

The Influence of Store Environment Factors on the Purchase Intentions of Mongolian Customers

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Abstract

The entry of foreign franchise stores and shifts in customer preferences pose significant challenges for Mongolian retail establishments, potentially resulting in a loss of customers, decreased revenue, and even market exit. Consequently, it is essential to explore opportunities for market protection by offering services that align with customer preferences. This research aims to identify the environmental factors of retail stores that influence Mongolian customers' purchasing intentions and to examine whether these factors vary by age and gender. The findings indicate that women tend to focus more on various aspects of the store environment than men, while younger customers demonstrate greater attentiveness than their older counterparts. Additionally, the amount of time and money spent in stores influences customers' priorities during their shopping experiences. Understanding these differential effects can give retailers insights into optimizing the shopping experience and tailoring marketing strategies to enhance customer engagement and drive sales. Based on these insights, it is recommended to enhance the store environment to better accommodate these preferences. The results of the research can be fully utilized in the development of store employees and the ongoing research about the store environment in this field.

Keywords: Store Environment, Purchase Intention, Store Ambient Cues, Store Design Cues.

Introduction

The historical development of Mongolia's trade sector began with the establishment of the first People's Mutual Aid Cooperative on December 16, 1921, comprising 116 members. The evolution of this sector can be divided into several distinct periods: the socialist trade era (1960-1972), the socialist centralized trade period (1972-1990), the market transition phase (1990-1997), and the multilateral free trade era that commenced in 1998. The latter period has been characterized by innovative approaches to trade and services, particularly in food and consumer goods. Numerous large commercial centers in the private sector have emerged, elevating trade to new heights. In response to global developments and changing consumer behaviors, many trade and service centers have been established to meet international standards. This era has also seen the introduction of advanced technologies and new formats within the trade sector.

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By the first half of 2024, sales revenue in the trade sector reached 36.1 trillion MNT (Note 1: 1 USD = 3400 MNT as of September 2024), marking an increase of 9.4 trillion MNT, or 35.7%, compared to the same period the previous year. The trade sector is a vital component of Mongolia's national economy, contributing 16.7 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and accounting for 43.6 percent of all operating enterprises. Furthermore, the trade sector plays a significant role in the labor market, employing 211,200 individuals as of 2022. By 2023, there were 234,519 enterprises registered in the business registry, with 96,815 of these maintaining stable operations over the past year. Notably, retail trade alone constituted 43.6 percent of the operating commercial enterprises (see Table 1).

Table 1. Number of enterprises and organizations operating in the trade sector

Indicators	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total	71717	72522	76329	81533	86356	96815
Number of companies in the trade sector	25859	26325	28076	29672	33028	42211
Share of companies in the trade sector	36.1	36.3	36.8	36.4	38.2	43.6

Source: National Statistics Office report, 2018-2023

In 2023, the number of enterprises and organizations within the trade sector nationwide reached 42,211, reflecting an increase of 9,200 (27.8%) from the previous year. This sector has experienced consistent growth in recent years, with the retail industry expanding significantly over the past decade, leading to a highly dynamic and competitive market. Since 2018, the entry of foreign franchise stores into the Mongolian market has increased the risk of domestic companies losing customers. Consequently, it has become essential for these companies to identify strategies to navigate this competitive landscape. The accelerating pace of modern life has prompted individuals to prioritize time savings over monetary considerations, leading many to seek to allocate more time for family, personal development, and energy conservation. As a result, there is a growing trend toward minimizing shopping frequency for food and essential items, suggesting that customers increasingly seek improved service and store environments. In response, domestic companies are keen to understand how to safeguard their market share by creating environments and services that enhance customer satisfaction. Additionally, government agencies have recognized the need to update service standards. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate how various store environment factors influence customer intentions and purchasing decisions.

Understanding customer buying behavior is vital for retailers, as it allows them to identify what matters to customers and the factors that shape their decisions (Murray, Elms, & Teller, 2017). Retailers must not only recognize customer needs and wants but also understand how these customers make purchasing decisions (Cant & Hefer, 2012). While research on the simultaneous influence of multiple cues within the store environment is limited, existing studies indicate that the concurrent consideration of these cues significantly affects customer responses (Areni & Kim, 1993; Hui, Dubé, & Chebat, 1997; Milliman, 1982; Bellizzi, Crowley, & Hastie, 1983; Spangenberg, Crowley, & Henderson, 1996). Much of the current literature emphasizes the importance of store atmosphere and environment attributes in fostering customer satisfaction and positively influencing decision-making. However, there is a notable gap in understanding the specific environmental factors that drive purchase intentions across different contexts. This study aims to comprehensively investigate the impact of the store environment on customers' purchasing intentions, which is crucial for addressing challenges within retail settings. Enhancing these factors is vital for strengthening the competitiveness of national stores, which play a significant role in advancing the overall quality of trade services. The retail environment significantly shapes consumer behavior and purchase intentions, particularly in emerging markets like Mongolia. As international franchise stores penetrate the Mongolian retail landscape, local retailers face substantial challenges in retaining their customer base amid shifting preferences and intensified competition. This study explores the environmental factors within retail settings that influence

the purchasing intentions of Mongolian consumers, employing the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a foundational framework. The TPB has been effectively utilized in various contexts to understand behavioral intentions, including financial behavior among working adults in Malaysia (She et al., 2024), social media engagement (Mehraboun, 2024), and investment behaviors in cryptocurrency (Pilatin & Dilek, 2024). These studies highlight the importance of constructs such as attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in predicting individuals' intentions and subsequent actions. In the retail domain, factors such as store atmospherics, crowding, and design significantly impact consumers' purchase decisions, as evidenced by research focused on supermarkets (Sadikoglu et al., 2022) and the fashion industry (De Villiers et al., 2018). Moreover, studies have identified gender differences in shopping behavior, indicating that women are generally more attentive to store environmental factors than men, which leads to variations in purchasing intentions (Borges et al., 2013). This trend is echoed in the context of age, where younger consumers exhibit distinct preferences compared to their older counterparts (van Niekerk et al., 2024). In light of these findings, this research aims to identify the specific store environment factors affecting Mongolian customers' purchasing intentions and analyze how these factors differ by age and gender. By doing so, we aim to provide valuable insights for local retailers seeking to enhance their market strategies and optimize the shopping experience. Understanding these dynamics offers a competitive edge in a rapidly evolving retail landscape and informs tailored marketing strategies that resonate with diverse consumer segments. The outcomes of this study will serve as a foundational resource for both practitioners and researchers interested in the intersection of retail environments and consumer behavior in Mongolia.

Literature Review

Customer decision-making is the psychological process of selecting the most attractive and desirable substitute from the many options available to the customer (Kotler & Keller, 2009; North and Croeser, 2006). The store environment is defined as the psychological impression a retailer creates in a customer during their visit to a store (Giraldi et al., 2003). The store environment is a strategic approach designed to create an atmosphere that makes customers feel comfortable and welcome. This approach aims to attract customers and encourage them to shop within the store (Sudaryanto et al., 2019). Studies have demonstrated that the store environment significantly influences customer purchasing decisions. For organizations to gain a deeper understanding of their customers' lifestyles and behaviors, it is essential to examine how customers spend their time and their perceptions of various environmental factors (Evans, 2010). In the past, customers primarily focused on the features and benefits of store products; however, contemporary customers seek more than just a transactional shopping experience. As a result, retailers strive to enhance the attractiveness of their store atmosphere and design store environments to create and amplify pleasant experiences (Mathur & Goswami, 2014; Esbjerg et al., 2012). Moreover, decisions regarding store location, values, and guiding philosophies that shape store environments are becoming crucial for customer acquisition (Davis et al., 2017). In examining the characteristics of the actual retail store environment, it is essential to consider several key factors. Scholars have proposed several categories for factors of the store and service environment, which can be classified into three groups: tangible, intangible, and human variables (Kotler, 1974; Baker, 1986; Bitner, 1992; Turley & Milliman, 2000). For instance, the retail environment encompasses the surrounding environment (such as music, lighting, color, and crowding), environmental design and architecture (including store size, layout, and product availability), and the social environment (which involves employee availability and helpfulness) (Baker, 1986; Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman, 1994). Other researchers have expanded on these aspects to include the store's exterior, general interior, layout, design, point-of-purchase factors, and decoration parameters. Additional indicators, such as scent and ambient temperature, were also defined by later works (Hultén, Broweus, and Van Dijk, 2009). Overall, the store environment encompasses the sensory stimuli—visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory—crafted by

the retailer to evoke emotional responses in customers. These emotional responses influence purchasing decisions, either facilitating or hindering the buying process.

An insightful study by Baker (1986) classified the social factors of the store environment into three categories: design, sensory factors, and social factors. Subsequently, Baker et al. (2002) expanded this classification by grouping store environment factors into three categories, with social factors emphasizing the role of sales force participation and efficiency. Social factors encompass interactions between customers and other individuals present in the environment, such as service personnel (Berman & Evans, 2013) and other patrons (Baker, 1986; Baker et al., 2002), including the presence and behavior of individuals, such as the number, type, and conduct of other customers (Baker & Grewal, 1994). Turley and Milliman (2000) further developed this framework by introducing five additional categories that incorporate human variables, resulting in a more comprehensive model. These categories include employee availability, the salesperson's image, friendliness, and employee helpfulness. Various theories explain the relationship between factors affecting customer decision-making, including the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) theory, TRA (Theory of Reasoned Action), TPB (Theory of Planned Behavior), and other theories related to customer behavior. The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), proposed by Martin Fishbein in 1967, focuses on voluntary personal behavior. It is broad in scope and is "intended to explain almost any human behavior" (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), acknowledging that, in certain situations, behavior may become more compulsive. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) extends the Theory of Reasoned Action by incorporating the concept of perceived behavioral control (Schifter and Ajzen, 1985). According to the theory, perceived behavioral control (PBC)—in addition to attitudinal and normative influences—affects both behavioral intentions and actual behavior. Likewise, human action is guided by three types of reasoning: (a) behavioral beliefs regarding the potential outcomes of behavior and evaluations of these outcomes; (b) normative beliefs about the expectations of others and the motivation to meet those expectations; and (c) perceived behavioral control, which encompasses an individual's beliefs about the resources and opportunities available to them, as well as their ability to manage barriers and obstacles related to the performance of target behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). Furthermore, a person's intentions and behavior concerning a target task can be predicted by the individual's perception of the ease or difficulty associated with performing a behavior, which is a form of perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). The primary distinction between the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) lies in the concept of individual motivation. While the Theory of Reasoned Action primarily addresses voluntary behavior, the TPB includes perceived behavioral control to account for factors influencing involuntary behavior. Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's perceived ability to perform a desired behavior easily (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Earlier studies have identified significant behavioral differences between men and women in customer behavior based on demographics. For instance, women generally spend more time in the store compared to men, interact more with store employees, check product quality, compare prices, and make inquiries before making a purchase (Gąsiorowska, 2011). Furthermore, gender has been found to moderate the relationship between perceived value or satisfaction and behavioral intention within the retail industry (Sharma, 2012). It is widely recognized that women and men differ in their shopping styles, perceptions, and behaviors (Faqih, 2016; Babin et al., 2013; Borges et al., 2013; Mortimer & Clark, 2011; Jones et al., 2006). Males tend to shop in larger groups, while females are more likely to engage in pair bonding (Melnik et al., 2009; Gabriel & Gardner, 1999). Specifically, research indicates that women exhibit greater loyalty to individuals, such as service workers, whereas men tend to demonstrate loyalty to entities, such as companies (Melnik, 2014). Based on the rationale presented above, this research aims to determine how the store environment influences customer purchase intention and addresses the following research questions: I) Which specific factors of the store environment—such as lighting, scent, layout, music, and employee interactions—influence customer purchase intentions? II) How do these specific factors affect different customer segments based on age (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45+) and

gender (male, female)? & III) How does the duration of time spent in the store (e.g., up to 1 hour, 1-2 hours, and over 2 hours) influence customer purchase intentions, particularly regarding the identified store environment factors?

Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) serves as a foundational framework for understanding various behavioral intentions across diverse contexts, particularly in financial behavior, social media engagement, investor behavior, knowledge sharing, and waste reduction. TPB posits that an individual's intention to perform a behavior is influenced by three primary constructs: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of financial behavior, She et al. (2024) identified that financial knowledge positively impacts attitudes towards retirement, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and ultimately financial behavior among working adults in Malaysia. This underscores the role of informed decision-making in shaping positive financial habits. Similarly, Mehrabioun (2024) highlighted TPB as a critical driver for users' intentions to continue engaging with social media, revealing that the constructs of TPB significantly outperformed other theoretical frameworks in predicting post-adoptive behaviors. In exploring investment behaviors in crypto assets, Pilatin and Dilek (2024) utilized a decomposed TPB approach, establishing that attitudes and perceived behavioral control significantly influenced investors' intentions, which in turn were strong predictors of actual investment behavior. This study emphasizes the importance of individual perceptions and external influences on financial decision-making. Furthermore, in knowledge-sharing contexts, Fauzi et al. (2024) analyzed literature revealing the integration of TPB in understanding knowledge-sharing behaviors, suggesting that attitudes, norms, and perceived control are crucial determinants. This aligns with Akhter et al. (2024), who examined food waste behaviors among university students, indicating that knowledge, attitudes, and moral standards significantly shaped intentions to reduce food waste, although subjective norms did not have a statistically significant impact. Collectively, these studies illustrate that the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior not only explain behavioral intentions in various domains but also highlight the necessity for targeted interventions that enhance attitudes, modify norms, and improve perceived control, ultimately fostering desired behaviors.

Additionally, the interplay between the store environment and consumer purchase intentions is a critical area of study within retail marketing, best understood through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). This theory posits that an individual's intention to engage in a behavior—such as making a purchase—is influenced by their attitudes toward that behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (She et al., 2024). The store environment, encompassing elements such as lighting, music, scent, layout, and employee interactions, plays a significant role in shaping these components. Research by De Villiers et al. (2018) indicates that positive atmospheric cues elicit favorable emotional responses, enhancing consumer attitudes and subsequently increasing purchase intentions. Additionally, store layout significantly influences consumer behavior, facilitating product discovery and encouraging impulse purchases (Sadikoglu et al., 2022). Age and gender serve as important moderating factors; younger consumers (aged 18-24) often prefer vibrant and dynamic experiences, while older consumers (aged 35 and above) favor straightforward layouts (van Niekerk et al., 2024; Borges et al., 2013). Gender differences further complicate this relationship, as women typically respond more positively to sensory stimuli, while men prioritize functionality (Akhter et al., 2024). The duration of time spent in a store also amplifies the influence of environmental factors on purchase intentions, as longer visits foster emotional connections to the shopping environment (Nguyen et al., 2017). In summary, the store environment significantly shapes consumer purchase intentions by influencing attitudes, norms, and perceived control, with age and gender as critical moderating variables. This framework underscores the necessity for retailers to create tailored shopping experiences that cater to diverse consumer needs, ultimately enhancing customer satisfaction and driving sales.

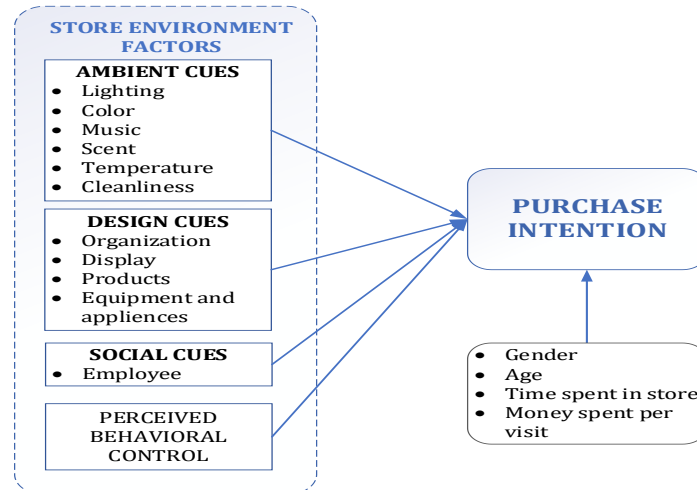


Figure 1. A conceptual model

Hypotheses development

Previous research has highlighted that various environmental cues, such as store design, atmosphere, and layout, can significantly affect consumer behavior. For instance, De Villiers et al. (2018) found that the store environment positively influences brand attitude and purchase intention, indicating that different environmental factors can create varying levels of emotional and cognitive engagement with products. Similarly, Sadikoglu et al. (2022) pointed out that specific elements of the store environment, such as ambient factors and social dynamics, can differentially impact consumer intentions. Thus, it is expected that distinct environmental factors will yield varying impacts on customers' purchase intentions.

H₁: *Factors of the store environment impact customer purchase intention in distinct ways.*

Additionally, gender orientation has been shown to moderate the effects of store atmospheres on purchase intentions. Borges et al. (2013) indicated that hedonic and utilitarian atmospheres lead to different evaluations depending on gender orientation, suggesting that female consumers may respond more favorably to hedonic environments. Furthermore, Nguyen et al. (2017) identified differences in purchasing behaviors based on gender, highlighting the need for marketers to consider gender-specific responses to store atmospherics. Hence, it is anticipated that the impact of store environmental factors on purchase intention will vary between male and female customers.

H₂: *Factors of the store environment differentially influence the purchasing intentions of female and male customers.*

Also, age has been identified as a significant moderator in consumer behavior research. Van Niekerk et al. (2024) found that age differences affect how consumers perceive store atmospherics, which in turn influences their purchasing intentions. Additionally, the study by Gupta and Coskun (2021) emphasizes that demographic factors, including age, play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of store environments and their subsequent impact on purchase behavior. This suggests that various age groups may react differently to the same environmental stimuli, leading to distinct purchasing intentions based on age. Thus, it is hypothesized that the factors of the store environment will influence purchasing intentions differently across various age groups.

H₃: *Factors of the store environment influence the purchasing intentions of customers across different age groups in distinct ways.*

Research Methodology

In the study of social relationships, researchers aim to explore the causes and conditions influencing the interplay between various factors from multiple perspectives (Hayes, 2009).

According to Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005), causal research is concerned with the “cause and effect” relationships among different variables. Specifically, it investigates whether one variable can influence or determine another, focusing on the interactions between these variables (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Quantitative methods are predominantly employed in this area of research, as they enable the quantitative expression of attitudes, intentions, and opinions while also facilitating the analysis of relationships and differences between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Christensen et al., 2014). Based on the theoretical and conceptual framework of the research, 18 groups of factors were identified, assuming that the environmental and personal factors of the store will affect customers' intention to visit the store and make purchases. A questionnaire comprising three sub-groups of 119 questions was utilized, with each question employing a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire included a section where participants were asked about their socio-economic and demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, monthly income, and educational level. The second part of the questionnaire included questions about the frequency of store visits, the typical amount spent, the product categories most frequently purchased, and the store most commonly chosen for shopping. The final section consisted of 26 questions that focused on customers' purchase intentions and the store environment factors influencing those intentions. The questions were adapted from existing academic research and translated to accommodate the preferences of Mongolian customers. For instance, the intention to purchase was assessed using the following statements: I intend to make good use of environmental information when purchasing from this store; if I need to buy again, I will use this store; I have a generally positive opinion about this store; I like the atmosphere of this store; when I visit this store, I buy things I didn't plan to; I intend to make good use of environmental information when purchasing from this store; and I intend to purchase from this store again soon, all rated on a Likert scale. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 26.0.

Research Analysis and Results

A sample of 726 regular shoppers from the selected nine stores in Ulaanbaatar was gathered, with 66.8 percent identifying as women. Considering the age distribution of the respondents, 82.4 percent were customers aged 44 years or younger. Specifically, 32.8 percent were between 18 and 24 years old, 24 percent were between 25 and 34 years old, and 25.6 percent were between 35 and 44 years old. Additionally, 11.0 percent were aged 45 to 54, while 6.6 percent were over 55 years old (Figure 2).

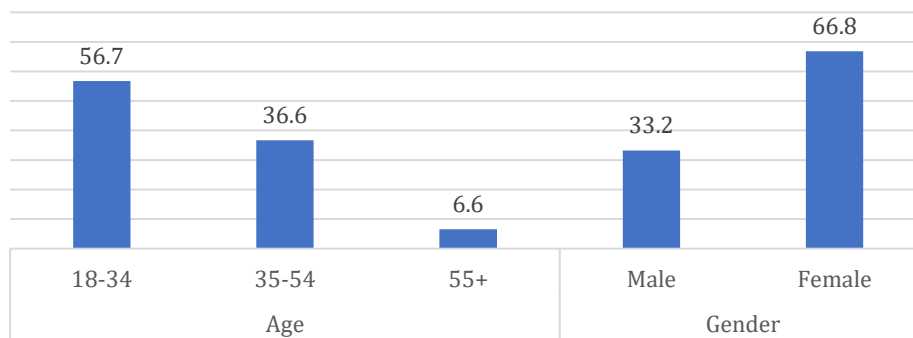


Figure 2. Age and gender of the respondents

The average monthly household income of the respondents is between 1 and 2 million MNT. Among the respondents, 59.2 percent come from households with 3 to 5 members, 24.9 percent are from households with up to 2 members, and 15.9 percent come from households with more than 6 members. In other words, 84.1 percent of the surveyed customers belong to households with up to 5 members. Additionally, the largest proportion of these customers, 57.4 percent, come from households with an income exceeding 2 million MNT (Figure 3).

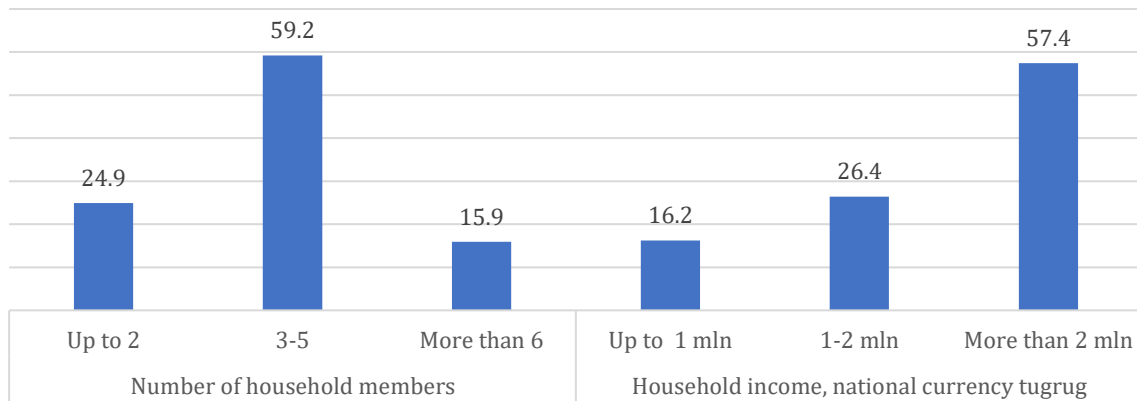


Figure 3. Family and household income status of respondents

Respondents visit the supermarket 3 to 5 times per month, spending between 30 minutes to 1 hour per visit. For each shopping trip, they typically spend approximately 101,000 to 150,000 MNT. Among the surveyed customers, 85.8% spend up to 2 hours in the store, 80.1% make purchases up to 9 times a month, and 79.5% spend up to 201,000 MNT per purchase (Figure 4).

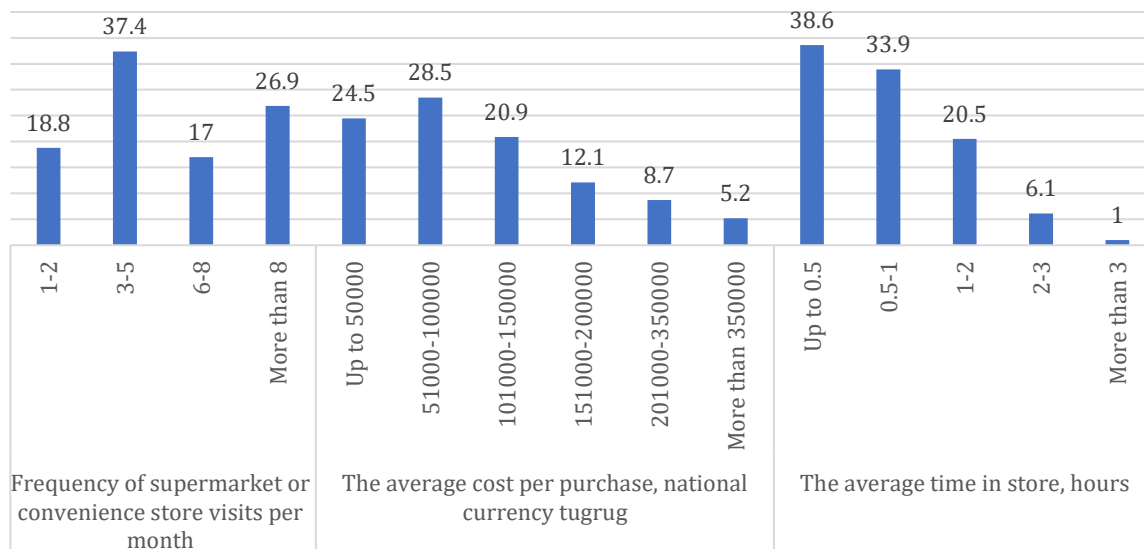


Figure 4. Frequency of visits to the store, spending, and average time

Model Measurement Evaluation

The study considered 18 groups of variables and 119 factors; however, according to the results of the factor analysis, 11 groups of variables and 76 factors were found to be valid.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

No	Variable	Number of Items	Maximum value	Minimum value	Mean	St.dev.	Cronbach's alpha
1	Perceived behavioral control	6	3.991	3.559	3.692	0.189	0.848
2	Purchase decision	6	3.551	3.407	3.467	0.063	0.892
3	Influence of others	6	3.288	2.844	3.006	0.155	0.910
4	Organization	7	3.576	3.441	3.506	0.055	0.927
5	Display	11	3.384	3.194	3.308	0.055	0.944
6	Equipment	5	3.325	3.213	3.245	0.045	0.884
7	Products	8	3.586	3.456	3.531	0.054	0.933
8	Light	7	3.655	3.286	3.529	0.167	0.828

9	Color	4	3.494	3.457	3.481	0.000	0.905
10	Music	7	3.383	3.061	3.204	0.105	0.937
11	Scent	6	3.433	2.978	3.106	0.167	0.789
12	Temperature	5	3.446	3.289	3.392	0.063	0.897
13	Cleanliness	4	3.560	3.461	3.509	0.044	0.889
14	Ease of use	7	3.180	3.067	3.139	0.032	0.958
15	Usefulness	4	3.243	3.098	3.172	0.071	0.905
16	Employees	9	3.433	3.318	3.381	0.044	0.946
17	Purchase Intention	10	3.609	3.415	3.520	0.063	0.878
18	Satisfaction	7	3.651	3.535	3.578	0.045	0.938

Factor analysis was conducted to estimate the impact of the store environment on customer purchasing decision-making. In this analysis, factors with an Eigenvalue greater than 1 and absolute variable loadings exceeding 0.6 were considered significant. Additionally, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.973, indicating that the sample size is sufficient for the analysis.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.973
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	42005.558
	df	3003
	Sig.	.000

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	32.753	43.671	43.671	32.753	43.671	43.671	11.075	14.766	14.766
2	4.549	6.065	49.735	4.549	6.065	49.735	8.176	10.902	25.668
3	3.639	4.852	54.587	3.639	4.852	54.587	6.262	8.349	34.018
4	2.785	3.713	58.301	2.785	3.713	58.301	5.147	6.863	40.881
5	2.110	2.814	61.114	2.110	2.814	61.114	4.927	6.570	47.450
6	1.857	2.476	63.590	1.857	2.476	63.590	4.121	5.494	52.944
7	1.712	2.282	65.873	1.712	2.282	65.873	3.740	4.987	57.931
8	1.632	2.176	68.049	1.632	2.176	68.049	3.114	4.152	62.084
9	1.447	1.929	69.978	1.447	1.929	69.978	2.923	3.897	65.981
10	1.209	1.612	71.589	1.209	1.612	71.589	2.755	3.673	69.654
11	1.112	1.483	73.072	1.112	1.483	73.072	2.564	3.418	73.072
12	.897	1.195	74.268						
13	.807	1.076	75.344						
14	.753	1.004	76.348						
15	.704	.938	77.286						
16	.681	.908	78.194						
17	.617	.823	79.017						
18	.589	.785	79.802						

Figure 5. Dispersion analysis/ Total Variance Explained by the model

From the above analysis, 11 groups of valid variables explain 73% of the variance in customer purchase intention. Cronbach's alpha, which assesses the reliability of the questionnaire, indicates an appropriate level of internal consistency across the variables (satisfaction -0.950; ease of use- 0.96; screen- 0.945; music- 0.938; employees- 0.940; organization-0.929; scent- 0.920; influence of others -0.911; purchase decision- 0.823; control- 0.858). These results suggest that the internal consistency among the variables is acceptable, allowing the questionnaire results to be used for further inferential statistics.

Difference Analysis of the Effect of Store Environment Factors on Customer Intention to Purchase

In the analyses, we examined how various store environment factors differentially influence customer purchase intentions. By considering demographic variables such as age and gender and specific store attributes—such as layout (organization), lighting, and employee interaction—this study aims to uncover distinct patterns in customer behavior. Understanding these differential effects can give retailers insights into optimizing the shopping experience and tailoring marketing strategies to enhance customer engagement and drive sales. The results of the regression analysis indicate that store environment factors exert different influences on the willingness of men and women to visit a store. The regression analysis of factors influencing purchase intentions among

male respondents revealed significant insights. The findings indicated that a positive store atmosphere significantly enhanced purchase intentions among male respondents, specifically, the key factors are organization, staff, and lighting (Table 3). Overall, the regression analysis demonstrated that these factors collectively play a critical role in shaping purchase intentions among male shoppers.

Table 3. The regression analysis result of factors influencing purchase intentions among male respondents

Model Summary

Model	R A.2gender=male (Selected)	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.839 ^a	.703	.691	.50202

a. Predictors: (Constant), mean_3, mean_8, mean_14_15, mean_16, mean_1, mean_11, mean_4, mean_10, mean_5

Coefficients ^{a,b}

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.333	.152		2.191	.029
	Ease of use	.054	.040	.065	1.340	.182
	Display	.083	.059	.086	1.405	.161
	Employees	.360	.050	.371	7.134	<.001
	Music	.066	.047	.074	1.384	.168
	Store Organization	.254	.051	.281	4.994	<.001
	Scent	.060	.044	.074	1.381	.169
	Perceived Control	-.008	.043	-.009	-.191	.849
	Lighting	.095	.032	.129	2.932	.004
	Influence of Others	-.009	.041	-.011	-.217	.828

a. Dependent Variable: purchase intention

b. Selecting only cases for which A.2gender = male

$$PI_m = 0.333 + 0.255SO + 0.360Em + 0.095LT \quad R^2 = 0.703$$

(2.191) (4.994) (7,134) (2.932)

Here: PI – Purchase Intention; SO-Store Organization; Em-Employee; LT -Store Lighting;

In contrast, for female customers, several factors—including ease of use (convenience), store employees, organization, ambient scent, lighting, and perceived control—significantly influence their Intention to Purchase. This heightened sensitivity results in female customers taking multiple factors into account when deciding whether to make a purchase (Table 4).

Table 4. The regression analysis result of factors influencing purchase intentions among female respondents

Model Summary

Model	R A.2gender =female (Selected)	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.834 ^a	.696	.690	.53001

a. Predictors: (Constant), mean_3, mean_14_15, mean_1, mean_16, mean_11, mean_8, mean_4, mean_10, mean_5

Coefficients ^{a,b}

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.198	.111		1.788	.074
	Ease of use	.089	.028	.108	3.163	.002
	Display	.016	.040	.016	.391	.696
	Employees	.338	.036	.355	9.416	<.001

Music	.020	.035	.023	.567	.571
Organization	.154	.040	.157	3.859	<.001
Scent	.080	.031	.094	2.552	.011
Perceived control	.088	.032	.092	2.745	.006
Lighting	.190	.036	.204	5.275	<.001
Influence of others	.002	.030	.002	.065	.948

- a. Dependent Variable: purchase intention
- b. Selecting only cases for which A.2gender =female

Further analysis indicates that various factors influence the intention to purchase among younger individuals, while the number of influencing factors tends to decrease with age. For instance, store layout, staff, ambient scent, lighting, and the ease of use of automatic equipment significantly affect young people aged 18-24. In contrast, customers over 45 are primarily influenced by staff, lighting, and perceived control over their shopping experience (Table 5).

Table 5. Factors influencing shopping intention, age, and gender differences

Factors	Age			Gender	
	18-34	35-54	55+	Male	Female
Ease of Use	+	-	-	-	+
Display	-	-	-	-	-
Music	-	-	-	-	-
Organization	+	+	-	+	+
Employees	+	+	+	+	+
Scent	+	-	-	-	+
Lighting	+	+	+	+	+
Perceived Control	-	+	-	-	+
Influence of others	-	-	-	-	-
R²	0.688	0.699	0.871	0.703	0.696

Additional analyses were conducted to determine whether the duration of time spent in the store and the amount of money spent per visit differently affect the intention to purchase. For customers who spend up to one hour in the store, factors such as display information, organization, employees, ambient scent, and lighting significantly influence their intention to purchase. For respondents, who spend 1-2 hours in the store organization, ease of use appliances, and employees have a significant impact on their intention to purchase. In contrast, for those who spend more than two hours, it appears that only store employees and lighting impact their desire to purchase (Table 6).

Table 6. Factors affecting the intention to purchase, differences per time spent in the store, and the amount of money spent

Factors	Time spent in store			Money spent at one-time purchase /MNT/		
	Up to 1 hour	1-2 hour	2 or more hour	Up to 100 thousand MNT	100-200 thousand MNT	200 thousand or more MNT
Ease of Use	+	+	-	+	-	-
Display	+	-	-	-	-	-
Music	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organization	+	+	-	+	+	-
Employees	+	+	+	+	+	+
Scent	+	-	-	+	+	-
Lighting	+	-	+	+	+	+
Perceived Control	-	-	-	-	-	-
R²	0.718	0.654	0.660	0.714	0.690	0.648

Furthermore, customers who spend up to 100,000 MNT per visit are influenced by the convenience of automatic devices, store organization, staff, ambient scent, and lighting.

Conversely, for customers spending more than 200,000 MNT, the primary factors affecting their intention to visit are the presence of employees and lighting (Table 6).

Findings and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify the environmental factors of supermarkets and chain stores that influence customer purchase intentions. To achieve this objective, nine stores operating in Ulaanbaatar were selected, and a sample of 726 customers was surveyed. The research aimed to determine which store environment factors impact customer purchase intentions and whether these factors affect different customer segments differently. The study was grounded in the SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). A quantitative research method, specifically a questionnaire, was employed as the primary research tool, and Exploratory Factor Analysis was used to validate the research model. The analysis revealed that factors such as store lighting, color, music, display, and layout positively affect customers' purchase intentions. Additionally, a pleasant store environment is associated with increased time and money spent by customers. Other environmental factors, including employee performance, layout, scent, and displays, significantly influence customers' purchase intentions. Previous studies have confirmed that two-thirds of customers are influenced by lighting, a finding that is corroborated by the results of our research. This underscores the significance of these environmental factors in shaping customer behavior and purchasing decisions.

The research highlighted that customer attention to different store environment factors varies based on age, gender, household income, and time spent in the store. For instance, male customers prioritize store organization and employee relationships, while female customers place greater importance on lighting, appearance, and scent. The regression analysis indicated that these factors have varying effects on the willingness of men and women to visit the store, emphasizing the need for retailers to consider gender-specific preferences in in-store design. From this perspective, a thorough examination of the lifestyles, behaviors, and positive influencing factors of target customers can enhance the appeal of the store environment. Research indicates that such improvements can significantly influence customer buying behavior. By understanding and addressing specific customer preferences and needs, retailers can create a more inviting shopping experience that encourages purchases. The research revealed that customer perceptions of store environment factors vary based on age, gender, household income, and time spent in the store. Notably, key findings indicate significant differences by gender; for male customers, interactions with store employees significantly enhance their purchasing attitude. In contrast, female customers place a higher value on other aspects of the store environment, though specifics were not detailed in this summary. Furthermore, the length of time customers spend in the store influences their sensitivity to various environmental factors, suggesting that extended shopping periods might amplify the impact of certain elements of the store environment. Additionally, indicators such as music and ambient temperature were found to be statistically insignificant, indicating that these factors warrant further investigation through experimental and qualitative methods.

Recommendations for Managerial applications:

This study also demonstrates that a store can actively create its unique environment. The findings of this research can be effectively utilized to enhance the store environment and inform ongoing studies in this area. A clean and well-organized store attracts customers, leading to increased purchases, longer shopping durations, and a higher likelihood of return visits. Conversely, disorganized shelves and narrow aisles create psychological pressure, resulting in distorted behavioral responses. In this context, conducting a comprehensive analysis of the lifestyles, behaviors, and positive influencing factors related to the store's target customers can enhance the potential for creating a more pleasant store environment. Research indicates that such enhancements can significantly influence customer purchasing behavior. By tailoring the

shopping experience to align with the specific needs and preferences of customers, retailers can cultivate a more inviting atmosphere that encourages increased purchasing activity. Understanding these factors will provide valuable insights into creating a more appealing shopping experience and fostering positive feelings toward the store. Furthermore, improving the store environment by considering factors such as employee appearance and behavior can increase customer satisfaction and create a favorable atmosphere that differentiates the store from competitors. Acknowledging the role of customer emotions in purchasing decisions is critical; designing the store environment and employee interactions to positively influence emotional experiences can further enhance purchase intentions. To leverage the positive impact of store employees on purchase intentions, focus on improving employee skills, knowledge, and overall customer service. Ensure that employees are well-trained to provide friendly and helpful interactions. Recognizing the role of customer emotions in purchase decisions is important. Designing store environments and employee interactions to positively influence customers' emotional experiences can further boost their intention to purchase.

A subsequent study by Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman (1994) investigated how greeting customers and the presence of salespeople wearing aprons influence perceptions of retail service quality. The impact of the store environment is mediated through employee perceptions, where the number of employees and the quality of service provided by sales staff can significantly influence customers' store choices, particularly in home delivery businesses. Attributes such as well-trained, knowledgeable, friendly, and competent store staff are highly valued by customers. Marques (2016) demonstrated that customers appreciate the friendliness and politeness of sales staff, personal attention, prompt service, and the ability to locate products while shopping. Baker et al. (2002) found that positive cues from employees, such as wearing professional uniforms and greeting customers upon entry, led participants to perceive higher levels of service quality. Positive behaviors, such as smiling and providing assistance, can enhance customer satisfaction and foster favorable feelings during interactions (Mattila & Wirtz, 2008). Conversely, customers who experience poor service are likely to avoid returning to the store and may share their negative experiences with others (Tendai & Crispen, 2009). It is important to note that customers pay attention to different store environment factors based on age, gender, and time spent in the store. Moreover, the length of time shoppers spend in a store affects their sensitivity to various environmental factors, suggesting that longer shopping periods may increase exposure to certain factors. A store with a prestigious image—characterized by more salespeople on the floor, employees wearing aprons, and staff greeting customers—is perceived as having better service quality compared to a store with a discount image, where there is typically only one salesperson, employees do not wear aprons, and there is no staff interaction with customers. Even minimal interactions between shoppers and others in the store can slow them down, increase the time spent in the store, and boost their purchasing behavior (Zhang et al., 2014). Retailers can benefit from longer customer stays, as this can lead to increased purchases (Milliman, 1986). Friendly behavior from store employees contributes to a more engaging and stimulating store atmosphere (Baker, Grewal, & Levy, 1992). The number, appearance, and behavior of retail employees significantly impact customer perceptions of the store, thereby influencing customer behavior (Bitner, 1992; Turley & Milliman, 2000). Additionally, the number and friendliness of employees positively affect customer satisfaction and arousal levels, which in turn influence purchase intentions (Baker, Levy, & Grewal, 1992).

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