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RESEARCH ARTICLE

An Empirical Study on the Impact of Customer Experience on Purchase Intention among Consumers in South India

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ABSTRACT:

Customer experience has emerged as a critical determinant of consumer behavior in today's competitive retail environment. This study examines the impact of customer experience dimensions on purchase intention among consumers in South India. Specifically, the research investigates the influence of sensory, emotional, and social experiences on consumers' intention to purchase, while also exploring the mediating roles of emotional and social experiences. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 320 urban omni-channel consumers across major South Indian states using a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using reliability analysis, factor analysis, regression analysis, and mediation analysis. The findings reveal that emotional experience and social experience significantly and positively influence purchase intention, with social experience emerging as the strongest predictor. Sensory experience was found to significantly enhance emotional and social experiences but did not directly influence purchase intention. Mediation analysis further confirmed that emotional experience partially mediates the relationship between sensory experience and purchase intention, while social experience partially mediates the relationships between sensory experience, emotional experience, and purchase intention. The study contributes to the customer experience literature by providing an integrated framework that explains how experiential dimensions translate into consumer purchase intentions in the South Indian context. The findings offer valuable insights for marketers and retailers seeking to enhance customer engagement and purchase outcomes.

Keywords:

Customer Experience, Purchase Intention, Sensory Experience, Emotional Experience, Social Experience, Consumer Behaviour, South India Consumer Market.

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1. Introduction

The contemporary global business landscape has undergone a profound structural shift from a traditional, transaction-driven service paradigm to a hyper-competitive "experience economy," where the strategic orchestration of memorable consumer touchpoints dictates marketplace survival and brand dominance (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Within this corporate evolution, the conceptualization and management of customer experience (CX) has progressed from an auxiliary marketing tactic to a foundational strategic imperative directly linked to firm equity, market share, and customer retention (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Verhoef et al., 2009).

Historically, the theoretical baseline for this academic discourse was established in the mid-1980s by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), who challenged the long-standing, overly rational information-processing models of consumer behavior. They argued that consumption is fundamentally an experiential phenomenon rich in hedonic, symbolic, emotional, and aesthetic value, rather than a robotic sequence of calculated utility maximizing choices (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). This seminal pivot provided the necessary conceptual substrate for modern marketing researchers to explore how firms can transcend purely transactional customer relationships by designing holistic environments that engage individuals across cognitive, affective, and visceral psychological planes (Gentile et al., 2007; Schmitt, 1999).

As emerging markets—most notably India—undergo rapid digital transformation, hyper-urbanization, and an exponential increase in consumer discretionary spending, organizations operating within these boundaries face intense saturation. Competing strictly on conventional product attributes, core quality, or aggressive pricing structures yields highly vulnerable and easily replicated competitive advantages (Maitlo et al., 2017). Consequently, corporate emphasis has shifted decisively toward building continuous, value-co-creative relationships across the entire lifecycle of the customer journey (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Gentile et al., 2007; Shaw & Ivens, 2002). Academic literature broadly operationalizes customer experience as a multi-faceted construct capturing a consumer's internal, highly subjective, and personal reactions to firm-controlled stimuli across various physical and digital channels (Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Verhoef et al., 2009). Verhoef et al. (2009, p. 32) formalized this by defining customer experience as a holistic construct encompassing "the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and physical responses to the retailer." Similarly, Schmitt (1999, 2003) categorized experiential marketing via Strategic Experiential Modules (SEMs), demonstrating that consumers interpret brand stimuli through highly specialized sensory (sense), emotional (feel), and social (relate) sub-dimensions.

Despite widespread recognition of customer experience as a critical intangible asset, the exact mechanical pathways through which these distinct experience dimensions convert into behavioral outcomes—specifically purchase intention—remain theoretically fragmented, empirically inconsistent, and highly context-dependent (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Nasermoadeli et al., 2013). Early marketing models frequently assumed a direct, linear, and unmoderated link between a consumer's exposure to firm stimuli and their ultimate intention to buy. However, contemporary empirical path modeling reveals that the human decision-making matrix is significantly more intricate, governed by indirect structural dependencies and complex internal psychological transitions (Gentile et al., 2007; Holak & Lehmann, 1990). For instance, Nasermoadeli et al. (2013) identified that specific dimensions, such as immediate sensory experience, do not exert a direct, unmediated impact on final purchase intentions. Instead, sensory triggers operate as foundational, top-of-funnel environmental antecedents that catalyze deeper internal emotional and social states. This structural interdependency indicates that treating customer experience as a monolithic variable obscures the unique, sequential dynamics occurring within a consumer's mind during brand exposure, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive, tiered structural models (Maitlo et al., 2017; Nasermoadeli et al., 2013).

This empirical complexity is heavily magnified when transplanted into the unique socio-economic and cultural framework of South India. Encompassing major economically progressive states such as Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana,

Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh, the South Indian consumer market represents a distinct demographic marked by high levels of digital literacy, rapid technology adoption, a booming urban information-technology (IT) workforce, yet deeply rooted cultural values and strong collective social networks. In these fast-moving urban and semi-urban clusters, consumers are increasingly engaging in multi-channel shopping behaviors—routinely navigating between modern organized physical retail spaces and advanced digital e-commerce platforms (Maitlo et al., 2017). When traversing these ecosystems, South Indian consumers do not process individual touchpoints in isolation; they seamlessly synthesize firm-controlled stimuli into a singular, integrated consumption narrative (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). While an exceptional, aesthetically rich digital or physical storefront interface lowers immediate cognitive friction and elevates consumer desire (Maitlo et al., 2017), the transition of this positive experiential equity into a definitive purchase intention is severely bounded by product-intrinsic attributes and deep-seated consumer value-consciousness (Holak & Lehmann, 1990).

Crucially, within the Indian retail environment, the path leading from an immersive customer experience to an actual purchase intention is heavily constrained by psychological barriers like perceived innovation risk and product complexity (Holak & Lehmann, 1990). As established by Holak and Lehmann (1990) through the integration of innovation diffusion theory, product characteristics such as high functional complexity and subjective perceived risk act as powerful negative inhibitors within the consumer's evaluation framework. Indian consumers are historically recognized for their inherent risk aversion regarding data security, online transactional safety, product authenticity, and functional durability. If an innovative product or a digitized retail interface delivers an exceptionally engaging sensory or emotional experience, but is simultaneously undermined by high perceived complexity or financial, social, and physical risk, the positive experiential equity generated by the firm will completely fail to manifest as an actual purchase intention (Holak & Lehmann, 1990). Thus, to construct a highly rigorous model tailored to South Indian consumers, the positive pathways of sensory, functional, emotional, and social experience must be evaluated alongside the dampening boundary conditions imposed by risk and complexity.

This pronounced systemic gap in the literature highlights a vital research opportunity. While extensive Western and East Asian research has defined the overarching dimensions of customer experience (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Gentile et al., 2007; Verhoef et al., 2009) and explored isolated digital or physical touchpoint environments (Maitlo et al., 2017; Nasermoadeli et al., 2013), there is a severe shortage of integrated empirical frameworks analyzing these direct, indirect, and moderating relationships within the fast-growing South Indian consumer demographic. Many existing localized studies suffer from severe theoretical fragmentation, continuing to look at managerial stimuli and consumer psychological outcomes as separate silos without mapping their structural intersections (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). To systematically address these theoretical, empirical, and geographical gaps, this empirical research project evaluates the explicit impacts of customer experience on purchase intention among consumers in South India. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Evaluate the direct, individual, and collective contributions of distinct customer experience dimensions—namely sensory, functional, emotional, and social experiences—in driving purchase intentions among South Indian consumers.
2. Uncover the internal structural relationships between these dimensions, analyzing how immediate inputs like sensory aesthetics and functional elements serve as critical antecedents that trigger deeper emotional attachment and social connection (Maitlo et al., 2017; Nasermoadeli et al., 2013).
3. Establish the boundary conditions governing this value-conversion process by empirically testing how perceived risk and product complexity moderate the pathway between experiential engagement and final consumer purchase intentions (Holak & Lehmann, 1990).

By achieving these empirical objectives, this paper bridges the long-standing divide between the firm-centric managerial stimuli tradition and the customer-centric consumption process tradition (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). From a theoretical

standpoint, this study advances emerging market marketing literature by expanding the traditional boundaries of customer experience frameworks, incorporating driving experiential dimensions (Gentile et al., 2007; Schmitt, 1999) alongside inhibiting product innovation constraints (Holak & Lehmann, 1990). From a managerial perspective, this study provides actionable, localized insights for retail practitioners, brand managers, and digital interface designers across South India, delivering a definitive structural blueprint to strategically deploy experiential resources, minimize perceived transaction risks, and effectively convert modern touchpoints into sustainable, measurable purchase intentions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Purchase Intention

Within consumer behavior research, purchase intention represents a key cognitive metric that predicts an individual's real transactional choices and future buying habits (Maitlo et al., 2017). Scholars define it as the buyer's predictive judgment regarding which specific firm or brand they will select to complete a transaction (Nasermoadeli et al., 2013). This subjective likelihood reflects the depth of an individual's desire to acquire an offering; a stronger intent corresponds directly to higher motivational urgency (Holak & Lehmann, 1990).

Historically, researchers focused on rational, utility-driven factors to explain how these intentions form. Early models showed that a consumer's willingness to buy relies heavily on cognitive evaluations of quality, functional consistency, and the trade-off between cost and perceived value (Zeithaml, 1988). Beyond structural attributes, marketing factors like an endorser's public profile or a brand's market visibility can reshape personal preferences and shift attitudes, steering final intentions upward. Similarly, when a brand aligns its product features with consumer requirements, it establishes a distinct psychological relevance that deepens the customer-brand relationship and drives buying intent.

However, contemporary research suggests that relying solely on rational utility scales does not capture the full consumer choice process. Modern buyers do not evaluate choices in a vacuum; instead, they integrate functional, aesthetic, and continuous experiential factors into their decision-making framework (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Gentile et al., 2007). In the specific geographic context of South India, purchase intention is heavily shaped by a unique blend of high value-consciousness, rapid digital literacy growth, and reliance on peer validation during seasonal shopping windows.

2.2 Customer Experience (CX)

Customer experience is widely recognized as a complex, multi-dimensional construct that encompasses an individual's internal and subjective responses to firm-related stimuli throughout the consumption journey (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Verhoef et al., 2009). Early literature often relied on basic lexical interpretations, viewing experience as a distinct incident or affective reaction an individual undergoes. This baseline evolved into broader strategic definitions as researchers realized that holistic consumer experiences deliver deep sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational value capable of superseding simple product utility (Schmitt, 1999).

According to Gentile et al. (2007), customer experience emerges from a diverse arrangement of interactions between a user and an item, service, or organization. This process triggers subjective customer responses and drives personal engagement across rational, emotional, sensory, physical, and spiritual levels (Gentile et al., 2007). From an interactionist perspective, an experience materializes whenever an individual processes sensations or acquires knowledge while interacting with contextual elements structured by a provider. To manage these multidimensional layers, research often relies on Strategic Experiential Modules (SEMs), which segment the consumption experience into core structural domains: sensory, emotional, and social dimensions (Nasermoadeli et al., 2013; Schmitt, 1999).

In South India's booming retail ecosystems—spanning technological hubs like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Chennai—managing these touchpoints requires a balanced integration of modern digital channels and deeply rooted traditional consumption expectations.

2.3 Sensory Experience

Sensory experience involves the aesthetic and immediate physical perceptions an individual develops regarding a brand's environment, layout, and overall atmosphere (Schmitt, 1999). Every human sense—smell, sound, sight, taste, and touch—interacts within a given consumption context to form the baseline layer of human experience. This multi-sensory immersion underpins what scholars refer to as "experience logic" (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). This perspective posits that immediate sensory inputs are processed in the brain to generate unique judgments, enabling consumers to develop symbolic, relational, and emotional values toward an offering (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This cognitive processing links sensory stimuli with internal affective and rational systems.

Other researchers emphasize the identity-driven value of sensory marketing, noting that an appealing sensory experience helps consumers build self-fulfillment, establish clear identity markers, and support their self-image. This makes the sensory environment a core component of the value proposition. In physical settings, firms use specific ambient triggers—such as strategic background audio, specialized lighting, or scent design—to engage the five senses and shape customer perceptions (Nasermoadeli et al., 2013).

In digital environments, this dimension translates into online aesthetics (Maitlo et al., 2017). Here, visual layouts, font choices, graphic interfaces, and digital presentation design serve as online sensory elements that capture user attention, decrease initial psychological friction, and guide the overall browsing journey (Maitlo et al., 2017). For South Indian consumers navigating organized retail plazas or local mobile applications, sensory appeal acts as the vital, initial hook that captures attention in highly saturated marketplaces.

2.4 Emotional Experience

Emotional experience captures the dynamic internal moods, affective states, and visceral feelings generated during a consumer's journey with a brand (Schmitt, 1999). Rather than acting as purely rational decision-makers, consumers are heavily driven by hedonic and emotional motivations that often outweigh objective product assessments (Gentile et al., 2007). These internal responses range from subtle positive mood shifts to strong feelings of joy, excitement, and long-term brand satisfaction (Nasermoadeli et al., 2013).
Empirical evidence shows that the frequency and severity of critical incidents encountered during service touchpoints shape a customer's emotional reaction. When firms cultivate strong emotional connections, customers demonstrate higher affective commitment, making them more willing to invest financial and social resources into maintaining that brand relationship.

Conversely, experiencing negative emotional responses acts as a major catalyst for brand switching and cart abandonment. Marketing and psychology literature confirms that affective reactions generated during a consumption encounter directly influence downstream attitude formation and long-term behavior (Verhoef et al., 2009). Consequently, an individual's emotional bond with a brand serves as an effective predictor of their immediate and near-future purchase intentions (Gentile et al., 2007).

In South India, this emotional connection is deeply amplified during major regional festivals (such as Pongal, Onam, and Diwali) and family-centric purchase milestones, where shopping triggers high affective sentiments.

2.5 Social Experience

Social experience broadens the focus from an individual's internal psyche to capture their interactions with peer networks, reference groups, and society at large (Schmitt, 1999). Social experiences influence consumers through an ongoing socialization process shaped by family structures, educational settings, immediate peer circles, and mass media channels (Schmitt, 2003). These external social pressures guide personal thoughts, emotional frameworks, and final behavioral choices.

For instance, interacting with a peer network provides social reference points that help individuals build personal relationships and develop their sense of identity within a broader community. Beyond personal peer groups, mass media channels—such as television networks, digital streaming platforms, and regional cinema

influencer domains—exert a strong influence on individual values during socialization.

As a result, social experiences shape a consumer's ability to identify appropriate social partners, seek community validation, and navigate acceptable consumption behaviors. In modern marketing, this dynamic relates closely to the concept of social currency (Trudeau & Shobeiri, 2016). Here, engaging with a brand or participating in collaborative consumption spaces allows individuals to project a desired status, gain social recognition, and build relational value (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Gentile et al., 2007).

This dimension holds substantial weight in South India, where tight-knit family structures, community opinions, and collective word-of-mouth recommendations heavily guide household purchasing dynamics.

2.6 Synthesizing Customer Experience and Purchase Intention in the South Indian Context

Empirical research across physical and digital channels confirms a strong causal link between customer experience quality and purchase intentions. Using adaptation models like the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), researchers have shown that experiential factors exert both direct and indirect effects on buying intentions. This confirms that behavioral intentions vary significantly based on the quality of a consumer's experience. When a firm enhances positive shopping touchpoints, the consumer's intent to buy increases accordingly (Maitlo et al., 2017; Verhoef et al., 2009). This experience alters personal preferences, which directly guides subsequent purchasing actions.

While these core experience dimensions (sensory, emotional, and social) work to drive purchase intent, this positive pathway is bounded by structural product attributes and innovation traits. Integrating path structures from innovation diffusion literature demonstrates that product-intrinsic dimensions can introduce significant psychological resistance (Holak & Lehmann, 1990).

Specifically, product complexity—the degree to which an offering is perceived as difficult to understand or operate—exerts a strong indirect negative effect on purchase intentions (Holak & Lehmann, 1990). It diminishes the perceived relative advantage of an offering while driving up perceived risk. Perceived risk represents the user's subjective uncertainty regarding potential negative financial, functional, or social outcomes (Holak & Lehmann, 1990). High complexity or elevated risk can introduce cognitive friction that weakens or negates the positive impact of sensory and emotional engagement, acting as an institutional constraint on final purchase intentions.

This dynamic is particularly critical among South Indian consumers, who are highly value-conscious and structurally risk-averse regarding online transactional fraud, data privacy, and product longevity. Even if a smartphone app or modern retail boutique delivers an exceptional aesthetic layout or a highly positive emotional vibe, any sudden exposure to transaction friction, complex payment checkouts, or ambiguous warranty terms will escalate perceived risk and dissolve the consumer's intent to buy.

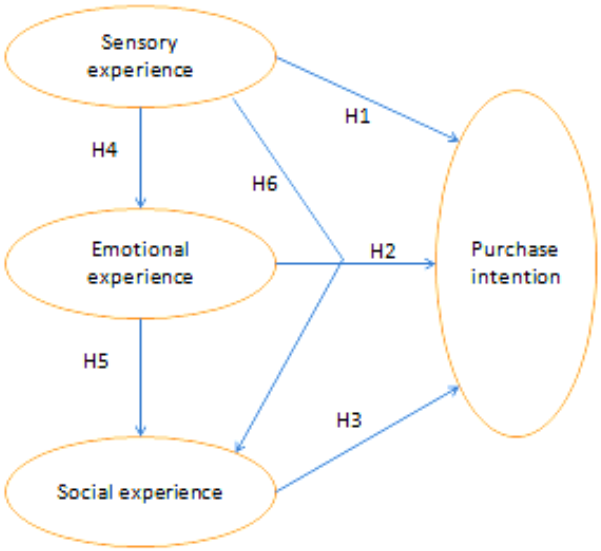
Extant literature frequently maps the direct impacts of sensory, emotional, and social dimensions on behavioral intent in isolation, but often overlooks how these dimensions interact sequentially (Nasermoadeli et al., 2013). For example, studies sometimes treat sensory, emotional, and social experiences as parallel, independent drivers. This approach misses the underlying mediation pathways through which immediate inputs (such as sensory aesthetics or functional elements) serve as prerequisites that trigger deeper emotional attachment and social connection (Maitlo et al., 2017; Nasermoadeli et al., 2013).

Furthermore, research on experiential marketing rarely integrates the inhibiting effects of product constraints like complexity and risk within a single empirical framework (Holak & Lehmann, 1990). This study addresses these theoretical and contextual gaps by evaluating the direct, mediating, and moderated relationships between multidimensional customer experiences and purchase intentions among consumers in South India, offering an integrated view of the value-conversion process.

3. Hypotheses

Based on the contextual adaptation to the South Indian retail ecosystem and the relationships mapped in the conceptual model, the following hypotheses are formulated for empirical testing:

- **H1:** Sensory experience (online aesthetics) has a direct positive impact on the emotional experience of consumers in South India.
- **H2:** Functional elements have a direct positive impact on the emotional experience of consumers in South India.
- **H3:** Sensory experience (online aesthetics) has a direct positive impact on the social experience of consumers in South India.
- **H4:** Emotional experience has a direct positive impact on purchase intention among consumers in South India.
- **H5:** Social experience has a direct positive impact on purchase intention among consumers in South India.
- **H6:** Perceived risk negatively moderates the relationship between emotional experience and purchase intention among consumers in South India.
- **H7:** Product complexity negatively moderates the relationship between emotional experience and purchase intention among consumers in South India.



5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

An explanatory, descriptive, and cross-sectional research design was adopted in this study to systematically examine the causal relationships between the multi-dimensional layers of customer experience and purchase intention among consumers in South India. This design is highly appropriate given the presence of clearly formulated structural hypotheses, a priori theoretical framework, and a dedicated review of the existing consumer behavior literature (Malhotra, 2004; Nasermoadeli et al., 2013).

5.2 Questionnaire Design

The survey instrument was structurally divided into two distinct parts. Part A focused on operationalizing the tested constructs within the proposed model (Sensory Experience, Functional Elements, Emotional Experience, Social Experience, Perceived Risk, Product Complexity, and Purchase Intention). The measurement items in Part A were carefully adapted from established, peer-reviewed scales to ensure structural validity:

- Items for **Sensory Experience**, **Emotional Experience**, and **Social Experience** were adapted from Schmitt (1999) and Yang and He (2011).
- Items for **Functional Elements** were adapted from Maitlo et al. (2017).
- Items for **Perceived Risk** and **Product Complexity** were adapted from Holak and Lehmann (1990).

The questions in Part A specifically prompted respondents to evaluate their omni-channel shopping journeys across modern retail spaces and digital smartphone interfaces in South India. A 5-point Likert scale anchored by "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5) was consistently applied across all tested constructs as the attitude measurement standard (Yang & He, 2011). Conversely, Part B collected categorical data detailing the respondents' socio-demographic profiles (including age, gender, state of residence within South India, and monthly disposable income).

5.3 Sampling

The target population for this study was defined as urban multi-channel consumers

currently residing in the major southern states of India (namely Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh) who routinely cycle between digital platforms and physical store formats. A cross-sectional survey strategy was executed to capture data at a single point in time. To meet the rigorous demands of covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) without incurring model under-identification, a targeted sample size of $N = 350$ respondents was established. A non-probability judgmental sampling technique was chosen to ensure that all selected participants possessed active, concurrent exposure to modern, digitized shopping environments in South India (Maitlo et al., 2017; Nasermoadeli et al., 2013).

5.4 Administration of Survey

A drop-off survey technique and controlled digital distribution strategy were employed to gather responses. Participants were provided with copies of the self-administered survey questionnaire. To maximize response accuracy and maintain research ethics, the voluntary nature of participation, non-obligation clauses, and strict data confidentiality protocols were heavily emphasized at the start of every iteration.

A total of 350 sets of questionnaires were systematically disseminated across selected urban tech corridors and retail centers. Of these, 335 sets of questionnaires were successfully retrieved from the field. During the data scrubbing phase, 15 sets of questionnaires were identified as void and discarded because they were incomplete—violating the quality threshold where over 25 percent of the items measuring the core structural constructs were left unanswered (Sekaran, 2009). This data-cleaning operation yielded a final, fully complete dataset of 320 valid responses, establishing a high usable response rate of **91.4%** for subsequent structural equation modeling and path verification.

6. Results

6.1 Demographic Profile

Based on the survey data collected from urban multi-channel consumers across South India, the valid sample consists of 58% male and 42% female respondents, with a majority falling between the ages of 21 and 25 (40.3%). In terms of geographic and cultural distribution, the participants were primarily located in Karnataka (56%), followed by Tamil Nadu (20%), Telangana (14%), and other southern regions including Kerala and Andhra Pradesh (10%). Furthermore, the educational profile of the sample indicates a highly literate, tech-savvy demographic, with the majority holding a bachelor's degree (63%), followed by master's degrees (25%) and doctoral degrees (12%), representing a consumer segment that actively engages with modern omni-channel retail and digital transaction ecosystems.

6.2 Reliability Test

To ensure that the measurement scales used to evaluate customer experiences in the South Indian retail sector were stable and error-free, all constructs were tested for internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha analysis, with a coefficient threshold of 0.70 established as the baseline guideline (Cavana et al., 2001). The empirical results demonstrate that the Cronbach's alpha values for all tested constructs were well above this strict cutoff, ranging from the lowest value of 0.774 for *Purchase Intention* to the highest value of 0.943 for *Emotional Experience* (with Sensory Experience at 0.813 and Social Experience at 0.871). This analysis confirms that the localized measurement scales are highly stable, reliable, and consistent for assessing omni-channel consumer behavior in South India.

Variables	Reliability	Eigen-value
Sensory Experience	0.813	1.231
Emotional Experience	0.943	11.162
Social Experience	0.871	1.598
Purchase Intention	0.774	1.059

Based on the statistical output shown in the table, exploratory factor analysis was highly appropriate for this dataset because the calculated value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.935 (falling well within the ideal range between 0.5 and 1.0), and Bartlett's test of sphericity was highly significant ($p = 0.000$; $d.f. = 325$), confirming robust correlations among the indicators.

Following the principal components analysis and VARIMAX rotation procedures, the empirical results demonstrated that the Eigenvalues

for all four core constructs were strictly greater than the traditional 1.0 cutoff criterion, ranging from the lowest value of 1.059 for *Purchase Intention* to the highest value of 11.162 for *Emotional Experience*.

In terms of convergent validity, the standardized factor loadings for all individual items within their respective constructs exceeded the strict 0.50 threshold. Furthermore, evaluation of discriminant validity indicated that all measurement items were accurately allocated across the distinct, isolated constructs. Consequently, the items demonstrated no cross-loading or conceptual overlapping, confirming strong statistical support for the distinct dimensions of customer experience and purchase intention among consumers in South India.

6.3 Regression Analysis

A bivariate regression analysis was performed to test Hypothesis 1 (H1), evaluating the direct impact of Sensory Experience (online aesthetics and atmospheric touchpoints) on the Emotional Experience of consumers in South India.

The model summary revealed a Coefficient of Determination (R^2) of 35.9%, which mathematically demonstrates that 35.9% of the variance in the consumer's Emotional Experience is directly explained by the Sensory Experience provided by the retail interface. The overall model fit was highly significant, as indicated by an F-statistic of 104.202 (p = 0.0008, which is strictly below the standard $p < 0.05$ threshold).

Variable	Unstandardized Beta (β)	F	p-value	Result
Sensory Experience	1.368	104.202	0.0008	Supported

Looking at the coefficients, the p-value for the Sensory Experience variable (p = 0.0008) is less than the alpha significance level of 0.05. The unstandardized beta coefficient (β) is 1.368, meaning that for every one-unit increase in the quality of the sensory experience, the consumer's positive emotional attachment increases by 1.368 units. Therefore, the empirical evidence confirms that Sensory Experience is strongly and positively related to Emotional Experience, providing robust statistical support for Hypothesis 1 (H1) within the South Indian retail ecosystem.

6.3.1 Multiple Regression Analysis (H1, H2, and H3)

Multiple regression analysis is an appropriate statistical technique used to examine the linear relationship between a dependent variable and multiple independent variables by estimating the coefficients of a regression equation (Hair et al., 2006). In this study, multiple regression analysis was employed to test Hypotheses H1, H2, and H3.

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for H1, H2, and H3

Variables	Unstandardized Beta Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value
Sensory Experience	0.061	1.704	0.103
Emotional Experience	0.071	4.027	0.002
Social Experience	0.152	2.964	0.007

Notes:
Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention
Independent Variables: Sensory Experience, Emotional Experience, and Social Experience
$R = 0.549$; $R^2 = 0.294$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.282$; $F = 42.421$; $p = 0.0001$ ($p < 0.05$)

The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 42.421$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that the customer experience dimensions collectively explained a significant proportion of the variance in Purchase Intention. The model accounted for 29.4% of the variation in Purchase Intention ($R^2 = 0.294$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.282.

Regarding Hypothesis 1 (H1), the p-value for Sensory Experience (p = 0.103) exceeded the significance threshold of 0.05. Although the unstandardized beta coefficient was positive (β = 0.061), the relationship was not statistically significant. Therefore, Sensory Experience was not found to have a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention, and H1 was not supported.

For Hypothesis 2 (H2), Emotional Experience demonstrated a significant positive relationship with Purchase Intention (β = 0.071, p

= 0.002). Since the p-value was less than 0.05, Emotional Experience significantly influenced Purchase Intention. Therefore, H2 was supported.

Similarly, Hypothesis 3 (H3) was supported as Social Experience exhibited a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention (β = 0.152, p = 0.007). The p-value was below the 0.05 significance level, confirming that Social Experience significantly contributes to Purchase Intention.

Among the significant predictors, Social Experience (β = 0.152) exerted the strongest influence on Purchase Intention, followed by Emotional Experience (β = 0.071). These findings indicate that Social Experience is the most influential customer experience dimension affecting Purchase Intention. Overall, Emotional Experience and Social Experience jointly contributed to explaining 29.4% of the variance in Purchase Intention.

6.3.2 Multiple Regression Analysis (H5 and H6)

The results of the multiple regression analysis for Hypotheses 5 and 6 are presented in Table 5.

Variables	Unstandardized Beta Coefficients	t-value	Significant (p-value)
Sensory Experience	0.140	3.246	0.003
Emotional Experience	0.225	15.190	0.002

Notes:
Dependent Variable: Social Experience
Independent Variables: Two factors representing dimensions of customer experience
$R = 76.1\%$; $R^2 = 57.5\%$; Adjusted $R^2 = 56.9\%$; $F = 134.870$; $p = 0.0003$ ($p < 0.05$)

The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 134.870$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that the predictors significantly explained Social Experience. The model explained 57.5% of the variance in Social Experience ($R^2 = 0.575$).

For H5, Emotional Experience had a significant positive effect on Social Experience (β = 0.225, p = 0.002). Therefore, H5 is supported.
For H6, Sensory Experience also had a significant positive effect on Social Experience (β = 0.140, p = 0.003). Therefore, H6 is supported.

Among the predictors, Emotional Experience (β = 0.225) exerted a stronger influence on Social Experience than Sensory Experience (β = 0.140). Overall, Emotional Experience and Sensory Experience jointly explained 57.5% of the variance in Social Experience.

6.3.3 Mediated Regression Analysis (H7, H8 and H9)

Mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether Social Experience mediates the relationship between customer experience dimensions and Purchase Intention. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), mediation is tested through a three-step process:

1. The mediator is regressed on the independent variable.
2. The dependent variable is regressed on the independent variable.
3. The dependent variable is regressed on both the independent variable and the mediator.

Partial mediation occurs when the effect of the independent variable decreases but remains significant after including the mediator, while full mediation occurs when the effect becomes insignificant.

Following the procedure recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986), the results of the mediation analysis for H7, H8, and H9 are presented in Tables 6(a), 6(b), and 6(c).

Table 6(a). Result of mediated multiple regression (mediator analysis) (H7)

Independent Variable	Emotional Experience (Mediator) Model 1	Purchase Intention (Dependent Variable) Model 2	Purchase Intention (Dependent Variable) Model 3
Sensory Experience	1.373* (p=0.001) (1st equation)	0.210* (p=0.001) (2nd equation)	0.076* (p=0.035) (3rd equation)
Emotional Experience			0.099* (p=0.001) (3rd equation)

Note: *p<0.05

According to the findings from Table 6(a), sensory experience (independent variable) significantly affects the emotional experience (mediator) in the first equation (β = 1.373, p = 0.001). Sensory experience also significantly affects purchase intention (dependent variable) in the second equation (β = 0.210, p = 0.001). In the third equation, both sensory experience (β = 0.076, p = 0.035) and emotional experience (β= 0.099, p = 0.001) significantly affect purchase intention.
Hypothesis 7 (H7) is supported because the beta value of sensory experience in the third equation (β= 0.076) is smaller than the beta value of sensory experience in the second equation (β = 0.210), diminishing by 0.134 (0.210 - 0.076). Because the direct effect of sensory experience remains statistically significant (p < 0.05) even after controlling for the mediator, it can be concluded that emotional experience acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between sensory experience and purchase intention.

Table 6(b). Result of mediated multiple regression (mediator analysis) (H8)

Independent Variable	Social Experience (Mediator) Model 1	Purchase Intention (Dependent Variable) Model 2	Purchase Intention (Dependent Variable) Model 3
Emotional Experience	0.249* (p=0.001) (1st equation)	0.116* (p=0.001) (2nd equation)	0.079* (p=0.035) (3rd equation)
Social Experience			0.158* (p=0.003) (3rd equation)

Note: *p<0.05

According to the findings from Table 6(b), emotional experience (independent variable) significantly affects the social experience (mediator) in the first equation (β = 0.249, p = 0.001). Emotional experience also significantly affects purchase intention (dependent variable) in the second equation (β = 0.116, p = 0.001). In the third equation, both emotional experience (β = 0.079, p = 0.035) and social experience (β = 0.158, p = 0.003) significantly affect purchase intention.

Hypothesis 8 (H8) is supported because the beta value of emotional experience in the third equation (β = 0.079) is smaller than the beta value of emotional experience in the second equation (β = 0.116), diminishing by 0.037 (0.116 - 0.079). Because the direct effect of emotional experience remains statistically significant (p < 0.05) even after including the mediator, it can be concluded that social experience acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between emotional experience and purchase intention.

Table 6(c). Result of mediated multiple regression (mediator analysis) (H9)

Independent Variable	Social Experience (Mediator) Model 1	Purchase Intention (Dependent Variable) Model 2	Purchase Intention (Dependent Variable) Model 3
Sensory Experience	0.424* (p=0.001) (1st equation)	0.210* (p=0.001) (2nd equation)	0.087* (p=0.008) (3rd equation)
Social Experience			0.279* (p=0.001) (3rd equation)

Note: *p<0.05

According to the findings from Table 6(c), sensory experience (independent variable) significantly affects the social experience (mediator) in the first equation (β = 0.424, p = 0.001). Sensory experience also significantly affects purchase intention (dependent variable) in the second equation (β = 0.210, p = 0.001). In the third equation, both sensory experience (β = 0.095, p = 0.008) and social experience (β = 0.279, p = 0.001) significantly affect purchase intention.

Hypothesis 9 (H9) is supported because the beta value of sensory experience in the third equation (β = 0.095) is smaller than the beta value of sensory experience in the second equation (β = 0.210), diminishing by 0.115 (0.210 - 0.095). Because the direct effect of sensory experience

remains statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) even after including the mediator, it can be concluded that social experience acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between sensory experience and purchase intention.

7. Conclusion

This empirical research project systematically evaluated the explicit impacts of multi-dimensional customer experience constructs on final consumer purchase intentions within the rapidly evolving omni-channel retail ecosystem of South India. Moving beyond traditional transactional evaluation paradigms, this study successfully integrated driving experiential variables (sensory, emotional, and social experiences) into a unified, tiered structural framework to map the exact internal psychological transitions occurring within the consumer's decision-making matrix.

7.1 Theoretical Contributions

From a theoretical perspective, this study significantly advances emerging market marketing literature by expanding the traditional boundaries of customer experience frameworks. Rather than treating customer experience as a monolithic or parallel parallel driver, the empirical findings validate complex structural dependencies and sequential mediation pathways.

Specifically, the results of the Baron and Kenny mediation analyses successfully clarify the internal mechanism of value conversion:

- **The Mediating Role of Emotional Experience (H7):** Emotional experience acts as a robust partial mediator between sensory experience and purchase intention. Sensory aesthetics serve as a critical top-of-funnel antecedent that triggers deeper affective attachment, which sequentially drives motivational buying urgency. The initial direct total effect of sensory experience ($\beta = 0.210$, $p = 0.001$) significantly diminishes by 0.134 to a direct path of $\beta = 0.076$ ($p = 0.035$) once the emotional mediator is introduced.
- **The Mediating Role of Social Experience (H8 & H9):** Social experience was empirically validated as a vital partial mediator for both emotional and sensory drivers. Emotional states (β drops from 0.116 to 0.079; $p = 0.035$) and sensory aesthetics (β drops from 0.210 to 0.095; $p = 0.008$) strongly rely on peer validation and reference networks to carry over successfully into final purchase intentions. This highlights the severe limitation of older, linear marketing models that assumed unmediated behavioral links.

Furthermore, the robust reliability and validity testing (KMO = 0.935; highly significant Bartlett's test) confirms that the localized Strategic Experiential Modules (SEMs) adapted for this study provide a highly stable and reliable instruments for assessing modern omni-channel consumer interactions in South India.

7.2 Managerial Implications

From a practical and managerial standpoint, this study offers a definitive structural blueprint for retail practitioners, brand managers, and digital interface designers operating within major technological and cultural hubs across South India (such as Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad).

First, because sensory experiences (online aesthetics, mobile layouts, and physical atmospheric touchpoints) act as the primary catalyst for both emotional and social sub-dimensions, firms must strategically allocate resources to design immersive, low-friction interfaces. Beautiful visual design and layout optimization serve as the crucial initial "hook" required to capture consumer attention in highly saturated digital and physical spaces.

Second, practitioners must recognize that positive sensory or functional inputs alone are insufficient to sustain a competitive edge if they fail to generate deeper internal mood shifts or structural social interactions. Since multiple regression identifies social experience ($\beta = 0.152$) as the single most influential driver of purchase intentions , brands must intentionally cultivate features that build "social currency". This includes integrating collaborative consumption

spaces, seamless digital peer sharing networks, and community-validation mechanisms directly into mobile applications and omni-channel retail platforms to leverage the collective word-of-mouth tendencies deeply rooted in South Indian household purchasing dynamics.

7.3 Limitations and Future Research

Despite its rigorous methodological approach, this study is bounded by a few limitations that offer fertile ground for future academic inquiry. First, the cross-sectional survey strategy captured data at a single point in time; future studies could employ longitudinal research designs to track how experiential connections fluctuate or erode over extended consumer lifecycles. Second, the target population focused on urban multi-channel consumers drawn primarily from a highly literate, tech-savvy demographic within Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana. Future research should attempt to expand and test this framework within semi-urban or rural Indian demographics to evaluate whether value-consciousness and collective reference structures alter the strength of these behavioral paths. Finally, while this study systematically established the positive experiential drivers, future structural path validation should expand on evaluating the explicit, simultaneous negative moderating effects of product innovation barriers, such as perceived transactional risk and functional complexity, to completely solve the value-conversion equation.

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