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Author(s)	Anna Saikkonen	Student number	
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Title	PUTTING THE ELEMENTS OF THE RETAIL STORE ENVIRONMENT INTO PRACTICE Case: Bestseller		
Supervisor(s)	D.Sc. Rami Olkkonen D.Sc. Hannu Makkonen		

Abstract

Retailers are continuously faced with increased competition in the market place and higher and higher expectations are placed upon them by customers to deliver better products, services and most importantly experiences. The retail environment is part of the service experience offered to the customer. This study deals with that retail store environment and its various elements. The purpose of this study is to find out how the retail store environment affects consumers and influences their behavior, how this influence can potentially be harnessed by managers to create competitive advantage and how a retailer executes and manages their retail store environment in practice. The theoretical framework of this study describes the various elements of the retail store environment and reviews some of the past empirical research that has shown the effect various elements of the retail environment have on consumer behavior and discusses the implications for management in the light of these findings.

The Bestseller company is a family-owned company operating in the clothing market, with 10 different brand names and more than 5,000 stores in 43 countries. For this study three Bestseller brands were taken to closer examination; Jack & Jones, ONLY and VILA. The data for this study was collected using qualitative research methods; interviewing and observation. Data via interviews was collected from three different levels; office managerial, store managerial and sales personnel. Themes for the interviews were based on the theoretical framework presented in chapter 2 of this study. Data via observation was gathered using non-participant and non-disguised observation at three different stores of each of the three brands. Qualitative research was chosen as a research method for this study because it was felt a qualitative method suited the research question better than a quantitative method.

The results of the study revealed that Jack & Jones, ONLY and VILA all have their own retail store concepts. However there are similarities between how the different elements of the retail store environment are executed and managed, some of the similarities are very strong but there are also differences between the brands on how elements are arranged. The three brands are also at different places with regard to how long the store concept they have has been in use. With Jack & Jones the concept has been in place for many years and almost all stores are based on the current concept, whereas ONLY and VILA have relatively new concepts and only a handful of stores are based on the current store concept. Thus it is clear that Jack & Jones is better situated when it comes to creating a unified store front and through that a favorable and strong store and brand image.

Key words	Retail store environment, retail store environment elements, chain concepts, interiors
Further information	

