



Examining the Influence of Gender Differences on Shopping Mall Experience in Ghana

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Abstract

The study sought to examine the influence of gender differences on shopping mall experiences. A quantitative research methodology was adopted in the study to be able to analyse the data using statistical techniques. A convenience sampling technique was used to select 300 shoppers from Accra Mall, Achimota Mall and China Mall. The data after the collection was coded into SPSS and a t-test was used to examine the influence of gender differences on shopping mall experiences. The study found that the existence of a particular store in the shopping mall and services provided at the shopping mall are greatly influenced by the male gender, while, the prices of goods and services at the shopping mall such as entertainment, shopping easiness and convenience, and the attractiveness of the shopping mall are influenced by the female gender. Hence, based on the empirical findings it is recommended that managers of shopping malls segment the activities of the shopping mall based on the gender of the shoppers by offering quality services such as specialised services and modern designer wear which are unique to offer shopping experience to the male gender. On the other hand, shopping mall managers should also target the female gender by offering them affordable prices of goods and services, offering more entertainment, shopping easiness and convenience, and the attractiveness of the shopping mall which appeals to the female gender.

Keywords: Entertainment, Easiness and Convenience, Mall Attractiveness, Gender, Ghana, Shopping Mall Experience

1. Introduction

The retail landscape and customer experiences have seen significant transformations in the last three decades in response to evolving consumer preferences and advancements in Internet-based technology (Helm et al., 2020). The understanding of how a particular retail setting influences customer attitudes, emotions, and behaviours is crucial for the progression of consumer and retailing studies (Pizam & Tasci, 2019). Shopping malls continue to be a significant form of in-store shopping within the physical retail environment having a significant

impact on the economic and social well-being of customers and communities of every country (Elmashhara & Soares, 2020; Haj-Salem et al. 2016; Katrodia & Soni 2018).

Despite the proliferation of the numerous at-home shopping alternatives, the act of "shopping" continues to mostly include a physical visit to the designated retail location for most intents and purposes. Indeed, the act of engaging in shopping may be seen as a significant domestic task, in addition to serving as a means of deriving enjoyment and alleviating stress (Sutha, 2018). In addition to the responsibility of establishing a physical setting conducive to generating memorable in-store experiences (Flacandji & Krey, 2020), shopping mall managers are also required to address the omnichannel expectations of consumers (Lopes et al., 2021). The effective management of the physical mall environment in conjunction with virtual settings has emerged as a crucial undertaking (Ameen, Tarhini, Shah & Madichie, 2020). Shopping malls continue to serve as crucial retail destinations; nevertheless, the retail landscape is undergoing a notable shift towards a diverse array of locations, micro experiences, and purchasing methods, all of which contribute to the overall consumer experience (Treadgold & Reynolds, 2021). In light of the emergence of the experience economy, consumers have shifted their attention away from the acquisition of products and services and instead prioritised the pursuit of distinctive and unforgettable experiences (Anselmsson, 2016; Calvo-Porrall and Levy-Mangin, 2018; Ni and Ishii, 2019).

The emergence of shopping malls in Ghana is a recent phenomenon (Eduful 2019). However, these establishments have seen significant growth in popularity over the last decade, successfully drawing in customers who previously depended on the informal retail sector to fulfil their household needs and access various services. Similar to other nations, shopping malls in Ghana have emerged as a convenient destination for many individuals and families. These individuals and families not only visit these malls for the purpose of shopping (Heffner & Twardzik, 2015), but also use them as spaces for social interaction and community engagement (Eyiah-Botwe et al., 2015; Quagraine et al., 2016). The latter observation suggests that shopping malls in Ghana are progressively expanding their presence and market dominance within the formal retail sector. Scholars have posited that in order to increase consumer attraction, it is essential to augment the experiential value offered to clients (Hoyer et al., 2020).

According to Alhadeff and Acheampong (2022), the informal sector in Ghana accounts for around 95 percent of retail transactions. This implies that the informal sector has significant influence over a considerable portion of the retail market in Ghana. The retail market in Ghana is characterised by a fierce rivalry between shopping malls and the informal retail sector (Anku & Ahorbo, 2017). According to a report by Deloitte (2016), Ghanaian consumers hold the perception that items and services available for purchase in shopping malls are more expensive when compared to those offered in the informal retail sector.

In order to provide a satisfactory experience to the Ghanaian population, shopping malls in Ghana need to go beyond offering just retail services. This may be achieved by a smart arrangement of stores that cater to the preferences of ordinary Ghanaian customers. Furthermore, a recent scholarly study suggests that the development of personalised marketing tactics for diverse customer groups is advisable, taking into account variations in buying motives and demographics (Kalia, 2017). The sensitivity of shoppers' experiences and their expectation structures to many factors, such as value and demographic characteristics like gender, has been explored in previous research (El-Adly et al., 2017; Deshwal, 2016).

Consequently, this study tends to examine the influence of gender differences on shopping mall experiences.

2. Literature review

2.1 Shopping Mall Experience

Since the 1960s, researchers have focused on examining mall attractiveness factors to better understand what draws customers to visit and remain in malls. But retailing has changed from being about making sales to being about providing experiences; customers now view malls and stores as places to hang out and meet their needs for new experiences (Haseki, 2013), which makes them prefer to buy these "places" to straightforward goods (Nsairi, 2012). According to Chebat et al. (2010), a mall's overall customer experience is a culmination of the experiences that each business or activity offers on its own as well as the experiences that the mall provides.

The diverse range of social, recreational, and entertainment activities that take place in shopping malls makes them special as retail spaces (Gomes & Paula, 2017). It also originates from the possibility of a multifunctional shopping trip and the satisfaction of several consumer experiences in one place. A mall experience emerges from an incredibly complex mix of physical, social, and physiological stimuli, given the variety of consumer, recreational, and social activities that occur in a shopping mall (Gilboa et al., 2020).

Shopping centres provide customers with several merchants, brands, and services in one place, resulting in simultaneous touchpoints, or moments of consumer connection and communication with a company, across channels (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Ameen et al., 2020). According to Jain and Bagdare (2011), the goal of retailing has changed from making quick sales to creating enduring bonds via distinctive shopping experiences.

According to Srinivasan and Srivastava (2010), businesses may be able to increase turnover by offering consumers favourable shopping experiences that are focused on visual appeal and encourage them to spend longer time in the store. According to Yuan et al. (2021), space structure and business planning, in particular, have a greater impact on the consumer experience than the other three design elements. The four dimensions of the construct are visual atmosphere, physical environment comfort, space structure, and business planning. Furthermore, because of individual variances, there are notable disparities in how consumers perceive certain components.

2.2 Gender and Shopping Mall Experience

According to Audrain-Pontevia and Vanhuele (2016), there is a scholarly argument suggesting that males exhibit higher levels of loyalty towards chain stores, whereas women tend to display more loyalty towards individual stores. Furthermore, the study conducted by Maurer Herter et al. (2014) reveals that males have an increased inclination towards hedonic shopping when they are in a state of good emotions, characterised by feelings of joy, enthusiasm, calmness, excitement, and happiness. Conversely, women exhibit a decrease in their propensity for hedonic shopping when they are experiencing negative emotions, such as sadness, lack of enthusiasm, irritability, absence of excitement, and unhappiness. According to a study conducted by Sutha (2018), it was observed that women in Sri Lanka exhibited a higher frequency of visits to shopping malls compared to men. The gendered nature of shopping has transformed, as it has become a source of pleasure for individuals of both genders (Bandara,

Thalgaspitiya, & Hettiarachchi, 2022). The study conducted by Ameen, Tarhini, Shah, and Nusair (2021) uncovered a notable change in the shopping behaviour of males. Specifically, male shoppers demonstrated a heightened focus on peer interaction on social platforms, service excellence, convenience, diversity, and personalisation within shopping malls. In contrast, female shoppers placed greater importance on aesthetics and privacy. Prior research on shopper behaviour has focused on the prominent shopping characteristics exhibited by males, highlighting their task-oriented approach to shopping (Teller & Thomson, 2012). Conversely, studies have indicated that female shoppers, particularly those belonging to the millennial generation, exhibit a greater interest in the variety of prices, brands, advertisements, and cultural aspects associated with shopping (Polkes, 2019).

3. Methodology

A quantitative research methodology was adopted in the study to be able to analyse the data using statistical techniques. Shopping mall experience was measured using six items, that is, “existence of a particular store in the shopping mall, services provided at the shopping mall, prices of product and services at the shopping mall (Bodkin & Lord, 1997), entertainment at the shopping mall (Banerjee, 2012), shopping easiness and convenience, and attractiveness of the shopping mall (Sujo & Bharati, 2012)”. The target respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with the 6 items using a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). A convenience sampling technique was used to select 300 shoppers from Accra Mall, Achimota Mall and China Mall. Data was coded into SPSS and a t-test was used to examine the influence of gender differences on shopping mall experiences.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Gender differences influence on shopping mall experience

Table 1. Gender and existence of a particular store in the shopping mall

Gender		Existence of a particular store in the shopping mall
Female	Mean	3.93
	Std. Dev	.994
Male	Mean	3.97
	Std. Dev	.893

Source: Field Study, 2023

Table 1 presents the mean values and standard deviations for male and female genders in relation to the existence of a particular store in the shopping mall. The results indicate that the male gender exhibited the highest mean value ($m = 3.97$; $sd = 0.893$), while the female gender displayed the lowest mean value ($m = 3.93$; $sd = 0.994$). These findings suggest that in Ghana, male individuals demonstrate a greater level of interest in a particular store within the mall compared to their female counterparts. Consequently, this implies that the purchasing behaviour of males can significantly influence the demand for specific goods and services in the market. Thus, the presence or absence of male customers in a shopping mall can have a substantial effect on the success or failure of a particular store that caters to their specific needs and preferences in the Ghanaian context. In contrast, Audrain-Pontevia and Vanhuele (2016), suggested that males exhibit higher levels of loyalty towards chain stores, whereas women tend to display more loyalty towards individual stores.

Table 2. Gender and services provided at the shopping mall

Gender		Services provided at the shopping mall
Female	Mean	3.41
	Std. Dev	1.042
Male	Mean	3.48
	Std. Dev	1.037

Source: Field Study, 2023

Table 2 establishes that the male gender had the highest mean value ($m = 3.48$; $sd = 1.037$) while the female gender had the lowest ($m = 3.41$; $sd = 1.042$) with the services provided at the shopping mall. This means that in Ghana, there is an increase number of the male gender taking keen interest in the services provided at the shopping mall will make the shopping malls do their best to provide a quality service to the male gender. This suggests that shops selling menswear may provide specialised services like modification or tailoring that aren't offered by other shops. In addition, male consumers may also be the focus of other services such as electronics, sports equipment, and personal grooming. Overall, the mall's retailers may customise their offerings to cater to the wants and demands of its male clientele, which will have an effect on the kinds of services offered there. Ameen, Tarhini, Shah, and Nusair (2021) revealed that male shoppers demonstrated a heightened focus on service excellence within shopping malls which is in line with the study findings.

Table 3. Gender and prices of goods and services at the shopping mall

Gender		Prices of goods and services at the shopping mall
Female	Mean	3.79
	Std. Dev	.733
Male	Mean	3.65
	Std. Dev	.813

Source: Field Study, 2023

As depicted in Table 3, the female gender had a mean value of 3.79 and a corresponding standard deviation of 0.733, while the male gender also had a mean and a standard deviation value of 3.65 and 0.813 respectively in relation to prices of goods and services at the shopping mall. This means that most women patronizing Ghana shopping malls will result in shopping malls providing goods and services to women at reasonable prices. This implies that the preferences and purchasing power of the female gender will influence the demand for certain goods and services in the shopping mall. In support of the study findings to previous literature, female shoppers, particularly those belonging to the millennial generation, exhibit a greater interest in the variety of prices in shopping (Polkes, 2019).

Table 4. Gender and entertainment at the shopping mall

Gender		Entertainment at the shopping mall
Female	Mean	3.50
	Std. Dev	1.128
Male	Mean	3.47
	Std. Dev	1.211

Source: Field Study, 2023

As shown in Table 4 above, the female gender had a mean value of 3.50 and a corresponding standard deviation of 1.128, while the male gender also had a mean and a standard deviation

value of 3.47 and 1.211 respectively in relation to the entertainment at the shopping mall. This means that females had the highest mean value and they are the kind of people who always love to visit shopping malls that are full of entertainment. This implies that shopping malls providing a range of entertainment options such as movie theatres, beauty salons, spas, or specialized events and activities will catch the attention of the female gender. Also, the female gender always has memorable experiences anytime they visit, sales volume of the mall will gradually increase. Conversely, studies have indicated that female shoppers, particularly those belonging to the millennial generation, exhibit a greater interest in cultural aspects associated with shopping (Polkes, 2019) which is in line with the study findings.

Table 5, Gender and shopping easiness and convenience

Gender		Shopping easiness and convenience
Female	Mean	3.71
	Std. Dev	.888
Male	Mean	3.66
	Std. Dev	.944

Source: Field Study, 2023

Table 5 reveals that the female gender had a mean and a standard deviation value of 3.71 and 0.888 respectively while the male gender also had a mean and a standard deviation value of 3.66 and 0.944 respectively in relation to shopping easiness and convenience. This means that the female gender had the highest mean value which implies that the female gender are the people who looked at the shopping easiness and convenience. This implies that available amenities, store layout, accessibility, and customer service contribute to the female gender shopping easiness and conveniences at the shopping mall. Thus, the shopping mall will provide a convenience and a user-friendly experience for the female gender. In contrast, according to Ameen, Tarhini, Shah, and Nusair (2021), male shoppers demonstrated a heightened focus on convenience within shopping malls

Table 6, Gender and attractiveness of the shopping mall

Gender		attractiveness of the shopping mall
Female	Mean	3.61
	Std. Deviation	.957
Male	Mean	3.05
	Std. Deviation	1.332

Source: Field Study, 2023

As displayed in Table 6 above, the female gender had a mean value of 3.61 and a corresponding standard deviation of 0.957, and the male gender also had a mean and a standard deviation value of 3.05 and 1.332 respectively in respect of the attractiveness of the shopping mall. With the female gender having the highest mean value implies that the attractiveness of the shopping mall leads to a higher demand for shopping malls in Ghana to create an appealing environment, incorporating aesthetically pleasing designs, comfortable amenities, and a wide range of stores and services that cater for women interests and preferences to attract more female gender. In support of the study result, Teller and Thomson, (2012) found out that female shoppers placed greater importance on aesthetics and privacy.

5. Conclusion and recommendation

The retail landscape has evolved significantly in the last three decades, with physical retail establishments playing a crucial role in customer experiences. Shopping malls, particularly in Ghana, have become popular destinations for both shopping and social interaction. However, the informal retail sector still dominates the retail market, accounting for 95% of transactions. To improve customer satisfaction, shopping malls in Ghana should cater to the preferences of the general Ghanaian population and develop personalized marketing strategies. This study examined the influence of gender differences on shopping mall experiences. The study found that the existence of a particular store in the shopping mall and services provided at the shopping mall are greatly influenced by the male gender. The finding is consistent with the previous study of Ameen et al. (2021). The study also revealed that in Ghana, there is an increased number of the male gender taking a keen interest in the services provided at the shopping malls. It is, therefore, recommended to the shopping mall managers to provide the best quality services to the male gender shoppers on their visit to the malls. For example, shops selling menswear should provide specialised services and modern designer wear that are not common in town. In addition, male shoppers can also be one of their focus for specialized products such as electronics items, sports equipment, and personal grooming. Overall, the shopping mall's retailers may customise their offerings to meet the needs and demands of their male clientele, in order to attract them to patronize their shopping malls which in turn will satisfy them and increase the profitability of the shopping malls.

However, the prices of goods and services at the shopping mall, entertainment at the shopping mall, shopping easiness and convenience, and attractiveness of the shopping mall are influenced by the female gender. The findings of the study are consistent with previous studies (Hashem, 2020); Polkes, 2019). It is, therefore, recommended that the manager of the shopping mall consider the gender difference when managing the malls and also their pricing since it influences the patronage of the malls. Since research has also indicated that there are more females than males in Ghana, shopping mall managers should pay particular attention to entertainment activities at the malls, the shopping easiness and convenience, and attractiveness of the shopping mall to attract more females to the shopping mall which in return create satisfaction and profitability for the shopping malls in general. The study suggests that a similar study should be conducted using marital status and respondents' educational level influence on shopping mall experiences.

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