

The Effects Of Staff Interactions By A Qualitative Study Of Buying Decisions In Convenience Stores

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Abstract: *The aim of this study is to examine the effects of staff interactions on customer purchasing decisions in convenience stores in Arayat, Pampanga, Philippines. Purposive sampling was used which included 12 participants from 6 barangays selected in Arayat, Pampanga. This study utilized a qualitative research approach, through interviews, specifically transcendental descriptive phenomenology. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions with twelve deliberately selected customers from six barangays in Arayat, Pampanga, through the use of researcher-made validated questionnaires. The researcher grouped the findings into themes and codes. Some of the things that customers care about when buying are (1) Friendly Service; (2) Staff Assistance; (3) Attitude; (4) Planned Buying. The factors that make customers decide to buy are (1) Affordability; (2) Service Accessibility; (3) Brand Commitment; (4) Staff Interaction. As a result, these positive staff interactions are expectedly influences customers' emotional comfort and eagerness to look around, but seldom outweigh practical purchasing factors. The study concludes that positive staff interactions reinforce customer satisfaction and advocate repeat visits, while negative experience discourage customers regardless of price advantages. Convenience stores may gain from structured service training and employee involvement programs to enhance overall customer experience.*

Keywords—Staff Interactions, Buying Decisions, Convenience Stores, Qualitative Research, Customer Experience, Philippines.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Convenience stores are on-the-go stores for many individuals. Convenience stores are not just for selling products. It is also a way to get on-the-go products from snacks and beverages to essential household items. Convenience stores that focus on providing quick and easy access to everyday needs were crucial for customers. In convenience stores there are a lot of convenient products people can buy to save their time. For instance, when cooking food, more Filipinos are running to convenience stores for ready-to-eat meals.

Convenience stores help a lot of individuals, especially those who are having a tough time buying from the market. Staff who serve fast, and efficiently while keeping a friendly manner are more likely to influence customers to buy. Lucas, D. L. (2020). Convenience stores in Arayat serve just as essential stores for daily customer requirements, therefore staff-customer interactions are a common aspect of the shopping experience. However, there is little qualitative research to explain how customers in this local setting perceive these encounters and how those perceptions influence their purchasing decisions. Understanding these experiences is important because it provides insight into the human and interactional factors influencing customer

behavior that are sometimes overlooked in quantitative research.

Today's generation where a lot of convenient stores face a huge competition from different convenient stores. Key understanding from this study can help stores use staff behavior as a unique selling point to stand out in different stores. Research by (Jihye, Park et al., 2023), suggests that proper staff behavior can build consumer trust that would lead in shaping customers' buying- decision and can support advocacy for greater service standards. Utilizing proper behavior towards customers makes them feel heard and valued. Although customers find convenience stores helpful for them, such as providing paying bills, or even acting as emergency shelter, it also has drawbacks that convenience store owners must address.

As customer preferences evolve, changing customer preferences is one of the global issues faced by convenience stores such as Seven-Eleven. Many customers are becoming more health conscious, demanding higher quality products and improved shopping experiences. (Zheng, 2025). Limited staff is one of the significant issues that convenience stores encounter. It typically manages smaller teams, where staff may manage responsibilities at once. Due to this, staff may emphasize and be more focused on speed over accuracy during restocking which lead to disorganized shelves. This

causes challenges for customers to easily find their needs. (Analyticsmart, 2024).

According to Tillster (2023), one of the challenges facing the convenience store is a labor shortage. Convenience stores have been dealing with labor difficulties for years, with employees quitting blaming low pay, a lack of development opportunities, and a desire to have better time management and working conditions. This has resulted in an extremely high turnover rate of 118%. This issue is also abundant in this study, as it affects the staff's interaction with their customers, because there is a lot of work to be done, but they only receive the minimum pay. It could impact how they engage with customers.

Several factors influence retail buying decisions, influencing how customer select products and make purchases. Impulse buying has been recognized as a strong predictor of customers' buying decisions (Borromeo & Etrata et al., 2022). However, in the Philippines, research into customer buying behavior, particularly about interpersonal issues, is limited.

This study would explore how quick and immediate transactions at convenience stores influence customer purchase decisions. Because staff behavior influences the entire shopping experience, it recognizes that it plays a significant role in deciding customer behavior. The researcher would explore store employees' lived experiences using qualitative methodologies such as in-depth interviews and observations, focused on how they deal with and control their behaviors to keep customers. It would show the practical and emotional aspects of store encounters by creating narratives about staff members balancing late-night shifts, attending to a variety of client demands, and aiming for exceptional customer service.

The convenience store business has seen influential globalization, supported by evolving customers' way of living, urbanization, and desire for easygoing goods and services. Metro Manila is one of the good examples, Metro Manila is so overcrowded, that's why these stores are always there for those people so they can buy items that are essential to their everyday lives. Even if location, the availability of the products, and pricing are one of the common influencers when it comes to purchasing decisions, the role of staff Interactions still remains unfounded in qualitative research focused on this retail segments. Operating in a marketplace with major chains and local outlets, convenience stores should transform far beyond from product offerings, as the modern customers keep on appraising individual experiences and emotional connections with different brands. Even in transaction focused settings, positive reactions can still build loyalty while negative relations often ends up taking away small to high amount of customers. Most of the existing research already emphasized measurable variables, providing statistical insights but they also lack of understanding of behind the

customers actions, and while qualitative studies have stressed staff customer dynamics in a large retail format, only few ones have approached the different unique context of convenience stores where the dealings are often brief and the customers presumption may varies from other settings. Additionally, many articles are formed on Western markets, with restricted data from emerging economies like the Philippines, where cultural factors such as pakikisama (emphasis on personal relationships), respect, and hospitality may form how intercommunication affects buying decisions in different ways.

This study, *The Effect of Staff Interactions: A Qualitative Study of Buying Decisions in convenience Stores*, aims to fill this gap by investigating how customers describe and interpret their interactions with staff, as well as how these interactions influence their in-store decision- making and future purchases. This research aims to generate in-depth insights into customer lived experiences, adding to a better understanding of the role of staff interactions in buying decisions in convenience store settings. By conducting this study, it can uncover how staff behaviors influence the buying-decision of a customer in Arayat, Pampanga. Addressing these gaps through examining how customers perceive staff influence, what factors define their buying journey, and what strategies can enhance the customer-staff dynamic to help both shoppers and retailers.

1.2 Review of Related Literature

Key Dimensions of Staff-Customer Interaction in Retail Shop.

According to Kim & Byron (2018) Their study found that effective behavior from workers, such as being friendly, helpful, and attentive, improve customer's views of service quality, but negative or inappropriate behaviors reduce those feelings. In terms of purchasing decisions, these behaviors influence how customers feel during service interactions, which might affect their decision to buy and return to the store. The study also found that customer satisfaction with staff controls the relationship between service quality and customer responses, implying that positive interactions with staff result in favorable customer attitudes and behaviors.

A study by Chen & Li (2021) examined the quality of employee-customer interactions and their impact on customer responses during interaction with service. Their research shows that high-quality staff-customer interactions have a positive effect on customers' restrictive voice behaviors, such as expressing complaints or making suggestions to avoid service problems. The study said as well that customer trust and association with the service provider play important moderating roles in this interaction, showing that positive encounters help develop trust and a sense of connection between customer and staff members. In terms of purchase decisions, these interaction qualities help customers to communicate more openly and confidently with staff, which

might influence their opinions of the store and decision to continue buying.

According to (Wang & Lang, 2019) Their study emphasizes the importance of staff traits and interaction quality in proving the relationship between employees and customers. Their study discovered that both employees' personal characteristics and the feeling of satisfaction customers have during interactions strengthen the customer-employee relationship. Additionally, the effects of this relationship on customers' expressive commitment—defined by subjective connection and commitment to the service provider—are moderated by both incentive and social motivation. In terms of purchasing decisions, this means that customers who have a strong, positive relationship with the staff are more likely to build loyalty and preference for the store, which can affect repeat purchases and long-term loyalty.

Huang and Xie (2017) said the significance of both interaction frequency and quality for finding business outcomes. Their research discovered that frequent and important interactions between staff and customers have a direct impact on staff productivity, which in turn enhances customer satisfaction. In addition to the direct effect, interaction frequency and quality have an indirect impact on customer satisfaction through enhancing employee performance and effectiveness. This suggests that the benefits of employee-customer interactions go beyond the first service encounter and extend to improving overall productivity at work, that improves customer satisfaction.

Pageyasa and Sarmadan (2024) said the significance of effective communication strategies in shaping consumer buying decisions. Their research showed that communication strategies that are targeted to customers' interests and generate a sense of urgency are the most effective at promoting quick purchases. The result also reveals that staffs represents a major part in fulfilling these strategies, since their capability to articulate and persuasively has a explicit influence on customer involvement and sales result. From an pragmatic approach the paper indicates that store supervisors can enhance customer pleasure and acquisition conclusion by instructing employees to utilize tactics for communication that support trust while supporting fast acquisition decisions.

According to Rohadisantoso (2024), relationships with people are highly valued, and it is a essential part of business success specifically in The Philippines Employees that are involved often show liberality, eagerness to support, and skills, all of which have a good effect on customer interactions. In retail places such as convenience stores, such beneficial behavior from staffs possibly affect shoppers' instore reviews and purchasing conclusion. Customers are more probable to perceive pleased and confident in their acquisitions when staffs are considerate and pleasing to consult with. In this

study, interactions between employees and customers at convenience stores in Arayat have a significant impact on how shoppers see the business and make final purchase decisions, emphasizing the importance of employee engagement in improving consumer experiences.

Theoretical Foundation for Studying Interactions

Research by Saepudin et. Al., (2022) suggests that product knowledge has an influence on customer buying decisions, saying that if knowledge about products increases, this means that customer buying decisions also increases. This finding is relevant to this study about influencing customer buying decisions. If the staff in a convenience store are knowledgeable about the product, if they can introduce it to the customer, the customer is more likely to influence their purchasing decisions.

As shown by Solissa et. Al., (2025) states that product quality and the information they have when deciding purchase is one of the influencing factors that shapes their purchasing decisions, while price stays an element but not the main factor. This study suggested that price is not the customer's main concern in their purchasing decision, the customer is more focused on the quality of the product and the information they get. The findings are applicable for this study because it says that one of the factors of influencing customer decisions is the information they have wherein informed customers make more intentional purchase choices, while limited knowledge can lead to indecision and ask for alternatives.

Research by (Menidjel and Bilginan 2022) suggests that positive impact on customer satisfaction, customer trust, and purchase intent came from customer relationship proneness. Tendency of a customer to engage in retailers or brands depends on several factors that relate to customer characteristics. This study also suggests that in developing customer loyalty and cultivating long-term relationships, retailers are suggested to segment their customers based on their respective relationship proneness.

According to Omolawal (2023) human relations theory forms the bedrock of and provides the theoretical foundation for effective human resource management organization. This theory of Elton mayo is relevant in this study about staff interaction and customer buying decisions in Arayat, Pampanga. This theory presents a lens for understanding how social interaction influences both staff and customer decisions.

The Social Influence Theory describes how the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the interactions with the other people in a social context (Oliveira et. Al., 2025) argues that SIT focuses on the fact that social norms, authority, and interpersonal relations influence people, so it has a lot to do with the retail setting where employees and customers must meet each other on a

regular basis. This illustrates that employee behavior significantly influences customer buying decisions through interpersonal interactions.

Successful interactions rely on mutual respect, shared competencies, and time-built connections, according to study on collaborative partnerships in governance contexts (Ruth Cox et. Al., 2025). This study shows that principles, and practices, power equalization, and adaptive communication are important domains in the study. This finding is relevant in this study as staff- customer interactions in store settings who value mutual respect influence buying decisions through trust personalized involvement.

Influencing Factors On What Customer Buys

Šostar & Jurić (2023) analyzed cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors affecting customer habits, finding personal and psychological factors to heavily influence purchasing behavior. By understanding the factors that influence customer behavior, organizations can better design their products and services, develop targeted marketing campaigns, and tailor their customer experiences to meet the needs and preferences of their target audience. It showed how to consume people's time when they buy from others. Convenience store shopping is made easier to avoid wasting your time doing what you're doing.

OpenStax (2023) outlined how situational factors such as store environment, timing pressure, and mood significantly change both the decision to purchase and the quantity bought. Consider how these values and attitudes have shaped your buying behavior. It showed how important the staff's treatment of the person who buys from them is, because this is where you can absorb how to treat a buyer properly. The mood changes when a buyer is not treated well and depends on how much he buys.

Satchapappichit (2025) examined factors affecting online purchase decisions for convenience delivery services, showing promotions and price influence purchase frequency and average transaction amount. It shows how important you are to a shopper if it is cheap and does not speed up its relationship because of the convenience of the delivery service. So, it is inevitable to buy because of the convenience of the customer who does not think or have problems. But on the one hand, he no longer realizes that he is abusing himself by buying.

Choi et al. (2024) explored how proximity to amenities influences where and how often buys occur, with local shopping preferences affecting urban customer behavior. It also helps a lot in time because the shopper is given satisfaction when it is fast to get or buy what he wants, and what they do is made easier when it is close to the location.

Muzumdar (2021) examined how review valence and perceived uncertainty influence purchase decisions under time constraints. It showed how to consume people's time when they buy from others. Convenience store shopping is made easier to avoid wasting your time doing what you are doing.

Sun (2023) found that time pressure is significantly related to impulsive buying, showing that customers under time constraints tend to make quicker and sometimes less rational purchase decisions. It affects because, first you must decide quickly because of what you are doing. So, most people make buying at the convenience store a fast life to avoid their boredom and time consuming.

Choi, Neffke, Yu, & Jun (2024) analyzed urban shopping behavior in Seoul and found location proximity strongly influences where customers prefer to shop, especially for routine purchases. It also helps a lot in time because the shopper is given satisfaction when it is very fast to get or buy what he wants, and what they do is made easier when it is close to the location.

Dudziak et al. (2023) studied food purchase locations and highlighted that retail environment, accessibility. They separate the local and international products so as not to confuse and ease the purchase of a customer. This is important so that the customer does not spend a long- time shopping.

According to the study conducted by Borromeo, Cai, and Etrata (2022), several factors were assessed which have the potential to trigger impulse buying amongst Filipino customers in convenience stores. The authors pointed out that internal urges such as mood and personal choice and outer factors like store arrangement and interaction with staff are among the contributors to this decision. The study asserts that the manner in which the employees act, being attentive and approachable, could create an atmosphere where the customer feels free to make an impulse buy, which connects directly to the aim of the current research of getting deeper insights into how the interaction between customers and staff in Arayat's stores affects the decision to buy. This brings to light the fact that employees are no longer just providers of service but have become the main factors that find customer behavior.

Ong, Persada, and Prasetyo (2022) carried out an analysis to figure out the level of impact of service quality on the behavioral intentions of buyers. They showed that the willingness and the capability of the staff to respond, their reliability and empathy are the main factors influencing the customer's intention to buy again. This Hillard aspect is consistent with the main theme of the earlier inquiry which is about how the interplay between the employees' personalized support and professional mannerisms affects the buying choices of the customer in small convenience stores.

Influencing Factor On When, Where And How Much Consumer Buy

Jaafri and Mansor (2024) assessed the attitudes of customers towards their experience in convenience stores and concluded that among the employee's characteristics conducive to building positive relations are politeness and being attentive. Directly or indirectly, these factors are and serve as the basis for customer satisfaction and thus provide a reason for purchase. The current study in Arayat is supported by the finding that staff recognition and interaction do not only help to keep customers but also influence when and how much they buy.

Ozturk, A., et al. (2023) undertook a research project aimed at revealing the role of service quality and service convenience in the aspects of customer satisfaction and retention, based on the view that the presence of engaged and effective staff enables customers to feel both convenient and trustworthy. This is consistent with the Arayat research which asserts that the interaction of the human element with the staff, for example, through customer guidance and answering questions, can sway retail purchase decisions and lead to customers visiting again, particularly in the case of convenience stores.

Chen and Li (2021) did some research on the issue of employee customer interaction quality mediation of the customer where the identification and trust took place and that was a factor of customer behavior. The research found out that highly interactive quality among customers and employees makes the first ones less dissatisfied and the second ones more positively tended to behave. A scenario such as the Arayat convenience store is where the employees' communication skills and their being responsive to customers can increase the latter's trust which in the end may lead to a larger and repeated purchase.

Agil Wahyudi, S., Sudarmiatin, & Titis Shinta Dhewi (2024) According to the research, excellent service, especially in the areas of staff professionalism and customer orientation, has a positive impact on sales. It is like the Arayat study where the role of human interaction between customers and employees is presented as the core that decides the quantity and quality of the sales in retail establishment.

Firdaus and Octaviany (2024) investigated the influence of workers on the customers' feeling of the product and concluded that polite and accommodating workers have a tremendous impact on the customer's feeling of the product. The outcome is parallel to that of the Arayat study which pointed out that the sellers' person to person communication skills and the sales strategy used by them have a direct impact on customers' buying decisions within the convenience store sector.

According to Serra et al. (2022), the market-oriented approach and brand loyalty were examined together with buying decisions by emphasizing the mediating role of staff interactions in value transmission to customers. This is in accord with Arayat's convenience store research as it suggests that employees are the intermediaries through whom the store's brand experience is conveyed, thereby influencing not only buy decisions but also customer retention.

Vizconde and Mendoza (2023) studied the influence of service quality on customer's purchase intention and staff attentiveness, and problem-solving skills were found to be the most key factors in customer choice. The research backs up the Arayat one by suggesting that employee conduct has an impact on not only the buying decision but also when and how much a customer buys in a convenience store.

Tianchon, Peñaranda, Pagulong, & Lazaro (2025) examined findings among college students on ready-to-eat food purchases, demonstrating that perceptions of food quality and convenience significantly correlate with customer buying behavior. It showed how quickly and easily a customer can eat and the security of the product being purchased. Most of the people who shop here are students who are in a hurry because it is easy to carry wherever they go. Unlike when you eat in a *karinderya* or restaurant, a lot of time will be wasted. As a student, I prefer shopping at those convenience stores to speed up my work and not waste a lot of time.

Carlos & Menes (2025) assessed how purchase decisionmaking styles, marketing mix, and socio-demographic factors influence customer's buying behavior in General Trias City. Findings suggested demographics and marketing tactics significantly impact whether, where, and how much customer purchase. It showed how important the marketing strategy of a convenience store is to attract people to shop. Based on my experience, I go to a convenience store when their product is on sale or promo to save money on what I buy.

Unique Dynamics Of Convenience Store Retail

A study by Gibson, Hsu, and Zhou (2022) examined how different store attributes affect customer experience and revisit intentions in convenience stores. Their findings showed that the customers used to have a better experience when the store that they are shopping in offers both enjoyment and practicality. Simple things like a comfortable store atmosphere, quick service, enough product choices, and fair prices all contribute to how customers feel during their visit. When customers depart the store feeling gratified, they are more probable to return again instead of choosing a separate shop next time. This illustrates that convenience stores never depend on speed alone. Alternatively, they must also evaluate how customers observe while browsing. As customer expectations continue to change in the digital age providing

both efficiency and a pleasant in-store experience becomes more important for those convenience stores to remain competitive.

Nam, Lee, and Lee (2025) conducted a choice experiment study to understand customer preferences toward unmanned or cashier-less stores, which are becoming more common in convenience retail. The study also showed that people choose unmanned stores based on things like where the store is found and how the place feels, as well as the technology used inside. What the study also pointed out is that consumers do not always prefer advanced technology. Some consumers may feel uncomfortable when the systems become too complicated for them, especially if they do not know how to use it. This shows that convenience stores should not add technology just to look modern. Instead they should choose the type of technology that can make the consumers shopping experience faster and easier just like a machine that can scan and check the price of certain product, so customer would not have to feel getting shy anymore when asking the price of a product at the cashier, not that type of technology that may give confusion to customer or makes them feel stressed.

A study by Jaafri and Mansor (2024) investigated how several factors like service quality, perceived value, product quality, and trust influence customer satisfaction and buying behavior in convenience stores. Their findings showed that customer tend to feel more satisfied when they receive fast and friendly service, feel that the prices are worth it, and trust the store.

1.3 Objective of the Study / Statement of the Problem

This study aim to examine in what manner staff interactions influence customer purchasing decisions in Arayat convenience stores. It specifically seek to explore customers' perspectives, experiences, into staff behavior and its effects on their physical buying decisions. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do the customers of convenience stores in Arayat perceive the influence of staff interactions on their in-store purchasing decisions?
2. What are the lived experiences and key factors that currently shape the customers' buying decisions within the context of Arayat's convenience stores?
3. Based on the findings of the study, what strategies to enhance staff interactions may be recommended?

This framework acts as an opening for understanding the importance of staff interactions in customer behavior, with the purpose of knowledge that can support enhance staff accomplishment, customer gratification, and store operations in Arayat convenience stores.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The research work, "The Effect of Staff Interactions: A Qualitative Study of Buying Decisions in convenience Stores," has a relatively great influence on all stakeholders in the retail and service industries, either directly or indirectly involved. This is because the findings from the research have contributed positively to the understanding of the significance of service quality and customer satisfaction, which are essential factors in the business sustainability of convenience stores.

Convenience Store Owners and Management: From a strategic and managerial perspective, the ownership and management of convenience stores realized the importance of the behavior of store employees in affecting customer decisions to purchase and revisit the store. They were thus able to develop appropriate customer service strategies, improve employee control, and allocate funds for employee training. In addition, the findings of this research work indicated the way forward for the store owners in terms of improving store performance and gaining a competitive advantage in the local market of Arayat.

Store Employees and Staff: The study for the employees in the store put the positive staff behavior in the spotlight as the major factor in the customer experience. Staff members who got the idea of the influence of their actions on customers' feeling and decision of buying, were more conscious of their role in the customer's satisfaction. The study's results brought about the encouragement for the establishment of better work attitudes, communication skills, and service-oriented behavior, which in turn led to personal growth and improved workplace performance.

Consumers and the Local Community: The study customer played a significant role in the promotion of better-quality service in the convenience stores through their demand. Improved staff behavior at stores culminated in a more congenial and pleasant shopping experience thereby increasing customer trust and loyalty. The local community of Arayat was able to enjoy the higher retail service standards because of which the business environment became more customer-friendly and local enterprises got support to grow.

Local Government Units and Business Regulators: With respect to service quality and business development, local government units and the relevant regulatory authorities recognized the small retail sector's dependence on service quality. Drawing on the report, they might create schedules of service standards and support for small business training initiatives, etc. therefore, empowering the local businesses and improving customer protection in the municipality.

Researchers and Academics: The study takes the cake from an academic standpoint since it has added a mouthful to the little literature available on customer behavior and service management within a small context like local convenience stores. It has opened the door for future research on staff behavior, customers' satisfaction, and buying decisions and has even more so encouraged the carrying out of qualitative and interdisciplinary studies in the fields of business management and marketing.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design, specifically transcendental (descriptive) phenomenology, to explore and understand regarding staff and customers interactions and how these experiences influence their buying decisions in convenience stores located in Arayat. Phenomenology is appropriate for this study because it seeks to describe and interpret the essence of participants' experiences as they are consciously lived, rather than testing hypotheses or measuring variables. The researchers of this study chose to use the transcendental (descriptive) phenomenology method which was proposed by Creswell and Poth (2018).

Transcendental phenomenology focuses on describing participants' experiences while setting aside the researcher's personal assumptions and prior knowledge. This method is considered to be perfect for the present study, as it can help the researcher to recognize the true perceptions of the customers regarding staff behavior in terms of friendliness, responsiveness, and professionalism and how these interactions influence customers buying decisions. The interviews with the staff at the convenience store in Arayat. They were asked to provide a detailed account of their experience, particularly how customer interaction had an effect on their decision when, where, and how much customers buy. The application of transcendental phenomenology enabled the research to make a significant contribution in the areas of consumer behavior and decision-making by showing how the staff interactions in reality worked among the customers in the convenience store of Arayat.

2.2 Population and Sample of the Study

This study would involve 12 total participants, all of which are customers who often visit and shop at convenience stores in Arayat. These customers would be chosen from the following

Barangays: Poblacion, San Nicolas, Mesulo, Gatiawin, Lacmit, and Mangga Cacutud. These participants would be chosen using purposive sampling, in other words the researcher would choose those who have direct experience and can provide detailed information about staff interactions and buying decisions. This procedure assure that the study will only gather important perception from the customer side of the store experience.

To maintain the confidentiality of their personal information, all participants would be given distinctive coded identifiers ranging from B1 to B12. The researchers implemented this coding system to de-identify individuals' identities while maintaining the integrity of their responses.

2.3 Research Instruments

To gather information, the researchers would employ purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a popular nonprobability technique that is essential to qualitative and mixed methods research because of its emphasis on detailed and contextual understanding. Purposive sampling, defined as the intentional selection of specific units (such as individuals, cases, or events) based on their significance to the research question, allows researchers to gain in-depth insights into complex phenomena (Omid Tajik et al., 2024). To ensure the validity and reliability of the questions, the survey instrument saw expert validation by (2) with the doctorate degree holder, master's degree holder and the one who has experience and ability in qualitative research.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

To obtain rich and in-depth data, the study used semistructured interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as the primary data collection methods.

Semi-Structured Interviews Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted to investigate participants' individual experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of staff behavior and interactions during their visits to convenience stores. Semi-structured interviews are more efficient than other types of interviews for qualitative research because they allow researchers to collect detailed information and evidence while keeping the aim of the research in mind. Second, it allows. When compared to an unstructured interview, researchers have greater flexibility and freedom to keep on schedule. Ruslin, Mashuri, et al. (2022).

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) According to (Mishra, 2016), a focus group is an in- depth interview held in a group. The scope, structure, and interview processes of the suggestion find traits of such sessions. This strategy helped to find frequent issues about customer service, shop setting, and buying behavior as effects by staff behavior.

The information gathered from related literature and other relevant materials was used to support the research claims and integrated into the study. The primary data was collected through the following procedures.

The research instrument was given to (2) with a doctorate degree holder, master's degree holder and the one who has experience and ability in qualitative research. For approval of survey questionnaire dissemination.

After receiving approval, the researcher found and invited participants through purposive sampling based on their shopping experience in convenience stores within the local area.

Before data collection, participants were told about the purpose of the research, their voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time.

The researcher assured the participating convenience stores that a copy of the completed research output would be provided upon request.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the collected data, along with its interpretation,

	sometimes leads to unplanned purchases.		Influence of Staff Behavior on Customer Buying Decisions
B8, B10	Staff help customers find items easily. However, it rarely changes their preferred brand or planned purchase.	Staff Assistance	
B3, B5	Rude or unfriendly staff discourage customers from buying. Negative treatment may cause customers to leave the store.	Negative Attitude	
B2, B11	Customers usually have planned purchases. Staff behavior mainly affects their comfort and store choice.	Planned Buying	

were presented in code form, arranged thematically to serve as the foundation for interpreting the statement of the

B1, B3, B7	Customers prioritize savings, low prices, and promotions, as financial constraints strongly influence their choices.	Affordability	
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				B9, B10, B12	Customers prefer stores that are easy to reach, open anytime, and maintain a clean and organized environment.	Service Accessibility	Determinants of Consumer Buying Decisions
Participants	Details/ insights	Keywords	Central Theme				
B1, B7	Friendly staff make customers feel comfortable. This encourages browsing and	Friendly Service					

problem. These findings formed the basis for deriving conclusions and recommendations. The first question was structured to offer an extensive exploration of the experiences narrated by the customers' perception on staff interaction in convenience stores, stressing the importance of identifying commonalities and similarities in their buying decision process.

Table 1.0 Summary Transcript of Two (2) Central Theme

B2, B8, B11	Customers stick to preferred brands and regularly buy the same products, showing strong product needs and brand loyalty.	Brand Commitment		B5, B6, B7	Staff behavior influences the customer experience, yet it seldom outweighs key factors like price, convenience, and product preferences.	Staff Interaction as Moderator	
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Central Question 1. How do the customers of convenience stores in Arayat perceive and describe the influence of staff interactions on their in-store buying decisions?

For Research Question 1, the objective was to determine the consumer perceptions of the ways in which staff interactions affect their shopping preferences within convenience stores in Arayat. The question sought to elicit the perceptions and insights from consumers regarding staff behaviors or interactions that affect their purchases in terms of selection and amount of money that they would pay.

Friendly Service

Customer satisfaction is significantly enhanced by offering friendly and sympathetic service. This positive experience affects how customers observed a brand, as a result providing trust. Satisfied customers are more likely to become loyal customers who choose a store's service over competitors. Ocampo (2024) validate this, saying that customers are an essential element of any business, and their acceptance and loyalty directly affect performance indicators. Easy to approach and friendly customer service is an important component of providing great support.

B1 stated:

“Good manners to attract customers, because if you don’t treat them well, how will they come to you? Something like convenience stores. Friendly, smiley. And then, ahh... you need to sell to them. For me, even if they greet me nicely, if I don’t need the product, I won’t buy it. Because right now, our financial situation is the hardest... I still won’t buy it. If the staff following me around doesn’t really affect me because that’s their job. If they don’t follow it, they won’t be able to do their job well. B6: “When staff are kind and attentive, I feel more motivated to browse and shop... their treatment can change my mood and desire to buy. This shows that their treatment can change my mood and desire to buy.” *(Good manners para maka-attract din ng mga customers kung kuan, kasi kung di maganda pakikitungo mo pano ka pupuntahan ng mga customers? Isang kuan katulad ng mga convenience store. Friendly, smiley. Tapos ahh... kailangan mabenta ka sa kanila. Sakin naman din kahit batiin nila ako ng maganda, kung diko naman kailangan ang product. Kasi yung kuan ngayon yung financial natin ang pinakamahirap financial... di pa rin ako bibili. Di naman nakakaapekto ang pagbubuntot ng mga staff kasi yon din ang trabaho nila, kung di naman sila susunod, di sila makakapag trabaho ng maganda.)* B7:

“Uhm for me, the way the staff treat me is really a big thing. Like for example if they are kind and they talk to me properly, I become more comfortable, you know, walking around inside the store. So sometimes even if I really just plan to buy one or two items that I already have in mind, I still end up looking at other items. It’s like you’re not in a hurry to leave and your feeling while shopping is better, like you feel comfortable, so sometimes you end up buying extra even if you didn’t really plan to.” *(Ahmm ano kasi for me malaking bagay talaga yung pakikitungo ng staff saken. Like kunwari kapag ano mabait sila tapos maayos pa sila makipag usap saken mas nagiging comfortable ako lalo na alam mo yun mag libot libot sa loob ng store. So ahh minsan kahit bibili lang talaga ako ng isa or dalawang item na nasa isi isip ko napapatingin parin ko sa ibang items. Parang bang di ka nagmamadali umalis tapos ano, mas okay yung feeling mo habang namimili ka like*

comfortable ka ganon, kaya minsan napapabili ka ng extra kahit di mo naman talaga pinaplano.)

Planned Buying

Planned purchasing behavior is more common among consumers who carefully consider the necessity of an item before buying it (Research Basics, 2019). These purchases are usually connected with specific brands or repurchased items. When customers spend time looking for something before making a purchase, they are compelling in planned purchasing behavior, which often involves asking trusted sources and comparing options before making a decision.

B2:

“Those are just stocks being bought, for me it’s different brands, different things... but... I stick to just one, I only go for Edmond, that’s really it, I don’t change. The stocks are just bought, like for me in other brands, the prices are different.. but.. I stick to just one, I only go for Edmond, that’s really it, it doesn’t change. With others, their prices change, their offerings vary, so... I don’t really stick to just one brand, I only go with Edmond. The item I want to buy doesn’t change anymore, that’s really what I want... in other words, that’s really what I’ll buy.” *(Yung mga stock laang binibili, kumbaga sa akin sa ibang brand, iba iba yong mga ano.. pero.. ako nag-aano ako sa isa lang kay edmond lang ako, don lang talaga di nagbabago. Sa iba nagbabago yung ano nila, iba-iba yung presyo, iba-iba yung ano nila kaya... di ako nag-aano talaga sa isang brand, sa isang ano lang ako kay edmond lang ako talaga. Di na nagbabago yung gustong bilhin ayon na lang talaga yung ano ko ahh... kumbaga ayun na lang yung bibilhin ko talaga.)* B11:

“Uhm one time I was buying some skin care and then I asked a staff member what it was, then he answered then, it seemed like he gave me some other skin care products so that’s it, he suggested something else. So I bought it.” *(Uhm one time ah bumibili ako ng ano skin care tapos ano nagtanong ako dun sa isang staff, then sumagot siya then, parang nagbigay pa siya ng ibang gamit pang skin care para yun nga, nag-suggest siya ng iba. Edi napabili ako.)*

Negative Attitude

Negative attitude refer to staff’s incompetent or rude behavior when handling with customers. This contains being impolite, impatient, unhelpful, or showing a lack of interest in helping customers. Such attitudes creates an negative experience, leading to dissatisfaction and influencing customers’ decision not to return. Subramanian (2016) uphold this, saying that attitude problems in the workplace often arise from managerial actions instead of employee behavior alone, and

that management should take action to enhance behavioral arrangement.

B3:

“Sometimes there are snobs like that haha... snobs, you leave them and go to those who are not snobs. Like school supplies, it’s not forbidden to look at... those snobs over there. But others go to those who are not snobs and have cheaper stuff. Like in Osave, look at the cheap ones... 10 percent.” (Minsan may mga suplada ganon haha... mga suplada, iiwanan mo pumunta ka sa mga di suplada. Tulad ng mga school supply di naman bawal kahit tumingin ka ng mga... yung mga ano dyan suplada. Eh mga iba pumupunta sa mga di suplada tsaka yung mga mura yung ano nila mga gamit nila. Katulad sa osave tignan mo mga mura... 10 percent.) B5:

“One time I bought something from a convenience store, and the staff ignored me because all I bought was shampoo. That’s when I lost interest in buying from them again because I wasn’t treated well. At a convenience store, I experienced good treatment from the staff. As soon as I entered, I was greeted and assisted with my purchases. This made me want to buy more than I had planned because the staff treated me well.” (One-time bumili ako sa isang convenience store binalewala ako ng staff dahil binili ko lang is shampoo, at dun ako nawalan nang gana bumili ulit dahil hindi ako naitrato ng maayos. Sa isang convenience store naman nakaranas ako ng maayos na pakikitungo ng staff sakín, dahil pagpasok ko palang bumungad na agad ang pag welcome sakín at pag assist sakín sa aking bibilhin, at ginanahan ako bumili pa ng madami na wala sa plano kase maayos ang pakikitungo ng staff sa akín.)

Staff Assistance

Staff assistance pertains to the providing help and support that employees offers to customers, like answering questions, providing product knowledge, and helping customers find items. When staff help customers politely, they giving a friendly, product advised, and a willingness to solve concerns. This type of service makes customers feel comfortable and asdured in their purchasing decisions. Torino (2025) said that excellent work performance starts with interactive staff, however intense workloads may consume their ability to perform effectively.

B8:

“It affects you but not that much, since whatever product you’re buying, that’s the only thing you want to buy, that’s the only thing you’ll buy in that store. But, umh, sometimes if the staff at that store is rude, it can affect you in such a way that, umh, you might not want to go back to that store again. And then the warm greeting from the staff affects you because you feel like you’re welcome in that

store. But when they keep following me, um, it makes me want to leave immediately because it’s awkward to have someone following you like that. But, um, maybe if that staff member doesn’t follow you and you can approach them instead.” (Nakakaffect sya pero hindi ganon kalala, since kung ano lang naman yung product na binibili mo, yun lang din lang naman yung ay na, gusto mong bilhin, yun lang din naman yung parang umh bibilhin mo dun sa store na yon. Pero umh minsan kase ifrude yung ahm yung staff dun sa store na yon parang makaka affect sya na ahm parang ma-ahm hindi kana ulit babalik don sa store na yon ganun. Tapos yung magiliw na pagbati ng staff ay nakakaapekto kase maffeel mo na parang welcome ka sa store na yon. Pero kapag lagi ako nito sinusundan ano, ahm parang gusto ko na agad umalis, kase ang awkward na may mga sumusunod sayo ganon, pero ahm siguro if yung staff na yon h-hindi sya susunod like Kung pweding mo syang malapitan ganun.) B10:

“In terms of interaction with the staff, it really depends on both their approach and the consumer’s attitude. Sometimes, as a buyer, you need to ask questions especially when an item doesn’t have a specific price indicated. So you go to the counter and ask. There are times when the cashier isn’t very approachable, but you also have to understand that it’s part of their job and they might be under pressure. In situations like that, you need to be patient. There are also instances when the staff themselves are not aware of the exact price unless they scan it in the computer. After all, they’re only human and can make mistakes. Sometimes, customers can be too demanding, expecting the cashier to immediately know the price when asked. But realistically, they may not know it unless they scan the item, so they’ll say, “Please wait a moment, we’ll scan it. From my experience, I understand the nature of their work. They need to be accurate with prices because it’s difficult to just give a price without scanning it can lead to mistakes. Personally, I’m patient, although there are times when some cashiers can be unfriendly or unapproachable. Still, as consumers, we should try to be patient in those situations.” (Interact in a sense of ano? Sa staff nila? Paano ang approach and then ng customer at tsaka dun sa ano, minsan kasi hindi mo maaalis na, yung mga customer yung mga buyer may tatanong sila Kasi, for example, may item kasi sila na hindi na ka-specific yung price. So pupunta ka nyan sa counter, magtatanong ka. Minsan kasi may mga ano... how do you call this? Yung sa cashier, hindi sila approachable pero dapat, naiintindihan mo din sila in line of sa trabaho nila. Dapat dyan sa ganyan nagiging ano ka dyan, mahaba yung pasensya mo. Minsan din kasi sila hindi rin nila aware yung price ng mga product nila unless kung hindi nila iku-computer, diba yung i-scan, minsan kasi, tao ka lang din naman nakakamali sila pag in-scan nila dung palang malalaman, eh minsan kasi ang customer masyado silang demanding, yung gusto nila pag tinanong nila magkano to magkano siyempre hindi naman talaga sila totally alam nila yung product na yan so ang sasabihin nila, sandali lang po, scan natin yung bang yung mga may nai-interact ako pero sa

akin alam ko naman kung ano yung klase ng trabaho nila kailangan din nilang maging specific sa price kasi mahirap yung magbibigay ka lang ng price na hindi na i-scan minsan kasi magkakamali sila sa akin naman so far mahaba naman yung pasensya ko pero minsan talaga merong cashier na nag-aanong masunget, di approachable pero tayo bilang customer dapat mahaba pasensya natin sa ganon.)

Participants regularly said that staff interactions mainly influence shopping experience and return visits rather than modifying center needs for planned purchases. Positive behaviors such as smiling, guidance, and polite interactions create a inviting atmosphere that helps more browsing and repeat visits, as seen in B1, B6, and B7. Nevertheless, brand loyalty (B2, B10) and predetermined needs may inhibit switching despite any possible positive reinforcement by employees.

The negativity associated with negative experiences becomes an important barrier to switching. Employees who are rude or condescending (B3, B5) make clients stay away from the shop, irrespective of costs and availability. Although a few respondents concentrate more on their requirements for products rather than attitudes of employees (B1, B8), it appears that bad treatment becomes an excuse for switching. The study on customer satisfaction shows that personal contact contributes to emotions and behavioral loyalty but not necessarily purchasing decisions (Homburg & Stock, 2004; Verhoef et al., 2009).

CENTRAL QUESTION 2: What are the lived experiences and key factors that currently shape customers' buying decisions within the context of Arayat's convenience stores?

Affordability

It is clear that according to B1, B3, and B7, cost and affordability determine where and what people purchase. Customers prefer shopping at establishments that provide discounts, buy one get one offers, and good prices. Although customer service affects the overall experience, affordability seems to have more weight in most cases. Customers may be dissatisfied with the staff but keep coming back because of affordable prices. However, if they find staff impolite, they may choose not to visit any longer despite the cheap prices offered.

B1:

"Where I can save money because that's where I'll buy, where I can save money, it makes a big difference because even small amounts, small... The value, when accumulated, becomes significant for... They should just be kind because nothing will happen if they don't show their true behavior. How will they sell? Because the company requires good manners, then, um... friendly,

smiley, and then, umm... sales talk... If their prices are low and I've tried them sometimes, I would still buy them, but next time I won't, because it feels like you're not welcome to buy from them anymore, because in a store, the customer is always right. And they should be smiley and friendly. I only go shopping there for the product, not because of the staff. Nothing will happen, especially if you already have a family. What good are those staff? I only want the product; not them, otherwise, I'll just end up fighting with my family if I get attached."

(Para sakin kahit di naman nila ako tanggapin ng manganda o tanggapin nila ako ng maganda wala naman magbabago kasi pumunta lang ako don para sa mga kailangan ko. Kahit na mag-ano sila, magsungit sila. Pero mas maganda nga sana para maka-attract sila ng customer yung... good manners, smiley... kase yon ang qualified ng mga company e. Pwede rin makabili ng extra, oo babalik pa rin ako kase... kahit may mas malapit, kung may malapit nga tapos di ka naman welcome sa store nila bat ka pa babalik? Don ka na babalik sa welcome ka sa iba) B3:

"Buy 1 take 1 hahah... buy 1 take 1 the cheap ones, sometimes there really is a buy 1 take 1, that's what we look for, especially in Puregold, they also have buy 1 take 1. They should be nice, they should do that because they are customers, they need to provide good service, or if they don't do that, they won't have customers, no one will go there, that's why some people buy like that, they look for good service for customers. If they're grumpy, I won't buy anymore. Even if it's cheap, if they're grumpy, you won't buy it. Even if it's expensive, you go there because they're not grumpy. What's the use of a cheap price if the seller is grumpy? It's pointless. I shop there for the goods they are selling, not for the staff." *(Mga buy 1 take 1 hahah... buy 1 take 1 yung mura, minsan talaga may buy 1 take 1 yun ang tinitignan namin, lalo na sa puregold meron din, buy 1 take 1. Ata dapat mabait sila, dapat nilang gawin yon dahil mga customer e kailangan maganda yung pang-aano nila o pag hindi nila ginagawa yon e wala na sila customer, walang papasok don, kaya mga iba bumibili ganon hinahanap nila magandang serbisyo sa mga customer. Pag masungit hindi na ako bibili, masungit kahit mura di ka na bibili masungit, kahig mahal yon puntahan mo na lang di naman masungit, paano ba yung mura kung masungit naman yung nagtitinda balewala rin. Sa mga tinitinda nila kaya ako pumunta hindi sa mga nagtatrabaho.)*

Service Accessibility

Convenience-based aspects always come into consideration when B9, B10, and B12 describe their shopping habits. Wellorganized stores, 24-hour services, and store proximity determine consumer buying behavior. As established by Choi et al. (2024), store proximity has a significant impact on the buying decision process, particularly when engaging in routine purchases, making the process easier. From the above

information, it can be seen that while organization and access are important, proximity is the main determinant in routine shopping.

B9:

“Because in convenience stores a their what eh ahmm tsss their products are organized well ahmm you can easily see their products, that’s it ah and they are also what is this called? 24 ah what? 24 hours they are a oh a 24 hours open unlike other stores, that is what is good about convenience stores, yes, they are open 24 hours.” (Kasi sa mga convenience store a a ano dun eh ahmm tsss naka organize nang ma mabuti yung kanilang mga ano products ahmm kita mo agad yung mga products nila, yun lang ah tsaka ma ano sila a la (anong pangalan nito?) 24 ah ano? 24 hours silang a oh a 24 hours silang naka open di katulad nang mga ibang store, yun ang maganda sa convenience store, oo 24 hours sila open.) B10:

“That’s what satisfies me. Just entering... I can only get the satisfaction that they can entertain me, that they can welcome me... that I feel that they are giving me the best services. That’s okay with me and I’m satisfied with that. But with their products, that’s no problem for me either. When it comes to accessibility. If I’m in Santa Ana, then I’ll just buy at Santa Ana. But for example, if I happen to be in Arayat and there’s something I want to buy there, that’s fine too. However, since we’re talking about where I live, what really matters is accessibility. If it’s available here in my place, I’ll just go there. As long as they also meet the consumer’s satisfaction, that’s okay. I probably wouldn’t prioritize a place just because it’s better in some way. The top priority is accessibility — somewhere that won’t take too much of your time. If there’s already a branch near your location, that’s good enough for me.” (Yun namang sa ikina-satisfied ko. Yung lang ma-enter... makuha ko lang yung satisfaction na ma-entertain nila ako, mawelcome nila ako na... na ramdam ko naman na binibigay naman nila yung the best services nila sakin. Okay na saking yun at tsaka satisfied ako sa ganun. Pero sa mga product naman nila, no problem din sakin yung ganun. When it comes to accessibility no kung nasa Santa Ana ako, siguro sa Santa Ana ako. Pero kung nga halimbawa nakarating ako sa Arayat, may gusto akong bilin sa Arayat, pwede din naman. Pero pinag-uusapan natin kasi dyan eh kung saan ako nakatira. Yung accessible. Kung meron naman dito sa place ko, doon na lang ako. Kung na-mmeet din naman nila yung mga satisfaction ng consumer, okay lang. Siguro hindi ko ipapriority na okay don. Ang best na priority mo dyan is accessible ka. Yung hindi ka magkakain ng maraming oras, kung nandiyan naman sa location mo na may branch sila diyan, okay na ko don.)

B12:

“When it comes to what I buy at convenience stores, price, time, and how tired I am are big factors for me. If I’m in a rush or still have class or errands, I only buy basic items. But when I have time and I’m not rushing, I notice promos and new products more. It’s also important if the store is clean and organized because it makes me more interested in looking around and buying.” (Sa mga binibili ko sa convenience store, malaking factor sakin yung presyo, oras, at kung gaano ako kapagod. Kapag mabilis lang ako at may klase pa o may gagawin, yung pinaka-basic lang talaga binibili ko. Pero kapag may time ako at hindi ako nagmamadali, mas napapansin ko yung mga promo at bagong products. Importante rin kung malinis at maayos yung store kasi mas ginaganahan akong tumingin at mamili.)

Brand Commitment

The views of B2, B8, and B11 indicate that customers are committed to brands based on their experience with and preferences for their preferred products, while interactions with employees are less important. While consumers generally concentrate on their usual products, there is also room for new suggestions. According to Wang & Lang (2019), when customers have good relationships with employees, they tend to develop loyalty towards the stores and make return purchases; however, the respondents in this case prioritized product experience over employee interaction.

B2:

“Those are just stocks being bought, for me it’s different brands, different things... but... I stick to just one, I only go for Edmond, that’s really it, I don’t change. The stocks are just bought, like for me in other brands, the prices are different.. but.. I stick to just one, I only go for Edmond, that’s really it, it doesn’t change. With others, their prices change, their offerings vary, so... I don’t really stick to just one brand, I only go with Edmond. The item I want to buy doesn’t change anymore, that’s really what I want... in other words, that’s really what I’ll buy.” (Yung mga stock laang binibili, kumbaga sa akin sa ibang brand, iba iba yong mga ano.. pero.. ako nag-aano ako sa isa lang kay edmond lang ako, don lang talaga di nagbabago. Sa iba nagbabago yung ano nila, iba-iba yung presyo, iba-iba yung ano nila kaya... di ako nag-aano talaga sa isang brand, sa isang ano lang ako kay edmond lang ako talaga. Di na nagbabago yung gustong bilhin ayon na lang talaga yung ano ko ah... kumbaga ayon na lang yung bibilhin ko talaga.) B8:

“uhm, I am influenced when that store is closer, and I can save more on the products they sell. The service of the staff is just a bonus, because, as I mentioned earlier, since you only go to that store to buy and not to interact with the staff, well, unless you know them or are close to them. When the staff is unfriendly in a store, even if the prices are low, I might not buy again because I would feel

unwelcome in that store, so I would lose the desire to shop or return to that store. When I go to a specific store, I go there because of the product, not for the staff.” (*Ahm, na iinfluence po ako kapag ahm mas malapit yung store na yon, and mas nakakamura ako sa mga products na tinitinda nila. Yung service ng staff ay Bonus nalang po siguro sya kasi, kagaya nga po ung sinabi ko kanina, since pupunta kalang naman sa store na yon para bumili and hindi makipag interact sa mga staff, ahm siguro unless kakilala or ka close mo sya ganun. Kapag naman masungit ang staff sa isang store kahit na mababa ang price dito baka Hindi po siguro ako bibili ulit, kasi ahm ma fifeel ko na hindi ako welcome sa store na yon so mawawalan akong gana bumili or bumalik pa sa store na yon. Kapag naman pumupunta ako sa isang specific store Ahh pumupunta po ako sa store na yon because of the product not the, not for the staff.*) B11:

“Of course, first is how the staff welcome you and whether they are approachable and know how to properly assist their customers. When the staff are approachable, you feel more comfortable and more drawn to stay longer, look around, and even search for other things I might want to buy. Uhm, sometimes yes it affects what I bought, sometimes no. It just depends on what... I just focus on what I need.” (*Uhm syempre sa una, kung paano ka iwelcome ng staff and kung approachable ba sila and marunong sila mag-entertain ng mga customer nila. Pag approachable yung mga staff, mas mahuhumaling or and ma komportable ka na mag-ikot-ikot pa, and maghanap pa ng iba pang pwedeng bilhin. Uhm minsan oo nakaka apekto yung mga staff, minsan naman hindi. Depende lang kung ano yung... focus ko lang yung kung ano yung kailangan ko.*)

Staff Interactions as Moderator

The reactions of B5, B6, and B7 show that the attitude of the staff is a crucial factor that affects how shopping is done and how decisions to purchase are made, either in the present or future. Positive treatment motivates buyers to make purchases and even make impromptu purchases while bad treatment discourages repeat visits by consumers. Kim & Byron (2018) state that positive staff interaction enhances service quality, making customers have positive experiences.

B5:

“As a shopper at a convenience store, how well the staff treats you is a big factor because you will be more likely to shop there if they treat customers like me well. For example, I bought household items; if the staff treats me well, I will be more likely to buy more, and I will come back to that convenience store because the staff treats me well.” (*Bilang isang mamimili sa convenience store, malaking factor kung gaano ka tratuhin nang tama ng staff dahil gaganahan ka bumili dito kapag maayos ang pakikitungo nila sa mga tulad kong customer. For example namili ako ng mga gamit sa bahay, kapag inaasikaso ako ng maayos ng staff is gaganahan*

ako bumili pa ng mas madami at babalik balikan ko ang convenience na yon kase maayos ang pakikitungo sakin nang staff.) B6:

“The interaction with the staff has a big impact on what I buy in Arayat. First, when the staff is kind and takes good care of me, I’m even more motivated to browse their store and shop because I feel like a customer like me is very welcome. On the other hand, when the staff is not kind and doesn’t treat customers well, it feels like I’m always rushing to finish shopping for the things I only want to buy, meaning I’ll only buy what I really need.” (*Malaki ang epekto ng interaction s ng mga staff kung ano ang binibili ko sa arayat. Una, kapag mabait ang staff at inaasikaso ako ng maayos mas gaganahan pa akong magikot ikot sa store nila para mamili kase feeling ko welcome na welcome ang isang tulad ko customer. Sa kabilang banda, kapag hindi mabait at hindi maayos ang pakikitungo ng staff is parang palagi akong nagmamadali mamili para matapos agad yung mga bagay na gusto ko lang bilhin, kumbaga bibilhin ko lang yung talagang kailangan ko.*) B7:

“Uhm for me, the way the staff treat me is really a big thing. Like for example if they are kind and they talk to me properly, I become more comfortable, you know, walking around inside the store. So sometimes even if I really just plan to buy one or two items that I already have in mind, I still end up looking at other items. It’s like you’re not in a hurry to leave and your feeling while shopping is better, like you feel comfortable, so sometimes you end up buying extra even if you didn’t really plan to.” (*Ahmm ano kasi for me malaking bagay talaga yung pakikitungo ng staff saken. Like kunwari kapag ano mabait sila tapos maayos pa sila makipag usap saken mas nagiging comfortable ako lalo na alam mo yun mag libot libot sa loob ng store. So ahh minsan kahit bibili lang talaga ako ng isa or dalawang item na nasa isi isip ko napapatingin parin ko sa ibang items. Parang bang di ka nagmamadali umalis tapos ano, mas okay yung feeling mo habang namimili ka like comfortable ka ganon, kaya minsan napapabili ka ng extra kahit di mo naman talaga pinaplano.*)

Price and promotions appear to be the most stable influencing factors, as people always look for discounts and deals (B1, B3, B7). Factors related to convenience, such as the proximity of a shop, round the-clock work schedule, and interior layout, also have considerable influence on consumers (B9, B10, B12). Brand loyalty and predefined needs tend to dominate other factors, and people usually prefer sticking to their favorite brands (B2, B8, B11). Employees’ actions overlap with all above-mentioned factors, as they have little impact on the purchase of preplanned items but may make shopping more pleasant so as to prompt impulsive purchases (B5, B7) or dissuade customers altogether (B3, B5).

4. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Summary of Findings

This research determine the lived experiences and major factors that influence customers' buying behavior in convenience stores in Arayat, Pampanga. Using the responses of twelve participants, some similar themes were found relating to their purchasing decisions and experiences.

1. In response to Research Question 1, on how customers observed and describe the influence of staff interactions on their in-store buying decisions, the results shown four key patterns. First, friendly and approachable staff create a inviting atmosphere that motivate customers to wander through longer and sometimes make unplanned purchases. Second, staff services such as product advice and suggestions may shift or add to planned purchases, specially when customers are not decided. Third, negative staff behavior such as rudeness, lack of interest, or coldness affect customers from making purchases and prevents them from returning to the store. Fourth, planned purchasing behavior typically limits the influence of staff interaction on what customers buy, though the overall shopping comfort and store choice are still affected.

2. In answer to Research Question 2, on the lived experiences and major factors that presently influence customers' buying decisions in Arayat's convenience stores, the results highlight four influences. Inexpensive appeared as the most dependable factor, with participants focusing on stores that propose competitive prices and promotions such as buy-one-take- one deals. Service accessibility, including store location, 24-hour operation, and product organization, was decided as a primary reason for store selection, particularly for routine purchases. Brand commitment was found to firmly limit the influence of staff behavior, as most customers go to convenience stores with specific products already in mind and rarely wander from familiar brands. Employee interactions have been seen to act as a moderating variable rather than as a determining one for purchase decisions – they can add value and make consumers buy again if good, while dissuade them from making any further purchases if bad, but they do not take away from the fundamental factors of pricing, convenience, and necessity.

3. In general, consumers in Arayat convenience stores exhibit buying behavior that is influenced by price, employee conduct, convenience, and product availability.

4.2 CONCLUSIONS

In relation to the findings of this study, the following are the conclusions arrived at based on the three research questions posed at the start of the study.

1. With regards to Research Question 1, it is clear that the conduct of the personnel significantly impacts the feelings of the clients and their shopping experience. In most cases, the participants narrated the impact of polite greetings, courteous interactions, and attentive service, which creates a comfortable environment for prolonged shopping, even leading to unplanned additional purchases. In contrast, unprofessional conduct such as rude gestures or indifference serves as a deterrent against future patronage by the customers. Although there were instances where customers stuck to their predetermined purchases despite the conduct of the personnel, Unprofessional conduct acts as a deal-breaker.

2. With respect to Research Question 2, several considerations make customers decide on which products to purchase, how much, and from which stores. Low costs, availability, organized stores, limited time, and individual needs are the main determinants for customers making their purchasing decisions. Some customers prefer to visit stores that are easily found, available for extended hours, and organized in a manner that makes products easily accessible. Promotions, cost considerations, and speed of services affect customers' purchasing decisions. These findings are consistent with the fact that while employee-staffed interactions have an influence on consumers' experiences, the fundamental retailing considerations still remain highly influential. Moreover, customers' previous shopping experiences decide how strongly staff interactions affect their buying decisions. Regular shoppers with established brand priority maintain loyalty regardless of staff behavior, while positive staff experiences may add customer comfort and search of additional products. In contrast, a one negative encounter may cancel other advantages and cause customers to avoid a particular store.

3. In relation to Research Question 3, the study shows that there is a need for planned and steady strategies to improve staff interactions in convenience stores. The results shows that staff behavior, while not the primary driver of purchasing decisions, importantly controls the overall shopping experience and affect customer maintenance. Stores that commit in staff training, service quality, and employee interaction are more likely to make a loyal customer base and create a competitive advantage in the local market.

In general, customer buying decisions in convenience stores are formed by a combination of interpersonal interactions, operational purchasing factors, and gathered shopping experiences. Positive staff interactions enhanced the shopping experience and enhanced customer satisfaction, although negative interactions may discourage repeat visits even when other store advantages are existing. These results emphasize the importance of adjusting effective retail operations with quality human interaction to improve customer experiences and support long-term term business performance.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study and guided by the three research questions, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Dealing with Research Question 1, on how staff interactions influence buying decisions, convenience store staff may keep up friendly and professional engagement with customers all the time. Staff may greet customers politely immediately after entering, communicate mannerly, and create a friendly environment that helps customers to feel comfortable while shopping. Since positive interactions have been detected to lead to unplanned purchases and repeat visits, while negative interactions stop customers completely, stores may categorized consistent and courteous staff behavior as a important part of their service model.

2. Addressing Research Question 2, on the factors shaping customers' buying decisions, store management may enhance staff training and direction to enhance customer service quality. Administration may guarantee that employees shows proper behavior, patience, and readiness to support customers, which may help lessen the negative attitudes that were found to dismay customers from returning. In addition, convenience store owners may continue an accessible, organized, and customer-oriented store conditions, making certain of product availability, clear organization of items, reasonable pricing, and convenient access so that customers can effectively complete their purchases.

3. Dealing with Research Question 3, on suggestions methods to improve staff interactions, convenience stores may apply a plan service training programs focused on communication skills, customer engagement, and conflict solution. The use of standard evaluation and response procedures can be of assistance to the managers in terms of observing the staff's actions and dealing with problems as soon as they arise. Appreciation campaigns can be introduced by the stores since this may have an effect on the employees' increased commitment to the workplace, which will consequently improve their customers' experiences.

Some of the aspects that should be taken into consideration by future researchers could include such topics as marketing techniques, store environment, technological services offered, or customer loyalty schemes that affect purchasing decisions made in convenience stores in order to further develop consumer behavior research in the retail sector.

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