

Determinants of Attitudes, Patronage Intentions and the Desire to Spend at a Mall: The Case of Pioneer Shopping Mall in Maseru, Lesotho

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Abstract

Shopping malls are a new concept in Lesotho. Even though scholarship on factors that influence shopping in malls is not new, some findings are inconsistent and inconclusive. Furthermore, consumer psychologists warn against generalising results from different environments because cultures and lifestyles differ. The aim of this paper is to examine attributes that influence young shoppers' attitude, patronage intentions and desire to spend time at the Pioneer Shopping mall in Maseru, Lesotho. The sample consisted of 200 students from the National University of Lesotho located about 35KM from where the mall is based. The results generally suggest that mall atmospherics had positive and strong association with young shoppers' attitude, patronage intentions and desire to spend time at the mall. Even though the perception of mall service influenced the desire of young shoppers to spend time at the mall, it neither influenced the young shoppers' attitude nor their patronage intentions. We discuss these results and provide managerial implications and prospects for future research.

Keywords: Mall attributes, attitude, patronage intentions, behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Shopping malls as popular places for shopping and entertainment have attracted interest of researchers and practitioners for decades. Even though the construction and patronage of shopping malls has reached saturation points in developed countries (Martin, 2009; Tsai, 2010; Wakefield and Baker, 1998), malls are still new phenomena in some developing countries. The first mall to be established in Lesotho for example, the Pioneer Shopping Mall, was only opened in 2011. Before then, the nearest mall was located in Bloemfontein, South Africa. The establishment of a local shopping mall was probably one of the most significant changes in the history of retailing in Lesotho (China Central Television News,

2012). To date, the country boasts of two shopping malls (the other one being Maseru Mall), and they are all located in the capital city, Maseru.

Existing literature suggests that consumer perception of mall attributes such as lighting, music, temperature, colour, décor, scent, design, layout, tenant mix, product arrangement, service, entertainment, promotions, crowding, safety and accessibility influence consumer attitudes, emotions and behaviours (Martin, 2009; Michon, Chebat and Turley, 2005; Tsai, 2010; Turley and Milliman, 2000; Wakefield and Baker, 1998). The results of some prior studies have however been inconsistent and inconclusive (Teller and Dennis, 2012; Tsai, 2010; Turley and Milliman, 2000:197). Furthermore, most of the studies were conducted in developed countries, but according to consumer psychologists, lifestyles in affluent economies and less affluent economies can be very different (Tsai, 2010:336). Since shopping malls are new phenomenon in Lesotho, it is not known which mall attributes influence consumer attitudes and behaviours. Turley and Milliman (2000:209) concluded that reactions to retail environments are not universal, and recommended that retail environments should be ‘crafted with a particular consumer in mind’.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the impact of various mall attributes on the attitude, patronage intentions and desire of young people to spend time at the Pioneer Shopping Mall in Lesotho. We focus on young people because this market segment is more likely to embrace the shopping mall experience than old consumers, and the future viability of shopping malls rests on how the young people perceive them (Martin, 2009:49). We contribute to literature by conducting the ‘pioneering’ scholarly research on mall management in Lesotho.

The rest of the paper is outlined as follows: The relevant literature review is presented next, followed by research methodology and findings. Finally the results are summarised, and the limitations, prospects for future research and implications for mall management are presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) paradigm is often used to explain how consumers evaluate and react to environmental cues (Spangenberg, Crowley and Henderson, 1996; Turley and Milliman, 2000:193). This paradigm posits that the environment is the stimulus (S) containing cues that cause consumer’s internal evaluation (O), which in turn create behavioural responses (R). According to this theory, consumers respond to environment with two forms of behaviour: approach behaviour or avoidance behaviour (Turley and Milliman, 2000:193). Approach behaviours are positive behaviours directed at the environment (e.g.

time spent at the mall, or the intent to visit the mall), and avoidance behaviours are behaviours that respond negatively to the environment (e.g. desire to leave the mall). According to Spangenberg et al. (1996:68), environmental factors such as colour, crowding or scent can increase the liking or disliking of the store, which may in turn increase the approach or avoidance behaviours respectively.

The vast body of research reveals that consumers are likely to make a decision regarding where to shop on the basis of their attitudes towards a variety of mall or store attributes. These attributes also increase the desire of consumers to stay within malls or stores, and spending is likely to increase if consumers stay longer within a mall or store (Wakefield and Baker, 1998). Michon et al. (2005:580) found a positive relationship between the perception of mall attributes and product quality. The study by Spangenberg et al. (1996) established that the evaluation of the store, environment, merchandise, intent to visit the store, and perceived time spent in the store were influenced by ambient scent. A recent study by Teller and Dennis (2012) however concluded that ambient scent had no impact on perception, emotions, or behaviour of consumers in their study. The review by Turley and Milliman (2000) examined a number of atmospheric effects on consumer behaviours, and generally found that the perception of the stores' atmosphere influences consumer behaviours such as sales, impulse buying, and time spent in the store. Wakefield and Baker (1998) found that mall environment (ambience, design and layout) and tenant variety influence excitement in a mall setting, and the desire to stay at the mall. Based on shoppers in Japan, Australia, Britain and the USA, Tsai (2010:321) concluded that mall attributes and dimensions of entertainment experience combine 'to elicit favourable shopping behaviours'.

In general, the weight of evidence suggests that the perception of mall attributes or their interaction has impact on attitudes, emotions and behaviour of consumers. Based on past studies, we expected that various mall attributes in Lesotho would correlate positively with consumer attitudes, patronage intentions and desire to stay at the mall.

H1: Mall attributes are positively associated with shoppers' attitude towards a mall.

H2: Mall attributes are positively associated with shoppers' patronage intentions.

H3: Mall attributes are positively associated with shoppers' desire to spend time at the mall.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample, Procedures and Instrument

The paper is based on a sample of about 200 students of the National University of Lesotho located about 35 KM from Maseru where the Pioneer Shopping Mall is based. The sample of 200 was selected because it was adequate for the analysis model (OLS regression) used. According to Green (1991), the sample size should at least be 50 plus eight times the number of predictors to ensure a power of 0.80. In this case $50+8*7=106$ observations were deemed adequate for the purpose of the study. Students were approached near the university gate or their residences and asked to fill a survey questionnaire.

The first section of the questionnaire inquired about the demographic information of the participants such as gender, age, marital status, year of study, and estimated monthly income. The second section entailed the contingency/filter question: 'Do you ever go to Pioneer Shopping Mall?' Students that answered 'yes' were asked to answer subsequent questions. The final section consisted of items inquiring about participants' perception of mall attributes, attitude towards the mall, patronage intentions, and desire to spend time at the mall. The instrument and the summary of the measures of variables are shown in the appendix.

Measures

Mall atmosphere: We adapted the items developed by Wakefield and Baker (1998) to measure mall atmospherics such as ambience (music and lighting), interior design and décor, and layout. The items were measured on a Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Sample items included: 'the mall music is played at an appropriate volume', 'the mall lighting is appropriate', 'the mall layout makes it easy to get around', 'the décor of the mall is appealing to my senses', and 'the overall design of the mall is interesting'.

Product and tenant variety: We again adapted some items from the scale developed by Wakefield and Baker (1998) to measure entertainment, product or tenant variety. The items were measured on a Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Sample items included: 'the mall has excellent entertainment alternatives', and 'the mall has excellent variety of stores'.

Service: We adapted some items from the scale developed by Tsai (2010) to measure the mall service. The items were measured on a Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Sample items included: ‘the mall employees are quite friendly’ and ‘the brands offered are of high quality’.

Attitude towards the mall: We developed two items to measure this construct. The items were measured on a Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The items were ‘I prefer shopping at this mall’ and ‘I like shopping at this mall’. The Cronbach’s alpha (internal reliability) was 0.65.

Patronage intentions: We used one item developed by Wakefield and Baker (1998) to measure patronage intentions. The item was measured on a Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The selected item was: ‘in the future, my shopping at this mall will be possible’.

Desire to spend time at mall: We used one item developed by Wakefield and Baker (1998) to measure the desire to stay at the mall (i.e. propensity to stay at the mall). The item was measured on a Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The selected item was: ‘I like to stay at this mall as long as possible’.

RESULTS

The descriptive information of the sample is shown in Table 1. Of the 200 students who agreed to take part in the study, 170 (85 percent) indicated that they had gone to Pioneer Shopping Mall before, and filled the rest of the questionnaire. Of the respondent sample, 63 percent were females, and this response rate was inadvertently not different from the female response bias reported by Wakefield and Baker (1998:523) and Teller and Dennis (2012:24) of about 63 percent and 62 percent respectively.

TABLE 1
Characteristics of the Sample

Variable	Category	Percentage
	Males	37
	Females	63
Age	Below 20 years	12
	20-29 years	83
	30-39 years	05
Marital status	Single	87
	Married	13
Income level	Below R1000	77
	R1000-R2000	17
	R2001-R3000	04
	Above R3000	02

The majority (87 percent) of the respondents were single, and in terms of age, the majority (83 percent) were between 20 and 30 years of age. In terms of monthly income, the majority (77 percent) received less than R1 000, the amount which reflects the monthly stipend of R800 students get from the National Manpower Development Secretariat (NMDS) bursary fund.

We correlated each of the items measuring mall attributes with attitude towards the mall, patronage intentions, and the desire to spend time at the mall to get the general overview of the associations. The results are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Zero-Order Correlations between Mall Attributes and Attitude, Patronage Intentions and Time Spent at the Mall

Variable	Attitude towards a mall	Patronage intentions	Desire to stay at the mall
The mall has an excellent variety of stores	0.30**	0.27**	0.08
The brands offered are of high quality	0.24**	0.30**	0.16*
The mall employees are quite friendly	0.23**	0.16*	0.18*
The layout of the mall makes it easy to get around	0.20**	-0.01	0.06
The packing facility is satisfactory	0.33**	0.21**	0.03
The décor of the mall is appealing to my senses	0.38**	0.29**	0.13
The mall music is played at an appropriate volume	0.28**	0.09	-0.05
The mall lighting is appropriate	0.31**	0.26**	-0.02
The overall design of the mall is interesting	0.34**	0.26**	0.34**
The mall has excellent entertainment alternatives	0.18*	0.25**	0.16*

*significant at 0.05 (2-tailed); **significant at 0.01(2-tailed)

Figures represent correlation coefficients (r)

Table 2 suggests that all items were positively and significantly related to attitude towards Pioneer Shopping mall. Again, with the exception of the items measuring the mall layout and the mall music, all items were positively and significantly related to patronage intentions. Thus the general overview of bivariate correlations suggest that the majority of items measuring mall attributes were positively related to attitude towards the mall and patronage intentions, suggesting that the higher the perception of mall attributes, the higher the attitude towards the mall and patronage intentions respectively, and vice versa. That notwithstanding, only the items relating to mall service (quality of brands and employee friendliness), mall design and entertainment were positively related to consumers' desire to spend time at the mall.

The limitation of simple correlation analysis is that it does not control the spurious relationships that may be caused by other variables such as demographic factors, and this may result in erroneous relationships. We use regression analysis to control for the possibility of spurious relationships based on personal differences.

We also conducted factor analysis (principal components, varimax rotation) to examine the factor structure of items measuring mall attributes. The results are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Factor Analysis Solution of Mall Attributes

	Component	
	1	2
The mall lighting is appropriate	0.705554	0.03188
The overall design of the mall is interesting	0.685249	0.252315
The décor of the mall is appealing to my senses	0.68393	0.207759
The mall has excellent entertainment alternatives	0.635406	0.17276
The mall music is played at an appropriate volume	0.614685	0.116001
The packing facility is satisfactory	0.422667	0.357691
The brands offered are of high quality	0.066893	0.778483
The mall employees are quite friendly	0.126046	0.750752
The layout of the mall makes is easy to get around	0.157818	0.452155
The mall has an excellent variety of stores	0.379484	0.427763
Eigenvalue	3.325	1.096
Percentage of variance explained	33.325	10.956

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

The results of factor analysis yielded two factors. Factor 1 corresponds to what can broadly be referred to as mall atmospherics, and factor 2 corresponds to a mixture of variety and mall service. Most items under factor 1 represent items Wakefield and Baker (1998) generated to measure mall ambience (e.g. lighting and music), design, décor, entertainment, and layout. The Cronbach's alpha (internal reliability) of items in factor 1 was 0.74. The first two items loading on factor 2 tap into what Tsai (2010) identified as perceived mall service. These were the only items that combined to produce a moderately reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha=0.60), and they were considered to represent perceived mall service construct for the purpose of this study. Other items were dropped from the scale because their inclusion reduced the internal reliability of the scale. We use these two factors to represent mall attributes throughout the rest of the paper.

We ran three simple multiple regression equations to test hypotheses 1, 2 and 3. We used regression analyses to control for the possible confounding effects of demographic factors on the relationship between the mall attributes and attitude towards the mall, patronage intentions and the desire to spend time at the mall respectively. The results are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4
Results of Simple Regression Models

Variable	Model 1 Attitudes towards a mall	Model 2 Patronage intentions	Model 3 Desire to stay at the mall
Gender	0.10	0.04	0.16*
Age	0.00	-0.07	-0.06
Marital status	-0.08	-0.06	0.09
Level of study	0.03	0.05	0.16*
Income	0.05	0.07	-0.02
Mall atmospherics	0.46**	0.34**	0.35**
Perceived mall service	0.02	0.08	0.21*
R ²	0.23	0.16	0.25

*significant at 0.05 (2-tailed); **significant at 0.01(2-tailed)

Figures represent standardized betas (β)

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the perception of mall attributes would be positively related to shoppers' attitude towards a mall. Even though the perception about mall atmospherics were positively and significantly related to attitude towards the Pioneer Shopping Mall ($\beta=0.46$, $p\leq 0.01$), there was no relationship between shoppers' perceived mall service and their attitude towards the mall after controlling for the effects of other variables ($\beta=0.02$, $p\geq 0.05$). The significant relationship suggests that shoppers who had favourable perception about the mall atmosphere were more likely to have positive attitude about the mall than the shoppers who had unfavourable perception of the mall atmosphere.

Similar pattern of results were obtained in relation to hypothesis 2 since the perception about mall atmospherics were positively and significantly related to shoppers' patronage intentions ($\beta=0.34$, $p\leq 0.01$), but the relationship between shoppers' perceived mall service and patronage intentions were close to zero after controlling for the effects of other variables ($\beta=0.08$, $p\geq 0.05$). Thus hypotheses 1 and 2 were partially supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the perception of mall attributes would be positively related to shoppers' desire to spend time at the mall. This hypothesis was fully supported because the perception of mall atmospherics and mall service were positively and

significantly related to shoppers' desire to spend time at the mall ($\beta=0.35$, $p\leq 0.01$ and $\beta=0.21$, $p\leq 0.05$ respectively). This suggests that shoppers who had favourable perception about the mall atmosphere were more likely to have high patronage intentions and desire to spend time at the mall than the shoppers who had unfavourable perception of the mall atmosphere respectively.

There was also a slight influence of gender and level of study on desire to spend time at the mall, with females and those in higher grades more likely to stay at mall than males and those in lower grades respectively.

CONCLUSION

Discussion

The shopping mall concept is relatively new in Lesotho, and as such, it is not known which mall attributes motivate patrons to visit and stay at shopping malls in this new environment. Even though much has been written about the factors that determine consumer behaviours related to shopping malls in developed countries, some prior results have been mixed and hence inconclusive (Teller and Denis, 2012). Furthermore, consumer psychologists warn against generalisation of results because lifestyles and cultures differ from one environment to another (Tsai, 2010:336). The central aim of the current study was to examine the relationships among various mall attributes and shoppers' attitude, patronage intentions and desire to spend time at the first mall to be built in Lesotho – the Pioneer Shopping Mall.

The results suggest that the perception of mall atmospherics was positively and strongly related to shoppers' attitude towards the mall, patronage intentions, and desire to spend time at the mall. This finding is generally consistent with prior studies. For instance, the influential study by Wakefield and Baker (1998) found that the mall atmosphere (ambience, design and layout) and tenant variety had positive influences on shoppers' excitement and desire to stay at the mall. Two years earlier, Spangenberg et al. (1996) found that ambient scent influenced the positive evaluation of the store, intent to visit the store, and the time spent in the store. Turley and Milliman (2000) found that mall atmospherics generally influenced positively consumer behaviours such as time spent in the store. Tsai (2010) argued that the combination of mall atmosphere and 'holistic' dimensions of entertainment experience induced favourable shopping behaviours.

Even though the perception of mall service influenced the desire of consumers to stay or spent time at the mall in this study, contrary to expectations, it neither influenced the consumer attitude towards the mall nor their patronage intentions after controlling for the

effects of other variables. It is possible that for these young shoppers, good service was expected from the shopping mall, and as such, they could not notice it unless it became too bad to attract their attention. This is consistent with Wakefield and Baker's (1998:531-532) argument that some environmental elements are 'not noticed by consumers unless they exist at the unpleasant levels'. Thus the perception of mall service acted like a 'hygiene' or 'maintenance' factor in the process of influencing consumer attitudes or patronage intentions. The perception of the same mall service apparently had a different impact in influencing the desire of consumers to stay at the mall. As shoppers stay longer at the mall, it is possible that good service becomes critical to keep them there, hence the positive relationship between the perception of mall service and the shoppers' desire to spend time at the mall in this study.

The gender impact indicating that females had higher desire to stay at the mall than males, though arguably small, is not surprising. Taylor and Cosenza (2002:393) argued that the typical female teenager 'was born to shop'. Martin (2009) found that daughters had higher desire to spend time at the mall than their mothers.

Managerial Implications

The two major findings of this study are that while perceived mall service only influenced students' desire to stay at the mall, mall atmospherics were determinants of their attitude towards the mall, patronage intentions, and the desire to stay at the mall. This study supports the importance of mall atmosphere to young consumers. Mall managers should therefore pay close attention to various mall attributes such as design, layout, music, interior décor, and others to attract and keep young consumers. As indicated by Taylor and Cosenza (2002:393), young consumers, especially female teens, have huge discretionary spending power. The findings caution mall managers that basic services such friendly employees are not enough to influence attitudes and patronage intentions of young consumers, probably because these are services expected from all retailers in Lesotho. The implication is that mall managers should not only provide good services, but they should also differentiate their shopping malls by including added attributes such as exciting mall atmosphere and entertainment to attract and keep young shoppers.

Limitations and Prospects for Future Research

When interpreting the results of this study and their implications, limitations should be considered. First, although the results replicate findings in the existing literature, the student sample and how it was selected may reduce the generalisation of the results. While most young people are found in universities, future studies in Lesotho can benefit from a larger sample of youth in Lesotho. Second, the cross-sectional nature of the study precludes

causal inferences. Longitudinal or experimental studies are needed to establish causality between variables. Third, though attitudes are best reported by participants; there are arguments that self-reported data lends itself to common method variance. Common method variance can be reduced by obtaining data from different sources. Since perceptions and attitudes can change over time, it is also important to replicate this study in light of the presence of other shopping malls (e.g. Maseru Mall) that were not fully operational at the time this study was conducted. Future studies can also test the mediating variables in line with either the Value-Attitude-Behaviour hierarchy (Shim and Easlick, 1998) or the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). It is known for instance that according to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the relationship between attitude and behaviour is mediated by intentions to perform the behaviour.

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APPENDIX
Research Instrument

Demographic Factors

Gender (Males=0, female=1)

Age (below 20 years=0; 20-29 years=1; 30-39=2; 40 and above=3)

Marital status (single=1; married=2)

Level of study (year 1=1; year 2= 2; year 3 =3; year 4=4)

Monthly income (below R1000=0; R1000-R2000=1; R2001-R3000=2; above R3000)

Contingency Questions

Do you ever go to Pioneer Shopping Mall? (Yes=0; no=1)

If yes, why do you go there? (Entertainment=0; appointment=1; buying=2; window shopping=3; other=4)

Mall Attributes (1=strongly disagree ...5=strongly agree)

1. The mall has excellent variety of stores
2. The brands offered are of high quality
3. The mall employees are quite friendly
4. The layout of the mall makes it easy to get around
5. The parking facility is satisfactory
6. The décor of the mall is appealing to my senses
7. The music played at an appropriate volume
8. The mall lighting is appropriate
9. The overall design of the mall is of the mall is interesting
10. The mall has excellent entertainment alternatives

Attitude towards Mall (1=strongly disagree ...5=strongly agree)

1. I prefer shopping at this mall
2. I like shopping at this mall

Patronage Intentions (1=strongly disagree ...5=strongly agree)

1. In the future, my shopping at this mall is possible

Time Spend at the Mall

1. I like to stay at this mall as long as possible