

Why do we drink coffee? Relationship marketing and atmospheric cues impact on attitude formation and other consumer behavior outcomes

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Marketing is a management process used to plan and execute the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of offerings. Ultimately, marketing's purpose is to create an exchange between an organization and a consumer that satisfies the consumer's perceived needs and wants. Relationship marketing (RM) is a fundamental component of this marketing purpose, because understanding and managing customer relationships is at the core of marketing (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Morgan and Hunt (1994) defined RM as "all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relationship exchanges" (p. 34). Price and Arnould's 1999 study found that friendships serve as a metaphor for consumers and this metaphor helps consumers define and understand marketing relationships. Relationships in a commercial setting are equivalent to other friendships and share many of the same characteristics, such as affection, intimacy, social support, loyalty, and reciprocal gift giving (Price and Arnould, 1999).

Möller and Halinen (2000) conducted previous research that identified two types of marketing relationships, including market-based RM and network-based RM. Market-based RM is less complex, while network-based RM increases in complexity. This study explained how commercial friendships form, because the results indicated that most commercial relationships do not exist purely in either single type of marketing relationships, but exist along a continuum. Thus, some commercial relationships are extremely simplistic and form from scant interactions,

while others are complicated and require comprehensive interactions. This theoretical examination of RM informed marketers of a need for a broad understanding and an ability to use different modes of marketing communication in an integrated manner, because friendships are used to interact with and engage consumers (Möller and Halinen, 2000). Another method for engaging consumers is ambience marketing.

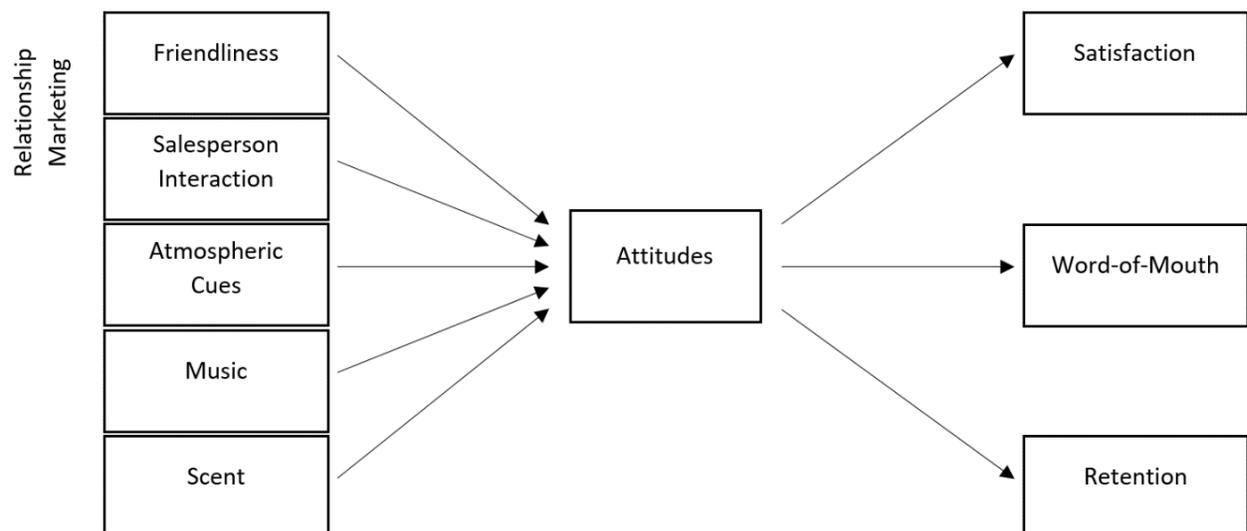
The place where an offering is purchased innately impacts the consumer; more specifically, the atmosphere has a large impact on the decision made by the consumer to purchase or not to purchase an offering. Spatial aesthetics are employed by marketers in a similar manner as advertising, price, and other marketing tools. Kotler (1971) defines atmospherics as, “the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance [his or her] purchase probability” (p. 50). The atmosphere is made up of different cues, such as cues that are recognizable by consumers’ senses, cues that lead to an intended reaction, and cues that are manipulated by marketers. These cues embody ambience marketing, and, in collaboration with RM, ambience marketing is a vital method for influencing consumer behavior (Kotler, 1971).

A 2002 study conducted by Turley and Chebat found that consumers are sensitive to even the slightest of atmospheric details and changes. Additionally, atmospheric stimuli are absorbed both consciously and subconsciously by the consumer. Marketers control ambient cues through stimuli. These stimuli have a large impact on consumer perception and purchase intention, because atmospheric stimuli impact store image and attitude formation (Turley and Chebat, 2002). Store image is defined as “the way a retailer is defined in a shopper’s mind, partly by its functional qualities and partly by its functional qualities and partly by an aura of psychological attributes” (Martineau, 1958, p. 47). Ambient cues activate the approach-avoidance response in

consumers. Positive responses to an environment create an approach response, while negative responses to an environment create an avoid response. Thus, the environment can influence purchasing behaviors (Turley and Chebat, 2002).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify how RM factors such as friendliness, salesperson interaction, and atmospheric cues, such as scent and music, impact attitudes. Additionally, this study analyzes the impact of attitudes on satisfaction, word-of-mouth (WOM), and retention in a retail setting. These variables need to be analyzed in the retail setting of a coffee shop. At the local coffee shop, the utilization of RM is analyzed through an interview process. One-on-one contact is vital in the coffee shop business, because customers should feel welcome and comfortable. It is important to maintain customers, because lifetime customers help keep the coffee shop profitable. Customers repeatedly come to the local coffee shop for many reasons, including the relationships formed with the barista and the atmospheric stimuli in which consumers receive while at the coffee shop. Relationships and atmospherics help coffee shops achieve success.

## MODEL



## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **FRIENDLINESS**

Previous research conducted by Möller and Halinen (2000) found that commercial friendships form in a similar manner to other friendships, and commercial friendships exist along a continuum of complexity. Some commercial relationships require more interactions than others. A previous study conducted by Price and Arnould's 1999 study found that emotional aspects, such as friendliness, can affect the consumer and how they interact with the salesperson and, subsequently, the brand. The degree of friendliness bestowed on the consumer via the salesperson appears to influence friendship formation. Commercial friendships are strongly related to satisfaction, loyalty, and positive WOM (Price and Arnould, 1999). Because of the link between attitudes and these outcomes, this study examines the relationship between friendliness and attitude formation.

### **SALESPERSON INTERACTION**

Salesperson interactions help customers feel valued by retailers, and the degree of value is based on how attentive the retailers' employees are to customers while they are present (Bhukya and Singh, 2016; Erasmus and Grabowski, 2013; Hasan and Mishra, 2015). While discussing salesperson interactions, it is important to discuss communication style. A 1985 study conducted by Williams and Spiro found that communication styles are categorized as task oriented, interaction oriented, or self-oriented. These three communication styles are related to sales outcomes. The results found that there is a wide array of communication styles, and the different communication styles greatly impact the way consumers respond. Salespeople with greater interaction orientations do not inevitably sell more, and consumers with greater task

orientations do not inevitable purchase more. How customers perceive salespersons' communication style directly relates to the purchasing behavior of the customer. However, there are no combinations, in terms of communication styles, that make a greater impact on consumer behavior outcomes than others. Each customer responds differently to different types of communication styles. Positive salesperson interactions lead to more satisfied customers; thus, salespeople should have comprehensive training utilizing all communication styles to properly influence consumers' attitude formation (Porat and Tractinsky, 2012). Because of the implications found in previous research, this study analyzes the correlation between salesperson interactions and subsequent attitude formation.

## ATMOSPHERIC CUES

Consumers are sensitive to even the slightest of atmospheric details and changes. Stimuli may include scent, music, and store layout, for example. Atmospheric stimuli are processed both consciously and subconsciously by the consumer. These stimuli have a large impact on consumer perception and purchase intention, because atmospheric stimuli impact store image (Turley and Chebat, 2002). Store image is defined as “the way a retailer is defined in a shopper’s mind, partly by its functional qualities and partly by an aura of psychological attributes” (Martineau, 1958, p. 47). A previous study conducted by Turley and Chebat (2002) found that atmospheric cues also activate the approach-avoidance response in consumers. Positive responses to an environment create an approach response, while negative responses to an environment create an avoid response. Thus, the environment can influence attitude formation and purchasing behaviors (Turley and Chebat, 2002). Thus, this study assesses the relationship between atmospheric cues and the resulting attitudes of consumers.

## *Scent*

Pleasant smells allow consumers to feel more comfortable, relaxed, and satisfied, thus creating consumer satisfaction and retention. Ambient scent has affects over individuals, even if they do not recognize the scent. Consumers may not pay attention to the scent; however, they respond to it, unknowingly (Doucé and Janssens, 2013; Madzharov, Block, and Morrin, 2015; Mattila and Wirtz, 2001; Bambauer-Schase, 2012). Bambauer-Sachse's 2012 study found that ambient scent impacts purchase intention in a retail setting. The effects of ambient scent on purchasing behavior is complex; however, ambient scent triggers two affects, mood and product evaluation (Bambauer-Sachse, 2012). While other research conducted by Morrin and Ratneshwar (2003) indicates that ambient scent does not influence mood Bambauer-Sachse (2012) found that it does. Mood is an important variable because it has a large impact on consumer behavior. Mood impacts evaluation of salesperson and purchase intention of the consumer, and ambiance evaluation impacts purchase intention. By influencing mood through ambient scent, retailers' direct consumer behavior towards interacting with and purchasing offerings. Ambient scents can increase purchase behavior; thus, it can be assumed that retailers diffusing appropriate ambient scents are able to influence consumers' purchasing behavior (Bambauer-Sachse, 2012). This research undertakes the connection between ambient factors, such as scent, and consumer outcomes, such as attitudes.

## *Music*

It is commonly understood that consumers' environment directly impacts outcomes; however, music is capable of evoking complex affective and behavioral responses in consumers. Mattila and Wirtz (2001) conducted previous research examining the impact of store environment factors, such as music, on shopping experiences. In the previous study, the

researchers manipulated music by changing the volume: No music, pleasant low arousal, and high arousal music. The results indicated that pleasant environmental cues enhance shopping experiences, and that scent and music should match. For example, soft scents, such as lavender, should be paired with soft music. Whereas, loud scents, such as grapefruit, should be paired with louder music. This past research suggests that ambient scents that are consistent with music have a substantial impact on consumers, such as enhances in pleasure, approach, perceived positivity of the store environment, impulse buying, and satisfaction. (Mattila and Wirtz, 2001).

Previous research conducted by Milliman (1982), found that music can affect consumer behavior in retail environments. This research found that shoppers spend more time and money when slow music is present. Fei-Fei, Chin-Shan, and David (2009) and Sachdeva and Goel (2015) found that playing music helps consumers connect to the brand, positively encourages satisfaction, and increases purchase desire. Connecting to the music enhances consumers' mood and encourages relaxation; thus, creating a more satisfying experience. Adding mood enhancing features, such as relatable music, enhances the purchase experience (David, 2009; Sachdeva and Goel, 2015). However, music is often a challenging ambient cue to harness, because the music must be geared towards and appreciated by the target audience. Because music tastes among consumers varies greatly, a broad target market is challenging to please (Doucé and Janssens, 2013; Yalch and Spangenberg, 1993). On the other hand, when music is harnessed properly as an ambient cue, it enhances not only the consumer experience, but the overall store image (Erasmus and Grabowski, 2013; Fei-Fei, Chin-Shan, and David, 2009; Yalch and Spangenberg, 1993). Because previous research indicates music is a vital atmospheric cue, this study analyzes the relationship between music and attitude formation.

## ATTITUDES

Hill, Fishbein, and Ajzen (1977) define attitude as customers' predisposition to respond in a manner towards an object. This response is often guided by beliefs pertaining to the object. The theory that beliefs determine attitudes suggests that changes to beliefs subsequently change attitudes. Attitudes towards brands are customers' beliefs about attributes of a brand. Attitudes toward advertisements produce cognitive and behavioral changes, and these changes affect attitudes toward the brand and purchase intention (Hill, Fishbein, and Ajzen, 1977; Ganeson, Sridhar, and Priyadharsani, 2017). Ganeson, Sridhar, and Priyadharsani conducted previous research in 2017 that found that there is a positive relationship between attractiveness, meaningfulness, and vitality to attitudes towards brands; there is a positive relationship between attitudes toward brands and purchase intention; and there is a positive relationship between attractiveness, meaningfulness, and vitality towards purchase intention. Thus, if a retailer can influence attitude formation, the retailer can influence many consumer outcomes.

Park, Macinnis, Priester, Eisingerich, and Iacobucci (2010) found, through previous research, that attitudes can range from strong-positive to weak-positive or strong-negative to weak-negative. If consumers fall into the positive range, they feel inclined to purchase from the brand; however, if consumers fall into the negative range, they feel inclined to not purchase from the brand. The previous study found that brand attitude does lead to purchasing from the brand and brand attachment. If consumers have a positive brand attitude and/or brand attachment toward a brand, consumers purchase more and are satisfied with those purchases (Park, et al., 2010). Based on previous research, this study addresses the connection between attitudes and consumer outcomes.

## SATISFACTION

It is important to understand consumer satisfaction regarding products and services. Customer satisfaction is based on attractiveness and if the predetermined requirements of the product or service are fulfilled (Dash, 2017). A previous study conducted by Dash (2017) found that attractiveness and fulfillment largely enhance customer satisfaction. Essentially, satisfaction is determined by how well consumers' needs are fulfilled. Satisfaction, in other words, means that consumers have an enjoyable experience in the store, and satisfaction leads to purchasing behaviors (Dash, 2017; Porat and Tractinsky, 2012). This study analyzes impact of attitude formation on overall customer satisfaction.

## WORD-OF-MOUTH

WOM is defined as “an oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, regarding a brand, product, or service” (Arndt, 1967, p. 66). WOM is the oldest form of advertising. However, it has been propelled forward by today's connectedness provided via the Internet. Today's world is overcrowded with brand choices and customers are easily overwhelmed by the capacity of advertising information. Blogs and social networks centered around WOM help customers navigate brand choices (Plummer, 2007). Lam, Lee, and Mizerski (2009) conducted a previous study that addressed the impact common cultural values have on WOM. The results indicated that the more a customer values masculinity compared with femininity, the more he or she is likely to engage in WOM with a group. Additionally, the more a customer values high power distance, compared with those who value low power distance, the more likely s/he is to engage in WOM with a group (Lam, Lee, and Mizerski, 2009).

Schellekens, Verlegh, and Smidts conducted previous research in 2010 that found that consumers share experiences with offerings through WOM, and this information has the ability

to sway potential consumers to engage or disengage with the brand. Negative product experiences are communicated more abstractly by consumers with an unfavorable product attitude; however, the language used by consumers is abstract in terminology, meaning concrete reasons are rarely given. Despite the lack of reasoning, negative WOM has the same level of impact on consumers (Schellekens, Verlegh, and Smidts, 2010). Positive WOM, on the other hand, has a significant impact on the likeliness other customers try, switch to, or adopt a product or brand. WOM is important because it measures advertising impact, consumers' willingness to try a brand, and increases brand credibility. WOM is an effective means of disseminating information because it is perceived by consumers as unbiased information (Rogers, 2003; Plummer, 2007; Mizerski, 1982). Based on previous studies, this research analyzes the connection between attitudes and positive WOM.

## RETENTION

Brand equity and customer lifetime value are key indicators of and drive customer retention, which is the idea that a customer is acquired and retained (Stahl, Hetiman, Lehman, and Neslin, 2012). Brand equity is defined as “outcomes that accrue to a product with its brand name compared with those that would accrue if the same product did not have the brand name” (Ailawadi, Lehmann, and Neslin, 2003, p. 1). Customer lifetime value is defined as “the present value of the future cash flows attributed to the customer relationship” (Farris, Bendle, and Reibstein, 2006, p. 143) A previous study conducted by Stahl, et al. (2012) found that changes in brand equity change behaviors, such as profits and retention; increases in knowledge and relevance increase profits and retention; and changes in differentiation are positively associated with profits, but negatively associated with retention. Johnson, Herrman, and Huber conducted previous research in 2006 that found that the antecedents of customer loyalty are convoluted and

dynamic, changing and evolving over time. Because of this, retailers must provide customers with perceived value to improve buying intentions and retention. Perceived value of an offering has a direct and positive effect on loyalty intentions and brand equity (Jonson, Herrman, and Huber, 2006). This study analysis the relationship between attitudes and customer retention.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Data for this study was obtained through a survey. Participants were asked to imagine a recent coffee shop and their experience in the coffee shop before completing the survey. The survey asked questions to accurately measure friendliness, salesperson interactions, atmospheric cues, scent, music, attitudes, satisfaction, WOM, and retention. Data were collected from volunteers in the Greater St. Louis area. Data for friendliness, salesperson interaction, atmospheric cues, scent, music, satisfaction, WOM, and retention were collected through a survey with a Likert, 1 through 7, scale. Attitudes were measured through the semantic differential scale. General demographic information was collected, as well. Surveys were distributed by hand throughout McKendree University located in Lebanon, Illinois. More specifically, surveys were handed out at campus organization meetings and before and after classes. Additionally, a small portion of surveys were handed out at the local coffee shop located in downtown Lebanon, Illinois. The data collection process was done by hand to ensure that there was a full response rate and to ensure full understanding of the questions asked in the survey.

The data obtained were collected and used for a valid response rate during the participation of the survey. There was a total of 50 respondents. The survey consisted of 26% males and 74% females. Age ranged from 18 to 53; however, 30% of participants were 20 and 38% of participants were 21. A younger generation was targeted in this research because they are

the young consumers and the future of the retail industry. 74% of participants were Caucasian. 74% of participants completed or were attending a program at a University. Thus, this study focused on Caucasian Generation Y or Z females attending a University program.

The survey questions were adopted from previous research studies. The questions regarding friendliness, satisfaction, and positive WOM were adapted from Price and Arnould's 1999 study that addressed commercial friendships and their impact on consumer outcomes. The research found that factors, such as friendliness in commercial relationships, positively influenced satisfaction and WOM, and this result is why these questions were adapted. The questions concerning salesperson interaction were adopted from William and Spiro's study in 1985 studying how communication styles of salespersons' impact consumers. Salesperson interaction was chosen because salesperson interactions were found to be important for selling and marketing purposes. The questions regarding atmospheric cues, such as music and lighting, were adapted from Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman's study in 1994 as well as Grewal, Baker, Levy, and Voss's study in 2003. These questions were chosen, because previous research indicates that atmospheric cues impact attitude formation. The questions concerning retention were adopted from Dutta, Biswas, and Grewal's study in 2007. Retention is an important variable, because previous research demonstrates that retention is a result of positive attitude formation.

## **ANALYSIS**

IBM SPSS software was used to enter and analyze the research data and create statistics. Reliability ensures that the variable measured appropriately represents what they are intended to indicate. Reliability for a variable is assessed on whether the variable is greater than .700. Friendliness had a reliability of .890, salesperson interaction had a reliability of .657,

atmospheric cues had a reliability of .739, attitudes had a reliability of .945, satisfaction had a reliability of .842, WOM had a reliability of .936, and retention had a reliability of .926. Music and scent cannot be tested for reliability because there was only 1 question for each variable in the survey. From this information, it can be determined that friendliness, atmospheric cues, attitudes, satisfaction, WOM, and retention are reliable variables, while friendliness, scent, and music are not.

Using the multiple regression model, the constraints were tested. Multiple regression methods measure whether an independent variable affects a dependent variable. It can be determined by assessing if the probability is smaller than .05. Hypothesis one (H1): Friendliness will create positive attitudes of consumers. Hypothesis two (H2): Positive salesperson interactions will create positive attitudes of consumers. Hypothesis three (H3): Pleasant atmospheric cues will create positive attitudes of consumers. Hypothesis four (H4): Pleasant scents will create positive attitudes in consumers. Hypothesis five (H5): Pleasant music will create positive attitudes of consumers. Hypothesis six (H6): Positive attitudes will increase customer satisfaction. Hypothesis 7 (H7): Positive attitudes will increase positive customer WOM. Hypothesis 8 (H8): Positive attitudes will increase customer retention. Determining whether friendliness affected attitudes (H1), salesperson interaction affected attitudes (H2), atmospheric cues affected attitudes (H3), music affected attitudes (H4), scent affected attitudes (H5), attitudes affected satisfaction (H6), attitudes effected WOM (H7), and attitudes affected retention (H8) were measured through multiple regressions.

## **RESULTS**

Friendliness → Attitudes (H1) probability of .852.

Salesperson interaction → Attitudes (H2) probability of .010.

Atmospheric cues → Attitudes (H3) probability of .022.

Music → Attitudes (H4) probability of .932.

Scent → Attitudes (H5) probability of .260.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.454	1.182		2.076	.044		
	F	-.027	.145	-.025	-.187	.852	.596	1.678
	Si	-.367	.136	-.335	-2.699	.010	.680	1.470
	Atm	.537	.226	.412	2.371	.022	.347	2.883
	M	-.010	.116	-.011	-.086	.932	.593	1.686
	Sc	.178	.156	.181	1.140	.260	.418	2.390

a. Dependent Variable: Att

Attitudes → Satisfaction (H6) probability of .000.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.743	.487		5.633	.000
	Att	.575	.086	.693	6.654	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Sa

Attitudes → WOM (H7) probability of .000.

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.346	.505		4.648	.000
	Att	.614	.090	.704	6.862	.000

a. Dependent Variable: W

Attitudes → Retention (H8) probability of .000.

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.222	.540		2.264	.028
	Att	.849	.096	.788	8.866	.000

a. Dependent Variable: R

## CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, it is determined that H1, friendliness affecting attitudes, is not supported; H2, salesperson interactions affecting attitudes, is supported; H3, atmospheric cues affecting attitudes is supported; H4, music affecting attitudes, is not supported; H5, scent affecting attitudes is not supported; H6, attitudes affecting satisfaction, is supported; H7, attitudes effecting WOM, is supported; and H8, attitudes affecting retention, is supported through multiple regressions. It is important to note that the variables in H1, H4, and H5 were found to be unreliable.

## IMPLICATIONS

According to the results, friendliness is not a significant factor in determining consumers' attitudes. This differs from past research that clearly states that emotional aspects, such as

friendliness, can affect the offering (Price and Arnould, 1999). Additionally, previous research states that commercial friendships are strongly related to satisfaction, loyalty, and positive WOM (Price and Arnould, 1999). Because of the results of this study, it may be important for coffee shops to conduct further research regarding friendliness and the attitude formation of consumers. Because friendliness appears to not be an influencer in attitude formation, it may not be important to spend extra time with each consumer. Many local coffee shops place a high importance on friendliness; however, this research indicates it is not important. Efforts are better placed elsewhere. Despite these results, it is important to note friendliness was found to be an unreliable variable; thus, further research needs to be done before further action is taken in a retail setting.

Previous research conducted by Porat and Tractinsky (2012) found that salesperson interactions lead to more satisfied customers. Customers perceive the salesperson's communication style and this directly relates to outcomes, such as attitude formation and purchasing behavior. This research supports the notion that salesperson interaction influences consumer outcomes, because this research found that salesperson interaction is important for positive attitude formation. This finding is important to coffee shops, because baristas should spend time talking to customers. However, coffee shops should keep in mind that those customers are not interested in establishing relationships or friendships with the barista. Instead, the customers are simply interested in the salesperson interaction; they are concerned with if the barista talked to them and understood the message being conveyed. This research indicates that it is vital for coffee companies to research the depth of involvement that needs to occur between baristas and consumers to influence positive attitude formation regarding coffee shop

experiences. Salesperson interaction is important to consumer outcomes, such as positive attitude formation.

This research found that it is vital for coffee shops to be aware of atmospheric cues. It appears that atmospheric cues, overall, largely impact consumers' attitude formation. This is supported by Turley and Chebat's 2002 study that found positive responses to an environment create an approach response, and the environment can greatly influence behaviors, such as attitude formation and purchasing behaviors. While this research supported atmospheric cues impact on attitude formation, it did not support scent and music as important cues that impact attitude formation. This is surprising because previous research conducted by Mattila and Wirtz (2001) found that music and scent are capable of evoking complex affective and behavioral responses in customers. The previous research found that ambient scents that are consistent with music have a substantial impact on consumers, such as enhances in pleasure, approach, perceived positivity of store environment, impulse buying, and satisfaction. Because scent and music were found to be unreliable variables, this study may not have identified enough survey questions to properly identify the importance of scent and music; thus, further research in this area is needed to properly conclude that scent and music are not important atmospheric cues. Coffee shops should conduct research to determine which atmospheric cues are important to their customers to properly influence positive attitude formation and other consumer behavior outcomes.

Previous research suggests that attitude formation is important to outcomes, such as satisfaction, WOM, and retention. A study conducted by Ganeson, Sridhar, and Priyadharsani (2017) found that attitudes produce cognitive and behavioral changes. These changes affect purchase intention and other outcomes, such as satisfaction, WOM, and retention. Satisfaction, WOM, and retention are all important factors for a successful business; thus, a large focus on

positive attitude formation is required for long-term success. Coffee shops should place a large emphasis on providing enjoyable experiences in the store, because this intensifies satisfaction (Porat and Tractinsky, 2012). Coffee shops should place on emphasis on providing superior service to ensure positive WOM is spread, because WOM is an efficient means of disseminating information because it is perceived as unbiased (Mizerski, 1982). Attitude formation is also important to coffee shops, because retention, acquiring and retaining customers, is vital for continued success (Farris, et al., 2006).

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