

Interactive Installation Art in Retail Environments: A Brief Communication on Social Experience

Jiang Yaping., Muhammad Zaffwan Idris*, Mohd Ekram Alhafis Hashim

Faculty of Art, Sustainability and Creative Industry, Sultan Idris Education University, 35900, Tanjung Malim, Perak, Malaysia

***Corresponding Authors**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100600382>

Received: 29 May 2026; Accepted: 03 June 2026; Published: 24 June 2026

ABSTRACT

Interactive installation art is increasingly used in retail environments to transform physical and hybrid spaces into participatory, memorable, and socially engaging experiences. However, discussions of retail innovation often emphasise technological novelty, purchase intention, or digital transformation while giving less attention to the social and aesthetic roles of interactive installations. This brief communication argues that interactive installation art should be understood as a social science concern because it shapes how consumers experience space, interact with others, respond to cultural meanings, engage with technology, and negotiate trust. Drawing on selected literature on retail servicescapes, experiential marketing, sensory marketing, interactive art, immersive technologies, artificial intelligence, and consumer engagement, the paper proposes that interactive installations influence retail experience through sensory-aesthetic stimulation, participatory engagement, digital mediation, and ethical design. The paper concludes by outlining future research directions on aesthetic user experience, cross-cultural retail contexts, inclusive design, and AI-supported personalisation.

Keywords: interactive installation art; retail environments; social experience; consumer engagement; aesthetic participation; experiential retail; digital transformation; consumer behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Retail environments have increasingly shifted from transaction-oriented spaces to experience-oriented spaces. Contemporary consumers encounter products, brands, technologies, and other consumers through multiple sensory and social touchpoints. This shift aligns with customer experience research, which views consumption as a journey shaped by cognitive, emotional, sensory, behavioural, and social interactions across physical and digital environments (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The physical retail environment is therefore not merely a site of economic exchange but a designed social setting that can influence perception, affect, engagement, and behavioural response.

The role of the environment in shaping consumer experience has long been recognised in servicescape and experiential marketing literature. Bitner (1992) argued that physical surroundings affect internal responses and behavioural outcomes, while Schmitt (1999) proposed that experience can be understood through sense, feel, think, act, and relate dimensions. Sensory marketing research similarly demonstrates that visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory cues can influence consumer perception and judgement (Krishna, 2012). Helme Falk and Berndt (2018) further showed that multisensory cues in retail settings can influence consumer behaviour, including time spent in-store and purchasing.

Within this context, interactive installation art has become a meaningful retail phenomenon. It may be understood as a spatially situated aesthetic or design intervention that invites consumer participation through movement, touch, gesture, sound, projection, artificial intelligence, robotics, mixed reality, or sensor-based response. Unlike static displays, interactive installations invite consumers to become participants in the retail

experience. This makes them relevant not only to art and design but also to marketing, communication, consumer psychology, technology studies, and social science.

Existing studies suggest that art and interactive technologies can influence how consumers interpret commercial and public spaces. Oh et al. (2018) found that artworks in retail environments may affect behavioural intention and expected consumption experience. Hu et al. (2013) showed that interactive public art installations may support social connectedness, attractiveness, novelty, creativity, and motivation. In commercial contexts, Ding and Guo (2023) identified interaction, immersion, and entertainment as key characteristics of interactive installation art under the experience economy, while Li et al. (2018) showed how object recognition and projection mapping can strengthen connections among customers, products, and retailers.

This brief communication argues that interactive installation art in retail environments should be understood as a social, aesthetic, and technological phenomenon. Rather than presenting original empirical data or claiming to conduct a systematic review, the paper develops a conceptual discussion based on selected literature. Its purpose is to clarify why interactive installation art deserves social science attention and to identify future research directions for studying its role in contemporary retail experience.

Interactive Installation Art as Social Retail Experience

Interactive installation art transforms retail experience because it changes the consumer's role from observer to participant. In a conventional retail display, consumers look at products, images, or brand messages. In an interactive installation, consumers may move, touch, respond, photograph, share, or interact with digital and physical elements. These actions are socially meaningful because they show how consumers position themselves in relation to brands, products, technologies, and other people.

Consumer engagement is commonly understood as a multidimensional construct involving cognitive, emotional, and behavioural participation (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Interactive installations can intensify such engagement by combining sensory stimulation with active participation. Sensory marketing research indicates that consumers respond not only to functional product information but also to atmosphere, sound, scent, texture, visual design, and embodied experience (Krishna, 2012). In this sense, interactive installations should not be reduced to decoration; they function as multisensory and participatory environments.

The social role of interactive installation art becomes clearer in shared retail spaces such as shopping malls, boutiques, flagship stores, and pop-up stores. Consumers may observe one another, imitate interaction, participate collectively, or share the experience through social media. Hu et al. (2013) found that interactive public art can support social connectedness, while Ustazah et al. (2025) showed that multisensory retail spaces such as batik boutiques can support emotional connection, cultural attachment, identity projection, and social interaction. These findings suggest that retail spaces may function not only as commercial environments but also as sites of social and cultural meaning-making.

Social media further extends the life of interactive installations beyond the physical store. Retail experiences are increasingly shaped by online visibility, short-form video culture, and platform-mediated consumer behaviour. Ibrahim et al. (2025) discussed TikTok's influence on online shopping behaviour in Malaysia, while Castro et al. (2026) examined the influence of social media engagement on purchase intention in e-commerce. Although these studies focus on online settings, they are relevant because interactive installations are often designed to be photographed, filmed, circulated, and discussed online. The physical installation therefore becomes part of a wider digital-social ecosystem.

Digital and Aesthetic Participation

Interactive installation art differs from ordinary retail technology because it carries aesthetic and symbolic value. Consumers do not only evaluate whether an installation is useful; they also interpret whether it is attractive, meaningful, surprising, coherent, culturally appropriate, or authentic. Oh et al. (2018) demonstrated that consumers' responses to artwork and artist information can influence behavioural intention and expected

consumption experience. When art becomes interactive, this interpretive process becomes more complex because consumers participate in the unfolding of the experience.

Digital technologies now intensify this participatory dimension. Augmented reality, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, robotics, digital signage, projection mapping, and sensor-based systems allow retail environments to become more responsive and immersive. Scholz and Smith (2016) argued that augmented reality can support immersive consumer engagement, while Hilken et al. (2017) examined AR's potential to enhance service experiences. Dacko (2017) similarly discussed mobile AR shopping applications as part of smart retail settings. Virtual reality has also been examined as a tool for retail demonstration and visualisation, particularly in relation to immersive product experience and consumer decision-making (Billano et al., 2024). These studies suggest that immersive technologies can bridge physical and digital retail by allowing consumers to visualise products, interact with digital overlays, and experience enhanced decision-making environments.

AI and data-driven technologies add further possibilities. Hsiao et al. (2025) examined AI digital signage as an experiential retail interface involving sensory, affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions. Juma'at et al. (2025) mapped artificial intelligence adoption in marketing and highlighted its relevance to customer engagement, personalisation, and marketing transformation. In the food and beverage context, Zulpekri et al. (2025) discussed how data analytics can support customer experience through service improvement and personalisation. Schneider et al. (2025) presented an immersive interactive installation in a shopping mall, while Rahman et al. (2026) proposed an expressive robotic installation for fragrance retail. These examples show that interactive installation art is moving beyond visual display toward embodied, responsive, personalised, and emotionally legible systems.

However, technological sophistication alone does not guarantee meaningful engagement. Aesthetic participation depends on coherence, usability, sensory quality, emotional clarity, and perceived relevance. Poorly designed installations may appear gimmicky, intrusive, or disconnected from the brand. In contrast, installations that combine aesthetic quality, cultural sensitivity, and ethical transparency may generate stronger social and symbolic value.

Ethical Concerns and Future Research

The use of interactive installation art in retail environments raises ethical concerns because such installations may combine aesthetic experience with behavioural data, personalisation, and commercial persuasion. Many interactive systems rely on cameras, sensors, mobile interfaces, facial or movement recognition, location tracking, or AI-supported analytics. These technologies may make the retail environment more responsive, but they may also make consumer behaviour more observable and measurable. Hsiao et al. (2025) showed how AI-enabled touchpoints can deliver multiple experiential dimensions, while Pape and Toporowski (2023) highlighted the ethical value dimension of in-store AR, particularly privacy concerns.

Trust is therefore central. Consumers may respond positively to interactive technologies when they perceive them as useful, enjoyable, transparent, and secure. Conversely, technologies that appear intrusive, confusing, or excessively personalised may generate discomfort. Aloysius et al. (2025), although writing about digital banking, highlighted the importance of technological familiarity and security in shaping consumer behaviour toward digital services. This insight is relevant to retail installations because consumers are more likely to engage when they understand what the technology does and when they trust the interaction environment. Accessibility is another concern. Interactive installations may unintentionally privilege consumers who are young, digitally confident, physically mobile, or familiar with immersive media. Older consumers, disabled consumers, digitally inexperienced users, or consumers uncomfortable with public interaction may be excluded. Social science research should therefore examine not only whether installations increase engagement, but also who is able to participate, under what conditions, and with what level of comfort.

Cultural representation also requires attention. Experiential retail spaces may use heritage, craft, music, local motifs, or cultural symbols to create immersive environments. Ustazah et al. (2025) showed that multisensory batik boutiques can support identity projection and cultural attachment. However, cultural materials can also be simplified or commodified. Interactive installation art should therefore be evaluated not only for visual impact

but also for cultural responsibility. Based on these ethical and conceptual concerns, Table 1 summarises possible directions for future research on interactive installation art in retail environments.

Table 1 Future Research Directions for Interactive Installation Art in Retail Environments

Research direction	Key issue	Possible approach
Aesthetic user experience	How beauty, novelty, coherence, and sensory richness influence engagement	Survey, visual analysis, user experience evaluation
Social experience	How consumers interact, observe, imitate, share, and perform identity	Observation, interview, ethnography
Cross-cultural retail contexts	How cultural values and local symbols shape interpretation	Comparative case study, cross-cultural survey
AI and privacy	How consumers understand data capture, consent, and personalisation	Scenario study, mixed-method research
Inclusive design	Who is excluded from interactive installation experiences	Usability testing, accessibility audit

CONCLUSION

Interactive installation art in retail environments deserves attention as a social science concern because it shapes how consumers experience space, technology, brands, culture, and one another. It should not be treated merely as decoration or marketing spectacle. Instead, it should be understood as a participatory environment where aesthetic experience, sensory stimulation, technological interaction, social behaviour, and consumer engagement intersect. This brief communication has argued that interactive installations influence retail experience through sensory-aesthetic stimulation, participatory engagement, digital mediation, and ethical design. Future research should move beyond asking whether interactive installations increase purchase intention and instead examine how they reshape the social experience of retail itself.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors gratefully acknowledge *Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris* (Sultan Idris Education University) for its academic support and scholarly environment during the development of this article. The authors also appreciate the constructive feedback received throughout the preparation of this brief communication.

Competing Interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Data Availability

No original empirical data were generated or analysed in this brief communication. The article is based on a conceptual discussion of selected published literature.

Ethical Approval

Not applicable.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

REFERENCES

1. Aloysius, N. M., Ringmu, H. S., Felix, N., & Feudjio, V. T. (2025). The effect of digital banking on consumer behaviour and marketing strategies in Cameroon. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(2), 395–407. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.9020033>
2. Billano, E. R. S., Maulion, M. J. L., Quinatadcan, R. M., & Zulueta, J. E. (2024). Using virtual reality (VR) demonstration and visualization in retail grocery industries. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 8(12), 575–587. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8120045>
3. Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(2), 57–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299205600205>
4. Castro, J. M., Hicale, F. B. A., & Lazaro, J. M. B. (2026). The influence of social media engagement in consumer's purchase intention in e-commerce. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 10(4), 3204–3217. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100400232>
5. Dacko, S. G. (2017). Enabling smart retail settings via mobile augmented reality shopping apps. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 124, 243–256. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2016.09.032>
6. Ding, W., & Guo, T. (2023). Research on the application of interactive installation art in modern commercial space under the background of experience economy. In M. Rauterberg (Ed.), *Culture and computing (Lecture Notes in Computer Science, Vol. 14035, pp. 111–119)*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-34732-0_8
7. Helme Falk, M., & Berndt, A. (2018). Shedding light on the use of single and multisensory cues and their effect on consumer behaviours. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 46(11/12), 1077–1091. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-03-2018-0057>
8. Hilken, T., de Ruyter, K., Chylinski, M., Mahr, D., & Keeling, D. I. (2017). Augmenting the eye of the beholder: Exploring the strategic potential of augmented reality to enhance online service experiences. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 45(6), 884–905. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-017-0541-x>
9. Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(2), 149–165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.002>
10. Hsiao, W.-H., Tsai, P.-H., & Chen, C.-J. (2025). Exploring the factors influencing consumers' engagement with AI digital signage in retailing: Evidence from Taiwan. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEIM-05-2024-0246>
11. Hu, J., Le, D., Funk, M., Wang, F., & Rauterberg, M. (2013). Attractiveness of an interactive public art installation. In N. Streitz & C. Stephanidis (Eds.), *Distributed, ambient, and pervasive interactions (Lecture Notes in Computer Science, Vol. 8028, pp. 430–438)*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-39351-8_47
12. Ibrahim, N. M. B. H., Shah, K. A. M., & Abdullah, N. S. N. (2025). An overview of TikTok on online shopping behaviour in Malaysia. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(2), 1606–1625. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.9020132>
13. Juma'at, E. J., Mat Sani, A., Mohamad, N., & Sufian, A. (2025). Mapping the research landscape of artificial intelligence adoption in marketing: A bibliometric analysis (2019–2025). *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(11), 1677–1699. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.91100136>
14. Krishna, A. (2012). An integrative review of sensory marketing: Engaging the senses to affect perception, judgment and behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(3), 332–351. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2011.08.003>
15. Lemon, K. N., & Verhoef, P. C. (2016). Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(6), 69–96. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0420>
16. Li, J., Liu, J., & Wang, S. J. (2018). In-store shopping experience enhancement: Designing a physical object-recognition interactive renderer. In A. L. Brooks, E. Brooks, & N. Vidakis (Eds.), *Interactivity, game creation, design, learning, and innovation (Lecture Notes of the Institute for Computer Sciences, Social Informatics and Telecommunications Engineering, Vol. 229, pp. 105–115)*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76908-0_11

17. Oh, H., Lee, H. K., Kim, J., & Choo, H. J. (2018). Effects of art in retail environments. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, 28(3), 294–319. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09593969.2018.1441893>
18. Pape, D., & Toporowski, W. (2023). The effect of in-store augmented reality on customers' patronage intention: An abstract. In *Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science* (pp. 303–304). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-24687-6_122
19. Rahman, K. A., Jungblut, B., & Chung, Y. (2026). Expressive robotics in retail: Conveying fragrance emotion through multimodal interaction. In *Companion proceedings of the 21st ACM/IEEE International Conference on Human-Robot Interaction* (pp. 1193–1196). Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3776734.3794592>
20. Schmitt, B. (1999). Experiential marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(1–3), 53–67. <https://doi.org/10.1362/026725799784870496>
21. Schneider, T., Clavel, C., Kubryk, G., Gouiffès, M., Frenoux, E., Courgeon, M., Hulot, V., Junot, G., & Maître, X. (2025). Creating and measuring immersion in open public spaces with Ariadne's Fibres. *IFAC-PapersOnLine*, 59(11), 252–257. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ifacol.2025.09.557>
22. Scholz, J., & Smith, A. N. (2016). Augmented reality: Designing immersive experiences that maximize consumer engagement. *Business Horizons*, 59(2), 149–161. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2015.10.003>
23. Ustazah, E. N., Setijanti, P., & Hayati, A. (2025). Experiential retailing in cultural spaces: A case study of multisensory design in batik boutiques. *F1000Research*, 14, Article 506. <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.163519.2>
24. Zulpekri, Z. Z., Razali, N. F., Abdul Aziz, N. A., Ali, N. M., Mohd Nizam, M. N., & Ahmad, N. S. (2025). Leveraging data analytics to enhance customer experience in the food and beverage (F&B) industry: A review of practices and strategies. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(28), 87–102. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.92800010>