ESCAPE THROUGH CONSUMPTION

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ABSTRACT:
Purpose: This study delves into human behaviour as to why people seek escape and what do they seek escape from. It further investigates whether consumption and shopping experience can provide them an escape.
Design/Methodology/Approach: Established theories and constructs are studied to understand the basis of escape. This study is based on existing literature related to consumer behaviour and human psychology.
Research papers and books are retrieved from databases including Proquest, Ebsco, Elsevier, Emerald, Science Direct, Google Scholar and Research Gate.
Findings: Psychological needs of consumers should be looked after by marketers besides functional needs. Experiences created at shopping centres, retail stores, product choice & display and ambiance can provide sensory stimulation and distraction to consumers. It may provide them distractions from their painful emotions, negative self awareness and guilt. These distractions can be a source of much needed relief even though they may be temporary in nature.
Research Limitations: This research is purely based on study of earlier researches. The findings should be corroborated by conducting empirical research.
Practical Implications: Marketers should understand consumers' need for escape and should design experiences to provide sensory distractions to consumers. The insight can also add more meaning to jobs of marketers. They may not merely sell products or increase footfalls, rather they may change consumer lives
Originality/ Value: The study establishes a strong linkage between need to escape, experiential marketing and consumption

Keywords: Escapism, Consumer Emotions, Consumption, Experience Design

INTRODUCTION

People experience discomfort as incompatible belief about themselves makes them emotionally vulnerable and can result in depression and anxiety (Higgins, 1987). To remove this discomfort they may opt for disengaged coping strategies including problem avoidance, wishful thinking, self criticism and social withdrawal, all of these are positively correlated with escapism (Bowditch, Chapman, & Naweed, 2018). One way to reduce these emotional problems is to modify behaviour or environment and lessen exposure to situations/ interactions which are related to a problem (Higgins, 1987).All these factors may not be controllable and manageable and therefore, one looks for escape elsewhere.

Human beings are not born with an ability to accept reality as it is, like any other animal. They have an ability to 'see' what is not there (Tuan, 2000) and an inherent tendency to explore, go beyond limitations, try out novel things and to learn but they don't wish to lose autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Another challenge is that our self view keep changing and is prone not only to serious threats but also to minor ones leading to continuous changes in self (Gao & Wheeler, 2009).

Earlier ethical systems promised paradise but only if one controls selfish interests and practices compassion , tolerance, overcome anger and cravings ,all these conditions are not easy to practice (Harari, 2011). Activities which are of intrinsic interest and include challenge, aesthetic value motivate people (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Consumption can be one such activity as it is a pillar of modern identity (Nesse, 1999) and hedonic shopping experiences can provide enjoyment, excitement and escape (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994; Chebat & Michon, 2003).

Retail can exert a therapeutic effect by compensating for psychosocial deficiencies (compensatory consumption) and by repairing and reducing negative emotions (Kang & Johnson, 2011).It can trigger excitement which is marked by curiosity and fascination (Izard C. E., 1991) and can propel one to look forward to future outcomes (Lawler & Yoon, 1996) generating further positive emotions like hope.A short term intervention like shopping trip, entertainment can provide immediate relief/distraction giving customer some time to strengthen his emotions and look for long term solution (Baumeister, 1990).

Shopping and higher consumption reduces sadness, loss and helplessness (Garg & Lerner, 2013) by giving people a sense of more personal control as it

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always involves choices (Rick, Pereira, & Burson, 2014). People may consume hedonic produce to regulate negative emotions like fear/anxiety or sadness and people with positive emotions like amusement and contentment may engage in consumption to maintain this emotional balance (Kemp & Kopp, 2011).

Interestingly consumerism has become the first religion in history whose followers actually do whatever they are asked to do as various promotions make you believe that you will get paradise in return (Harari, 2011).

Moreover situational influences can create emotions through events created by other people or oneself and also impersonally created events (Roseman, 1984). Perception of mall environment including scents and odours can provoke and induce shoppers' arousal (Chebat & Michon, 2003).

This study delves into consumer emotions, what makes them seek escape and exploring potential of consumption as an escape from boredom, emotional pain. The paper is divided into three main parts – first one talks about research methodology, second one looks into consumer emotions, need to escape, consumption as an escape route, third one involves managerial implications, fourth one talks about conclusion and research limitations.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
This study investigates the following issues:

i. To study factors which propel people to seek escape
ii. To study impact of consumption on consumer escapism

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
This research is based on review of existing literature including books , full text, peer reviewed research papers and newspaper articles.

First keywords were shortlisted and these were evaluated by two academic professionals and two industry experts. Shortlisted keywords were Escape, Escapism, Escapist, Fantasy, Distraction, Dreaming, Daydreaming, Imagination, Illusion and Consumption.

Using these keywords, research papers were extracted from Proquest, Ebsco, Google Scholar, Science Direct, Researchgate, Emerald, Elsevier.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Consumer Emotions
Emotions begin with a biological response in body called affect, when we become aware about it, then it becomes feeling and when we remember same type of earlier feelings, it becomes an emotion (Tomkins, 1962). According to Differential Emotions theory each emotion is a distinct system acting as a primary motivation system within the personality (Izard, Ackerman, Schoff, & Fine).These emotions and cognitions interact and help in building personality and creating affective-cognitive structures (Izard, Ackerman, Schoff, & Fine).

There are five constituents of an emotion – Phenomenological like thoughts, images and subjective , physiological comprising of bodily responses, gestural including facial expressions, voice, postures etc. and behavioural including actions associated with particular emotion (Roseman, 1984).Emotivational are goals created by emotions such as avoiding some people or situation etc (Roseman, 1984).

Discrete emotions are classified into basic emotions and emotion schema or emotions in everyday life after infancy, which may involve simple appraisal process or complex processes including concepts, thoughts, memories (Izard, Woodburn, Finlon, Krauthmer-Ewing, Grossman, & Seidenfeld, 2011).These emotions can be differentiated based

on the type of motives that are at stake, consistency of an event with these motives and features of situation that may determine or predict the relative effectiveness of alternative emotional responses (Roseman, 1984). Basic emotions don't have marked boundaries, they overlap to adapt according to the challenges in a given situation.

During person environment interaction, emotion feeling becomes a motivational state creating an interconnected web of images, appraisals, thoughts, feelings and goals (Izard C. E., Human Emotions, 1977). An interpretation of events rather than event itself decides which emotion will be felt (Roseman, 1984).Feelings like excitement can vary depending on affect intensity and it can propel to seek novel experience or exploration (Tomkins, 1962).

Consumption emotions are a result of cognitive evaluation of goal relevance, goal compatibility and coping potential (Nyer, 1997).Attempts to regulate emotions impact consumption behaviour. A term coined for the same is ERC (Emotion Regulation Consumption) which denotes purchase and consumption of a good or service for improving, repairing or managing an emotion in short term (Kemp & Kopp, 2011).

ERC may depend on a person's innate ability to manage various emotions (Kemp & Kopp, 2011).People having less control over their emotions are more likely to indulge in hedonic consumption to manage their emotions (Kemp & Kopp, 2011). A hyperactive social media and averse comments can also shake self view pushing young people to restore their identity by buying symbolic products which bestow status (Gao & Wheeler, 2009).

Consumer can experience both positive and negative emotions depending upon the type of merchandise and buying

experience. Consumption Emotion set (CES) include anger, discontent, worry, sadness, fear, shame, envy, loneliness, romantic love, love, peacefulness, contentment and optimism (Richins, 1997).

Antecedents of Escapism

Escapism is defined as habitual diversion of the mind to purely imaginative activity or entertainment as an escape from reality or routine according to Merriam Webster Dictionary (Merriam Webster).It is something that helps you to forget about your normal life and think of more pleasant things (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2000).

Escapism may be of two types – 1) escapism from boredom due to lack of stimulating activity and 2) escaping from negative emotional situations or avoidance coping (Panova & Lleras, 2016). It includes a range of motivations which include managing unpleasant moods, unwanted impulses and also a mechanism to overcome stress, aggression and anxiety (Bowditch, Chapman, & Naweed, 2018).

Need to escape can become strong if one experiences self discrepancy. Self discrepancy is the gap between how one currently perceives himself(current perception) and how one would desire to view oneself(Ideal or aspired perception of self) (Mendel, Rucker, Levav, & Galinsky, 2017)According to Self Discrepancy theory we wish to reach a state where our self concept matches our relevant self guide (Higgins, 1987). People may experience self discrepancy which triggers coping strategies and this in turn impact consumption (Mendel, Rucker, Levav, & Galinsky, 2017). There may not be a fundamental difference between coping and other motivated action. Only difference seems to be that coping reflects greater urgency.

Another strategy to reduce these negative emotions is to avoid thinking about self discrepancy or distract oneself by turning attention elsewhere (Mendel, Rucker, Levav, & Galinsky, 2017). However, if a person lack resources to face routine psychosocial problems then there is a higher risk of negative outcomes of escapism (Bowditch, Chapman, & Naweed, 2018).

Another situation where one seeks escape is when self view is at stake.A threat to self view can result in a) losing confidence in self view for the moment and b) triggering behaviours to regain this confidence (Gao & Wheeler, 2009).These threats can be as subtle as doing any work in an unfamiliar way or as serious as recalling immoral behaviour etc (Gao & Wheeler, 2009). A focus on self rather than goals may generate negativity and this can be diverting attention on a need which will require a goal (Csikszentmihaly, 2000). Shopping is one such goal directed activity, irrespective of what the person shopping for, the aim is to shop for anything to fill this experiential vacuum (Csikszentmihaly, 2000)

People may seek escape from pain when they face unexpected and unfavourable situations and attribute reason of failure to themselves (Baumeister, 1990). One way to escape this pain is to take attention away from self awareness through cognitive deconstruction (Baumeister, 1990). This deconstruction can take a serious turn when people start considering suicides as an escape from self.

Escape theory postulates six steps which may lead to Suicide-a) Events/ experiences falling far below expectations b) self blame or internal attribution c) negative self awareness making one feel inadequate/guilty d) unfavorable comparison with established standards leading to further negative thoughts e) Efforts to escape from painful thoughts through

cognitive destruction f) Increased willingness to commit suicide if these efforts are unsuccessful (Baechler, 1980).

These steps are linear and intervention at any of the steps will block progression to further steps. These steps can be considered as choice points where final step can be prevented by stopping any of the earlier steps (Baumeister, 1990). A short term intervention can make a difference in this state as many suicides resemble a form of escape.

Escapism can also be sought for reducing pain caused by self awareness of problem. According to escape theory (Heatherton & Baumeister, 1991) self awareness of a problem can cause so much pain that consumers may indulge in self destructive, specific and immediate activity like binge eating or compulsive buying as an escape. Consumer focus his attention purely on buying task employing cognitive narrowing and temporarily not thinking about anxieties (Heatherton & Baumeister, 1991).

Recent and serious disappointments are more harmful as time helps in coping with old emotional crisis (Baumeister, 1990).Pleasant shopping experiences and consumption can support efforts to escape from painful thoughts or it may at least reduce the intensity of negative emotions If setbacks can be handled with external intervention like consumption of products/services, which enhance self esteem, then the process towards suicide can be interrupted.

For coping up with stress people use following strategies: problem focused coping, emotion focused coping, focus on and venting of emotions, behavioural disengagement and mental disengagement (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989).A specific kind of problem focused coping is suppression of competing activities which means

putting aside other projects, seeking to avoid or escape by becoming distracted by other events or even letting other things slide to face the stressor (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989).

Coping requires urgent action and If situations are controllable, active coping strategies prevail but if people cant do anything about a situation, they tend to cope up with strategies like denial and disengagement (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). Consumers can also block these negative emotions by imagining alternative outcomes and 'escaping' stress, losing touch with reality for the time being which may lead to compulsive buying (Heatherton & Baumeister, 1991).

In response to mortality resilience (awareness about inevitability of death) low self esteem consumers tend to consume more to escape self awareness (Mandel, 2008). If people feel that they can not meet ideal standards they try to turn attention away from themselves (Mandel, 2008).

Consumer can be both emotional as well as intellectual (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994). Even when there is a temporary threat to a confident self view people tend to choose products to support their self view (Gao & Wheeler, 2009). Buying may appear as a chance to change circumstances by acquiring new goods (Han, Lerner, & Keltner, 2007). Consumer may experience pure enjoyment, excitement, escapism, captivation and spontaneity through hedonic shopping values (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994). Specific emotions may influence evaluation of monetary value associated with consumption as per Appraisal Tendency Framework (Han, Lerner, & Keltner, 2007).

Shopping choices increase feelings of personal control over one's environment and choosing is more helpful than browsing in reducing

sadness and the underlying reason is restoration of personal control (Rick, Pereira, & Burson, 2014).

To restore belief in self view individuals tend to collect objective information to restore their confidence (Gao & Wheeler, 2009). As its difficult to collect such objective information, people tend to consume symbolic products which can restore confidence in one's self view and also signal to others 'Who one is' (Gao & Wheeler, 2009). An indirect way to regain self view is to affirm strength in an unrelated self value (Gao & Wheeler, 2009). An important point to note here is that self view is fragile and can be shaken by seemingly minor events. And this view can also be restored by inconsequential actions like reflecting on another self value (Gao & Wheeler, 2009).

Escape through consumption
Consumption can be considered a regular flow of fantasies, feeling and fun manifesting in experiential view (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). This view is in contrast to information processing models which stipulates consumer as a logical thinker who makes purchase decisions to solve his problems (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Addictive consumption can also help people overcome suicidal tendencies (Elliott, 1994). For women shopping is a socially approved tool for mood repair (Elliott, 1994).

Consumer choices are a function different consumption values- functional, conditional, emotional, epistemic, social values (Sheth, Newmann, & Gross, 1991), aesthetics, escape, flow, exploration, role enactment, social & convenience (Ahmed, Ghingold, & Dahari, 2007). Each of these values contribute different proportion in different choice situations and these values are independent of each other (Sheth, Newmann, & Gross, 1991).

Emotional value depends on the kind of emotions or affective state that a product can trigger and epistemic value is rooted in a product's capacity to generate curiosity, novelty and by providing knowledge (Sheth, Newmann, & Gross, 1991).

According to Compensatory Consumer Behaviour Model (Mendel, Rucker, Levav, & Galinsky, 2017), any use, purchase or consumption of products or services triggered by a desire to ameliorate self discrepancy is termed as compensatory consumer behaviour. There are five strategies that a consumer can use to cope up with self discrepancies :1)Direct Resolution- When people purchase products / services that directly resolve their shortcomings. Buying gym membership or going through plastic surgery are examples of this coping strategy.2) Symbolic Self Completion-Consumers buy products that show their value to others. Purchase of goods to highlight status like cars, handbags, premium clothes etc are examples of this coping strategy.3)Dissociation-Under this strategy consumers avoid buying or consuming products which are related to their undesired identities.4) Escapism-Another strategy to reduce these negative emotions is to avoid thinking about self discrepancy or distract oneself. This requires turning attention away from self discrepancy to elsewhere. This can result in consumers giving more attention to eating or shopping.5)Fluid Compensation -this strategy is based on self affirmation theory which suggests that reinforcing positive aspects of self can reduce the significance of any activated negative emotion. This strategy is also supported by MMM(meaning Maintenance Model) which posits that a discrepancy of one aspect of self can be reduced by finding meaning in another dimension of self. This strategy is distinct from escapism as the individual tends to find meaning in another dimension related to self whereas individual shifts

attention elsewhere which is not related to self in case of escapism.

Compensatory consumption signifies consumption provoked by self threats and people may try to restore their self-worth through consumption (Mendel, Rucker, Levav, & Galinsky, 2017). Retail therapy can help shoppers opt for compensatory consumption to overcome psychosocial deficiencies and also to repair and alleviate negative emotions (Kang & Johnson, 2011).

Consumption environment

Behavioural approaches tend to find linkages between emotional responses and external environmental stimuli (Roseman, 1984). Whenever it is possible to change the environment which is compliant with one's motive, emotional response syndromes are generated to increase the probability that required action will be taken (Roseman, 1984).

Individuals can alleviate pain if they a) stop feeling emotions b) stop blaming themselves c) overcome self awareness (Baumeister, 1990). Body sensations and movements can take away attention from meaningful awareness (Baumeister, 1990).Ambience in shopping centres, touch and feel of merchandise, product trials, attractive displays can provide such sensory pleasure.Scents/ Odors in shopping environment can induce arousal (Chebat & Michon, 2003) which may lead to unplanned shopping (Nesco & Warnaby, 2014). There are shoppers who simply enjoy exploring the retail space i.e., movement, sensation and browsing experience and they are known as explorers (Cox, Cox, & Anderson, 2005).

Besides shopping people may visit malls for relaxing (Rajagopal, 2009) , browsing (Blotch, Ridgway, & Nelson, 1991), catching up with friends (Underhill, 2010), seeking escape and

retail therapy to repair their bad moods (Atalay & Meloy, 2011).

Avoiding negative feelings like regret appears to be a more significant antecedent of airport shopping behaviour compared to pursuing positive feelings (Chung, 2015). People may browse merchandise just for information and entertainment purpose without any intent to buy (Bloch & Richins, 1983).

Servicescape or a physical setting in which a marketplace exchange is performed, delivered and consumed within a service organisation (Bitner, 1992)exerts a strong influence on customer satisfaction and repatronage especially in case of leisure services (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). Servicescapes include: ambient Conditions including temperature, air quality, noise, music etc., spatial layout & functionality including layout, equipments , furnishings etc. (Reimers & Clulow, 2010)& elements related to aesthetic appeal including signage ,symbols and artifacts, style of décor etc (Bitner, 1992; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994).The impact can be cognitive, emotional and physiological resulting in either approach behaviour or avoidance behaviour.

Layout and familiarity have an impact on comfort which in turn impacts utilitarian and hedonic values. (Foster & Ainsworth, 2016).Besides clear directions and simple layout speed up completion of transaction for customers. (Bitner, 1992).Restorative potential of a place can drive consumption. A bad layout will make shoppers walk more resulting in tiredness and diminished desire to stay at shopping centre (Reimers & Clulow, 2010).

Customers who are on the lookout for a psychological escape from their everyday lives can be influenced by natural dimensions of servicescapes.

(Rosenbaum & Massiah, An expanded Servicescape Perspective, 2011) High level of stress is related to lower preference for built environments and higher preference for natural environments. (Van Den Berg, Koole, & Wulp, 2003) Design elements can enhance mental restoration by promoting feelings of escapism, fascination and compatibility. (Rosenbaum & Wong, 2015)

Malls can help people escape from negative aspects of city life including weather, traffic and poor people (Blotch, Ridgway, & Nelson, 1991). Malls offer a way to escape boredom by providing entertainment. (NG, 2003) Adolescents face boredom not because of non availability of options but due to their participation in adult structured activities. (Shaw, Caldwell, & Kleiber, 1996).Individuals who are less capable of controlling their negative emotions are most likely to indulge in "Emotion regulation Consumption(ERC) "to manage their emotions. (Kemp & Kopp, 2011)

Improved Social Relationships

Desire to escape may be fueled by disruption in family life and relationships (Baumeister, 1990). Moreover people seek out relationships that can alleviate the magnitude or accessibility of their self discrepancies (Higgins, 1987).

Translated in consumption scenario, a customer may keep coming back if transaction/ exchange evoke positive emotions in him. As per theory of relational cohesion people want to replicate the positive feeling arising out of an exchange and therefore, this relation itself becomes a force to influence future commitments (Lawler & Yoon, 1996).This commitment can make people part with gifts, stay in a relationship or contribute to a joint cause (Lawler & Yoon, 1996).

Shopping has socially symbolic and

restorative dimensions which can be subjective, immeasurable and managerially controllable (Rosenbaum & Massiah, An expanded Servicescape Perspective, 2011). Shopping experience in a mall provides such opportunity as customers can socialize with retail personnel, other shoppers, entertainment besides purchasing goods and services (Hedhli, Chebat, & Sirgy, 2011). People also seek out relationships that can alleviate the magnitude or accessibility of their self discrepancies (Higgins, 1987).

Social Influence situations in consumption also include non interactive situations besides interactive situations (Argo, Dahl, & Manchanda). According to Social Impact Theory (Latane, 1981) – people are influenced by real, implied or imagined presence or action of a social presence based on three social forces: a)Social Size- Number of people b.Immediacy – proximity of people c. Social Source Strength – importance of these people . Social Influence in the retail context was studied using two field experiments in North America (Argo, Dahl, & Manchanda). From no social presence to one person negative emotions decreased and positive emotions increased but they inverted when social presence increased from one to three (Argo, Dahl, & Manchanda).

High density of customers may induce positive response in some situations and in many others the same may be considered as crowding and can negatively affect customers (Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011). Displayed emotions of others can also influence the customer experience especially for consumers engaged in group consumption (Rosenbaum & Massiah, An expanded Servicescape Perspective, 2011).

Humans have inherent tendency to explore, go beyond limitations, try out novel things and to learn (Ryan

& Deci, 2000) but they don't wish to compromise on their autonomy to gain competence or to relate to others according to CET(Cognitive Evolution Theory) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Accessibility to negative thoughts is reduced during 'Flow' experience as self consciousness disappears and an intense concentration ensure that you are so absorbed in the activity that you can not worry about your problems or pay any attention to irrelevant things (Csikzentmihalyi, 2002). A person capable of finding flow can enjoy even despairing situations (Csikzentmihalyi, 2002).

When consumers gain information through browsing, it adds to his shopping pleasure (Bloch & Richins, 1983). Activities which are of intrinsic interest and include challenge, aesthetic value will motivate people (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Some brands and experiences score high on utilitarian or functional aspect and some may score high on hedonic or sensory component (Voss, Spangenberg, & Grohmann, 2003). A pleasant shopping experience is connected to overall contentment of consumer (Wagner, 2007) and can induce "Flow". Theme park activities are now available in shopping malls and theme parks are also becoming places to shop (Crawford, 2004).

Managerial Implications
The study can be used by retailers, Mall Managers and marketers to design store experiences and to craft suitable shopping environment to help customers escape their negative emotions.

Following actions are suggested:
Fill experiential vacuum: Make it easy for customers to access malls/ markets so that he can exercise his option to shop. Creating a "path of least resistance" will make customers consider shopping as their first option

to distract themselves. E-commerce scores over offline retail in this aspect as the customer can simply pick mobile and start browsing to shop.

CTC Mall offered customers free pick up and drop facility for promoting their bridal wear collection. Mall of India provides shuttle services to shoppers coming through metro.

Sensory Experiential Design: Focus on body sensations can make distract people from pain. Entire shopping experience should be multi sensory and designed such that it engages more and more senses of consumers. In Bologna, Italy a café is stocking wool and offer customers an opportunity to knit to wind down from a stressful day.

Global audio branding company , Muzak, provide branded tunes everyday on elevators, malls and stores. Victoria's Secret plays classical music in their store creating a pleasant atmosphere and making its merchandise more prestigious.

Many supermarkets in India offer rice and pulses in big, open packs allowing customer to touch, feel and smell.

Create "Positive" Virtual reality: Retailers can use AI (Artificial Intelligence) and VR(Virtual Reality) to provide engaging experiences. "Rent it Bae" installed smart screens inside their store where customers can place merchandise in front of screen and get all necessary details about product's price, fabrics, rent charges, sizes, availability etcThey can also try different attires and get their 360 degree video recorded.

Provide symbolic products to enhance self esteem:Luxury retailers can market sense of pride and recognition that a customer will feel after buying their merchandise. Tanishq installed VR enabled kiosks,"MirrAR" at selected airports in India where customers

can try out jeweller as many times as they wish to. With its subtle marketing campaigns, Apple provides a sense of achievement to its buyers boosting their self esteem.

Help Customers find meaning in their lives: Promotional campaigns can highlight how consumption adds meaning to the society so that shoppers feel that they are helping other when they consume. When customers patronise or shops products crafted by rural artisans, they feel that they are doing an act of kindness. Buying organic products or opting for eco tourism gives customers a feeling of satisfaction as they feel that their action is helping environment. Emotions of kindness or charity contributes to sense of well being.

Behavioural Training to Staff: Staff should be made aware about emotional needs of the customer. Making eye contact, greeting, conversing, consulting, listening should be a part of regular staff training so that staff makes the customer feel valued and respected.

Many retail outlets/ mall managements train their security staff to greet customers at entry/exit points but they must focus on genuine smiles and warm greeting rather than a forced routine.

Personalized Branding: Marketers can use data and technology to create personalised brands for customer which can give a boost to their self esteem. Toblerone has introduced machines which can add name, picture and personal messages on package.

Experiences can be personalized by recalling customer names and preferences using earlier data.

Provide Human Interaction: Design customer experience in a manner that encourages positive human interaction.

Starbucks regularly carry out coffee conversations with the customer wherein an employee brings different type of coffee in a beautifully arranged tray, makes customers sample them and get their feedback. This turns out to be an informative, engaging and sensual experience for the customer.

Reduce Pain Points: When people come to seek escape from boredom, pain, stress and negative emotions, entire shopping experience including accessibility, parking, layout, merchandise placement should be targeted towards providing them a positive experience.

Any hassle in finding a parking spot, locating a particular retail store, finding out a product on shelf, non responsive staff can add to their negative emotions. Marketeres should ensure a seamless, smooth and pleasant customer experience.

Staff Training: Sales people are crucial element in entire consumption experience. They can provide much needed boost to customers' self esteem by giving them attention, appreciating their product choices and ensuring smooth check outs.

Salesforce should be given behavioural training in empathy, self control and handling customer emotions.

CONCLUSION

As it is inherent in human nature to seek change and novel experiences, they regularly look for escape from routine. Factors like low self esteem, self discrepancy, stress, high self awareness and boredom can propel people to seek distraction.

Consumption can provide an accessible escape route to overcome negative emotions. It can provide temporary relief and time to look for solution to problems or situations.

LIMITATIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study is based on review of existing literature. Current data can be collected to verify existing theories and concepts. Impact of age, gender and income on consumer emotions and tendency to escape can be explored

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