



## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** To examine the influence of servicescape on consumers' behaviour in the context of grocery shopping, in a comprehensive and concrete way. And explore physical and social dimension of servicescape and their variables.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The researcher used the interpretive philosophy, the inductive and abductive approaches. The survey and grounded theory strategies have been followed and the research choice is a mixed method using both quantitative and qualitative data. Haphazard sampling is use in the research.

**Findings:** Servicescape may produce emotional, cognitive and physiological responses from both employees and customers. It shows that physical and social dimensions are both perceived by customers but they seem to give lot of importance to the social dimension. Then primary research shows that customers principally retain the negative influences so marketers and retailers should carefully work on their servicescape in a creative way.

**Research limitations:** As it is the first research of the author, primary data was only collected by conducting a survey among 100 respondents from different retailers. Observations and interviews could have given more clearness and trustfulness to the research.

**Practical implications:** Managerial implications among French grocery shops: marketers should provide more consideration to their servicescape and take customers' perceptions, needs and expectations into consideration.

**Keywords:** Servicescape, environment, consumer behaviour, grocery shopping, French consumer, perceived servicescape.

## INTRODUCTION

*"In certain shopping situations the atmosphere may be more influential than the product itself in the purchase decision". Kotler, (1973)*

This environment is called **servicescape** (Bitner, 1992). It includes ambiance, spaces and symbols of the interior and exterior and human relationships of a sale outlet. It is said that servicescape impacts on the accomplishment of external and internal goals, and consequently on customers.

### How French consumers perceive the servicescape's influence on their behaviour during grocery shopping?

**Objective 1:** Study the social and physical dimension of servicescape.

**Objective 2:** Examine the behavioural responses engendered by servicescape.

**Objective 3:** Determine the effect of servicescape on perceived quality.

## METHODOLOGY

**Philosophy:** Interpretive philosophy: to understand the social implications of servicescape. Critical realism: because the results are just one interpretation among others.

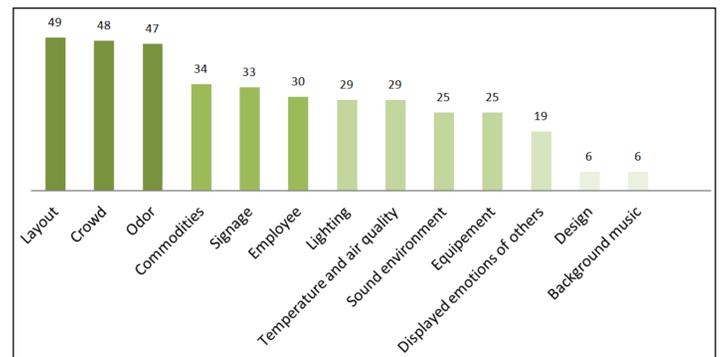
**Approach:** Combination of both induction and abduction. Induction: to show different explanations of the same phenomenon. Abduction: to add logic in the research.

**Research choice:** Survey: to respond to the questions "what", "who", "where", "how much" and "how many", to explore and describe a phenomenon using statistics and evaluate relationships between variables.

## RESULTS

The result of the primary research reveals some major elements listed below:

- **Design** is the servicescape's variable which induce the more positive perception;
- **Odours** and **layout** are considered as **the two major variables** of the physical dimension on servicescape;
- The **crowd density** is considered as **the most important variable** of social dimension of servicescape:



- Mood tend to change while customers are shopping, and this change is **principally negative**:
- Crowd density, sound environment, displayed emotion of others and layout are the main causes of this negative mood change:



- People agree on the fact that **servicescape influences**: Approach or avoidance behaviours; time spent in store; purchasing behaviours; repatronage intentions; the perceived quality of a store, (People tend to link quality and high prices).
- Servicescape acts as a **facilitator**: shopping is easier within a pleasant and well-thought-out environment; as a **package**: servicescape gives information about the type of store, the products, and the prices; as a **differentiator**: helps to recognize a store from competitors.
- Difference of servicescape between traditional stores and supermarkets revealed by primary data: it is more pleasant to shop in a traditional store because there is a better relationship.
- **Relationship** is what is the most important for people.
- Servicescape is not considered as the main element when it comes to purchase, but **quality of product** and **prices** are.

## DISCUSSION

Links between primary and secondary research was studied in the discussion. And each element was analysed and we can retain four main ideas.

- Layout was chosen as the most important element of servicescape by the population. This assessment seems logical in the context of grocery retail; indeed, the organisation of aisles, the presentation of products and the space available to have a freedom of movement in the store are significant elements for the comfort of both consumers and employees, consequently it may make their task easier.
- Odour is considered as one of the most important elements of servicescape. A good odour may be linked with the quality and freshness of products. For example, in a grocery store, if the odour of the fish section is not pleasant, people may tend to restrain their purchases. Here, the question about which actions should be undertaken may arise. The suppression of bad odours seems necessary, but do stores should use artificial odours to create a pleasant smell environment?
- Grocery shopping is not considered as a funny activity but more as an obligation. So people are going grocery shopping with a prejudice and imagine that the time spent in store will not be pleasant. Consequently, they tend more to feel the negative influences of the environment. The objective would be to inverse this trend, and to make groceries a pleasant activity.
- More and more people are looking for a bond creation with the place and the employees, more than coming to shop. They are looking for experiences, even in the context of grocery shopping. Traditional stores seem to offer this experience. And after an expression of supermarkets, they are emerging again certainly because of the trend of this return to the roots. They are looking for a customised service, and the fulfilment of their hedonic impulse in this type of stores.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, **servicescape is an important element of a marketing strategy**. Indeed, marketers and retailers might be able to achieve marketing goals through a careful and **creative management of their servicescape**. Willingness, time spending, repatronization intention, purchase increase, attraction or satisfaction increase, all these elements may be influenced by creating a physical and a social environment and may determine customer's impression about the store. Moreover, it aims at **employee's well-being**; **makes work easier** and **increases performance**. To finish, it is in the store manager best interest to work on servicescape as **it acts as a differentiator, and differentiation is one of the major marketing objectives for every company**.

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