

Beyond the fragrance - Exploring the store environment from the perspective of gender

Muito além da fragrância - Explorando o ambiente de loja sob a perspectiva do gênero

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ABSTRACT

Knowing that the physical environment is an important factor of influence on consumer behavior, this study sought to examine, in a preliminary way, the differences between female and male gender behaviors in the interaction with the elements of the store environment. The research was conducted in a store on segment of perfumery, located in Recife/PE, from a qualitative approach, using of non-participant observation as a research method. The observations were described and analyzed through two perspectives, one related to attractive stimuli and the other related to facility stimuli, as discussed in the theory. At the end of the study were created gender propositions that express the main aspects in which men and women differ in their relationship with the store environment.

KEYWORDS: Store environment; Consumer behavior; Gender differences.

RESUMO

Sabendo que o ambiente físico constitui um importante fator influenciador do comportamento do consumidor, o presente estudo buscou analisar, de forma preliminar, as diferenças de comportamento existentes entre o gênero feminino e o masculino na interação com os elementos do ambiente de loja. A pesquisa foi realizada em uma loja do segmento de perfumaria, localizada na cidade de Recife/PE, a partir de uma abordagem qualitativa e da utilização da observação não participante como método de investigação. As observações obtidas foram descritas e analisadas por meio de duas perspectivas: uma relacionada a estímulos atrativos, e a outra a estímulos de facilidade, conforme teoria abordada. Ao final do estudo, foram criadas proposições de gênero que expressam os principais aspectos nos quais, homens e mulheres, diferem em sua relação com o ambiente de loja.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ambiente de loja; Comportamento do consumidor; Diferenças de gênero.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Among the most diverse findings found by marketing scholars in the last decades, one of the most important is the recognition that consumers in their purchasing decisions respond to other aspects beyond the tangible elements of the product or service offered. Individuals respond to the so-called total product, which includes packaging, courtesies, warranties, advertisements and so many other elements that accompany the product (Kotler, 1973).

One of these elements is the environment or the place where the good or service is bought or consumed. According to Turley and Milliman (2000), marketing research has identified that customers are affected by physical stimuli at the point of purchase and/or consumption, so that the ability to create influential environments is an important strategy for exchange environments. Several aspects make up this environment, such as external and internal prints, store decoration, sensorial resources, among others.

These dimensions of the physical environment influence the behavior of employees and clients, the latter being the group adopted by this article as the object of study. According to Bitner (1992), a variety of objective environmental factors are perceived by buyers/consumers who respond cognitively, emotionally and physiologically to the scenario. These individuals can therefore be induced to behave according to the atmosphere created by management. However, it is crucial to recognize that your reactions are not universal. As Turley and Milliman (2000, p.209) argue, "different categories of consumers appear to behave differently when presented with the same atmospheric stimulus."

Considering the importance of the store environment to create an atmosphere that will influence consumer behavior, several marketing scholars started to develop works focused on this theme (Kotler, 1973; Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Grossbart, Hampton, Rammohan, & Lapidus, 1990; Chebat & Dubé, 2000; Soars, 2009; Spence, Puccinelli, Grewal, & Roggeveen, 2014; Ballantine, Parsons, & Comeskey, 2015; Engdahl & Gelang, 2016). Despite considerable advances in research, some gaps remain in the field of store environment, especially when considering the categories of consumers addressed in the published works.

It was noticed, for example, that researches aimed at comparing the behavior of women and men in interaction with elements of a store environment have not yet been performed. However, the gender is already recognized by scholars of consumer behavior as a fundamental concept of the area, influencer of the customer's self-concept and consumer decisions being studied in marketing with great emphasis since the 1970s (Catterall & Maclaran, 2002). Not seeing a study that deals with the impact of gender in the reaction to the store environment, this article seeks to mitigate this gap.

With the objective of analyzing the behavior of men and women interacting with the elements of the physical store environment, this article dealt, due to the complexity and limitation that each study involves, of the universe of perfumeries. Both men and women enjoy the purchase of this product because they consider perfume as a support and transmitter of symbolic meanings related to sensuality, masculinity, femininity, sensitivity, softness and freedom (Lima, Silva, Maffezzoli & Rocha, 2013). The environments in which they are marketed also emphasize these symbolic aspects and are interpreted differently by men and women, with the settings of these stores being filled with sensory characteristics that deserve to be studied. From this locus, this research seeks to reach a preliminary analysis about the influence of the gender of consumers and their way of interacting with the store environment.

For the purpose of its presentation, this paper is structured as follows: besides this introduction, a section of the evolution of the gender theme within the area of consumer behavior was developed, highlighting the lack of studies that relate this category to behavior of the consumer in the store environment. Subsequently, the main contributions of marketing scholars about the store environment are described, highlighting their elements and their characteristics. After these theoretical perspectives, the methodological procedures adopted in the field work were highlighted. In another section, the results achieved were demonstrated and, finally, final considerations were established.

2 GENDER AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Gender is object of study in the most diverse areas of knowledge, being recognized by Peretti (2011) as an essential concept for science, already in use for at least three decades. The term, however, is highly controversial.

There is no consensus as to whether gender differences are innate or culturally shaped. Some researchers adopt the concept in a biological view, where men and women differ in respect to hormonal differences, chromosomes and lateralization of the brain (laterality of emotions and intellect). Others, however, adopt the idea of gender as referring to the sociocultural categories in which men and women are socialized and thus learn the roles of women and men to follow (Secchi, Silva, Corso, & Tortato, 2012). In this latter perspective, gender is therefore the result of cultural aspects.

Among the many fields that recognize the influence of gender in their studies, regardless of the perspective adopted (biological and / or cultural), Consumer Behavior stands out here. Gender is recognized as a fundamental concept within this area by forming and/or influencing the buyer's self-concept and consumer decisions. As Underhill (2009, 109) points out, "men and women differ in almost everything. Therefore, why should they not differ in their purchases?"

Considering its importance, the impact of gender on buying behavior was already announced by Alexander in the mid-1940s (Bacellar, Gouveia, & Miranda, 2008). Nevertheless, it was only in the 1970s that it was possible to identify a massive concern of marketing researchers with gender. The diverse articles that have been developed since this time approaches diverse themes, such as the differences of portrayal of men and women in advertisements (Moschis & Moore, 1982; Golden, Allison, & Clee, 1985), the different responses to ads by different genders (Hupfer, 2002), the comparison throughout the purchase process (Bacellar, 2003) and the use of technology by men and women (Falkner, 2001).

In general, as Catterall and Maclaran (2002) reveal, it is possible to divide the gender perspectives in Consumer Behavior into two blocks. The first one, formed by studies that took place mostly until the end of the 1980s, is focused especially on the understanding of two research topics defined as the representations of gender in advertisements and gender identity. The second one, formed by studies from the 1990s to the present research, brings different gender theories linked to the new vision of Consumer Behavior and to the cultural changes that occurred in the last decade related to the role of men and women in society (Catterall & Maclaran, 2002). These two blocks are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

2.1 Gender representations in advertising

The ways men and women are portrayed in advertisements are important for scholars and marketers as well as for society, because these means of promoting goods or services can have a major impact on the ways of consuming and observing the world. Thus, since the 1970s, the manner the gender is shown in advertisements is the object of scholars of Consumer Behavior (Catterall & Maclaran, 2002).

In this perspective, the majority of the studies focused on this marketing strategy sought to analyze especially the feminine role played in the advertisements. Studies such as Moschis and Moore (1982) recognized that women were portrayed in a very limited way, as decorative objects or through the domestic functions performed by them (maid and mother). This negatively impacted the woman's self-concept. In a study, Kacen and Nelson (2002) demonstrated the evolution of the role played by the female sex in the advertisements and perceived a small change of this image, although the woman, as object of decoration and playing socially defined roles as feminine, remains in featured.

Some researchers have also turned their attention to the portrayal of man in advertisements (Kolbe & Albanese, 1996). According to Catterall and Maclaran (2002), interest in the male role came in the 1980s in efforts to develop new market opportunities and in response to criticism from feminist

movements that accused the advertisements of showing women with minimalist roles. According to Kacen and Nelson (2002), in this marketing strategy, men were also portrayed as objects of decoration, although they are more likely to show the woman in this way.

During the 1990s, various theories began to be used by researchers of consumer behavior to evaluate advertising, including feminist theories (Stern, 1992). The idea of meaning co-creation was one of the theories that most contributed to gender studies and advertising at the time, since it revealed that the meaning attributed to the woman or to the man also depends on the individual who watches and interprets it (Brown, Stevens, & Maclaran, 1999).

2.2 Gender identity

Attached to the researches of the roles of gender in advertising, other researchers carried out their studies based on the idea of gender identity. This concept is considered a two-dimensional model, with male traits that comprise one dimension and female traits that comprise another (Palan, 2001) referring, therefore, to the extent to which people identify with female or male personality traits, not having a connection with biological questions.

According Lueptow, Garovich e Lupetow (1995), it is possible to distinguish female and male traits because of cultural and historical elements that brought, for each genus, a specific role to play, but which today may be associated with an individual of the opposite gender. Because of this, a woman may have more masculine traits than feminine traits and vice versa. In Figure 1, these characteristics of each personality trait are shown.

Male traits	Female traits
Authoritative	Friendly
Athletic	Shy
Aggressive	Creative
Domineering	Obedient
Competitive	Affectionate
Adventurous	Romantic
Self-confident	Communicative
Ambitious	Sympathetic

Figure 1 - Male and female traits from gender identity

Source: Adapted from Lueptow et al., 1995.

Several scales in the 1970s were constructed to measure the extent to which an individual identifies with female or male personality traits (Catterall & Maclaran, 2002). Over time, however, they began to be questioned, as did the very concept of gender identity. Taylor and Hall (1982), for example, reveal that the scales developed take a one-dimensional position and that the concept must be more multidimensional than the way it presents itself.

2.3 Gender vision in the new consumer behavior

New theoretical and methodological perspectives began to emerge in the late 1980s in the area of research on Consumer Behavior, stimulated by sociological, psychological and anthropological contributions that diverged from traditional themes and approaches in the area of Marketing (Belk, 1995). The new consumer behavior was beginning to take shape.

The new perspective of the area has moved the attention from the pre-purchase and purchase decision-making processes to the consumption experience as a whole (Belk, 1995). The consumer was also recognized as a socially connected being who did not simply observe the characteristics and utilitarian benefits of goods and services; other elements understood as subjective were as or more important for the individual's purchase choice (Addis & Holbrook, 2001). As a consequence, new

research methodologies were adopted, based on a non-positivist perspective, using qualitative instruments and researching areas that were not analyzed by traditional currents (Belk, 1995).

In this context, new perspectives on gender issues were adopted by consumer researchers. Postmodernists come to regard this category as simply unproductive (Firat, 1994), bringing up barriers and obscuring the meaning of masculinity and femininity. Feminists, however, argue that gender division is still an important category to be analyzed in Consumer Behavior, since according to Catterall and Maclaran (2002), whether or not they approve, in today's culture, the activities are codified as masculine and feminine, that is, gender cannot be neutral in society. These two visions have come to permeate the new perspectives and hence new consumer studies since the 1990s.

In recent years, research in this area has focused on the relation of gender to the use of technologies (Secchi et al., 2012). Faulkner's work (2001) highlighted this theme of study by revealing that men and women in their family roles consume different technologies. According to the author, equipment related to routine tasks at home, such as washing machines, are more associated with women and with femininity; since less routine technologies in domestic activities, such as drills, are commonly used by men and associated with masculinity.

It is noticeable that the relationship of gender to new consumer behavior is a field of research in development and therefore with many opportunities for innovative studies (Catterall & Maclaran, 2002). The evolution of the work in this category reviewed helps us to understand that there is still much to be researched, such as the gender relationship with the interactions in the store environment. The store environment, inclusively, has been the target of several studies in the last decades.

3 THE STORE ENVIRONMENT AND ITS ELEMENTS

Goods or services are not only composed by their essential characteristics, there are other factors that integrate the total consumption experience. In this sense, the physical environment corresponds to one of the main influencing aspects of consumers decision, since it provides signals responsible for communicating the image and the purposes of the company, often making the atmosphere of the place more important than the product itself at the time of purchase (Kotler, 1973; Bitner, 1992).

From the article by Kotler (1973), the term store atmosphere was developed, emphasizing the need to consider the importance given to the physical environment in marketing studies. Based on a theoretical essay, this author developed a systematic exposure of the retail atmosphere as influencing the purchase, opening space for discussions that generated the interest of the field of Consumer Behavior on the phenomenon with contributions from other areas such as Environmental Psychology (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). With the help of this area, it was noticed that consumers respond to the stimuli coming from the store environment in two ways: approaching, when the environment is seen positively, which favors the desire to stay and explore; and moving away, when the opposite occurs and individuals do not want to stay and waste time in the store (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

It is recognized, therefore, that the store environment in terms of architecture, layout, plates and displays, colors, temperature, sounds and smells, significantly influences consumer behavior (Levy, Weitz, & Grewal, 2014), impacting the emotions and cognitions in the shopping experience (Parente, 2000; Turley & Milliman, 2000; Michon, Chebat, & Turley, 2005; Helmfalk & Hultén, 2017) people will have, once “the image of the store is the first visual and mental impression that consumers have of the store and that influences their decision to enter or not” (Bernardino, Pacanowski, Khoury, & Reis, 2006, p. 108). This environment is a relevant strategic variable when acting as packaging around the products that are for sale, creating competitive differential, especially when there are similarities in terms of competitive products (Farias, 2007).

In addition, studies such as Bitner (1992), Kumar and Karande (2000) and Turley and Milliman (2000) have pointed out that perceptions of the store environment generate beliefs, physiological sensations and certain emotions that influence behavior, highlighting the use of its atmosphere as an important strategic marketing tool. Visual stimuli are the most common, dominating the store atmosphere. However, retailers need to complement such space with auditory, olfactory, and

gustatory cues, providing a multisensory environment (Spence et al., 2014; Ballantine et al., 2015). In this perspective, Turley and Milliman (2000) have developed a literature review about the effects of store atmosphere sensory stimuli on consumer behavior, recognizing five sets that form the store environment. These elements are described as:

- **External variables:** they correspond to the aspects related to the showcase, front and entrance of the store. They are the main elements observed by consumers. Like the others, the showcase is responsible for attracting and issuing a huge variety of information to the customer, being considered a determining factor to enter the store (Sen, Block, & Chandran, 2002). It can be seen as a microcosm of consumer culture (Engdahl & Gelang, 2016), being decisive in favoring or inhibiting consumer situations, suggesting that this variable is managed in order to provide a pleasant experience to clients (Turley & Milliman, 2000);
- **Internal variables:** they are related to the lighting, aromas and sounds that communicate meanings by a visual perspective. Lighting, for example, is a tool of the store atmosphere that has great influence on the mood and behavior of consumers when worked in consonance with other visual elements of the environment (Quartier, Christiaans, & Van Cleempoel, 2008). It is indispensable for consumers to see the products and offers that retailers want (Gabriel, Mandolesi, & Brondino-Pompeo, 2017), influencing image and product manipulation, making people feel stimulated and stay more time within the environment in order to acquire goods or services offered there (Summers & Hebert, 2001). Colors and aromas, in turn, have the ability to attract the consumer, as well as provoke pleasurable sensations and excitement, also influencing the time spent in the store (Turley & Milliman, 2000). The color combinations of the store's ceiling, walls and floor convey the brand image, the products that are sold locally, and the consumers who should attend it (Gabriel, Mandolesi, & Brondino-Pompeo, 2017). The aromas must be pleasant, congruent with the design of the space, with the consumers and with the goods and services offered (Leenders, Smidts & El Haji, 2016). Another aspect considered is the sound that echoes in the buying space. In-store music is seen as an effective way to incite people's moods and communication (Brunner, 1990), producing certain attitudes and behaviors, improving the image of the establishment, stimulating purchase and affecting movement and flow in this environment. In fact, sound in the environment affects the shopping experience daily, helping consumers navigate through space, identifying objects more quickly (Chen & Spence, 2010);
- **Store Layout and Design:** access references, space allocation, traffic flow, and product grouping make up this category of the store environment. It is understood that a poorly planned store layout can hinder the movement of the consumer or generate unwanted physical contacts among customers or with furniture and stored objects, raising the level of stress during consumption and a consequent dissatisfaction (Aguiar, 2011). Thus, the overall organization of the layout, with furniture, goods and signaling in a symmetrical way can reduce the visual complexity of the environment (Rayner, 2009);
- **Point of sale and decoration:** in this category are included the products on display, the point of sale, posters and all types of signage and wall decoration. According to Turley and Milliman (2000), these elements are important because they provide information in the buying environment and attract consumers, since using an attractive display, for example, can directly influence sales, affecting customer choice. The design and aesthetics of the decorative environment contributes to highlight the dominant sense - the vision of consumers, influencing their choices and pleasures (Hekkert, 2006). In addition, sales may also be influenced by the amount of information found in signage, because when two products of equal quality are compared, consumers tend to prefer brands that provide more information (Turley & Milliman, 2000);
- **Human variable:** it corresponds to the characteristics of employees, uniforms, grouping of people and areas of privacy. According to Bitner (1992), the service scenario has the capacity

to influence the quality and nature of social interactions among clients and employees. Thus, human variables can be divided into two areas. The first refers to the influence of other consumers; while the second, to the influence of employees in buying behavior. For example, clustering of many people inside the store has a negative impact on the buyer's perception and harms the interactions. In addition, through the standardization of employees, it is possible to facilitate employee identification, as well as to communicate the company's image (Turley & Milliman, 2000).

Although most of the studies adopt this categorization of Turley and Milliman (2000), Ballantine, Jack and Parsons (2010) call attention to the need for a more holistic and broad view of the elements that form the store environment, since these stimuli are not independently experienced; there is a great interaction among them. From this perspective, these authors categorize the elements of the store environment into attractive stimuli (lighting, auditory stimuli, space, color, layout, product layout and displays, and other store design features) and facilitating stimuli (comfort, accumulation of people, lighting and provision of products as facilitators and employees), recognizing the experience of enjoying a store environment as a hedonic activity.

In fact, the congruence between the sensory aspects of the store atmosphere, its image, and the retail settings become equally important to buyers, reinforcing the need for a holistic and broad view of the elements of the store environment (Helmefalk & Hultén 2017). This was the point of view adopted in this article.

4 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This section describes the methods, tools and approaches used to develop the research, as well as the description of the research locus adopted and the individuals observed there.

4.1 Approach, method and research tool

Having interpretivism as the epistemological direction of this research, the methodological procedures to achieve the purposes of the study were based on a qualitative approach.

From this approach, non-participant observation was used as a research method, using as a tool a pre-established observation script based on the theoretical reference formed by books and articles that addressed the central constructs of the study. According to Lee and Broderick (2007), the method of observation has been increasingly used in the field of Marketing because it allows the collect of empirical data through the observation of behavior and/or other forms of activity. In it, the researcher has the role of spectator of the analyzed object and the subjects do not know that they are being observed, which allows the researcher to portray a situation as it actually occurs (Gil, 2006).

Several field notes were written concomitant with observation, bringing the essence of notes (Merriam, 1998). These notes, after the observation process, were analyzed for the accomplishment of the study results. Through them, the main observations seized and the differences in gender behavior when interacting with the store environment were described.

4.2 Research locus and subjects observed

This research was carried out at Shopping Rio Mar, the most recent shopping center in the city of Recife-PE. Among the 14 stores in the perfumery segment present at this establishment, it was chosen the franchised store of an organization considered the largest Brazilian network in perfumery and cosmetics, denominated in this study "Fragance".

The method of observation was performed in this franchise on the date before the commemoration of Valentine's Day, on 06/11/2014, during a period of three hours (9:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m.). Initially, two researchers entered the Fragance and observed the elements that formed the store environment.

Later, based on the pre-established script that emphasized the stimuli of attractiveness and facility, they, already outside the establishment, observed the behavior of men and women who entered the store in search of perfumes.

Behaviors such as looking and analyzing the showcase, going through the whole interior of the store, analyzing many products, interacting with employees or other clients and also the time spent were analyzed during the observation, being one of the researchers responsible for observing men and another to observe women. At the end, the behaviors of 25 women and 11 men were observed. The categories analyzed were based on the study of Ballantine et al. (2010), being thus divided into categories of attractiveness stimuli and category of facilitating stimuli.

5 ANALYSIS OF OBSERVATIONS AND CONSTRUCTION OF PROPOSALS

In this section we find the results and consequent discussions of the observation made at the research locus. The analysis of these considerations made possible the construction of proposals that, as a preliminary study, should be attested, improved or disregarded later through the use of other data collection and analysis tools.

5.1 Attractive stimuli

On the eve of Valentine's Day, most of the stores at the Mall had their decorations for this commemorative date. In the Fragrance store it was no different. Its showcase was totally focused on the romantic climate that exists during this time of June.

In the showcase of the Fragrance store various shades of pink and hearts of various sizes mixed with the perfumes exposed. A phrase in large letters next to the showcase glass recommended: "Live breathtaking moments - secure your Valentine's Day right now with Fragrance gifts." Taking less than half the entrance to the store, this exhibition strategy drew attention.

During the period of observation, the showcase was perceived as an element of attraction for the individuals who passed through it. As Sen, Block and Chandran (2002) and Engdahl and Gelang (2016) pointed out in their studies the importance of this element for entry into the store, Fragrance's showcase was essential for most customers to enter the store. In this regard, however, a crucial difference between the behavior of men and women in the face of this appeal was found. The showcase was observed as a source of contemplation for women, since most of them spent more time analyzing the products and decorations found there to the detriment of men, who also looked at the showcase, but abruptly. Thus, the first proposition of the study is developed:

P₁: The showcase variable is observed by men and women before entering the store, but the time spent contemplating it is greater in relation to the female gender.

The aspects of lighting, aroma, colors and sounds are also considered as means to attract the customer (Ballantine, Jack, & Parsons, 2010). The element of enlightenment, however, among all these, deserves attention through the observation made at Fragrance. Its showcase, entrance and internal environment were well lit in yellow and white, making the atmosphere pleasant and inviting, helping to bring clients closer to the environment, making them visualize the brand and the products (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Gabriel, Mandolesi, & Brondino-Pompeo 2017). The entire lighted shop, with its own brand displayed on a bright sign, caught the attention of those who entered Fragrance regardless of gender. Thus, through observation, no differences in gender behavior were found by enlightenment. In this way, it was considered that:

P₂: There is no relation of differentiation among behaviors of men and women and the illumination in the environment. This stimulus attracts the attention of both positively.

In addition, at the level of understanding, the store analyzed did not present music in its environment and there were no aromas in the establishment as a whole, making it impossible to analyze the existence or not of different behaviors among men and women through these stimuli. So, it was perceived that Fragrance did not have a multisensory environment, with auditory, olfactory and gustatory cues that could develop different emotions and behaviors (Spence et al., 2014; Ballantine et al., 2015; Helmfalk & Hultén 2017). Such elements used as strategies can generate advantages and competitive differentiations that should be used by the perfumery in question (Farias, 2007).

The layout and design are other characteristics of the store environment. These elements can help in the movement of the consumer and in the attraction of the customer through the environment (Aguiar, 2011). The layout of the Fragrance was composed of several shelves that occupied almost completely the walls of the environment. In addition, some benches were scattered around the center of the scenery with some kits or products highlighted by price or innovation. The cashiers were more reserved on the opposite side of the product display. This store configuration made customers turn their attention to products in general, and especially to strategically located kits. The overall organization of the layout, with furniture, goods and signs symmetrically reduced the visual complexity of the environment, facilitating the strategic flow of movement (Rayner, 2009). Thus, the layout and design were perceived in this environment more intensely as stimuli of facility rather than attractiveness, presenting as main element, the aid of movement.

5.2 Facilitating stimuli

As it was a small shop and the date of the observation preceded one of the main commemorative dates in terms of increased sales, the locomotion of the consumers inside the Fragrance store was at times difficult due to the large number of customers that came to the store in certain periods of time.

Despite this finding, it was noticed that the layout of the store observed favored the possibility of finding the desired products, especially when referring to kits located in strategic spaces of the environment that encouraged specific sales for Valentine's Day. As pointed out by Aguiar (2011), a poorly drawn layout can make it harder for the locomotion of the client and generate stress among consumers. This was not seen in Fragrance, because even with many customers in some moments inside the store, the layout facilitated the movement of these clients.

Because of its location, the layout of the kits reduced the need for circulation in the store, favoring those people interested in something more practical. Once again, the layout of the environment has contributed to reduce the visual complexity of the environment and to expedite the purchase (Rayner, 2009). In this sense, men who entered the store enjoyed more of this strategy, turning their purchasing decisions especially for these products in the spotlight. Women, however, opted to analyze the various goods offered in that space and, therefore, circulated more for the environment. In this way, it was realized that:

P₃: Men choose to make their buying decisions based on products that are best favored by store layout due to the viability found in product identification.

P₄: Women circulate more around the store environment, looking for alternative products, besides those highlighted by the layout.

Another key element in the store environment for the purchase to occur more easily is signage. Turley and Milliman (2000) emphasize that this form of communication is important because it provides consumers with information about potential purchases, influencing their choices and the time they remain in the store. Fragrance featured several plaques scattered throughout its physical environment. It was possible to easily identify the locations where each type of product was located and the characteristics and prices of each one.

In general, men and women analyzed looked at this information available in the store environment, reinforcing the impact of the visual sense on the choices and pleasures in the store environment (Hekkert, 2006). Both male and female gender presented a read-and-observe readiness of the plates that indicated the section titled at the top of each shelf or the smaller plates that contained the characteristics of the product and its price. The signs that pointed to a kind of advertising to the product, however, were the target of analysis only of women. The latter can also be characterized as a stimulus of attractiveness. In this way, it is possible to conclude that:

P₅: Women and men exhibit the same behavior regarding the signaling in the store environment regarding the specific characteristics of the product and its price, identifying it and considering it at the time of purchase experience.

P₆: The advertisements available in the store environment, through posters and plaques, are observed especially by women.

Despite focusing on strategically located products and looking at product characteristics at the same rate as women, men generally spent more time in this environment. The degree of indecision is more intensified during purchases in this gender. One of the men, for example, accompanied by another older man, remained in the store for about twenty minutes, something not seen in relation to women who passed by it. The analysis of the various characteristics of the product seems to be more intense and time consuming in the male gender. Thus, in spite of the atmosphere of the store favoring the quick identification of the product and offering the necessary signals to choose the good, elements exposed in the studies of Bernardino, Pacanowski, Khoury e Reis (2006), Farias (2007) e Rayner (2009) as constructors of a strategic differential, the man's decision-making process was more time-consuming than the woman's. Perhaps these elements are associated with prior knowledge of the product and store environment. Thus, it was noticed that:

P₇: Compared to women, men spend more time at the point of sale performing their buying processes.

In addition, among the stimuli that aid in ease, there is the human variable (Ballantine et al., 2010). Because it is a store that deals with aspects of aesthetics and beauty, Fragrance employees presented themselves with impeccably combed hair and with a well-made faces. Being part of the front line and thus interacting directly with the consumer, the employees always kept the smile on their faces and the speech slight pause in a moderate tone. As part of their job, they approached every customer in the store who entered.

Consistent with Bitner's (1992) research, it was found that the store's environment influenced the quality and nature of Fragrance's interactions. The gender also presented itself as an element to influence the degree of this relation. During the observation it was noticed that the women interacted less with the employees in the store, perhaps because they were already familiar with the products and know the store or because they believed that only the signs would be enough to give them all the necessary information. The men, however, needed help at the time of the choice and made the interaction with the employees more intense. Thus:

P₈: There is greater interaction between men and store clerks during their shopping experiences in relation to the less intense interaction observed in female gender behavior.

The human variable was also highly important in the process of facilitating the choice of products when referring to friends, children and relatives who especially accompanied men in this purchase process (Turley & Milliman, 2000). Of all men who entered the store during the observation method, only two were unaccompanied. This genre was constantly aided, in addition to the employees, by the individuals who accompanied them. From another perspective, most of the women who entered the

store were alone and did not interact with the other clients who were there. In this way, the last propositions of the research are developed, emphasizing that:

P₉: Men are more likely to be influenced by others to determine their choices, with the help of other individuals who are in the area.

P₁₀: Women often buy perfumes on their own and rarely interact with other clients.

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present article has developed an innovative proposal in seeking to understand the differences in behavior between men and women in interaction with the store environment. The two themes separately, as perceived by the literature review, are addressed by several researches in the Marketing area, but a study that aimed to analyze these two constructs in an interrelated way had not yet been developed. Through this proposal, some propositions could be developed and, for better illustration, they are condensed in Figure 2.

Stimuli	Propositions
Attractive Stimuli	<p>P1: The showcase variable is observed by men and women before entering the store, but the time spent contemplating it is greater in relation to the female gender.</p> <p>P2: There is no relation of differentiation among behaviors of men and women and the illumination in the environment. This stimulus attracts the attention of both positively.</p>
Facilitating Stimuli	<p>P3: Men choose to make their buying decisions based on products that are best favored by store layout due to the viability found in product identification.</p> <p>P4: Women circulate more around the store environment, looking for alternative products, besides those highlighted by the layout.</p> <p>P5: Women and men exhibit the same behavior regarding the signaling in the store environment regarding the specific characteristics of the product and its price, identifying it and considering it at the time of purchase experience.</p> <p>P6: The advertisements available in the store environment, through posters and plaques, are observed especially by women.</p> <p>P7: Compared to women, men spend more time at the point of sale performing their buying processes.</p> <p>P8: There is greater interaction between men and store clerks during their shopping experiences in relation to the less intense interaction observed in female gender behavior.</p> <p>P9: Men are more likely to be influenced by others to determine their choices, with the help of other individuals who are in the area.</p> <p>P10: Women often buy perfumes on their own and rarely interact with other clients.</p>

Figura 2 - Proposals of the gender in relation to the store environment

Despite the categorization, it was possible to identify that the elements that form the store environment are interconnected and that a certain aspect can be considered at the same time a stimulus of attractiveness and facility, therefore, an intersection between these two sets. This consideration reinforces the proposal made by Ballantine et al. (2010) and Helme Falk & Hultén 2017 to study the atmosphere in a more holistic and integrated way.

It should be noted that, despite the innovative nature of the study, some limitations of this research should be considered. The first of these limitations is the use of only one instrument of data collection - observation. It is recognized that the practice of triangulation in research makes it richer and with possibilities of other propositions being established. Because this is a preliminary study, however, this limitation should be overcome with its continuity. Another element of limitation refers to the fact that the observation was made on an unusual day for the trade in the sense that it represents a greater shopping moment due to Valentine's Day. Other observations should be made on days that do not precede commemorative dates in order to verify whether or not differences in behavior are found. In

addition, it is possible to point out as a restriction of the research the fact that the conclusions of the study are based on a small number of observations, which is to be healed with the sequence of the investigation. In spite of this, the importance of this research of exploratory character for the development of contributions in a subject until then little observed is recognized.

For future research, it is suggested the applicability of this study in environments that offer other categories of goods and / or services, in addition to the use of other methods and research tools to analyze the phenomenon.

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