



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN SHOPPING MALLS : AN EXPLORATORY
STUDY AMONGST STUDENTS FROM INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER
LEARNING AT KLANG VALLEY***

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**CONSUMER
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Consumer behavior in shopping malls : an exploratory study
amongst students from institutions of higher learning at Klang
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BY

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to examine the behavior of consumers in shopping malls. The consumers in this study are students from Institutions of Higher Learning at Klang Valley. The students are chosen because they have a strong purchasing power and high potential target market.

Specifically, the study investigates the shopping habits and orientations of the shoppers among the students. Amongst others the study examines the frequency of mall visits, the number of different malls visited over a period of time, the monthly expenditure spent in shopping malls and the average time spent during mall visit. Differences in shopping orientations across age groups of the student are also analyzed.

The non-probability sampling procedure by convenience is used in this study. The five-page of questionnaires is distributed to one hundred and thirty two students from the Public and Private Institutions of Higher Learning.

The data obtained from the respondents were analyzed using frequency analysis, percentage, mean score and cross tabulation.

The results showed that factors like aesthetic, exploration, social, and convenience were the main reasons why students patronize shopping malls. Students considered the interior design of the mall as the most important reason for visiting shopping mall. The students also enjoyed the mall environment, explore new things, socializing with friend, and the variety of products offered.

The developers of shopping malls should ensure that they could offer numerous futuristic attractions of facilities, which will provide a very conducive and pleasant environment for shoppers to socialize and explore the mall. In addition, those facilities must be able to attract all range of age group from the young towards the older, as their requirements are difference.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti gelagat pengguna ketika berkunjung ke pusat membeli belah. Pengguna didalam kajian ini adalah pelajar di institusi pengajian tinggi di Lembah Kelang. Pelajar di pilih kerana mereka mempunyai kuasa membeli yang tinggi dan merupakan pelanggan yang berpotensi.

Secara khusus, kajian ini cuba mengenal pasti kelakuan dan orientasi pelajar yang datang ke pusat membeli belah. Antara perkara yang di selideki adalah seperti kekerapan mengunjungi pusat membeli belah, jumlah pusat membeli belah yang di kunjungi sejak sebulan yang lalu, wang yang dibelanjakan di pusat membeli belah dan masa yang dihabiskan ketika berada di pusat membeli belah. "Orientasi Pembelian" antara umur pelajar yang berbeza turut di analisa.

Kaedah soal selidek digunakan dalam kajian ini. Soalan berkaitan dengan kajian setebal lima mukasurat telah digunakan untuk mendapatkan pendapat responden. Sebanyak seratus tiga puluh dua pelajar di pusat pengajian tinggi awam dan swasta telah menjawab soalan tersebut. Maklumat yang didapati telah dianalisa menggunakan kekerapan, analisis peratusan, markah purata dan analisis silang.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan pelajar mementingkan ciri-ciri hiasan dalaman pusat membeli belah dan membeli di pusat membeli belah kerana tertarik dengan keunikannya, keselesaan, untuk berjumpa rakan-rakan dan kepelbagaian barangan yang ditawarkan.

Oleh kerana itu, pemaju pusat membeli belah semestinya menawarkan kemudahan yang moden dan terkini yang mana ia akan memberikan suasana yang selesa untuk pengunjung menjelajah pusat membeli belah. Oleh kerana keperluan setiap pengunjung pusat membeli belah adalah berbeza, kemudahan tersebut semestinya dapat menarik perhatian semua golongan yang terdiri dari pelbagai kategori umur, bangsa, status dan pekerjaan.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 General

This chapter will present a general idea of the project. It will emphasize the importance of understanding in consumer shopping behavior specifically among the students from the Institutions of Higher Learning at the Klang Valley. The detail of the study will be discussed as below:

- Background of the study
- Problem statement
- Objectives of the study
- Importance of the study
- Scope of the study
- Organization of the study
- Theoretical framework of the study

1.1 Consumer Shopping Behavior

The field of consumer behavior has experienced a dynamic period of growth over the past ten years. According to Tauber (1972) in his exploratory study titled 'Why do people shop?', consumer behavior consists of three distinct activities: shopping, buying and consuming. Considerable progress has been achieved in identifying the behavioral

dimensions of buying and a number of theories on buying behavior have been postulated. However, less is known about the determinants of consuming and shopping, which are also of substantial theoretical and managerial importance.

According to Dholakia (1999), shopping is not merely shopping. Shopping trips are made in a variety of context: the motives for shopping for gifts are not the same as the motives for shopping for groceries. The most common episodes are shopping for groceries, household items, clothing and gifts. According to Assael (1987), although related to store choice, shopping behavior is a distinctive form of consumer behavior. For some, says Reid and Brown (1996), it is the prospect of picking up a bargain; for others it provides an opportunity to interact socially with other people; and yet for others, it represents a welcome break from the tedious household routine. Two consumers may shop at the same set of stores for reasons of convenience, courteous help or good décor, but one consumer's attitude to shopping can be totally different from the others. The first consumer may find shopping a burden, something to be done quickly with a minimum of effort. The second consumer may enjoy shopping, particularly the satisfaction of buying a desired item at a bargain price. This consumer does not mind spending time searching for alternatives.

According to Underhill (1999) shopping is more than the simple, dutiful acquisition of whatever is absolutely necessary to one's life. It is more than the "grab and go"- you need corn flakes, you go to the corn flakes, you grab the corn flakes, you pay for the corn flakes and leave. The kind of activity shopping has become today involve the senses-

sight, smell, taste, hearing- as the basis for choosing this or rejecting that. Underhill stressed that virtually all unplanned purchases- and many planned ones, too- come as a result of the shopper seeing, touching, smelling or tasting something that promises pleasure, if not total fulfillment.

Retailers spend large amount of capital creating environments that will attract customers and induce them to spend money. East (1997) said that the result of their work might be measured at an aggregate level, or more individually in terms of shoppers' attitude and motivations. In this study, shoppers' behaviors that are the students, measured in terms of their activities in the mall and their shopping orientations.

Consumers (will be referred to as the students from now) activities in the mall include; among others, buying things, meeting friends, having lunch/dinner, browsing around the shops and making an unplanned purchase. However, consumer-shopping orientations refer to the different reasons why students go to shopping malls and the benefits they seek from visiting shopping malls. Students' activities in the mall and their shopping orientations will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two. Therefore, in this paper, attention is given to the way in which a student, as a shopper, uses and evaluates the retail environment other than purchasing products and services offered in the mall.

1.2 Shopping Malls in Malaysia

The rapid expansion of the Malaysian economy over the last ten years (despite the economic crisis in 1997/98), combined with external economic and social influences have led to a boom in the retail industry. As a result, retail space has been increasing by more than 20% in recent years (Othman & Lim, 1997). Shopping malls could act as growth poles by stimulating further retail and non-retail commercial activities. Recent surveys of retail performances in the Klang Valley and of local retail chain stores indicated that the overall business has improved since the crisis in 1997/98. Surveys of the chain stores in November 1999 showed a general increase in turnover of above ten percent (10%) for most fashion, groceries and convenience categories in the Klang Valley (New Straits Times, 9/9/2000).

In Malaysia, shopping malls have transcended their initial role as an economic activity to become a community center for social and recreational activity. There is an increasing trend of Malaysians shopping for pleasure and spending their leisure time in the shopping malls. A research conducted by Frank Small & Associates found that Malaysian adults (above 18 years old) spent forty eight percent (48%) of their leisure time in shopping centers compared to other activities. Window-shopping is one of the seven leisure activities most often participated by young, urban Malaysian adults especially the students. According to Mary Lee (1995) the biggest population age mix in Malaysia is fall under the age between 18 till 44 years old which is about forty nine percent. It shows

that the consumer under that particular age can be an active consumer as the potential target market.

Moreover, many mall developer have realized how influencing the students towards the successfulness of the business in shopping mall. Therefore the trend is, the shopping mall is built nearby with the Higher Learning Institution such as Mines Shopping mall with the University Putra Malaysia and University Tenaga Nasional, Mid Valley Mega Mall with University Malaya, One Utama with College Damansara Utama and College Bandar Utama, Bangsar Shopping Complex with Help Institutes. These examples are the evidence that the students have played a crucial factors to determine the location of Shopping mall because they too have the strong purchasing power.

1.3 Problem Statement

Business always target working people as their target market. However they have forgotten that the increasing numbers of students in Institutions of Higher Learning are getting more important. The students in the Klang Valley nowadays are able to spend due to the increase of allowance from their parents. Generally the students will receive pocket money from parents and their study loan, which can total up to one thousand ringgit per month. That amount definitely will provide comfortable lifestyle to them.

In addition, the competition between malls and newer forms of shopping centers has led mall developers and management to consider alternative methods to build excitement with customers. Mall managers or marketing managers are becoming aware of the need

to differentiate themselves from their competitors in order to attract and gain consumers' patronage.

Most studies have only looked at shopping in general or have focused on single stores such as retailers. Research has not adequately addressed shopping behavior in the context of larger scale retail institutions such as mall. Therefore, mall managers are seldom aware of the shopping orientations that bring customers to malls.

With the growing number of modern shopping malls in Malaysia, it is obvious that the competition in this industry is increasingly severe. In order to maintain market share, shopping mall management must be able to understand the needs and wants of the consumers especially the growing students market. Marketing strategies can then be formulated to deliver the needs of this particular target market. The more a mall's products and services offerings satisfy this students needs and meet their expectations, the more likely the mall will induce the existing customers' loyalty.

Why do students go to a mall in the first place? The most obvious answer being "because they need to purchase something" – can be deceptive and reflects a marketing myopia that management must avoid. This answer only considers the product that people may purchase and is but a partial and insufficient basis for behavioral explanations. It implicitly assumes that the shopping motive is a simple function of the buying motive. In real, people's behavior toward shopping is a function of many variables, some of which are unrelated to the actual buying of products. Therefore, a better understanding of

students shopping behavior requires the consideration of their shopping orientations and the activities they engage in while inside the mall.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.41 General Objective:

The overall objective of this study is to examine students shopping behavior toward shopping malls. For the purpose of this study, students shopping behavior will be identified in the context of their activities in the shopping mall and the shopping orientations.

1.42 Specific objectives:

The specific objectives in this study are as follows:

1. To identify the shopping habits of the students.

The habits considered in this study includes; the time spent in the mall, the number of different stores visited during a normal trip to the mall, the number of different malls visited by the respondents in the previous 30 days, frequency of visiting shopping malls and the pattern of monthly expenditure.

2. To identify the students' shopping orientation in the shopping malls.

The shopping orientations employed in this paper are based on the studies done by Tauber (1972) and Bloch, Ridgway and Dawson (1994). The authors identify twenty-seven shopping orientations that draw consumers to shopping malls. By using factor analysis, the twenty-seven items are group into seven dimensions. The dimensions are: aesthetic, escape, flow, exploration, role enactment, social and convenience.

3. To compare between the various categories of the age groups of respondents with respect to shopping orientations.

4. To identify the shopping activities that students are engaged in while inside the mall.

The activities considered in this study includes; unplanned purchase, watching movies, having haircut/facial treatment, dining and socializing with friends and family.

5. To identify the relationship between students shopping habits and respondents' demographic variables such as the age, gender, and monthly income.

1.5 The Importance of the Study

As the students are getting stronger in their purchasing power, the knowledge of their activities and orientations in patronizing shopping malls can provide mall management with clues on strategy to attract the student and obtaining more market share. Understanding students' activities in the mall and their orientations can help predict

target consumer behavior, improve mall environment, upgrade mall facilities and create something appealing to their desire and interest. Basically the important of this study are describe below:

1. Consumer analysis as a foundation of Marketing Management. It assists managers to:

- Design the marketing mix
- Segment the market place
- Position and differentiate products
- Perform an environmental analysis
- Develop market research studies

2. Play an important role in the development of public policy

Public policy is the development of laws and regulations that impact consumers in the market place. In its legislative, regulatory, and judicial roles, the federal government often deals with consumer issues.

3. Provides three types of information;

- A consumer orientation
- Facts about human behavior
- Theories to guide the thinking process

1.6 Scope of the Study

The project paper will determine consumer behavior toward shopping malls. The consumers in this study are amongst the students from Institutions of Higher Learning at Klang Valley. For the purpose of this study, consumer behavior is studied in the form of students shopping orientations (For example; social, convenience and aesthetic) and students activities inside the mall (e.g. dining, watching movie and socializing with friends).

1.7 Organization of the Study

Chapter Two will contain the critical review of the literature related to this topic.

Chapter Three will glance into the methods of Data Collection and Analysis used in this study, which include data collection method, questionnaire design and sampling procedure. This chapter also explains the statistical analysis that will be used to test the study.

Chapter Four will highlight the results and discussion of the study. It will also include the frequency test, mean score and the cross-tab analysis used to analyze the findings of this study.

Chapter Five will be the recommendations of the study. This chapter will put forward suggestions for mall management to improve their understanding on students' behavior toward shopping malls and thus, enable them to improve their market share. It will also include suggestions for future research and limitations of this study.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the earlier studies done by Tauber (1972) and Bloch, Ridgway and Dawson (1994). According to Tauber (1972), it implicitly assumes that the shopping motive is a simple function of the buying motive. Consumer motive for shopping (DEPENDENT variable) is a function of many (INDEPENDENT) variables, some of which are unrelated to the actual buying of products. It is maintained that an understanding of shopping motives requires the consideration of satisfactions which shopping activities provide as well as the utility obtained from the merchandise that may be purchased.

Tauber (1972) and Bloch, Ridgway and Dawson (1994) has undertaken an exploratory study to determine some reasons why people shop and categorized the responses into a number of hypothesized motives for shopping, classified (ex post) as either personal or social. A number of these motives that he found do not relate to purchasing interest. Those motives are:

- Role Enactment (Role Playing) – Many activities are learned behaviors, traditionally expected or accepted as part of a certain position or role in society such as a mother, housewife, husband, or student. A person internalizes these behaviors as “required” and is motivated to participate in the expected activities. For example, grocery shopping is a customary activity of the housewife.
- Escape – Shopping can offer an opportunity for diversion from the routine life thus represents a form of recreation. It can provide free family entertainment that

is available without the necessity of formal dress or preplanning. The common term “browsing” and the phenomenon of masses strolling through shopping mall reinforce the belief that shopping is a national pastime. Indoor shopping malls are in an advantageous position to encourage this activity through exhibits.

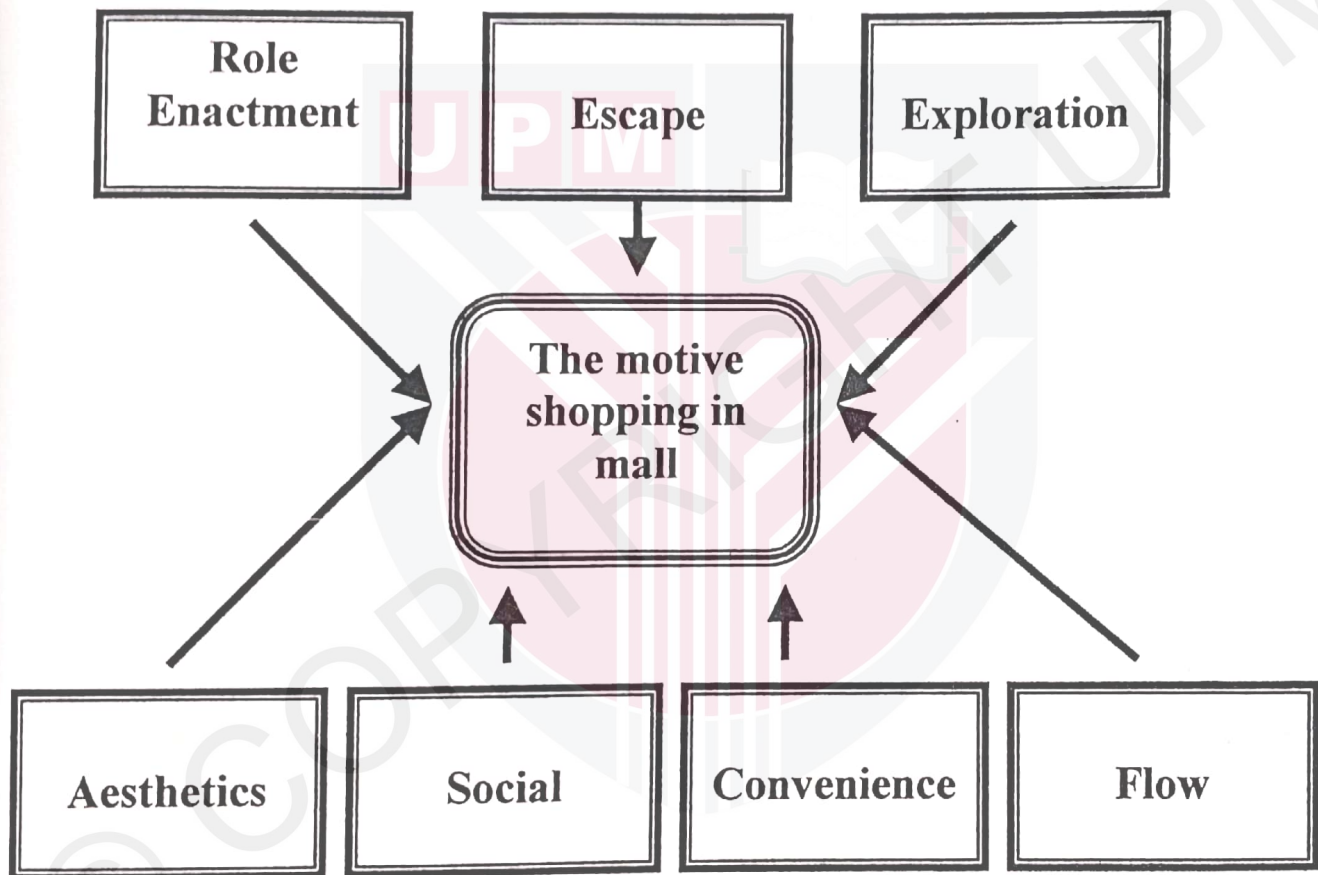
- Exploration – Many people are interested in learning about new trends in fashion, styling, or product innovation. While such learning may take place with or without a purchase, a certain segment of shoppers for each product category is more prone to buying new items. Stores that are trend conscious may appeal to these innovators.
- Aesthetics – Retailers provide many potential sensory benefits for shoppers. Consumers browse through a store looking at the merchandise and are either trying it on or trying it out. The sound can also be important because a “noisy” environment creates a different image than one which is characterized by silence or soft background music. Even scene may be relevant for instance; store may possess a distinctive odor of perfume or of prepared food. Nevertheless the gestalt of the shopping environment may influence a consumer’s decision to shop in a specific mall.
- Social – In urban environments, shopping can provide the opportunity for a social experience outside the home (e.g., seeking new acquaintances or meeting those opposite sex). Some shopping trips may result in direct encounters with friends.
- Convenience – The likelihood of going shopping has probably increased overtime with changes in the concept of convenience. Shopping convenience would be determined by “the spatial juxtapositions of the greatest number of retail and

nonretail attractors.” Because many consumers spend relatively little time at home, a definition of convenience that uses the home as the focal point may be misleading. The existence of modern transportation and the availability of increasing amounts of discretionary time serve to expose people to many shopping clusters while in transit to their job, or social and recreational activities.

- Flow - Bloch, Ridgway and Dawson (1994) describe as a pleasurable state of absorption that is associated with losing track of time. In some cases, malls resemble Las Vegas casinos where consumers become relatively isolated from cues relating to time and weather. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), flow is a rare and desirable state. Thus, one may speculate that the achievement of flow while in a mall may encourage continuation of those who are enthusiastic about shopping in mall.

As this study is partly a replication of the study done by Tauber (1972) and Bloch, Ridgway and Dawson (1994), we propose seven independent variables that could influence the motive of shopping in mall. The conceptual model used in this study is shown as below:

Figure 1



Source: Adapted Tauber (1972) and Bloch, Ridgway and Dawson (1994)

1.8 Hypotheses

Based on the model proposed by Tauber (1972) and Bloch, Ridgway and Dawson (1994) several hypotheses were formulated.

According to Tauber (1972), many activities are learned behaviors, traditionally expected or accepted as part of a certain position or role in society such as a mother, housewife, husband, or student. A person internalizes these behaviors as “required” and is motivated to participate in the expected activities. For example, grocery shopping is a customary activity of the housewife. Attempts to eliminate “food shopping” through home delivery and telephone order have, to date, been relatively unsuccessful. Apparently, the process of grocery shopping has positive utility for a large segment of women who view it as an integral part of their role. Therefore, we hypothesize that,

Hypothesis 1

Role Enactment factor positively influence the motive shopping in the mall.

Bloch, Ridgway and Dawson (1994), referred to mall as a relief of boredom and escape from routine. According to Graham (1988), malls are frequently used to relieve boredom or loneliness. Malls offer high levels of sensory stimulation and an opportunity to drown out problems. Unlike movies and restaurants, there is no stigma attached to visiting a mall alone. Thus, for many individuals, mall may serve as highly accessible, low cost sites for diversion. This variable also parallels the finding of Tauber (1972) who found that shopping is a boredom reliever for some consumers. Therefore we hypothesize that,

Hypothesis 2

Escape factor positively influence the motive shopping in the mall.

Items loading on this variable captured the perceived enjoyment of exploring new products or stores while in the mall. This dimension tapped consumers' desires for variety or novelty as discussed by a number of authors (Hirschman 1980; Lesser and Jain 1985; Raju 1980). Therefore we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 3

Exploration factor positively influence the motive shopping in the mall.

Aesthetics is an appreciation of the physical design or appearance of the mall. All of the statements loading on this factor referred to an attention to the architectural and interior design elements of malls. This dimension has not been mentioned in previous shopping orientation typologies despite the considerable resources being devoted to retail aesthetics and research evidence indicating the important of atmosphere (Baker 1988; Bitner 1992; Donovan and Rossiter 1982; Grossbart 1990; Kotler 1973). This variable is based on the premise that the built environment of mall may serve as an attraction for those consumers who notice and enjoy attractive spaces. Therefore:

Hypothesis 4

Aesthetics factor positively influence the motive shopping in the mall.

The social motive of shopping resembles those found in nearly all previous shopping orientation typologies (Tauber 1972; Westbrook and Black 1985). It was addressed an enjoyment of socializing with friends and family. Feinberg (1989) suggest that social motives may be particularly strong in the context of malls. Once can argue that compared with free standing stores, malls offer greater opportunities to socialize due to the presence of open spaces, benches, and food courts. Therefore:

Hypothesis 5

Social factor positively influence the motive shopping in the mall.

According to Tauber (1972) the likelihood of going shopping on impulse has probably increased overtime with changes in the concept of convenience. Gravitationalists and behaviorists have traditionally evaluated a mall's attraction power in terms of the number of potential customers within a given radius of the malls or from the viewpoint of the customer's convenience, distance or time traveled from home to that mall. Therefore:

Hypothesis 6

Convenience factor positively influence the motive shopping in the mall.

Csikszentmihalyi's (1975;1990) has described Flow as a pleasurable state of absorption that is associated with losing track of time. It is referred to achieving a flow like psychological state while visiting the mall. In some cases, malls resemble Las Vegas casinos where patrons become relatively isolated from cues relating to time and weather (Kowinsky 1985). If the consumption activity is sufficiently pleasant, the hours may glide by. Although flow has not been specifically mentioned in past work on shopping

orientations, Lesser and Kamal (1991) asked consumers whether shopping makes them feel like they are in “another world”. Therefore we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 7

Flow factor positively influence the motive shopping in the mall.

If the shopping motive is a function of only the buying motive, the decision to shop will occur when the consumer need for particular goods becomes sufficiently strong for them to allocate time, money, and effort to visit a mall.

However, the multiplicities of hypothesized shopping motives suggest that a consumer may also go shopping mall when they need the factors discussed above.

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