

Virtual Store Experience: Will it increase the intention to visit the physical store or make a purchase?

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic challenges retail players to provide customers with an omnichannel shopping experience. Even though online retail shopping seems very promising, research have found that offline store is still needed to increase brand awareness and visit intention. Prior research has shown that virtual tours are effective at encouraging visit intention. However, they have not been proven for purchase intention. Brand equity was expected to mediate the relationship between store brand experience, visit intention, and purchase intention when the positive affective response was also expected to mediate for purchase intention. A total of 216 users who experienced the IKEA virtual store experience interface were used as respondents. The data collected were processed using SEM. Results showed that store brand experience positively impacts visit intention and purchase intention directly and indirectly with brand equity as a mediate variable. This study also reveals that in this case, higher visit intention are influenced by higher brand equity. Furthermore, this VR experience drives a more positive affective response which in returns creates higher purchase intention. This VR technology is recommended to bring back traffic post pandemic since it is easy to use and can be used by anyone anywhere.

Keywords: Brand Equity, Positive Affective Response, Purchase Intention, Virtual Store Experience, Visit Intention.

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 affected consumer behavior, especially in the first year. Expectations and consumer habits in grocery shopping are switched over. Government regulations limit our outside activities caused consumer demand for omnichannel shopping experience or online and offline shopping availability at once (The Economist, 2021). Quoted from a McKinsey report (Diebner, Silliman, Ungerman, & Vancauwenberghe, 2020) that in a crisis or recession, focusing on customer experience will lead the company to a winning strategy. During the 2007 to 2009 recession, research proved that higher returns for shareholders occurred in companies with leaders who prioritized customer experience. Although the 2007-2009 recession cannot be equated with the current state of Covid-19, the pressure that exists for every company to survive is the same. Companies are competing to reduce savings but at the same time they must at the same time provide the best service for consumers. According to McKinsey, the right way is to increase digital self-service and to shape smarter operational trade-offs by prioritizing what is most important to consumers.

A survey by Nielsen on 2019 Hari Belanja Online Nasional reports that industry 4.0 also changes consumer shopping behavior and increases total transaction up to more than 9 billion rupiah. This amount exceeded the total transaction in 2018 by 2.3 billion rupiah (Republika, 2019).

We are Social mentioned that there an increase in Indonesian internet penetration by 64% and active social media user penetration by 59% per January 2020. Compete with other categories, turns out furniture occupies the 4th position in e-commerce growth by category survey by We Are Social. Furniture became one among other categories with promising online shopping prospects (DATAREPORTAL, 2020).

Despite all that data, Indonesian Retail Association reported that since 2015, 3-4% of total 40.000 modern retail stores have closed their physical store (Bella, 2019) though Indonesian consumer has not been able to fully transfer to online shopping (Perdana, 2016). For a multichannel company, a physical store is still an option and will give a unique value to the brand (Bella, 2019). The consumer will be more pleased to evaluate online stores after having experience from a physical store (Baek, 2020). Physical stores and online stores are complementary (Fornari, Fornari, Grandi, Menegatti, & Hofacker, 2016).

The environment of a store is very important as it could keep the consumers to save more time to get what they need or spend more time visiting the store (Sin et al., 2021). To be able to persuade the consumer to come to a physical store, many retail players have tried to implement a virtual tour experience since it enables the consumer to experience a certain store or place without having to visit it physically. The virtual tour uses a computer to present a virtual environment with 360degree media, online media, and virtual reality tech without the need to attend physically. Virtual tours as part of the brand experience influence brand equity and also increases visit intention (Baek, 2020). Positive experience with store brands also has the influence to purchase intention (Diallo & Siqueira, 2017). Research by (Moreira, Fortes, & Santiago, 2017) also proves that there is a significant correlation between brand equity and purchase intentions. Consumers with a strong relationship with the brand will create a more unforgettable experience that will create an emotional attachment so that they want to repeat the experience. The higher the brand equity, the higher the motivation, preferences, and the desire to buy are formed (Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2005).

By conducting research similar with a modification needed, this research can provide industry and retail companies with insight into the importance of the kind of approach that can be taken virtually through increasing emotional engagement to drive consumer traffic to offline stores and create sales opportunities. This is very important for the brand considering the behavior of the Indonesian people, which is different from other countries, so it is necessary to conduct specialized research in Indonesia. Looking back at the results of research from (Baek, 2020) which has not considered purchase intention, which it is actually can be influenced by brand experience, but other research conducted by (Moreira et al., 2017) and (Watson, 2018) can support the hypothesis that in the retail industry, visit and purchase intention can be increased through store brand experiences. Looking at the behavior of Indonesian consumers who is still like the type of shopping to offline stores, it is important to consider interesting solutions so that consumers want to come to offline stores and increase their buying desire. Based on what has been mentioned, the researcher wants to know the effect of store brand experience on brand equity, visit intention, positive affective response, and purchase intention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Virtual Tour of a Store

Virtual tour is a virtual experience that takes place on a computer that is mediated by a virtual environment (Cho, Wang, & Fesenmaier, 2002). Virtual tour is using virtual reality tech and differ from augmented reality (Javornik, 2016). 360degree virtual tour experience is a web-based 360degree media and suitable for any kind of device so that the perceived ease of use is high.

Research conducted by (Baek, 2020) concluded that 360-degree interactive tours or the so-called virtual tour experiences have been proven to increase brand equity and ultimately increase visit intentions. Compared to VR equipment, web-based 360-degree media is easier to use and can be used on all devices such as mobile phones and computers. In the end, this virtual tour can be a consideration for companies to switch to web-based 360-degree media compared to the costs that must be incurred to create a new store (Baek, 2020).

Store Brand Experience

Brand experience involves feeling and defines as memorable and delightful consumer experience. 4 dimensions of brand experience are sensory, behavioral, emotional, and intellectual (Bearden, 2011). Sensory means the sensation of the body as if visual, hearing, smelling, tasting, and sensing. Behavior means motoric response from stimulus as if we experience physical activity, lifestyle, and interaction with brand. Emotional means sentiment and emotion that created from a brand. Intellectual means the intellection process that provoked or stimulated by an idea created by a brand.

Brand experience is not limited to products and services in the physical marketplace, but there is a lot of research on brand experience in other industries such as tourism, banking, and retail. In a previous study by (Baek, 2020), it has been investigated about a virtual tour of a store where consumers will experience sensory, behavioral, emotional, and intellectual experiences. There are results that emotional and intellectual influence actively to help build brand equity through virtual experience.

H1: Store brand experience increases visit intention

Brand Equity

Brand equity will add or reduce the value of product or services through their linked of asset and liabilities with brand, name, and symbols (Keller, 2003). 5 dimensions of brand equity are brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty (Srivastava & Shocker, 1991). Brand equity is forced by the power of customer experience (Jones, 2013) and has effect on brand experience (Brakus, 2009).

H2: Store brand experience positively affects brand equity

Visit Intention

Visit intentions refer to the perception of visiting a place at a time (Whang, 2015). Ferns (2012) in his research found that the influence of destination brand equity which leads to what consumers feel about the brand as a destination has a positive effect on visit intentions. Chen and Myagmarsuren (2010) also suggests that destination brand equity increases consumer interest in making return visits to a place. Therefore, the authors suspect that virtual experience will form brand equity so that in the end it will increase visit intentions.

H3: Brand equity increases visit intention

Purchase Intention

The main factors of purchase intention are behavior, evaluation, and perception of a brand (Wang, 2012). Purchase intention considered important to end consumer's purchase decision. Brand equity positively influences purchase intention where the higher the brand equity, the stronger consumer preference and purchase intention (Jani & Han, 2014). Consumers will have stronger purchase intention through attitude toward brands if they are interested in all kinds of experience (sensory, emotional, intellectual, and behavioral) (Diallo & Siqueira, 2017). Moreira et al. (2017) state that there is a correlation between brand equity and purchase intention.

H4: Brand equity increases purchase intention

The finding of Watson (2018) where the presence of augmentation to encourage store brand experience creates a stronger emotional response than the absence of augmentation. In his research, it is also proven that the effect of augmentation on behavior is mediated by a positive affective response.

H5: Store brand experience increases positive affective response

The findings of Watson (2018) where the implementation of AR in online retail can help increase the positive affective response of consumers so as to increase the desire to buy (purchase intention) in the future.

H6: Positive affective response increases purchase intention

Watson (2018) found that the implementation of AR in online retail can help increase the desire to buy (purchase intention) directly.

H7: Store brand experience increases purchase intention

RESEARCH METHODS

The scale or indicators used by this study were adopted from research (Baek, 2020; Moreira et al., 2017; and Watson, 2018). There are 5 main variables in this study where for the store brand experience construct the researcher uses sensory, behavioural, emotional, and intellectual dimensions. The store brand experience, brand equity, and visit intention indicators were obtained from (Baek, 2020), while the positive affective

response indicators were taken from (Watson, 2018). Purchase intention variable indicators are taken from research (Moreira et al., 2017; Watson, 2018). The item of questionnaire is attached on table below.

Table 1. Questionnaire Items

Variables		Statement
Brand Experience	Sensory	1. impression on the senses of sight or other senses 2. I find this shop sensorily appealing 3. The experience of this store is not interesting to me (reverse)
	Behavioral	4. I feel physically and behaviorally engaged when I experience this store 5. The experience with this shop resulted in an experience for my body
		6. The experience at this store is not action oriented (reverse)
	Intellectual	10. I put a lot of thought into this experience 11. This experience stimulated my curiosity and problem solving 12. This experience doesn't make me think
Brand equity (OBE)		13. It makes sense to buy this brand over other brands even though they are the same 14. If there is another brand that is as good as this brand, I still prefer this brand 15. If other brands are not different from this brand, it would be smarter if I still choose this brand 16. Even though other brands have the same features, the same will still choose this brand
Positive affective response		17. I get excited after experiencing the IKEA virtual experience 18. I feel enthusiastic after experiencing the IKEA virtual experience 19. I feel that the IKEA virtual experience is a cool thing 20. I feel happy after experiencing the IKEA virtual experience 21. I feel attracted to IKEA after experiencing the IKEA virtual experience 22. I became inspired after experiencing the IKEA virtual experience 23. I feel happy after experiencing the IKEA virtual experience
Visit intentions		24. I am willing to visit this shop in the future 25. I have high desire to visit this shop in the future 26. I willingly recommend visiting this shop to others 27. I will try to visit this shop in the future
Purchase intentions		28. I am seriously considering buying IKEA products 29. There is a very high probability that I will buy an IKEA product 30. I will buy IKEA products after experiencing the IKEA virtual experience

	31. If allowed to choose, my friends will choose IKEA products because I have experienced the virtual experience
	32. I will recommend IKEA to my friends

Likert 7 scale is used in the questionnaire to represent the highest answer that is strongly agree to the lowest that is strongly disagree. The demographics of the respondents were also questioned at the end of the questionnaire. Before conducting the main test, the researcher first conducted a pre-test to 30 respondents to ensure that the questionnaire indicators were valid and reliable. LISREL 8.80 is used to perform a reliability test where it is proven that the Cronbach alpha value is above the limit of 0.7 so that it can be said that all items are reliable. Validity test was also carried out using LISREL 8.80 where the test results proved all significance above 0.05, KMO value above 0.5, and all factor loading values above 0.5 so that it can be concluded that all items are valid.

The model fit assessment aims to assess the suitability of the data obtained with the model. An index that shows that the model is fit (Acceptable fit/Good fit) does not provide a guarantee that the GOF model is really fit. On the other hand, a fit index which concludes that the model is very bad, does not provide a guarantee that the model is really not fit or less fit (Marginal fit/Mediocre). This is due to the complexity of the model (Ghozali, 2008).

In addition, structural tests were also carried out to see the evaluation of the relationships between latent variables. The purpose of assessing the structural model is to determine whether the relationship that exists in the conceptualization model hypothesis is supported by empirical data through questionnaires or surveys. There are 3 things that must be considered in this case, namely the direction sign which states the relationship between variables and the significance of the parameter. The structural equation model is used and analyzed by LISREL. This research with prior reliability and validity test for the measurement indicators. The goodness of fit is used to ensure the compatibility of data and a model. 5% signification is used on one-tailed with a t-value of 1.65. We accept the hypothesis if t value is > 1.65 or < -1.65 .

RESULTS

This research is modification research from "Understanding the virtual tours of retail stores: how can store brand experience promote visit intention", "Influence of sensory stimuli on brand experience, brand equity, and purchase intentions" and "The impact of experiential augmented reality applications on fashion purchase intention". The researcher used quantitative research where the survey is used to get primary data. We recruited respondents whoever made a purchase of furniture either from IKEA or non-IKEA brand. Respondents who have never seen IKEA's virtual experience are expected to experience it for at least a minute. We used non-probability sampling where snowball sampling techniques are chosen considering it is hard to identify the sample from the selected population. The table below explains the respondents' demographics of this research.

Table 2. Respondents Demographics

Characteristic	Category	Results	Percentage
Gender	Woman	104	48
	Man	112	52

Age	< 21	15	1
	21-30	148	69
	31-40	26	12
	41-50	18	8
	> 50	9	4
Status	Single	157	73
	Married	59	27
Employment	Student	1	1
	College student	78	36
	Employee	98	45
	Entrepreneur	21	10
	Government employees	10	5
	Retire	0	0
	Teacher	2	1
	Youtuber	1	1
	State Institution Employees	2	1
Education	High school	39	18
	Graduate	159	74
	Master's degree	17	8
	Diploma	1	1
The average amount of money spent every time you shop for furniture	≤ Rp 500.000	57	26
	≤ Rp 1.000.000	52	24
	≤ Rp 2.000.000	33	15
	≤ Rp 5.000.000	55	26
	≤ Rp 10.000.000	16	7
	≤ Rp 20.000.000	3	1

The sampling method used is non-probability sampling where the type of method used is snowball sampling. Snowball sampling was chosen based on considerations of the difficulty of conducting samples selected from the population (Cooper, 2014). Using Hair's formula to determine the number of respondents, 160 is the minimum number of samples and 320 is the maximum. 217 approved surveys from a total of 240 are selected to be continued.

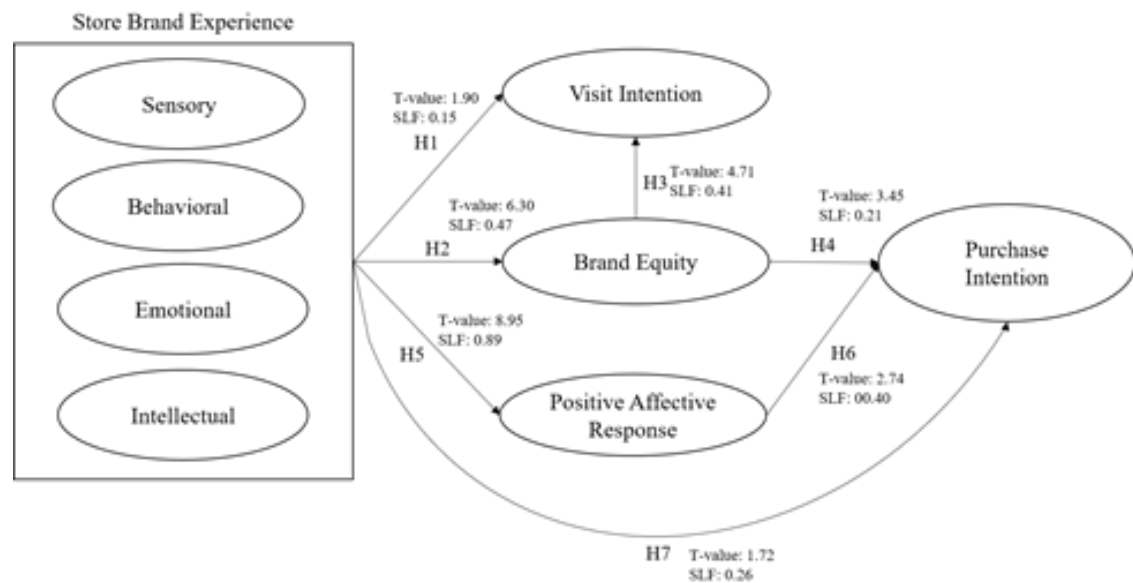
The result of the reliability and validity test of pre-test proved that all indicators can be used for further steps of this research. All variables have Cronbach alpha > 0.70 for the reliability test. Signification < 0.5, KMO > 0.5, and factor loading >0.5 proved that all the indicators are valid.

Respondents are dominated by a man by 52%, range age 21-30 years, not yet married, who works as a private employee, graduated, and willing to shop <500.000 rupiah or <5.000.000 rupiah in every furniture shopping activity. Most of the respondents chose IKEA as their favorite furniture brand, Informa in the second place, and Ace Hardware in the third place. Respondents already know the brand IKEA and may ever be bought from it, but more than 80% of total respondents do not know about the virtual experience, so for some respondents, this is their prime experience. Detail of respondent's data are attached on appendix 2.

Validity test also applied to measurement analysis by comparing construct reliability (CR) and variance extracted (VE). Results showed all items are valid with CR ≥ 0.7 and VE ≥

0.5. The goodness of fit test is conducted on measurement analysis result in a good fit in RMSEA and p-value for the test of close fit (RMSEA < 0.05).

Figure 1. Relationship Results



The goodness of fit test result on the structural equation showed a good fit on both RMSEA and p-value for the test of close fit (RMSEA < 0.05). All hypotheses are accepted including the indirect effect based on the t-value threshold of > 1.65. The indirect effect was analyzed using the Sobel test resulting in all three indirect effects have a significant path.

The relationship between store brand experience and visit intention has a t-value of 1.90 > 1.65 so that hypothesis 1 is accepted. It can be said that store brand experience has an effect on increasing visit intention. This is in line with the results of research (Chung, Han, & Joun, 2015) that there is a significant and positive effect of the use of AR (artificial intelligence) on destination visit intention. Although in this study it is not specific that the IKEA website uses AR, the functions and descriptions are the same so that Chung's et al. (2015) research can be supported. The results of this study also support the results of research (Baek, 2020) where sensory and behavioral as dimensions of brand experience have been shown to directly increase store visit intention.

The t-value between the store brand experience and brand equity variables is 6.30, so we can see here the t-value > 1.65. Therefore, it can be concluded that we can accept the hypothesis, meaning that store brand experience does have a positive influence on brand equity. These findings are in line with research results (Baek, 2020) where the four dimensions of brand experience positively affect brand equity. This finding is also in line with research (Moreira et al., 2017) where brand experience is proven to have a significant relationship with brand equity.

The t-value between the store brand experience and brand equity variables is 4.71, so we can see here the t-value > 1.65. Therefore, it can be concluded that we can accept the hypothesis, meaning that brand equity has an effect on increasing visit intention. These findings support the findings (Baek, 2020) where the coefficient of brand equity to visit intention is significant.

The t-value between the brand equity and purchase intention variables is 3.45, so we can see here the t-value > 1.65. Therefore, it can be concluded that we can accept the hypothesis, meaning that brand equity has an effect on increasing purchase intention. These findings support the findings (Moreira et al., 2017) where there is a correlation between brand equity and purchase intention.

The t-value between the store brand experience and positive affective response variables is 8.95, so we can see here the t-value > 1.65. Therefore, it can be concluded that we can accept the hypothesis, meaning that store brand experience has an effect on increasing positive affective responses. These findings support the findings (Watson, 2018) where the presence of augmentation creates a stronger emotional response than the absence of augmentation. In Watson's 78researchh, it is also proven that the effect of augmentation on behavior is mediated by a positive response.

The t-value between the positive affective response and purchase intention variables is 2.74, so we can see here the t-value > 1.65. Therefore, it can be concluded that we can accept the hypothesis, meaning that positive affective responses increase purchase intention. These findings support the findings (Watson, 2018) where the implementation of AR in online retail can help increase the positive affective response of consumers so as to increase the desire to buy (purchase intention).

The t-value between the positive affective response and purchase intention variables is 2.74, so we can see here the t-value > 1.65. Therefore, it can be concluded that we can accept the hypothesis, meaning that positive affective responses increase purchase intention. These findings support the findings (Watson, 2018) where the implementation of AR in online retail has a direct influence on purchase intention.

DISCUSSION

The relation between store brand experience and visit intention supported prior research by Baek (2020). The existence of virtual experience with sensory, behavioral, emotional, and intelligence as the dimension of brand experience affected the intention of the consumer to visit in the future without considering whether they have visited before or not. For the consumer that has ever been to IKEA before, this experience also supports their intention to come back again.

Store brand experience is also proven to affects brand equity. The virtual experience is not only strengthening the brand, name, and symbol but also the value of IKEA itself. This founding supports previous research by Jones, 2013 and Biedenback, 2010. To increase brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality for new or potential customers, management can deliberate this virtual experience. For existing customers, this media can maximize brand loyalty.

Management's effort to build brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty to increase brand equity also increases visit intention. The existence of offline stores is still important in the retail industry especially in Indonesia, so we need to find ways to increase visit intention. Virtual experience can increase brand equity and in the end affect visit intention, so this virtual tour is recommended for other retail brands. Not only to visit intention, but brand equity has also proven to impact purchase intention in line with Moreira et al. (2017). The higher the brand equity, the stronger customer preference to purchase.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, all the hypotheses are accepted. Store brand experience affects visit intention directly or indirectly through brand equity. Store brand experience also affects purchase intention directly or indirectly through brand equity and positive response. Based on the age domination of 21-30 years and the average money spent for furniture shopping at category ≤ 500.000 rupiah and $\leq 5.000.000$ rupiah, we consider all these respondents are aware of the technology. They do not have any problem accessing virtual experiences for a furniture shopping experience. Considering the pretty large spending that customers are willing to pay, the company should be considering put some investment in technology such as virtual experience. The second consideration is noticing that respondents are graduated, they will care about the quality of the virtual interface, so the company should improvise from time to time. Because it is hard to target sensory and behavioral, emotional and intelligence are the main focus in developing virtual experience.

The virtual experience created a positive response in respondents, so which affects purchase intention. Even though there are no physical activities happened, it can create emotional and intellectual experiences. Virtual experience affects purchase intention directly and indirectly through positive responses. Because sensory and behavioral aspects are hardly formed by VR, management should maximize the display, user interface, increase resolution, apps speed, and completeness of the information. While there is still covid-19 that allows the consumer to hesitate to go to a physical store, this virtual experience can assure and increase customer intention to visit the physical store in the future. VR affects not only visit intention but also purchase intention, so the company can develop digital transactions at the same link as virtual tour experience to increase perceived easiness.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest

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