

DESIRE FOR VISUAL AESTHETICS (DVA) IN THE STORE ENVIRONMENT: CONCEPT AND MEASUREMENT

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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the development, purification, and validation of a reliable self-report scale designed to measure the Desire for Visual Aesthetics (DVA) in the store environment. Despite the increasing amount of research on aesthetics, there is no guidance available to businesses to measure their customers' desire for visually aesthetic environments, or for environments with better or improved design. After all, an individual's aesthetic sensitivity is affected by his or her artistic judgment, which may differ from one person to the other. This research conceptualizes and develops a multi-item scale that measures an individual's level of desire for aesthetics in the store environment. Such a scale will have the potential to aid retailers to recognize possible improvement opportunities in store aesthetics and be able to position themselves according to the minds of the target market.

While superior designs help to distinguish from competitors, and gain recognition for some (Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold 2003), it is possible that superior visual aesthetics do the same for stores in their physical store environment. Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold (2003) state that aesthetics (visual) have a symbolic function on how a product is understood and evaluated, and as per Hollins and Pugh (1990), product appearance is the central channel for building the relationship between consumers and products. This research proposes that aesthetics can be applied to the store environment as well, suggesting that consumers might experience a higher level of satisfaction when they encounter a fine, or an agreeable atmosphere within a store.

Based on conceptual and empirical material obtained, which included focus groups, individual interviews, and 891 surveys, DVA emerged as a uni-dimensional, 9-item, construct comprised of elements from two domains: hedonistic and utilitarian. For the purpose of this research, the desire for visual aesthetics in the store environment is defined as a person's desire for all the necessary cues, such as layout, atmospherics, and design and display, that would please the senses, and may attract and retain customers, as well as motivate them to increase the length of time they spend in the store.

One of the most important managerial implications of this study is that store aesthetics could influence the decision of the customers with regards to the store choice. The research also provides evidence for reliability and validity. The scale could be used by academicians and practitioners alike, and could replace single items to measure the concept. Future research could investigate the possibility of developing a model using this scale and the intention to purchase for a particular store with aesthetics as a predictor variable. It could possibly be used in cross-national research, and longitudinal research could be undertaken to evaluate if the people's liking for store aesthetics is undergoing a change.

REFERENCES

- Bloch, Peter H., Frédéric F. Brunel, and Todd J. Arnold. 2003. "Individual Differences in the Centrality of Visual Product Aesthetics: Concept and Measurement." *Journal of Consumer Research* 29 (March): 551-565.
- Hollins, Bill and Stuart Pugh. 1990. *Successful Product Design*. London: Butterworths.