Attention Competition in Experiential Retail: Evidence from Foot-Traffic Trajectory Data

Qing Liu
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Cheng He
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Carol Liu
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Cite as:
Liu Qing, He Cheng, Liu Carol (2026), Attention Competition in Experiential Retail: Evidence from Foot-Traffic Trajectory Data. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 55th, (133674)

Paper from the 55th Annual EMAC Conference, Bath, United Kingdom, June 2-5, 2026

Attention Competition in Experiential Retail: Evidence from Foot-Traffic Trajectory Data

Abstract

This study examines the competitive dynamics of temporary, experience-based retail interventions in omnichannel strategies. Using pop-up shops in shopping malls as a representative example, we leverage mall-, store-, and consumer-level foot-traffic trajectory data to examine the effects of pop-ups on host venues. We move beyond aggregate traffic and sales metrics and uncover consumer-level behavioral mechanisms. We find that while pop-ups increase overall mall traffic, they intensify attention competition, leading to shorter, more goal-driven shopping paths. Our results reveal dual mechanisms—traffic attraction (positive spillover) and attention diversion (negative competition). Stores in the mall that are similar to the pop-ups in terms of category or location benefit more from the positive spillover, while stores that rely on exploratory traffic suffer more from the attention competition. Our findings advance theory on retail competition, with critical implications for retail design, mall management, and the study of platform spillovers in offline settings.

Track: Retailing & Omni-Channel Management