



Impact of Store format on Shopping Involvement

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ABSTRACT

Store formats exist in three forms of convenience, variety and experience. Shopping involvement tends to change across these formats. This current study (a) establishes the role of store formats on shopping involvement, (b) understands the change in the nature of involvement as the shopper moves to an experience store from a variety or a convenience store format, and (c) measures shopping involvement as different from purchase involvement or purchase-decision involvement. A 3 X 3 factorial design was created using the three formats and three levels of extent of information search representing different buying decisions. Participant observations at different formats were carried out, which was followed by in-depth interviews to understand the motivations and gratifications with regard to shopping and store formats. A new scale to measure Shopping Involvement was developed as different from purchase and purchase – decision involvement.

The study found that store formats impacted shopping involvement levels. The convenience format showed a lower level of involvement compared to other formats. However, there was no significant difference between the involvement levels of the variety store format and experience store format. The study showed that the expressive aspect of involvement became more prominent in experience store, while the functional involvement did not increase to the same extent. Shopping involvement in each of these formats also varied with the extent of information search. Retailers would benefit by adopting in-store activities that enhance involvement for the format used. They need to provide the correct type and amount of increase information to the shoppers for better shopping experience and building loyalty.

Keywords: Shopping Involvement, Store Format, Point of Purchase, Retail Communication, Shopping, In-store Information Search, Shopper Marketing

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Economists have viewed shopping as an activity that allows consumers to maximise their utility function (Michelle, Corrine and Jane, 1995). But customers tend to exhibit 'economic' as well as 'recreational' shopping behaviour (Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980). For some it is an act of killing boredom, for others it leads to self-gratification and to another category of shoppers it gives a sense of emotional fulfilment (Tauber, 1972). Involvement has also been described as leisure behaviour (Bloch and Bruce, 1984).

Consumers tend to differ in their behaviour across shopping situations, represented by the store formats. This has been linked to their level of involvement in the process of shopping (Eagly and Manis, 1966; Sinha and Uniyal, 2005). Most studies have measured involvement as related to product, purchase or person. It has been measured in the context defined by shopping task, but the role of store format as a context in which the act of shopping is carried out has not been considered.

Some studies have indicated shopping or purchasing as enduring involvement (Mittal, 1989). Some have also found relationships between situational and enduring relationship. These relationships are not, however, clear or consistent (Havit, http://lin.ca/Uploads/cclr9/CCLR9_66.pdf). There seems to be a lack of studies that combine two types of involvement. In this study of shopping involvement, situational and enduring involvement types are integrated. Shopping as an activity, therefore, is different from purchasing which demands that shopping involvement should be studied differently.

Store Formats

Context or situation impacts behaviour (Belk, 1975). Shopping is an activity that happens in context represented by stores. These are presented to the shoppers in different formats defined by the mix of variables that retailers use to develop their business strategies. A store format constitutes a mix of assortment, price, transactional convenience, and experience (Messinger and Chakravarthi, 1997). Store formats have evolved to satisfy the changing lifestyles of customers (Rousey and Morganosky, 1996). Store format tends to play a prominent role in the relationship between market share and spatial competition. Competitive intensity seems to be more severe at the intra-format than at the inter-format level. This implies a two-step hierarchy in the process of retail store choice in which the consumer chooses first the type of store in which to shop and second, the specific store within that format. (Benito, Muñoz-Gallego and Kopalle, 2005; Galata, Bucklin and Hanssens, 1999). It is also found that perceived shopping utility changes with different price formats (Tang, Bell and Ho, 2001; Timmermans, 1997). They tend to impact basket sizes of shoppers (Bell and Lattin, 1998; Bell, Bucklin and Sismeiro, 2000). Store formats are also designed to provide entertainment (Borghini, Diamond, Kozinets, McGrath, Muñiz and Sherry, 2009). It is suggested that different instrumental and hedonic motivations may dominate in different retail formats. In addition, the importance of different motivations may vary with regards to the degree of the shopper's product involvement and the particular shopping situation (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003). These studies acknowledge that the store format concept captures stores' generic positioning and, consequently, partly determines their attraction, competitive structure, and market response.

Studies on store choice show that the major values sought by shoppers are convenience, merchandise variety, price, service and ambience (Bell and Lattin, 1998; Bell, Bucklin and Sismeiro, 2000; Tang, Bell and Ho, 2001; Sinha, Banerjee and Uniyal, 2002; Borghini, Diamond, Kozinets, McGrath, Muñiz and Sherry, 2009). Retailers attract shoppers through distribution outputs in terms of decentralisation, waiting time, lot size and variety (Bucklin, 1966). This classification was refined into accessibility, product assortment, assurance of product delivery at

the desired time and in the desired form, availability of information and ambience (Hean, 1997). The retail outlets tend to be service oriented and lend themselves as communication media for sellers, especially with the advent of online retailing (Waterschoot, Annouk, Sinha and Haes Joeri De, 2011). In addition shoppers derive gratifications in terms of pleasure, fun and other hedonic values (Tauber, 1972; Kotler, 1973; Wakefield and Baker, 1988; Sinha, 2003, Arnold and Reynolds, 2003).

Stores tend to get associated with the kind of product they deal in. These products have been classified as convenience, shopping and speciality (Copeland, 1923). Aspinwall (1962) later defined them based on five objectively measured criteria and products were called as white, brown and red. Both these definitions are largely based on searching time which relates directly to the shopping behaviour of consumers (Feldman, 1967). These definitions also relate very well to the values being sought by customers while choosing a format.

Shopping Involvement

Involvement has been treated as major socio-psychological variable that explains individual differences (Festinger, 1957; Petty, Cacioppo and Goldman, 1981; Slama, 1985). Besides the number of attributes used to compare brands, the length of the choice process and the willingness to reach a maximum or a threshold level of satisfaction, it is also indicated by the extent of information search, receptivity to advertising and the number of cognitive responses generated during exposure (Krugman, 1965, 1967). Studies describe different types of involvement such as Ego Involvement (Rhine and Severance, 1970; Hupfer and Gardner, 1971; Newman and Dolich, 1979), Product Class Involvement (Howard and Sheth, 1968; Bloch, 1981a), Generalised Purchasing Involvement (Slama, 1981), Enduring Involvement (Havitz and Howard, 1995; Bloch, 1981b; Michelle, Corrine and Jane, 1995; Heslin and Blair, 2006) and Situational Involvement (Richins and Bloch, 1986). Zaichkowsky (1985) defined involvement as a person's perceived relevance of the subject based on inherent needs, values and interests. Kapferer and Laurent (1993) concluded that the state of involvement may stem from five different types of antecedents which include perceived importance of the product (its personal meaning), perceived risk associated with the product purchase involving perceived importance of negative consequences in case of poor choice and perceived probability of making such a mistake (Bauer, 1967), symbolic or sign value attributed by the consumer to the product, its purchase or its consumption, hedonic value of the product, its emotional appeal, its ability to provide pleasure and affect and Interest is an enduring relationship with the product class.

Mittal (1989) argued that when involvement is defined as an activated motivational state, all its antecedents can be categorized into two categories of goals: utilitarian and psycho-social. Shimp and Sharma (1983) have also explored different dimensions of involvement. These studies established that involvement can be treated as a multi-dimensional construct. Some commonality has also been found between involvement and personal relevance (Greenwald and Leavitt, 1984). Kassarian (1981) found that the differences between individuals were the main reason behind making some people more interested, concerned and involved in the consumer's decision process. The construct of involvement has been an important factor in studying advertising. Studies have applied involvement to TV copy testing (Krugman (1965), advertising planning (Hovland, Harvey and Sherif, 1957; Tybjee, 1979) and the learning of non-ego material (Zaichkowsky, 1986).

Initial research on involvement was conducted by Sherif and Cantril (1947). Many researchers in subsequent years reviewed this field of consumer research (Robertson 1976; De Bruicker, 1979; Ray, 1979; Assel, 1981; Arora, 1982; Engel and Blackwel, 1982). Involvement with products has been measured using several methods; rank ordering products (Sheth and Venkatesan, 1968), asking how important it is to get a particular brand (Cohen and Goldberg, 1970) and rating a

series of products on an eight-point concentric scale as to their importance in the subject's life (Hupfer and Gardner, 1971). On a broader level, involvement has been measured by administering Likert type statements that were thought to tap the underlying concept including statements like, the product means a lot to me, it matters to me, or the product is important to me (Lastovicka and Gardner, 1978; Antil, 1984). However, these methods suffered from the limitation that when conflicting results were obtained, it was difficult to know whether the discrepancy was due to different measures or different behaviours. Also, many scales were single item measures and did not capture the total Involvement concept. Evidence has been found in the literature that three factors, physical, personal and situational, influence consumer's level of involvement or response to products, advertisements and purchase decisions (Houston and Rothschild, 1978; Bloch and Richins, 1983). Lastovicka and Gardner (1978a) demonstrated that the same product had different involvement levels across people and Clarke and Belk (1978) found that different purchase situations for the same products causes differences in search and evaluation or raises the level of involvement. Involvement seems to be affected by person, product, situation and the act of purchase (Rothschild, 1979; Belk, 1982; Zaichkowsky, 1985)

Store Format and Information Search

Shopping has been defined as the act of identifying the store and purchasing from it. Once inside a store, a shopper goes through a process of 'see-touch-sense-select' in order to buy a product. The degree to which the consumer follows the whole or part of this process varies with brand, product category and other elements of the retail mix making them 'blinkered', 'magpie' or 'browser' (Connolly and Firth 1999). This process of decision-making can take the forms of extended problem solving, limited problem solving or habitual buying (Howard and Sheth, 1968). This information search process tends to differ with store formats (Sinha and Uniyal, 2005) and also with the involvement level with the act of shopping (Berman and Evans, 2003) or their orientation towards shopping (Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994; Sinha, 2003). This also seems to be affected by shoppers' demographics and lifestyles (Woodruffee, Eccles and Elliot 2002).

The extent of search depends on factors like cost of information search, level of consumer knowledge, type of purchase and the level of consumer involvement with the product and purchase (Newman and Staelin, 1973; Bettman, 1979; Beatty and Smith, 1987; Bloch, Sherrell Ridgway and Nancy, 1986; Brucks, 1985; Srinivasan and Ratchford, 1991; Laband, 1991). Knowledgeable consumers are more likely to search for new information prior to making a decision (Duncan and Olshavsky, 1982; Johnson and Russo, 1984; Punj and Stalein, 1983). Expert consumers tend to seek a greater amount of information about particular attributes because they are more aware of such attributes (Brucks, 1985) or because they were more capable of formulating specific questions about them (Miyake and Norman, 1979; Alba and Hutchinson, 1987). The less knowledgeable consumers are more likely to rely on extrinsic attributes such as brand name, price (Park and Lessig, 1981) or opinions of others (Brucks, 1985; Furse, Punj, and Stewart, 1984). On the other hand, moderately knowledgeable consumers were found to rely on intrinsic information to a greater degree (Rao and Munroe, 1988; Rao and Sieben, 1992). Studies also show that customers tend to combine the learning about the product and the store format to decide about their purchases (Waterschoot, Sinha, Kenhove and Wulf, 2008).

Information accessibility has been found to be one of the factors that determined the cost of information search for the consumers. It was the extent to which information was made available and accessible to the consumer in a format that the consumer could use (Betman, 1979). Consumers also seek additional information in order to minimise the cost of a mis-purchase (Laband, 1991). Shoppers find that displays and layout have a more significant role in

high-fashion appeal than in a broad appeal store (Rich S and Portis, 1964; Sinha and Uniyal, 2000).

Shopping Involvement and Store format

Studies of involvement have focussed on product, individuals, purchasing and purchase-decision. All these studies have been carried out without bringing the context in which purchase is being planned or occurring. It is established that context has a significant impact on behaviour (Belk, 1975). Situation in the studies of involvement has been largely defined as the purchase situation created by the task definition. Whereas a store format is a situation created by a mix of store variables and it has been found to influence shopping behaviour. Store atmosphere is a significant variable for shoppers (Donover, Rossiter, Marcollin and Nesdale, 1994). Shoppers do tend to get influenced by local information structure (adjacent objects) than non-local information and organisation of display can change the perception of variety in a store (Hoch, Barlow and Wansink, 1999). Shoppers have tended to become more variety seeking in a self-service format as against an over-the-counter store (Sinha and Uniyal, 2005). They seem to seek hedonistic value from a departmental store as compared to a mass merchandiser or a convenience store (Berman and Evans, 2003; Anuradha, Sinha and Krishna, 2003). Shoppers have also shown the tendency of altering their lists of purchase while shopping (Kollat and Willet, 1967; Rook and Fisher, 1995).

In choosing a store format shoppers tend to consider fixed as well as variable costs. The fixed cost is independent of whereas the variable cost depends on, the shopping list (or basket). Consequently, unlike the fixed cost, the variable cost varies from trip to trip, because the household has a different shopping list for each trip (Bell, Ho and Tang, 1998). Price is considered to be a variable cost of shopping. It was also found that while setting store perceptions, price was not considered by customers (Sinha and Banerjee, 2004). We use only the fixed cost factors to classify the store as they would play a more stable and permanent role in format choice. Formats, for this study, were thus classified based on the three primary dimensions of convenience (accessibility in terms of location and time), variety (assortment providing comparison shopping) and experience (atmospherics and specialised treatment). It is hypothesised that the level of shopping involvement would change with store formats. Specifically,

H1a: In experience formats, shoppers would exhibit the highest level of shopping involvement

H1b: Shopping involvement in variety formats would be higher than convenience formats but lower than experience formats

Shopping Involvement and Information Use

The extent of use of in-store communication by customers tends to differ with the familiarity of the store and frequency of visits (Sinha and Uniyal, 2000). A study by POP (1995a,b) had indicated that PoP communication seems to influence impulse purchase more as compared to planned purchase. The rate of unplanned purchasing tends to depend on the type of stimulation technique, the product that is being promoted and the customer who selectively exposes himself to, and selectively perceives the promotional stimuli (Kollat and Willet, 1967; Swinyard, 1993). The format of the store has been found to impact the extent of information search at the store (Sinha and Uniyal, 2005, Watreschoot, Sinha, Kenhove and Wulf, 2008).

It was, thus, envisaged that shopping involvement would depend on the extent of information sought by the shoppers. For this study, the level of information sought by the shopper was categorised in three classes in line with the three purchase situations indicated by Howard and

Sheth (1968). A similar classification has been indicated by Firth and Connelly (1999) and Berman and Evans (2003).

H2a: Shopping involvement would remain at the same level for all formats, when shoppers are in low information search situation,

H2b: Shopping involvement in variety format would be higher than convenience and experience, in case the information search level is medium.

H2c: Shopping involvement would be higher in experience as compared to variety and convenience formats, when the information search is high.

Research Method

The primary method used for testing the hypotheses was experimentation. A laboratory experiment manipulates one or more independent variables under rigorously specified, operationalised and controlled conditions and by using random assignment (Kerlinger, 1986). By using laboratory experiments we may demonstrate the power of the phenomenon by showing that it occurs even under unnatural conditions that ought to preclude it (Mook, 1983). The experiment involved developing scenarios. A qualitative study was conducted to develop the scenarios for each of the nine cells of the matrix. Later in-depth interviews were carried to understand the role of involvement as well as developing scales for its measurement.

Developing the Shopping Situations

Shopping scenarios were developed using in-store observation of shoppers. Participant observation was chosen as it puts the researcher where the action is and experiences the lives of informants (Bernard, 2000). The process suggested by Schutt (2006) was followed. The text was analysed using a Grounded Theory Approach. It has found its use across social sciences including management (Bernard, 2000). It was used in identifying categories and concepts that emerged from the text and linking the concepts into substantive and formal theories. Content analysis was not used as there were no hypotheses to be tested and there was no a priori categorisation of behaviour (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994). The data was collected through observation of 230 shoppers across various retail formats. Three experts read these transcripts independently to develop themes. Thereafter, discussions were carried among these three experts to resolve differences. Themes that did not get consensus were dropped. The analysis brought out that shopping behaviour changed across formats. The shoppers also differed in the extent of information search across as well as within these formats. The different shopping situations that emerged were classified into nine cells (3 X 3) created by the three store formats and the three levels of extent of information search by the shoppers as given in **Figure – 1**.

Figure – 1: Shopping Situations

		Store Format		
		Convenience	Variety	Experience
Information Search in Shopping	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Least Effort in Shopping Convenient Location <p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Kirana Shops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Least Effort Store Location and appearance <p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stationery Store 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Least Effort Familiarity <p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stores at Petrol Pump
	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low Comparison Buying Convenient location Limited Assortment <p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Chemist in Residential Location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparison Buying Large Assortment and Brands Clear communication of offers and schemes <p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Supermarket 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparison Buying Large assortment Visual merchandising <p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Music Store
	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of wide Merchandise Pleasant Ambience Convenient location <p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Gift Shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of large assortment of products and brands Store offers best bargains and discounts Moderate ambience <p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hypermarket 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of preferred brands and merchandise Clearly laid out sections Very good ambience High level of customer service Store that best identifies with the self-image of the shopper <p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Departmental Store

Developing the Scales

A new scale for measuring shopping involvement was developed as the existing scales related to product involvement measuring situational or enduring product involvement (Lastovicka and Gardner, 1979; Laurent and Kapferer, 1985; Zaichkowsky 1985, 1986). Although Mittal (1989) developed a scale called purchase-decision involvement, this scale (PDI) was similar to the situational involvement of Houston and Rothschild (1977). Shopping involvement has been defined as self-relevance of shopping activities to the individual and it is treated rather as an enduring involvement (Michell, Corrine and Jane, 1995). Most studies have used shopping task definition as the situation which tends to be defined before the shoppers enter the store. It does not cover their behaviour inside the store. The retail store and its format have been found to influence shopping behaviour (Sinha and Uniyal, 2005). Also research on involvement have not studied two different types of involvements together; a phenomenon created by shopping. In addition, these scales were not developed in an emerging market context. A fresh approach was needed to define the construct of shopping involvement and measure it across various different shopping situations. The conceptualisation of Slama and Taschian (1988) was used for developing the scale.

Depth interviews using a discussion guide was carried out among 25 working women and housewives to explore their Involvement with the shopping process. The respondents were aged between 25-35 years and belonged to SEC A households. Studies had indicated that shoppers in this segment were decision makers and bought from all three types of stores (Sinha, 2005). The finding generated 20 items.

For developing a scale using these 20 items, a field study was carried out with 200 respondents, equally distributed among men and women. They were intercepted outside the retail stores and were asked to rate the 20 statements on a 5-point Likert type scale. The data was subjected to a factor analysis which generated seven factors. In the next stage, items with factor loadings of less than 0.60 were removed. The five factors solution explained 70% variance. The Cronbach alpha score was found to be 0.78. In line with Laurent and Kapferer (1985b), the multi-dimensional scale was accepted. The scale consisted of items related to Emotional Pleasure, Self-driven information Search, Emotional Distress, Risk, and Store-driven Information Search.

Table – 1: Shopping Involvement Scale		
No.	Item	FL
Emotional Pleasure		
1	I derive the pleasure of spending some time for myself	0.75
2	I feel happy and contented after every time I shop	0.70
Self-driven information Search		
3	I look for more information and references in case of high price products	0.85
4	I seek information on the price, alternatives available, after sales service, cost of usage	0.85
Emotional Distress		
5	I feel upset if I take a poor shopping decision	0.86
6	Most of the times when I buy a wrong product I go through financial and psychological turmoil	0.84
Risk		
7	I take risks when it is a low unit value purchase	0.85
8	I take risks when the shopping is related to products wherein trial and error is possible	0.77
Store-driven Information Search		
9	If I don't find something I am looking for I will probably ask the staff out there	0.74
10	My information search at the store depends on how the things are displayed in the store	0.70

Manipulation checks were carried out by conducting the experiment with 5 male and 5 female respondents. Respondents were chosen randomly within the sampling frame. It was found that all respondents understood the shopping scenarios correctly and knew the specific retail formats. They had also bought from these formats. There was consistency in their description of these formats. The responses did not vary with gender. All respondents also understood the items of the scale and derived similar meanings from the statements. There was also no bias towards a particular scenario due to randomization of scenarios.

Testing the Hypotheses

The experiment was designed as a within-sample factorial design. A general rule of thumb that cell numbers should not be less than 12-14 was followed (Drew and Hardman, 1987). According to Hair, Anderson, Thatham and Back (2003) sample size must exceed specific thresholds and a minimum cell size of 20 observations should be maintained. In this study, based on effect and power (Petersen, 1985; Cook and Donald, 1979), 50 male and 50 female respondents were chosen.

Respondents belonged to SEC A, had a monthly household income of more than Rs. 20,000, were married and were in the age range of 25-35 years. They were given the shopping scenarios

in the form of show cards (**Annexure – 1**). Once they had read one card, they were told to recall the store which came to their mind while reading the scenario. Then they were asked to respond to the involvement scale. Only when they had rated the scales for a particular scenario, another show card was given for another scenario. This process was repeated till they had responded to all scenarios. These cards were rotated randomly for every respondent. Data was analysed using univariate two-factor ANOVA.

Findings and Analysis

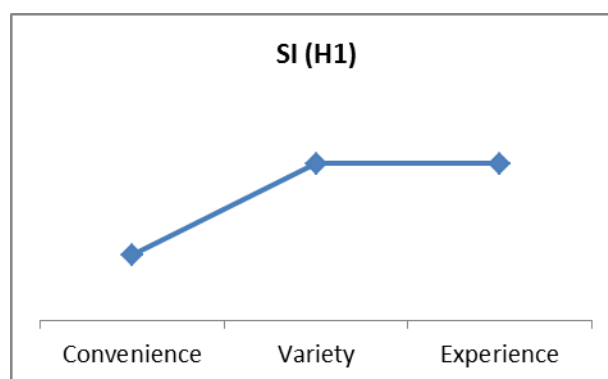
Based on the Wilk's Lambda and F scores, it was found that the effect of format as well as extent of information search were significant on shopping involvement (SI). Also there was a significant interaction effect between information search and format. Information Search [F (2, 19.776) = 54.299] was significant at $p < 0.000$. Store Format [F (2, 11.346) = 31.152] was found to be significant at $p < 0.000$. The combined effect of Information Search * Format [F (4, 2.707) = 7.433], was also found to be significant at $p < 0.000$.

Table 2: Anova Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Information Search	39.552	2	19.776	54.299	.000
Format	22.692	2	11.346	31.152	.000
Information Search * Format	10.829	4	2.707	7.433	.000

While on the whole format has been found to be affecting the involvement level significantly, it increased between convenience and variety but was similar or less for experience as compared to variety; though higher than convenience (**Figure – 1**). The means were 3.24, 3.57 and 3.57 respectively. Hence H1 is supported on the whole, though the difference between variety and experience was not significant at $p < 0.05$. Shopping Involvement increased significantly between convenience and variety but remained at the same level in an experience format.

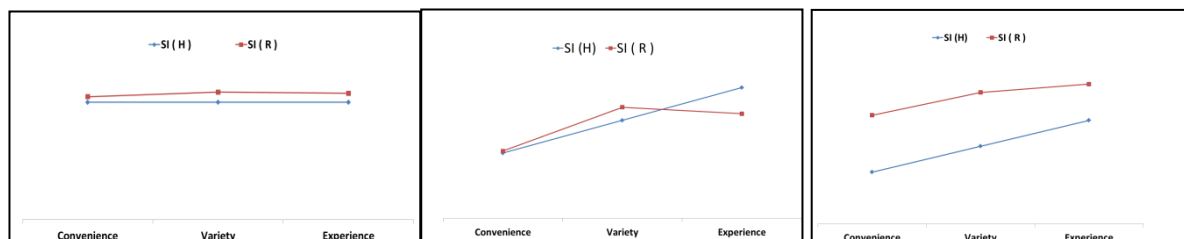
Figure – 2: Effect of Format on Shopping Involvement (H1)



The findings indicated a relationship between information search and store formats in determining shopping involvement for every shopping scenario as hypothesised (**Figure – 3**; H = Hypothesised, R = Result). The data analysis supported H2a. The shopping involvement levels were not significantly different among formats (3.14, 3.26, 3.24; F: 0.887; $p = 0.441$). During low information search shopper tend to remain in similar involvement state across all formats. This

seems to be a reflection of a routine or habitual purchase when the shopper seems pre-decided about purchases and does not utilise the cognitive resources while shopping. It may also be an indication that the interaction with the store is very limited and the store is being used only as a dispensing unit. A small increase in the experience store could be due to the involvement with the category being bought from these stores.

Figure – 3: Effect of Format on Shopping Involvement (H2 a,b,c)



In case of a medium information search situation, SI was highest for variety format, supporting H2b. The increase in variety seems to increase search effort indicating a higher cognitive processing by the shopper. The availability of option at the store in such a case may even lead to re-evaluation of the consideration set by shopper. In some cases it may lead to re-constitution of the set. The SI level in the experience format is similar but slightly lower indicating the category effect. The shopper may not be seeking this value from the store while buying these categories.

When the shopper was in high information search mode, SI kept increasing with format and was highest for experience format. This supported H2c that the shopper would exhibit the highest involvement with this format of the store. The difference in the SI between convenience and variety may be due to the increase search effort due to the merchandise mix and assortment. The increase between variety and experience would be due to the specialty and ambience that the format offers. The role of image congruence between the store and the shopper would play a significant role here.

Discussion

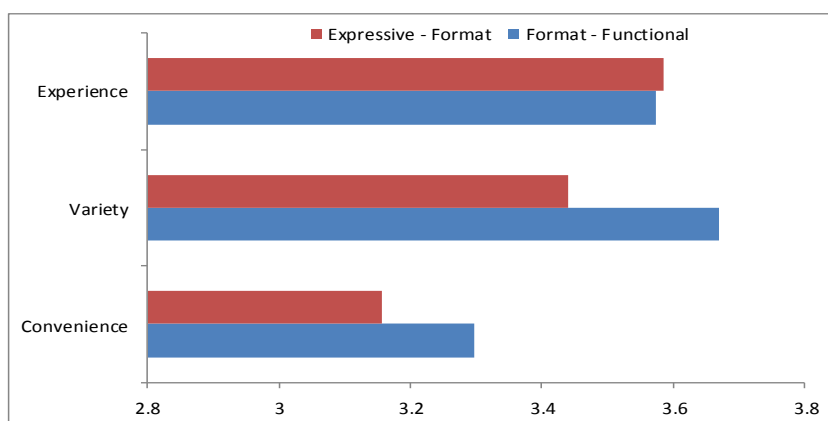
This study brought a new dimension to measuring involvement by introducing the role of store formats. While involvement with shopping could be enduring and would be affected by the need for more information, different store formats can also change the level of shopping involvement. It is noted that the involvement level increases from convenience to variety indicating a heightened cognitive process. Variety formats offer larger assortments and more choices to shoppers. Faced with the choices, shoppers tend to become variety seeking. When a store brings new merchandise or SKUs it influences the shoppers and in many cases it may lead to change in the planned list. Retailers have also resorted to the newness in merchandise to create situations of unplanned purchases. The change in the information set would lead to a more involved shopping as shoppers would look for external cues (Park and Lessig, 1981). Variety at a store would also influence the consideration set of the shoppers leading to a start of new purchase situation and reconstitution of the choice set and a higher cognitive processing by the shoppers. Hence even a routine purchase would become a higher involvement in a variety store.

The nature of involvement seems to be changing with format. The level of involvement in experience formats remaining similar to variety indicates a differing psychological state of the shoppers. Mittal (1989) has suggested that involvement could be functional or expressive. In case of functional the shoppers would seek information regarding tangible aspects, whereas in

the latter case, the shopper would seek the psychological interpretation of the same and become less susceptible to explicit information search (Markus, 1977 and Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). The items in the shopping involvement scale were divided into functional and expressive on the basis of explicit and psychological interpretations of the store format variables. When compared at the summated mean level, the direction of the two aspects of involvement became evident.

The expressive involvement keeps increasing from convenience to variety to experience (Figure – 4). On the other hand, while the functional involvement increases between convenience and variety; it reduces in experience format. The effect of the olfactory factors in the store becomes more dominant. The affective part of the attitude towards the store becomes equally important. The visit to the store may not only be for purchasing (Tauber, 1972). Shopping in these stores would have more of hedonic component (Westbrook and Black, 1985). Shoppers may seek more congruence of the self-concept with the store image (Martineau, 1969; Bellenger, Steinberg and Stanton, 1976). The experience store choices tend to be affected by the store image (Berry, 1969). Shoppers also tend to visit these stores for knowledge, something to talk about and as 'joints' (Sinha, 2004).

Figure – 4: Shopping Involvement Components Across Formats

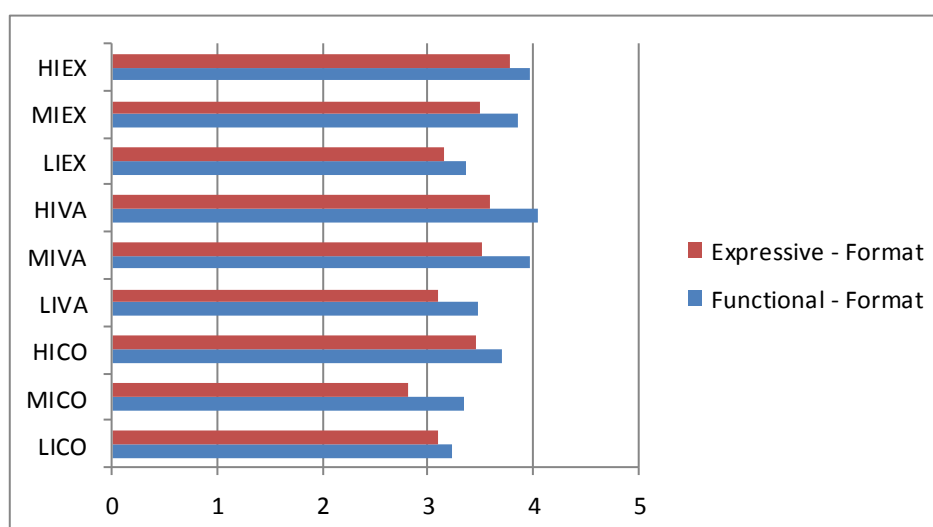


Studies in neurosciences (Ledoux 1998, 2003) indicate that affect may precede cognition or the two may operate independently in certain kinds of decisions. Zajonc's (1980) experiments demonstrate that reliable affective distinctions (like-dislike ratings) can be made without any interpolation of recognition memory (old-new judgments). He concludes that affect and cognition are under the control of separate and partially independent systems that could impact each other in several ways. Other researchers (Abelson et al. 1982; Breckler and Wiggins, 1991; Edwards, 1990; Millar and Millar, 1990, Lavine et al., 1998, Farley and Stasson, 2003) also demonstrate that affect and cognition are distinct components of attitude with differential impact on conation.

Breckler and Wiggins (1991) indicate that subject's pre-persuasion conative responses are primarily affect driven while the post-persuasion responses tend to be mainly thoughts related. Sojka and Giese (2003) classified affect and cognition according to their intensity and captured varying behaviour in each of the affect-cognition combinations. Some other work (Chugani, 1998; Casey, Giedd and Thomas, 2000; Goldman-Rakic, 1987; Huttenlocher and de Courten, 1987) describe attitude as a Dual Locus construct comprising affect and cognition, which need to be treated independently. Studies show that anticipated gain, loss and preference activated the nucleus accumbens (NAcc), while excessive prices activated the insula and deactivated the mesial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) prior to the purchase decision. Activity from each of these

regions independently predicted immediately subsequent purchases above and beyond self-report variables. These findings suggest that activation of distinct neural circuits related to anticipatory affect precedes and supports consumers' purchasing decisions (Knutson et al, 2007). It is also suggested that risk-seeking choices (purchase linked store visits) and risk-averse choices (browsing) may be driven by two distinct neural circuits involving the NAcc and the anterior insula. The findings are consistent with the notion that activation in the NAcc and anterior insula, respectively, index positive and negative anticipatory affective states and that activating one of these two regions can lead to a shift in risk preferences. In such a case the expressive aspect of involvement may be driving the functional part leading to increase in enhanced cognitive processes as can be seen in **Figure – 5**.

Figure – 5: Involvement Components Across Shopping Situations



The study established the known fact that when shoppers indulge in searching for information and as its levels increase, it indicates a heightened involvement state. The three type of purchase situations of routine, limited decision making and complex decision making (Howard and Sheth, 1968) would lead to differing and increasing level of involvement. Thus for instance, though important, routine purchase decisions tend to be made with less cognitive resources. Many of these decisions are reflex or out of habit. However, these may not necessarily mean low-involvement purchases (Mittal, 1989). But shopping in such a situation could be very 'automatic' or 'blinkered' (Firth and Connelly, 1999), reflecting a low shopping involvement. The study reinforced that during shopping as the need for information for making a decision increased, the shoppers tend to start searching for more information actively and show a higher level of shopping involvement (Slama and Taschian, 1987, 1988).

Managerial Implications – Moving Southward

Using Figure – 1, each of the formats would need to move southward and increase involvement levels by providing more information. The challenges faced by each of the formats are different. For instance, the shoppers are not much interested in gathering a lot of information at the convenience stores. They wish to complete the purchase quickly. However, when a store is able to increase their involvement by providing relevant information in terms of new offers and launches through displays or in-store communication, shoppers do tend to buy more or change the brand or pack sizes. Retailer recommendation in such a situation plays an important role. In markets such as India or Japan, where a large proportion of stores are still small, it becomes imperative for the brands to ensure good placement and retailer push for gaining market share. Similarly, when a hypermarket, which is a price format, offers better shopping atmosphere, it

would tend to attract customers from who do not mind paying a little more. Retailers need to understand that two aspects of involvements, functional and expressive, operate differently in each of the formats. For instance, in case of experience stores expressive involvement when supported by cognitive action would increase involvement. Interactive communication tools would enhance shopping experience. Role of sales person becomes very critical here in terms for not being intrusive but still help. In case of convenience formats, which are generally OTC, the function involvement drives the expressive involvement. Easy and handy displays, attractive packaging, and accessibility to new merchandise need to be managed by the retailers. These store can use online/internet to not only create a good experience but also of much wider variety of product which are not needed immediately and can be delivered later. In any case these store do deliver to customers' premises.

Future Research Direction

The study has been carried out for store formats that could be dealing different products. The moderating effect of product category in shaping involvement by each of the formats can be explored. The different parts of involvement becoming operative at different level in each shopping scenario is an interesting finding. A neuroeconomic study of this phenomenon is another area for further exploration. The study involved only physical store formats. The changing shopping involvement in non-store formats such as online, catalogue, telemarketing or vending machines should be explored as shoppers are increasing buying from these formats.

Summary

This study is unique in three ways. First, it measures shopping involvement as different from purchase involvement or purchase-decision involvement. Secondly, it establishes the role of context as store formats in influencing shopping involvement. Thirdly, the nature of involvement changes as the shoppers moves to an experience store from a variety or convenience store format. Retailers must treat differently the choice of store format and shopping within a format. The value proposition of each of the formats sets the expectations of the shoppers and condition the search and purchase behaviour. It is important that shoppers derive satisfaction out of search and convert into purchasing.

The new scale of shopping involvement would become very useful to retailers in designing effective in-store communication that would affect the path-to-purchase of the shoppers and reinforce purchase of a brand or to switch towards a desired brand. It is also suggested that shopping involvement should be treated as consisting of cognitive and affective aspects and store formats, depending on their value proposition, would elevate a particular aspect of shopping involvement.

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Figure – 1: Shopping Situations

		Store Benefit		
		Convenience	Variety	Experience
Information Search in Shopping	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Least Effort in Shopping Convenient Location <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Neighbourhood Kirana Shops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Least Effort Store Location and appearance <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stationery Store 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Least Effort Familiarity <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Large Kirana shop; Ciggarattes/Paan Shop
	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low Brand Comparison Convenient location Limited Assortment <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Neighbourhood Chemist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brand Comparison Large Assortment Clear communication of offers and schemes <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Supermarket 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brand Comparison Large assortment Visual merchandising <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Speciality store
	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of preferred brands Convenient location <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Gifts and Cards Shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of preferred brands Store that gives best bargain for the brand <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hypermarket 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of preferred brands Store that best identifies with the self-image of the shopper <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Departmental Store

Annexure – 1
Scenario 1: Neighbourhood Kirana Shop

This store can be classified as a convenience store and the effort here is to minimize the transaction time for the customer. The shoppers come to this shop usually had a shopping list ready at hand and the transaction involved the shopkeeper fetching the required items and billing which usually concluded within a short span of time.

Shop Location

The shop is located in a building complex facing the main road at a residential location. It is flanked by a petrol pump on the left and a string of small shops on the left. The building complex has one other Kirana store, a dairy parlour, a gift shop and a CD DVD parlour. There is some parking space in front of the shop.

Shopping behaviour:

A majority of the people who came to this Kirana store came by foot or two wheelers. Most of them spoke in local language. Customers were generally aware of the brands of their purchase and some insisted on buying 'standard' brands only. The average time spent in the shop was less than ten minutes. Most of the customers were either housewives or domestic helps/servants.

Shop Description

It is a small shop of roughly 400 sq.ft. The shopkeeper stood behind the main counter and roamed around in the store. The main counter had all the glass bottles which the children were attracted to. The display counters were utilized to keep fast selling items at eye-level. On entering the shop an arch of the ceiling over the counter had a bright orange sticker of a detergent. The next thing which got the attention is the wide assortment of colourful mélange of shampoo sachets dangling at a point above the eye level. Utility items like floor brushes and scrubbers were hanging from the right hand corner of the ceiling.

Shop Front



Counter



Shelf Display



Payment Counter/weighing scale

