

Exploring Consumer Behavior in Luxury Pop-up Stores Based on the SOR Theory: A Study of Interactive Experiences

Haiying Long^{1,a,*}

¹Carey Business School, Johns Hopkins University, 100 International Drive, Baltimore, United State

a. Hlong7@jh.edu

**corresponding author*

Abstract: This study explores the influence that interactive elements, including photo zones, augmented reality (AR), and customized services, might improve consumer loyalty and brand engagement in luxury pop-up shops. The study examines how these components elicit favorable emotional responses, resulting in more extended in-store stays and higher purchase intent, using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory. Using case studies of premium brands, including Jacquemus, Burberry, and Hermès, the study demonstrates that interactive forms can foster a strong emotional connection with consumers and encourage organic social media sharing via immersive and multi-sensory experience. Through analyzing three cases, the findings indicate that interactive pop-up shops may enhance customer satisfaction, strengthen brand appeal, and promote long-term company success. Furthermore, the research underscores the importance of integrating innovative technologies and design into experiential retail strategies to boost consumer engagement and enhance brand loyalty, showing that luxury brands can leverage these elements to differentiate brand style and strengthen their market presence.

Keywords: Luxury pop-up stores. Stimulus-Organism-Response model. Emotional engagement.

1. Introduction

In the increasingly competitive luxury market, young consumers have gradually become the core target group of brands. As a flexible and creative marketing form, luxury brand pop-up stores meet young consumers' needs for novelty, sharing, and instant experience through short-term temporary stores. Opening pop-up stores may appeal more to customers with a strong sense of creativity because unique and novel venues can provide sensory stimulation. This study focuses on crucial interactive elements, such as photo zones, augmented reality (AR) technology, and personalized services, to explore how luxury pop-up stores create immersive experiences for young consumers. Using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, this paper employs case studies to illustrate how interactive features can stimulate positive emotional responses in consumers, thereby extending shopping time and driving purchase decisions. Additionally, based on examples from Jacquemus, Burberry, and Hermès, the study reveals that, while enhancing brand loyalty, these interactive

elements can significantly boost brand exposure and word of mouth (WOM) effects through spontaneous consumer sharing on social media platforms.

With its "Le Bleu" pop-up store at Selfridges, Jacquemus utilizes a surreal, eye-catching design with elements like enormous bathroom props that produce extremely shareable moments. The following distinctive arrangement prompted guests to snap and post pictures on social media, increasing brand awareness and creating buzz on all channels. Similarly, Burberry uses AR to improve its Olympia Bag pop-up experience, enabling guests to engage with virtual statues. Encouraging users to share pictures and videos, which immersively augment the reality experience, increases Burberry's online visibility. In the Hermèsmatic pop-up, the brand allows customers to customize their scarves by selecting colors and watching the dyeing process in real-time, encouraging customers to post their original works on social media, which increased brand experience and WOM marketing.

2. Pop-up Store Characteristics

2.1. Unique Appearance

The appearance of pop-up stores enhances brand experience and emotional engagement through innovative visual presentation [1]. Design elements like color, shape, and structure can spark consumer curiosity and excitement, increasing the brand's appeal [2]. For consumers with limited brand knowledge, visual imagery often plays a crucial role in product evaluation, while for more experienced consumers, store design reinforces their emotional attachment to the brand [3]. Additionally, pop-up stores' temporary and unconventional nature tends to evoke a sense of scarcity and novelty. This limited-time aspect triggers "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO), heightening emotional investment and fostering a more positive attitude toward the brand [1]. Uniqueness, scarcity, and surprise characteristics significantly amplify the emotional impact of pop-up stores, making them practical tools for creating memorable brand experiences [4]. Consequently, such temporary and visually distinctive store designs elicit strong emotional responses in experiential retail, promoting positive WOM.

2.2. In-store Atmosphere

In addition to visual design, the in-store atmosphere of a pop-up store is a critical factor influencing consumer emotions [1]. Pop-up stores provide an emotional experience distinct from traditional retail environments by creating a unique ambiance. Specifically, the more unique and interactive the atmosphere is, the more positive the emotional response from consumers is [5]. This distinctive ambiance can be achieved through lighting, music, and decor [1]. Multi-sensory temporary retail spaces, which engage senses like sight and sound, have been proven to attract consumers and strengthen emotional connections to the brand [6]. Consequently, the in-store atmosphere of pop-up stores utilizes sensory stimuli, such as scents and sound effects, to evoke emotional resonance, thereby enhancing consumers' desire to shop [7]. At the same time, pop-up stores foster a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere, alleviating discomfort and encouraging consumers to immerse themselves in the multi-sensory brand experience [8]. In other words, the comfortable and enjoyable environment reduces shopping-related anxiety, especially in luxury retail, significantly enhancing the emotional experience for consumers.

2.3. Store Events

When consumers are exposed to brand-related stimuli, their sensory, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses collectively shape their brand experience [9]. Store events such as product

showcases, celebrity meet-and-greets, and workshops can create a more positive brand experience through their interactive and entertaining nature [9]. These events' novelty and entertainment value trigger strong emotional responses in consumers, particularly feelings of joy and excitement. By eliciting such positive emotions, brands can boost consumer engagement while fostering deeper emotional bonds with the brand [10]. These events help establish an enjoyable and interactive atmosphere, contributing to a memorable shopping experience. For example, product launches and celebrity appearances offer unique social experiences that heighten consumer enjoyment and strengthen brand affinity [3]. Particularly for luxury and fashion brands, events such as salons add cultural and emotional value to the brand, fostering a stronger sense of emotional belonging among consumers.

3. The SOR Theory

The SOR framework [11], initially developed in environmental psychology, explains how ecological stimuli (S) influence behavioral responses (R) through the organism's (O) internal emotional state. It suggests that specific environmental characteristics (stimuli) trigger cognitive and emotional states (organism), which drive specific behavioral responses. In a retail context, stimuli (S) refer to all physical and non-physical elements of the store environment that are within the retailer's control and can enhance the customer's shopping experience [12]. The organism (O) refers to the internal processes and structures between external stimuli and the final actions, responses, or behaviors, including perception, physiology, sensation, and thought processes [13]. Researchers have identified two internal evaluative states triggered by the physical environment: cognitive and affective evaluations. Cognitive evaluations involve consumers' perceptions as physiological activities, where consumers make conclusions based on atmospheric cues about crucial information such as store pricing, product, and service quality [12]. On the other hand, affective evaluations relate to emotions and feelings toward an object, involving judgments about whether the object is pleasant, attractive, valuable, likable, or desirable. Refers to the customer's behavioral responses, such as purchase intention, satisfaction, loyalty, WOM, or time spent in the store [13].

According to research, when it comes to retail settings, store environments significantly impact consumers' emotional states, which can change how they buy by making them spend more time there or spend more money [14]. The organism can perceive various physical stimuli in retail environments (e.g., lighting, scent, music), evoking emotional responses like pleasure and excitement, thereby affecting purchase intentions [15]. Research on shopping environments has revealed that store design, layout, lighting, and color are stimuli that activate meaningful emotional responses in the organism, such as pleasure, excitement, or comfort, directly impacting consumers' purchase decisions [16]. Aspects such as product display, color coordination, and web page layout are stimuli that affect consumers' emotional states (e.g., comfort, enjoyment) when the SOR model is applied to e-commerce [16]. The visual design and detail of the information display can significantly enhance consumers' emotional responses, thereby driving purchase behavior [17].

Experiential shopping settings, like pop-up retail stores, may be more significant for customers with solid and inventive tendencies because they offer the chance to test and examine things firsthand. Pop-up retail establishments provide additional chances for direct engagement and interaction with businesses, stimulating customers with more inventive tendencies and making it easier to evaluate products in more practical ways. As a result, customers who are more inclined to be creative think that pop-up shops should facilitate decision-making and lessen the likelihood of "erroneous impulse purchases. Moreover, the informal atmosphere of luxury pop-up stores helps alleviate customer anxiety typically associated with high-end environments, positively influencing their purchasing decisions through enhanced emotional states [8]. By creating a relaxed and enjoyable setting, brands

can effectively lower consumers' psychological barriers, fostering emotional closeness and engagement and increasing purchasing behavior and brand loyalty.

4. Emotional Engagement in Pop-up Stores

4.1. Word of mouth for Luxury Products

A global consumer survey indicates that only roughly 50% of consumers believe in mass media marketing, compared to 83% who trust recommendations from friends and family [1]. Word of mouth (WOM) is crucial for luxury brands since activities such as recommendations and consumers reporting positive experiences with brands increase the brand's relevance among target groups and customers' desire for the brand [4]. When consumers can share interesting or novel information and experiences, they are more likely to participate in WOM marketing activities [1]. In other words, Consumers have more potential to share engaging, unique, and entertaining content, mainly when emotional arousal is triggered during brand interaction [5]. Therefore, consumer excitement is a driving force behind WOM marketing activities [6].

On the other hand, WOM advertising is closely linked to emotionally charged brand experiences, particularly in the luxury goods industry. Positive WOM communication impacts and customer brand loyalty are significantly increased by highly tailored and participatory brand experiences [4]. Motivated by emotion, this recommendation can substantially improve the brand's market influence [6]. In retail experiences, when consumers perceive that experiential stores possess these ideal qualities, it enhances their brand experience and generates positive WOM for the brand [4]. Therefore, creating positive consumer emotion and WOM is necessary for luxury brand marketing.

4.2. Positive Emotions towards Pop-up Stores

The success of pop-up stores depends on surprise and delight, according to other research on the subject [3]. Because customers value entertainment and fun in pop-up stores, surprise and pleasure factors are particularly important in these establishments [10]. Meanwhile, excitement and happiness are hallmarks of customer joy, which is the emotional aspect of satisfaction. For instance, companies employ interactive games, touch video walls, and live music to improve the entertainment element of pop-up shops and produce hedonic experiences that elicit favorable feelings like customer satisfaction [1]. Further, as promotions are linked to shopping enjoyment, pop-up stores may provide free samples and accessible services to generate a hedonic shopping experience [6].

4.3. Brand Experience

Experiential stores play a crucial role in achieving brand communication objectives, as both retail and brand experiences are critical drivers of positive WOM and long-term brand outcomes [18]. Consumers' brand experience plays an essential role in this process by mediating the impact of hedonic shopping value and pop-up store characteristics on WOM [4]. Brand experiences are responses to stimuli that occur on sensory, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral levels. Experiences might evoke particular emotions rather than a general feeling of "liking" something. Engagement is driven by the customers' needs, values, and interests that motivate them to support a brand, while brand experience does not necessarily assume a motivational state [9]. Even in cases where customers lack a personal connection or interest in the brand, they can still have meaningful experiences [4]. Brand experience also differs from brand attachment, which refers to the deep emotional bond between customers and a brand, often characterized by a strong personal identification with and loyalty to the brand [9].

The effects of pop-up stores' unique features, in-store atmosphere, and store events on customer WOM are thoroughly examined in earlier research [6]. Research on the use of interactive forms, particularly in boosting positive feelings like "delight," "surprise," and "excitement" in customers to boost sales and WOM, is lacking, nonetheless. Consumer surprise and delight are vital to the success of temporary retail, confirming the close link between positive emotions and consumer engagement [4]. Therefore, the research argues that interactive elements could stimulate positive emotional responses, leading to outcomes such as product purchase, brand sharing, and repeat buying. Academically speaking, this paper provides unique insights into improving emotional experiences based on the SOR paradigm, addressing the research gap by focusing on interactive elements in pop-up stores. In real-world terms, it explains how emotional engagement impacts consumer experience and brand identification, which provides valuable guidance for optimizing experiential marketing strategies.

5. SOR Theory and Interactive Experience

5.1. Photo Zones

Photo zones in luxury pop-up stores enhance the consumer experience and boost brand interaction. These zones allow customers to actively engage with the brand while capturing and sharing their unique moments. For instance, in Jacquemus' "Le Bleu" pop-up store at Selfridges, London, the brand creatively showcased its Spring/Summer 2022 collection with a meticulously designed photo zone. The retail space was covered in pale blue tiles and featured quirky, interactive installations, including oversized bathtubs, sponges, shower fixtures, and sinks, complemented by toothpaste tubes overflowing with red-and-white gel [19]. Additionally, life-sized vending machines offered exclusive versions of the Chiquito and Bambino bags around the clock. Beyond helping make shopping more pleasurable, these surrealist designs gave consumers the ideal setting for social media images, inspiring them to post about their distinctive online shopping experiences. Jacquemus broke away from traditional luxury store displays by offering such interactive elements, allowing customers to enjoy novelty while deepening their emotional connection to the brand through photography and interaction.

The significance of photo zones lies in their ability to serve as a bridge for organic brand exposure on social media. Jacquemus tapped into the trend of young consumers "checking in" on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, providing visually captivating settings that encourage spontaneous sharing. This social media sharing effect increased brand visibility and attracted more potential customers through WOM. Jacquemus leveraged digital channels to extend its online influence and, through interactive engagement, strengthened emotional ties between the brand and its customers, successfully merging interactive shopping with social sharing.

Referred to the SOR model, photo zones offer a unique tactile and visual experience that successfully triggers emotional responses in customers, leading to deeper brand interaction. By encouraging customers to spend more time in-store, Jacquemus increased the opportunity for brand engagement, thereby enhancing customers' purchase intent. Extended dwell time often correlates with higher purchase conversion rates, especially when the shopping environment is interactive and enjoyable [20]. Through interaction in the photo zones, customers gained a deeper understanding and appreciation of the products, which ultimately translated into purchasing behavior. The immersive, shareable brand experience also generated more significant market influence and sales opportunities for the brand.

5.2. Augmented reality Technology

In luxury pop-up stores, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies have increasingly become essential tools for enhancing customer interaction. New technologies break away from traditional product display formats and create more immersive and personalized experiences for consumers. For instance, in Burberry's 2021 Olympia Bag pop-up store, AR technology gives customers unprecedented interactivity. Scanning a QR code with their smartphone requires no app download; customers could activate virtual statues and watch them "walk" towards them in real time [21]. This integration of virtual elements into the physical world transcended the limitations of static displays, allowing customers to experience Burberry's innovation and design aesthetics firsthand.

By observing the dynamic movement of these virtual statues, customers often spent more time exploring the artistic inspirations and design concepts behind the products, thus extending their in-store dwell time. Additionally, AR interactions highlighted the products' unique value, enhancing customers' purchase decisions through engaging visual effects. Interactive technology allows customers to experience the texture and design details of the product more directly, further fueling their desire to buy. Emerging technologies such as AR and VR have a solid potential to spark consumer enthusiasm, prompting spontaneous social media sharing. User-generated content (UGC), involving videos and photos of the virtual statues shared on platforms like Instagram or Facebook, significantly boosted Burberry's brand exposure, attracting more potential customers to engage with this unique brand experience.

Based on the SOR model, AR is a powerful visual stimulus that enhances customer engagement through immersive interactions, effectively strengthening their emotional connection to the brand. The dynamic movement of the virtual statues offers a unique visual experience, combined with classical art, successfully evoking emotional resonance in customers. AR technology amplifies customer involvement with the brand, allowing a deeper understanding of Burberry's design depth and innovation. This immersive experience further solidified the emotional bond between customers and the brand, encouraging more positive purchase decisions and enhancing the perceived value of the products, ultimately leading to greater brand loyalty.

5.3. Customized Services

Personalized services are crucial for luxury pop-up shops, particularly in the fiercely competitive industry. Through customized services, luxury brands allow customers to enhance their brand experience, strengthening their unique value proposition [22]. A prime example is the 2017 Hermèsmatic pop-up store in New York, where customers could reinvent their Hermès scarves through a custom dyeing service inspired by a self-service laundromat concept [23]. This service catered to consumers' desire for uniqueness by involving them in the creative process, allowing them to witness the transformation of their products, thus deepening their emotional connection with the brand.

Tailored services can significantly increase customer engagement and emotional connections to the brand as an interactive component. In these pop-up stores, customers transition from passive buyers to active participants in creating products through tailored services. For instance, in Hermèsmatic, customers could choose their preferred colors and watch the dyeing process of their scarves unfold in real time [23]. This high-engagement interaction, combining tactile and visual stimulation, fosters a sense of creative joy and product appreciation, extending their time spent in the store and heightening their desire to purchase. In other words, by fulfilling consumers' needs, brands enhance the emotional value customers attach to their experience, which will likely translate into increased purchasing behavior. In parallel, consumers tend to share these individualized, tailored

experiences with their social networks by posting images and videos of them. In addition to increasing brand awareness, the UGC increases brand influence through WOM marketing.

Moreover, customized services give consumers a stronger sense of control and participation. In such an interactive experience, consumers are no longer simply recipients of products but actively shape the products they buy. The "perceived control" gives customers a stronger sense of emotional satisfaction and autonomy by giving them more choices, such as the dyeing method of silk scarves in Hermèsmatic. From the Psychology, increased perceived control over the purchasing process might help buyers feel less anxious, particularly in the luxury goods industry where consumers are frequently pressured to make expensive selections. Thanks to tailored services, customers are given greater control over product specifics and less confusion while making purchases. They may make better decisions due to this emotional stability and sense of power, which enhances the pleasure of shopping.

6. Conclusion

By analyzing interactive elements such as photo zones, AR technology, and personalized services, luxury pop-up stores demonstrate their strong potential for enhancing brand promotion and customer experience. These interactive features provide customers with novel sensory stimuli and immersive experiences, boosting brand appeal and consumer engagement through personalization and emotional connections. Drawing on the SOR model, this study reveals that luxury pop-up stores effectively elicit emotional responses from customers, extending their time spent in-store and influencing their purchasing decisions. Moreover, these interactive elements significantly increase brand visibility and WOM effects through organic social media sharing. Therefore, luxury businesses may create strong emotional connections with consumers through creative interactive designs, increasing brand loyalty and fortifying the future market position.

In conclusion, the interactive elements in luxury pop-up stores, such as photo zones, AR, and personalized services, significantly enhance the brand experience and emotional engagement with the brand. Jacquemus effectively uses surrealist photo zones to invite social media sharing, which heightened brand visibility and WOM marketing. This emotional engagement encourages consumers to spend more time in-store, increasing purchase intent. Similarly, Burberry's integration of AR technology in their Olympia Bag pop-up created an immersive experience that extends dwell time and boosts brand interaction through user-generated content, further enhancing the brand's reach. In terms of Hermès, the Hermèsmatic pop-up deepens emotional connections through a customized dyeing service, allowing customers to participate in the creative process, which increases their perceived control. Meanwhile, Hermès encourages social media sharing, thus amplifying brand exposure. Through the SOR framework, it is clear that these interactive elements evoke strong emotional responses and drive consumer behavior, leading to increased brand loyalty and higher conversion rates.

References

- [1] Klein, J. F., Falk, T., Esch, F. R., & Gloukhovtsev, A. (2016) *Linking pop-up brand stores to brand experience and word of mouth: The case of luxury retail*. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(12), 5761-5767.
- [2] Overdiek, A., & Warnaby, G. (2020) *Co-creation and co-design in pop-up stores: The intersection of marketing and design research?*. *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 29, 63-74.
- [3] Zogaj, A., Olk, S., & Tscheulin, D. K. (2019) *Go pop-up: Effects of temporary retail on product-and brand-related consumer reactions*. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 50, 111-121.
- [4] Boustani, G. (2019) *Ephemeral Retailing: Pop-up stores in a postmodern consumption Era*. Routledge.
- [5] Henkel, L., & Toporowski, W. (2023) *Once they've been there, they like to share: Capitalizing on ephemerality and need for uniqueness to drive word of mouth for brands with pop-up stores*. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 51(6), 1284-1304.

- [6] Kim, H., Fiore, A. M., Niehm, L. S., & Jeong, M. (2010) Psychographic characteristics affecting behavioral intentions towards pop-up retail. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 38(2), 133-154.
- [7] Köhler, I., and Esch, F. R. (2018) Increasing Brand Experiences and Word of Mouth in Experiential Retailing-A Cross-Cultural Perspective. *Advances in Advertising Research IX: Power to Consumers*, 259-272.
- [8] Lunardo, R., & Mouangue, E. (2019) Getting over discomfort in luxury brand stores: How pop-up stores affect perceptions of luxury, embarrassment, and store evaluations. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 49, 77-85.
- [9] Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H., & Zarantonello, L. (2009) Brand experience: what is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty?. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(3), 52-68.
- [10] Lowe, J., Maggioni, I., & Sands, S. (2018) Critical success factors of temporary retail activations: A multi-actor perspective. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 40, 74-81.
- [11] Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974) A verbal measure of information rate for studies in environmental psychology. *Environment and Behavior*, 6(2), 233.
- [12] Eroglu, S. A., & Machleit, K. A. (1990) An empirical study of retail crowding: Antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Retailing*, 66(2), 201.
- [13] Bagozzi, R. P. (1986) Principles of marketing management. Science Research Associates.
- [14] Robert, D., & John, R. (1982) Store atmosphere: an environmental psychology approach. *Journal of Retailing*, 58(1), 34-57.
- [15] Eroglu, S. A., Machleit, K. A., & Davis, L. M. (2003) Empirical testing of a model of online store atmospherics and shopper responses. *Psychology and Marketing*, 20(2), 139-150.
- [16] Berger, J., & Milkman, K. L. (2012) What makes online content viral?. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49(2), 192-205.
- [17] Tong, X., Chen, Y., Zhou, S., & Yang, S. (2022) How background visual complexity influences purchase intention in live streaming: The mediating role of emotion and the moderating role of gender. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 67, 103031.
- [18] Jahn, S., Nierobisch, T., Toporowski, W., & Dannewald, T. (2018) Selling the extraordinary in experiential retail stores. *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, 3(3), 412-424.
- [19] Parkes, J. (2022) Jacquemus creates surrealist interpretation of own bathroom for Selfridges pop-up. *Dezeen*. Retrieved from <https://www.dezeen.com/2022/05/11/jacquemus-le-bleu-selfridges-retail-interiors/>
- [20] Khan, M. A., Vivek, Minhaj, S. M., Saifi, M. A., Alam, S., & Hasan, A. (2022) Impact of Store Design and Atmosphere on Shoppers' Purchase Decisions: an Empirical Study with Special Reference to Delhi-NCR. *Sustainability*, 15(1), 95.
- [21] Olympia. (2021) Burberry brings AR experience to Olympia pop-ups. *Luxury Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.luxurydaily.com/burberry-world-of-olympia-ar/>
- [22] Takagoshi, N., & Matsubayashi, N. (2013) Customization competition between branded firms: Continuous extension of product line from core product. *European Journal of Operational Research*, 225(2), 337-352.
- [23] Fisher, L. A. (2017) An Hermès Laundromat Is Coming To New York. *Harper's BAZAAR*. Retrieved from <https://www.harperbazaar.com/fashion/designers/a10022583/hermes-laundromat-pop-up-shops/>