior a lot."*

> **Hugh:** *"About the atmosphere… Maybe Kodin Terra is such a big store that you don't want to go through the trouble of going round the whole store. So in that regard, the layout and the signage play a big role. You need to know where the things you're looking for exactly are, because at least I don't want to go around the whole store. So maybe I actually spend less time here than at some smaller store."*

In sum, the customers of Kodin Terra seek mostly utilitarian value in their shopping experiences, but the previous findings of customers demanding more than goods acquisition, i.e. pleasure in shopping, were also discovered in a hardware store environment (Berry 1996; Babin & Attaway 2000). The need for support in purchase decisions (availability, competence and friendliness of personnel), a maneuverable and clear layout were the most recurring themes in relation to positive affects and distribution of customer share. Negative affects and thus avoidance behavior were mostly linked to discontentment with possibly unattainable or absent personnel.

## 4.2   Store atmospherics eliciting moods

The results of the atmospheric factors' impacts on interviewed customers' moods are discussed accordingly to the presented theoretical background in chapter 2.4, by first addressing the selected components of general interior (mu-

sic, scent and lighting) and then reviewing the perceived impacts of human variables.

### 4.2.1 Impacts of general interior

Kodin Terra had piped-in music playing throughout the store at the times of the customer visits and interviews. The type of the played music was common popular music, Finnish and international, directed mostly towards middle-aged and elderly people. The tempo of the music could be described as average, it being not very slow, nor very fast. As it was early Christmas season, Christmas music was being played at times as well. The volume was rather low at all times. With aural climate like this, the presumption of the impacts of music was in accordance with Yalch's and Spangenberg's (1990) conclusion of only few shoppers notifying the music consciously. Albeit, several researchers deciphered the impacts of music to be psychologically inclined, showing manifestations on the amount of time and money spent, pace of movement and pleasure and arousal (Smith & Curnow 1966; Milliman 1982; Turley & Milliman 2000; Lam 2001; Garlin & Owen 2006; Andersson, Kristensson, Wästlund & Gustafsson 2012;). Even if testing these subconscious reactions to atmospheric music was outside the limits of this study, the customers were asked about their conscious reactions on in-store music. Firstly, the customers were asked if they notified the prevailing music in the background, and as expected, the majority of the respondents said they paid little or no attention to the piped-in music. Additionally, the respondents were asked how they generally feel about in-store music, and what kinds of emotions and implications background music evokes:

> **Martha:** *"Actually I didn't even notice the music, but hey, but at least it means I wasn't annoyed by it! My husband did notice it at some level, but thought it was still rather unnoticeable, because fortunately it wasn't very loud. But generally speaking, loud Christmas carols and such are very irritating. Thankfully they weren't being played here."*

> **Sam:** *"We did hear the music, although we didn't pay attention to it, nor reacted to it anyhow. So I could say it wasn't very irritating, but not very inspiring either. By and large quiet music can be nicely soothing and helps focusing on browsing the products, and creates a sense of relaxation. Too loud music is never good!"*

> **Sally:** *"I don't care much for music but quiet music goes just fine. That is not disturbing. It is important for someone using a hearing aid that there is no external undertone, because it makes it more difficult to interact with the store personnel. But again, quiet music is ok."*

To conclude, piped-in music was seen to have little impact on Kodin Terra customers, and was seldom consciously notified. Yet, quiet music in the background was recognized to promote positive emotions and shopping relaxation.

Surprisingly, among the interviewed Kodin Terra customers, age and gender did not alter the opinions on in-store music, as opposed to the findings of Andersson et al (2012). At the same time, 4 of the respondents reported no-music ambience to be the most preferable, which does support the previous results of Andersson et al (2012).

Store scent was the second component of general interior under contemplation and the preconceived notion on customer responses to store scent was similar with responses to music, i.e. the actual effects on shopping behavior would be manifested primarily at a subconscious level and would be difficult to measure. At the times of the interviews, the surrounding odor atmosphere was natural and induced by the artifacts displayed in the store premises, i.e. no artificial, congruent or non-congruent scents were emphasized. Again, although laboratory-type testing with varying scent climates and accordingly recording alterations in shopping behavior was beyond the limitations of this study, customers' general opinions on the current non-scented, or more like natural and product inventory inflicted ambience and its conscious effects on customers were reviewed. Accordingly with the existing literature, customers' opinions on the congruency of the scent with the store type were examined (Parsons 2009). The findings indicated that none of the respondents paid attention to the predominant odor, much likely due to the rather neutral or utmost very mild scent climate. Yet, when speaking about scent congruency, the customer responses brought forward that a neutral scent was indeed congruent with a hardware type store. More so, importance of cleanliness and freshness of the air was accentuated as some of the products being sold were considered to have inherently negative smells, such as plastics and paints. As the previous finding was somewhat expected, the interviewees were further inquired about the most preferable scent climate for their personal shopping experiences. The responses were fairly unanimous, the smells associated with wood products, plants and flowers were regarded as positive, whereas artificial incongruent smells were seen to promote negative associations. The question of preferring plain natural scents, enhanced and congruent natural scents or odorless ambience was twofold, i.e. scents of wood, plants and flowers were recognized as positive, but these natural scents should not be given emphasis on, and on the other hand, completely odorless premises were seen as equally appealing. The lack of interest for enhanced scent ambiences might be due to consumer's general first thought on emphasizing odors with commercial purposes, i.e. the enhanced scents might be foreseen of being overly dominant, disturbing, and easily distinguishable as artificial and adhesive to clothing. Regardless, the typical customer responses were:

> **Kelly:** *"Well I guess you would kind of assume, say if you go to check out a section with wooden floors or such, to smell wood of course. And it smells quite nice actually. So, artificial scent ambiences are something I don't want. I guess I want something between natural scents and the odorless environment."*

**Jenny:** *"I would not like a scented atmosphere, the materials being sold here should be experienced as they are, by that I mean they should also smell like the actually do. So therefore, I don't want any additional smells at a hardware store."*

**Martha***: "From my point of view, this could be a completely odorless store. My husband agrees with me on that one. Though, one does have to acknowledge that certain products just naturally come with certain smells. But it's ok when the store is this big. Enhancing anything… There's certainly no need in my opinion."*

Based on the interview materials, the earlier propositions (suggesting that when there are natural scents present, congruent scent is required (Parsons 2009), and sometimes non-scented conditions are favored (Spangenberg et al 1996)) were attested in this particular hardware setting as well.

The third component of general interior within this study concerned store lighting. At the times of the interviewed customers' visits, fluorescent strip lights hung up in the rather high ceiling mainly constructed the lighting of Kodin Terra, excluding the lighting sections with presentation lamps turned on and few sections with separate display lights, such as wallpaper section. The intensity of the lighting could be described as fairly bright or normal, i.e. ambient lighting conditions or considerably highlighting display spotlights were not used. The interviewees were inquired about their gratification and opinions on the current lighting setup, and similarly about their opinions on possible different lighting conditions in a hardware store, such as dimmer "soft lighting" conditions or bright lighting conditions with emphasizing spotlights. The interviews yielded inconsistent responses, as some of the respondents perceived the current lighting conditions even as disturbingly bright, whereas some thought the lights were too dim, making product descriptions hard to read. Two respondents even recognized ambient lighting conditions to influence their shopping behavior positively, i.e. resulting in improved mood states and longer shopping times. However, the majority of the interviewees were content with the current lighting setup, reporting that an ambient or "soft lighting" was not desirable at a hardware store, but were perhaps open to having brighter display spotlights:

**Sean:** *"The lighting here is pretty ok. A person of my age still sees pretty well, though I could imagine elderly people having trouble reading the product information, so I could imagine having even brighter lighting. Therefore bright spotlights in certain spots would be ok. Ambient lighting is something I wouldn't want to see in here, at a store like this you should really be able to properly see the products you're looking at.*

**Roger:** *"I think the lighting is good as it is now, I can't complain. Generally, I think the lighting affects the overall presentation of the product a lot. It is way easier to navigate towards products which are somehow distinguishably and nicely presented. The lightings should be organized accordingly with different prod-*

*uct categories. On the other hand, exaggerated, in your face lighting is something I definitely don't want, especially by the entrance."*

**Kelly:** *"The lighting was pretty good, or at least sufficient for me. But then, some products could be lit with brighter lights to make them stand out better. And on a second thought, showroom furnishings and such should have ambient soft lights."*

This study does not take a stand on the question of the lighting having an effect on the customers' behavior of examining and handling the merchandise at a hardware retail setting, but it does support the rationale of the previous studies indicating how better-illuminated merchandise being the more favorable lighting condition (Areni & Kim 1994; Summers & Hebert 2001).

### 4.2.2 Human variables as atmospheric effects

As mentioned earlier in this study (see chapter 2.4.2), human variables are a two-fold notion (i.e. customers' and employees' impacts on and perceptions of atmospheric cues can be measured separately), yet this study focuses solely on customers' perspective on how they perceive human variables as atmospheric effects at Kodin Terra. Firstly, the effects of crowding were discussed. The interviews took place at weekend afternoons and between 3pm and 7pm on weekdays, since these were recognized to be the busiest business hours of the week and therefore presenting the most probable circumstances to enable perceived effects of crowding. Regardless of the selected hours, and despite the fact that it was Christmas season, no effects of crowding concerning other patrons were recognized among the respondent group. Kodin Terra's vast floor space of 14 000 m$^2$, and hardware retailing as a type of business (not know for huge shopping rushes or shopping sprees) were probably the reasons enabling the crowding-free shopping environment.

The respondents were similarly inquired about their perceptions of crowding concerning objects (products, racks, displays, signs etc.), as the previous literature suggested that spatial crowding perceptions are equally as important determinants of shopper satisfaction as human crowding perceptions are (Eroglu & Machleit 1990; Machleit et al 1994). The aforementioned floor space and the volume of the product assortment of 35 000 different product items put the space to merchandise ratio in perspective. Regardless of this ratio, the perceptions of crowding are individually bound and moderated by situational and individual factors (Eroglu et al 2005), yet still being an interesting avenue to encompass in order to gain general comprehension how Kodin Terra's customers perceive the current effects of crowding. As the previous literature suggested, the results were also individually bound, i.e. showing disharmonious perceptions:

**Bruce:** *"I think some areas of the store, like the main aisles, are a little too stuffed with products, and sometimes it feels a bit rammed to get around properly, especially with shopping carts."*

Yet again, whereas 1 out of 4 respondents experienced sensations of spatial crowding (such as the latter respondent comment), the remaining 3 out of 4 were rather pleased with the store's current space to merchandise ratio, responding typically like the following comment:

**Mark:** *"No, I don't think it is crowded at all in here. Perhaps that is one of the reasons keeping me coming here, because they don't have too much stuff crammed in here. The products are displayed clearly and there is space to move around, which is absolutely important to me. Even more important it is to get to move around with the cart."*

Regardless of the interviewees' perceptions on the store's current usage of space, the respondents had, not surprisingly, congruent opinions on the ideal floor space to products allocation: wide and accessible aisles were the most preferred.

Next aspect of human variables, the customer's perceptions about the effects of store personnel as a part of store atmospherics (quantity, availability, physical aspects and behavioral aspects) were discussed. As the results of this study and the previous literature suggests, the importance of personnel' effect on customer satisfaction, repeated visits and value creation cannot be emphasized too much in a retailing context (Bitner 1992; Bagdare 2012; Kim & Kim 2012, Bagdare 2013). First, the customer comments on satisfaction with the quantity and availability of personnel:

**Cindy:** *"Yes. Every time that I've come here, I've always asked for assistance right away, and I've always been given that too. This time I didn't even make it to asking for help, but they got a hold of me the minute I stepped in. And this is something I consider highly important, or maybe even the reason why I shop here in the first place."*

**Sam:** *"Yes we've been satisfied. We, at least, encountered several sales clerks providing assistance. Even though we didn't need help this time, it is nice feel you've been acknowledged. Surely it is pretty slow now, I don't know how it's like if they ever have rush-hours here."*

The previous customer comments were representative of the majority of the responses. However, as it came about in chapter 4.1, identifying the store personnel as the single most important determinant of store atmospherics, should the personnel not be available for one reason or another, the few of the respondents who felt they had experienced mishandle, the tone in their expressions was highly negative:

**Cynthia:** *"Today I was pleased. But on some of my previous visits, they (store personnel) have been just so hard to find. Especially when you need to ask for something, be sure there's no one around. And often if you find someone, you just*

*get a careless wave of hand towards the right aisle, and a quick guidance of this section, that aisle and those shelves… And I'm telling you, that is the biggest red flag for someone of my age. Why wouldn't they just politely take you to the right place or even better pick up the product for you like "here, you're welcome". That would surely be the best, I think!"*

The discussion about store personnel as a part of store atmospherics continued with the personnel's physical attributes. The work of Kim and Kim (2012) depicted the human-related environmental stimuli i.e. sales associates' work uniforms, physical attractiveness, demographics (e.g. age, sex and ethnicity) and non-verbal cues (e.g. smiles and gestures) to manifest cognitional, emotional and behavioral response (see Figure 7). These responses were ambitiously pursued to be recorded in the interviews, yet being aware of the possibility of the interviewees having trouble assessing their, perhaps unconscious behavior and perceptions commensurate to these stimuli. Kodin Terra employs around 50 people, whom consist of solely Caucasian men and women of different ages. Contrary to the preconceived notion of respondents' trouble to assess their reactions, a surprisingly wide array of commentary came about:

**Kelly:** *"Well at least with this visit, from what I gathered, the personnel had pretty youthful image, which makes them maybe somehow easier to approach. And about their uniforms and other physical attributes, I'd say they were quite smartly dressed, without being mucky or anything. And I do find it important that sales clerks also look convincing, it gives an instant feel of reliability."*

**Cynthia:** *"I haven't paid any attention to the sex of the employees here, though I did notice most of them are quite young here. For my taste, a smile could come off a little easier from them, but there are some sunny people here too. Oh, and the personnel at the more traditional hardware section, like tools and such, have given an impression of high expertise, and that certainly builds overall trust."*

**Cindy:** *"Well I guess I could give an example: last time I was buying some flooring and there was this older male sales person presenting me the products. And I instantly felt very convinced for what he was saying. And that's just how it goes, I don't think I would've felt convinced at all should there have been a kid in his twenties."*

In sum, it seems the customers tend to evaluate personnel's physical aspects very individually, giving relatively high importance to various, seemingly insignificant or trivial attributes. However, the interviews yielded two repeating answers: older aged and compelling personnel and consistent and tidy work uniforms were seen as facilitators of trustworthiness.

Finally, sales associates' behavioral attributes were discussed. To be precise, the customers' responses to sales associates' personal characteristics and sales interaction were under contemplation. The results supported the propositions of Kim and Kim (2012) and Bagdare (2012; 2013), as in highlighting the

role of well-trained, knowledgeable, well behaved and motivated staff in creating positive overall retail experiences and customer satisfaction. To enliven these findings, customer quotations are demonstrated:

> **Roger:** *"Personnel's skills are extremely important, at least to me. Polite behavior and that they don't force-feed products, and also that the sales clerk can read the situation what the customer might want or need are something I consider to be of high expertise in their work. Proficiency is also emphasized. It feels really annoying if you, as a customer, feel like you know more about the product or whatnot than the clerk does!"*

> **Hugh:** *"No matter where you go in here, people are really friendly and joyful, but still decorous. It feels like this group here has been trained a little longer, instead of just being pulled straight out of some employment office's line. And that's what I've gathered from the very first time I came here, and that's why I come here, because you get a feeling that they've really invested in the staff here, and I'm sure other people have noticed it too."*

> **Tim:** *I was just there looking at some tiles and there was this clerk glancing at me, but she let me browse and take my time. She probably saw I wasn't trying to make contact and she let me be. So there wasn't any hustling or anything like that. And I just thought to myself how well that was handled. I think good interaction can be something like that too."*

On the contrary to the mostly positive commentary on sales associates' behavioral attributes, randomly occurring cursory responses to customer's questions and inquiries were seen as one avenue of development. The respondents felt the personnel should never handle customers dismissively, even if the purchase or a problem might seem insignificant or small.

## 4.3   Store layout and orientation

Newman et al (2002) advanced the customers' tendency not to consciously evaluate the individual factors gaining their attention within a store environment, nor the aspects of the store's layout. Nevertheless, this study attempts to bore into customers' perceptions of general layout, information rate, which factors determine their orientation and to attain an overview of typical entry routes and most heavily trafficked aisles near the entry and exit points of Kodin Terra. First, general perceptions are discussed, then typical actualized shopping paths are examined with observed material and finally the factors behind customer movement are argued alongside the observations.

### 4.3.1 Customer perceptions of layout's components

Previous literature had made interesting observations about the possible impacts of a store's layout on customers: 1) positive emotional responses to layout are predictors of store loyalty intentions, 2) well-designed, low-congestion layouts invoke positive emotions, 3) wide and clean aisles and consistency in layout are preferred attributes, 4) layout influences shoppers' mood and thereby the amount spent within the store and 5) clear and legible store designs reduce uncertainty and shopping stress often associated with large floor spaces (Donovan & Rossiter 1982; Aylott & Mitchell 1998; Yoo et al 1998; Newman et al 2002; Huddleston et al 2004). The attempt of this study was to test the tenability of these allegations in a hardware-retailing context. Generally speaking the customers perceived the store as easily maneuverable, but much due to the fact that all of the respondents were returning customers. For this reason, many respondents described their current and first experiences in the store:

> **Jenny:** *"Rationality is highly important at a store like this. Like, for example, if you're looking at lavatory bowls, you assume to find everything bathroom related in the next aisle. That sort of ease in orientation is important in a store this big to save time and my nerves."*

> **Bill:** *"We've been here pretty often, so we pretty much know our way around here. Although if you come here as a first-timer, your eyes will surely spin all over the place, like "where am I supposed to go now", just because the sheer size of the store."*

> **Aaron:** *"Well, big stores like this always have the problem with finding things, that is if you don't visit very often. Then you're pretty much dependent on the signs and such... I don't know if they have one here, but if the entrance had a map about the layout, it would surely be helpful."*

Not all of the respondents however regarded the store as clear and manageable. In this instance, the role of the store personnel's assistance was again emphasized:

> **Kelly:** *It's a little difficult to get around here. Even though I'm trying to read the signs, it's still hard for me to picture where I'm supposed to go. Then I just usually ask for help.*

> **Roger:** *"I can say, that I know the store and I'm accustomed to coming here, but especially if you're here for the first time, you probably need to consult the personnel to find or escort you to what you're looking for. No matter how much and how good the signs they have here, I think the only way to ensure a positive experience is to ask the clerks."*

The personnel's importance was clearly not the only component providing manageability. Granted that Kodin Terra currently has a floor map hanging from the ceiling above the entry area, few customers noticed it. Therefore, providing better positioned floor plan maps throughout the store would help customers navigate should the personnel not be within reach.

Ultimately, store's information rate (i.e. the number of information units within a certain time interval, e.g. signs and visual aids), ease of finding products and a sense of personal control concerning orientation were discussed. The results implied the current information rate to be perceived of being at its optimal level as it currently is. That is, the respondents beheld the current amount of signs providing an optimal level of attraction, feeling neither overloaded nor shorthanded with information. However some room for improvements was also found:

> **Bruce:** *"The signs at the ends of the aisles should be bigger. The main signs, the big ones over there are pretty ok, but smaller signposts would be easier to notice if they were a bit bigger or at a different angle. On the other hand, I think the amount of information itself was sufficient."*

> **Jack:** *"I don't look at the signs that much, I just go and ask someone. But sometimes when the clerks just tell me where to go, I find it a little annoying, because I will probably forget where I was supposed to go. So the best is to come and show where everything is. But sure I understand if they're busy sometimes… However, if I need to go alone, then it is important that there's plenty of information in rational order."*

The satisfaction with the provided signposts was manifested in the fulfillments of the respondent's shopping goals, i.e. each of the respondents felt they found the products they were looking for with little effort. Abreast of fulfilling the goals, the importance of sense of personal control and mastery about the surrounding environment was emphasized within hardware retailing context. The current layout facilitated this sense of control, yet customers' paths being mildly led or manipulated by pertinent displays and discounts was seen to be a positive implementation of layout design:

> **Teresa:** *"We sure felt like we were our own masters here. On the other hand we just browsed and circled around today, so on a shopping trip like this, a little leading layout wouldn't harm either. I mean if they want us to be led by good deals. But generally, if I'm looking for something specific, that personal control and clarity in layout is important. I think finding the product and being able to exit quickly too is normally more important at a hardware store like this. For example, having to go always through the whole store, like in IKEAs would be burdensome."*

> **Hugh:** *"Generally speaking I felt I controlled my journey around the store, but I went after discount racks. So in that sense my path was somehow manipulated, but I didn't regard that as something negative, quite the opposite actually."*

**Bruce:** *"I don't think I was anyhow led by manipulative store design. And I think it is absolutely important to feel like I'm able to choose my own path here in this type of a store. Quick transitions to where ever I'm going are the key. I don't think anyone comes here with the intention of going through the whole store."*

To conclude, customer opinions once again stress the importance of store design's clarity, the ease of orientation, the volume of information and sign posts, apposite arrangement of discount racks and ultimately the availability of personal assistance.

## 4.3.2 Customer traffic and typical entry section routes

The uppermost objection of deciphering customers' actualized shopping paths concentrates in the main entry and exit zone of the store. The rationale behind observing these sections lays behind the layout patterns. The entry/exit sections embody open grid layout pattern, whereas other parts of the store represent a more organized shelf arrangement where customers are more likely to follow more purpose driven paths. Furthermore, Kodin Terra recognized the entry section to be the most fruitful section for development. Figure 15 illustrates the floor plan of Kodin Terra and the typical entry routes based on the 148 recorded shopping paths. The previously presented findings of Harrell et al (1980), Hui et al (2009) and Yada (2011) exemplified the customers' tendency to circulate and cluster near the entrance of the store. This was recognized to be due to the enticement to shop where other shoppers are present (i.e. following the paths of other shoppers) and perceived intensifying time pressure towards the end of the trip (Hui et al 2009; Yada 2011). The findings partially support these phenomena, albeit only 1 out of 4 patrons seemed to be in a browsing mode. The black line illustrates this in Figure 15. Nevertheless, this could not be explained by the social impact of certain areas tempting customers to visit the zone, since the customer traffic was always rather slow and crowding of any sort was not detected at any times of the observations. Instead, the browsing in the first sections might just be due to the link between perceived time pressure and general browsing and shopping mode. The sections of the store that the customers in browsing mode typically circulated in the most are indicated with the red areas in Figure 15.

The interview material alongside observed findings clarified the utilitarian nature of shopping in hardware retail environment, as it appeared that 3 out of 4 customers were in a purpose driven shopping mode and executing pre-determined shopping trip tasks, rather than spending leisure time browsing. Yellow, blue and red lines demonstrate these purpose driven entry routes in Figure 15. The most heavily trafficked area (orange section in Figure 15) is most likely explained by the miscellaneous merchandise with deals and offers and because it is the most rectilinear route to get to the central sections of the store. With correct product placements, the second horizontal aisle from the entrance (black and yellow lines leading here in Figure 15) has the potential of being

heavily trafficked as well, as its role is now more of a passage to other sections of the store.

In addition to the conclusions of the detected paths, an interesting, yet counterproductive consideration from the retailer's point of view was made; the arrangement of entry/checkout/exit area enables an entry route through the checkout instead of the "official" entryway (blue line in Figure 15), bypassing a large coverage of the most heavily trafficked area (orange area in Figure 15) with seasonal products, offers and discounts.

Another interesting remark about the entry section was the area marked with grey in Figure 15 (i.e. vertically right after the entry area), which was clearly the least acknowledged zone, given the presumably convenient and immediate location commensurate with the entry. Albeit, it needs to be specified that although a large amount of customers do traverse the section, yet only few neither appear to pay attention nor stop to browse the racks and displays in this area.
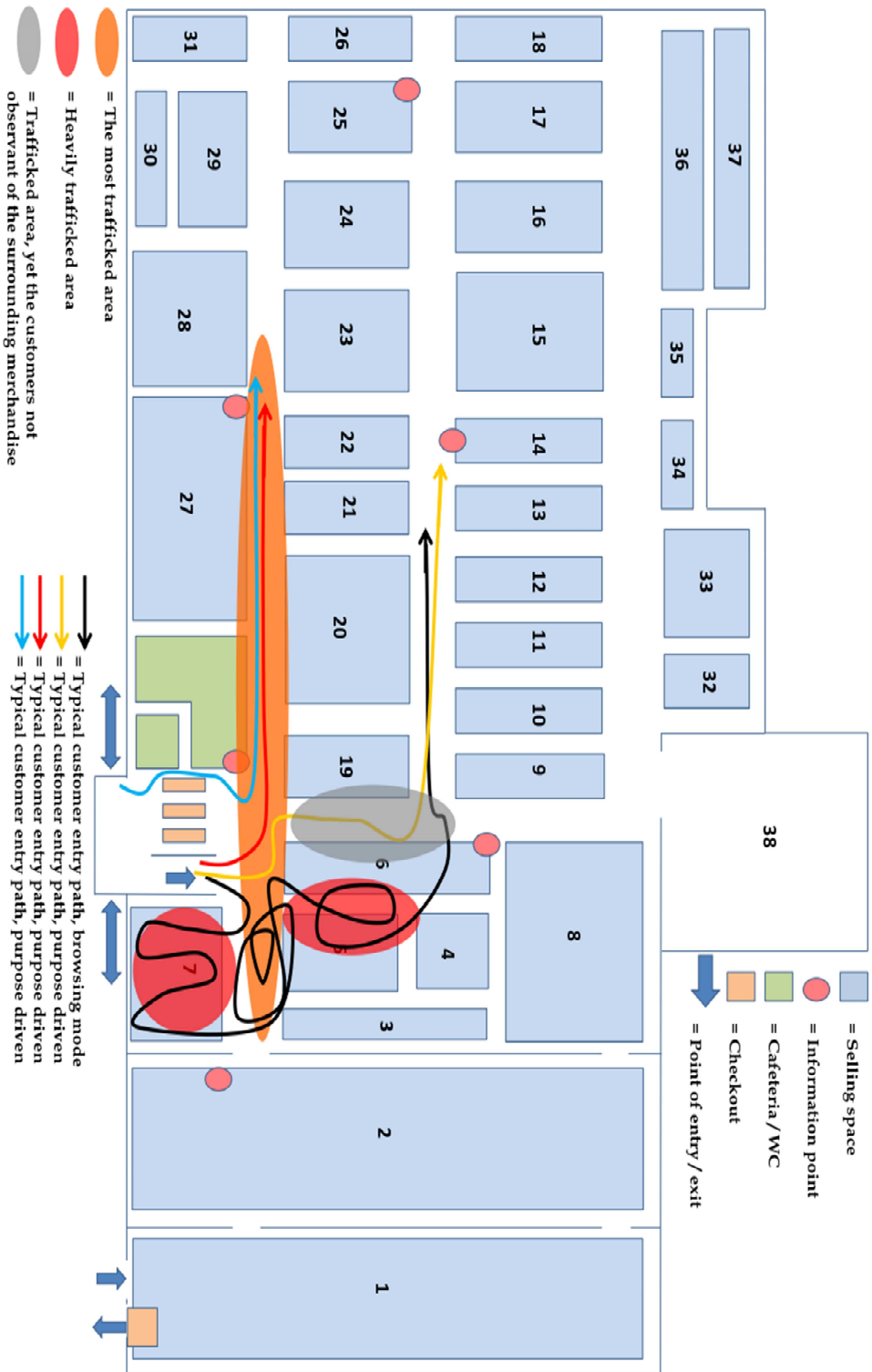
FIGURE 15 The typical customer entry routes and traffic concentration map

### 4.3.3 Factors behind customer movement

To supplement the observed shopping paths, the respondent group was interviewed about their realized paths at the ends of their visits. More so, the focus was on discussing the stimuli enticing the customers to choose the paths they chose. The first objective of the interview questions concerning shopping paths was to reflect and compare customer responses of their behavior to the observed material and to previous literature's findings (i.e. perceived time pressure, the presence of other shoppers and the composition of the shopping basket) (Harrell et al 1980; Hui et al 2009; Yada 2011).

As described earlier, the customers' shopping goals and motives were mostly of utilitarian nature, and the goals reflect the course of maneuvering the store accordingly. Additionally, all of the respondents were familiar with the store beforehand, and therefore the shoppers with pre-determined goals maneuvered the store in an accustomed and purpose driven, rational manner. However, even goal-oriented shoppers did make deviations from their otherwise straightforward routes:

> **Sally:** *"I think my path was pretty much a combination of rational maneuvering from place A to B, but alongside my pre-set goals, offers and discounts caught my attention and somewhat determined my route actually, or at least made me differ from my route a little."*

The previous phenomenon could be explained by the composition of shopping basket as the previous literature suggested, i.e. buying virtue category items "justifies" browsing and buying vice category items (Khan & Dhar 2006). In hardware retailing context, in which traditional vice category items are by and large nonexistent, the discount items can be seen to represent this category, whereas items on the pre-determined shopping list represent virtue category items. According to this mindset, strategic placing of discount items throughout all of the major passage aisles would be well reasoned, as the findings of Hui et al (2009) suggested too.

Next, as the previous literature indicated, time pressure was one of the key determinants of the course of the shopping trip (Yada 2011). However, the time pressure of Kodin Terra customers did not have to do with intensifying time pressure towards the end of the trip, but was more likely already set before entering the store and therefore putting emphasis on rational, clear and easily maneuverable store layout:

> **Cindy:** *"The biggest factor that determined my route today was time pressure. The products I needed had to be found quickly, I was planning on getting out of here quickly."*

Apart from recognized perceived time pressure and the composition of shopping basket, this study encounters the same problem as the previous literature (Newman et al 2002). That is to say, the customers fail to provide detailed

descriptions of why they chose to do what they did. Especially the patrons in browsing mode thought the turns they took were completely random, even though the observed material demonstrates a clear pattern of turning right from the entry, circulating around zones 5, 6 and 7 and then moving towards the center aisle (Figure 15). As described in the previous chapter, social impact of other shoppers could not be demonstrated in the interviewed material either, due to low congestion and large floor space of the store.

## 4.4   Occurrence of impulse purchases

In correspondence with the POPAI (1998) study, 70% of the purchases are driven by impulses. However, the study by POPAI (1998) does not make a distinction between unplanned purchases and pure impulse purchases, which again is a crucial determinant when the drivers behind these actions are discussed. Kacen et al (2012) defined impulse purchases to not include a reminder factor, but occurring at-the-moment and perhaps being affected by the store environment or the product itself, whereas unplanned purchases represented situations in which the shopper recalled that a certain product was missing from his/her home inventory.

This study revealed that the great majority of the purchases with no prior intentions of buying were more of unplanned than impulse-nature. A majority of respondents (12/20) did buy without former consideration, but only 6 out of these 12 respondents made pure impulse purchases. Nevertheless, as every interviewee was a returning customer, each also recalled making impulse purchases on their prior shopping trips to the store. The respondents were asked if their purchases were unplanned, or occurring at the spur of the moment. The following answers were the most typical among interviewees, bringing about three identified purchase patterns:

> **Roger**: *"Yes, I made some unplanned purchases today. I had some other products in mind that I came to look for today, which I also bought. But then, for example, I came across some sale racks, and I figured I need this flashlight for my car, so I decided to get it. I kind of knew beforehand that I would need this product, but I had actually forgotten to buy it. So now that it was on sale, and I saw it was a quality product, I decided to grab it."*

> **Teresa***: "I did make some impulse purchases today. It is Saturday, so we decided to do a little shopping, because we had some free time at our hands, and we decided to come here and just stroll around. This time the Christmas decorations caught my eye, which I did not even know that they sell in here, so I bought a bunch of them. I also bought some candelabras as Christmas presents for my kids' families. So I guess you could say all my purchases today were impulse purchases."*

**Kelly***: "Not this time. Though, I have made some impulse purchases on my previous visits, seasonal products and such, plants for example. Yet today I only got the things I was determined to get before coming here. And ok, at times I might have bought some essential things for the house, which I knew will be needed in the future. Granted that, it is more likely for this to happen when the price-quality ratio is right."*

The previous three exemplary customer comments bring about quintessential outcomes of impulse buying behavior in Kodin Terra. That is, the majority of the customers do make unplanned purchases, and in those cases the incentives to buy are mostly driven by the products' utilitarian benefits. These products are often considered to be needed in the future, and the purchase is most likely to occur when price reductions are combined with perceivably high quality products. The second scenario, i.e. pure impulse buying, is often related to seasonal products and promotions. Finally, the third scenario is that the customer is pre-decided and purpose driven in his shopping motives and decisions, and will not be influenced by extrinsic cues outside his shopping list.

### 4.4.1 Impulse purchase incitement

Each respondent had made unplanned purchases and impulse purchases, not necessarily on the certain shopping trip they were interviewed after, but additionally on their previous trips. Therefore, they were asked to describe their experiences about the realized impulse purchase and unplanned purchase behavior from the present and the past. This was in order to fully exploit the available respondent group, since concentrating solely on the customers who had made unplanned or impulse purchases on the days of their interviews would have yielded responses from only 12 interviewees.

Chapter 2.6.1 introduced the common stimuli eliciting impulse purchase behavior, which were recognized to be: environmental factors, individual factors, situational factors and product characteristics (Beatty & Ferrell 1998; Jones et al 2003; Mattila & Wirtz 2008; Kacen et al 2012; Mohan et al 2013). The customers of Kodin Terra were interviewed which factors were the most eminent in creating this behavior in them, and three themes were recognized to have the utmost importance: store layout, product characteristics and general mood. These results were in accordance with the findings of Kacen et al (2012) and Mohan et al (2013). The archetypal opinions on the question of which factors were the most influential in causing impulse purchases were the following:

**Sean:** *"What affects my impulse purchasing the most is the layout, or the placement of the products or whatever you call it. Mostly I buy products that I might have forgotten to buy, but the thing is, that in order for this to happen, these products need to be on my normal route. Usually these are products that I know will be needed at some point, the display itself does not matter, but yeah, the physical location needs to be right."*

> **Teresa:** *"I think I was on a shopping mood today. That definitely affected my impulse purchase behavior today. Of course the price reductions played a role too, because I think I might have bought a lot less if it was not for them. It is Christmas season, so that too affected my purchases today, seasonal products are somehow easier to buy without further consideration."*

> **Jenny:** *"Maybe it was the general mood that made me by on an impulse. One thing led to another, I came to look for certain products, I was assisted by a friendly salesperson, and then he made me consider some things I might need too… I don't know, maybe it got me on a good mood, and I ended up buying impulsively.*

The importance of layout reoccurred among nearly all of the responses, which supports the findings of Mohan et al (2013), who emphasized the importance of store layout in eliciting impulse purchases to be the most influential factor. On the other hand, the findings of Rook and Gardner (1993) were supported similarly, as the respondents' positive moods seemed to positively influence their purchase behavior. Therefore, the store atmospherics' impact on the customers' moods, the most influential store atmosphere components, and the relationship between moods and impulse purchase behavior were discussed in detail with the interviewees. It became apparent, that the respondents had rather bipartite opinions on the matter: the store atmospherics either had a great impact, or allegedly no impact whatsoever:

> **Sam:** *"I don't think it (the store atmosphere) had any kind of an effect on me. I would probably have bought the products I needed anyway, regardless of those atmosphere factors, and my mood remained completely neutral throughout the whole shopping trip. I simply needed the products I came here to buy."*

> **Aaron:** *"No, not in a hardware store. I might consider these atmospheric things more in different sorts of retail establishments, but at a hardware store the sole expectation is to buy for consciously recognized needs, on which the moods and the store atmosphere do not have an effect, I think. Even the impulse purchases here, I buy them when I know there will be a certain use for the product."*

Whereas about a half of the respondents contended neither their purchase behavior, nor the moods to not have been affected by the store atmosphere, at the same time, a half of the respondents recognized the atmospheric factors to influence them greatly:

> **Cindy:** *"I do believe that I'm affected by them (store atmospheric factors), particularly if the sales personnel is nowhere to be found, or if they appear to be somehow morose. I do feel a change in my mood then, and it's a mood that makes me not want to shop, even those minor impulse purchases that wouldn't normally require personnel assistance."*

*Bill:* "Yes probably, if the store environment is pleasant and serene, such as it is in here, then I feel comfortable and the visits tend to prolong. Spaciousness, the big variety of the selection, the displays, and primarily the general peaceful mood that this environment brings about are the factors that influence me the most, and additionally the competent personnel too! All of these probably make me buy impulsively, or at least they promote such behavior in me."

*Lisa:* "Yes, although it might not be such an important factor for me personally. Regardless, out of the store's atmospheric factors, the store personnel are the most important. A visit, when I get friendly and professional service, and when my goals for the trip are fulfilled, leaves a good mental image about the store and makes want to come back again."

As the previous customer quotes indicate, the store personnel were perceived to be distinctly the most important part of store atmospherics, as their impulse purchase behavior was contemplated. The very first contacts with the personnel, (e.g. a friendly greeting, general availability and presence) played a crucial role similarly, as some of the interviewees reported their shopping trips' completion to be determined by the first encounters with personnel. The first encounters had varying outcomes, depending on how the customer perceived the course of the encounter to have been, e.g. non-willingness to buy anything outside mandatory items on shopping lists, quick exits, general bad mood, or vice versa, prolonged visits, impulse purchases or good moods. These findings supported the previous studies by Beatty and Ferrell (1998), i.e. positive atmospherics promote longer visits, which mean becoming more exposed to stimuli, and ultimately leading to increased impulse purchases.

Next, as the existing literature had suggested that the product characteristics had fifty percent greater impact on impulse purchase decisions than retailing factors do (Jones et al 2003; Kacen at al 2012), the respondents were inquired about the nature of their impulse purchases. Dhar and Wertenbroch (2000) and Kacen et al (2012) came to conclusions that hedonic, low-cost products would be the most plausible to be bought impulsively, and similar outcomes were presumed to come up within this study. However, the results yielded dissident customer responses in Kodin Terra, as the utilitarian products appeared to be the dominant impulse purchase product category:

**Roger:** "If I buy on an impulse, the product's price-quality ratio is normally pretty good. I do quite a lot of remodeling at my house and I'm always looking for good deals, tools are one good example of this. But I don't buy just for the sake of getting a good deal, I buy the things I buy when I know they will be useful. I never buy useless junk, so even the low price is not enough to convince met into getting something I have my doubts about. After all, the impulse purchase doesn't have to be cheap, but instead it's all about that price-quality ratio I mentioned earlier."

> **Hugh:** *"My impulse purchases here are normally practical items, and they tend to lean towards the lower priced category."*

> **Jack:** *"I buy utilitarian products, when I buy something on an impulse here. What makes me grab it is the low price, or when it's on sale."*

Yet, it needs to be highlighted that this study was conducted in a hardware retail environment, and the shopping motives are not fully comparable with e.g. grocery store settings. This might explain the impulse purchase behavior's differences in contrast with the previous literature's findings. It seems the motives to buy on an impulse in a hardware store are determined more by customer's utilitarian needs, not hedonic desires. Notwithstanding the differences, complying findings were also discovered, as the hedonic and low price oriented impulse buyers were recognized similarly:

> **Bruce:** *"Seasonal products are the ones that I typically buy on an impulse, such as Christmas ornaments or garden articles in the summer. So I guess you could say they are low price items too."*

> **Lisa:** *"I would say that maybe some beautiful items, like decorations, and the ones that are beautifully presented get picked the easiest."*

> **Teresa:** *"Home decorations are something I buy impulsively, such things that make me feel good. And it goes without saying, they are normally low priced."*

## 4.4.2   P-O-P communication's efficacy

The previous literature suggested that the shoppers tend to be more influenced by in-store communication than out-of-store factors, resulting in increased sales (Underhill 1999; POPAI 2001; Chandon et al 2009; Sigurdsson et al 2010). It was also found, that when in-store displays were tied to price reductions, their impact would be even greater (Davies & Tilley 2004). Inman and Winer (1998) contributed the point-of-purchase communication's efficiency by highlighting the customers' tendency to buy without prior consideration, as the displays were placed at the ends of the aisles or by the checkout counters. Similar findings were brought forward within this study, as the general nominator among the respondent group was that the location of the display had the greatest influence on their purchase decisions, especially when tied with price promotions. Yet, it was interesting to decipher that the general opinion among the respondents was that they were actually not very affected by the display itself, i.e. according to their opinion, while at the same time they did recognize the unplanned nature of many of their purchases. The question phrasing might have been somewhat ill-defined and hard to process, since the effects of displays and other marketing communication channels often work at a subliminal level, and the customers may not even consciously recognize that the in-store communication did have an effect on them. However, alongside with the effectiveness of the in-

store displays questions, the interviewees were also asked if there was a certain part of the store where they were the most influenced by product displays, altogether the following findings came about:

> **Bill:** *"Especially with the sale products, the display of the product has a great impact on me. The bigger the promotion sign the more likely it is to get my attention, and when you get my attention, I sure will check it out! Other than that, I do not know whether I am that affected by product displays or not. Though question. But what comes to the location of those displays, I would say they definitely need to be placed alongside the main passages, such as the main passage towards the check-out, or right on my entry route."*

The previous customer comment embodied the most representative opinion on the location and design of the product displays among respondents, which shows the deal-proneness and the recognition for need typical for a Kodin Terra customer. Furthermore, divergent opinions emerged too. The desire for alluring product displays exists too, which was expressed by a few female respondents, mostly concerning decorative products:

> **Cindy:** *"I do not really care where the display is located, but if the presentation of the product pleases my eye, I will probably pay a lot more attention to it, and might even change my route quite a lot just because of it. So I would say a pretty presentation, and right prices do play a role in my purchase decisions, especially when speaking of impulse purchases."*

Finally, customer responses that will surely interest store owners had clear messages too: imposing marketing messages were seen as disruptive and that the store personnel can have much greater potential in inducing impulse purchase, than displays do. The interviewees conveyed:

> **Sean:** *"No, I cannot say that I am influenced by in-store displays. When I shop at a hardware store, I know my goals for the trip beforehand, and it is very rare for me to pick up anything extra outside my shopping list. I might even say the sale displays that they usually place by the checkouts, basically saying "buy, buy, buy", really piss me off. And those definitely make me not want to buy."*

> **Jenny:** *"The displays did not have an effect on me really. I usually come to get what I need only. Actually, even the impulse purchases I made today were suggestions by the salesperson."*

## 4.5 Summary of findings

Table 5 summarizes the previously presented findings of the study. As many of the previous in-store marketing studies, this study relies similarly on the S-O-R

framework in an attempt to comprehensively grasp the abstract topic. The stimuli-column categorizes the detected environmental stimuli that were emphasized within the survey. The organism-column describes the typical shopper types and their goals and pairs the stimuli with the shopper group influenced by these stimuli. Finally, the response-column lists the emphasized positive responses in accordance with the selected environmental stimuli categorizations (e.g. proficiency under human variables results in overall satisfaction, trust, etc. whereas quiet piped-in music and wood scents under general interior result in shopping relaxation and positive associations towards the store).

TABLE 5 Summary of findings

| STIMULI | ORGANISM | RESPONSE |
|---------|----------|----------|
| Environmental stimuli emphasized by the selected shopper category | Proximate distribution of shoppers and pursued shopping value /goals:<br><br>**¾ of clientele utilitarian shoppers** (task completion, deliberateness, efficiency, exact or vague and mental or actual, but pre-defined needs, personnel consultations)<br><br>**¼ of clientele hedonic shoppers** (browsing, getting new ideas) | Typical responses ensued as results of positive affects |
| HUMAN VARIABLES<br><br>- Constant attainableness<br>- Proficiency<br>- Recommendations /salesmanship<br>- Contact initiatives<br>- Smiles, gestures / friendliness<br>- Unified and clean work uniforms<br>- Mature sales clerks | Utilitarian<br><br>Utilitarian<br>Utilitarian / Hedonic<br><br>Utilitarian / Hedonic<br>Utilitarian / Hedonic<br><br>Utilitarian / Hedonic<br><br>Utilitarian / Hedonic | Overall satisfaction<br>Improved mood state<br>Intentions of re-entries<br>Trust<br>Unplanned purchases<br>Impulse purchases<br>Customer share<br>Prolonged visits |
| GENERAL INTERIOR<br><br>- Quiet piped-in music<br>- Wood and flower scents<br>- Bright lighting, spotlights on displays | Utilitarian / Hedonic<br>Utilitarian / Hedonic<br><br>Utilitarian / Hedonic | Shopping relaxation<br>Positive associations<br>Overall satisfaction<br>Prolonged visits<br>Improved mood state |

(continues)

TABLE 5 Summary of findings (continues)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **LAYOUT AND STORE DE-SIGN** | | |
| - Immediate access to desired sections of the store | Utilitarian | Overall satisfaction<br>Unplanned purchases<br>Impulse purchases<br>Increased browsing |
| - Rationality in layout, product allocations and allocations within departments | Utilitarian | |
| - Clear and sufficient signage | Utilitarian | |
| - Relevant product offers and deals within the main aisles | Utilitarian / Hedonic | |
| - Wide and accessible aisles | Utilitarian / Hedonic | |
| **POINT-OF-PURCHASE COMMUNICATIONS** | | |
| - Esthetically and emotionally pleasing products and product displays | Hedonic | Unplanned purchases<br>Impulse purchases<br>Increased browsing<br>More items examined<br>More time spent browsing<br>Improved mood state |
| - Product displays tied with price reductions | Utilitarian / Hedonic | |
| - Vast selection of goods | Hedonic | |
| - Seasonal products displayed on central locations | Utilitarian / Hedonic | |
| - Perceivably good price-to-quality ratios on utilitarian items | Utilitarian / Hedonic | |

# 5   DISCUSSION

The results shed light upon the store atmospherics' effect on Kodin Terra's customers' purchase behavior and general perceptions about the store. The conclusions in this chapter abridge the results, provide managerial implications and suggest theoretical insertions with fresh insight into hardware retailing sector to contribute to the existing marketing literature which generally portrays different business sectors (i.e. grocery stores, malls, clothing stores, department stores). The research questions are answered commensurate with the imparted theoretical framework. Furthermore, in the hope of providing practicable solutions for hardware retailers, and the management of Kodin Terra Jyväskylä in particular, the managerial implications are presented in their own chapter. Subsequently, the limitations of the study, the research reliability and validity and conceivable avenues for further research are conversed.

## 5.1   Theoretical contributions

The composition of the theoretical framework of the study (Figure 13) and the interviewed and observed customer data provide solutions for the original five research problems. The theoretical framework is a re-applied version of Stimulus-Organism-Response framework of variables in a retail environment by Turley and Milliman (2000). This study set off with first deciphering the typical Kodin Terra customer's shopping goals, motives and desired value, i.e. the principal motives guiding the customer's (organism) behavior (Babin et al 1994; Kalteva & Weitz 2006, Zentes at al 2011):

*What are the typical shopping goals and motives on an average shopping trip to a DIY store?*

The results illustrated three fourths of the customers to derive value from task-completion, efficiency and deliberate decision-making, i.e. utilitarian shopping motives (Babin et al 1994). The remaining one fourth of the customers

is categorized to be driven by hedonic motives, but not necessarily portraying festive, ludic or epicurean aspects as the previous literature suggested (Sherry 1990). Instead, hedonic shopping was manifested by general browsing mode, spending a lot of time in the store and finding good deals. The apportionment between shopping motive categorization was important to canvass, since the motives determine the course of the entire shopping trip. More so, the motives reflect directly to one of the initial research problems:

*How do the customers of home improvement store proceed along the store premises?*

The results indicated that the shopping paths and motives have a clear correlation. Whereas shoppers with utilitarian motives proceeded rationally towards their pre-defined target areas with little deviation from their routes on main aisles, the shoppers with hedonic motives usually started browsing the very first sections of the store. These phenomena were described in detail with path analysis data in chapter 4.3.

However, the already previously detected "two-edged sword"-problem of creating an environment that simultaneously induces both circulative and deliberate customer movement arises in this study as well (Zentes et al 2011). Inasmuch as assisting or escorting the customers from the very beginnings of their shopping trips straight to their desired aisles and racks comes with a flip side; they will be less exposed to in-store marketing stimuli and thus will be less prone to make unplanned or impulse purchases. The following research question concerned shopper movement accordingly:

*Which are the hot spots, i.e. the most heavily trafficked aisles of the store?*

Figure 15 exhibited the answer to the question. Previous findings of Hui et al (2009) and Yada (2011) of customers circulating mostly on the first and last sections of the store were discovered within Kodin Terra accordingly. The previous literature suggested this to occur due to perceived time pressure, the composition of shopping basket (i.e. licensing behavior) and the presence of other shoppers. These findings were not fully supported within the selected case company, as effects of crowding were minimal, and the product portfolio of a DIY store does not contain traditional vice items. The remaining explanatory factors to argue the nature of observed customer movement lay most probably behind the situational factors (perceived time pressure, shopping goals) and on the other hand general browsing / shopping modes.

Alongside the previous stimuli (the layout factors), the effects of selected components of store atmospherics (i.e. general interior and human variables) were deciphered. The initial research problem was:

*How do the store environment factors affect customers' shopping behavior in DIY retail context?*

The results indicated that the customers' overall perceptions of the store and thus behavior and satisfaction were the most affected by encounters with the store personnel. Prior to any other atmospheric stimulus, professional, reachable, well-behaved, friendly and consultative personnel were the most profound instigators of customers' shopping enjoyment, satisfaction, acquired information and ultimately actualized purchases. In addition to the previous behavioral attributes of human variables, the personnel's physical attributes contributed to customer responses accordingly (Kim & Kim 2012). Young sales associates were seen as easily approachable, whereas more mature salespersons were associated with credibility and professionalism. Harmonious and clean work uniforms were equally seen as facilitators of trust. Simple smiles from store personnel were however par excellence weighty contributors of shopping enjoyment.

The scrutiny of the components of general interior as atmospheric stimuli brought forward several conclusions. Generally, scent, lighting and music have relatively little impact on Kodin Terra's customers purchase behavior and over-all store perceptions. However, few implications of preferred ambient conditions were detected to support the findings of previous literature. Firstly, soothing and quiet piped-in music was regarded as relaxant mediator of the shopping experience (Turley & Milliman 2000; Lam 2001; Garlin & Owen 2006; Andersson et al 2012). Secondly, bright lighting was preferred over softer ambient lighting conditions, exactly as the findings of Areni and Kim (1994) and Summers and Hebert (2001) demonstrated. The findings in Kodin Terra stressed the significance of providing sufficiently bright lighting conditions in order that the products can be thoroughly examined. Thirdly, the store should be kept as odorless as possible, i.e. none of the respondents perceived accentuated scents, congruent or incongruent with the store type, as preferable atmospheric effects. However, the smells of wood, flowers and plants were regarded as positive attributes within the store environment.

The final part of the study focused on canvassing the impulse purchase proneness and the factors inspiring impulse purchase behavior. It appears that the customers of Kodin Terra are typically inclined to follow their pre-defined shopping lists and are therefore more purpose than impulse driven in their shopping behavior. This finding stresses the importance of out-of-store communication. However, as previous reports indicate (POPAI 1998; POPAI 2001), also the majority of Kodin Terra customers do make unplanned purchases. Yet, pure impulse purchases are less prone to occur within a hardware retail store than unplanned purchases are. The final research question attempted to decipher the reasons why impulse buying did or did not occur:

*What is the most potential way to inspire impulse buying?*

Impulse purchases, or more likely unplanned purchases in this instance, were the most probable to occur when product's perceived price-quality ratio was optimal. Contrary to the previous literature's findings (Dittmar et al 1995),

customers bought mostly utilitarian products on an impulse. The driving factor when deciding upon buying without prior consideration often included a reminder factor, i.e. the item was missing from the customer's home inventory or was regarded to be needed in the future. Yet still, seasonal products and lower priced items were more likely to be selected to be bought impulsively or without cognitive planning. Therefore, as the previous literature stressed, the merchandising factors were the biggest instigator of impulse buying (Kacen et al 2012; Jones et al 2003). Furthermore, store environment factors affected the impulse buying process accordingly; distinguishable product displays and signs tied with price reductions and recommendations from store personnel bolstered impulsive buying. Before anything, central locations along typical shopping paths were seen as contributors of impulse purchases, which support the similar finding of layout being the most important element of store environment as a provocateur of impulse and unplanned buying (Mohan et al 2013). Other atmospheric stimuli (i.e. music, lighting, scents) had allegedly little or no impact on realization of unplanned buying.

## 5.2 Managerial implications

The initial research problem of deciphering Kodin Terra's customers' typical shopping goals recognized the majority of the respondents as shoppers with utilitarian goals, i.e. seeking efficient task completion and deliberateness. Additionally, a smaller quota of customers with hedonic motives was discovered accordingly. An apposite store atmosphere is thus needed to serve the needs for both recognized customer groups. However the distribution of shopper types implies obvious, yet essential suggestions for the store management to consider. Firstly, as the utilitarian shoppers were the significantly larger shopper group, the need to satisfy this group's utilitarian oriented shopping goals should be emphasized. Practical managerial implications of this are: improving the clarity of the store's layout and information rate, rationalizing allocations within departments and placing easily detectable floor plan maps throughout the store. Furthermore, even before the attributes of physical accessibility of the store, customer service's role in creating positive customer experiences and enhancing positive associations towards the store should be the primal focus for the store management. To ensure the demand and supply for personal assistance, immediate availability of personnel and general customer acknowledgement upon arrivals to meet, placing a constantly manned information/ greeting point in near proximity to the entry section of the store would is advisable.

Providing personal assistance right upon customer's arrival creates however an additional problem for the store management; prompt customer contact reduces browsing and thus decreases exposure to in-store marketing stimuli and thus again lessens impulse/ unplanned purchasing proneness. Roughly speaking, it is upon the retailer management to choose between providing what the majority of the customers appear to want (i.e. deliberateness in shopping

trip) or attempting the customers to linger. However, a compromise between compensating possibly lessened exposure to in-store stimuli and the need for efficacy is suggested: the personnel should be instructed and trained to explicitly survey the customers' wants and need in pursuit of promoting add-on sales.

Adding to the previous suggestions on store layout design, the customer movement analysis brought about further managerial proposals. First, as Figure 15 in chapter 4.3.2 explained, the possibility to bypass the "official" entry should be blocked. By entering through the checkout area, the customers dismiss an area packed with timely product placements. Second, the observation of customer movement focusing on the first and last sections of the store (see Figure 15), stresses the necessity to place alluring items along these aisles, since even the pre-decided customers were prone to make impulse purchases as long as the products were placed beside their normal routes. However, the observations indicated that "a gray area" (marked gray in Figure 15) within the entry area creates an avenue for future development. That is to say, the gray area was more trafficked than it was acknowledged. This complication is most probably fixed by proper merchandising and placing interesting displays and offers within the aisle. The same applies to the second horizontal aisle from the entrance as well.

Next, the remaining store atmosphere attributes were reviewed. Again, customer service and store personnel came out to be peremptorily the most important atmospheric attribute. These findings once again highlight the company's human resource managements need to continuously motivate, educate and train the store personnel's professional and customer service skills to ensure positive associations and shopping enjoyment with the store environment. Store management should encourage their employees to deliver superior service in terms of product related expertise, indefatigable friendliness and minimal delays in initiating customer contacts, as it appeared that these attributes reflect greatly to the customers' overall perceptions of the store, intents of returns and shopping enjoyment. Whereas personnel's behavioral attributes' importance was emphasized the most, their physical attributes resulted in customer responses accordingly. Firstly, the management should that the personnel are provided with clean and unified work uniforms as they were seen as facilitators of reliability. Second, the results indicated that an avenue to consider along recruitment processes deals with the age of personnel. The management should piece together a staff that consist of both young and more mature salespersons and position them in suitable job assignments, as the young were seen as approachable and the old as credible and professional.

The scrutiny of general interior's components evoked suggestions for managerial implications equally. Retailers of DIY sector should pursuit creating shopping environments with bright lighting conditions, and with spotlights on product displays to ease the legibility of products specifications and to attract customer traffic towards selected product displays. Additionally, according to customer responses, separate sections of the store or showrooms with display furnishings should be illuminated with ambient lightings. Considering the

scent ambience of the store, placing odorous wooden products and plants throughout the store to promote positive associations towards the entire store and shopping experience is recommended as the customers these naturally in-flicted scents as positive attributes within the hardware retail environment. Alternatively, an odorless store was equally seen as desirable, i.e. strong, unpleasant or artificial scents should be restrained.

Finally, the discussion around impulse purchase behavior yielded practical managerial suggestions. Pre-decidedness (i.e. being driven by shopping lists constructed prior entering the store) in shopping behavior was not an uncommon phenomenon within customer surveys, which highlights the role of out-of-store marketing initiatives in persuading the customers to visit the store in the first place. In order for the company to encourage its customers' purchase behavior, the findings highlight the means of merchandising, i.e. adding and campaigning more essential, appealing, high quality, yet low priced utilitarian products to the assortment. What is left to do within the store is to place these items according to the suggested heavily trafficked areas of the store (see Figure 15), present them with obtrusive product displays tied with price reductions and brief the personnel to recommend topical product offers relevant to customers' needs.

## 5.3 Limitations of the research

As all research papers, this study suffers from multiple limitations similarly. Firstly, owing to the qualitative nature of this study, the presented findings cannot be completely generalized and are only relevant to the participants and the singular Kodin Terra Jyväskylä store included. Equally, as the nature of case studies is to produce reports narrative rather than quantitative, the results will be based on interpretation and judgment, yet the interpretation problem concerning especially the material acquired by observing is minor (Wells & LoSciuto 1966).

Secondly, the sample of interview respondents brings forward notable considerations. The inclination to participate in the study after a shopping trip was generally speaking low, creating a possibly biased respondent base. Appointing a meeting time for interviews with customers' terms would have been the most beneficial in pursuit of more in-depth responses, yet it was considered time-wisely too burdensome to conduct the study. Next, only customers who had made purchases were reached for interviews. Non-buyers were endeavored to take part in the interviews, but none of this group had the time nor interest to participate in the survey. This brings about an academic and a managerial problem; this group manifesting avoidance behavior would have been the most potential to shed light upon possible nodes and problems in the current store atmosphere. Perhaps a compensation of higher value than free coffee and pastries would have summoned a more versatile respondent group. Additionally, even the respondents who agreed to take part in the study portray possibly a

distorted interviewee group, i.e. the reached interviewees were generally in a good mood, leaving out the possibly discontented customers, who would have had perhaps differing responses to the survey questions. Those who opted in the interview appeared to be happy to be heard and therefore perhaps generally more involved in the shopping process per se. However, undertaking the customers who declined to be interviewed would have dispensed managerially important data deepening and enriching the understanding of this particular shopping environment. Additionally, only returning customers were contrived to participate the survey. Responses from new customers (i.e. customers visiting the store for the first time) might have been able to provide information about the immediate first impressions and effects concerning the store's layout and information rate. The interviewed customers were more or less familiar with product placements within the store, and oriented at least partially relying on former shopping experiences. On the other hand, returning customers were able to reflect their perceptions based on multiple previous shopping trips.

Thirdly, this study examines rather abstract and subconsciously inclined themes, making it hard to consciously assess the implications for the uninitiated, or even for the astute. Moreover, the predicament to conduct a study having to rely on customer's memories about past events applies to this study accordingly. Even if the recollections were complete, the nature of the subject is inherently complex as the respondents are mostly capable of rendering answers for questions of what not why. This applies especially to the topics of music, light and scent as atmospheric stimuli. Hence, the value of the interviewed data is intrinsically arguable.

Fourthly, the interviewer in itself and the premises where the interviews were performed, have an effect on the course of the interviews. One individual interviewer acquired all of the respondents and executed the interviews within the store premises. It became apparent that many patrons suspected the interview for being a market research and therefore hurriedly declined their participation before the academic nature was even revealed. Thus, conducting the study within independent environment might yield differing respondent base and hence differing responses. Additionally, as human variables of store personnel (e.g. behavioral attributes, physical attributes) have an effect on customers' perceptions, the same attributes concern the interviewer's role too. Conducting the survey with interviewers of different ages and sexes would presumably have had its own effect on the responses.

## 5.4   Research validity and reliability

This research seeks to avoid errors and defects in the overall process of conducting the study, and endeavors to produce as truthful information as possible. Nevertheless, flaws, deficiencies and limitations occur in every research, which makes it relevant to evaluate the trustworthiness of the research. In case-studies, which often portray unique and case-specific information concerning people

and culture, the assessment of research validity and reliability are challenging (Hirsjärvi et al 1997).

Research reliability connotes the repeatability of the results the study yields, i.e. the study's ability to generate non-coincidental results (Hirsjärvi et al 1997). This research, being a case-study, the attained results are unique and change over time, thus they illustrate the measured phenomena bound in a certain context and are difficult to reproduce in equivalent measures. The context is bound to the relatively limited amount of respondents, to the singular Kodin Terra store and to the affiliation with time, i.e. the results may be different, should the study be conducted in a different location, with different respondents, at a different time or even with another researcher. To alleviate the homogeneity in interviewed and observed material, conscious methodological decisions were made; 1) the respondent group portrays people of different ages and sexes, 2) shoppers who were accompanied and alone were interviewed, 3) the interviews took place at different days of the week and at different times of the day and 4) the observations were made without the customers knowing they were being monitored. Yet it is safe to say, generalizations even at a national hardware retailing sector, not to mention at the level of general marketing theory contributions, would be unsound. Nevertheless, the study's results provide valuable practical suggestions and field data for Kodin Terra Jyväskylä, and could be applied to other S-Group's Kodin Terra stores on co-operative chain level, as the building blocks of store atmospherics, merchandise, layout and clientele are similar of nature.

Research validity refers to the research method's ability to measure exactly what the original intention was to measure (Hirsjärvi et al 1997). In qualitative studies, the research validity bespeaks the suitability of depiction of subjects and phenomena to the explanations linked to them, i.e. the trustworthiness of explanations (Hirsjärvi et al 1997). The validity of the research can be enhanced by exploiting multiple research methods (Hirsjärvi et al 1997). In an attempt to create as accurate results as possible, the combination of both methods of semi-structured interviews and direct observation was utilized to represent the surveyed phenomena. Moreover, describing the respondents, locations and incidents in detail enhance the research validity (Janesick 2000). Acknowledging Janesick's (2000) concepts, the relevant information on respondents, field of hardware business, the interviews and observations were specified in detail, and direct quotations of the interviews were added in the documentation.

On the reliability and validity of direct observation as a marketing research method, it has some drawbacks. It offers information to questions of what, not why, it also requires adequate sampling of points in space and points in time, it does not allow control over important variables, and finally the type of data is of qualitative nature, not quantitative. Despite these drawbacks, direct observation method comes with relevant advantages; it reveals what people actually do, as opposed to what people say. "It can yield the correct answer when faulty memory, desire to impress the interviewer, or simple inattention to details would cause an interview answer to be wrong (Wells & LoSciuto 1966,

p.232)." Additionally, as the observer has no control over important variables, hence cause and effect are sometimes indistinguishable (Wells & LoSciuto 1966).

## 5.5   Further research topics

It is recommended that a study of this type is to be performed on a larger scale with more study subjects in combination with quantitative research and technically more sophisticated observation methods, such as video tracking, RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) -tracking methods, in order for the study to yield results representative of a larger spectrum of the Finnish hardware retailing sector.

To fully comprehend the subconscious effects of different atmospheric variables in this specific retailing context, it is advisable that different experimental studies are conducted, i.e. the altering effects of different aural, scent and lighting conditions on customers' purchase behavior (i.e. measuring the changes in sales volumes) should be tested. Furthermore, the rationale to administer similar type of experimental tests goes for different layout, signage, and point-of-purchase communications designs and placements. Ideally, further studies would also consider the effects of seasonal changes on customer movement and perceptions on store's atmospherics.

Additionally, in pursuit of gaining more in-depth data, it is recommended that further studies provide greater compensation for interviewees for longer interviews. It is also recommended that acquiring respondents using other channels than gathering them from within the store should be used, in order to not confuse the academic nature of the survey with market research (to which the respondent generally reacted negatively).

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82

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# APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- Working professional in DIY-sector / private consumer
- Returning customer / new customer
- Gender
- Age
- Accompanied / alone

## THEME 1 – SHOPPING GOALS AND MOTIVES, SEGMENTATION OF SHOPPERS

- Did you have specific shopping goals for your shopping trip?
- Were you more purpose driven on your shopping trip, or did you take pleasure of the shopping experience per se, e.g. browsing and getting new ideas?
- Were the motives for your shopping trip to seek for bargains and deals?
- Did you seek for support or information from personnel with your shopping decisions?
- Did you feel a change in your mood state or emotions that the store environment and its merchandise might have had an effect on, if so what kinds of emotions did you feel?
- Do you feel the overall store atmosphere to have an effect on the completion of your shopping trip, which manifestations did it have?
  (Longer vs. shorter trip, increased vs. decreased patience for waiting for service, desire to shop longer and browse, buy more, leave immediately etc.)
- Do you consciously centralize your shopping in Kodin Terra, i.e. due to the store itself, not because of merchandise and / or price levels it provides?
- As your shopping trip progressed, did your shopping goals and motives become more or less concrete, i.e. even if you did not have specified goals before entering the store? Or alternatively, did you stay completely impulse driven?

## THEME 2 – STORE ATMOSPHERE

- Did you notify the music being played in the store? If so, would you say you were anyhow affected by it, i.e. irritated, relaxed, felt positive emotions etc.?
- Would you say the scent of the store was in congruence with the store type?

- Would you rather have a hardware store to have an ambient scent climate, or should the scents natural to the store be endorsed? Or do you prefer a store of no scents present?
- How do you feel about the light conditions of the store? Do you prefer bright lighting, and highlighted displays, or a more "soft" ambient lighting?
- Did you perceive the store premises as crowded, i.e. in terms of other patrons or in terms of merchandise, displays and racks? Why, in which parts of the store and what were your reactions to it?
- Were you satisfied with the number of sales associates (should the store have more or less personnel)?
- What were your responses to the physical attributes of the sales associates? I.e. Uniforms, physical attractiveness, demographics (e.g. age, sex, ethnicity), non-verbal cues (e.g. smiles, gestures). What kinds of responses did they evoke in you?
- How would you describe the behavioral attributes of the sales associates? Characteristics and sales interaction? What kinds of responses did they evoke in you?

## THEME 3 – STORE LAYOUT

- Concerning the layout of the store, how would you describe the orientation within the store?
- How was the information rate, were the signs and posts easy to locate and rationally organized? Was the information rate adequate or did you feel overloaded with information?
- Did you find it easy to locate the products you were looking for?
- Did you feel you were in order of the orientation, or mastered by leading store layout?
- Concerning your actualized shopping path, what factors affected you the most when maneuvering the store? E.g. time pressure, presence of other shoppers or composition of shopping basket (vice/ virtue items explained to the interviewee).
- Did your orientation stay consistent throughout the whole path, e.g. irrational browsing, rational movement from point a-to-b, or a mix of the previous?

## THEME 4 – IMPULSE PURCHASES
- Did you make impulse purchases today? Or were these purchases more of unplanned nature? (the distinction between impulse purchases and unplanned purchases was made clear for the interviewee)
- What do you think were the factors enticing your impulse purchases; special signs and displays, deals and offers, suggestions by store personnel, layout and product location, general mood?

- Was there a certain genre of products bought on an impulse, why? (e.g. hedonic vs. utilitarian, low-priced vs. expensive items)
- Do you think the general atmosphere of the store had an impulse on your mood and hence on your impulse purchase behavior?
- Would you say in-store displays had an effect on your purchase decisions? If so, do you remember where these displays physically were located?

# APPENDIX 2 – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN FINNISH

## HAASTATELTAVAN TAUSTATIEDOT

- Työskentelee rakennus- tai urakointialalla / yksityinen kuluttaja
- Palaava asiakas / uusasiakas
- Sukupuoli
- Ikä
- Seurassa / yksin

## TEEMA 1 – ASIOINNIN TAVOITTEET JA MOTIIVIT, ASIAKASSEGMENTAATIO

- Oliko teillä tiettyjä tavoitteita ostoksien suhteen tullessanne ostoksille?
- Olitteko tarkoitushakuinen ostoksissanne, vai nautitteko ostosreissusta itsessään, kuten kiertelemällä ja etsimällä uusia ideoita?
- Oliko motiivina ostosreissullenne etsiä tarjouksia ja löytöjä?
- Etsittekö apua tai tietoa henkilökunnalta tehdessänne ostopäätöksiä?
- Tunsitteko muutoksia mielialassanne, jotka myymäläilmapiiri tai tuotevalikoima olisi voinut aiheuttaa? Jos kyllä, niin millaisia tunteita tunsitte?
- Uskotteko kokonaisvaltaisen myymäläilmapiirin vaikuttaneen ostosreissunne kulkuun, ja millaisia ilmenemiä sillä oli (kuten lyhyt vs. pitkä ostosreissu, laskenut vs. noussut kärsivällisyys palvelun odottamiseen, halu viettää enemmän aikaa myymälässä ja kiertää hyllyjä tutkien, lähteä välittömästi jne.)?
- Keskitättekö ostoksianne tietoisesti Kodin Terraan, myymälän itsensä vuoksi? (ottamatta kantaa tuotteisiin, hintatasoon, kanta-asiakasohjelmiin jne.)
- Kun ostosreissunne eteni, muuttuivatko tavoitteet ja motiivinne ostoksien suhteen konkreettisemmiksi, vaikkei teillä välttämättä ollut ennalta määrättyjä tavoitteita ennen saapumistanne myymälään? Vaihtoehtoisesti, pysyittekö täysin impulssien ohjaamana?

## TEEMA 2 – MYYMÄLÄILMAPIIRI

- Huomasitteko taustalla soivan musiikin? Jos huomasitte, sanoisitteko sen vaikuttaneen teihin millään lailla, esimerkiksi tuntemalla itsenne rentoutuneeksi, ärsyyntyneeksi, tunsitteko positiivisia tunteita jne.?
- Oliko myymälän tuoksu mielestänne yhteensopiva myymälätyypin kanssa?
- Tulisiko mielestänne rautakaupalla olla tunnelmaa luova tuoksumaailma, vai tulisiko siihen liittyviä luonnollisia tuoksuja vahvistaa? Vai olisiko mahdollisimman tuoksuton myymälä mieluisin?

- Mitä mieltä olitte myymälän valaistuksesta? Tulisiko myymälässä olla mielestänne kirkas valaistus, esillepanoja korostetun kirkkain valoin, vai "pehmeämpi" tunnelmallinen valaistus?
- Pidättekö myymälää ruuhkautuneena, toisten asiakkaiden suhteen, tai tuotteiden esillepanon, mainoskylttien ja hyllyjen suhteen? Jos kyllä, niin mitkä osat myymälää olivat mielestänne ruuhkautuneita ja mitkä olivat teidän reaktionne siihen?
- Olitteko tyytyväinen myymälähenkilökunnan määrään (tulisiko henkilökuntaa olla enemmän vai vähemmän)?
- Miten suhtauduitte henkilökunnan fyysisiin ominaisuuksiin, i.e. työasut, fyysinen viehätysvoima, demografiset tekijät (ikä, sukupuoli, etnisyys), ääneen lausumattomat vihjeet (hymyt, eleet). Millaisia vasteita nämä herättivät teissä?
- Kuinka kuvailisit myymälähenkilökunnan käyttäytymistekijöitä, kuten henkilökunnan luonteenpiirteitä ja myynnin vuorovaikutusta? Minkälaisia reaktioita ne herättivät teissä?

## TEEMA 3 – MYYMÄLÄN SOMMITTELU

- Kuinka kuvailisitte yleistä suunnistamista myymälässä?
- Millainen oli informaation taso, olivatko opasteet ja kyltit helppoja löytää ja rationaalisessa järjestyksessä? Oliko informaation määrä riittävä vai tunsitteko itsenne ylikuormittuneeksi sen määrästä?
- Löysittekö etsimänne tuotteet helposti?
- Tunsitteko kontrolloivanne suunnistusta myymälässä, vai koitteko olevanne johdattelevan sommittelun ohjaamia?
- Liittyen toteutuneeseen ostospolkuunne (kulkemanne reitti myymälässä), minkä tekijöiden uskotte vaikuttaneen teihin eniten liikkuessanne myymälässä, e.g. aikapaineet ostosreissun pituuteen liittyen, muiden asiakkaiden läsnäolo, ostoskorin muodostuminen (hyve vs. pahe tuotteet ja vuorotteleva järjestys)?
- Pysyikö liikkumisenne tapa myymälässä tasaisena koko ostospolkunne läpi, eli oliko liikehdintänne koko ostosreissun ajan esimerkiksi; irrationaalista selailua, rationaalista liikehdintää paikasta A paikkaan B, vai edellisten yhdistelmä?

## TEEMA 4 – IMPULSSIOSTOKSET

- Teittekö impulssiostoja tänään, vai olivatko ostoksenne täysin ennalta suunniteltuja tai ns. suunniteltuja impulssiostoja (tarve tiedostettu, mutta unohdettu ja uudelleenmuistettu myymälässä)?
- Minkä tekijöiden uskotte vaikuttaneen impulssiostojenne tapahtumiseen; kyltit ja näytteillepanot, tarjoukset, myymälähenkilökunnan ehdotukset, myymälän sommittelu ja tuotteen sijoitus, yleinen mieliala?

- Koostuiko impulssiostonne tietyn tuotekategorian tai tietyn tyyppisistä tuotteista? Jos kyllä, miksi (e.g. hedonistiset vs. utilitaristiset tuotteet, matalahintaiset vs. kalliit tuotteet jne.)?
- Uskotteko yleisen myymäläilmapiirin vaikuttaneen mielialaanne ja sitä kautta impulssiostokäyttäytymiseenne?
- Sanoisitteko myymälänsisäisten näytteillepanojen vaikuttaneen ostopäätöksiinne? Jos kyllä, muistatteko missä nämä näytteillepanot sijaitsivat?