

The influence of window displays on patronage intentions: The case of French tourist bureaux.

Abstract

Objective: Tourist bureaux in France are evolving from their conventional role of solely providing information toward a newer commercial role of selling goods and services to tourists. Window displays are an important marketing tool for attracting tourists, and traditionally attract attention and incite individuals into the point-of-sale. The goal of this study is to apply Construal Level Theory to tourist bureau window display content and to examine its influence on patronage intentions.

Design/methodology/approach: The study applies the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) paradigm to examine the influence of window display construal level on patronage intentions. One hundred and forty-four (144) volunteers participated in a laboratory experiment applying abstract (1) and concrete (2) window display images in a quasi-experimental design over a four-week period in November-December 2017.

Results: The results show that window display construal level has a direct positive significant influence on patronage intention. The findings support those of previous studies and extend current research on window displays and exterior atmospherics in the tourism sector.

Originality: This study is the first to explore the influence of window display construal level on patronage intentions in a retail-oriented context of tourist bureaux and contributes to the scant literature on exterior atmospherics.

Key words: window display; tourist bureau; Construal Level Theory

> Danielle Lecointre-Erickson

Assistant Professor
Univ Angers, GRANEM, SFR CONFLUENCES, F-49000 Angers, France
13 allée François Mitterrand
49000 Angers, France
Phone: 02 41 81 67 66
E-mail: danielle.lecointre@univ-angers.fr

> Patrick Legohérel

Associate Professor
Univ Angers, GRANEM, SFR CONFLUENCES, F-49000 Angers, France
13 allée François Mitterrand
49000 Angers, France
Phone: 02 44 68 81 29
E-mail: patrick.legoherel@univ-angers.fr

> Bruno Daucé

Associate Professor
Univ Angers, GRANEM, SFR CONFLUENCES, F-49000 Angers, France
13 allée François Mitterrand
49000 Angers, France
Phone: 02 41 22 65 70
E-mail: bruno.dauce@univ-angers.fr

Introduction

Tourist bureaux worldwide are commonly known for welcoming and informing visitors. The role of these tourist bureaux can vary from country to country, diversifying from their initially informative role to activities that are more oriented toward economic and commercial value creation. Tourist bureaux in France are traditionally perceived by the population as venues that simply distribute information when requested, for instance. However, they are slowly becoming event organizers and resellers of goods and services (MONA 2017). This recent evolution is due to the 2009 French Economic Modernization Act enabling tourist bureaux to legally sell goods and services. Consequently, this evolution means that these venues need to change their view of their role in the local economy. Individuals entering tourist bureaux should no longer be seen as travelers who obtain their desired information and then leave. They are consumers, and some tourist bureaux have taken note. The tourist bureau of Angers in Western France is a case in point, clearly adopting a commercial outlook by welcoming individuals with personalized service and a point-of-sale with a reservation platform and a variety of gift products.

Various strategies enable managers to improve the experience that consumers have in their points-of-sale and to ultimately increase sales. Research on this topic has largely been addressed in the marketing literature (Souiden, Ladhari, and Chiadmi 2018). Marketing literature on store atmospherics explains how stimuli influences the senses and ultimately leads to desired behaviors, such as spending more time in the store, increasing expenditures or encouraging intention to return (Das and Varshneya 2017; Donovan and Rossiter 1994; Kotler 1973; Spence et al. 2014). The store exterior has received less attention in the literature (Bloch and Kamran-Disfani 2017; Oh and Petrie 2012). The main role of store windows identified in the literature is to provide information to the consumer (Sen, Block, and Chandran 2002) and to attract consumers' attention (Lange, Rosengren, and Blom 2016). Recent retailing research has also begun to examine how the level of verbo-visual complexity in high-street store windows influences store entry propensity (Lick, Bargenda, and Trabelsi 2020). Even though research has identified the role of dual visual attention (Oh and Petrie 2012), studies have focused more on bottom-up rather than on top-down visual processes (Lange, Rosengren, and Blom 2016). Although colors and shapes can attract the eye, other research suggests that the way props are displayed or the types of props that are displayed can induce degrees of cognitive interpretation and construal. The focus of this paper leans toward the latter and seeks to explore whether certain types of display construals can influence patronage intentions. The current study seeks to fill these gaps and answer the following research question: How do window displays influence affective and cognitive reactions, and patronage intentions?

The article is structured in four parts. Firstly, a review of the literature analyzes the research on window displays, internal reactions and patronage intentions. The overarching paradigm that the authors chose for this study is the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) paradigm (Mehrabian and Russell 1974). Thus, the stimulus (S) (i.e. the store window display) will influence the consumer's internal cognitive and affective reactions (O) which will then influence behavioral responses (R) (i.e. patronage intentions). A positivist, hypothetico-deductive approach is used to experimentally test the effects of the chosen variables in this study. The authors apply the principles of Construal Level Theory (Lieberman, Trope, and Wakslak 2007; Trope and Liberman 2003) to explore the effects of display construal.

Then, we present the methodological approach and the tools used for the study. Thirdly, we present the findings of the study. Fourthly, the authors discuss the results and possibilities for future research. This study is the first to explore the influence of window display construal level on patronage intentions in a retail-oriented context of tourist bureaux and contributes to the scant literature on exterior atmospherics. This study also opens the door to future research on the manipulation and effects of construal level and potentially of psychological distance in window displays.

Literature review

In order to respond to the gaps in the literature, this section reviews the research on window displays and Construal Level Theory, perceived global atmosphere and affective responses, and expected shopping value.

Window displays and Construal Level Theory

This paper conceptualizes store windows as exterior atmospheric variables (Turley and Milliman 2000). Research shows that atmospheric variables influence consumers' future intentions (Heung and Gu 2012; Roschk, Loureiro, and Breitsohl 2017; Sen, Block, and Chandran 2002). Roschk, Loureiro, and Breitsohl's (2017) meta-analysis shows that visual atmospheric variables have a significant influence on behavioral intentions. Atmospheric variables in a restaurant context have a significant, positive influence on customers' behavioral intentions, notably on willingness to spend more,

on word-of-mouth and on the intention to return to the restaurant (Heung and Gu 2012). The results from Sen, Block, and Chandran's (2002) window display study reveal that consumers observe products in the display in order to obtain relevant information on the store's product category, which then influences future purchase decisions. The findings from Mower, Kim, and Childs's (2012) study show that consumers have greater patronage intentions in the presence of window displays. The findings from Lange, Rosengren, and Blom's (2016) recent in situ study show that creative displays attract more store entries.

The extant literature on the role of the exterior of touristic points-of-sale remains limited and disparate. Yüksel's (2009) study was a field experiment conducted on tourists visiting a clothing store. The findings of the study show that variations in color influence tourists' internal reactions and behavioral intentions (e.g., "I'd like to explore the store"). Lecoindre-Erickson, Daucé, and Legohérel's (2018) study, although published in the retailing literature, focused on the influence of an interactive window display in a tourist bureau. Their findings show that interactive window displays in French tourist bureaux induce arousal but not pleasure.

Previous studies have explored how props, products and the way they are organized in the display attract attention and facilitate information processing. For example, Oh and Petrie's (2012) experiment provides respondents with images of "artistic" displays, which can be considered fairly abstract and encourage exploration processes, and "merchandise-oriented" displays, which can be considered fairly concrete and encourage comprehension processes. However, previous studies do not clearly put forward a theoretical framework to explain which window dressing could be more influential than another. This paper posits that Construal Level

Theory (CLT) may help us to better understand consumers' perceptions of window displays. Cornelius, Natter, and Faure's (2010) storefront study briefly mentions CLT. However, the authors do not explicitly apply CLT principles to the displays. Construal Level Theory (CLT) (Lieberman, Trope, and Wakslak 2007; Trope and Liberman 2003) postulates that events and objects that are considered to be psychologically distant are construed in an abstract manner. Inversely, events and objects that are considered to be psychologically proximal are construed in a concrete manner. The formation of a higher level of construal "involves a belief about the substitutability for a specific purpose of two or more subjectively distinct objects" (Lieberman and Trope 2014, p. 366). Psychological distance (Lieberman, Trope, and Stephan 2007) corresponds to the degree of divergence from the "me", the "here" and the "now" along four different dimensions: temporal, spatial, social and hypothetical.

Recent advertising research has examined the effect of congruency between construal level and psychological distance (Choi et al. 2019). In line with Amit, Algom, and Trope's (2009) findings, pictures are correlated with psychological (temporal) proximity, whereas text is correlated with psychological (temporal) distance (Choi et al. 2019). More specifically, Choi et al. (2019) find a positive effect from using advertising with text to promote goods that will be consumed in the future or that are in stores that are geographically distant and a positive effect from using advertising with pictures for goods that will be consumed in the near future or that are in stores that are geographically close.

Construal level and psychological distance have also been applied in the tourism literature to explain the effects of advertising messages on tourist evaluations (Kim et al. 2014; Line, Hanks, and Zhang 2016). Kim et al. (2014) found that manipulation of construal level and psychological (temporal and spatial) distance of hotel room website images had significant influences on attitude toward the hotel. More specifically, imagining travel to a faraway destination in the far future encourages more favorable evaluations of abstract messages and pictures (e.g., "Comfortable bed and top-quality bedding"; picture of broad scenery around the hotel), and imagining travel to a nearby destination or in the near future encourages more favorable evaluations of concrete messages and pictures (e.g., "Bed with pillowtop mattresses and 100% down comforters"; picture of a detailed hotel room). Sen, Block, and Chandran's (2002) findings show that store merchandise in window displays is strongly correlated with intention to purchase. These findings suggest that consumers in front of a display that has more concrete images (such as products that can be purchased immediately) will positively influence patronage intentions. We therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

H₁ Concrete construal level in a window display will positively influence patronage intentions.

Perceived global atmosphere and affective responses

This paper focuses on how tourists perceive the atmosphere of a commercial environment. Rayburn and Voss (2013) define perceived global atmosphere as "the overall impression of the store's atmosphere as a pleasant or unpleasant place to shop" (Rayburn and Voss 2013, p. 401). This concept reflects a cognitive process where the tourist holistically appraises a commercial environment as being either beneficial or harmful to achieving one's goals or to satisfying one's well-being (Chebat and Michon 2003). Perceived atmosphere in the retailing literature has been shown to positively influence internal reactions and behavioral intentions (Chebat et al. 2014; Poncin and Ben Mimoun 2014). Affective responses are a key variable to integrate when examining shopping environments since they have been shown

to influence behavior (Das and Varshneya 2017). Research in environmental psychology shows that two dimensions – valence and intensity – fully represent the core of affective responses in physical environments (Russell and Pratt 1980). Research in the retail marketing and tourist shopping literature have shown that these components best reflect hedonic and utilitarian dimensions. Valence reflects pleasure and the degree of pleasantness or unpleasantness of an affective response (Vieira 2013). Arousal is “an affective property (dimension) ranging from sleep to frantic excitement” (Mehrabian and Russell 1974, p. 18). Research findings show that the pleasure and arousal dimensions are sufficient in measuring affective response in retail settings (Vieira 2013).

Construal level has been shown to influence behavioral intentions (Trope, Liberman, and Wakslak 2007), but not in the context of window displays. This paper examines window display design using CLT, and proposes that top-down cognitive processing will occur when respondents observe the window display. This is in line with the cognition-emotion model of internal processing (Lazarus 1991). Window display construal level corresponds to manipulating top-down attention processes where information that is modified is related to voluntary, cognitive processing. This type of manipulation differs from bottom-up attention where salience (e.g., colors, luminosity and shapes) or the valence (positive or negative) of window display elements are modified and where affective reactions serve as a heuristic in the decision-making process.

The literature on atmospheric variables has revealed a mediating influence of global perceived atmosphere (Chebat and Michon 2003; Dennis et al. 2010; Poncin and Ben Mimoun 2014). Chebat and Michon’s (2003) findings reveal that scents have a positive, significant influence on the perceived global atmosphere of a shopping mall. The findings from Poncin and Ben Mimoun’s (2014) study show a mediating effect of perceived global atmosphere when using new in-store technologies. Dennis et al.’s (2010) findings also demonstrate a mediating effect of perceived global atmosphere between the presence of digital signage and approach behaviors. These findings suggest that the tourist’s perception of the point-of-sale’s atmosphere, which is induced by the window display, will influence the tourist’s patronage intentions.

H₂ Perceived global atmosphere will positively mediate the relation between window display construal level and patronage intentions.

Poncin and Ben Mimoun (2014) have shown that perceived atmosphere has a significant positive influence on affective reactions. Chebat and Michon (2003) have shown a mediating influence of perceived atmosphere on the relation between scents and affective arousal. In the hospitality literature, the findings from Lam et al.’s (2011) study show that ambience of the perceived casino atmosphere has a significantly positive influence on affective response. Choi et al.’s (2019) studies show significantly positive relations between advertisements with text (pictures), affective reactions and purchase intentions. The findings also revealed that advertisements with text had positive effects on attitudes and purchase intentions for durable goods whereas advertisements with pictures had more positive effects for nondurable goods. These findings suggest that construal level in a store window will significantly influence internal reactions. We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

H₃ Perceived global atmosphere will positively influence (a.) pleasure and (b.) arousal.

Expected shopping value

Recent literature in retailing has begun to examine the role of window displays in shopping experience (Lecointre-Erickson, Daucé, and Legohérel 2018). In the experimental literature, shopping experience can be measured by its perceived value. This paper adopts a bidimensional conceptual approach to shopping value, where value is composed of hedonic and utilitarian dimensions (Babin, Darden, and Griffin 1994). This paper argues that the perception of tourist bureaux as being commercial retail outlets is too recent for us to apply a more sophisticated multidimensional approach that may include irrelevant dimensions such as a social dimension. Lecointre-Erickson, Daucé, and Legohérel’s (2018) study showed that perceived global atmosphere induced by the arousing effect of interactive window displays in tourist bureaux positively and significantly influenced perceived expected hedonic shopping value.

The informational nature of window displays is considered part of the pre-experience phase of a point-of-sale’s shopping experience, and the effects of this pre-experience separation from the core in-store experience and persuasive nature of the display can be explained by CLT (Trope, Liberman, and Wakslak 2007). Poncin and Ben Mimoun (2014) have shown that perceived atmosphere has a significantly positive influence on perceived value. Chebat et al. (2014) reveal a significantly positive effect of the perceived atmosphere of a mall on hedonic and utilitarian shopping value.

Research in the hospitality literature has shown a correlation between perceived value and construal level (Jeong and Jang 2015). The findings from Jeong and Jang’s (2015) study on healthy menu promotions show that hedonic values (e.g., values associated with eating at a fine-food restaurant) lead to more abstract thinking (e.g., “enjoy lifelong health”)

whereas utilitarian values (e.g., values associated with eating at a quick-food restaurant) lead to more concrete thinking (e.g., “enjoy a healthy meal today”). This would suggest that positive internal reactions induced by store window construal level would influence perceived expected value prior to entering the point-of-sale. We therefore formulate the following hypotheses:

H₄ Pleasure will positively influence expected utilitarian (a) and hedonic (b) shopping value.

In the shopping literature, arousal is associated with hedonic motivations where the consumer seeks fun and stimulating dimensions of a shopping activity. On the other hand, pleasure is more associated with utilitarian motivations where the consumer seeks the usefulness of completing a task (Vieira 2013). Arousal has a significantly positive influence on hedonic shopping value and pleasure has a significantly positive influence on utilitarian shopping value (Vieira 2013). Wang et al.’s (2007) study on social indices in online points-of-sale reveal significant effects of arousal and pleasure on hedonic and utilitarian shopping value. Yüksel’s (2007) study on tourist shopping reveals significant effects of arousal on hedonic shopping value and of pleasure on utilitarian and hedonic shopping value. We therefore propose the following hypotheses:

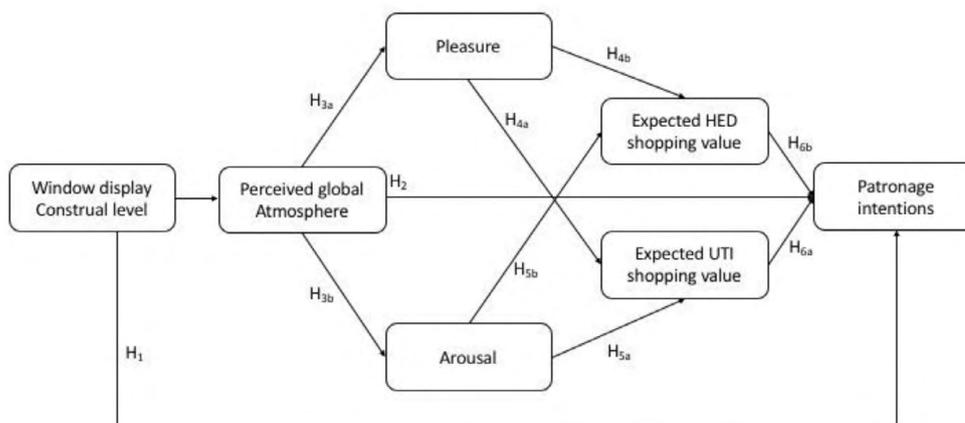
H₅ Arousal will positively influence expected utilitarian (a) and hedonic (b) shopping value.

Poncin and Ben Mimoun (2014) found a significant effect of perceived value on patronage intentions. Rahman, Wong, and Yu’s (2016) study also revealed a significant influence of shopping value on patronage intentions. Lloyd, Yip, and Luk’s (2011) study found that perceived value has a positive significant influence on behavioral intentions. Yüksel (2007) found a significantly positive influence of hedonic shopping value on tourists’ approach behaviors. Alternatively, Albayrak, Caber, and Çömen (2016) found significantly positive effects of shopping value on behavioral intentions, even though utilitarian shopping value had a stronger influence on behavioral intentions than hedonic shopping value. Finally, Perez-Vega et al. (2018) found significantly positive relations between hedonic and utilitarian value and behavioral intentions. We therefore predict the following:

H₆ Expected (a.) utilitarian and (b.) hedonic shopping value will positively influence patronage intentions.

Figure 1 summarizes the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study testing the relationship between window display construal, perceived global atmosphere, affective responses, expected shopping value and patronage intentions.

Figure 1 : Conceptual and theoretical framework



Methodology

Subjects

One hundred and forty-four (144) volunteers (52 males, 92 females) participated in our study. The individuals were divided into 2 experimental conditions. The average number of respondents per condition was 72. This convenience sample primarily included university personnel and students at the undergraduate and graduate level. An intercept method was used to recruit volunteers. Individuals who had not mastered the French language or who were unable to clearly understand protocol instructions were excluded from the study. No ethics committee approval was needed at the time this study was conducted. Each volunteer was informed that all data collected were anonymous.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the sample

| Gender | | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|--|------------------|-------------------|
| | Men | 52 | 36.1% |
| | Women | 92 | 63.9% |
| Age | | | |
| | Under 15 | - | - |
| | 15 to 18 | 2 | 1.4% |
| | 19 to 24 | 104 | 72.2% |
| | 25 to 34 | 12 | 8.3% |
| | 35 to 44 | 14 | 9.7% |
| | 45 to 54 | 10 | 6.9% |
| | 55 to 64 | 2 | 1.4% |
| | 65 to 74 | - | - |
| | Over 74 | - | - |
| Professional category | | | |
| | Farmer | - | - |
| | Craftsman | - | - |
| | Upper-level manager | 18 | 12.5% |
| | Middle-level manager | 2 | 1.4% |
| | Employee | 9 | 6.3% |
| | Manual worker | - | - |
| | Retiree | - | - |
| | Other (student, unemployed, etc.) | 115 | 79.9% |
| Visits to tourist offices in general | | | |
| | Never | 39 | 27.1% |
| | Once per year | 56 | 38.9% |
| | Once every six months | 36 | 25.0% |
| | Once every three months | 11 | 7.6% |
| | Once a month | 2 | 1.4% |
| | Twice a month | - | - |
| | Four times a month | - | - |

Experimental procedure

Questionnaire data were collected over a four-week period during November and December 2017. A quasi-experimental design with concrete (2) and abstract (1) window displays was established for this experiment. A between-subjects approach was used exposing each individual to a specific display condition followed by a questionnaire. Each viewing condition was free of time constraints to reflect the realistic nature of looking at a window display.

Questionnaire

The authors developed the questionnaire for the study in accordance with the literature review. The authors pre-tested the questionnaire for errors and clarity, then pre-tested the scales for internal consistency and reliability before administering the questionnaire to the final sample of respondents. Constructs included in the questionnaire were perceived global atmosphere (Rayburn and Voss 2013), arousal and pleasure (Bradley and Lang 1994), expected utilitarian and hedonic shopping value (Lecointre-Erickson, Daucé, and Legohérel 2018) and patronage intentions (Baker et al. 2002). Since the study was conducted in France, the questionnaire was administered in French. The scales were adapted to the tourism context. The French translations of the original English scales had been previously validated in the literature. All the scales had French translations except for perceived global atmosphere. The perceived global atmosphere scale was translated from the original English version into French using the translation-back translation technique. That is, the original version of the scale was translated into French by bilingual university linguists and then translated back into English by other bilingual university linguists (Appendix A).

Manipulation of image construal levels

Empirical research in consumer behavior emphasizes the distinction between abstract and concrete construal levels through desirability, the consequences and benefits of an object or event (the “why”), and the feasibility of an object or event (the “how”) (Kim, Zhang, and Li 2008). One main characteristic of a tourist service is its intangible nature. Services are characterized by stronger spatial and sensorial distance than goods, which are tangible by nature. Since psychological distance is associated with construal level, this paper considers services and events to be abstractly construed. On the other hand, consumers can physically see and touch products, such as bottles and packages. This psychological proximity is associated with concrete construal. This paper proposes that tourist bureau window displays can be manipulated through dimensions of psychological distance – sensorial (Kardes, Cronley, and Kim 2006), temporal (Trope, Liberman, and Wakslak 2007), and spatial (Trope, Liberman, and Wakslak 2007) distance – as well as through construal level itself (Amit, Algom, and Trope 2009; Kim et al. 2014). Sensorial distance was manipulated through the absence versus presence of tangible goods. This manipulation is in line with Kardes, Cronley, and Kim’s (2006) finding that it is easier for a consumer to imagine using a product when the product is physically present and seen. Temporal and spatial distance was manipulated through immediate access versus deferred access to an offer. This manipulation is in line with Liberman, Trope, and Stephan (2007) and Liberman, Trope, and Wakslak (2007), where the more temporally and/or geographically distant an object or event is, the more abstractly it will be construed and viceversa. Finally, in line with Amit, Algom, and Trope (2009) and Kim et al. (2014), construal level was manipulated through the presence of unspecific images and text or the presence of specific products.

The images chosen were adapted to the tourism sector and to displays that can be found in French tourist bureaux. For concretely construed window displays (Figure 2), the objects chosen included bottles of liqueur and sparkling wine, jars of jam, as well as bags of cookies and chocolates. The abstractly construed displays (Figure 3) were made up of posters for future local events. The posters included images and text. The photographic images of a real tourist bureau display window and of product and posters displays provided by the tourist bureau of the city of Angers (Loire Valley, France) were manipulated using Photoshop software. Real photos were not used due to the difficulty of obtaining pristine images with no reflection of sunlight or exterior landscapes in the glass.

Figure 2: Window display (concrete construal level)



Figure 3: Window display (abstract construal level)



Manipulation check

A total of 37 undergraduate students in two tourism schools in France rated nine window display images on a scale from 1 (very concrete) to 7 (very abstract) (Jin and He 2013; Kim et al. 2014). The nine images included cultural posters; landscape posters; non-food products and cultural posters; local food products; local non-food products; food products and cultural posters; landscape posters and non-food products; cultural posters with food and non-food products; landscape posters with food and non-food products; and landscape posters with food products. The image with the cultural posters was retained for the abstract construal condition (M=4.43, SD=1.625), and the image with the local food products was retained for the concrete construal condition (M=3.30, SD=1.648). The results from a paired sample t-test show a significant difference between the abstract image and the concrete image (t=3.035, p=0.004).

Results

Pre-test findings

A pre-test was conducted using SPSS 22 to test the internal consistency and reliability of the latent constructs (n=100). In line with Anderson and Gerbing (1988), an exploratory factor analysis was conducted followed by a confirmatory factor analysis on the latent constructs “expected shopping value”, “perceived global atmosphere”, “patronage intentions” and the control variable “mood”. The unidimensional “pleasure” and “arousal” SAM scales were not included in the pre-test as previous studies have shown psychometric validity for these scales and as their unidimensional nature would simply generate a value of 1 for the various tests for reliability and validity. The number of factors extracted was determined using the Kaiser method and Horn’s parallel analysis. The Kaiser method is directly available in SPSS software and extracts the number of factors based on eigenvalues that are higher than 1. Parallel analysis coding is imported into SPSS software (O’connor 2000) and extracts the number of factors with eigenvalues that are higher than the Monte Carlo (MC) simulation values. Although the parallel analysis is less common, parallel analysis is considered to be a superior factor-extraction method (Schmitt 2011). Validity was measured using factor loadings and Cronbach’s alpha.

Table 2

Pre-test results for internal reliability and consistency

| Item | Loadings | α de Cronbach |
|---|----------|------------------|
| Perceived Global Atmosphere | | 0.865 |
| <i>Kaiser method: total variance explained = 71.41% (F1: eigenvalue = 2.856)</i> | | |
| <i>Parallel analysis: F1: eigenvalue = 2.856 > MC simulation = 1.222</i> | | |
| Atmos1 Charming – obnoxious | 0.811 | |
| Atmos2 Comfortable – uncomfortable | 0.882 | |
| Atmos3 Displeasing – pleasing | 0.862 | |
| Atmos4 Appealing – unappealing | 0.823 | |
| Expected Utilitarian Shopping Value | | 0.704 |
| <i>Kaiser method: total variance explained = 20.11% (F1 : eigenvalue = 1.207)</i> | | |
| <i>Parallel analysis: F1: eigenvalue = 1.207 > MC simulation = 1.173</i> | | |
| Uti1 I will accomplish just what I want to on this trip to this office of tourism. | 0.839 | |
| Uti2 I will be disappointed because I will have to go to another store to complete my shopping. | 0.745 | |
| Uti3 I feel this shopping trip will be successful. | 0.705 | |

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Expected Hedonic Shopping Value | 0.853 |
| <i>Kaiser method: total variance explained = 51.28% (F1: eigenvalue = 3.075)</i> | |
| <i>Parallel analysis: F1: eigenvalue = 3.075 > MC simulation = 1.343</i> | |
| Hed1 Compared to other things I would do, the time spent shopping will be truly enjoyable. | 0.873 |
| Hed2 This shopping trip will truly be a joy. | 0.863 |
| Hed3 I will enjoy this shopping trip for its own sake, not just for the items I may purchase. | 0.841 |
| Patronage intentions | 0.789 |
| <i>Kaiser method: total variance explained = 70.77% (F1: eigenvalue=2.123)</i> | |
| <i>Parallel analysis: F1: eigenvalue=2.123 > MC simulation = 1.291</i> | |
| I would be willing to go shopping in this tourist bureau. | 0.909 |
| I would be willing to make a purchase in this tourist bureau. | 0.922 |
| I would be willing to recommend this tourist bureau to friends. | 0.669 |
| Mood (control variable) | 0.954 |
| <i>Kaiser method: total variance explained = 88.01% (F1: eigenvalue=3.520)</i> | |
| <i>Parallel analysis: F1: eigenvalue=3.520 > MC simulation = 1.222</i> | |
| Irritable – Happy | 0.938 |
| Depressed – Delighted | 0.942 |
| In a bad mood – In a good mood | 0.943 |
| Sad – Cheerful | 0.930 |

Partial-Least Square (PLS) approach

A PLS-SEM approach was chosen for data analysis of the perceived atmosphere, pleasure, arousal, expected shopping value and patronage intention endogenous constructs using SmartPLS version 2.3.4 (Ringle, Wende, and Becker 2015). The PLS approach is not limited to the normal distribution of data, nor is it limited to sample size (Reinartz, Haenlein, and Henseler 2009), and is therefore appropriate for this dataset. This approach can test the effects of several variables at once, whereas more traditional linear approaches cannot (Hair et al. 2017).

Results for the measurement model

Internal consistency and scale reliability were examined on the constructs of the final sample. All the values for the item loadings were above the minimum threshold of 0.40 (Hair et al. 2017), indicating satisfactory reliability of the items within each latent construct. Average variance extracted (AVE) is the most common indicator for determining convergent validity of a model (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The recommended indicator for measuring internal consistency and scale reliability when using a PLS approach is composite reliability (CR) (Cho and Kim 2015). Recent research has found that this indicator is superior to Cronbach’s α for estimating consistency and reliability, especially when using a PLS-SEM approach (Wong 2016).

The loading for the Uti2 item was below the threshold of 0.70. As a result, this item was removed from the Expected Utilitarian Shopping Value construct in order to improve convergent validity, leaving this construct with two items. The final reported AVE values are above the minimum threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al. 2017), and CR values reported are above the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al. 2017), indicating satisfactory convergent validity for the constructs.

Table 3

Assessment results of the measurement model

| | Loadings | AVE | CR |
|---|-----------------|------------|-----------|
| Perceived Global Atmosphere | | 0.803 | 0.942 |
| Atmos1 Charming – obnoxious | 0.873 | | |
| Atmos2 Comfortable – uncomfortable | 0.908 | | |
| Atmos3 Displeasing – pleasing | 0.879 | | |
| Atmos4 Appealing – unappealing | 0.924 | | |
| Expected Utilitarian Shopping Value | | 0.700 | 0.822 |
| Uti1 I will accomplish just what I want to on this trip to this office of tourism. | 0.755 | | |
| Uti3 I feel this shopping trip will be successful. | 0.912 | | |
| Expected Hedonic Shopping Value | | 0.739 | 0.895 |
| Hed1 Compared to other things I would do, the time spent shopping will be truly enjoyable. | 0.862 | | |
| Hed2 This shopping trip will truly be a joy. | 0.853 | | |
| Hed3 I will enjoy this shopping trip for its own sake, not just for the items I may purchase. | 0.865 | | |
| Patronage Intentions | | 0.787 | 0.917 |
| Pat1 willing to shop in this tourist bureau | 0.874 | | |
| Pat2 willing to make a purchase in this tourist bureau | 0.903 | | |
| Pat3 willing to recommend this tourist bureau | 0.884 | | |
| Mood (Control Variable) | | 0.748 | 0.922 |
| Irritable – Happy | 0.834 | | |
| Depressed – Delighted | 0.906 | | |
| In a bad mood – In a good mood | 0.835 | | |
| Sad – Cheerful | 0.882 | | |

The Fornell-Larcker criterion is the most common indicator for determining the discriminant validity of a model (Fornell and Larcker 1981). However, recent research has shown that the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio is more appropriate in PLS models for determining discriminant validity, and that this criterion is superior to the Fornell-Larcker criterion when using a PLS approach (Henseler, Hubona, and Ray 2016; Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2015). However, we have added this criterion alongside the HTMT ratio values in order to ensure transparency. The square root of the AVE values for each of the latent constructs are superior to the values of their correlations, and all the HTMT ratio values are below the recommended threshold of 0.85 (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2015), indicating discriminant validity for the latent constructs.

Table 4

Fornell-Larcker Criterion results

| | Arousal | Atmosphere | Hedonic value | Patronage intentions | Pleasure | Utilitarian value | Window display construal |
|--------------------------|---------|------------|---------------|----------------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Arousal | 1.000 | | | | | | |
| Atmosphere | 0.161 | 0.915 | | | | | |
| Hedonic value | 0.159 | 0.545 | 0.869 | | | | |
| Patronage intentions | 0.326 | 0.599 | 0.588 | 0.891 | | | |
| Pleasure | 0.091 | 0.474 | 0.335 | 0.317 | 1.000 | | |
| Utilitarian value | 0.005 | 0.292 | 0.349 | 0.302 | 0.321 | 0.821 | |
| Window display construal | 0.063 | 0.345 | 0.182 | 0.424 | 0.010 | 0.077 | 1.000 |

Table 5

Results from Heterotrait-Montotrait (HTMT) ratio values for convergent and discriminant validity

| | Arousal | Atmosphere | Expected Hedonic Shopping Value | Patronage intentions | Pleasure | Expected Utilitarian Shopping Value | Construal Level |
|-------------------------------------|---------|------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Arousal | | | | | | | |
| Atmosphere | 0.166 | | | | | | |
| Expected Hedonic Shopping Value | 0.173 | 0.626 | | | | | |
| Patronage intentions | 0.340 | 0.658 | 0.672 | | | | |
| Pleasure | 0.091 | 0.500 | 0.365 | 0.333 | | | |
| Expected Utilitarian Shopping Value | 0.046 | 0.368 | 0.503 | 0.415 | 0.411 | | |
| Construal Level | 0.063 | 0.362 | 0.197 | 0.461 | 0.010 | 0.089 | |

Even though researchers and developers have recently integrated criteria, such as RMS_{Theta} and SRMR, for measuring model fit in PLS software, measuring model fit is not encouraged when using a PLS approach (Henseler et al. 2014). However, we are reporting the SRMR fit index in this paper in order to ensure transparency. The SRMR value for the model is 0.073. This is below the threshold of 0.08, indicating satisfactory model fit.

Structural model findings

SmartPLS version 2.3.4 (Ringle, Wende, and Becker 2015) software was used to analyze the relationships between window display construal level, perceived global atmosphere, pleasure, arousal, expected utilitarian and hedonic shopping value and patronage intentions. The authors used reversed coding for the pleasure, arousal, and perceived global atmosphere variables during the statistical analysis. Collinearity between the latent constructs was assessed using the variance influence factor (VIF) indicator. The VIF values were between 1 and 1.588, indicating an absence of collinearity issues between the latent constructs (Hair et al. 2017),

A non-parametric bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples was conducted in order to determine the level of significance of the relationships between the constructs in the model (Hair et al. 2017).

A blindfolding procedure with seven observations was conducted in order to assess the predictive relevance (Q^2) of the latent constructs. Results indicate satisfactory levels of predictive relevance (>0) for all the latent constructs except for arousal ($-0.013 < 0$) (Hair et al. 2017).

Cohen's effect sizes (f^2) indicate the strength of the effect of an exogenous construct on an endogenous construct. The results of the f^2 values for most of the constructs were above 0.02 (Henseler, Hubona, and Ray 2016), indicating satisfactory effects for these endogenous constructs. Weaker values (<0.02) were reported for arousal – expected hedonic shopping value, arousal – expected utilitarian shopping value, and expected utilitarian value – patronage intentions.

The model explained 52% of the variance in patronage intentions. In support of previous findings in retailing, the results show a significantly positive influence of window display construal on patronage intentions, supporting H1 and in line with previous findings (Oh and Petrie 2012). More specifically, the more concrete the window display construal, the stronger the influence on patronage intentions. The findings for specific indirect effects also indicate a positive mediating effect of perceived atmosphere on the relationship between window display construal level and patronage intentions ($p < 0.001$), supporting H₂.

All other relationships are significantly positive, except for the following cases. The findings indicate that relationships with the arousal construct, for which the results show no predictive relevance via the blindfolding procedure, are non-significant. Therefore, hypotheses H_{3b}, H_{5a} and H_{5b} are not supported. Also, the relationship between expected shopping value and patronage intentions is only significantly positive through expected hedonic shopping value, supporting H_{6b}. The findings show no significant relationship between expected utilitarian shopping value and patronage intentions (H_{6a}) and are consistent with previous findings (Yüksel 2007). A summary of the results is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Path coefficients and results for significance levels

| Hypotheses | Path | Path coefficient | t values >1.96 | Significance | p values |
|-----------------|--|------------------|-------------------|--------------|----------|
| H ₁ | Window display construal level → Patronage intentions | 0.251 | 3.895 | *** | <0.001 |
| H ₂ | Window display construal level → Atmosphere | 0.345 | 4.554 | *** | <0.001 |
| H ₂ | Atmosphere → Patronage intentions | 0.297 | 4.204 | *** | <0.001 |
| H _{3a} | Atmosphere → Pleasure | 0.474 | 6.700 | *** | <0.001 |
| H _{3b} | Atmosphere → Arousal | 0.161 | 1.968 | * | 0.049 |
| H _{4a} | Pleasure → Expected Utilitarian Shopping Value | 0.323 | 4.735 | *** | <0.001 |
| H _{4b} | Pleasure → Expected Hedonic Shopping Value | 0.323 | 3.526 | *** | <0.001 |
| H _{5a} | Arousal → Expected Utilitarian Shopping Value | -0.025 | 0.295 | NS | 0.768 |
| H _{5b} | Arousal → Expected Hedonic Shopping Value | 0.130 | 1.710 | NS | 0.087 |
| H _{6a} | Expected Utilitarian Shopping Value → Patronage Intentions | 0.072 | 0.937 | NS | 0.349 |
| H _{6b} | Expected Hedonic Shopping Value → Patronage Intentions | 0.356 | 5.228 | *** | <0.001 |

*** p<.001, ** p<.01, *p<.05

The authors controlled for gender, frequency of visits and mood through interaction moderation on all of the latent constructs. The findings show no significant results ($p > 0.05$).

Discussion

Discussion and theoretical implications

This study extends the experimental literature by addressing the role of window displays in tourist bureaux. Although previous marketing research on window displays has focused on the influence of the level of creativity and innovativeness of displays, this study focuses on the types of products and services to display. This study demonstrates through CLT that concrete construals positively influence patronage intentions in tourist bureaux.

In line with Oh and Petrie (2012), our findings suggest that “concrete” window displays facilitate understanding of the point-of-sale’s offer and incite the consumer to adopt an approach behavior. The positive mediating effect of perceived global atmosphere along with the perceived positive effect of global atmosphere on pleasure indicates that window display construal level can enable the consumer to identify the components necessary for perceiving the pleasing or displeasing characteristics of the shopping environment. These results suggest overall that the cognitive dimension of display construal level provides heuristics for practical decision-making as well as for understanding the sales environment. This study contributes to the mounting literature employing CLT in tourism marketing.

Practical implications

As already stated, tourist bureaux are evolving from their conventional role of solely providing information toward a newer commercial role of selling goods and services to tourists. Travelers entering tourist bureaux should no longer be seen as tourists who obtain their desired information and then leave. They are consumers. And in the age of the digital era, more and more information is provided online, giving the opportunity to tourist bureaux to become real points-of-sale where tourists may want to book tickets and buy various goods and services. In this context, tourist bureaux are moving toward a more retail shop-oriented model and point-of-sale management. Here, the window display is a key element of the tourist journey, from the exterior attractiveness of the window display to the interior shopping experience within the purchase decision-making process. Dressing a window display appropriately to tourists’ needs can guide them in being more pragmatic with the time that they dedicate to shopping at the point-of-sale.

The present study has demonstrated the importance of the window display and its potential impact on tourists’ patronage intentions. For example, among contributions already discussed in the paper, results have shown evidence of a positive influence of window display construal on patronage intentions: the more concrete the window display becomes, the stronger the influence on patronage intentions. It could be interesting to replicate such a study in situ and track additional data in order to understand if previous behaviors are followed by a buying or booking decision within the tourist bureau. In retailing, window displays have for a long time been considered an efficient tool. In various sectors, retail shop managers try to reap as many benefits as possible from efficient and attractive window displays. The present study has investigated specific issues. Many others should be considered in order to better understand the attractiveness of window displays in tourism and hospitality sectors.

Managers of tourist bureaux should definitely pay attention to their window displays. This concern is not limited to tourist bureaux, as many other tourist places and hospitality companies have window displays, including travel agencies (with more and more implementing digital and dynamic content), boutiques located on the ground floor of many hotels, shopping areas where transit passengers spend a significant amount of money, souvenirs and gift shops in all theme parks, as well as at the end of visits to museums, zoos, etc.

The main targeted segment should also be considered. In a theme park for instance, managers could consider if they should prioritize children with stories, dreams, fun and excitement, etc. and with objects to be construed in an abstract manner, or rather the parents, through providing reasons to purchase, the price of the souvenirs, size and practical dimensions when traveling back home, etc., where the object is construed in a concrete manner. Future research could also investigate the role of tourists’ country of origin when entering tourist bureaux. Window displays may not have the same impact depending on the tourists’ cultural background. Therefore, the content of a window display and the way it is organized and construed should be studied in a cross-cultural context, which is often the case for many tourist bureaux.

Limits and future research

A main limit of this study is the nature of the sample. This study was conducted in a laboratory experiment on a sample made up primarily of students. The controlled environment of the laboratory ensures a level of filtering of external

influencers, factors and “noise”. However, this approach is criticized for its lack of realism, and future research should replicate the study in situ. Future research should also investigate combined “top-down” and “bottom-up” cognitive processes and effects generated from window displays.

The issues of psychological and cultural distance have already been considered in the literature (Hateftabar 2021), but should be further investigated in the context of window displays and international visitors. Since psychological distance is associated with construal level, services and events are considered as abstractly construed, but in the meantime, tourists may also physically see and/or touch goods such as bottles, gifts, etc. Therefore, future studies could go deeper into the dimension of psychological distance and, more specifically, into the correlation with cultural distance. Both concepts are considered similar ones, where psychic distance is defined as the wider concept comprising cultural distance (Avloniti and Filippaios 2014). Psychic distance assesses cultural differences and similarities between countries at the individual level and reflects an individual perception of cultural differences among countries. Because tourists facing the window display of a tourist bureau, not to mention boutiques at theme parks or airports, often come from different countries, the dimension of psychological distance may then contribute to a better understanding of tourists’ perception of the window display, either abstractly or concretely construed, based on their cultural differences.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire section structure and items

Section 1: Level of mastery of the French language.

1. Native fluency 2. Bilingual fluency 3. Professional fluency 4. Intermediate fluency 5. Weak fluency

Section 2: Questions concerning the window in front of the office of tourism.

What reaction does this window display evoke in you? Look at the SAM figures. They represent a scale from 1=Excited to 9=Calm (1=Happy to 9=Unhappy). Your reaction can be situated either at one of the SAM figures or between two SAM figures. Choose the number that best corresponds to your reaction.

How do you perceive the overall atmosphere of this office of tourism thanks to this window display?

What experience do you think you will have in this office of tourism thanks to this window display?

Section 3: Questions concerning current mood and frequency of visits to tourist bureaux

Frequency of visits: 1. Never; 2. Once a year; 3. Twice a year; 4. Every quarter; 5. Once a month; 6. Twice a month; 7. Every week

Section 4: Demographic questions (gender, age, profession)

| | | | |
|--|---|-----------|--|
| What reaction does this window display evoke in you? | Excited, aroused, frenzied, jittery, wide awake, stimulated | 123456789 | Unaroused, relaxed, calm, dull, sluggish, sleepy |
| What reaction does this window display evoke in you? | Happy, pleased, satisfied, contented, hopeful, relaxed | 123456789 | Unhappy, annoyed, unsatisfied, melancholic, despairing, bored |

| | | | |
|--|------------------|---------|----------------|
| How do you perceive the overall atmosphere of this office of tourism thanks to this window display (on a scale from 1 to 7)? | Charming | 1234567 | Obnoxious |
| | Comfortable | 1234567 | Uncomfortable |
| | Pleasing | 1234567 | Displeasing |
| | Appealing | 1234567 | Unappealing |
| I will accomplish just what I want to on this trip to this office of tourism. | Totally disagree | 1234567 | Totally agree |
| I will be disappointed because I will have to go to another store to complete my shopping. | Totally disagree | 1234567 | Totally agree |
| I feel this trip to this office of tourism will be successful. | Totally disagree | 1234567 | Totally agree |
| Compared to other things I would do, the time spent shopping will be truly enjoyable. | Totally disagree | 1234567 | Totally agree |
| This shopping trip will truly be a joy. | Totally disagree | 1234567 | Totally agree |
| I will enjoy this shopping trip for its own sake, not just for the items I may purchase. | Totally disagree | 1234567 | Totally agree |
| I would be willing to go shopping in this tourist bureau. | Totally disagree | 1234567 | Totally agree |
| I would be willing to make a purchase in this tourist bureau. | Totally disagree | 1234567 | Totally agree |
| I would be willing to recommend this tourist bureau to friends. | Totally disagree | 1234567 | Totally agree |
| How do you feel right now? | Irritable | 1234567 | Happy |
| | Depressed | 1234567 | Delighted |
| | In a bad mood | 1234567 | In a good mood |
| | Sad | 1234567 | Cheerful |