


## Innovation in retail marketing: sensory experience and its influence on women's footwear purchase decisions

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**Abstract:** The main objective of this study was to identify the predominant elements influencing the purchasing decision-making process in a footwear retail setting, considering physical product attributes (design, color, price, and brand), the commercial environment (lighting and music), and customer service (quality of service provided). A quantitative, descriptive-level approach was employed, using cross-sectional data analysis. Data were collected through a survey administered to 59 randomly selected women, all aged 35 or older, who had made purchases at the store. The information was processed using descriptive statistics. The main findings indicated that 56% of respondents prioritized footwear design, while environmental and service-related elements such as lighting (84%), music (75%), and customer service (81%) significantly contributed to the decision-making process. The study confirmed that additional experiential elements related to customer service play a pivotal role in shaping purchasing decisions, with design emerging as the most salient factor when selecting footwear.

**Keywords:** footwear market, store atmosphere, sensory stimuli, female costumer, customer service.

**JEL CODE:** M31, M39, L81.

### <sup>ES</sup> Innovación en el marketing minorista: la experiencia sensorial y su influencia en las decisiones de compra de calzado femenino

**Resumen:** El objetivo principal de este estudio fue identificar los elementos predominantes que influyen en el proceso de toma de decisiones de compra en un entorno minorista de calzado, considerando los atributos físicos del producto (diseño, color, precio y marca), el ambiente comercial (iluminación y música) y el servicio al cliente (calidad del servicio prestado). Se empleó un enfoque cuantitativo, de nivel descriptivo, utilizando análisis de datos de corte transversal. Los datos se recolectaron a través de una encuesta administrada a 59 mujeres seleccionadas aleatoriamente, todas de 35 años o más, que habían realizado compras en la tienda. La información se procesó utilizando estadística descriptiva. Los principales hallazgos indicaron que el 56% de las encuestadas priorizó el diseño del calzado, mientras que los elementos ambientales y relacionados con el servicio, como la iluminación (84%), la música (75%) y el servicio al cliente (81%), contribuyeron significativamente al proceso de toma de decisiones. El estudio confirmó que los elementos experienciales adicionales relacionados con el servicio al cliente desempeñan un papel fundamental en la configuración de las decisiones de compra, siendo el diseño el factor más destacado al seleccionar el calzado.

**Palabras clave:** Mercado del calzado, atmósfera comercial, estímulos sensoriales, clientela femenina, servicio al cliente.

**Sumario:** Introduction. Framework. Methodology. Results. Discussion. Conclusion. References.

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## Introduction

The footwear industry has undergone significant transformations in recent years, driven by shifts in consumer habits, the growing demand for personalized experiences, and the integration of innovative technologies at the point of sale. Within this context, sensory marketing has emerged as an innovative strategic tool to influence consumers' perceptions, emotions, and purchasing behavior—particularly in sectors such as women's footwear, where store design, ambiance, and customer service play a crucial role (Sulla, 2021). Numerous studies have indicated that the sensory experience within a retail environment can significantly impact the purchase intention, strengthening the emotional connection between the customer and the brand while differentiating the value proposition from competitors (Barrena et al., 2021; Raz et al., 2008).

The dynamics of commercial transactions play a pivotal role as a driving force in the global economy. One of the primary concerns for business owners is to optimize sales volume within a short time frame. Within this framework, a relevant question arises regarding the key factors prioritized by Peruvian women over the age of 35 when purchasing leather footwear. This inquiry aims to explore and understand the fundamental aspects that may influence the revitalization and strengthening of women's footwear sales, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The rationale underpinning this research encompasses both economic and social dimensions (Núñez & Morales-Alonso, 2024).

From an economic standpoint, the study offers footwear business owners and decision-makers deeper insights into the key determinants influencing the purchasing process of women's shoes. Such knowledge may serve as a foundation for developing and implementing effective strategies aimed at stimulating footwear consumption and contributing to the recovery of the sector. On a social level, the research provides highly relevant information, particularly for footwear retailers and entrepreneurs, emphasizing its practical applicability—especially for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) (Kastenholz et al., 2020; Sparacino et al., 2023).

Moreover, it is crucial to recognize that footwear plays a fundamental role in ensuring protection and comfort in everyday attire (López et al., 2023). Footwear purchasing is closely linked to psychological factors triggered by marketing strategies (Alagarsamy et al., 2024; Uhm et al., 2022), such as the visual presentation of products in advertising campaigns (Calzati & van Loenen, 2023) and the real-time experiential interaction with products (Weber et al., 2024).

In light of this critical situation, it is imperative that both store owners and managers of specialized footwear retailers optimize their business operations. First, doing so ensures the long-term sustainability of their enterprises in the marketplace; second, it enables revenue growth through more efficient commercial management. This consideration is particularly relevant in footwear retail, as products are purchased directly by the end consumer, thereby establishing a continuous feedback loop that should be strategically leveraged to inform other areas of the production chain.

Consequently, it is essential to analyze consumer behavior in this market and identify the most influential factors in the purchasing decision-making process (Morales-Alonso et al., 2024). This research aims to support the implementation of effective measures not only for this specific store, but also for other retailers facing similar challenges. It is critical for management to acknowledge that consumers in Magdalena del Mar, a Peruvian district in Lima, may exhibit distinct purchasing patterns compared to those in other districts where additional stores are located, highlighting the need for decisions tailored to the specific characteristics of each market segment.

The research focused on the female consumer segment due to a higher product turnover rate compared to the male segment (Xia et al., 2023). Moreover, a consistent trend has been observed among women favoring more comfortable and stable footwear options (Azhar et al., 2023), primarily to prevent potential long-term deformities (Miladi et al., 2023) caused by wearing high heels over 5 cm in height (Zeng et al., 2023). It is worth noting that, in many cases, manufacturers are aware of these adverse effects (Lorkowski & Pokorski, 2023), particularly when it comes to older consumers (Nakatake et al., 2023).

The primary objective of this research was to identify the predominant elements influencing decision-making during the footwear purchasing process. The analysis therefore focused on key aspects such as the product's physical attributes (design, color, price, and brand), the commercial environment (lighting and ambient music), and direct customer interaction, assessing the quality of service provided. This approach offers a deeper understanding of the factors that shape footwear purchasing decisions and contributes to the body of knowledge and future research in this field, with the aim of improving commercial strategies and enriching the overall understanding of consumer decision-making processes in the context of fashion and retail.

In order to address this knowledge gap, the following research question was proposed: What are the most influential factors in the purchasing decision process of women's footwear, considering physical attributes, store environment, and customer service? Accordingly, the study aimed to test the hypothesis: Physical characteristics of footwear are prioritized over environmental factors or customer service during the decision-making process.

## Framework

### Innovation in retail marketing and costumer shopping experience

In the retail context, innovation strategies focus on creating differentiated shopping experiences that generate value for consumers and sustainable competitive advantages for brands (Navarro-Castillo et al., 2024). These strategies include the incorporation of digital technologies (Álvarez et al., 2024), the design of stimulating sensory environments (such as lighting, music, and scents), and the personalization of the customer experience through data analytics.

Authors like Pantano et al. (2020) emphasize that innovation in retail responds not only to technological evolution but also to the transformation of consumer behavior, which is increasingly oriented towards memorable and emotionally significant experiences. In the footwear sector, innovation is reflected both in product design and the shopping environment, directly impacting perceived value and purchase intention.

### **Intangible assets and their role in enhancing customer experience**

Such brand image, customer knowledge, relational capital, and organizational capabilities—play a crucial role in shaping effective sensory experiences. These assets not only support strategic differentiation but also enable a more coherent implementation of sensory stimuli aligned with brand identity. According to studies like Lev & Gu (2016), intangible assets significantly contribute to perceived customer value and positioning in highly competitive markets. In the field of experiential marketing, these assets are essential for establishing lasting emotional bonds between consumers and brands, thus strengthening customer loyalty and lifetime value (Navarro-Castillo & Perea, 2024).

### **Sensory marketing and the store atmosphere**

Sensory marketing is defined as the discipline that seeks to influence consumer behavior by stimulating the five senses within the commercial environment. The store atmosphere, also known as the servicescape, plays a crucial role in the customer experience and is considered a key element in sensory marketing (Bitner, 1992). The elements comprising this atmosphere can be strategically manipulated to affect consumers' emotions, perceptions, and ultimately, their purchasing decisions.

- **Lighting:** The tonality, intensity, and distribution of light directly impact the perception of a space, product quality, and consumer mood (Tantanatewin & Inkarojrit, 2016). Appropriate lighting can create an inviting atmosphere that encourages lingering and facilitates product exploration, influencing the propensity to buy.
- **Music:** Ambient music in an establishment significantly affects dwell time, mood, and brand perception. Rhythm, volume, and genre can influence in-store traffic flow, perceived waiting time, and overall customer satisfaction (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2025). Music consistent with brand identity and target audience preferences can enhance the experience and extend time spent at the point of sale.

### **Service quality and customer satisfaction in retail**

Service quality refers to the customer's evaluation of the superiority or excellence of the service received (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In the retail context, interaction with store personnel is a critical component of service quality.

- **Customer attention:** Personalized and effective attention from employees can significantly influence positive brand perception and the completion of a purchase (Shrestha, 2021). Exceptional service not only facilitates the decision-making process but can also justify increased spending and foster long-term loyalty. Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980) suggests that customer satisfaction derives from comparing initial expectations with perceived service performance. If the service exceeds expectations, high satisfaction is generated, which can lead to repeat purchases and recommendations.
- **Impact on purchase decision:** Service quality acts as a facilitator of the purchase process, especially when consumers require assistance or additional information (Balinado et al., 2021). The perception of high-quality service can overcome barriers like price and solidify the acquisition decision.

### **Product characteristics and demographic factor in footwear purchase decisions**

Intrinsic product characteristics and price are fundamental determinants in purchasing decisions, though their relevance can vary depending on the context and demographic segment.

- **Product design and quality:** For categories like footwear, the physical and functional properties of the product (design, material quality, comfort) often outweigh the influence of the brand. This is particularly true in markets where consumers value functionality and direct aesthetic appeal over brand reputation (Carrillo et al., 2022). This approach aligns with the Perceived Value Theory, where consumers evaluate the benefit obtained (design, quality) in relation to the cost.
- **Brand influence:** While brand can be a factor in some purchasing decisions, in certain segments and product categories, its influence may be limited. This is common when consumers are guided more by functionality, personal style, or the perceived value of the product itself (Bakalo & Amantie, 2023).
- **Impact of price and demographics:** Price is a decisive factor, especially in youth segments or fast-fashion contexts where affordability can be paramount (Khan et al., 2022). However, in older cohorts with higher purchasing power, the relevance of price tends to decrease, while service quality and product characteristics gain importance. Consumer Behavior Theory recognizes the influence of demographic variables (age, income) on purchasing priorities and patterns.

In light of these developments, the following hypotheses are proposed to guide the present research:

H<sub>1</sub>: Consumers prioritize physical attributes of footwear (e.g., comfort, design) when forming their purchase intentions.

H<sub>2</sub>: Multisensory environmental factors (e.g., music, lighting, store aesthetics) serve as primary stimuli for initiating the purchase process.

H<sub>3</sub>: The quality of customer service across touchpoints (online and offline) significantly facilitates the completion of the purchase decision.

This framework integrates insights from experiential retail, and consumer psychology, offering a comprehensive understanding of how interactive and sensorial cues converge across channels to shape consumer decisions. Understanding these dynamics is critical for businesses seeking to align their strategies with evolving consumer expectations and to strengthen customer loyalty in competitive retail environments.

## Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional, and correlational research design to explore the influence of sensory marketing components on consumer purchasing decisions in the context of women's footwear. The research was conducted in retail stores located in Lima, Peru, during the first quarter of 2024. The target population consisted of female consumers who had recently made a purchase in a footwear store. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed due to accessibility constraints and the exploratory nature of the study.

Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire, designed based on previously validated measurement scales from the literature (Krishna, 2012; Spangenberg et al., 2005) and more recent scales such as the Sensory Brand Experience scale (Krupka, 2023) and multi-sensory marketing scales deployed in impulse-buying studies (Le et al., 2024). The instrument included Likert-scale items (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) measuring the perceived impact of environmental design, music, lighting, and service quality on purchasing behavior. Prior to fieldwork, a pilot test with 30 participants was conducted to assess the clarity, reliability, and internal consistency of the instrument. Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceeded the 0.70 threshold, indicating acceptable reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics summarized the demographic profile of respondents and key study variables. Inferential analysis, including Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression, was performed to test the proposed hypotheses and identify significant predictors of purchase decision-making. All statistical procedures were conducted using SPSS version 26, with a significance level set at  $p < 0.05$ .

## Results

To address the first hypothesis, customers were asked to rank the dimensions of footwear physical attributes in order of importance. The results are presented in Figure 1, which shows that most participants prioritized design, followed by color, price, and lastly, brand. The devaluation of brand can be explained by the store's location within a shopping mall, where consumers typically enter department stores seeking specific styles (designs) that align with their color preferences. They then compare options based on price to finalize their decision on whether or not to purchase a fashion item, often disregarding brand considerations (Guzman & Canaza, 2021). This finding aligns with Carrillo et al. (2022), who note that older consumers prioritize comfort, visual appeal, and material quality due to greater awareness of long-term physical implications and the need for ergonomic support.

The diminished role of brand, positioned last in the ranking, reflects a consumer profile less influenced by symbolic consumption. This contrasts with younger consumers, who often use brand associations to signal identity. In this context, women over 35 demonstrate a more utilitarian and experience-driven evaluation of footwear, prioritizing tangible attributes that can be directly perceived and tested in-store. Such behavior reinforces the relevance of product-centric strategies in footwear retail environments targeting mature female segments.

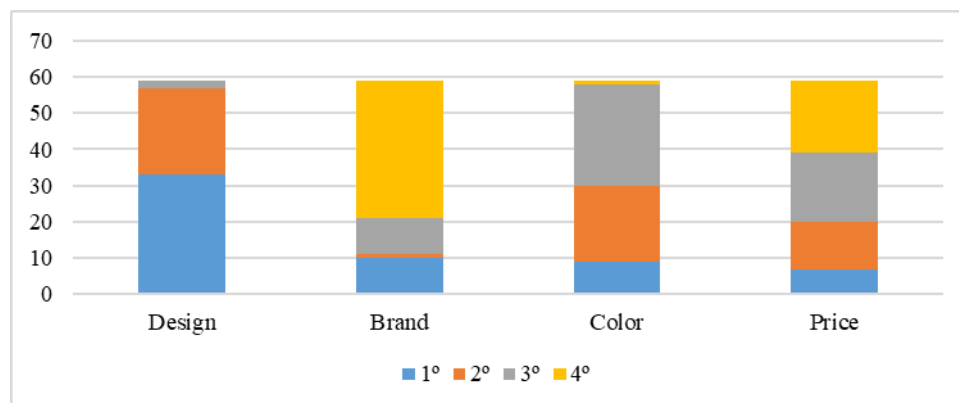


Figure 1. Prioritization of physical footwear attributes

Note.  $n=59$ . 1°: first place. 2°: second place. 3°: third place. 4°: fourth place.

Figure 2 reveals a notable preference for functional comfort over aesthetic appeal, with a 10% difference favoring comfort-based decision-making. This result reflects the increasing importance of physiological comfort among women over 35, who tend to value footwear that minimizes physical strain and prevents long-term musculoskeletal issues. This aligns with findings from Lorkowski and Pokorski (2023), which highlight the health implications of poorly designed footwear, including postural imbalance, foot deformities, and joint stress, and how these concerns intensify with age.

While aesthetic design serves as an initial visual attractor, the final decision is significantly influenced by the comfort experienced during product trial. The tactile and ergonomic aspects of footwear provide immediate sensory feedback, shaping both emotional reassurance and perceived product value. This behavior mirrors a functional-aesthetic tradeoff commonly observed in mature consumer groups, where design remains important but is secondary to the practical experience of wearing the product.

This insight underscores the importance for retailers of emphasizing comfort technologies, cushioning systems, and ergonomic features in product displays and customer interactions.

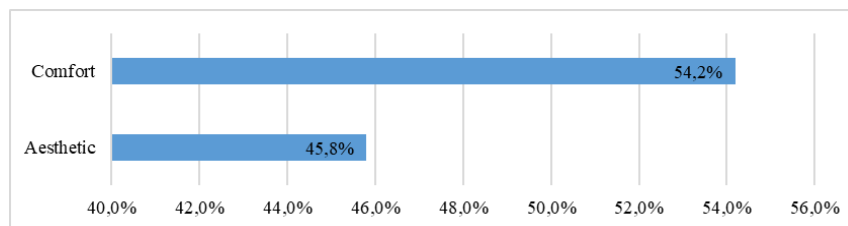


Figure 2. Percentage preference between aesthetic appeal and functional comfort in footwear

Note.  $n=59$ .

Figure 3 shows that most respondents prefer single-colored footwear, reflecting not only aesthetic preferences but also deeper psychological and functional motivations. According to Baca (2019), color choices in products often reflect emotional associations, personal identity, and the desire for coherence with existing wardrobe items. Women over 35 typically seek footwear that is versatile, professional, and easy to combine with different outfits, leading them to prefer neutral or solid tones.

This preference is also consistent with trends in post-pandemic consumer behavior, where minimalism and functional fashion have become more dominant. Single-colored footwear signals reliability, timelessness, and practicality, characteristics that resonate with mature consumers who prioritize value longevity. Retailers can leverage this insight by highlighting classic and neutral-toned footwear in visual merchandising and using lighting to enhance the richness of these colors.

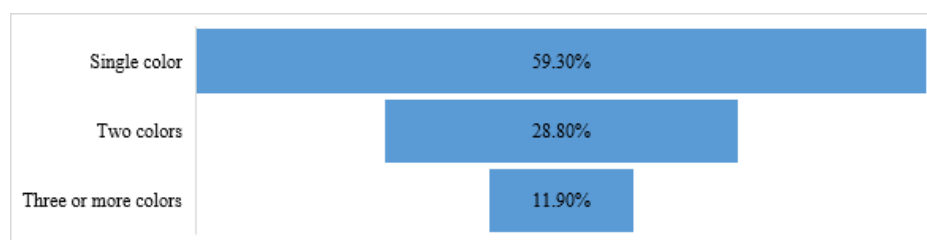


Figure 3. Percentage distribution in the choice of footwear color quantity

Note.  $n=59$ .

To test the second hypothesis, participants were asked to rank the commercial environment factors that influenced their decision to remain in the store and initiate the purchasing process. This procedure led to the development of Table 2, which provides a detailed breakdown of the weight assigned to each feature that motivated consumers to stay in the store after entering. This methodological approach offers a specific and structured view of the environmental elements that influenced consumer behavior, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the key factors that affected their in-store engagement and purchase initiation.

A value exceeding 60% indicated that customers affirmed both lighting ( $r = 0.566$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.005$ ) and music played ( $r = 0.599$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.005$ ) a crucial role in their initial decision to remain in the store. The perception of comfort through sensory stimuli emerged as a decisive factor in preventing consumers from leaving the establishment at the beginning of their shopping process, thereby increasing the likelihood of customer retention and purchase completion. This result underscores the significant influence of lighting and music on first impressions and perceived comfort, highlighting their impact on customer retention and sales opportunities.

Regarding lighting, 64% of female consumers reported this aspect as a crucial factor in their decision to remain in or exit a store after entry. Given that lighting tonality significantly impacts brand perception, as demonstrated by previous studies (Kutlu et al., 2013) it can be inferred that consumers positively evaluated the store's lighting level and type. This analysis suggests these considerations were appropriate and acted as motivators for extended in-store Browse, ultimately culminating in concrete purchase decisions. The importance assigned to lighting underscores its pivotal role in shaping consumer experience, influencing perceptions and decisions within the retail environment.



Regarding music, 61% of participants agreed that this factor was also instrumental in their decision to remain within the premises. This finding is supported by previous research that has identified the significant impact of music on consumer behavior (Ahlbom et al., 2023). These additional studies corroborate Hypothesis 2, which postulates that environmental factors play a significant role in initiating the purchasing process. Consequently, this strengthens the notion that music, as an environmental component, positively influences the consumer experience and can be strategically employed to facilitate the initiation of the purchase process within a specific retail environment.

Table 2. Summary of results for sensory factors

Evaluated Factor	Alternative	Frequency	Percentage
Positive influence of lighting on store stays	Yes	38	64%
	No	5	9%
	Indifferent	16	27%
Positive influence of lighting during the purchasing process	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	0	0%
	Neutral	9	16%
	Agree	38	64%
	Strongly agree	12	20%
Positive influence of music on store stays	Yes	36	61%
	No	7	12%
	Indifferent	16	27%
Positive influence of music during the purchasing process	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	4	7%
	Neutral	11	18%
	Agree	27	46%
	Strongly agree	17	29%

Finally, to validate the last hypothesis, an analysis of the service quality variable was conducted. This focused specifically on the attention provided by store employees to determine its influence on the conclusion of the purchase process. A concise summary of the data collected is presented in Table 2.

A strong approval for customer service was evident among female consumers ( $r = 0.404$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.005$ ), highlighting the importance of commitment to quality service delivery and creating a satisfactory shopping experience. These are fundamental elements for enhancing positive consumer perception (Nagaiti & Hareri, 2023). This endorsement suggests that, within the past research context, the emphasis on customer attention significantly contributed to cultivating a positive perception among female consumers. This reinforces the idea that service quality plays a crucial role in building a favorable relationship with customers, not only during a first visit but also in the long term, ultimately achieving customer loyalty.

Following the initial stages of the purchase process and the consumer's decision to remain in the store, as previously demonstrated, 81% of female consumers perceived that the attention provided by store employees played a significant role in continuing the product acquisition process. It's important to note that this percentage excludes consumers who already had a clear predisposition to purchase a specific model, as they did not require additional assistance, or whose shopping experience was categorized as simple and quick. This finding highlights the positive influence of quality customer service, suggesting that for the majority of consumers, interaction with store staff is crucial in their ultimate purchasing decision.

Table 2. Consumer evaluation of customer service

Evaluated Factor	Alternative	Frequency	Percentage
Assessment of salesperson attention provided	Very poor	0	0%
	Poor	0	0%
	Average	1	2%
	Good	38	64%
	Very good	20	34%
Level of influence of salesperson attention on purchase decision	None	4	7%
	Some	7	12%
	Much	20	34%
	Very much	28	47%

Figure 4 highlights an important behavioral mechanism: high-quality salesperson attention not only facilitates the purchase decision but also increases the customer's maximum willingness to pay. This effect aligns with evidence from consumer psychology showing that trusted interpersonal interactions reduce perceived risk, reinforce confidence in the product, and enhance perceived value. When customers feel guided, supported, and understood, they are more inclined to consider premium options or increase their budget.

This phenomenon reflects what marketing literature identifies as upgrading behavior, where emotional reassurance enables consumers to justify a higher price, especially in categories where comfort and aesthetic fit matter. For footwear retailers, this implies that excellent service can directly influence revenue per customer, not merely conversion rates. From a managerial perspective, investments in staff training may generate measurable financial returns through improved customer satisfaction and increased transaction value.

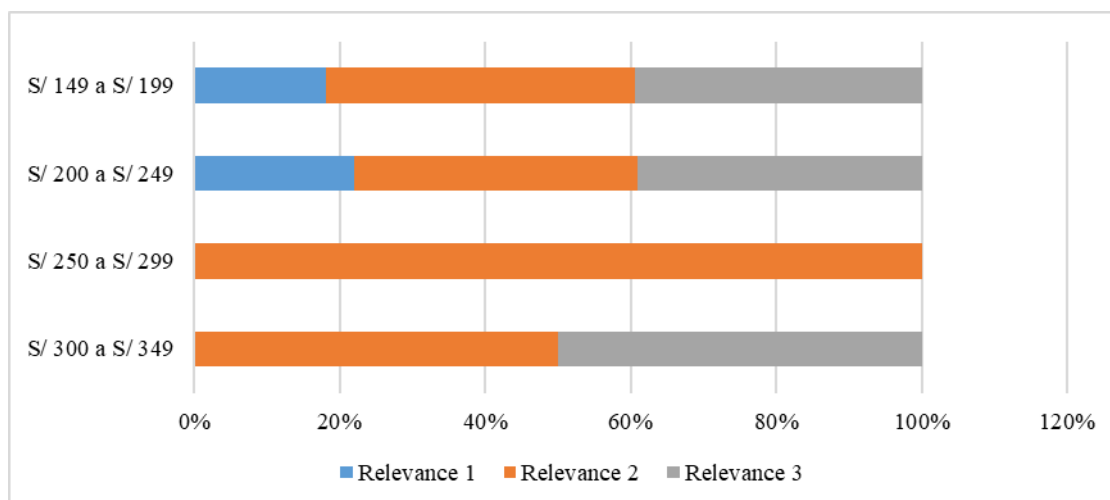


Figure 4. Salesperson attention vs. maximum willingness to pay

## Discussion

A key contribution of this study to the existing literature lies in the empirical confirmation that a substantial proportion of female consumers prioritize the intrinsic characteristics of footwear—such as comfort, design, and material quality—when making purchase decisions and intangible assets such as environment and attention quality. This emphasis on functional and aesthetic dimensions underscores a product-centric orientation in consumer behavior. In contrast, brand name emerged as the least influential factor among the variables examined, suggesting a shift away from traditional brand-driven loyalty in this specific retail segment.

These findings provide meaningful insights for both academic researchers and retail practitioners by highlighting the predominance of product-specific attributes over brand reputation in shaping purchase intentions. From a theoretical standpoint, this reinforces the relevance of experiential and utilitarian value frameworks in consumer decision-making models. For the business sector, the results suggest a strategic imperative to invest in product innovation and in-store experiential elements rather than relying solely on brand equity. Furthermore, this evidence offers a robust basis for future investigations into the dynamics of consumer preferences in fashion-related categories, especially within emerging market contexts.

This finding aligns with previous research by Guzman and Canaza (2021) which revealed that a considerable 90% of respondents opted to purchase footwear in galleries without considering the brand. This behavioral pattern suggests that, in certain commercial contexts, the brand may have a limited influence on footwear purchase decisions, underscoring the importance of other factors. Furthermore, this perspective is supported by additional studies indicating a reduced involvement of brand in the decision-making process, such as those by Lim et al. (2023).

It is relevant to note that, according to Juárez-Varón et al. (2023) the emotional component also plays a significant role in purchase decisions. This evidence suggests that, beyond pragmatic considerations like brand, emotions can trigger purchasing decisions, enriching our understanding of the determinants of consumer behavior when acquiring footwear in specific retail environments.

Regarding the findings from Guayaquil and Laverde's (2018) research on personal factors influencing footwear purchasing behavior among consumers in Latacunga, design (26%) and quality (21%) emerged as the most relevant elements for the studied population. These concordances indicate a consistency in the importance assigned to these factors within the specific context of footwear acquisition in that locality, supporting the premise that design and quality played central roles in consumers' purchase decisions in the results of this research.

In comparison to the results obtained by Dueñas and Carmona (2021) where price and product quality played a predominant role in 50.6% of purchases (with 74% female participation and 73% of participants aged 16-30 years), a significant coincidence is observed in the relevance attributed to these factors within the context analyzed in this study. Nevertheless, it is imperative to note that, according to previous studies (Maslowska et al., 2017), positive evaluations do not always directly translate into sales. This

observation suggests the need for further exploration into the complexities involved in converting stated preferences into effective purchasing behaviors, underscoring the importance of considering other commercial factors within this dynamic. Consequently, it can be described that in the context of purchase decisions within the youth fashion category, price becomes the most relevant factor for acquiring clothing or footwear. This perspective differs from the results obtained in the current research, where all respondents were over 35 years old, and the selling price was ranked as the third most influential factor in the majority of purchases. Only 12% of participants considered it the most relevant factor. This discrepancy can be explained by a higher purchasing power in the older age range, allowing them to allocate more resources to these types of purchases.

Regarding the categories evaluated within the framework of this research on the retail atmosphere, it was evident that both lighting and music in the store contributed positively to the shopping experience, being favorably appreciated by 84% and 75% of respondents, respectively. The importance of these elements as components of the retail atmosphere is supported by prior studies, such as Castro and Altamirano (2020), who highlighted that retail atmosphere had a high level of significance ( $r=0.944$ ) in purchase decisions. Specifically, lighting ( $r=0.541$ ) was identified as the most influential factor in this variable. These results reinforce the general perception of the relevance of the retail atmosphere, and more specifically lighting, in the purchase decision-making process.

Additionally, Riaño and Méndez's (2014) study provided valuable insight into the influence of music in the retail environment by comparing the relevance and acceptance of music among consumers in four retail establishments—two franchises and two independent stores. The results revealed that 74% of respondents in the franchised stores appreciated the in-store music, contributing to a more gratifying shopping experience. In contrast, only 56% of consumers in the non-franchised stores expressed interest in the music. This finding demonstrates the beneficial effect of selecting appropriate in-store music, aligning it with customer preferences to optimize the overall experience.

Regarding customer service and its influence on purchase decisions, the present study reveals that 98% of participants successfully evaluated customer service, rating it as satisfactory or excellent. This high satisfaction rate was further evidenced by 80% of female consumers who stated that customer service positively influenced their purchase decision. These findings align with Asimbaya and Calle's (2018) research, which underscores the relevance of customer service in footwear stores. Their study found that 72% of consumers over 18 years old considered customer service to be a highly influential factor in their product acquisition decisions.

In contrast, the results obtained by Dueñas & Carmona (2021) showed that personal treatment influenced only 23.5% of clothing purchases made by a sample of 140 individuals, mostly women, and only 10% of participants over 45 years old. This led them to conclude that customer service does not appear to be a relevant factor for the younger demographic in their purchase decisions. However, in our research, conducted with 86% of participants over 45 years old, it was found that customer service did exert an influence on their purchase decision, suggesting a possible variability in the perception and relevance of customer service across different age segments.

This divergence emphasizes the importance of incorporating demographic variability into the assessment of customer service relevance. It reinforces the strategic imperative of adapting commercial approaches to the expectations and values of specific consumer segments. In this regard, evaluating customer satisfaction with footwear purchases becomes essential for understanding whether consumer expectations were effectively met. This is particularly relevant when considering that 69.5% of participants entered the store with a clear purchasing intention, while 30.5% made unplanned purchases, influenced by in-store factors. By examining the overall customer experience—spanning product attributes, service quality, and sensory stimuli—it is possible to anticipate repeat purchase behavior and word-of-mouth referrals, both of which are critical for long-term business sustainability and customer loyalty.

In accordance with data presented by Asimbaya and Calle (2018) 74% of consumers opted to make a repeat purchase at the same footwear store after a satisfactory experience. Furthermore, findings from Guzman and Canaza (2021) indicate that 76% of customers declared themselves satisfied, while 46% expressed high satisfaction with their purchase. In a competitive and saturated market, maintaining this high level of satisfaction presents a significant challenge for businesses. The proper management of product offerings, the retail environment, and customer service is clearly a fundamental task for establishing and sustaining long-term relationships with customers.

## Conclusion

This study confirms that sensory marketing elements, particularly lighting and background music, play a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior within the retail environment. Specifically, 64% of respondents indicated that lighting influenced their decision to remain longer in the store, while 61% reported that music enhanced their shopping experience. These findings align with hypotheses  $H_2$  and  $H_3$ , demonstrating that atmospheric stimuli are instrumental in triggering consumer engagement and facilitating the purchasing process.

Beyond merely attracting attention, these environmental factors were shown to support customer retention and foster autonomous product exploration. The creation of a welcoming and stimulating retail space enabled consumers to engage in deeper product evaluation, increasing the likelihood of a satisfactory



purchase outcome. This underscores the critical role of synergistic interactions between environmental and product-related stimuli in shaping positive affective responses and encouraging informed purchasing behavior. As such, the study reinforces the need for integrated sensory design strategies within the retail sector to enhance decision-making quality and consumer satisfaction.

The strategic integration of sensory cues not only initiated purchase interest but also promoted customer satisfaction and retention. Respondents reported greater autonomy and a willingness to explore product options when the store environment was inviting and immersive. This supports the hypothesis that experiential stimuli contribute to successful purchasing outcomes and deepens the customer's product evaluation process.

In terms of product-related factors, intrinsic attributes such as comfort, material, and design were found to be more influential than brand recognition. This confirms  $H_1$  and reflects a consumer preference for functional and aesthetic characteristics over symbolic brand value, especially among women over 35 with higher purchasing power.

Customer service emerged as a key factor in finalizing purchase decisions, with 98% of participants rating it positively and 80% acknowledging its influence. These findings not only validate  $H_3$  but also highlight demographic differences, as older customers showed greater sensitivity to service quality, reinforcing the need for age-segmented marketing strategies.

In conclusion, the integration of sensory elements, product-centered design, and high-quality customer service forms the backbone of a successful retail strategy. This research contributes to understanding how innovation in retail marketing—grounded in sensory experiences—drives purchasing behavior in women's footwear. Future research may explore how these findings extend across digital environments and emerging consumer segments.

This study presents several limitations that contextualize its findings. The sample was limited to 59 women over 35 from a single district, which restricts the generalizability of the results. The cross-sectional and self-reported nature of the data may introduce response bias and prevents observing changes in consumer behavior over time. Additionally, the study focused solely on in-store experiences and did not examine digital or hybrid purchasing behaviors that increasingly shape retail decision-making.

The results highlight concrete actions for footwear retailers and store managers. Emphasizing product attributes—especially comfort and design—can strengthen consumer engagement among women over 35. Carefully managed sensory cues, such as lighting and music, should be used to create a welcoming shopping atmosphere. Furthermore, the strong influence of customer service underscores the need for continuous staff training to enhance personalized attention, encourage repeat purchases, and build long-term loyalty.

Future studies should expand the sample to include broader demographic groups and multiple retail settings. Incorporating longitudinal or experimental designs could deepen understanding of how sensory stimuli influence decisions over time. Additional psychological or emotional variables may also enrich the analysis, and given current retail trends, examining sensory stimuli in online or blended shopping environments represents a promising research avenue.

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