

An empirical study on the antecedents of shopping experience in Bangladeshi malls: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach

Shamsad Ahmed

University of Asia Pacific, Bangladesh

Prakash Chandra Dash

Asian School of Business Management

Imroz Mahmud

Samira Sahel

University of Asia Pacific, Bangladesh

Keywords

Shopping Mall, Ambience, Safety, Amenities, Structural Equation Modeling, Bangladesh

Abstract

Growing competition amongst contemporary forms of shopping malls has made mall developers and management consider devising methods that enrich the experience of the customers. In this study, an attempt was made to explore the antecedents to the shopping experience at the mall. For this purpose, a survey instrument was developed for measuring the respondents' opinion. The constructs developed for this study were tested and validated by means of multidimensional procedure on a sample of 284 mall shoppers in Bangladesh. Structural equation modeling was applied to test the hypotheses developed for this study. Among the three exogenous factors analyzed in this study, two factors namely ambience and amenities have a significant influence in determining customers' shopping experience, while the third factor, named safety, exerts a statistically insignificant impact. It is reasonable to conclude, based on the evidence gathered from the study that, an enriched shopping experience can be facilitated by mall managers as a relational outcome of managing ambience and amenities. Being the first of its kind, this research work delves into the interrelated dependence among the factors that in turn influence customer experience at the shopping malls in the context of Bangladesh.

Corresponding author: Shamsad Ahmed

Email addresses for the corresponding author: shamsad@uap-bd.edu

First submission received: 11th September 2018

Revised submission received: 17th December 2018

Accepted: 7th January 2019

Introduction

The Bangladeshi marketplace, especially in relation to retail, has been going through a significant metamorphosis. A decade back, the discussion was about the expected negative impact of modern formal stores and shopping malls on the unorganized retail stores (Kalhan, 2007; Singh and Dave, 2013). Without considering the economic logic, shopping malls were considered as symbols of all that is wrong with the capitalist system and therefore were branded as an instrument of division within the society (Voyce, 2007). In the present scenario, the narrative has changed, as the competition between malls and unorganized stores has shifted to the competition between malls. An emergence of shopping malls is being observed next to each other, which is leading to cannibalization and encroachment upon each other's catchment area (Singh and Prashar, 2014). Besides, the reduction in consumer spending vis-à-vis the increasing number of competing distribution channels and changes in customers' habits are coming as formidable challenges for the shopping centres (Lucia-Palacios, Pérez-López, and Polo-Redondo, 2016). Moreover, the rise of e-commerce which is gradually crafting alternate venues for shopping is posing immediate threats to lure away traditional shoppers. (Tsai, 2009).

It has been argued that malls can differentiate themselves based on superior shopping experience (Wakefield and Baker, 1998; Csaba and Askergaard, 1999; Singh and Sahay, 2012; Singh and Prashar, 2014). Gonzalez-Hernández and Orozco-Gomez (2012) put forward that the retailers should identify the

shopping centre attributes, which are instrumental in retaining existing customers and appealing to new ones. It is crucial on the managers' part to understand the concept of "customer experience" in order to unearth the reasons and dimensions that drive the shoppers towards malls. Understanding such mall attractiveness dimensions would help attract shoppers and maintain mall profitability/viability. Some researchers have also studied the impact of shopping experience on the outcome variables like emotional response, shopping response, and satisfaction (Wakefield and Baker, 1998; Machleit and Eroglu, 2000; Anselmsson, 2006). However, there is no study on the combined impact of ambience, amenities, and safety on the overall experience at the shopping mall, and so in this study, an attempt was made to probe the same. This research completes through developing constructs pertinent to shopping malls and in turn assessing the effects of those constructs on the shopping experience of the buyers. Furthermore, this study has been conducted in the context of the Bangladeshi market, where research on the related topic is yet to be paid adequate attention. The following sections of the paper consist of the theoretical background and hypotheses, subsequent to which there is the section on methodology and data collection, followed by the findings and discussion of the study, managerial implications, limitations and future research directions.

1.1 Objective of the Study

During last two decades, the development of mall has paved the way for organized retail in Bangladesh. The investments made in this sector are also quite huge. In such a situation, it becomes crucial for those retail players to ensure sufficient footfall and high amount of sales for justifying their investments. However, the Bangladeshi shoppers who have been exposed to the unorganized local retail stores have been used to it for quite a long time. In some cases, trust develops between the storekeeper and the buyer. The storekeeper provides special facilities to the regular customers such as credit and home delivery, which has been their key driving factor. It was also observed by some researchers that additional reasons for customers preference of traditional stores could be mentioned as their perceived value and relationship with the retailers (Rabbanee, Ramaseshan, Wu, and Vinden, 2012), attachment with the community (Mullis and Kim, 2011) or adherence to community's social norms (Kim and Stoel, 2010). Furthermore, cultural impact (Seock and Lin, 2011), poverty or lack of transport (Clarke and Banga, 2010) also play significant roles in shaping the preferences, which is also evident in Bangladesh. In the given circumstances, therefore, it is crucial on the part of the retailers to ensure an entertaining shopping experience to customers in order to intrigue them towards the malls. If the management engages customers in a manner that serves their sensory appeals and feeds their best interest, an experience as such can be guaranteed. Therefore, it is important to know what makes shopping experience appealing.

Globally, the focus of consumers has shifted from traditional markets- souqs or bazaars- to modern retail formats- superstores, supermarkets, hypermarkets, and city centres (Rakesh and Shweta, 2017). Correspondingly, the establishment of shopping malls is becoming an emerging trend in Bangladesh with the growing population. Management of various malls is now keen to know what induces a customer in choosing its shopping destination. Although there have been several studies on malls and factors driving the consumer attitudes towards the mall all over the global arena, a significant gap of research remains in Bangladesh that feeds the interest of the Mall management by exposing the critical dimensions of experience management. Thus, the present research was undertaken with an objective of particularly examining the antecedents of shopping experience in Bangladesh, which will ultimately help global researchers to check impact of the findings in other countries.

Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical background

Shopping malls can be characterized by large floorage, extensive range of product categories, a variety of specialty stores as well as recreational offerings (Tsai, 2010). Traditionally, developers tended to attract consumers to malls through the promise of a wide assortment of stores and merchandise available at one specific location. Over the years, the concept of developing malls has reached a new height and their one-stop convenience has expanded to include service outlets and entertainment providers. Representing a unique form of shopping environment, malls nowadays have become a vital destination for people to engage not only in buying activities, but also to derive a holistic experience from the surrounding atmosphere. Social activities, such as going to a movie, having food or a meal out, getting

together with friends or family, hair styling, etc. (Ahmed, Ghingold, and Dahari, 2007) are also adding values. Even relatively small shopping malls today offer fast-food courts, art exhibits, restaurants, movie theatres, hair salons, and dental offices. (Bloch, Ridgway, and Dawson, 1994). Some researchers have stated that malls have transgressed beyond mere shopping places and are being considered multi-leisure complexes (Jones and Hillier, 2002). As claimed by Underhill (1999), a customer these days entering a shopping mall is never sure if he is in a store or a theme park. Because of their architectural design, retailing, eating and entertaining facilities, it is further stated that the malls have become tourist destinations (Ooi and Sim, 2007). Along with purchasing, the motives for visiting malls today are social interaction, spending leisure time, having pleasure, convenience and relaxing (Kumar and Karande, 2000; Michon, Yu, Smith, and Chebat, 2008). Management and consumer behaviour scholars, Dube and Le Bel (2003), Schmitt (2003), McCole (2004), Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), Tsai (2005a, 2005b, 2006) and Caru & Cova (2003) notably, have gone to great lengths in explaining how customer experience derived from the malls is enhanced through all sorts of dynamic exchanges and contact points in the sensory, emotional, social and intellectual context.

According to different researchers, the issue of selecting a mall by a consumer for shopping depends on several factors like product assortment, price bargains, transactional convenience, and shopping experience. All these attributes are combined under one roof in a mall in association with the ambience, design and layout, which further evoke varying degrees of emotional reactions from the consumers (Babin and Attaway, 2000). However, a number of other factors influencing the success of a mall have been revealed by others such as the location, store atmospherics (Babin and Attaway, 2000), size & services, and facilities (Coye, 2004).

In the light of available literature related to theorization of customer experience (Carbone and Haeckel, 1994; Schmitt, 1999; Gentile, Spiller, and Noci, 2007; Verhoef, Lemon, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsiros, and Schlesinger, 2009), retail customer experience can be defined as an encapsulation of cognitive, emotional, sensorial, and behavioural responses produced during the entire buying process. This also involves an integrated series of interaction with people, objects, processes and environment in retailing. Some mall management scholars such as Wakefield and Baker (1998), Wilhelm and Mottner (2005), and Bäckström (2006), in view of the constricting business environment in which shopping malls operate, theorize that the creation of satisfying experience may play a vital role in enhancing the competitive edge of the shopping malls.

To explore more in this regard, thorough study of extant literature also reveals that discovering dimensions of shopping experience those prompt shoppers to visit and stay at malls, have been the subject of research since the 1960s. Retailing has evolved from conducting transactions to offering experiences. Shoppers have begun to consider malls as places where they enjoy their time and satisfy their experiential needs (Haseki, 2013). As a result, they started to consume these "places" rather than simpler products (Nsairi, 2012). Studies recommend that to enhance a mall's attraction and improve shopper experience, many dimensions need to be considered (Wakefield and Baker, 1998; Venkateswarulu and Uniyal, 2007; Khare and Rakesh, 2010; Banerjee, 2012; Singh and Sahay, 2012; Tandon, Gupta, and Tripathi, 2016). As mall shopping is a relative choice phenomenon (LeHew and Fairhurst, 2000; Singh and Sahay, 2012), mall attractiveness plays a critical role in determining customers' re-visit intentions, facility evaluation and word-of-mouth communications (Joseph-Mathews, Bonn, and Snepenger, 2009; Saarijarvi, Rintamaki, and Kuusela, 2013). However, mall experience, that is, the way shoppers' focus on malls on consumption spaces instead of focusing on the activity of shopping has been little studied (Gilboa and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2013). Through this research, initiative has been taken to identify the contributing factors of memorable shopping experience.

2.2 Hypotheses Development

In this article, three exogenous variables have been used namely ambience, amenities, safety and the endogenous variable considered is shopping experience. These variables have been taken into consideration keeping in mind the earlier literature and by discussing with industry personnel. The constructs are explained below and accordingly, the hypotheses are developed. A conceptual model is developed using those constructs, which has been tested with the help of Structural Equation Modeling.

In this study, the hypotheses were basically developed using the findings of the west since no relevant study in Bangladeshi context is available. However, literature of one of the neighbouring countries, India, was thoroughly reviewed and used as India is very much like Bangladesh in terms of shoppers' language, values, religion, and culture.

2.2.1 The effect of ambience on customer experience

The purpose of shopping has transgressed beyond shopping and indulges in recreation and enjoyment, so the character and atmosphere of a place, that is, ambience is of paramount importance. Bitner (1992) mentioned that the consumer response would be influenced by the physical factors such as the physical ambience of the shop, servicescape, and others. Kurtz and Clow (1998) articulated that the environment of the shop has the capability to instigate emotions whether satisfactory or dissatisfactory. The mall itself is a place that provides experiences, which are consumable beyond the products and services sold in the mall (Ahmed, Ghingold, and Dahari, 2007). The atmosphere of the store is affected by different factors like store layout, interiors, colour, lighting, aisle, heating, store size, crowds, music, and cleanliness. These factors impact consumers' moods and attitudes and eventually influence their purchase intentions (Khare, 2012). In the study conducted by Ballantine, Jack, and Parsons (2010), the importance of manipulating atmospherics, especially when attempting to create a hedonic experience for the customers was reinforced. Among the four determinants of shopping experience (Ambience, Physical infrastructure, Marketing focus, Convenience to shoppers, Safety and security), ambience ranked the highest in terms of significance (Singh & Sahay, 2012).

Mall managers have realized that mall ambience and attractiveness contribute majorly in attracting shoppers to stores (Laroche, Teng, Michon, and Chebat, 2005) and plays a significant role in consumers' evaluations about products. Mathwick, Malhotra, and Rigdon (2001) stated that the service aspects of a mall should be blended with the physical ambience to create an enjoyable experience for the shoppers. Colour schemes, lighting factors, in-store temperature, music, and scent are few of the issues that have been studied by researchers, and it is observed that these issues contribute profoundly to the shopping behaviour, knowingly or unknowingly (Chebat and Morrin, 2007). A study conducted by Mattila and Wirtz (2001) measured the influence of music along with that of scent. Findings of the study showed the significance of both the attributes in isolation as well as in combination with each other. Bradford and Desrochers (2009) found in their study that pleasantly scented environments led to approach behaviours and unpleasant environments caused avoidance without the customers even being aware of the presence of the smell. The results of the study conducted by Merrilees, Miller, and Shao (2016), to delve into the indicators of customer experience, regarded satisfaction as an indicator of the mall experience. Mall atmosphere or ambience was held to be an underlying major statistical influence on customer mall satisfaction. Wang, Chang, and Wysong (2012) identified customers with High Optimum Stimulation Level to be the most valued customers to whom the ambience of a retail store is of favourable evaluation. It can thus be posited that:

H₁: Ambience has a relatively significant impact on the shopping experience.

2.2.2 The effect of amenities on customer experience

Behind the success of any mall, the facility it provides contributes significantly. Tangible and intangible attributes like variety and number of stores, design and parking facilities motivate consumers to shop in the malls (Castaldo and Premazzi, 2001; Yan and Eckman, 2009). The presence of facilities within the centre, such as customer service points, rest areas, crèche, and other services complement the shopping process and provide greater convenience to shoppers (Frasquet, Vallet, and Gil, 2002). Among the core services of a shopping centre, free parking and long opening hours are notable, because both these services are the key aspects of the new shopping habits of consumers (Frasquet *et al.*, 2002). Besides, variables like services (personnel, business hours, checkout-technology, after sales services) and augmented facilities (banking, children's corner, covered parking, food courts, and post office) can be taken into account in explaining retailers' positioning (Hassan and Rahman, 2012; Hassan, Bakar Sade, and Sabbir Rahman, 2013; González-Benito, Martos-Partal, and Fustinoni-Venturini, 2014). In such a condition, it is reasonable to assume that amenities or facilities provided within the mall have a significant impact on the selection of a shopping mall because these amenities influence the experience provided by it.

H₂: Amenities have a relatively significant impact on the shopping experience.

2.2.3 The effect of safety on customer experience

Safety is the main concern for the shoppers, which they often evaluate while going for shopping. Safety of vehicle, safety in the lift, escalator, and rest-room are the factors that might influence somebody while going to the shopping mall. Safety concerns leave an adverse impact on shopping well-being by deteriorating well-being of consumers' social, leisure, and community life. Shoppers cannot spontaneously engage in purchasing needed goods and services when they hold concern about their own safety and possibly the safety of their family, friends, and significant others (El Hedhli, Chebat, and Sirgy, 2013). Safety has been highlighted by Frassetto *et al.* (2002) in their work on 'Shopping-centre selection modeling: a segmentation approach'. Wee (1986) highlighted the safety concern that develops an image in the mind of the prospects. In the seminal research conducted by Josiam, Kinley, and Kim (2005), safety was ascribed as most important by the shoppers in a focused group discussion. This was further corroborated in a study conducted by Ismail El-Adly (2007) on multiple segments of shoppers where the largest segment put great emphasis on safety as a comfort factor. According to Overstreet and Clodfelter (1995), shoppers put greatest value on mall activities that address their safety outside the shopping centre and strongly suggest additional security as the best way to improve shoppers' feelings of safety and security while shopping. Consistent with these, safety is a vital concern in Bangladesh because retailers are not well equipped with the updated technology as mall development is in the nascent stage. Moreover, the security of the family members is a major concern while choosing a shopping mall. People tend to avoid a mall located in an area that does not have a good reputation until and unless the mall has enough protection facilities. Hence, it is the responsibility of the mall management to provide a safe and secured environment, which further affects the shopping experience. Thus, the hypothesis can be posited as:

H₃: Safety has a relatively significant impact on the shopping experience.

3. Research Methodology

In order to carry out this research, both primary and secondary sources of data were used. For gathering secondary data, several scholarly articles relevant to the research objectives were thoroughly reviewed.

In order to test the hypothesized model, a survey questionnaire was developed based on previous empirical literature and personal interview with academicians well versed in this regard. The instrumentation of the measurement items for the three exogenous variables, namely, ambience, amenities, safety, and one endogenous variable, i.e. shopping experience was based on the extant literature (e.g. Mohan and Tandon, 2015; Anuradha and Manohar, 2011; Mittal and Jhamb, 2016; Sit, Merrilees, and Birch, 2003; Khalaf Ahmad, 2012; Ibrahim and Ng, 2002; Ismail El-Adly, 2007). These measurement items were selected to evaluate their influence on customers' shopping experience. To operationalize these dimensions, thirty items were generated and measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

According to Baumgartner and Homburg (1996), the statistical strength of the results may be in doubt, if the parameter ratio is less than 5:1. This assumption implies that models with greater number of parameters require larger samples (Kline, 2010). Ho (2008) observed that a sample size of 200 possesses and provides enough statistical power for data analysis. In line with the above-recommended guidelines, considering the number of items (in the questionnaire) which is 30 in the current study, it was decided that the target number of respondents should be more than 200. Based on convenience sampling technique, 450 survey questionnaires were distributed to the target respondents living as well as shopping in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. In total 284 respondents completed the questionnaire.

A large share of respondents includes university students, faculty members and staff. The reason for choosing them is that they possess the characteristics as a shopper that is quite like a typical mall shopper (Rafiq and Fulford, 2005).

SPSS version 21.0 was used to input data and carry out the analysis on it. Both descriptive analysis of the demographic attributes of the respondents and the reliability analysis of the study variables were

performed. AMOS version 21.0 was used to perform Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the hypotheses developed for this study.

4. Findings of the Study

Out of the total 450 questionnaires distributed, 284 questionnaires are returned that amounts to a response rate of 63.11%. Before conducting various analyses, data screening is done to address the few missing values in the survey questionnaires. This section presents the profile of the respondents, descriptive and reliability analysis of the study variables, and the full-fledged structural model done by AMOS version 21.0 that highlights the results of hypotheses developed for this study.

4.1 Analysis of Demographic Variables

Table I portrays the respondents' profile that highlights their gender mix, age, family income, occupation, academic qualifications, frequency of their visit to shopping mall, time spent on each trip, and the main purpose of visit.

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	174	61.3
Female	110	38.7
Total	284	100.0
Occupation		
Student	159	56.0
Housewife	16	5.6
Businessman / Self-employed	9	3.2
Private Service	89	31.3
Govt. Service	5	1.8
Others	6	2.1
Total	284	100.0
Academic Qualification		
SSC (Secondary School Certificate)	2	.7
HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate)	71	25.0
Graduate	124	43.7
Postgraduate	80	28.2
Others	7	2.5
Total	284	100.0
Age		
16-20	35	12.3
21-30	183	64.4
31-40	45	15.8
41-50	16	5.6
Above 50	5	1.8
Total	284	100.0
Monthly Family Income (BDT)		
Less than 25000	37	13.0
25001-50000	90	31.7
50001-75000	70	24.6
75001-100000	44	15.5
Above 100000	43	15.1
Total	284	100.0
Frequency of visit to shopping mall		
Once a month	149	52.5
Once a fortnight	43	15.1
Once a week	92	32.4
Total	284	100.0
Time spent per trip (in hour)		
Less than 1	33	11.6
1-2	154	54.2

More than 2	97	34.2
Total	284	100.0
Main purpose for visiting		
For entertainment	22	7.7
For shopping	182	64.1
To have a good time out with friends/families	55	19.4
To know and examine new product	25	8.8
Total	284	100.0

Table 1-Demographic Profile of Respondents

As seen from Table 1, out of 284 respondents, 174 are male and 110 are female. In terms of their occupation, 56% of the respondents are students followed by 31.3% of private service holders, and 5.6% of housewives. As far as respondents' academic qualifications are concerned, about 44% of them possess bachelor's degree followed by 28.2% possessing a master's degree. In terms of their age-group, an overwhelming majority of about 64.4% falls into 21 – 30 years of age bracket followed by about 15.8% and 12.3% in the brackets of 31 – 40 and 16 – 20 years of age, respectively. Regarding their level of monthly family income, about 32% of the respondents earn in the range of above 25,000 – 50,000 takas. This is followed by about 25% with monthly family earnings of above 50,000 to 75,000 takas. Besides, only 13% of the respondents have a monthly family income of less than 25,000 taka and about 15% of them have a monthly family income of above 100,000 taka.

When it comes to the frequency of their shopping mall visit, about 53% of the respondents mention that they visit once a month followed by 32.4% of them visiting once a week. As for the time spent on each trip to the shopping mall, about 54% of the respondents spend between 1 – 2 hours followed by 34.2% spending more than two hours. Regarding their main purpose of visiting the shopping mall, an overwhelming majority of around 64% of the respondents mention that they visit for shopping, while 19.4% of them visit to have a good time-out with their friends and/or family. Only 7.7% of them reported that they visit for entertainment purposes.

4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The structural equation modeling (SEM) embodies two processes: first, testing the measurement model and then the structural model. Kline (2010) stated that the measurement model points to the suitability as measurement instrument of the observed indicators representing a latent variable. The adequacy of a measurement model is scrutinized by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). For this, three fit indices are checked to determine the fitting of the model with the data: normed chi-square, root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) and comparative fit index (CFI). The general guidelines of the cut-off values for such indices: Normed chi-square and RMSEA are to be less than 5 and 0.08, respectively, while CFI values are to be above 0.9 (Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, 2010). Table 2 presents the CFAs for the four factors or the constructs, i.e., Amenities, Ambience, Safety and the Experience at the mall. As the Table 2 suggests, all the four factors or the constructs have adequate construct validity with the cut-off points of all the three indices being adequately satisfied.

Goodness-of-fit statistics	Normed-Chi Square	RMSEA	CFI
Amenities (AME)	2.655	0.076	0.959
Safety (SAF)	1.529	0.043	0.979
Ambience (AMB)	.539	.000	1.000
Experience (EXP)	2.277	0.067	0.977
Threshold values for the fit indices	< 5.0	< 0.08	> 0.90

Table 2-Results of CFAs of the Four Factors

4.3 Structural Equation Modeling

The structural equation modeling (SEM) has been employed in this study to test the causal effect among the main constructs of a hypothesized model (Kline, 2010). A causal model has been developed and shown in Figure 1 that assesses the structural relationships among the three constructs or the factors undertaken in this research.

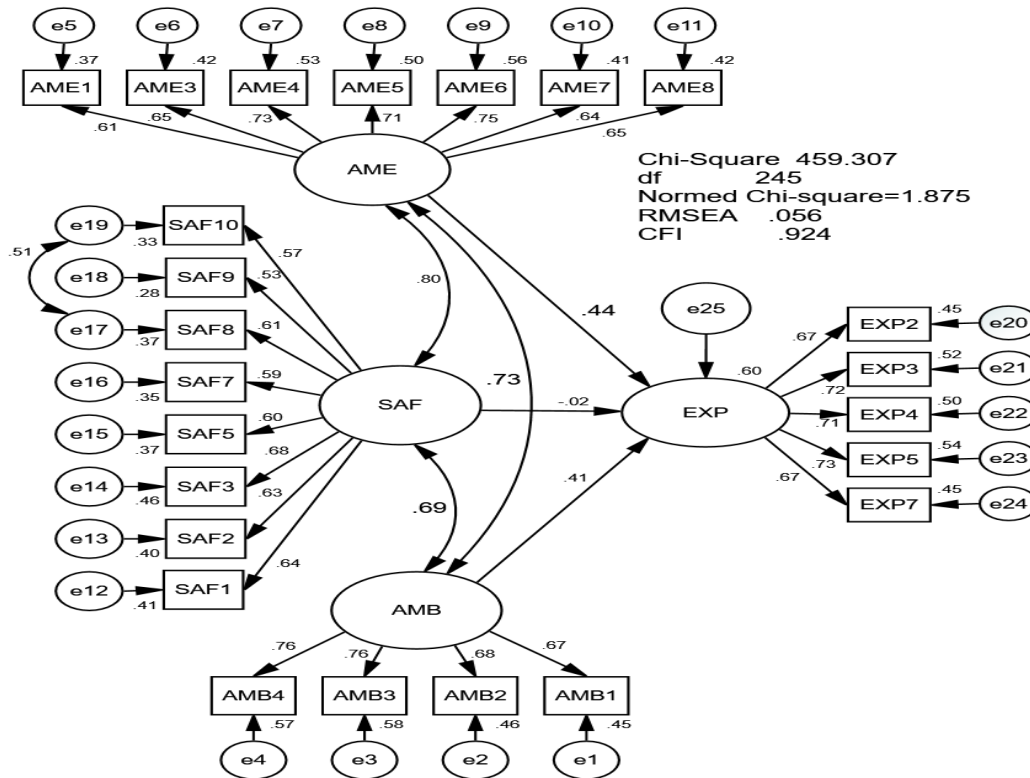


Figure 1: Full-fledged Structural Model

In Figure 1, the structural model has been found to have an adequate fit to the sample data as three fit indices meet their threshold values with Normed- chi-square and RMSEA falling well below 5.0 and 0.08 correspondingly, and CFI with a value of above 0.90. In addition to this, the constructs show considerable evidence of convergent validity as all the loadings possess values above threshold point of 0.50. From Table 3 and Figure 1, it is evident that two path coefficients, namely, AME→Experience and AMB→Experience are proven to be statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, while the other one, i.e., SAF→Experience is not. It can, therefore, be deduced that in this study, the hypotheses H1 (Ambience has a relatively significant impact on the shopping experience) and H2 (Amenities have a relatively significant impact on the shopping experience.) are substantiated by the model while the hypothesis, H3 (Safety has a relatively significant impact on the shopping experience.), is not supported by the model (Table 3).

It has also been confirmed from the model in Figure 1 that Amenities exert a higher influence (0.44) than that of Ambience (0.41) with Safety having no statistically significant effect. The collective effect of these three accounts for 60% of the total variance in customer experience. As to what has been illustrated in Figure 1 and Table 3, The model advocates statistically significant correlations among the influencing factors that stand at 80%, 69%, and 73% respectively.

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
Exp <--- AME	.419	.123	3.397	***	Supported
Exp <--- SAF	-.025	.132	-.189	.850	Not Supported
Exp <--- AMB	.439	.111	3.941	***	Supported

Table 3-Regression Weights

5. Discussion and Managerial implications

Customer shopping habits have forever changed. They are not just seen as utilitarian buyers, their feelings, personality, and motives are being acknowledged as influencers of shopping behaviour and store/mall patronage (Banyte, Rütelionė, and Jarusevičiūtė, 2015; Sane and Chopra, 2014; Azizi and Shariffar, 2011; Farrag, El Sayed, and Belk, 2010). Consumer awareness has resulted in a perceptible change in customer behaviour and they are on the lookout for better convenience, speed, efficiency and a wide range of products, all together – a one-stop shopping experience. Although experience is inextricably connected with subjectivity, retailers need to develop a rational discourse to cater to an ever-evolving customer. Focusing on the phenomenon, the contemporary retail settings have transited from utilitarian consumption to offering holistic experience. The findings, in line with this, suggest that mall experience should be enhanced by identifying an optimal mix of factors namely amenities and ambience.

Customers have multiple choices as growing number of malls has increased probable shopping destinations. However, they are more likely to patronize malls that match their preference in terms of attractiveness, wide range of products and store varieties. The primary aim of owners and mall management should be to enhance factors for shopping experience by creating holistic experiences for its customers and increasing opportunities for the tenants to enhance their revenue. Since a mall is a cluster of stores located under one roof, there lies ample scope on part of the mall manager of delivering additional utilitarian and hedonic shopping values to customers (Teller and Reutterer, 2008; Oppewala and Holyoake, 2004; Babin, Darden, and Griffin, 1994), in comparison to single retail outlet.

Buying environment can be persistently designed to influence special emotional effects in shoppers, thereby encouraging their purchase probability (Kotler, 1973). The present study highlighted that the mall ambience has a significant effect in forming positive consumer experiences. Aspects of ambience can be utilized by the management of the malls towards triggering memorable customer experience. The process may involve managing multiple tangible and intangible stimuli as suggested in this paper like; lighting, temperature control, landscaping, music and pleasant scent (odour), etc. Organizing the atmosphere cues appropriately may also influence the length of stay, retention and patronage intention.

One interesting finding that has been unearthed from the results is that Bangladeshi shoppers have not posed major concern about safety. Similar to the study of Singh and Sahay 2017, safety has not been regarded as a significant factor for choosing a shopping mall. It could be attributed to the fact that so far Bangladesh has not witnessed any major accident inside the shopping malls. Despite huge political turmoil, there has not been a single act of terrorist violence inside shopping malls in Bangladesh. As a result, the differentiation created by any Bangladeshi mall using safety as a factor will not have any significant impact on shopping experience.

By considering the geographic and time context of this study, it is possible to understand the results. The respondents of this study solely come from the capital city of Bangladesh. Shoppers in this city have experienced modern format retailing and shopping malls for over one decade. As a result, their expectations from retail formats have evolved. These shoppers are no longer motivated if the shopping malls deliver competently on factors like convenience, promotional activities because these are at par for the course. However, it would be wrong to assume that shoppers are indifferent to these because they may feel repulsed if the mall falls short of their expectations on these factors. In a way, these are 'hygiene factors' that are associated with shopping in a mall, so the absence of these factors would lead to dissonance, but the presence will not motivate. A close examination of these factors reflects that these do not represent the core aspects of shopping. These are more of 'support factors'.

Limitations and Direction for Future Research

6.1 Limitations

Data collection was restrained within the capital city of Bangladesh only, which is inadequate when it comes to drawing general inference of the research. To ensure the validity and reliability of the factors, research in other cities and on other shoppers is of crucial importance. Also, this study is limited in that it didn't go for mall intercept rather restricted the survey among faculty, instructors, students, staff in academic institutions and their acquaintances considering shoppers.

Although an attempt has been made to design a mall-specific inventory rather than a general inventory of items, the scales use items adapted from various international studies. Hence, all of them might not be adequately reflective of Bangladeshi consumers.

Further, during the data collection period, it occurred to the researchers that family income was not accurately reported by the respondents. The well-to-do respondents were under-reporting their income while others were inflating theirs. Lastly, the study was solely based on consumer insights; expert opinion was not taken into account.

Future Research Scope

The findings of this study could be an outset to an understanding of the dynamics of the retail market in Bangladesh and further span to cross-country study with other countries of South Asian region. Further research is required to understand the mall phenomena better. In this study, an attempt was made to collect a decent sample size; however, as the consumers are growing exponentially and the retail sector in Bangladesh is burgeoning rapidly, more catchments belonging to the major metro-cities of Bangladesh, could be taken into account in further works. The role of price could be incorporated in further study. The nature of price perception, its relationship with customer's patronage and its role vis-à-vis that of the tenant mix could be called for analysis. In order to draw the full market potential, malls may also need to consider how the medium and low volume spending shoppers can be converted into heavier shoppers. An exhaustive media plan could be devised upon examining different segments' media habits, which will result in more focused promotional efforts and further endeavour in making the shopping experience remarkable.

The study reveals that safety does not have any significant impact on positive shopping experience. Researchers should test this hypothesis in other countries for further verification. This could be a contextual factor which may vary from country to country.

The atmospherics is gradually gaining momentum in enhancing mall shopping experience in Bangladesh and entertainment-seeking motive is being held as a vital attractiveness dimension for malls. Hence, it may be propounded that Bangladeshi shoppers have begun to place importance on hedonic or pleasure-seeking motives over utilitarian motives from their mall visits.

This study is a cross-sectional one. To better gauge the users' perceptions regarding mall shopping, future studies can thus put forward longitudinal surveys over different time periods. In addition to this, the lacuna between the customer's expectation and the services they are offered can pave the way for further research. Simultaneously, taking other behavioural dimensions into consideration and conjecturing them as independent variables, future research could also possibly develop a model of mall patronage.

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