

Mixed use shopping mall as an attractiveness on customer behaviors in Bangkok, Thailand

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Keywords

Customer Behavior, Mixed Use Shopping Mall, Retail Business, Shopping Mall, Thailand

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to examine and identify the variables that are important to customers while visiting shopping malls. It provides updated information to shopping mall managers and property developers about customers' shopping preferences in Northern Bangkok. The primary data was collected in a two-part questionnaire. Part I included details about the demographic characteristics of respondents, and Part II contained a set of 29 questions to determine the level of agreement, in a five-point Likert scale, on reasons that motivate customers to choose a particular shopping mall. Of the 420 questionnaires distributed in the area, 395 were completed and used for data analysis.

Six critical conclusions were generated from the factor analysis. Mean rankings began with convenience, promotion, privileges, one-stop shopping, professionalism, and the combination of free services, and facility safety. One-stop shopping, convenience and free services/safe facilities were the top three critical factors that significantly influenced consumers' visiting frequency and time spent per visit at shopping malls. Customers more often visited and spent more time at malls that provided multiple services (mixed-use malls). These tendencies increased for the malls that offered additional free services, such as a free shuttle bus. A mall manager or property developer's principal tasks are to fulfill customers' overall needs, particularly their physiological needs (including hedonic ones), and to differentiate their products and services from those of competitors, to induce customers to make actual purchases.

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Introduction

A modern shopping mall is a complex of different merchandisers. It normally contains interconnecting walkways that allow customers to move easily from one store to another. In the 19th century, a rapid, global growth of shopping malls occurred. In the late 20th century, shopping malls began to incorporate, featuring entertainment zones, movie theaters, and restaurants. More recently, consumer technology and e-commerce have allowed malls to provide experiences beyond shopping. Thus, malls are no longer primarily about shopping; they also serve such purposes as social interaction, excursions, and works and even official meetings. This trend has occurred globally but is especially noticeable in the USA, where a number of pioneering shopping mall concepts arose. Updated shopping malls now provide ancillary entertainment options such as ski slopes, go-karts, balloon rides, bowling, underwater aquariums, theme parks, and dinosaur museums, among others.

The Thai Shopping Mall Association (TSCA) combined 13 Thai retail companies into Shopping Mall 4.0, an initiative that connects consumers digitally, with the goal of becoming the largest mall operator in Asia. One strategy is to create a positive consumer experience. New layout designs and spaces are considered to serve and support every generation of mall visitor. Various zonings are tailored to the needs of specific consumer segments. Through technology, customers now obtain customized retail offerings. New mall designs also address environmental issues by incorporating "green" building concepts, electric cars, and public transportation. In 2018, Thai retail industry growth was approximately 3.3% to 3.5%, as compared with 3.2% in 2017 and 2.97% in 2016. Thirty percent of retail businesses are in

Bangkok, where they boosted growth. From 2019 onwards, various types of retail businesses are expected to develop and open in Bangkok, for example: BT5bn shopping center, near Suvarnabhumi International Airport, Central Village with 160,000 square metres; Gateway Bangsue, with an 11-story community mall; EmSphere; One Bangkok; and Bangkok Mall, the largest mall in Southeast Asia. Property developers and mall managers seek to improve the effectiveness of marketing programs to meet consumer demands in specific areas. Updated and specific consumer behavior information will support their strategies and decision-making.

Literature Review

Although many marketing studies have investigated consumer behavior in stores and shopping malls, findings have varied due to differences in cultures and social lifestyles. Wijnen, Kemperman, and Janssen (2012) noted that shopping mall attributes should be adapted to national consumer lifestyles and cultures. Decades ago, customers segregated product purchases by location. For instance, they did not normally purchase meat, fresh fruit, or vegetables where they bought dry groceries, even though all these goods may have been available in one store (Applebaum, 1951). Nowadays, however, customers look to purchase goods in one place, where a variety of venues can save time and energy. The malls cater to customers' time constraints by offering one-stop shopping (El-Adly, 2007; Jacobs et al., 2010). Furthermore, having a supermarket in a mall is critical to satisfying customer needs. Sharma (2012) opined that Indian customers are concerned about the location of shopping malls. The distance between a shopping mall and workplace or home is an important factor. Sehgal and Khanna (2017) indicated that the existence of convenient operating hours represents another critical factor that influenced customer purchase decisions in retail stores in Ludhiana. Essential considerations for mall management include offering late hours at supermarkets, as well as the ability to compare different prices, models, or brands in one place (El-Adly and Eid, 2015).

Wakefield and Baker (1998) wrote that the atmosphere and the variety of tenants motivated customers to stay longer in shopping malls. Khaola and Ramokepa (2015), who studied customer behavior at shopping malls in Maseru, Lesotho, found that an excellent variety of stores was directly related to customers' positive attitudes. They also noted that malls should support the needs of all family members and friends by incorporating extra amenities, such as video games, movies, or window shopping. LeHew and Wesley (2007) found that customers at two new malls in Bloomington, USA, were more satisfied with the overall convenience of shopping malls offering a variety of retail stores, food options, and entertainment facilities. Parakhonyak and Titova (2018) give supportive evidence that customers might prefer visiting malls located in a peripheral area that offers a wide range of prices and a variety of products. Overall, customers enjoy the fashionable merchandise available in shopping malls, which offer unique and high-quality products, including brand-name items (Litirell et al., 1994; Costello and Fairhurst, 2002). The more free time customers have, the more time they will spend in a shopping mall and the more they will exhibit impulsive buying behaviors. Various payment methods are considered to serve them (Nova and Aditya, 2018).

Facilities and special services at malls also attract customers. Most customers drive to shopping malls, because many malls cannot be accessed by public transportation. Shopping malls generally provide ample parking space (Sharma, 2012). Malls also generally offer comfortable seats in the rest areas for shoppers and family members (El-Adly, 2007). Vipul and Mahendra (2009) noted that facilities or customer services are important to consumers, while pricing and sales promotions are critical reasons why Indian shoppers do business at shopping malls. Danziger (2005) pointed out that even luxury customers, who care less about saving money, like to purchase items on sale, because it is a sensible decision that makes them feel good.

The relationship between shopping mall factors and customer behavior is still debatable and is discussed in different areas. The shopping malls located in Bangkok and its periphery is rapidly growing. This study aims to determine the important variables by analyzing the patterns of shopping mall visits of customers in Northern Bangkok, Thailand. The research hypotheses are:

H1: Critical factors are positively associated with the frequency of visits to shopping malls.

H2: Critical factors are positively associated with the amount of time that customers spend visiting shopping malls.

Research Methodology

This study uses both primary and secondary data. The secondary data was collected from various sources, such as journals, articles, and websites. In addition, 20 customers and academic professors were interviewed, and their answers were used as scaled items in the questionnaires, which validated their content. The primary data was collected in a two-part questionnaire. Part I included details about the demographic characteristics of respondents, and Part II contained a set of 29 questions to determine the level of agreement, in a five-point Likert scale, on variables used when choosing a particular shopping mall. The reliability of measurement and the internal consistency of reliability were assessed with Cronbach's Alpha. In this research, the Cronbach's Alpha for research variables was an acceptable 0.974 (higher than 0.70).

Because the total population was unknown, non-probability sampling and random quota sampling were utilized in the statistical analysis. The samples of this study were divided into two groups, weekday shoppers and weekend shoppers, which ensured the degree of representativeness of all the strata in the population. Four hundred twenty questionnaires were distributed in areas of Northern Bangkok. Half of these questionnaires were collected during the week, and the other half were collected on weekends, from 11:00 AM to 9:00 PM. A total of 395 questionnaires were completed and used in the data analysis. Hypotheses were tested using a regression analysis.

Findings

Over sixty percent (n=250) of respondents were female and 36.70 percent (n=145) were male. The respondents' age groups were as follows: 47.10% were between 21 and 30 years of age, 26.30% were between 31 and 40, and 11.40% were between 41 and 50. In addition, 5.60% of the respondents were between 50 and 60 years old, 60.80% were under 21, and 2.8% were over 61. Table 1 illustrates that 43.3% of respondents visited shopping malls 3 or 4 times a month, with 34.7% (n=137) of the respondents spending an average of 2 hours per visit.

Table 1: Customer Behaviors

Visits Per Month	Amount (n=395)	Percent	Shopping Hours Per Visit	Amount (n=395)	Percent
1-2	94	23.8	1	35	8.9
3-4	171	43.3	2	137	34.7
5-6	64	16.2	3	121	30.6
7-8	16	4.1	4	42	10.6
9-10	3	8.0	5	60	15.2
Above 11	47	11.9			

To explain the factors impacting customer behavior at shopping malls in Thailand, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted, using a principal components' analysis with varimax rotation. As illustrated in Table 2, the analysis yielded six distinct factors, which accounted for 64.05% of the variance extracted. Specific areas were open for 24 hours, and professional traffic and car parking staff generated a factor loading below 0.50 as a cut-off for acceptable loadings.

Table 2: Results of the Factor Analysis

Rotated Component Matrix Component							
Item Code	Description	Factors					
		Privileges	Professionalism	Free Services and Safe Facilities	Convenience	Promotion	One-Stop Shopping
V1	Personal advice from sales personnel	0.786					
V2	Parking zones for ladies	0.760					
V3	Supportive services for customers	0.731					

V4	Member privileges	0.713					
V5	Safety policies in facilities and a friendly environment	0.667					
V6	Places for family activities or meetings with friends	0.633					
V7	Attractive and customized products and services	0.582					
V8	Specific areas open 24 hours a day	0.403					
V9	Pleasant sales personnel		0.699				
V10	Sales personnel maintains relationships with customer by providing support		0.690				
V11	Professional skills and adequate knowledge about products and services		0.684				
V12	Flexible and fast service processing		0.590				
V13	Reasonable prices for products and services		0.533				
V14	Professional traffic and car-parking staff		0.489				
V15	Adequate public seating areas			0.733			
V16	Available free Wi-Fi			0.699			
V17	Free shuttle buses from point to point			0.662			
V18	High facility safety			0.644			
V19	Intelligent Navigator Systems available at car parks			0.521			
V20	Adequate and accessible parking spaces			0.509			
V21	A convenient location				0.741		
V22	Convenient operating hours				0.717		
V23	A variety of shops and services				0.615		
V24	Affordable products and services				0.573		
V25	Readable price tags and brand labels				0.546		
V26	Specific events or sales promotions					0.782	
V27	Loyalty programs for members					0.781	
V28	Attractive, new seasonal products or services					0.542	
V29	Multiple services under one roof						0.744
Percentage of Value Explained		36.32	9.01	6.59	4.32	4.06	3.76
Cumulative Percentage		36.32	45.34	51.92	56.24	60.30	64.05

Factor 1 – Privileges: Advantages or immunity granted to a particular person or group. Pleasant, personal attention of sales personnel, supportive customer service, attractive and customized products and services, places for family or friends' activities, health and environmental safety, and safe parking zones for ladies.

Factor 2 – Professionalism: For all customers, pleasant sales personnel with professional skills and adequate knowledge of products and services, flexible and fast service processing, and reasonable prices.

Factor 3 – Free Services and Safe Facilities: Adequate public sitting spaces and availability, safe facilities, free Wi-Fi, accessible parking spaces using an Intelligent Navigator System, and free shuttle buses.

Factor 4 – Convenience: Convenient location and operating hours, a variety of shops and services, affordable products and services on shelves with price tags and brand labels.

Factor 5 – Promotion: Attractive products, including seasonal ones, advertised events or sales promotions, and membership loyalty programs.

Factor 6 – One-Stop Shopping: Multiple services under one roof.

Reliability analysis was assessed by Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, which ranged from 0.753 to 0.879, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Reliability and Mean Rankings of Dimensions

Factors	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Position in Mean Rank
Privileges	7	0.879	3.827	3
Professionalism	5	0.871	3.686	5
Free Services and Safe Facilities	6	0.835	3.520	6
Convenience	5	0.805	4.087	1
Promotions	3	0.753	3.944	2
One-Stop Shopping	1	NA	3.800	4

Mean:

5=extremely important 4=important 3=moderately important 2=unimportant 1=extremely unimportant

Customers mainly emphasized convenience, promotion, and privileges. In terms of convenience, customers were concerned about location, operating hours, the variety of shops and services, and the availability of affordable products and services with readable price tags and brand labels. Regarding promotion, customers looked for attractive, seasonal products or services, sale promotions and events, and membership loyalty programs. Privilege is one of the three critical factors that attract customers, who look for pleasant, personal attention of sales personnel, supportive customer service, attractive and customized products and services, specific places for family or friends' activities, health and environmental safety, and ladies' parking zones. Lastly, the facilities should be environmentally friendly and beneficial to customers' health.

Six critical factors related to shopping malls in Northern Bangkok are illustrated in Table 4. Table 4 tests these hypotheses on consumer purchasing behavior by employing regression analyses.

Table 4: Results of Hypothesis Testing (H1/H2)

Factors	Sig. (2-tailed) Hypothesis1 Visits Per Month	Sig. (2-tailed) Hypothesis2 Time Spent Per Visit
Privileges	0.143	0.000*
Professionalism	0.513	0.002*
Free Services and Safe Facilities	0.008*	0.000*
Convenience	0.050*	0.000*
Promotions	0.817	0.043*
One-Stop Shopping	0.010*	0.000*

*Statistically significant at $P < 0.05$.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that three factors are positively associated with the frequency of visiting a mall: (1) free services and safe facilities (Sig.=0.008, $P < 0.05$); (2) one-stop shopping (Sig.=0.010, $P < 0.05$); and (3) general convenience (Sig.=0.050, $P < 0.05$). To consider these variables' relationships, their coefficients are illustrated in Table 5. Shopping malls with multiple services were visited more frequently by customers ($\beta = 0.130$, Sig.=0.010, $P < 0.05$). Regarding free services and safe facilities, a positive relationship existed between free shuttle bus service and frequency of visits ($\beta = 0.220$, Sig.=0.002, $P < 0.05$). By contrast, a high level of facility safety negatively affected the frequency of visits ($\beta = 0.178$, Sig.=0.008, $P < 0.05$). Lastly, the relationships among all five convenience variables (operating hours, location, variety, affordable products, and readable product price tags or brand labels) all increased the frequency of shopping mall visits.

Table 5: Coefficients of Variables with Significant Factors (H1)

	Standardized Coefficients(β)	T	Sig.
Factor: One-Stop Shopping			
Multiple services under one roof	0.130	2.594	0.010*
Factor: Free Services and Safe Facilities			
Free shuttle buses from point to point	0.220	3.159	0.002*
High facility safety	-0.178	-2.659	0.008*
Factor: Convenience			
Convenient operating hours	0.106	1.533	0.126
A convenient location	0.081	1.286	0.199
A variety of shops and services	-0.064	-1.000	0.318
Affordable products and services	0.060	1.001	0.318
Readable price tags and brand labels	-0.007	-0.115	0.908

*Statistically significant at $P < 0.05$

Hypothesis 2 predicts factors that are positively associated with the amount of time spent per visit at shopping malls. This hypothesis is supported by all six critical factors: privileges, professionalism, free services and safe facilities, convenience, promotions, and one-stop shopping (Sig. = 0.000, 0.020, 0.000, 0.000, 0.000, and 0.043, respectively).

Table 6: Coefficients of Variables with Significant Factors (H2)

	Standardized Coefficients(β)	T	Sig.
Factor: Privilege			
Safe parking zones for ladies	0.137	1.977	0.049*
Factor: Professionalism			
Reasonable prices of products and services	-0.180	-3.055	0.002*
Factor: Free Services and Safe Facilities			
Adequate and accessible parking spaces	-0.157	-2.404	0.017*
Free shuttle buses from point to point	0.233	3.579	0.000*
Factor: Convenience			
A convenient location	-0.178	-2.873	0.004*
A variety of shops and services	0.198	3.131	0.002*
Factor: Promotion			
Attractive, new seasonal products or services	0.114	2.045	0.042*
Factor: One-Stop shopping			
Multiple services under one roof	0.180	3.623	0.000*

*Statistically significant at $P < 0.05$

To consider the relationship between these variables, their coefficients and significant factors are illustrated in Table 6. Safe parking zones for ladies was the most important privilege factor relating to time spent per visit at shopping malls ($\beta = 0.137$, Sig. = 0.049, $P < 0.05$). Professionalism and reasonable prices for products and services were negatively related ($\beta = -0.180$, Sig. = 0.002), as were free services and safe facilities, adequate and accessible parking spaces ($\beta = -0.157$, Sig. = 0.017), and location convenience ($\beta = -0.178$, Sig. = 0.004). A positive relationship was found between time per visit and free shuttle buses ($\beta = 0.233$, Sig. = 0.000), variety of shops and services at the mall, and attractive, new seasonal products or services ($\beta = 0.114$, Sig. = 0.042).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examines numerous variables and identifies factors important to customers at shopping malls in Northern Bangkok. Hypotheses regarding these factors are proposed. The main results are summarized as follows:

Just over sixty percent (63.30%) of the respondents were female; most respondents were between 21 and 30 years of age, followed by the 31-to-40 and 41-to-50-year-old age groups; and 67.30% of the

respondents were single. Full-time employees are the top rank occupation of respondents. Almost half (44.30%) received a monthly income between 15,001 and 25,000 Baht, and a comparable proportion of respondents (43.3%) visited a shopping mall 3 or 4 times a month, spending an average of 2 hours per visit.

Six critical factors were generated from factor analysis. The mean rankings of dimensions encompassed convenience, promotion, privileges, one-stop shopping, professionalism, and the combination of free services and safe facilities.

Convenience placed first rank in mean ranking of what attracted customers to shopping malls. Free services/safe facilities were ranked sixth.

One-stop shopping, convenience, and free services/safe facilities were the only critical factors that significantly influenced the visiting frequency and time spent per visit at shopping malls.

To satisfy customers, shopping mall developers or managers should emphasize one-stop shopping. Since customers prefer multiple services under one roof, they will visit mixed-use malls more often and spend more time there. While the primary reason for visiting a shopping mall is to buy something, people also enjoy other services at malls, including restaurants, coffee shops, banks, tutorial schools, spas, beauty salons, and other amenities. New and emerging businesses in shopping malls include ski slopes, go-karts, balloon rides, underwater aquariums, theme parks, dinosaur walk museums, and co-working spaces. Previous finding suggested that shopping intention driven by hedonic needs is not likely to influence Thai shopping behavior significantly. They may choose to visit the mall less frequently but stay relatively longer (Cai and Shannon, 2012). Shopping mall developers or managers need to understand and study the trends and specific categories of products and services that fulfill their customers' needs. One recent study found that people profile malls based on the social mix of their customers (Beiró et al., 2018). Other advantages of malls are free services, such as shuttle buses, as well as convenient locations, long operating hours, and the large variety of products and services offered. One disadvantage is the inability to negotiate prices, a practice enjoyed by Thai people.

Some shopping mall attributes, such as free services and safe public areas, may exceed customer expectations and thus may be seen as an additional attraction. Mubi and Karrholm (2018) noted that public zones in malls that are maintained in good condition promote and sustain attendance by urban customers. While safety standards should be incorporated, the more that are set, the fewer the number of customer visits. Without a rapid transit system serving Northern Bangkok, most people access shopping malls by car, so the distance from home to shopping malls is not a key factor, when customers decide to go to higher social mixing mall. The availability of parking facilities generally causes customers to spend less time at malls (Sharma, 2012; LeHew and Wesley, 2007). Nevertheless, safe parking zones, which are particularly important for females, do increase the amount of time they spend at malls. Finally, mall managers should occasionally offer new seasonal products or services, to induce customers to stay longer in shopping malls.

Originality

This study adds value to the literature and provides empirical evidence from rapidly developing malls in Thailand. It provides insight about which critical factors are associated with customer behavior at shopping malls. By highlighting the mixed-use shopping mall, the study benefits retailers and mall managers in general, specifically those interested in property development.

Practical Implications

The findings indicate that stores and services in shopping malls serve customer needs, including hedonic ones. With property development focusing more on mixed-use spaces, mall managers and retailers should build strategies to induce customers to make actual purchases.

Research Limitations and Further Studies

Data samples were obtained from the residents of Northern Bangkok, Thailand. This limits the generalizability of the results. Additional contexts or countries should be included in future studies. In-depth interviews or customer observations should be investigated for insightful responses for comparison purposes. Lastly, use of related facilities or of the Internet of Things to induce customers to spend more time and money at shopping malls is another potential area for further research.

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