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Effects of atmospheric variables on children during shopping activity: a conceptual framework of children shopping experience

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Although children are recognised as an important market segment, research on how children feel, perceive and experience shopping environment is still very limited. This study developed a conceptual framework of children shopping experience based on a review of 20 years of related research on how shopping atmospheric variables affect children aged between three to seven years old during their shopping journey. These articles are sourced from well-known academic databases including “Sage Publications”, “Emerald Insight”, and “Elsevier”. The conceptual framework explains how atmospheric variables influence children shopping experience from four perspectives: the role of children during shopping, act and response towards the shopping variables, variables as an agent of socialization and response from parents. Specific sub-level factors have also been summarised under each category for retail managers and designers to consider when designing a shopping atmosphere for this specific target customer.

Keywords: Children experience, parent, shopping atmospheric variables, children socialization

Introduction

In a retail context, the term atmospheric was defined by Kotler (1973) as intentional control and structuring of environmental cues. Through his meticulous marketing research, Kotler described atmospheric as the air surrounding a sphere or more colloquially as the quality of the surrounding space. Since then, a large number of studies



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have confirmed great impacts of retail's atmospheric variables on customer behaviour from divers perspectives, such as retail density (Michon, Chebat, & Turley, 2005), shopping companion (Borges, Chebat, & Babin, 2010), physical surroundings (Bitner, 1992), music (North, Sheridan, & Areni, 2015), colour (Bregman & Geuens, 2004) other customers and sales associates (Kim & Kim, 2012) and atmospheric cues of women's fashion store (Ballantine, Parsons, & Comeskey, 2015). This is due to the fact that atmospheric variables can affect the customer's behavioural response, number of items purchase, customer's perception, product quality (Turley & Chebat, 2002) and store patronage intentions (Laroche, Laroche, Teng, Michon, & Chebat, 2005). In most competitive situations today, the well-designed of retail atmospherics can help to improvise the uniqueness and effectiveness of the shopping environment (Lucia-Palacios, Pérez-López, & Polo-Redondo, 2016). Nevertheless, Turley and Chebat (2002) found that different categories of customers appear to respond and behave differently towards similar atmospheric variables within the same environment. Therefore, Turley and colleague suggested that retail environments should be crafted with a particular consumer in mind, with the intention to attract new customer and gain continuous loyalty from the existing ones (Grewal, Levy, & Kumar, 2009).

Children customers have been identified as 'future customer in the making' (Ebster, Wagner, & Neumueller, 2009; Feenstra, Muzellec, de Faultrier, & Boulay, 2015; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001) and are considered as important as adult customer to retailers (Wiener, 2004) because they are powerful family influencer, have considerable amount of pocket money and their favour towards specific brand lasts well throughout their adulthood (de Faultrier, Deli-Gray, Matura, & Árva, 2014; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001). Children between this age group falls under the perceptual stage category (de Faultrier, Deli-Gray, et al., 2014), and is an interesting age group for the research. Firstly, this is because it is a crucial stage where the children show clear emotion, developing and retaining their own character and imaginative ideas how to run their life. They show great difficulty on resisting the temptations of a snack or a toy, while at the same time are still able to interact or respond to the attention given to them (de Faultrier, Deli-Gray, et al., 2014; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001). Secondly, as their negotiating skills and skills to verbally addressed their perspectives are still at the limited (Slunjski, 2015), bargaining with them might be a little challenging, leading to conflicts which then makes the shopping journey exhausting and inconvenient for parent (Badot et al., 2016; Cowles, 2002).

Although children are recognised as an important market segment, research on how children feel, perceive and experience shopping environment is still very limited (Ayadi & Cao, 2016; Badot et al., 2016; de Faultrier, Boulay, de Faultrier, Feenstra, & Muzellec, 2014), especially for younger children customers. The purpose of this study is therefore, to explore key shopping atmospheric variables that have great impact on children ages between three to seven years of age shopping experience when being accompanied by parent/s within a shopping environment.

The objectives of this research is threefold:

2. To review and analyse previous research related to children customer experience within the shopping environment.

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3. To construct and propose a conceptual framework on the effects of shopping atmospheric variables on children shopping experience.
 4. To provide suggestion for future research direction that may be used by other researcher who aim to further into this topic interest.

Literature Review

Shopping atmospheric variables

Research within atmospheric area has been carried out using stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model to understand how store atmosphere may affect customer behaviour during their shopping process (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Using this model, researcher investigates how the stimuli of the store atmosphere (S) have influenced customer's (O) emotional state, which then generates response (R) whether to approach or to avoid the store. Donovan and Rossiter (1982) found that the framework introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) called PAD dimension that measures how store environment produce customer's emotional states works well on studying customer responses and behaviors within retail environments. Pleasure (P) is identified as a degree in which a person feels good, joyful, happy, or satisfied. Arousal (A) refers to the degree in which a person feels excited, stimulated, alert, or active in the situation and dominance (D) refers to whether an individual feels in control of, or free to act in the situation (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). While pleasure and arousals has been regularly studied (Laroche et al., 2005; Machleit & Mantel, 2001), researchers found that dominance factor is not relatable or is context specific (Bregman & Geuens, 2004; Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). In addition, Turley and Milliman (2000) found five main categories with total amount of fifty-seven atmospheric variables that may critically influence customer's evaluation and behaviour in retail environment. The main categories are external variables, general interior, layout & design, point of purchase & decoration, and human variables. While the way each individual responds towards these variables may differ from each other, research found that each customer will engage with their shopping environments in a holistic manner (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001).

Shopping environment

Over the years, designers from various design disciplines and marketers have been working together to provide a product, service or interior of a shop that are able to meet their marketing goals (Bruce & Bessant, 2002). From consumption to trading space, retail space such as shopping centre has evolved alongside social needs and is recognized as the third place after working place and home (Johnstone & Todd, 2011; Mulhern, 1997). To cater the current customers' demands, most of the modern shopping places have expanded their function, providing entertainment, relaxation (Goss, 1993), excitement (Lucia-Palacios et al., 2016) and education (Joseph, 2013) for customer. In long term, these modern shopping space is labelled as tourist attractions and family leisure space (Bucha, Rizwan, & Shahid, 2015; Jones, 1995). As stated by (Bitner, 1992), the design of retail environment should consider to incorporate both the needs of their ultimate users and also the requirement of various functional units. Therefore, shopping environment is designed by technical and marketing people to create a liveable selling environment that encourages not only practicality but also psychologically experience that appeals customer

(Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015). The creation of environment should allow customers to experience a convenient and pleasant shopping journey that encourages positive shopping mode, store visits, customer's satisfaction and customer's loyalty for generations (Cowles, 2002; Feenstra et al., 2015; Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015).

For example, previous research highlighted that a clear focus at the point of sale could provide better communication (Cowles, 2002). Careful layout arrangement could promote ease of navigation and movement especially for customers with wheelchair or child's pram (Ballantine et al., 2015; Cowles, 2002) and the presence of shopping aid such as shopping cart with children seat could offer a convenient shopping journey for customer (Cook, 2003). On the other hand, visual clutter may add distraction to parent, lack of service facilities may create inconvenience (Cowles, 2002) and inappropriate location of children entertainment unit may lead to conflicts between parent and children (de Faultrier, Deli-Gray, et al., 2014). To avoid these problems, retailers begin to look into how parent and children experience their selling environment in order to attract and create a more pleasant and memorable shopping experience (Cook, 2003; Feenstra et al., 2015) through the design of their store atmosphere (Ayadi & Cao, 2016). However, research also shows that some retailers think that by providing space for children, they will behave in a way that could diminish other people's experience (Feenstra et al., 2015; Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015).

Designing space for children

One of the challenges in designing a shopping environment is that the initial design of the retail space is often performed by the architects and store designers originating outside of the main-line marketing functions (Bitner, 1992). Therefore, Bitner suggested that the creation of an environment should be made as similar as designing a product, in which it means the designing of the environment should be made by considering the marketing side and also the subjects within the space as a whole. In designing shopping environment for children, Exley and Exley (2007) and Slunjski (2015) suggested that it is important for a designer to figure out attractive factors for children and continuously study how children use and interact with the environments to attract and fascinate children when occupying the space. This is because the way children understand and perceive their environment is different from adult and they will feel safe, comfortable, welcome and engaged actively within an environment that positively evokes their sense of belonging (Exley & Exley, 2007; Slunjski, 2015).

To achieve this aim, recent multidisciplinary research by Slunjski (2015) suggested that the designing of children space requires networking and collaboration among stakeholders including pedagogues, designers, architects and many other experts that may contribute towards the process of developing, shaping and designing the features of the children facilities and spatial features to achieve a balance between form and function. In addition, Exley and Exley (2007) pointed out that the participatory involvement such as collaborative workshop involving children may support learning and reveal unexpected design opportunities. Other than direct workshop participant, some researchers use observation, guided tours, cameras, maps, recordings, 2D and 3D images of the space to gain insight into ways how children experience space around them (Dudek, 2005; Slunjski, 2015). These methods are adopted due to the limited capabilities among children to

verbally describe their perspectives and way of understanding their ideas (Slunjski, 2015). By using these methods, researchers have gathered deeper understanding into how children perceive the space, how they use it and to what extent it is available to them, what are the meaning of objects in the environment is (toys, furniture, stimuli) or which activities are perform within the space. Understanding how children perceive and experience the environment will help to identify the design criteria needed and generate ideal outcome to provide a positive children experience (Slunjski, 2015).

The scenario of contemporary parent and children shopping activities

Place have various meaning for people and as highlighted by Ironico (2012), children experience consumer spaces and goods as symbolic resources that merging their fantasy and magic imagination with the actual purposes of selling space, products and promotional stimuli. In today's modern lifestyle, bringing children to the shopping centre is typical to parent as shopping centre has been recognized as urban family leisure space (Bucha et al., 2015; Jones, 1995). Children relates their first purchase selections and first purchases in supermarket, especially for product like toys and candy (Cook, 2003; Young, 2004). In Western societies, parents authorize (Bauman, 2006), give command (Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001) and make decision (Cook, 2003) but children, most of the time, will greatly influence their family purchasing choices (Ebster et al., 2009; Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015; Pettersson, Olsson, & Fjellström, 2004; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001). As a matter of fact, research by (Tyler, 2009) pointed out that children are recognised as the main customer since their influence on adult spending power is worth over £200m in the UK alone (Wiener, 2004). In term of loyalty, their preference towards specific brand or place lasts into adulthood, putting them as market influencer in future (Cowles, 2002; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001).

Borges et al. (2010) states that shopping companion helps one make better shopping decision, reduces stress level, enhance a buyer's confidence, which then make the overall trip more enjoyable. Interestingly, a companion may also reduce positive shopping values. Research found that having family companion particularly children could make parent experience embarrassing moments, more difficult to make purchase decision and stressful (Ebster et al., 2009; Miller, Jackson, Thrift, Holbrook, & Rowlands, 1998; Tyler, 2009) due to the children's behaviour. As a result, parent may employ strategies (Ebster et al., 2009), give warning (Ayadi & Cao, 2016), or even shorten their shopping trip (Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015). Research by (Kazdin & Rotella, 2013) found that some parent who worries about children safety are considering safety harness. Social factors are another dimension that affects overall children shopping experience (John, 1999; Johnstone & Todd, 2011; Mulhern, 1997). By socialising, children build their sense of belonging and familiarity to the space and engage with modern community they live in (Mulhern, 1997). Because of these factors, research into how children feel, perceive and experience their shopping environment while being accompanied by parent is crucial and need further investigation.

Methodology

Figure 1 show the methodology flowchart for this study. Research published in refereed journals between 1999 until 2016, which focus on children involvements in retail or shopping environments have been collected and reviewed. The selected research included

origin from various databases including Sage Publications, Emerald Insight, Elsevier and ResearchGate. Relevant articles are sourced from Journals of Retail & Distribution Management, Young Consumers, Consumer Culture, Retailing and Consumer Services and Applied Developmental Psychology. The selection of keywords are shopping atmospheric, children customer, retail store, shopping experience, shopping environment and other related terms. Only papers written in English are reviewed for this study.

This research is children context specific. Although previous studies involved children from various age of background, only data that refers to children aged between three to seven years are analysed. Research focusing on children within other industries such as pure online shopping (Thomson & Laing, 2003) or health environment (Whitehouse et al., 2001) were excluded. Based on the selections criteria, seventeen study were reviewed in this research. The sets of data gathered are then extracted, listed, examined, compared, and conceptualized using open coding method (Bryman, 2012) before categorizing and grouping them under the sub-factor. To ensure validity of group, the data is then re-evaluated to avoid wrong grouping or double coding. Once finalized, the sub-factors are then linked together under four main factors.

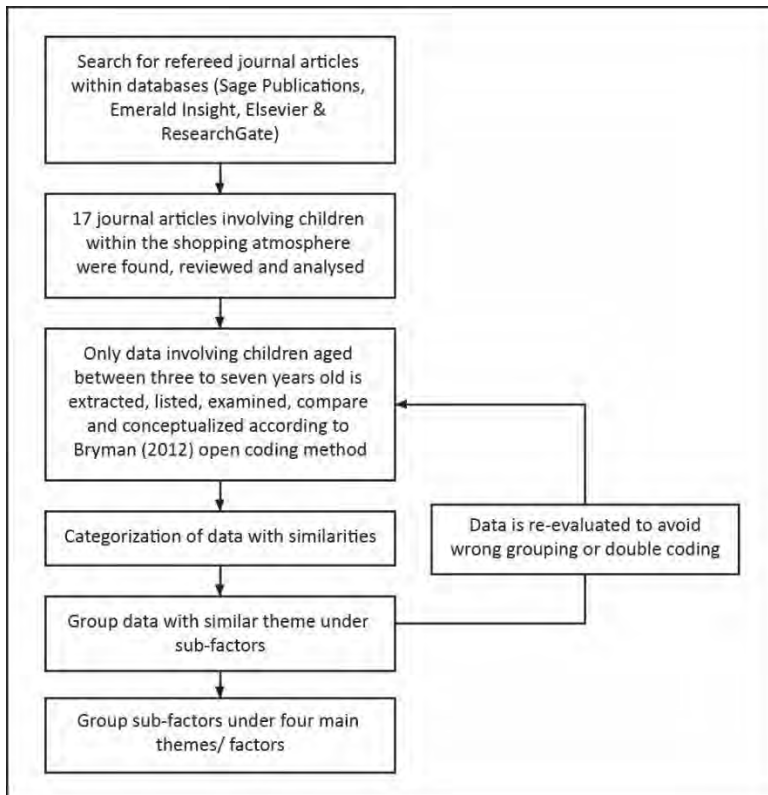


Figure 1 The methodology flowchart used to study the effects of atmospheric variables on children during shopping activity

Results

The research analysis found that shopping atmospheric variables might affect children experience during their shopping activity through four main factors. Figure 2 shows the conceptual framework for this research with the list of each main factors and its sub-factors. Role of children during shopping activity refers to how children demonstrate their role as young customer and family purchase influencer. Children act and respond refers to ways children engage with the shopping variables, merchandise, and express their emotions towards certain event and situation. The third factor refers to how one specific human variable can affect the children's socialization value, while the last one refers to how children receive respond from parent following their request and behaviour when they engage with the atmospheric variables.

<p>Role of children during shopping activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role as young customer • Role as family purchase influencer 	<p>Children act and respond towards shopping variables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with shopping variables • Engage with merchandise in store • Express emotions towards event and situation 	<p>Variables as an agent for socialization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonding place for parent and child • Socialization with peers • Attention received from store employee 	<p>Respond received from parent towards children behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and flexibility to explore the surrounding • Conflicts with parent • Negotiation and parental control • Concern for children's safety
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Figure 2 A conceptual framework for the effects of atmospheric variables on children during shopping activity

1) Role of children during shopping activity

Role as young customer

Children active role as customer begins once they start spending their own money as early as three years old (de Faultrier, Deli-Gray, et al., 2014; Deli-Gray et al., 2016) to buy snacks, sweets and toys (Ayadi & Cao, 2016; Johnstone & Todd, 2011). Children think that product and brands are the most salient aspects of the marketplace and are not sure of the existence of this place besides providing them snacks and sweets (John, 1999). They are easily influenced by television programme and hypermarket's advertisements (Badot et al., 2016; John, 1999) since they have limited understanding of the persuasive intention in marketing strategy (John, 1999). A research by John (1999) shows that children consumer knowledge and decision making skills were developed gradually along their cognitive abilities as they grow up. Their understanding of shop function starts only between the age of four to seven years old (Ironico, 2012) through exposure to the store, products for sale, shopping skills and pricing (John, 1999). As they reach preschool or kindergarten years, they already understand the actual meaning of shopping through observation, family exposure, interaction with peers, mass media and marketing institutions (Feenstra et al., 2015; John, 1999). However, their understanding of value is still limited (Deli-Gray et al., 2016); price is only relative to size. In terms of understanding money, John (1999) found out that children find money unimportant while Deli-Gray et al.

(2016) found that children in France understands the need for money and are able to relate the concept of price and payments activity from their self-observations. The knowledge, skills and values gained by the children during their childhood will benefit them as future customer (John, 1999).

Role as family purchase influencer

Children play important role as family purchase influencer (Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001) especially when requesting their own products, such as clothes, snacks, toys and candy (John, 1999; Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015). Young children, especially the one who sits in their buggy or cart makes fewer purchase requests compared to children who are not (Ebster et al., 2009). In today's family purchases, over 33% from overall purchasing at point-of-sale is influenced by children (Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015). Research by Ming Lim and Hultén (2015) however states that children may not always get what they want since parent purchase decision are influenced by children's age, household income and price of products they request. For examples, parent are found to agree less towards suggestion from children aged three years and below (Ebster et al., 2009) and children from higher income families have more influence over their family purchase decision (John, 1999). As they grow, they will have more understanding towards their family purchase preference, develop their consumer skills further and have more say towards the purchase decisions (de Faultrier, Deli-Gray, et al., 2014; Ebster et al., 2009; Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001).

2) Children act and respond towards shopping variables

i) Engage with shopping variables

Children between three to seven years adapt and actively respond towards shopping variables (Ayadi & Cao, 2016; John, 1999; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001). They pay more attention to the hedonic elements of the store rather than getting involved with their parent's purchase activity (Ayadi & Cao, 2016). They appreciate the whole experience cognitively, emotionally and physiologically through responding to the visual, aural and tactile elements (Ayadi & Cao, 2016; Feenstra et al., 2015). Children can also relate their memories and recognise their space through its environment variables such colours, music (Ayadi & Cao, 2016) and images from television shows (Cook, 2003). The more familiar they are to the space, the more they explore the surroundings and variables around them (Ayadi & Cao, 2016). However, children explores differently than adult (Wiener, 2004). Feenstra et al. (2015) and Badot et al. (2016) found that stores serves not only as a trading place, but also as a place to learn, play and have fun for children. This is also because children especially boys, are uninterested in purchasing process and creatively entertain themselves through playing (Ayadi & Cao, 2016; Cook, 2003). This is largely influenced by their character- adventurous, always seeking for surprise, prefer something different, love to explore, investigate further through questioning and want things that stimulate their emotions (de Faultrier, Deli-Gray, et al., 2014; Wiener, 2004). They also love games and be involved with interactive and shopping activities with their parent (Deli-Gray et al., 2016; Wiener, 2004). As a result, children always explore the shopping surroundings through playing (running, play hide and seek, dancing, sliding or surfing) in selling space, fitting rooms or even at the lift's lobby area (Ayadi & Cao, 2016; Ironico, 2012).

Engage with merchandise in-store

Children love shopping especially visiting shop where they can engage with merchandise (de Faultrier, Boulay, et al., 2014; Ironico, 2012; Wiener, 2004). They recognise product through their characters, shape, colour, size and brand (de Faultrier, Deli-Gray, et al., 2014; John, 1999; Wiener, 2004). Frequently, children are also attracted to certain merchandise that are aesthetically appealing to them even if its main function and purpose may differ (Cowles, 2002). They enjoy toys, friendly looking animal and adventurous characters (Cowles, 2002; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001). Children often grab any product they see, making impulse purchase request to their parent (Cook, 2003). However, children pick up products not only to purchase them, but also as their imaginary medium. Adult handles merchandise in-store with extra caution while children may use merchandise differently than it is intended for (racks as a place to hide, clothes as a guitar, mannequin as life size dolls or product's label as an airplane).

Express emotions towards event and situation

Children express positive and negative emotions during shopping trip as consequences to certain situations and surroundings (Feenstra et al., 2015). Research by Ayadi and Cao (2016) found that the way young children express their emotional and physiological responses towards surroundings are not clear as to older children. In general, children react positively when they feel their activity is interesting, when they receive souvenirs or gifts and when they get or can play with something they want (de Faultrier, Deli-Gray, et al., 2014; Deli-Gray et al., 2016; Feenstra et al., 2015; Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015). They respond to music with prominent rhythm and dance when listening to it (Ayadi & Cao, 2016). In other situation, children behave negatively by screaming, whining and crying when they don't get what they want (Deli-Gray et al., 2016; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001). Hopefully by showing their emotions, parents have a change of mind and agrees to them (Deli-Gray et al., 2016). In addition, children may also express negative emotions when they are forbidden to play or when they have to stop playing as they had to leave the store (Ayadi & Cao, 2016).

3) Variables as an agent for socialization

Bonding place for parent and child

Most of the time, children are accompanied by parent during their shopping journey (Ayadi & Cao, 2016). With this routine, children recognized shopping environment as a place to strengthen family bonding or place to get treats from their parent (Ayadi & Cao, 2016; Deli-Gray et al., 2016; Johnstone & Todd, 2011). Some activities that help encourage parent and children socialization are having meals, celebrating event, choosing products or having fun together (Deli-Gray et al., 2016; Johnstone & Todd, 2011).

Socialization with peers

Public space is recognised as a place that encourages conversation and interaction between people (Johnstone & Todd, 2011). For children, they learn to socialize with their peers through role-play, playing together or imitating each other behaviour (Ayadi & Cao, 2016; Wiener, 2004). Therefore, it is quite common to see children actively responding

and joining their peers playing around the cashier counter or display racks, although they don't come to the shop together (Ayadi & Cao, 2016). Occasionally, a group of children may be found playing together while their parent browse or make purchases. Research by Feenstra et al. (2015) found that children may also communicate with peers to share their experience during the workshop or commercial events (Feenstra et al., 2015).

Attention received from store employee

Children may also develop their consumer socialization skill and understanding of product's information through their communication with store employee (Cowles, 2002; Feenstra et al., 2015). Understanding children may be hard because they can be unpredictable and irrational, so store employee needs to spend more time and show good manners as they are role model, observed by the children (Tyler, 2009). Research by Cook (2003) found that children prefer similar treatment as adult and they don't like to be treated as 'babies' (Wiener, 2004). The way children receive attention from store employee is crucial because children's satisfaction influence parent's satisfaction and business success (Cowles, 2002). However, employee characteristics are not standardised and they show varied attitude such as professional, friendly, helpful, proud or even unhelpful when entertaining the children (Badot et al., 2016; de Faultrier, Deli-Gray, et al., 2014; Tyler, 2009). This is why some children may receive unfriendly treatment from store employee and in certain cases, the children reported that they have being pushed, warned and scolded by the retail employee.(de Faultrier, Deli-Gray, et al., 2014).

4) Respond received from parent towards children behaviour

Access and flexibility to explore the surrounding

Parent are found giving access and flexibility for children to freely explore their shopping surrounding for fun and as a way to let them experience something different from their daily routine (Feenstra et al., 2015; Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015). Most of the time, parent will let children explore the shopping variables available around them like following printed footprints or graphic elements on the floor, or communicating and playing with the store employee (Ayadi & Cao, 2016; Feenstra et al., 2015; Ironico, 2012). Small children will explore every nook and cranny of the store possible including areas that permit entrance only to retail employees (Ironico, 2012). Some parent may also give children permission to help with the shopping activities such as helping them at the self-checkouts, passing purchases or manoeuvring shopping cart (de Faultrier, Deli-Gray, et al., 2014; Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015). By giving permission to help, children are found more likely to co-operate during their shopping process (Ayadi & Cao, 2016).

Conflicts with parent

Children in-store behaviour may sometimes lead to conflicts between parent and children, turning smile into frown instantly (Ayadi & Cao, 2016; Badot et al., 2016). Factors that may lead to conflicts are varied, from agreeing on food selections (Cook, 2003) or when the children are playing somewhere with restricted entrance (Ayadi & Cao, 2016). In addition, conflicts may also happen when children start to scream, whine and cry when they don't get what they want (Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001). As a result to their negative expressions, parent may get less enjoyment and struggle with their shopping process (Ayadi & Cao,

2016; Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015). The way parent respond to conflicts are varied; some may give warning, express disappointment, educate or will ignore them (Ayadi & Cao, 2016; Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015). This is because for some parent, scolding causes embarrassment (Ebster et al., 2009). As consequences, parent may shorten their shopping trip, spend less time and money at the store (Ayadi & Cao, 2016; Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015). As an alternative to avoid conflicts, inconvenience, tiring and complicated shopping process, some parent may leave the children with their partner and then proceed shopping alone (Ayadi & Cao, 2016; Cowles, 2002; Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015).

Negotiation and parental control

Parent and children interaction is an important factor when studying children's responds to store atmosphere (Ayadi & Cao, 2016). Parent in Western society pays more attention to their children's opinion (Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001) and use discussion and negotiation to educate their children (Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015). However, the way children communicate to express their desire will influence their parent decision whether to ignore, grant or reject their children's request (Ebster et al., 2009; Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015). Small children express their desire using the word 'want' but as they turned to five years old, they start to negotiate, explain and make excuse to get something they desire (Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001). At this age, the selection of word change to 'I wish' or 'I hope' (Deli-Gray et al., 2016). Children may also express their desire differently such as by demand, appeal, urging manner, observations, discussion and proposition (Ebster et al., 2009; Ming Lim & Hultén, 2015). Parent want their children to be obedient (Ayadi & Cao, 2016) and may use their control power to teach and protect their children through the employment of strategies by giving them something to hold, eat or play with (Cook, 2003; Ebster et al., 2009). For parent, they think children are not independent and still cannot rationalize their decisions (Cook, 2003; Tyler, 2009). However, parent agrees more easily if their child request for something like food that could be consumed in the store (Ebster et al., 2009; John, 1999). Research also shows that parent who always shop with their children discuss more about their purchase request because the parent are more concern on their children's socialization and consumerism skills (Ebster et al., 2009).

Concern for children's safety

Parent worry about their children's safety in public spaces and wants their children nearby at all time until they can take care of themselves (Ayadi & Cao, 2016; Cook, 2003). Occasionally, some parent gives permission to children to roam or play around the shopping surrounding, while monitoring and securing safe distance between themselves (Ayadi & Cao, 2016). Parent are also more cautious with other children who might play too rough with their own (Cook, 2003).

Discussion and conclusion

This research concludes that children experience their shopping journey through their role in shopping activity (self-experience), act and respond towards shopping variables (space and place), socialization factors they involved with (human) and responds they received from parent as consequences to their behaviour (shopping companion).

The findings also reveal intersection values that children experienced with parent, peers or store employee. These intersection values are unique since previous research often focus only on specific type of customer (Lucia-Palacios et al., 2016; Michon et al., 2005). In this research, children are found to engage extensively towards shopping atmospheric variables more than what stated by Turley and Milliman (2000) including towards peers (human variable), entertainment and services, fitting rooms (layout and design) lifts and escalators (external variables). Children adapt, explore and view their surroundings differently than adult. Their physical feature and childhood imagination encourages limitless exploration around the shopping environment. With these contemporary children shopping scenario, it is interesting to point out that designer, architect and other stakeholders should consider revisiting some design criteria when designing space, product, service or furniture for children within the shopping atmosphere. Through this exposure, children are benefiting from self-explorations and observations, which then help build their socialization skills, confidence level, decision-making skills, product evaluations and understanding towards consumerism. For parent, understanding children experience in the shopping environment may help them make better strategies for an enjoyable shopping experience together.

This research also concludes that children experience pleasant emotions while shopping, as they express happiness and joy when they get what they want or when playing within the shopping spaces. They also respond towards arousals around them and are found dancing, as they get stimulated when listening to music played in-store. As for dominance, although children might show intention to play or make purchases, their decision is strongly influenced by parent's considerations. In certain situations, parent may express disagree towards their requests. This indicates that children are being submissive, as they are not allowed to decide freely during their shopping journey.

As for managerial, it is crucial to stress out that children may influence their parent's decision to spend money and time when shopping together. Understanding on how children experience their shopping atmospheric variables may open new opportunities for managerial to implement strategies that could benefit their customer experiences and businesses.

Limitations and directions for future research

As this research is based on reviews from related academic journal articles, future research should explore how shopping atmospheric variables affect children's experience via actual field studies and empirical research. Data collection from observation, interview, video recording or ethnography study may provide further understanding on how children experience their shopping activities and environment. This will also give researchers first-hand accounts of the shopping atmospheric variable experience.

Secondly, as this research focuses only on brick and mortar store environment, other shopping domain such as pure service settings or online store web atmospheric is not covered in the study. Future research may look into how children experience their web atmospheric variables when they are developmentally ready for computers as early as the age of three (Deli-Gray et al., 2016).

This research focuses only on Western culture and cannot be generalised into other culture. Therefore, alteration to this proposed conceptual framework may be needed before it can be used to investigate children experience from other cultural background. Comparison between different cultures may reveal interesting understandings on how children from other culture would respond towards their shopping atmospheric variables. Lastly, future research might be broadened into the effects of other public space atmospheric variables on children, as this research focus only on shopping atmosphere. Further investigation on how other specific atmospheric variables may reveal interesting findings and understandings of children experience on that specific area.

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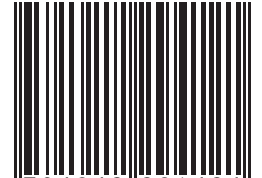
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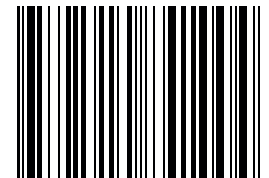
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