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EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE AND PURCHASE INTENTION: A MODERATED MEDIATION OF STORE IMAGE AND UTILITARIAN VALUE

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of emotional experience on purchase intention in a moderated mediation involving store image and utilitarian value. This study proposed a conceptual model to show how the interactions of emotional experience, utilitarian value and store image influences shoppers purchase intention. The study finds that emotional experience significantly relates to both utilitarian value and purchase intention. Moreover, utilitarian value was confirmed to be a significant mediator in this relationship. In addition, store image emerged as a significant moderator in both the emotional experience-utilitarian value relationships and also in the entire model. The results confirm the complex and contextual nature of consumer decision making processes. The theoretical and practical implications of this study are discussed together with gaps for possible future research directions.

Keywords: Emotional Experience, Utilitarian Value, Purchase Intention, Store Image, Mediation, Experiential Marketing

INTRODUCTION

The traditional canonic marketing principles are fast losing relevance in this era of information, branding and communications revolution (Schmitt, 1999) making audiences develop antipathy to the traditional communication approaches that have reached near saturation levels. The perfect answer to this challenge is experiential marketing that connects with the customers at the individual and emotional level resulting to increased customer satisfaction and enhanced firm competitiveness (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Vila-Lo'pez & Rodri'guez-Molina, 2013). Furthermore, with the increasing competition in the retail sector and particularly here in Kenya, retailers need to ensure that they offer value to their customers. According to Jackson *et al.*, (2011), this value represents the overall benefits realized from a particular shopping experience and captures the consumers response to a set of retail store attributes. Moreover, consumers are looking for distinct shopping experiences through their interactions with products, the store, personnel, and the store environment (Diallo *et al.*, 2015). This value ought to be offered in an environment that guarantees pleasurable experiences complemented by a supportive store image consistent with the strong arguments for firms to embrace the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). The interaction of memorable experiences and strong perceived shopping value has strong relationship with the likelihood of the customer revisiting and buying from a particular retail store in future.

A number of studies have linked experiential marketing or its dimensions with purchase intention (Srivastava, 2008; Srinivasan & Srivastava, 2010; Yang & He 2011) and also experiential marketing with perceived value or its dimensions (Gentile *et al.*, 2007 ; Yuan & Wu, 2008; Mishra, 2014). Furthermore, empirical studies have also linked perceived value or its dimensions with purchase intention (Parasuraman & Grewal ,2000; Cronin *et al.*, 2000; Ashton *et al.*, 2010 ; Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2015). In addition, the existence of a relationship between store image and perceived value or its dimensions has been confirmed (Ryu *et al.*, 2012 ; Wu *et al.*, 2014). It has however been established that no known research has sought to model the linkage between a major dimension of experiential marketing; emotional experience, and the consumers purchase intention, in an environment influenced by utilitarian value and store image with the objective of establishing the nature of their interaction. This is despite the existence of a general consensus among practitioners and scholars on the individual importance of the three constructs of emotional experience, utilitarian value and store image in influencing consumers purchase intention. Moreover , this is consistent with Cronin *et al.*, 2000 assertion that research should not pursue the objective of merely improving understanding of the individual constructs themselves, but also to show how they relate to each other in influencing purchase behaviour.

The belief that anchors this study is “that partial examinations of the simple bi-variate links between any of the constructs and purchase intentions may mask or overstate their true relationship due to omitted variable bias” (Cronin *et al.*, 2000 p.6). An investigation of a robust collective model was therefore needed so as to bring to light a more pragmatic picture of the underlying relationships that exist among these variables. There is a dearth of documented studies that have integrated the four constructs in a single model. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap. Moreover at a practical level, the competition in the retail sector is increasingly becoming vicious hence those retailers with a deeper grasp of the nuances underlying consumer decision making processes will gain an upper hand over their competitors in designing superior strategies.

The theories of experience economy (Pine & Gilmore 1998), Stimulus-Response model (Meherusian & Russell 1974), and the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen 1991), form the theoretical foundation of this study. Furthermore, these theories have been used in related studies (Prasher *et al.*, 2017: Kim & Chung 2011).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The concept of purchase intention

Ashton and Scott (2011) define purchase intention as a set of alternatives under consideration by the consumer with the choice among product alternatives influenced by the context of the purchase decision. It is the exchange behavior created after consumers' general evaluation of a product or attitude towards a brand combined with external stimulating factors and hence may be regarded as a perceptual reaction involving a subjective judgment for what we would like to buy in the future (Lin & Lu, 2010). Purchase intention is a combination of consumers' interest in and possibility of buying a product and hence may be regarded as an attitudinal variable for measuring customers' future contributions to a brand (Kim & Ko, 2012). This is consistent with the theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1975) that purchase intention are used to predict the actual behavior since it develops with respect to the response of an object. The theory posits that purchase intentions are formed by the attitude towards a predictive behavior and subjective norms that lead to the actual behavior given the availability of opportunities and resources. Purchase intention is therefore a result of consumer's attitude and assessment and external factors. Citing Zeithml 1988, Ashton and Scott (2011) argue that purchase intention will cause consumers to follow their experience, preference and external environment to collect information, evaluate alternatives, and make purchase decision. Furthermore, it comes from the consumer's perception on benefits and value acquisition.

Anggie & Haryanto, (2011) defined Purchase intention as the repeat request indicating the desire of customers to make purchases again and which occurs only if the customer has obtained the expected level of satisfaction. Moreover, purchase intention is conceptualized as a product of olfactory, approach behavior and experiential marketing. When customers are satisfied, they are willing to repurchase from a given retailer and also recommend the retailer to their friends.

Relationship emotional experience and purchase intention

Experiential marketing aims at creating a memorable experience that engages the customer in an inherently personal way (Gilmore & Pine, 2002) which can lead to favourable attitudes towards a company's products. Various studies have been carried out confirming the relationship between experiential marketing dimensions and purchase intention. An early study by Kotler (1974) established that store atmospherics- the conscious designing of space to create buyer effects, produces specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance purchase probability. The answer to the question as to whether it is possible to create the futuristic retail experience through emotional experience, was in the positive (Srinivasan & Srivastava, 2010). Emotional experience through its ability to create touch points for creating memorable experiences was found to be a significant factor in attracting shoppers to a retail store. In view of this, the study conclusion was that "retailers should work on the environmental elements to increase satisfaction and encourage the return of shoppers" (Srinivasan & Srivastava, 2010 p.6). Furthermore, Yang & He (2011) established that two dimensions of experiential marketing- emotional experience and social experience significantly affect purchase intention. Considering the arguments presented above, we propose the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1. Emotional experience is positively related to purchase intention

Relationship among emotional experience, utilitarian value and purchase intention

The concept of experiential marketing is credited to the seminal work of Pine & Gilmore (1998), where they argued that the key to firm competitiveness is providing special experiences and unforgettable memories. These experiences must holistically and consistently involve a person at different levels and thus contributing to the creation of value by enabling the customers to live all the moments of the relationship with a company in an excellent way, even beyond their expectations (Gentile *et al.*, 2007).

Numerous studies have been conducted confirming a linkage between experiential marketing and perceived value. A study on how to sustain the customer experience (Gentile *et al.*, 2007) identified five experiential dimensions that contribute to value perceptions namely;

sensorial, emotional, cognitive, lifestyle , and lastly , relational component. The study proved that a “relevant part of the value proposed to customers, and actually recognized by them, is linked to experiential features; and that “regardless of the context, customers want to live positive consumption experiences” (p.10). A study on ‘Tourist perceived value in a community-based home-stay visit’, and whose objective was to identify both the functional and experiential dimensions, established that home-stay visitors’ value perceptions are not only dependent on functional aspects of value but also on emotional and experiential features (Jamal *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, “the emotional and experiential dimensions were shown to be the main sources of value derived from tourists’ experiences” and in view of this, advises marketers on “the need to emphasize value in terms of fun, memorable experiences, new and different experiences...” (Jamal *et al.*, 2011 p.9)

In addition, the immense benefits to be realized by firms that embrace the concept of perceived value has elevated it to become an imperative prerequisite for any firm that embraces sustainability in an increasingly competitive market (Huber *et al.*,2001). Organizations are increasingly recognizing that perceived value is a key factor in strategic management and that the creation of customer value must be the reason for the firm’s existence and certainly for its success. Moreover, perceived value has been extensively discussed in service related and sociology literature owing to its recognition as a fundamental concept in understanding consumer behavior (Sabiote-Ortiz *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, perceived value has been regarded as a highly multi-dimensional construct (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001 : Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007: Petrick, 2002). For example Rintamäki *et al.*,(2006) decomposed the total customer perceived value into utilitarian (monetary savings and convenience), social (status and self esteem), and hedonic value dimensions (entertainment and exploration). Embracing perceived value concept or its dimensions in business practice results in high levels of customer satisfaction and furthermore, it has been found to have significant effect on customer repurchase intention and loyalty (Lin *et al.*, 2005). This is consistent with Parasuraman & Grewal (2000) who argue that perceived value is the most important predictor of repeat purchase intention.

In view of the above, the following hypotheses are proposed

Hypothesis 2. Emotional experience is positively related to utilitarian value

Hypothesis 3. Utilitarian value is positively related to purchase intention

Hypothesis 4. Utilitarian value mediates the relationship between emotional experience and purchase intention

Store image and its moderating effect

Scholars have established that “store image is related to perceived value of merchandise and that perceived value shapes the customer’s behavior”(Žemgulienė, 2013). Perceived value is the consumer’s overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given implying that value represents a trade-off of salient “get and give-components,” which are perceived as benefits and sacrifices, respectively (Chen & Dubinsky, 2003 citing Zeithaml 1988). Additionally, store image is “the complex of a consumer’s perceptions of a store on different (salient) attributes” (Bloemer & Ruyter, 1998 p.4) . It is the impression of a retailer in the minds of consumers formed on the basis of a shopping experience or on external information on the retailer from sources such as commercials, news, or word-of-mouth (Mazursky & Jacoby, 1986). These impressions, and especially when they are positive, tend to significantly enhance the likelihood that a shopper will frequent a particular store (Darley & Lim, 1999)

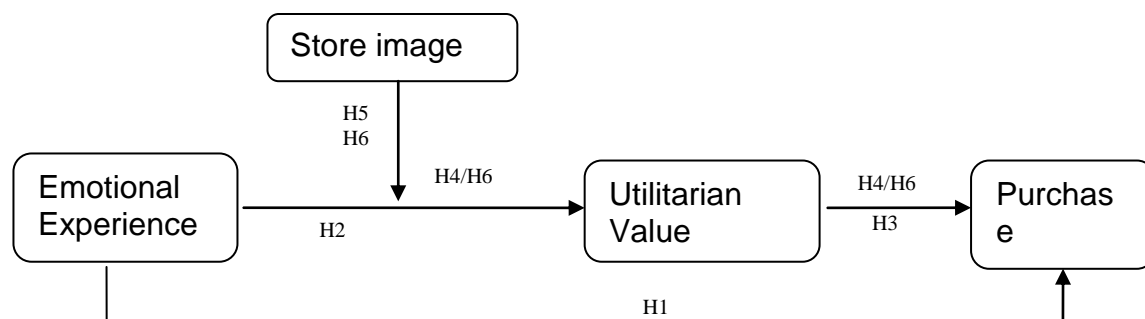
In view of the above arguments, the following hypotheses may be proposed.

Hypothesis 5. Store image moderates the relationship between Emotional experience and utilitarian value such that the positive effect of store image varies at different levels of utilitarian value

Hypothesis 6. Store image moderates the indirect relationship between emotional experience and purchase intention via utilitarian value such that the positive effect of store image varies at different levels of utilitarian value.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model that explains the hypotheses about the relationships among all variables involved in this study.

Figure 1: Conceptual model



Key: H stands for Hypothesis, H1/ H2/ H3 represents direct effects, H4 represents mediated effects, H5 represents moderated effects, H6 represents moderated mediation.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sampling

This study targeted shoppers of three tier one retail chains in Kenya namely; Tusksys, Naivas and Nakumat. Three leading branches based in the capital and commercial city of Kenya; Nairobi were picked so as to represent an homogenous population as regards shopping behavior. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select a representative sample from the supermarkets and where each supermarket contributed a proportionate sample based on the retail chain's branch network to realize a total sample of 420 respondents. The study used store intercept approach consistent with previous similar studies (Michon *et al.*, 2008; Madahi & Sukati, 2016).

The data

The data for the study was gathered through a structured questionnaire over a three day period running from Thursday to Saturday in the three outlets. This is because according to Diallo *et al.*, (2015) shopping motives vary by time of day and day of the week hence the need for data collection to also span multiple times and different days. The study yielded 386 usable questionnaires.

Measurements

All the items used in measuring the constructs of store image, purchase intention and utilitarian value adopted a 5-point Likert-type scale indicating the extent of agreement or disagreement with a given statement, namely, 1 "Disagree strongly", 2 "Disagree", 3 "Neither disagree nor agree", 4 "Agree", and, 5 "Agree strongly". However emotional experience was measured using five items that adopted a semantic differential scale.

The measurement of purchase intentions was done using five items adapted from Angie & Haryanto, (2011). The respondents were required to respond to the statement; "I plan to visit this supermarket again" "I hope that I can always shop at this supermarket", "I want to shop in this supermarket if there is any chance", "If I go shopping, I will always not forget to shop in this supermarket", "I will recommend this supermarket to my friends". Utilitarian value was measured using six items adapted from (Rintamäki *et al.*, 2006). The six items used to measure utilitarian value are; "I saved money when I shopped here", "I made inexpensive purchases", "I got my purchases done cheaper than if I had made them elsewhere", "I was able to get everything I needed under one roof", "I was able to shop without disruptive queuing or other delays", and "I was able to make my purchases conveniently" The store image was measured using five item measures adapted from Chang and Wang, (2014) and as previously used by

Grewal, *et al.*, (1998). The respondents were required to respond to the statements; “The retail store would be a pleasant place to shop”; “The customer has an attractive shopping experience in the retail store”; “The retail store offers good overall service”; “The retail store has helpful salespeople”; “The retail store has knowledgeable salespeople”. Emotional experience was measured using six items originally used by Brengman & Geuens, (2004). The respondents were required to rate their shopping experience using the scales: “Depressed_ :_ :_ Contented”, “Unhappy_ :_ :_ happy”, “Unsatisfied_ :_ :_ satisfied”, “Annoyed_ :_ :_ pleased”, “Bored_ :_ :_ relaxed”, “Despairing_ :_ :_ hopeful”), which is designed to semantic-differential scale (continuum with a pair of opposite adjectives as anchors).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Measurement model

Confirmatory factor analysis

The study conducted a factor analysis to establish the construct validity of the items in measuring the respective constructs. These items were factor analyzed with the construct configuration obtained through principal component analysis (PCA). Whereas all the items of store image, purchase intention and emotional experience loaded onto their respective constructs, only three out of six items of utilitarian value loaded onto the component of utilitarian value. The items that loaded together onto utilitarian value were; “I saved money when I shopped here”, “I made inexpensive purchases”, “and “I got my purchases done cheaper than if I had made them elsewhere”. The items that cross-loaded were then dropped. According to Shaharudin *et al.*, (2011) and Hair *et al.*, (2010) any item with factor loadings less than 0.5 should be dropped from further analysis. Notably, the least factor loading for the items in the four constructs was 0.779 hence meeting the minimum requirement of 0.5.

Reliability

To assess the reliability of the research tool, the study used composite reliability and Cronbach’s alpha. The recommended minimum is 0.6 for Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients and 0.7 for composite reliability (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornel & Lacker 1981). As the results indicate on table 1 both Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability were within the acceptable range confirming that the tool is free from random error.

Convergent validity

To establish whether the constructs adhered to the requirements of convergent validity, the study used Average Variance Extracted (AVE) which were computed using the squared multiple

correlations from the confirmatory factor analysis (O'cass& Grace 2008). A minimum score of 0.5 is suggestive of sufficient levels of convergent validity (Fornel & lacker 1981). As shown in table 1, all the four variables met this requirement.

Table 1. Internal Consistency Reliability

Dimensions	Number of questions	Composite Reliability (CR)	Cronbachs alpha dimensions	AVE
Purchase Intention.	5	0.94	0.919	0.76
Store Image	5	0.94	0.915	0.75
Utilitarian value	3	0.81	0.83	0.62
Emotional experience	6	0.94	0.941	0.71

Discriminant Validity

The researcher sought to establish whether the requirements for discriminant validity were met. The computed square roots of AVE' s as shown on table 2 were greater than the off-diagonal elements in the corresponding rows and columns suggesting satisfactory levels of discriminant validity (Lin & Chuan, 2013), for the four variables.

Table 2. Cross loadings of the constructs within the model

Variable	PI	EE	UT	SI
Purchase Intention	<i>0.87</i>			
Emotional Experience. (EE)	.468**	<i>0.84</i>		
Utilitarian Value (UT)	.413**	.442**	<i>0.79</i>	
Store image	.584**	.541**	.613**	<i>0.86</i>

Nb/. Square roots of AVE in diagonal and italicized

Hypotheses testing

The study used process macro model 7 to test the hypothesized relationships and the results are shown on table 3.

Hypothesis 1: The results indicates that emotional experience has a beta value ($\beta=0.2948, p=0.0000$). Since the p- value associated with emotional experience is less than 0.01, hypothesis 1 is supported and hence concludes that emotional experience is significant in predicting purchase intention.

Hypothesis 2: The results indicates that emotional experience has a beta value ($\beta= 0.2556, p<0.0001$). Since the p- value associated with emotional experience is less than 0.01,

hypothesis 2 is supported and hence concludes that emotional experience has a significant relationship with utilitarian value.

Hypothesis 3: The results indicates that utilitarian value has a beta value ($\beta= 0.2845$, $p=0.0000$). Since the p- value associated with utilitarian value is less than 0.01, hypothesis 3 is supported hence concludes that there exists a significant relationship between utilitarian value and purchase intention.

Hypothesis 4: The indirect effect of social-sensory effect on purchase intention via utilitarian value is computed by multiplying effect of emotional experience on utilitarian value with the effect of utilitarian value on purchase intention ($0.2456 \times 0.2845 = 0.07^{***}$) shown in table 3 The outcome is a beta value ($\beta= 0.07$, $p=0.0000$). Since the p- value associated with the indirect effect of emotional experience on purchase intention via utilitarian value is less than 0.01, hypothesis 4 is supported consequently concluding that there exists a significant mediating effect of utilitarian value on the relationship between emotional experience and purchase intention.

Hypothesis 5: The results of the interaction effect of store image on the relationship between emotional experience and utilitarian value as shown in table 3 has a beta value ($\beta= 0.1778$ $p=0.0033$). Since the p- value associated with the interaction effect is less than 0.01, hypothesis 5 is supported consequently concluding that there is a significant moderating effect of store image on the relationship between emotional experience and utilitarian value.

Furthermore, as shown on figure 2 at the lower level of emotional experience, the average effect on utilitarian value for the customers with low store image perceptions is 3.3; while for those with high store image perceptions is 4.3. Furthermore, when the level of emotional experience increases, the effect on utilitarian value also increases for both the customers with low and those with high store image perceptions. However the increase for those customers with high store image perceptions is quite significant unlike for those with low store image perceptions whose change is marginal, confirming interaction

Hypothesis 6: The conditional indirect effects of emotional experience on purchase intention via utilitarian value, moderated by store image were computed using bootstrapping and its result as indicated in table 3 is a beta value ($\beta=0.0506$; $Bt_{ll} 0.0045$, $Bt_{ul} 0.1075$). The conditional indirect effect is deemed to be significant if the bootstrapping bias corrected confidence interval does not contain 0 (Preacher, Rucker & Hayes, 2007). Since the confidence does not does not contain 0, hypothesis 6 is supported hence concludes that store image moderates the mediated effect of emotional experience on purchase intention via utilitarian value.

Figure 2: A graph on the moderating effect of store image

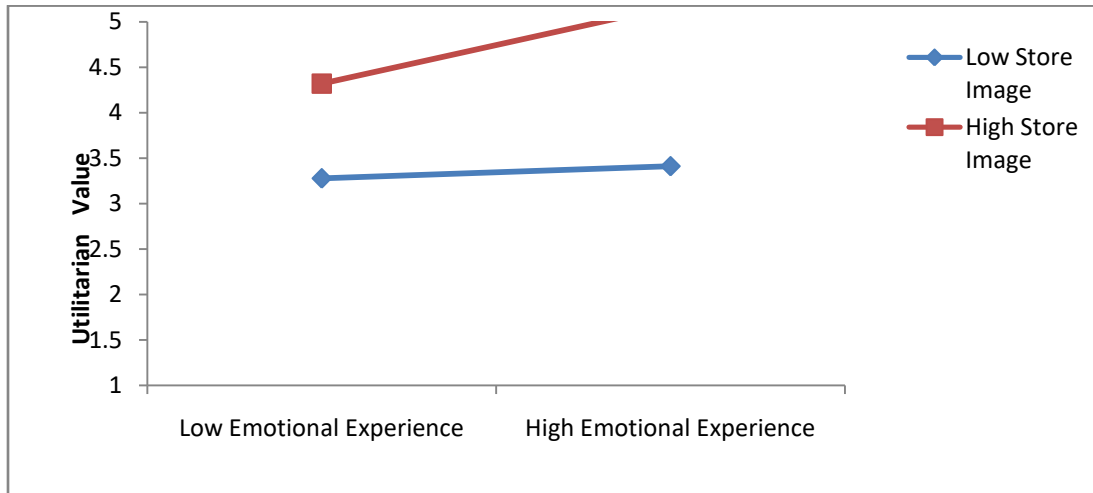


Table 3. Results of Regression Analysis with Utilitarian Value as the Mediator and Emotional Experience as the Predictor

Variable	Utilitarian Value	Purchase Intention	Indirect Effect	Moderating Effect
Intercept	4.0447***	3.4118***	0.2456*0.2845 =0.07***	0.1778***
Emotional Experience	0.2456***	0.2948***		
Utilitarian Value		0.2845***		
Store Image	0.6998***			
Emotional Experience*Store Image	0.1778***			
R ²	0.4072***	0.3357***		
Bootstrapping results for conditional indirect effect	0.0506***			

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Gaining understanding of consumer behavior remains a key pillar of the marketing concept and hence continues to attract increasing interest from both the marketing practitioners and scholars across the world. The fact that the intention-purchase relationship has continued to attract a number of empirical studies highlights the importance of gaining greater understanding of this relationship by both marketing practitioners and scholars. This study investigated the influence of emotional experience on purchase intention mediated and moderated by utilitarian value and store image.

According to this study, the relationship between emotional experience and purchase intention was significant and positive. In line with the call to embrace the experience economy, (Pine & Gilmore 1998) the study affirms the importance of experiential marketing and its dimensions as a major determinant of a consumers purchase intention. The results are consistent with Yang & He (2011) who established that emotional experience is strongly and positively related to purchase intention. This therefore implies that retailers need to recognize the unique expectations of their customers and endeavor to deal with them as individuals.

Emotional experience was equally found to be significantly and positively related to utilitarian value. This is in consonance with Gentile *et al.*, (2007) who established that experiential dimensions which includes emotional experience, significantly contribute to value perceptions. This therefore emphasis on the need for retailers to enrich their value propositions with experiential encounters to enhance customer attraction and retention. Furthermore, utilitarian value showed a significant and positive relationship with purchase intention. indeed numerous previous studies have underscored the significant mediating role played by perceived value and its dimensions in purchase intention directed relationships (Lin *et al.*, 2005: Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000). Retailers would therefore be more competitive if they factor relevant value perceptions in their retail offerings.

Store image emerged as a significant moderator in the emotional experience- utilitarian value relationship consistent with the results of previous studies such as Žemguliėnė, (2013). In view of this, it would be advisable for retailers to invest in building appropriate images of their stores to complement their value propositions so as to attract shoppers. Moreover, the contextual nature of the emotional experience-purchase intention relationship via utilitarian value was supported, affirming the complexity of consumer decision making process. Retailers should therefore emphasis on designing integrated strategies if they are to remain attractive and competitive.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The fact that the respondents used in this study were selected from only three outlets is a notable limitation and hence the generalizations of the study findings ought to be cautiously attempted. Furthermore, the study targeted tier one shoppers in an emerging market; Kenya. The results may probably be different if the study is carried out in a different market or lower level tiers of shoppers. This is because the level or class of a shopper will also have an impact on their lifestyle and shopping motives.

This study used only one dimension of experiential marketing; emotional experience. Notably, experiential marketing has numerous dimensions and these may be of interest for

future studies. Furthermore, the study used only used one dimension of perceived value; utilitarian value whereas a review of literature reveals that perceived value is a highly multi-dimensional construct. This therefore opens a window for a similar research to be carried using other dimensions of perceived value.

Moreover, this study was carried out in a physical store. Indeed literature shows that shopping behavior may differ between shoppers of a physical store and those shopping on-line. In this regard, there may be a need to conduct a study targeting on-line shoppers.

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