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DETERMINANTS OF SHOPPING MALLS ATTRACTIVENESS

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Abstract: *The paper examines the factors that make shopping malls attractive to shoppers. The research is funded by Universiti Sains Malaysia that aims to determine the effect of attractiveness factors on malls shoppers' satisfaction. The aim of this paper is achieved through reviews, analysis, and examination of available literature from the journal articles, previous studies and related investigation on shopping malls. Based on the analysis, this study tries to identify the factors of mall attractiveness that influence consumer intention and attraction in choosing a shopping mall. It was found that there are eight factors of attractiveness on mall shopper's satisfaction, these include location, entertainment, facilities and services, aesthetic, price, promotion, diversity, and quality. The finding of this examination helps to underpin the current investigation on shopping malls attraction in the Malaysian context.*

1. Introduction

The literature suggests that shopping is concerned with making physical contact with mall or shopping center in a way that incorporates performs one of the housework but with many recreational and entertainment included (Dholakia, 1999; Elmashhara & Soares 2019). To the general public shopping seems to be considered as a recreation activity, owing to the fact that the growth of the shopping malls as retailers and shopping centers are designed towards ensuring shopping, as an activity a more pleasurable movement. However, some researchers such as Axelrod (1990), Howard (2007), South & Spitze (1994) shopping is considered as a gendered activity where women take the obligation for the household shopping to fulfil the household needs.

According to ICSC (2004), a shopping mall is characterized as a combination of retailers and other business products and services that is carefully and specifically initiated, designed and compounded within a premise. Sankar (2005) added that shopping mall is defined as a common area within a complex that includes walkaways. Thus, the design of a shopping mall provides new experience and excitement alternatives to the visitors. In many instances, a shopping mall consists of twenty five percent retail space units. These include stores for garments, frills, household needs, books, and recreational activities. However, Ahmed *et al.* (2007) believes that the recreational areas, amusement centers and social and family activities within the shopping mall should be separated from retailing areas. It is believed that a shopping mall visitor enters a shopping mall may want to have some rest, spend time with companions, and to spend time for privacy. Therefore, the design of a shopping mall is characterized as a unique and crucial part of feasibility study that requires mind boggling, alluring, splendid and excellent themes. It shall outline visitor's expectation and be able to offer different products, services and administrations, recreational and pleasurable activities that cater the different needs, choices and economic and social status of the visitors. Assael (1987) believes that shopping behavior is perceived as the degree of possibility to conduct activities or perform purchasing transaction within a premise, for example there are items that are perceived to be to most frequent products purchased in a shopping mall such as gifts, clothes, groceries items and household items. In the same vein, Solomon (2004) added that the customer reaction towards a purchase and spending is highly associated with the process of purchasing and the factors impact that determine the purchase. Hence, it seems necessary to examine the processes involved in a purchase. It further implies that there is a governing factor that influence the behavioral aspect of an individual to perform shopping activities. These include the processes of 'why', 'what', 'when', and 'who' in relation to purchasing decision.

According to Arnold & Reynolds (2003), many scholars believed that shopping behavior is highly associated with motivation. Thus, they further extended the characteristic of behavioral aspect of shopping interest that considers motivation as the individual personal internal drive to achieve an impact from the purchasing activities. This argument leads to the belief that there are many underlying factors and seemingly significant to attract visitors, customers and public to visit shopping malls and perform purchasing activities. Previous researchers further classified the term motivation for shopping to different categories such as social shopping, esteem shopping, undertaking shopping, and advanced shopping. The classic beliefs of shopping motivation as suggested by Bloch *et al.* (1994) categorized and explained several dimensions such as aesthetics, exploration, convenience, role enactment, social, flow and escape at shopping, as the key factors that attract visitors to spend at a shopping mall. It seems clear to suggest now that the factors that attract visitors to visit and spend in shopping malls are multifaceted. Therefore, the main aim of this paper is to review and conceptualize the determinants of shopping mall attractiveness.

2. Development of Shopping Malls

In the recent years, the major developments in many cities emphasize on the life of vibrant and dynamic experiences of the people within the cities. Thus, shopping malls and centers

are designed, developed and built to impact and shape the characteristics of modern cities. Due to the economic boom and changes in the economic growth in the last few decades, there seems to be significant changes in term of economic trends, specially to the consumer behaviors. Thus, it provides opportunities and avenues for major city and project developers to introduce a new facelift in most of development projects, i.e. integrating shopping malls in the project developments. According to Lim *et al.* (2003), based on the case of the Malaysian experience in developing commercial buildings, there seems to be a significant change on traditional shopping destination since 1980s and beyond. It was found that traditional shopping and commercial buildings are transformed and emerged into social space, common activities, recreational and business activities.

2.1 Shopping Malls Attractiveness Factors

There seems to be significant differences between shopping malls in term of size, design, facilities, and management services. In many different circumstances, visitors are attracted to one or more factors that affect preference, and it drives different reasons of the decision to visit shopping malls. On the other hand, various scholars (Dennis *et al.*, 2002a; Denis *et al.*, 2002b; El-Adly, 2007; Ruiz, 1999; Wong and Yu, 2003; Mittal and Jhamb, 2016; Kiriri, 2019) suggest that there should be significant consideration to the factors that attract visitors to visit shopping malls.

Bodkin and Lord (1997) claimed from their investigation that most of the visitors select shopping malls based on their convenience, availability of certain products and services in the shopping mall, prices of products and services, and availability common and specific services. Rajagopal (2006) added that the buying decisions are highly associated with three distinct dimensions, these include emotions, pleasantness, and mall attractiveness. It was further added that these dimensions are the main drivers to make decision to buy or purchase in most shopping malls. In addition, El-Adly (2007) identified six main attributes of shopping mall attractiveness such as comfort, entertainment, diversity, mall's essence, convenience and luxury. In addition, this is consistent with other findings that shopping mall attractiveness attributes should comply with three broad segments of shoppers, i.e. stress-free shoppers, demanding shoppers and pragmatic shoppers (Tan, 2019). Interestingly enough, in relation to design of shopping malls, Tanan (1998) proposed five basic factors for shopping mall developers to consider in designing a shopping mall, i.e. location, business concept, design, tenant mix, and management. These dimensions are best described as attractiveness factors in determining a shopping mall. Hence, the main focus of the analysis in this paper adapts and extends the prescriptions of Tanan (1998) in determining the shopping mall attractiveness.

i. Location

Many scholars such as Bloch *et al.* (1994), Ahmed *et al.* (2007) and El-Adly (2007) believe that the location and locality are two main factors of convenience which contribute to the perceptions of the consumers. Koçak (2010) further added that location is not necessarily important for shoppers only, but location can also affect the administrative and technical staff of the shopping mall to manage the operations and processes of the shopping malls.

Syahara and Ristiana (1992) describes location as the key achievement and success factors of a shopping mall or any commercial and residential project developments. Thus, most of the developers conduct comprehensive feasibility studies to determine the best location for a shopping mall within an area. It considers all sets of alternatives and criteria before determining the best location for a shopping mall.

Syahara and Ristiana (1992) further elaborated that there are many dimensions of location for the development of a shopping mall. Significantly, it involves catchment area, distance from home or office, accessibility, and existing and further development neighborhood. In addition, Nicholls *et al.* (2002) pointed out that location is likely the most important element for a shopping mall. Fundamentally, the location of a shopping mall helps the consumers effortlessly that allows many advantages, for example visitors without driving licenses, location is considered to be vital due to the possibility of walking instead of driving. Furthermore, it seems to suggest that most visitors treat walking activity to the shopping malls as part of their recreational routine and sport regimes in maintaining healthy lifestyle in the city.

ii. Entertainment

Studies by Groover (2005) and Erkip (2005) revealed that shopping mall entertainment is considered as the emergence of a new concept of shopping activities. Thus, it seems clear to suggest that the new concept of shopping malls encompasses a mixture of leisure and entertainment. Many scholars view shopping activities as the manifestation of relaxation and recreation. The current trend of mall developers and designers try in many ways to include entertainment as one of the design criteria and elements to provide quality of services and products, diversity of activities and fun to the shopping mall visitors. Barbieri (2005) suggested that entertainment shall provide activities to children, teenagers and adults. Therefore, it is evident from many entertainment activities within the shopping mall premises include entertainment for children, fashion shows, celebrity appearances and live band performances.

On the other hand, in recent development most developers had changed the strategy to ensure shoppers can spend longer hours in the shopping mall, business owners, i.e. tenants make revenues, and more spaces in the shopping mall compound (Shim & Eastlick, 1998). Sit *et al.* (2003), the existing entertainment and show industries such as film theaters, fashion shows, and food and beverage stores could help the spaciousness of a shopping mall. Ahmad *et al.* (2007) opined that in order to meet the dynamic changes of consumers' preferences, malls have been expanded to encapsulate entertainment. Thus, in most shopping malls nowadays, shopping mall means a place that encapsulates restaurants, food courts, video arcades, movie theatres, beauty salons, dental offices, and bookstores, exhibition centers and many other product and services outlets. Interestingly enough, shopping malls also have turned into important meeting places, especially for youngsters and adults. Finally, Özsoy (2010) found that the behavior of Turkish shoppers towards the factors that attract them most to the malls are entertainment and leisure factors. It plays the

greatest role in enhancing the good image of the mall. It was further deduced that entertainment and leisure represent the most attractiveness factors for shoppers among the all other attractiveness factors.

iii. Facilities and Services

Lovelock *et al.* (1998) claimed that shopping malls are known by the services they provide, and the ways and means by which they deliver within the shopping mall premise. These might include courtesy, knowledge and friendliness of the staff, of which can be considered as prevalent criteria for any modern shopping mall. It suggests that it appreciates the sensitivity of the shopping industry. Scholar added and found that shopping centers that provide services for the public in terms of ambulence such as escalators, lifts and sign boards and amenities such as restrooms can add value and attract visitors (Berman & Evans, 2001). In addition, facilities and services that cater comfort factors such as secured parking, cleanliness, and safety and security can attract more visitors and influence the length of time spent inside the shopping malls. These include the availability of comfortable seats of rest rooms, centralized air-conditioning, spacious parking, and safety must be made available to enable shoppers to spend more time to mingle around the shopping malls or to socialize. In addition, El-Adly (2007) stressed the management of shopping mall has to ensure that shoppers are comfortable, and thus, attracting them to frequently visit the shopping mall.

Jin and Kim (2003) conducted an examination of the Korean shopping malls due to competition among retail industries. It was found that improvement of services in shopping malls by creating a more relaxed atmosphere like department stores help to attract visitors. The atmosphere introduced inside the shopping malls include food court, free kids lounge, free shuttle bus services from various residential areas to the store, ATM machines, and dry cleaners. It was further revealed that shopping malls in Korea are getting innovative in introducing family-departmental stores for clothes, shoes, accessories, sportswear, electronic appliances, and mobile services, in addition to kiosks selling candy. These initiatives help to attract families to spend their weekends and holidays, and also can be regarded as their family activities.

Winsted (1997) focuses on service quality as the determinant of shopping mall attractiveness. This is based on the understanding that visitors and shoppers have different perceptions and expectations from a service in the shopping mall. Thus, in many instances, it gives emphasis on the salespersons that are being knowledgeable, courteous and helpful. Warm gestures like smiling, greeting, kind eye contact all play on the positive impression about the shopping mall. It is further deduced that if the expectation is higher than the performance, then quality can be perceived as less satisfactory causing dissatisfaction to the shoppers and visitors.

iv. Aesthetic

Craig and Turley (2004) define aesthetic as beauty, neatness and design. It seems clear to suggest that modern malls should focus all attention to motivate shoppers to invest their time and spend at the shopping malls. Thus, there is an urgent need for the designers to create an internal and external environment including layout and architecture, so that visitors appreciate the aesthetic leading them to stay longer and repeat their visits to the mall. Lui (1997) believes that shopping malls today should embark in shifting the design paradigm from classical design into a more sophisticated architecture design and interior concept. It is consistent with Anselmsson (2006) that believes that interior design and decoration are important in implying the comfort and space of shopping malls. On the same vein, Loudon and Britta (1993) found that a better interior design helps to boost the mall image over time. In many circumstances, visitors and shoppers assess the shopping mall based on physical features such as air-conditioning, elevators, and washrooms, ceiling height, architecture, interior floor finishes, interior landscaping, and store layout. It seems clear to deduce that shopping malls should incorporated more physical attractive features.

Yan and Eckman (2009) and Wakefield and Baker (1998) in their studies found that visitors and shoppers evaluate the shopping malls based on the uniqueness of the building and architectural features as well as entertainment facilities, attractiveness of restaurants. This suggests that the architectural design of the mall is one of the most decisive factors that affects mall excitement, and the internal design and architecture helps to create and enhance the desire to attract shoppers and visitors to stay longer inside the shopping mall premises. Finally, Frasquet (2001), Solomon (1994), Peter and Olson (1994), Tiwari and Abraham (2010), and Wong and Nair (2018) concluded that atmosphere is of utmost importance in decision making, i.e. a major factor to visit a shopping mall. This suggests that a good atmosphere that emphasizes on aesthetic elements and characteristics encourage people to stay longer and buy more.

v. Price

Price is value of money paid for a commodity or service, or the total of the values that customers exchange for the benefits of having or using the product or service. Hence, Stanton *et al.*, (1994) and Kotler and Armstrong (2010) defined price as the sum of money or goods needed to obtain some combination of other goods and its accompanied services. Bell and Lattin (1998) characterize two pricing strategies, a) everyday low price across a wide assortment of product, and b) temporary deep discount in certain product categories. These strategies seem to be the most common tactics by most business operators and retailers. Based on this two knowledge on strategies, shoppers and visitors make their buying decisions relying on the pricing strategy as well as the amount they intend to spend. Generally, shoppers who spend more are more likely to opt for every-day low price, while those who have little to spend will choose the temporary deep discount. Singh *et al.* (2004) supported and believed that the majority of shoppers, visitors and buyers are more likely to choose the everyday low-price strategy.

Studies on marketing that emphasize on customer satisfaction and price fairness such as Hermann *et al.* (2007), Kukar-Kinney *et al.* (2007), Koksol (2019) and Martin-Consuegra

et al. (2007) found that price fairness denotes the evaluation of shoppers evaluation of whether the product is reasonable, acceptable or justifiable. Thus, it suggests that labeling goods with reasonable prices help to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. It is deduced that customer satisfaction is directly influenced by price perceptions, and indirectly through the perception of price fairness. It also includes the reasonably price and discount offered in the shopping malls.

vi. Promotion

Peattie & Peattie (1994a) define sales promotion as marketing initiatives. These activities usually are conducted within specific period of time, venue or targeted group of consumers. It encourages direct response from the customers based on the added value and advantage. On the vein, Kotler and Armstrong (2006) define sales promotion as an incentive that short-term based. This initiative encourages purchase or sale of a product or service. It seems clear that the aim of any promotion campaign is to attract shoppers, attract and encourage them to buy a product or services through immediate action. Moore and Carpenter (2008), Ruiz and Descals (2008), Kumar and Leone (1998), and Sivakumar (2003) found that promotion helps to build patronage and store traffic. Hence, it increases short-term sales of the promoted products and affect sales of other items. It was further found that not all shoppers equally and positively respond to sales promotion. It was further deduced that marketers should be wise enough to know how different shoppers can be polarized to buy their services and/or products.

In another study by Zhou and Wong (2004), it was revealed that there are two types of in-store promotions. It seems to suggest that the factors that influence impulsive buying behavior include displaying point-of-sale posters and exhibiting promotional discounts, and cheaper prices. However, the atmosphere dimension concerning enjoyment, elegance and attractiveness is achieved by the ambience inside the shopping mall.

vii. Diversity

Empirical evidences suggest that people have different tastes, attitudes, and dispositions that lay heavy demands on mall developers to attract visitors to the malls with different backgrounds and expectations in terms of what they want and prefer. Kaufmann (1996) believes that this is necessarily important for shopping mall management to provide a multitude of products and services for a better performance of the entire shopping mall which can be enhanced further by a cooperative mix of stores and tenants to meet the multi-needs of shoppers. Shopping malls that offer multi cross-category products and services will be favored by visitors due to convenience and ease of shopping. However, Chepat *et al.* (2009) and Koskol (2019) argued that to a certain extent shopping mall that offer products within-category assortment refers to the depth of a store's assortment within a product category. It is particularly necessity for the visitors looking for depth of variety and would likely appreciate a shopping mall that satisfy their specific needs. Indeed, this would add value to the positive image of the shopping mall.

Ahmed *et al.* (2007) pointed that traditional practice of shopping malls competing for a large variety of products and multi-services in a single location has created much of a similarity in terms of what is offered. Thus, it leads shopping mall managers to start competing to provide services and products with competitive prices and create competition with other shopping malls. In relation to visitors' preference, based on the Malaysian experience, the visitors especially the students prefer a wide assortment of products in a one-stop shopping. Thus, it suggests that there is a need for a mix of services to attract shoppers to the existing shopping malls in Malaysia.

The findings of previous studies, for example Balazs (1995), Brown (1992), Nicholls *et al.* (2002), Yavas (2001), Tandon *et al.* (2016) and El-Adly (2007) provide support to prove that shopping mall visitors find comfort and ease of shopping as they look for different brands and types. This further explains that when their tastes are appealed to by the malls with the greatest mix of goods, they are more likely to patronize that shopping mall, than visit to one limited variety of products. Their studies also provide evidences to suggest the importance of varieties of product and services. In addition, shopping mall managers should also focus on ethnic diversity in the operation and processes of their shopping malls.

viii. Quality

Lambert (1972) and Charters and Pettigrew (2006) claimed that Price, store image, brand reputation, market share, country of manufacture, and product features are only few elements that consumers often attach when quality of a product is concerned. For instance, the perceptions differ between people based on the category of people and how they define quality. This is important owing to the fact that quality is a multidimensional concept that cannot be easily defined or measured (Tsiotsou, 2005).

Previous studies associated perceived quality directly to positive purchase intentions (Carman, 1990; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1996). However, on the other hand, different scholars related quality to satisfaction (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Sweeney *et al.*, 1999). There are scholars that arguably hold that both relationships exist (Tsiotsou, 2006). Shoppers highly depend on their perception of quality to distinguish products depending on physical composition of a product and make up the outside of the product.

3. Determinants of Shopping Mall Attractiveness

The review of literature reveals that there are eight dimensions of determinants for shopping mall attractiveness. Conceptually, in short, it refers to the satisfaction of the visitors based on their perception toward the shopping mall. Satisfaction is defined as an individual's experience and pleasurable feeling of product or services, or disappointment

to certain performance and expectation of a product or services. Shopping malls' satisfaction is essential for the need to create a sense of belonging, emotional binding and brand loyalty among shopping malls. Satisfaction works if needs or demands of customers are fulfilled through particular product or service. Also, satisfaction reflects the shopping mall visitors' feeling of the desired benefits from the goods or services for which they spend. Satisfaction can further be associated with feelings of acceptance, happiness, relief, excitement, and delight. Satisfaction is the pleasant response of shoppers to products or services which satisfied their needs and wants. Many other factors affect customer satisfaction. These include, knowledgeable employees, courteous employees, friendly employees, accuracy of billing, helpful employees, billing timeliness, competitive pricing, good value, service and product quality, billing clarity and quick service. Therefore, the satisfaction of shopping mall visitors is the ultimate goal of the shopping malls, and all efforts are directed so as to meet shoppers and visitors' expectations. If they are satisfied with the product or services, the visitors and shoppers will have stronger intention to re-visit and re-buy.

Conclusively, this paper reviews the elements and factors that determine the attractiveness of shopping malls. It was found that there are eight factors of attractiveness on mall shopper's satisfaction, these include location, entertainment, facilities and services, aesthetic, price, promotion, diversity, and quality. Conceptually, it seems to suggest that the attractiveness factors of shopping mall are associated with shoppers' and visitors' satisfaction. The finding of this examination helps to underpin the current investigation on shopping malls attraction in the Malaysian context.

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