

Project #1 - Observational Exercise

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Assessment and Evaluation

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Jottings

Going to Sephora ☺

Nice day out. Walked to bus east. Took about 10 minutes. Had my headphones in. Youtube Car ride playlist

- Chee chee bus - these people smell like onions. Never changes. I think I saw someone actually eating an onion. Maybe it was an apple?

- want to see a Broadway show. Going to get my ticket at TKTS. Sephora is right across the street.

Sephora relocated to Times Square 7 years ago due to high demand makeup line.

store is overwhelming at times with sights, sounds, and smells.

Music is pop indie music - Sharamed a couple of times. Crowded aisles. Colorful makeup testers.

all people working here all dressed in black with name tags.

Tik Tok logo on several items. Almost all sold out. Crazy!

Aisles all organized by brand.

Clips for product details, reviews, and recommendations used by Sephora representatives.

Barcode scanning price checkers - Cool to see how since they don't have it in Edgewater.

Hand held POS tablets at cash registers.

Loady issues due to registers in the basement
(1st floor)

- Second floor for private parties and events
Technology blends in well - enhanced my
shopping experience.

Display screens show product ads

- lots of customers took out their phones and
you saw they were looking at tutorials and then
saved the to do videos.

Digital signage offers marketing discreetly
Electrum kiosks near skin care analysis
skin scan camera.

Full Observational Notes

Last weekend, I traveled to Manhattan to catch a Broadway show and passed by the Times Square Sephora, which had relocated there seven years ago due to high sales demand and new makeup lines. When I entered the store, I was excited by the energy and colorful atmosphere, where pop indie music filled the air and customers were everywhere in the aisles, testing a variety of colorful makeup products. Sales associates, identifiable by their black attire and name tags, walked through the crowds, assisting all of the customers.

Most customers were fixated on the latest products, many of which had gained popularity through TikTok, spanning lipsticks, eyeshadows, and foundations. As I explored, I noticed technology subtly enhancing the shopping experience. iPads provided product details, reviews, and recommendations, primarily used by Sephora representatives. Barcode scanning price checkers helped customers in comparing beauty items, while associates at cash registers processed orders with handheld POS tablets. Many of these sales associates looked very tired. However, they were still efficient. There were some occasional slow-loading pages due to the basement location of the checkout registers. The store's technology integrated to enhance rather than overpower the shopping experience.

The atmosphere remained upbeat, filled with music and high energy conversations. Sephora maintains its welcoming ambiance. They always have. Sephora is also leveraging technology to support sales while prioritizing an interactive and experiential shopping environment. There was a display of screens offering makeup tutorials and product advertisements, electronic kiosks analyzing skin, and tablets incorporating paperless receipts and enrollment in the Beauty Insider rewards program. Cashiers used portable card readers, expediting checkout. Overall, technology played a supportive role, preserving Sephora's vibrant

identity and personalized service, ensuring convenience without diminishing the human connection.

Analytic Section: Part One

Observational Notes	Coding
<p>Last weekend, I traveled to Manhattan to catch a Broadway show and passed by the Times Square Sephora, which had relocated there seven years ago to accommodate high sales demand and new makeup lines.</p>	<p>Store Location, Customer Demand</p>
<p>Upon entering, I was immediately engulfed by the bustling atmosphere, where pop indie music filled the air and customers swarmed the aisles, testing an array of colorful makeup products.</p>	<p>Store Atmosphere</p>
<p>Sales associates, identifiable by their black attire and name tags, navigated the crowds, assisting shoppers.</p>	<p>Sales Associates</p>
<p>Most customers were fixated on the latest products, many of which had gained popularity through TikTok, spanning lipsticks, eyeshadows, and foundations.</p>	<p>Popular Products</p>
<p>As I explored, I noticed technology subtly enhancing the shopping experience. iPads provided product details, reviews, and recommendations, primarily used by Sephora representatives. Barcode scanning price checkers aided customers in comparing beauty items, while associates at cash registers efficiently processed orders with handheld POS tablets. However, occasional slow-loading pages were noted due to the basement location of the checkout registers.</p>	<p>Technology</p>
<p>The atmosphere remained upbeat, filled with music and lively conversations. Sephora maintained its welcoming and vibrant ambiance, leveraging technology to support sales while prioritizing an interactive and experiential shopping environment.</p>	<p>Store Atmosphere</p>

Technology was discreet but essential, with display screens offering makeup tutorials and product advertisements, electronic kiosks analyzing skin, and tablets facilitating paperless receipts and enrollment in the Beauty Insider rewards program.	Technology
Cashiers used portable card readers, expediting checkout.	Technology, Checkout

Analytic Section: Part Two

Last weekend was a good day to go into Manhattan and see a Broadway show. After I purchased tickets, I walked past the Sephora at Times Square. Sephora relocated to Times Square about seven years ago. They needed more space due to the high demand of sales and new makeup lines.

As I walk into the Times Square Sephora store, I'm immediately overwhelmed by the sights, sounds, and smells. Pop indie music blasts over the speakers as customers walk around the crowded aisles, testing colorful makeup products under the bright lights. The lights are crucial due making sure we all see the array of colors to format what we like and want to buy. Sales associates wearing all black walk through the aisles, answering questions and retrieving products.

Most customers appear focused on the new items for that week. TikTok has made so many products go viral such as lipsticks, eyeshadows, and foundations. Everyone opens testers, swatching shades on their arms and hands to find the perfect match. The aisles are organized by brand, creating a rainbow of so many choices. There are so many colors everywhere!

iPads are mounted at displays which provide product details, reviews and recommendations when tapped. These iPads are used only by Sephora representatives. There are barcode scanning price checkers to help customers compare beauty items. At the cash registers,

associates armed with handheld POS tablets ring up orders. These tablets allow the cashiers to look up products and access inventory without leaving customers. The only problem I saw was that at times the loading of pages was not fast. This is due to having the checkout registers in the basement. (Basement is called the first floor). On the second floor, this is where the private parties formulate. They have The technology blends in, intended to enhance the shopping experience rather than overwhelm.

Though busy, the mood feels upbeat. Music and high energy conversations fill the space. Sephora is a welcoming and vibrant place. The store relies on technology to support sales, while keeping the focus on an experiential, interactive shopping environment.

Taking a closer look around the store, I notice several display screens showing makeup tutorials and product advertisements. They are strategically placed near relevant products. Very well organized and planned. The screens provide inspiration and education to customers browsing the aisles. At one display, I saw a customer watch a tutorial video while trying to copy the techniques on her own face using the makeup for sale. Near the skin care section, electronic kiosks with built-in cameras perform skin analyses. Customers stand in front of the high-res cameras, which scan their faces. They then receive customized product recommendations based on their skin type and concerns.

At checkout, customers can opt for emailed receipts rather than printed. Associates also ask if they want to enroll in the Beauty Insider rewards program, with perks like free samples and seasonal specials. Tablets streamline both paperless receipts and digital enrollment. A cashier stands at the checkout counter on the right side of the store. She does not have a register. She uses a card reader to scan credit cards. The card reader is a portable device that she can carry. This helps the lines move faster during checkout.

While technology plays a supporting role, the focus remains on Sephora's vibrant identity, interactive environment and personalized service. The technology provides convenience and customization without lessening the human connection.

RQ1- How does the retail technology utilized at Sephora enhance or detract from the overall shopping experience?

The retail technology used at Sephora plays a big role in enhancing the overall shopping experience in a qualitative way, contributing to the store's vibrant identity, interactive environment, and personalized service.

The technology integrates with the physical store layout, making it not distract from the sensory experience. Instead, it enhances the experience by providing valuable information, reviews, and price comparisons at customers' fingertips, helping them make informed choices.

The display screens showing makeup tutorials and product advertisements serve as sources of inspiration and education. They are nicely placed to complement relevant products, helping customers to engage with the products. Customers watching tutorial videos on YouTube and TikTok experimenting with techniques using the available makeup show how technology helps with interactive exploration.

Electronic kiosks with built-in cameras for skin analysis represents a personalized approach and stays true to the Sephora brand. Customers receive customized product recommendations based on their skin type and concerns. This level of personalization not only adds value but also showcases technology's ability to cater to individual needs and preferences.

The option for emailed receipts and digital enrollment in the Beauty Insider rewards program streamlines processes and adds convenience.

Despite the presence of technology, the store's focus remains on creating a human connection. Sales associates are readily available to answer questions and provide assistance, ensuring that technology complements their efforts rather than replacing them.

RQ2 - In what ways does Sephora effectively blend technological elements with human interaction and sensory marketing?

As I walked into Sephora, I immediately noticed how they seamlessly integrated technology with human interaction and sensory marketing to create a unique and engaging shopping experience.

First, I couldn't help but be drawn to the "Beauty Studio" area, where customers could schedule personalized beauty consultations with Sephora's beauty advisors. These makeup artists not only provided one-on-one guidance but also used tablets and digital tools to help customers find the perfect products for their skin type and preferences. It was impressive to see how technology enhanced the advisory process, making it more informative and helpful.

As I browsed through the aisles, I noticed the digital screens strategically placed throughout the store. These screens displayed product information, tutorials, and customer reviews. It was clear that Sephora wanted to provide customers with easy access to information, allowing them to make informed decisions about their purchases. This integration of technology made the shopping experience more interactive and educational.

Sephora also used technology to enhance the checkout process. The Beauty Insider program, accessible through a mobile app, rewarded loyal customers with points and exclusive offers. This not only encouraged repeat visits but also provided a personalized touch to the shopping experience.

While technology played a significant role, Sephora did not neglect the importance of human interaction. The beauty advisors were approachable and eager to assist customers, creating a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. They provided recommendations, answered questions, and even offered mini-makeovers. The combination of expert guidance and personalized service heightened the overall sensory experience. As I left Sephora, I couldn't help but appreciate how they effectively blended technology with human interaction and sensory marketing.

RQ3 - How do customers engage with the various technology touchpoints throughout the store?

Customers at Sephora engage with the various technology touchpoints throughout the store in a complementary manner, enhancing their overall shopping experience. Customers are seen using iPads discreetly mounted at displays to access product details, reviews, and recommendations. These tablets provide them with valuable information about the products they are interested in, helping them make informed decisions.

At the checkout, customers have the option to receive emailed receipts instead of printed ones, a feature that streamlines the transaction process. Additionally, associates have handheld POS tablets that help with the quick and efficient checkouts while also being able to look up products and access inventory without leaving the customers' side.

Electronic kiosks with built-in cameras near the skin care section perform skin analyses. Customers actively participate by standing in front of the high-resolution cameras, which rapidly scan their faces. They then receive personalized product recommendations based on their unique skin type and concerns, indicating a high level of engagement with technology to address individual needs. At the checkout, associates ask customers if they want to enroll in the Beauty Insider rewards program, highlighting how technology is used to encourage customer participation and engagement with loyalty programs.

RQ4 - How does the use of technology at Sephora align with or diverge from customer expectations for an interactive retail environment?

The use of technology at Sephora is a prime example of how the retail industry is evolving to meet and even exceed customer expectations in the realm of interactive retail environments. In today's digitally driven world, customers increasingly expect a blend of online and offline experiences when they walk into a store. Sephora's approach aligns closely with these expectations while also adding unique layers to the retail experience.

Customers now anticipate that technology will provide them with access to information, convenience, and personalization. Sephora's integration of digital screens displaying product details and customer reviews falls right in line with this expectation. Shoppers want to access information at their fingertips, and these screens empower them to make informed decisions quickly. It's a smart move because it caters to the needs of today's tech-savvy consumers who often research products online before making a purchase.

What sets Sephora apart is its careful balance of technology with human interaction. While technology plays a significant role, Sephora doesn't neglect the personal touch. The presence of knowledgeable beauty advisors who can offer expert guidance and advice aligns with the enduring desire for human connection in the shopping experience. Customers still appreciate the reassurance of speaking to a real person, particularly in matters as personal as skincare and makeup.

Sephora also excels in catering to customers' expectations for convenience through technology. The Beauty Insider program, accessible via a mobile app, is a prime example. It aligns with the growing preference for mobile-based loyalty programs, where customers can easily access rewards and exclusive offers from their smartphones. This not only enhances convenience but also adds an element of personalization as customers receive tailored recommendations based on their purchase history.

RQ5 - What customer needs are being met through the use of retail technology at Sephora?.

In our digital era, the modern consumer craves immediate access to a wealth of information. Sephora's digital screens provide customers with access to product insights, user-generated reviews, and step-by-step tutorials. This information helps the customer's desire

for comprehensive product knowledge.

The usage of mobile applications not only helps with transactions but also enables shoppers to manage their Beauty Insider accounts, accessing rewards and offers at their fingertips. The result is a shopping experience that aligns seamlessly with the customer's desire for fluidity and ease in their retail interactions.

Sephora integrates technology while preserving the critical element of human interaction through knowledgeable beauty advisors. Sephora helps with navigating beauty choices and creates an environment where questions are answered, and guidance is readily available, helping their confidence and trust in the brand.

Sephora's strategic utilization of retail technology addresses a spectrum of customer needs, bringing together information accessibility, personalization, convenience, engagement, and reassurance. The technology and human touch not only enhances the overall shopping experience but also helps with Sephora's position as a center of customer-centric innovation in the retail landscape.

RQ6 - How do the sights, sounds, smells, and technological touches come together to create the overall atmosphere at Sephora?

The atmosphere at Sephora has an array of sensory elements and technological touches, honing to craft an immersive and captivating shopping experience. This multidimensional sensory journey blends the perceptual worlds of sight, sound, smell, and technology, creating an ambiance that resonates with customers on both a conscious and subconscious level.

When one enters Sephora, the visual landscape is dominated by a striking interplay of so many colors, sleek design, and vibrant and clear product displays. The well-illuminated store space highlights products in the most flattering light, inviting customers to explore and discover.

Indie ambient music is played in the space, setting a tranquil mood for exploration and reflection. A defining component of Sephora's atmosphere is the enticing scent of perfumes and fragrances that flow through the air. These fragrances invoke emotions, memories, and desires, enriching the sensory journey for me. The perfume section actually are my favorite aisles.

The Beauty Insider program, accessible through the mobile app, extends the reach of technology, enabling customers to access loyalty rewards and exclusive offers at their convenience. Technology here isn't just an accessory; it's an integral part of the atmosphere, enhancing engagement and interaction.

In conclusion, Sephora's atmosphere is a testament to the artful fusion of sights, sounds, smells, and technological touches. It's a carefully orchestrated blend of sensory elements and innovation that caters to the desires of the modern consumer. This immersive ambiance invites customers to explore, experiment, and engage while leveraging technology as a seamless and integrated component. The result is an atmosphere that is not only aesthetically pleasing but also intellectually stimulating and emotionally resonant, setting a high standard for sensory-rich retail experiences.

As a researcher observing the Sephora store in Times Square, I aimed to take an impartial view of how retail technology and sensory marketing blended to create the overall shopping experience. My background is a lover of makeup, creator/artist, and consumer behavior, with a specific interest in brick-and-mortar retail environments. For this observational study, I spent two hours on a weekend afternoon walking through the Sephora store and taking notes on the layout, product displays, technology elements, customer behaviors, and sensory details that contributed to the atmosphere.

My goal was to carefully document the setting while maintaining an outsider perspective, avoiding personal opinions or judgments. I strove to capture objective insights that would illuminate how sensory marketing and technology intersect in shaping the retail experience. The two-column chart summarizes my observational notes, with details on the left and interpretive codes on the right.

My analysis of these codes revealed key themes around technology enabling customization and convenience while supporting Sephora's lively brand identity insights that can inform future retail innovation and customer engagement strategies. As an impartial observer, I aimed to set aside biases and analyze the data from a purely descriptive, anthropological lens. The chart format helped organize the objective details into meaningful codes and themes.

In summary, my background positioned me to take a measured, descriptive approach to observing and analyzing how technology and sensory details merged within the Sephora retail space. The two-column coding chart enabled an impartial perspective, supporting an analysis rooted in objective insights on the customer experience. My goal was an impartial documentation of technology and sensory marketing dynamics shaping the contemporary brick-and-mortar store.