Does Online Brand Influence Offline Word-of-mouth? Using Pop-up Stores as a Means of Surprise and Brand Experience

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Abstract

Pop-up stores are a way to promote exposure in ambient media, which stimulates the interest of potential customers. The study examines how in-store atmosphere, surprise factors, brand experience, brand attitude, word-of-mouth (WOM), and purchase intentions are structured and influence each other. The study chooses a pop-up store that is an online women's shoe brand to conduct the research. A total of 480 usable samples were used in the study. The study has adopted structural equation modeling (SEM) with the help of AMOS software to bring the outcomes of the research. The study finds that the store atmosphere affects the surprise factors, brand experience, and brand attitude. Whereas, surprise factors positively affect the brand experience and brand attitude. The brand experience impacts brand attitude and WOM. However, the brand experience is affecting the purchase intention in the study. The study also finds that the brand attitude affects the WOM and purchase intention. Further, WOM is affects the purchase intention in the study. So far, there has been no research conducted on the attitudes and behaviors of consumers affected by online-to-offline pop-up shops. Therefore, as part of the present study, consumer sentiment generated by pop-up stores is explored concerning consumers' attitudes and behaviors towards the brand, thereby providing the industry with a reference for creating pop-up stores. The gap in research regarding setting up online to offline pop-up stores that are currently lacking is filled by researchers, academicians, and the sector.

Introduction

The online retailing and e-commerce industry is expanding rapidly across the globe with the expansion and growth strategies of international giant retailers (Tolstoy et al., 2021). The growth of the organized retail industry is remarkable with the increasing demand and expansion of cities (Rodrigue, 2020). However, the online retailing industry or e-commerce is also closely competing with the offline retail industry worldwide. Online companies across the globe are serving their customers with the best services (Adam et al., 2020). Technological development and cellular experience with hi-speed internet are also one of the main factors among many towards the increasing online retailing (Stouthuysen, 2020). Offline retailing especially small retailers face several challenges because of the growth of extensive online retailing (Gauri et al., 2021). Most hit countries in the pandemic recorded slower growth in offline retailing whereas the lower-risk countries like Taiwan have maintained the offline retailing business at a satisfactory rate (Deloitte, 2021). Kemp and Moey (2019) described that the retail industry needs to integrate online, offline business, and cross-platform communication to be successful in the future.

Marketers must respond to ever-changing consumer demands in the era of ubiquitous smartphones, advanced network technology, and rapidly changing retail environments. For omnichannel retailers, physical stores and online stores represent two of the most important sales channels (Bell et al., 2018). It causes them to close physical stores, possibly disregarding their role in online stores (Valentini et al., 2020). When consumers begin making online and offline purchases simultaneously, the omnichannel approach becomes predominant in retailing (Melis et al., 2015). Due to this retail trend, online retailers must be able to establish brick-and-mortar channels, manage scale, and deal with enormous capital pressure. The construction and planning of physical channels are not easy processes. Brand owners can also allow consumers to get to know and experience their brand in a short time if they use pop-up stores to demonstrate their spirit or to experience physical retail. For example, in the United Kingdom, Amazon launched the Clicks and Mortar program in collaboration with Enterprise Nation in 2019. An internet-based click-and-mortar program refers to a traditional business that has expanded its activities to include activities on the internet.

A key part of consumer decision-making involves identifying what influences consumer behavior, how retailers use atmospheric (Roggeveen et al., 2020), social (Argo and Dahl 2020; Thomas et al., 2020), cultural (Shavitt and Barnes 2020), political (Jung and Mittal 2020), and numerical (Santana et al., 2020) cues as strategies to influence (and facilitate) consumer behavior. Consumers are increasingly communicating with brands by experiencing their products at pop-up store locations (Warnaby et al., 2015), and it plays a significant role for high-end brands (Klein et al., 2016). Using a pop-up store can help to draw customers' attention and interest in ambient media (Taube and Warnaby 2017). As an experiential marketing tool in luxury retailing, pop-up brand stores endeavor to create brand experiences while increasing (WOM) advertising among existing and new audiences (Klein et al., 2016). At the same time, pop-up stores provide a retail environment that can enhance and convey consumer experience as well as brand meaning to capture consumer attention as a form of short-term sales promotion (Zhang et al., 2019).

Pop-up stores allow luxury brands to reach consumers, enhancing brand awareness and helping brand experience to customers in a better way (Klein et al., 2016). In the same way, pop-up stores make luxury more accessible and less formal. Pop-up stores have many advantages, including affordability, a short-term commitment, etc. The rent for pop-up stores is usually lower than that of conventional retail stores. Most pop-up stores are temporary and more compact. Although pop-up stores can generate visible benefits as these stores become more prosperous and ubiquitous, consumers sometimes overlook the messages and stimulation due to their exposure to various media (Warnaby and Shi 2015). Pop-up stores are also a method of generating interest, creating a sense of urgency, and encouraging people to come to visit your business during a fun, limited-time event. Therefore, recent research suggests that brand memory can be improved if the sense of surprise is invoked (Dutta et al., 2019).

The structure of the research study after the introduction sections starts with the literature review where the past studies have been studied and reported and that helped in the formations of the conceptual model of the study. The present study's findings contribute to both theory and industry. First, pop-up stores have two main characteristics: focusing on shaping the customer experience, and non-permanent and short-term exposure. Hence, under these two premises, a pop-up store's atmosphere not only conveys the brand's core message but also creates a sense of surprise, shock, and attraction that customers have never felt before. Customers will then engage in consumption and experiences to establish a positive attitude toward the brand. Pop-up stores are usually small in scale; thus, retailers need to control the establishment of surprise, ensuring the development of a positive brand attitude. Then, the extended benefits will follow, such as word-of-mouth advertisement or purchase willingness.

Several studies have talked about the advantages of pop-up shops in the past (De Lassus and Freire, 2014; Gordon, 2004; Warnaby et al., 2015), but the topic of branding has not been adequately addressed in these studies. This is one of the reasons for conducting the present study in the first place. By the research questions identified in the study, the present study can provide answers to those questions.
a. How does the atmosphere of the store affect the level of surprise?
b. What is the role of surprise factors in influencing customer behavior?
c. How does ambient media play a role in the success of a pop-up store?
d. What is the impact of brand attitude on purchase intention and word-of-mouth?

Store Atmosphere:

Many consumer research studies have investigated the effects of store atmosphere or mood on customer behavior, but very few studies have examined the effects of store characteristics on customer behavior when mood is considered an intervening factor (Kim & Mattila, 2013, Ozer, Oyman & Ugurhan, 2020). Positive mood states, supposedly associated with a pleasant store atmosphere, were assumed to encourage customers to spend more money and purchase items more spontaneously. It is, however, imperative that products do not cost too much.

Surprise Factor:

In most academic circles, the surprise is considered to be a fundamental emotion (Plutchik 1980) as well as an independent emotion (Reisenzein and Studtmann 2007).

Informational incongruity, according to Karmarkar and Tormala (2010), is a phenomenon that occurs when information is inconsistent and violates people's expectations, causing people to be surprised and motivated to acquire more information (Ziegler and Ruther, 2002).

Customer Behavior:

The shopping experience of customers both, in physical and online businesses, has a significant impact on future customer behavior, including repurchase intentions, store revisit intentions, and word of mouth (WOM). Customer satisfaction is closely linked to their attitudes and intentions, which are integral to their behavior (Holloway et al., 2005) and directly influence their positive behavior.

Ambient Media:

The power of ambient media lies in their ability to keep passerby's attention through unexpected media designs and placements (Hutter and Hoffmann, 2014). When consumers have already turned their attention to an advertisement, traditional ads evoke surprise only within their content (e.g., unexpected or incongruent text or images) but ambient media uses the incongruity of the medium that contrasts with the surroundings to elicit surprise and draw passersby's attention. In this way, ambient media can direct attention to particular subjects, while surprise ads can only intensify the processing of information. Ambient media have a greater impact on retailers' attention than conventional media's downstream surprising effects.

Furthermore, studying these research questions are important because of the following reasons:
1. To improve prior understanding of how surprise and brand quality affects customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer behavior, such as repurchase intentions, word-of-mouth, and site revisits.
2. To understand the impact of pop-up store atmosphere (using ambient media) on customer brand behavior.
3. To verify the relationship among store atmosphere, surprise, WOM, and Purchase intention.

The present study has developed a theoretical model based on previous studies to address the research questions and achieve the research objectives. The study has conducted an extensive literature study to understand the theoretical concept. The objective of the present study is to examine whether a Taiwanese women's shoe brand can successfully build its brand through pop-up stores. This brand is a well-known e-commerce women's shoe brand and, is popular among young women aged 18-25. The brand set up a 3-week pop-up store in the popular business district of Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, to showcase brand intentions, new product experiences, and unique brand decoration, so that old customers and wandering customers of the brand can have a strong brand image impression. This study was conducted using the brand's pop-up store as its research object since it is quite consistent with the topic of this study. AMOS has been used to conduct structural equation modeling (SEM) to establish a structural relationship. The interpretations of the results have been done in the context of the research problems of the study.

Literature Review

Ambient Media and Pop-Up Stores

Ambient media captures the attention of customers by evoking surprise, promoting a positive attitude towards the campaign or brand, and generating WOM. In recent years, some marketing and advertising trade press have focused on ambient media (Shankar and Horton 1999). To differentiate themselves from their competitors, brands are developing increasingly creative, unusual, interactive, and unconventional ways to advertise. Ambient advertising is one of these ways, as it involves guerrilla marketing activities and unexpected alteration of environmental elements with which customers interact creatively and unexpectedly (e.g., pedestrian walkways, bus stops) to make these elements attractive to customers. According to Rosengren et al.(2015) ambient media are advertisements placed in unexpected or unanticipated places. These practices are usually unconventional and the first of such a marketing method.

Pop-up brands not only provide an attractive store atmosphere but also offer customers hedonistic shopping value, Babin et al., (1994) define this as the fun and excitement associated with in-store shopping. Pop-up stores differ from regular shops in these respects (Hollenbeck et al., 2008). As a result, using pop-up stores' in an unexpected manner and adding surprise factors in these stores make pop-up stores increase the efficacy of generating a word-of-mouth phenomenon than selling goods. Therefore, in pop-up stores, brand manufacturers and operators use brand explanations, unique sales offer, design elements, new media interactions, etc. to convey brand messages (Zhang et al., 2019). Table-1 summarizes ambient media, pop-up-store atmosphere, and marketing application literature.

Table 1: The ambient media, pop-up-store atmosphere, and marketing application literature

Author(s)	Area of research	Method	Findings
Vatavu(2013)	Public display	Qualitative	Factors such as location, installation, reachability, and content displayed can affect how people perceive your message.
Hutter and Hoffmann (2014)	Shoebox display on the street	Empirical	An effective strategy to solve the attention dilemma and attract new customers is to create surprises with ambient media.
Rosengren et al., (2015)	Advertising	Empirical	In the context of advertising and consumer care, ambient communication facilitates equal exchange between customers and brands.
Leonardi (2015)	Ambient media awareness	Empirical	Few studies explore the factors that influence knowledge sharing from the perspective of ambient media awareness, which involves understanding the flow and interaction of information within the organization.
Guo (2013)	Innovations in ambient	Empirical	The theory of global customer orientation examines how customers' global orientation affects their attitudes

	advertising perceptions		toward global brands and ambient advertising.
Spence et al., (2014)	Store atmosphere	Empirical	Many offline retailers are battling intense competition from online marketers by creating suitable shopping environments and utilizing ambient media to gain new competitive advantages.
Dolbec and Chebat (2013)	Positive customer experiences at pop-up stores	Empirical	Great store experiences and positive attitudes toward the brand are results of a positive pop-up store experience
Zhang et al., (2019)	Pop-Up Store's Value on Retailing Platforms	Empirical	In pop-up stores, brand manufacturers and operators use brand explanations, unique sales offer, design elements, new media interactions, etc. to convey brand messages

Surprise Factors

Most scholars believe that surprise is both a fundamental (Plutchik 1980) and independent emotion (Meyer et al., 1997; Vanhamme 2000; Reisenzein and Studtmann 2007;). Positive as well as negative emotional reactions are possible (Meyer et al., 1997). According to Karmarkar and Tormala's (2010) informational incongruity hypothesis, when information is inconsistent and violates people's expectations, people feel surprised and become motivated to acquire more information (Ziegler and Ruther, 2002). At the psychological level, the physiological responses include heartbeat accelerations due to mood changes. At the behavioral level, reactions include exaggerated facial expressions. Surprises can even interrupt the reception of the original message and instead make people shift their focus to the sources of surprises (Liu et al., 2018). Through experiments, Kupor and Tormala (2015) proved that this potential interruptive mechanism temporarily increases customers' curiosity and their motivation to understand the strong arguments, as well as the features, that will increase customers' sentiment. Pop-up stores are driven by curiosity, but if the interior decor or the products do not match the customers' expectations then it will not change their attitude. Many past marketing studies also found that surprising advertisements attract customers' attention (Hutter and Hoffmann, 2014).

Thus far, past research has focused on surprise generated from products, services, and ad operations. Despite this, no studies have examined the surprises created by pop-up stores' unexpected timing, location, format, and interaction characteristics. Therefore, this research investigates Americans' reactions to a brand experience and brand satisfaction that are unlike those of the past (Vanhamme and Snelders, 2001), using the pop-up store as a research target.

Brand Experience

According to branding literature, brand experience is a key construct in building consumer-brand relationships. The study by Brakus et al. (2009) stated that with a better understanding of brand experience, we could benefit from a fuller understanding of brand-related stimuli and their effects. It refers to the practice of associating an

organization's brand with a particular activity in order to promote the organization's interests. Brand Experience involves customer engagement, offers first-hand brand experiences (Whelan & Wohlfeil, 2006), and provides opportunities for brand equity and sales growth (Akaoui, 2007; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2013).

Word-of-Mouth

Brands increasingly rely on word-of-mouth and peer-to-peer communication to reach customers and strengthen their brand image. The Nielsen study found that 83% of consumers rely on recommendations from friends and family, but only 50% rely on mass media marketing (Nielsen, 2013). In contrast to conventional marketing methods, word of mouth can influence consumers' behavior significantly more effectively (Trusov et al., 2009) and is a dynamic way of communicating that goes far beyond the exchange of commercial information (Kozinets et al., 2010).
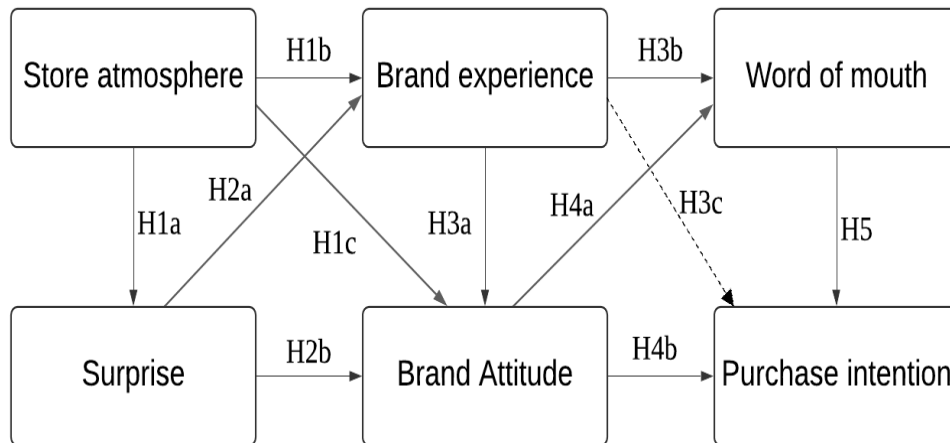
Brand Attitude

Buyer's brand attitude (BA) indicates how consistently a buyer evaluates a brand and how likely a customer is to be influenced by a brand (Wu, 2003). Several factors contribute to brand attitude, including consumer experiential values such as functional value, experimental value, and symbolic value (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). Attitude is a combination of all the expectations, opinions, values, and beliefs the buyer has towards a product/service. When a brand is positively evaluated, it helps to maintain the consumer's preference for that brand (Wu and Wang 2011).

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is an implicit promise to purchase the item again the next time when you visit the market. Understanding the purchase intention of a brand is crucial as it reflects the impression of customer loyalty. The elements of a brand that can influence purchase intention include its attitude, image, quality, features, and level of loyalty (Tariq et al., 2013). These functions exert considerable influence on customer purchase intentions. Attitudes towards a brand or product are among the most important factors that predict purchase intentions (Abzari et al., 2014). Customers' purchase intention for extended products is influenced by brand awareness, attitude towards the core brand, and customer perception (Wu and Lo 2009).

The conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1 shows the connections between store atmosphere measurement, brand behavior, surprise factor, WOM, and purchase intention. These elements are the fundamentals of the focus of the present study. To develop the hypotheses of the present study based on the concept of the previous studies various arguments were studied which are reported in the following sections.

Figure 1: The conceptual framework of the study

Store Atmosphere, Brand Experience, Brand Attitude, and Surprise

Customers are stimulated by surprise (Plutchik 1980) when they receive unexpected messages (Karmarkar and Tormala 2010). Along with manipulating new topics and implementing new technological interactions, pop-up stores also integrate brand intentions into the spaces' atmosphere to create a sentimental effect in customers with a focus on customer enjoyment (Kim and Mattila 2013). Thus, when the customer is positively surprised, a positive atmosphere is created, which leads to a good brand experience for the consumer. A stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model was introduced by (Mehrabian and Russell 1974). The SOR model suggests that customers' internal psychological states are influenced by their external physical environment. When environmental factors affect customer sentiment, they also change customer behaviors. Fascinating decorations, lighting designs, and other elements in pop-up stores are used to convey the brand's image of the store so that customers can ascertain the atmosphere of the store, and this makes the pop-up store a medium to create value within customers (De Lassus and Freire, 2014)). Great store experiences and positive attitudes toward the brand are results of a positive pop-up store experience (Dolbec and Chebat 2013). Based on the above propositions the following hypotheses are formed:

H1a   Store atmosphere affects surprise.

H1b   Store atmosphere affects the brand experience.

H1c   Store atmosphere affects brand attitude.

Surprise, Brand Experience, and Brand Attitude

Moreover, surprising advertisements will attract customers' attention (Lee and Mason 1999; Alden et al., 2000; Reisenzein and Studtmann 2007) and increase the impact of advertisements. Consumer perception of emotional cues will affect subsequent message processing and consumption decisions according to the affect-as-information concept developed by Schwarz, and customers' feelings of surprise will influence their perception of brands (Hutter and Hoffmann 2014). This research proposes the following hypotheses:

H2a   Surprise affects the brand experience.

H2b   Surprise affects brand attitude.

Brand Experience, Brand Attitude, and WOM

Brand attitude is customers' preference for brand stimulation in a specific situation (Lutz et al., 1983). In other words, brand attitude is the stimulus of brand messages in generating potential impacts on customer perceptions and preferences. A pop-up store involves media surrounding the customer and stimulation of the consumer's senses, emotions, cognition, and overall experience through the brand experience. Thus, when customers are attracted to a pop-up store and have an overall positive experience, they will develop a positive attitude toward the brand (Kozinets 2002). The brand conveys its symbolic and experiential meaning through the experience of fragmentary information to influence customers' attitudes toward a brand (Borghini et al., 2009). Two forms of customer loyalty will emerge: one is the intention to purchase, which is a reliable indicator for forecasting actual purchase activities. The second is WOM and informal communications among customers regarding products, services, and user experiences. Therefore, this research proposes the following hypotheses:

H3a   Brand experience affects brand attitude.

H3b   Brand experience affects WOM.

H3c   Brand experience affects purchase intention.

Brand Attitude, Purchase Intention, and WOM

The Omni channel marketing trend has brought pop-up stores from online to offline experiences and creative advertisements have been displayed in pop-up stores to demonstrate brand trends and vitality. When customers experience the thrill of pop-up stores, they respond to the surrounding media adverts, which in turn drives customers' willingness to buy (Dodds et al., 1991) and improves WOM (MacKenzie and Lutz 1989). As a result, when customers' advertising awareness increases through a pop-up store and a better brand attitude is cultivated, the likelihood of using and buying the brand's products is enhanced. A person's attitude towards a brand has a significant impact on its purchase intentions as brand attitude is the most important factor that determines purchase intention (Abzari et al., 2014). Below are the related hypotheses:

H4a   Brand attitude affects WOM.

H4b   Brand attitude affects purchase intention.

WOM and Purchase Intention

A customer's purchase intention, which occurs before the actual purchase, is usually influenced by product- and consumer-related factors. Customer purchase intentions are also influenced by information they receive in the form of WOM online or offline. WOM can increase the number of customers by eight times. WOM becomes a very effective tool for passing information between customers and is a strong predictor of

consumer decisions. Customers are likely to purchase after reading reviews of other customers. 82% of customers intend to purchase after reading reviews. Thus, the positive influence of the benefits of a product or service and the credibility of WOM promote purchase intention. The study proposed the following hypothesis based on these discussions:

H5   WOM affects purchase intention.

Methodology

The present study has adopted structural equation modeling (SEM) with the help of AMOS software to bring the outcomes of the research because SEM is mostly used for research that is designed to confirm a research study design rather than to explore or explain a phenomenon and SEM has three major advantages over traditional multivariate techniques: (1) explicit assessment of measurement error; (2) estimation of latent (unobserved) variables via observed variables; and (3) model testing where a structure can be imposed and assessed as to fit of the data.

Data Analysis Method and Research Instrument

In the first step, the CFA was estimated. Following the analysis of a structural model, AMOS 18 was used to estimate path coefficients. Several scales from previous retail studies were used to measure all constructs (see Table 3). According to Table 3, the reliability of the six constructs was considered acceptable as all reliability coefficients were above the recommended value of 0.7 (Bagozzi and Yi 1988). First, the validity of each construct was assessed by determining its discriminant validity (see Table 2), ensuring that its square root (AVE) was greater than its correlation with the other constructs (Fornell and Larcker 1981). An empirical validity analysis also analyzes the significance, magnitude, and sign of the factor loadings. The composite reliability index and AVE were calculated to examine the reliability of the indicators. The results showed that each factor loading was highly significant and had the correct sign. The factor loadings for most constructs were above 0.5. All constructs had composite reliability scores above 0.7, while each construct had an AVE of approximately 0.5. The results suggest that these constructs are reliable and unidimensional (Anderson and Gerbing 1988; Bagozzi and Yi 1988).

Data Collection Process

The purpose of this study is to examine consumer attitudes and behaviors toward offline pop-up stores opened by online retailers. Therefore, we selected a pop-up shop for a women's online shoe brand for empirical research. The pop-up shop conducted a three-week exposure campaign in a department store shopping area, where its target customers, as well as potential customers in other age groups, usually appear. Apart from the floral theme style display, this pop-up shop matched the brand's characteristics. However, there was no sales activity in this store. To purchase related products, one had to purchase from the official website or at a designated location. The questionnaire was developed with the help of previous studies where twenty items were used under the six latent variables of the study. To reduce questionnaire bias, this study set up two reverse questions in the questionnaire to confirm that the research samples

could be carefully answered. A total of 520 samples were collected in this study, and after discarding 40 samples because of their vague quality the final usable sample was found 480 with 92.31% response rate. The sample of women in this study accounted for 75.2%, and the 18–35-year-old age group accounted for 78.8%. It was observed in the study that more than half of the customers might be attracted to the wonders of surrounding media in the experience of the pop-up shop.

Table 2: A summary of descriptive statistics, a correlation matrix, and an average variance are provided

	Mean	Standard deviation	SA	S	BE	AA	WOM	PI
Store atmosphere								
Surprise	3.91	0.80	.40*	0.78				
Brand experience	3.93	0.66	.53*	.46*	0.67			
Advertising attitude	4.11	0.73	.54*	.57*	.54*	0.83		
WOM	3.73	0.71	.50*	.43*	.56*	.56*	0.73	
Purchase intention	3.50	0.76	.41*	.38*	.46*	.51*	.72*	0.72

Note: 1. *p<0.01
     2. Diagonals represent the square root of AVE values

Table 3: Measurement items and CFA results

Items	Standard Loading	Average Variance Extracted	Composite Reliability
Store atmosphere (Grewal et al., 2003)			
Shoppers would like to visit the pop-up store.	0.85		
The atmosphere of the pop-up store was pleasant.	0.87	0.66	0.85
The pop-up store was attractive.	0.69		
Surprise (Hutter and Hoffmann, 2014)			
The pop-up store is…			
…not surprising/surprising	0.79	0.61	0.76
…conventional/unconcentional	0.84		
Brand experience (Schmitt et al., 2009)			
X brand instigates feelings and sentiments	0.83		
X is a brand that holds strong emotions for me	0.80	0.45	0.70
The X brand is emotional.	0.50		
Brand attitude (Holbrook and Batra 1987)			
I like/dislike the X brand.	0.86	0.68	0.91

I feel positive/negative toward the X brand.	0.89		
I react favorably/unfavorably to the X brand.	0.92		
The ad is bad/good.	0.91		
I feel the X brand was pleasant/unpleasant.	0.93		
WOM (Hutter and Hoffmann 2014 and Klein et al., 2016)			
X is a brand I would recommend to my friends.	0.80	0.54	0.82
I will probably tell my friends about the X brand.	0.91		
X is a brand that I will recommend to others.	0.88		
I would recommend buying shoes of brand X if my friends were looking for them.	0.69		
Purchase intention (Kuo and Wu, 2012)			
I will buy it at X online brand store.	0.82		
When I look for the shoes next time, I will go to X online brand store.	0.91	0.51	0.76
I am considering purchasing at this X online brand store.	0.82		

Results

The structural model was estimated after validating the scales for each latent factor. Table-4 reports the summary of the model. After running the model, a reasonable fit has shown to be in line with the usual fitting criteria recommended in the literature: $\chi^2(159) = 315.66$, p<0.001, GFI=0.94, AGFI=0.92, CFI=0.98, NFI=0.96, RMSEA=0.045. Generally, the hypotheses turned out to be true, moving in the expected direction. Regarding the antecedents of store atmosphere, the positive and significant effects of surprise (H1a; $\beta=0.69$, $p < 0.01$), brand experience (H1b; $\beta=0.41$, $p < 0.01$) and advertising attitude (H1c; $\beta=0.37$, $p < 0.01$) were demonstrated. Surprise also showed a significant effect on brand experience and advertising attitude ($\beta=0.20$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta=0.43$, $p < 0.01$), H2a, H2b supported. And brand experience has a positive effect on advertising attitude (H3a, $\beta=0.42$, $p < 0.01$), WOM ($\beta=0.78$, $p < 0.01$) H3a, H3b were supported but not on purchase intention, ($\beta=0.04$, $p > 0.01$) H3c were not supported. In addition, advertising attitude also demonstrated a positive effect on WOM and purchase intention ($\beta=0.24$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta=0.13$, $p < 0.01$); thus H4a and H4b are supported. Finally, the equation model supported the hypothesis that WOM led to purchase intention (H5; $\beta=0.69$, $p < 0.01$), H5 was supported. Overall, the results were acceptable as evidenced by the goodness of fit numbers.

Table 4: Structural model estimates

Path	Coefficient (β)	p-values	Results
H1a: store atmosphere -> surprise	0.69	0.000*	Supported

H1b: store atmosphere -> brand experience	0.41	0.000*	Supported
H1c: store atmosphere -> brand attitude	0.37	0.000*	Supported
H2a: Surprise -> brand experience	0.2	0.000*	Supported
H2b: Surprise ->brand attitude	0.43	0.000*	Supported
H3a: brand experience -> attitudes toward the brand	0.42	0.000*	Supported
H3b: brand experience ->WOM	0.78	0.000*	Supported
H3c: brand experience -> purchase intention	0.04	0.689	Not supported
H4a: brand attitude -> WOM	0.24	0.000*	Supported
H4b: brand attitude -> purchase intention	0.13	0.004*	Supported
H5: WOM -> purchase intention	0.69	0.000*	Supported

Note – "*" denotes the p values i.e. equivalent to ($p < 0.01$)

Figure 2: The structural model with a beta coefficient
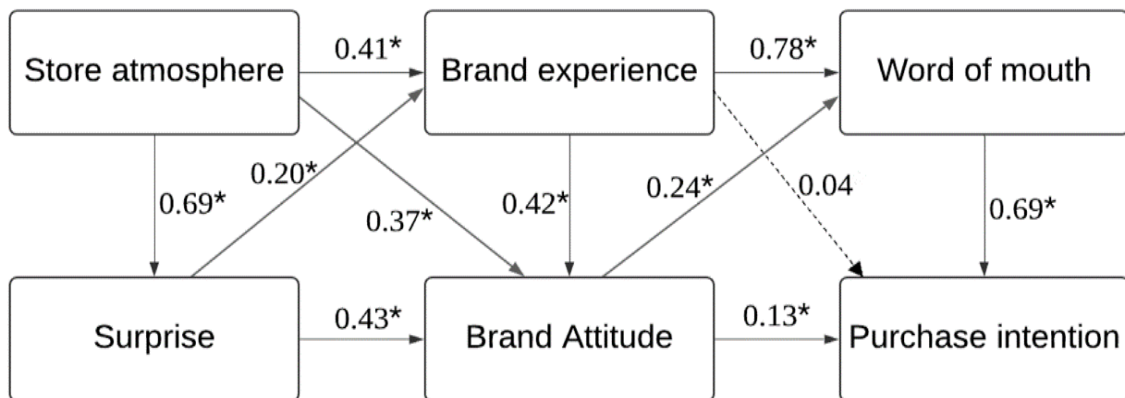
Discussion

While past research has discussed the benefits of pop-up stores, the impact on brand management has received scant attention (Boustani 2021). There is a lack of studies showing whether the operation of pop-up stores brings about different consumption experiences, positive attitudes, and behaviors toward brands (Childs et al., 2020). The studies have highlighted much about surprise factors concerning product and services, pop-up stores with advertisements, and pop-up store atmosphere with satisfaction. Past studies have discussed promotion using ambient media advertising in public spaces, the layout of goods on streets, etc., but very few have discussed advertising retail stores' brand information through pop-up stores (Esch et al., 2021). The studies also lack that establish an appropriate relationship of pop-up store atmosphere with customer brand behavior, surprise factors, and purchase intention (Huter and Hoffman 2014; Henkel

and Toporowski 2021). Thus, the present study explores the impact of consumer sentiment generated by pop-up stores on consumers' attitudes and behaviors toward the brand, which will also give the industry a reference for setting up pop-up stores and fill the research gap that is currently absent. So far, there has been no research on the attitudes and behaviors of consumers affected by online-to-offline pop-up stores.

This study's findings contribute to both theory and industry. First, pop-up stores have two main characteristics: focusing on shaping the customer experience, and non-permanent and short-term exposure. Hence, under these two premises, a pop-up store's atmosphere not only conveys the brand's core message but also creates a sense of surprise, shock, and attraction that customers have never felt before. Customers will then engage in consumption and experiences to establish a positive attitude toward the brand. Pop-up stores are usually small in scale; thus, retailers need to control the establishment of surprise, ensuring the development of a positive brand attitude. Then, the extended benefits will follow, such as word-of-mouth advertisement or purchase willingness.

The study also discovered that surprise factors can create a more powerful word-of-mouth effect. The standardized total effect from surprise to word-of-mouth was 0.47, while that of store atmosphere to word-of-mouth was 0.34. The values were 0.41 from surprise to behavioral intention and 0.28 from store atmosphere to behavioral intention. Therefore, a surprise is necessary to ensure brand awareness retention in consumer memory and influence factors that alter consumer behavior in a world of confusing advertising. This echoes past research from Hutter and Hoffmann (Hutter and Hoffmann 2014). Specifically, business owners should set up pop-up stores that provide customers with unique experiences that are in line with the core spirit of the brand.

In this study, the hypothesis on brand experience and purchase intention (H3c) was not supported. In other words, experiences cannot affect actual customer shopping tendencies. Customers must have a positive pre-established brand attitude before their customer behaviors can be influenced. This is because pop-up stores mainly shape shopping experiences, but the experience needs to deepen the consumer's appreciation and recognition of the brand before they engage in the next phase of their shopping behavior. This result serves to remind the industry that when a pop-up store is planned, the brand value conveyed in the store needs to be examined. A customer's subsequent shopping behavior will be affected by whether a brand leaves a good impression on them.

In the research sample, around half of the sample customers had never heard of the brand but were left with a deep impression and memorable experiences after being attracted to the pop-up store. The store thus helped the brand expand into a new consumer group. Therefore, this study provides some suggestions for retailers that want to transform into a full-channel operation. These brands can test consumer responses and experiences through short-term pop-up store exposure as a reference for adopting the full-channel strategy. Alternatively, these businesses can encourage customers to return to online shopping platforms for consumption, completing the consumer's full-channel experience.

The present study has some limitations that can be addressed in future studies. The first limitation is related to the specific context of an online shoe brand. Despite using the

online shoe brand, we chose; we cannot guarantee that the study will have external validity as it compares online to offline through pop-up stores. Future studies, therefore, can explore different product categories and brands to enhance the generalizability of the findings. This study also showed that surprise is a significant factor in the perception and attitude toward a brand. The direct relationships proposed in the conceptual model are rarely examined in a previous study in an online brand to offline through a pop-up way. The moderating effect of some variables, such as relationship duration, is not tested in this research. Thus, future research could examine this area, as such issues could deepen the understanding of brand behavior via pop-up stores.

Practical Implications for Asian Business

The present study examined customers' discernment and belief towards offline pop-up stores opened by online retailers. It also examines the impact of pop-up stores on customers' perceptions of brands through the main question in the title, namely the presence or absence of pop-up stores. The results were mixed, but the majority of respondents expressed positive views. The majority of the hypotheses have been confirmed and are moving in the intended direction. As summarized in Table IV, ten hypotheses were supported and, only one was not supported.

In these hypotheses, the store atmosphere has a positive effect on surprise, brand experience, and attitude. As per the previous researches, it is stated that customers are stimulated by surprise (Hutter and Hoffmann, 2014) when they receive unexpected messages (Karmarkar and Tormala 2010). Along with manipulating new topics and implementing new technological interactions, pop-up stores also integrate brand intentions into the spaces' atmosphere to create a sentimental effect in customers with a focus on customer enjoyment (Kim and Mattila 2013). The use of pop-up stores and actual face-to-face interaction, allows customers to understand the story behind the brand and build a deeper connection while satisfying the convenience of e-commerce. Therefore, if the customer is positively surprised, it leads to a good consumer brand experience. Great store experiences and positive attitudes toward the brand are results of a positive pop-up store experience (Dolbec and Chebat 2013).

In Asian countries, the land is narrow and densely populated, and the business districts are also densely populated. When hundreds of brands are competing, pop-up stores have become a particularly effective marketing method to promote the brand. The pop-up store is a way to attract customers' attention and interest to ambient media (Taube and Warnaby, 2017). As a marketing tool, ambient media marketing can also be used to promote products or services using unusual locations or items. Besides promoting the uniqueness of the brand and bringing a sense of surprise, flash mobs can stimulate product demand and highlight the brand's uniqueness. A consumer's engagement with ambient media is unlike any other media because they do not expect to see it. Studies have revealed that ambient media can stimulate customers' attention and prolong their memory of brands (Hutter and Hoffmann 2014). Klein et al. (2016), state that "pop-up brand stores are becoming a popular experiential marketing tool in luxury retailing, aiming to create brand experiences while increasing WOM among existing and new audiences." This study's findings can benefit locations and stores as well. Having people check-in at a location generates free WOM advertising. The best way to advertise at a specific location is to find out what motivates people to check-in. The frequency of check-ins would make WOM more effective, and ultimately, this would

boost revenue.

In the post-epidemic era, consumption habits have changed, and e-commerce consumption models have become more popular. In addition to the rapid development of Asian e-commerce brands under this trend, online brands are setting up pop-up stores to expand their channels online. Transforming from an online to an offline platform is a trend in the current retail industry. The business owners are adopting an Omni channel business model to increase market share, elevate brand value, and expand customer bases. This study takes an online women's shoe brand that ran a pop-up store as the research target. This study examined how in-store atmosphere and surprise factors influence brand experience and consumer attitude towards the brand, leading to increased recommendations and purchase intentions. Most of the assumptions proposed in the above theoretical framework are confirmed in this study. Therefore, this study also confirms that the strategy of taking the brand from online to offline through pop-up stores has achieved remarkable results.

For small and medium-sized enterprises in Taiwan, due to limited funds and resources, overseas expansion has a relative disadvantage. If creative curation is used in the form of pop-up stores, and products of small and medium-sized enterprises in Taiwan are repackaged, through pop-up stores, consumers can easily exert brand association effects, enrich the product experience, and increase brand visibility. Therefore, recommendations for the future include reviewing different product categories and product attributes to generalize the results of the present study. Additionally, to check the effectiveness of pop-up stores on actual consumer behavior, retailers are advised to issue discount codes at pop-up stores for customers to use in online stores while monitoring the performance of the pop-up stores. In addition, research related to the existing pop-up stores for luxury brands should be enriched by exploring other formats or other product categories.

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