Retail Shoe Departments: An Investigation of Microenvironment and Chronemics

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Abstract

The current investigative study examines the connection between employees’ use of chronemics and the microenvironments of retail shoe departments as they relate to the overall consumer shopping experience. Researchers utilized naturalistic observations at two separate locations. To measure chronemics, the research team noted the amount of time that passed before an employee approached a customer. To measure the microenvironment, detailed observations and notes were taken. As this is an investigative study in nature, potential effects of the microenvironment and employee’s use of chronemics are discussed using the two specific retail shoe departments as examples.

*Keywords:* nonverbal communication; chronemics; microenvironment; retail department stores

*Please Note:* The names and locations of the specific department stores have been changed to maintain confidentiality. Throughout the study, the department stores will be discerned by the terms ‘Store A’ and ‘Store B’.
Retail Shoe Departments: An Investigation of Environment and Chronemics

Nonverbal communication can be as important, if not more important, than verbal communication. Nonverbal communication can be vitally significant to the success of a retail store, as nonverbal communication can help further a sale. A kind smile or warm handshake can be the deciding factor in whether or not individuals decide to purchase an item.

Chronemics, the use of time, may not be the most important aspect of nonverbal communication in terms of retail stores, but how employees utilize time can impact the retail environment and the customers’ satisfaction with their shopping experience. Employees’ use of time can influence how and to what extent customers are helped in a timely and efficient manner.

The microenvironment of a retail store can also greatly affect the shopping experience for customers. An environment can dictate the feelings and kind of experience customers have in a particular store. A visually stimulating microenvironment versus one that is not as stimulating, for example, could yield different results in terms of how a customer feels in that environment. The look of a microenvironment, whether it is the motif or the physical environment, can greatly affect a consumer’s overall shopping experience.

This investigative study will utilize observations to explore the effect of microenvironments and employees’ use of time (chronemics) on the customer’s overall shopping experience in two different women’s shoe departments at popular retail stores. This study will explore the dynamic that exists between the customers, the employees, and the store. Therefore, the significance of this research will be in the fact that these two areas, the store’s microenvironment and its effect on consumers, as well as time (chronemics) and its interplay with communication, can work together to affect the consumer’s shopping experience, which makes it valuable for retailers in determining the best way to make a profit.
Review of Literature

Chronemics. The study of time, chronemics, “concerns the study of human temporality” (Bruneau, 2007, p. 90). Bruneau identifies that time is an essential area of study for the development of communication because all communication is, in some way, affected by time (Bruneau, 2007). Time “is a basic mechanism through which social acts, organizations, institutions, cultures, and social structures exist and operate” (Bruneau, 2007, p. 94). Unfortunately, little research exists in the context of retail environments, but this study hopes to make strides to understand chronemics’ place in these communicative situations.

One study that does discuss the topic of shopping and time measured customers’ reactions to a perceived time-pressured shopping situation inside a grocery store (Herrington & Capellan, 1995). Researchers measured both the actual amount of time shoppers spent in the store, as well as the consumers’ perceived amount of time constraints. The researchers found that total shopping time was not related to perceived time pressure; therefore, even if shoppers felt a time constraint, their time in the store did not necessarily decrease (Herrington & Capellan, 1995). In addition, the total purchase amount was not related to perceived time pressure, meaning that time pressure did not directly correlate to less money spent on groceries (Herrington & Capellan, 1995). In terms of retail environments where an employee’s use of time directly affects the customer, an employee’s time pressure could possibly affect a customer’s total shopping experience, which is something this exploratory study is designed to observe.

A study conducted in Mexico attempted to determine what motivating factors influence customers’ unhurried shopping behavior (Rajagopal, 2010). Rajagopal analyzed the role of individuals who promote sales and introduce customers to the stores and brands in which they may have interest (2010). The study hypothesized that consumers’ purchase decisions are
affected by merchandise attractiveness and the pre-purchase stimulation created by sales promoters (Rajagopal, 2010). The study additionally found that the sales promoters make a sizable difference in stimulating interest in products, possibly because of the relationship they are forming with the consumer (Rajagopal, 2010). These promoters provide information about products, perform demonstrations, and help consumers understand what new products are being introduced, while creating a connection with the consumer (Rajagopal, 2010). This study will additionally look at the connection between the seller and buyer in terms of the time and attention that the salesperson, or employee, gives the customer. The employee’s use of time can have direct effects on the behavior and overall feelings of the customer.

Microenvironment. Microenvironments include “everything that is physically present to [an] individual at a given moment” (Eaves & Leathers, 1991, p. 265). How these environments are designed, decorated, and kept is extremely important within nonverbal communication. Every day, individuals encounter environments that evoke certain emotions, either consciously or unconsciously, that dictate how long those individuals stay in an environment, what they do, and the quality of the experience they have. Researchers have previously explored store atmospheres and how consumers react to the surrounding elements (Newman & Foxall, 2003). Store layouts and the way merchandise is positioned are very important to consumers, even on a level of which they may not be fully conscious. The consumers may not be fully cognizant of this effect either because they are too busy thinking about their purchases or, because these factors are on such an undetectable level that the consumers completely discount these elements as having an effect on their attitudes and choices (Newman & Foxall, 2003). For additional evidence of this we must look to “the influence of the physical and social (staff and customers) retail environment on purchase and consumption
decision making” (Newman & Foxall, 2003, p. 595), which is what our study aims to accomplish.

The aspects of microenvironments are vast and many different factors can influence the behavior or emotion within a given environment. A study completed in the Netherlands observed participants’ reactions to lighting inside a fashion store (Custers, de Kort, IJsselsteijn, & de Kruiff, 2010). Participants were asked to look at photos of the store and rate the overall look of the store’s interior according to different categories. The categories utilized in the study were legibility (order-disorder) and warmth (warm-cold) (Custers et al., 2010). Questionnaires were used to rate the environment on these scales as well as noting other aspects of the perceived environment including liveliness, coziness, tenseness, and detachment (Custers et al., 2010). The researchers found that lighting did contribute to the feeling of the environment, though only to a modest extent (Custers et al., 2010). They found that the brighter the environment, the more the tenseness and sense of detachment increased and the sense of coziness decreased (Custers et al., 2010). The researchers did note that other aspects undoubtedly play a role in the perception of an environment; however, it is clear that lighting does affect the way one feels in his/her surroundings (Custers et al., 2010). This study illustrates the effect that a small part of a retail environment can have on the consumer. The current study will look at these small parts of the surrounding environment in order to determine their overall effect.

Similarly, other researchers attempted to identify whether or not certain elements of store atmosphere changed the amount that consumers shopped and purchased items based on a sustainability theme present in the Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI) flagship store (Ogle, Hyllegard, & Dunbar, 2004). The researchers were interested in whether REI’s push for sustainable living and consuming would be translated to their customers and possibly change
their behavior based on the way the store was decorated and furnished (Ogle et al., 2004). Part of the research identified that merchandise selection and the overarching habits of consumers who shopped at REI may affect the reasons for shopping there (Ogle et al., 2004). However, the researchers found that the reasons consumers chose the flagship REI store over other REI locations had to do with store atmosphere (Ogle et al., 2004). The main REI store’s attributes included elements such as aesthetics, merchandise brands, and the class of clientele (Ogle et al., 2004). This study contributes to the idea that the way a retail store feels and looks can greatly affect the behavior of consumers, and given the results of this study, can also alter the attitudes they hold towards certain movements or campaigns (Ogle et al., 2004). The following study also hopes to look at the effects of the environment on the consumer. Instead of looking at the attitudes towards certain movements, it will examine the behavior of the customer in terms of the complete shopping experience that is directly related to the overall look of the microenvironment.

As there are not many studies looking at the microenvironment and chronemics in relation to retail environments, this is an important area of study. The microenvironment surrounding the customers and the employees’ use of time can have a direct impact on the customer’s shopping experience. Therefore, we propose two research questions:

RQ1: Is there a difference in motif (artifacts and decoration) and physical environment (spatial layout and structural organization) between the two women’s shoe departments?
RQ2: Is there a difference in individuals’ usage of chronemics between the two women’s shoe departments?

**Method**

We chose the specific microenvironments of Store A and Store B because these retail
stores are nationally known and very popular within the local community. Particularly, the women’s shoe departments were chosen because employees need to assist customers by locating shoes from the back of the store in order for the customers to try on shoes and possibly make a purchase. Therefore, this specific microenvironment is different from other retail stores where individuals can try items on at their leisure and according to their own time constraints. In a shoe department, the employees’ use of chronemics directly affects the customer. We believe that Store A and Store B’s women’s shoe departments are proper places to measure chronemics and microenvironments in order to apply the findings on a wider scale, appealing to some of the largest department stores in the nation.

To observe the microenvironment and chronemics at the two department stores, naturalistic observations were utilized. The women’s shoe departments were observed, in person, at their respective locations. Store A’s women’s shoe department was located on the first floor bordering the entrance to the mall. Store B’s shoe department was located on the first floor near the back of the store, away from the entrance to the mall. Four members of the group made observations on two separate occasions. The first round of observations were made on Sunday, November 13, 2011, from 11:30am until 12:00pm, with two members spending thirty minutes at Store A and the other two spending thirty minutes at Store B. The second round of observations were made on Sunday, November 20, 2011, between 11:15am and 11:45am.

The researchers in each observation group entered their respective store and located an inconspicuous place to sit and observe. The appearances of the environments were noted, as well as how the customers and employees interacted. One member from each group observed customer and employee interactions while the other observed the environment. Once the observations reached 15 minutes, one researcher posed as a customer to obtain a direct
interaction with an employee to gain a more organic perspective. The researcher observing the customers selected an individual who had entered the store and observed him/her from the moment of arrival until an employee made contact. A stopwatch was used to time each interaction and a notebook was utilized to record the data. Acting as a customer, the researcher self-timed the interaction between herself and the employee at each point of contact.

In order to measure the microenvironment, the researchers made copious notes of the lighting, the surfaces of the environment, the shoe displays, cleanliness, and anything else that was deemed appropriate in the overall appearance of the environment. To measure chronemics, the researchers observed the time it took for an employee to approach a customer and begin an interaction. The focus of the study was to measure how long it took for the initial point of interaction to occur because the research group felt it would be a proper indicator of the employee’s use and management of time to help a customer and potentially make a sale. There were a total of six timed interactions at Store B: three at the first observation and three at the second. There were a total of eighteen timed interactions at Store A: nine at the first observation and nine at the second.

**Results**

The results of the study indicate many differences overall in terms of microenvironment and chronemics between the women’s shoe departments at Store A and Store B.

**Research Question 1**

A major difference was found in terms of motif and physical environment between Store A and Store B. Although both microenvironments were women’s shoe departments, the decorations and physical environment were vastly different from one another. In terms of decoration, Store B was dated and the shoe department had not been recently renovated. The
floor was comprised of brown tile and green carpet. The color motif of the environment was a mix between white and tan walls and displays partnered with the green carpet. Overall, the colors of the department were very bland and not stimulating. Additionally, there were brick columns throughout the store that were old and unattractive. There were out-of-date pictures of women modeling shoes, which did not advertise the shoes available in the store. The decorations were not interesting or attention-grabbing. The employees were dressed in relaxed, business casual attire with nametags. At times it was hard to distinguish the employee from the customer because of their casual dress.

In contrast, Store A’s motif was more modern. The shoe department was recently refurbished and had a clean, polished look. The color motif was black and brown tables and furniture paired white and tan walls with black, red, blue, and olive wall accents. Although the carpet was green, the colors of the walls and furniture did not conflict. The colors looked crisp, fresh, and contemporary, while also being visually refreshing and interesting. There were decorative vases on the walls and lamps hanging from the ceiling. The carpet looked new and the displays were clean. The displays contained different levels exhibiting the shoes, which created an interesting and stimulating environment. The decorative display tables consisted of trendy, black tables in different styles. Each display table contained similar looking signs displaying the shoe brands. The whole environment had a modern, clean, and stylistic decoration.

There was also a difference between the physical environments of the two shoe departments. At Store B, the displays for the shoes were either round or rectangle with a painted white base and glass top. The displays seemed bulky. There were not many stylistic elements in the way of the shoe displays. The displays were also very crowded. The spread of the tables
created a feeling as if one needed to weave himself/herself through a maze. Store B’s physical environment was also extremely dirty. The displays’ painted wooden bases were chipped and the glass was dusty. The carpet was heavily stained. The chairs were also stained and not very comfortable. There were cleaning supplies left out in the department; a Swiffer hand-duster was found stuck between two chairs. There was a large roll of brown paper towels sitting on a display with a used paper towel sitting next to it. Despite the evidence of cleaning supplies, when a researcher touched a glass display with her finger, the tabletop was heavily covered in dust.

Additionally, the environment was poorly lit. There were lights pointing to wall displays, but the light did not highlight the displays correctly in an eye-catching way. The lights were long, outdated, florescent lights with a few round fixtures in the ceiling. The light was dull and dingy and did not properly illuminate the environment. The shoes on the displays were haphazardly thrown onto the tables with shoes upturned and crowded. There were also broken shoes on the display tables. There were a few mirrors in the corners of the store, but they were hard to find and only served a minor functional purpose. The mirrors did not enhance the surrounding environment. Overall, the physical environment at Store B was dirty, poorly lit, and disordered.

In comparison, the physical environment at Store A was more inviting. The shoe displays were clean and evenly spaced. The displays were ordered in a specific way to enhance the customer experience. They were not crowded together, but spaced so that the customer could see all the shoes at one time and enabled the employees to keep track of the customers. The shoes were evenly arranged on the displays and looked cleanly organized without appearing overwhelming. Each shoe was properly displayed by itself without looking as if it was thrown
onto the display table.

The displays changed between the times the observations were made. A table in the middle of the department contained a display of Sperry Topsiders on the first day of observation and changed to a display of boots on the second observation. This may have been due to the change in weather, as the first day it was sunny and the second day it was raining. Therefore, Store A practices weather-sensitive displays and changes the shoes when it is appropriate. Although this happens in most retail stores as seasons and styles change, Store A changed their shoe displays within one week, whereas Store B did not.

Store A had black and brown chairs that were comfortable and contemporary. There were not only chairs and decorative footrests available, but also small couches for the customers to sit on, which created a more relaxing and potentially sociable environment. There were mirrored pillars throughout the department to enhance the overall environment. These pillars reflected the interior light and the shoes’ images to make the space look bigger and allow the customer to view their entire bodies as they tried on shoes. Store A was additionally well lit with halogen lights. There were interesting light fixtures hanging from the ceilings that added to the appeal of the environment. The lights on the ceilings were aimed towards shoe displays on the walls, highlighting the display and calling attention to the shoes being advertised. The shoes appeared to pop from the wall, even from across the department. Overall, Store A had an appealing, trendy, and clean motif and physical environment.

**Research Question 2**

The results of the observations distinguished a difference between chronemics at Store A and Store B. Overall, the observations illustrate that Store B is more rushed in terms of chronemics. First, the researchers timed how long it took for an employee to approach a
customer. Our timings indicate that it took longer for customers to be approached at Store B. One researcher participated in a self-timed observation and timed that it took 5:05 minutes to be approached by an employee. A mother and daughter spent three minutes in the section before leaving without being approached. There were timed interactions that were similar to those at Store A, but overall the customers waited longer to be approached by an employee at Store B.

Additionally, there were more people in Store B at both observations. At each of the observations, there were at least 25 individuals with only five employees working. With the uneven ratio of customers to employees, the employees seemed extremely rushed and therefore, it seemed as if the customers were negatively affected. There were multiple customers at Store B that needed to stop an employee in order to be helped. Others simply walked through the department without being approached. The employees at Store B were rushing about the department helping a multitude of customers at once. The employees were helping so many people and moving so rapidly that it was difficult to determine which employees were helping which customers.

At Store A, the use of time was much less rushed. The employees at Store A approached the customer in a very timely manner. Overall, it took about ten to 20 seconds for the employee to approach the customer. With a few exceptions where individuals were approached after a few minutes, the employees contacted the customers more rapidly compared to Store B. There were approximately six employees working during the observations, but all were not on the floor at the same time. There were less people overall in Store A’s shoe department at each of the observations; less than 20 people moved through the entire department during each 30-minute observation. The employees appeared to stand around and observe the customer much more often. The stress-free use of time allowed for the employees to watch the customer and decide
whether and when to approach. The employees did not move as quickly compared to their Store B counterparts. The employees were quick to help the customers, but they did not appear negatively rushed or strained. The employees at Store A were also able to help fewer customers at once; each employee probably helped two or fewer individuals at one time. This use of time created a more enjoyable and stress free environment.

Discussion

The purpose of this investigative study was to examine the microenvironment and chronemics in retail shoe departments as these can greatly determine the type of shopping experience for a customer. This study found major differences between Store A and Store B. They differed in terms of environment as well as with the employee’s use of chronemics. Store B’s environment was dated, dirty, and unappealing. Store A’s environment was modern, clean, and organized. Store B’s employees were much more rushed while working compared to Store A’s employees, and it took longer overall for Store B’s employees to approach customers in comparison to Store A’s employees. This section will deliberate the implications of these findings for each research question, discuss limitations of the study, and suggest ideas for future research.

Research Question 1

The findings for research question one illustrate the difference between motif and physical environment and how this can affect one’s experience while shopping. Our research found stark differences between the motifs and physical environments of Store A and Store B. Store B’s motif was unattractive and the physical environment was dirty and dated. Store A’s motif was trendy and the physical environment was clean and pleasantly arousing. The difference in motif can greatly affect the experience an individual can have in each environment.
The microenvironment of Store A evoked a feeling of contentment within the customer, whereas Store B was not relaxing. According to Knapp and Hall’s (2010) six perceptions of environment, individuals are more likely to stay in warmer environments. Knapp and Hall state, “environments that make us feel psychologically warm encourage us to linger, relax and feel comfortable. It may be some combination of the color of […] walls, paneling, carpet, texture of furniture, [and] softness of the chairs” (2010, p. 102). This relates directly to the environmental observations made at the two locations. Store A customers might be more likely to stay longer in the area because it is warm, clean, bright, and, attractive. The customers at Store A might be more at ease and happier with their shopping experience over Store B customers. Store B did not create a comfortable environment where customers would want to stay and spend time browsing. As a result of these different environments, Store A customers might spend longer in the department and therefore feel more comfortable trying on more shoes. If the customers tried on more shoes and felt at ease, they might be more willing to purchase shoes and therefore spend more money. Simply as a result of the environment, Store A over Store B might have higher customer satisfaction with the environment and therefore, Store A could be more profitable.

Similarly to the Custers et al. (2010) study, the lighting helped create the overall feeling of the environment in Store A and Store B. The lighting in Store A was much warmer and friendlier which created a more comfortable environment. The lighting in Store B was harsher and created a less inviting environment. Additionally, this research found similar ideas that Ogle et al. (2004) found in their study of REI. The environment of Store A and Store B could possibly affect the attitude and behavior of the customers. Just as REI used the environment to instill in the customers a certain attitude and belief, the environments of Store A
and Store B could affect the attitude and buying behavior of the customers. Store B’s environment did not instill a warm feeling in the customer, so the customers may spend the smallest amount of time in the environment when purchasing shoes. However, Store A’s environment could affect the customers by moving them to spend more time browsing the shoes and therefore, possibly purchase more shoes.

**Research Question 2**

The results pertaining to research question two found a difference in terms of chronemics at both stores. Overall, the employees at Store B took longer to approach the customers compared to Store A employees. The Store B employees helped more customers at one time, in comparison with the employees at Store A. The employees at Store B were hurrying about the store creating a more hectic atmosphere. The Store A employees approached the customers quicker and also spent more time observing the shopping customers. The Store A employees were much more relaxed and spent more quality time helping customers.

Because of the employees’ use of time within each of these environments, the customer had very different experiences. At Store B, many more customers left without being helped and more customers had to approach employees in order to be helped. Store B employees were more rushed and appeared more pressed for time over the employees at Store A. While watching the employees in the shoe department at Store B, an individual would not feel at ease or comfortable. The section felt rushed and stressed which did not create a good environment for shopping. If the customers are not being helped properly at a department store, frustration and unhappiness may ensue and potential purchases may be in jeopardy.

Interestingly, there were more separate purchases made at Store B, which also adds to the environment created. Because of the employees’ use of time, the whole department at Store B
seemed to move much quicker, but not in a positive way. Employees would provide the customer with the shoe they wished to try on and then move onto another customer. If the customer liked the shoe, they bought it and interaction ended. The customers seemed as if they came into the department with an idea of what they wanted to purchase; they would try on the pair of shoes and either liked it or passed. It was apparent that there was not much leisurely shopping occurring at Store B. At Store A, however, it seemed as if the employees had more time to spend with the customer. Multiple customers tried on a few different pairs of shoes and employees would bring out multiple pairs at one time and even go back for more. Customers spent time browsing the shoes on display, picking different ones they wished to try on. The environment created by chronemics at Store B was one of quick transactions, whereas Store A was an environment where individuals enjoyed trying on shoes and spent more time leisurely browsing.

The difference in chronemics in the stores may have been due to the fact that there was an immense difference between the ratio of employees and customers. Both Store A and Store B had five employees at each observation. However, Store B had over 25 people during the entirety of the two observations and Store A had less than 20 individuals move through the section during the entire 30-minute observation. Therefore, the Store B employees had to deal with many more customers at once compared to the Store A employees. This uneven ratio between employees and customers at Store B may have contributed to the fact that the employees took longer to approach customers and many customers left the without being helped. Without the proper number of employees to help every customer, it is obvious that many customers will not be helped efficiently. Store A had a more even ratio between employees and customers, which attributed to their employees’ timeliness. Store B can fix the uneven ratio by
hiring more employees who could effectively and efficiently help the multitude of customers.

These findings can be related back to Herrington and Capellan’s (1995) study. Although the study only focused on customer’s sense of time constraint, our findings can be applied. Herrington and Capellan found that the feeling of time constrain did not affect one’s overall time in the supermarket. This means that individuals who felt rushed and individuals who did not spent relatively the same amount of time in the store. However, the supermarket is a very different shopping experience compared to a shoe department. One’s entire shopping experience in a shoe department is reliant upon the employee’s ability to be helpful in a timely manner. This relates to the different use of chronemics at Store A and Store B because the employees’ use of time directly relates to the type of experience that individuals might have at these different shoe departments.

Implications

The overall purpose of this exploratory study was to determine how employees’ use of chronemics, in conjunction with the microenvironment, differed between the two department stores. The results of this study emphasize very different customer shopping experiences at each store. The implications of these findings relate specifically to employees and management of retail stores. Store employees and management need to understand the great importance of environment and chronemics as it relates to a customer’s experience. The job of an employee in a retail setting is to complete a sale. However, if the environment and use of time go directly against trying to make a profitable sale, the employees will have a much harder time and the department, or store as a whole, will ultimately suffer. The problem at Store B would have been much easier to handle if there had been more employees to help the overwhelming number of customers. Employees understanding the correct use of time is imperative to create a high-
quality shopping experience for the customers and this will help increase the amount of time customers spend shopping and hopefully increase profits.

**Limitations**

As no research study is perfect, there are some limitations to this study. The first limitation is that the same two groups viewed the same stores on the different observation dates. Since the same individuals observed the same stores, there was no variation between observers and this may affect the validity of this study. Without different individuals observing the environments, there could not be an agreement between two different parties on the observations, which directly affects the validity of the study.

The second limitation is that it was much harder than expected to perfectly time all the customers in the store, especially at Store B because of the vast amount of individuals in the department at one time. It was hard to differentiate between the customer and the employee and to determine exactly which employee was helping which customer. There was such a multitude of individuals walking in and out of the department it was sometimes difficult to obtain an accurate picture of the chronemics in Store B’s shoe department, which may have affected the results of the observations.

A third limitation to this study is the amount of time that the researchers spent in each shoe department. Although there were two separate observation times, the groups only made 30-minute observations each day. In order to obtain a more accurate picture of the use of chronemics, future researchers should spend much more time in the subsequent environments. Also, future researchers should be aware of the time of day and day of the week that observations are made. Our observations were made on a Sunday morning, which may have not been as popular for one store as it was for another. Future research needs to spend more time and ensure
observations are made during various times of the day and during various days of the week to ensure a much more accurate depiction of chronemics.

As this was an exploratory study, the biggest limitation is that our conclusions are based on assumptions. Although no specific calculations were made and the study was investigative in nature were made, the observations of the environments, as well as chronemics, are still illuminating and can help future researchers, as well as store employees, managers, and owners.

**Conclusion**

As this research has illustrated, the microenvironment and chronemics of a retail store can greatly affect a customer’s shopping experience. A dirty microenvironment will not elicit a positive response from a customer, as will not having enough employees to efficiently help every customer in the department. A clean, bright, stylistic environment coupled with efficient and correct use of time will help to create a great shopping experience for the customer. Chronemics is an important aspect of nonverbal communication that many individuals overlook. Without the accurate use of time, employees’ smiles and good eye contact may not satisfy the customer. Chronemics can greatly affect a customer’s overall shopping experience and may directly relate to the customer’s purchases.

Throughout this study, there were a few ideas for further research on the topic of chronemics and microenvironments. The first suggestion for future research would be to accurately time an entire interaction between a customer and an employee. It may be helpful and interesting to measure not only how long it takes a customer to be approached, but also how long it takes for the employee to come back with the shoes, how long it takes for the employee to come back to see if the customer liked the shoes, and how long, overall, the employee helped the customer. This measure of chronemics in terms of the entire employee-customer interaction
would help to wholly understand the use of chronemics.

Another suggestion for future research would move beyond naturalistic observation. The coupling of naturalistic observation and a post-observation questionnaire may prove to be extremely helpful in finding out the true feelings of the customers. Post-observation questionnaires may provide a good sense of how the customers feel about the environment, as well as the employees’ use of time. Without these, as illustrated in this study, the conclusions are simply conjectures.

To conclude, if stores are intent upon creating a hospitable environment and enhancing the customer experience, managers, owners, and employees need to look at the overall physical environment and the use of chronemics as it relates to the customer. The combination of environment and chronemics can ultimately have the most impact upon a customer’s overall shopping experience.
References


