Experiential Shopping at the Mall: Influence on Consumer Behaviour

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Shopping malls have become real venues for leisure where consumers amuse themselves while shopping. Their aim is to provide customers a great experience during the shopping trip. In this paper we provide an overview of the existing literature on customer experience at the retailer level and we examine the relationship between the experience lived by consumers during a shopping trip and its derived purchase behavior. We find that consumers who enjoy the shopping experience at the shopping mall will show desirable and profitable behavior for retailers. Overall, this research offers a richer understanding of the nature of consumer behavior for experiential shopping at the mall. The usefulness of this study is discussed for future research and to improve shopping malls strategies.

Keywords: shopping malls, consumer behavior, leisure, entertainment, experiential marketing, retail strategy

Introduction

Shopping centers are growing rapidly throughout the European geography (Gilboa, 2009; ICSC, 2009) both in number and in size. New malls add a wide series of leisure alternatives to their range of products and services as their most outstanding element, to give rise to an entertainment supply, thus becoming true spaces for leisure consumption (Ruiz, Chebat, & Hansen, 2004).

In this environment, it is no longer enough for a retailer, and especially for shopping malls, to operate in a convenient manner by offering consumers broad assortments, low pricing, or understanding the shopping experience as the activity of purchasing goods with the only aim to cover necessities (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003).

"Going shopping" has become a new experience, part of our leisure time and, therefore the excitement and hedonic aspects of retailing are recognized as a key competitive tool for hedonic consumption (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; Lindstrom, 2005b; Heath, Brandt, & Agnes, 2006; Schmitt, 2006; Underhill, 2007). Hedonic consumption has been defined as those facets of behavior that relate to the multi sensory, and emotive aspects of consumption (Holbrook & Hirshman, 1982). This view suggests that consumption is driven by the excitement a consumer experiences during the shopping activity and the criteria for "success" are essentially aesthetics in nature.

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Experience as defined within the realms of marketing involves a personal occurrence with emotional significance and consists in several private events in response of an external motivation affecting the whole human being (Schmitt, 2006). Experiences, though, are different from each other and from one individual to another. Thus, experiential consumption can be primarily hedonic (pleasure seeking, consumption as an end in itself) or instrumental (rational, problem solving, need driven) or a combination of the two (Lofman, 1991). Kwortnik and Ross (2000) stated that the pleasure of consumption can begin before the act of consuming; that is, the consumer feels excitement anticipating consumption and in the experience or browsing, strolling, window shopping and wondering during decision making can take the fun out of it.

The emotional experiences based on buying and entertaining have led to the coining of such terms as "shoppertainment" and "entertailing" (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003).

A major reason why this point of view is interesting for researchers is that consumers who enjoy the shopping experience at the shopping mall will show desirable and profitable behaviors for retailers.

Against this background, the objective of this study is to deepen into the knowledge of consumer purchase behavior in shopping malls and investigate the relationship between the experienced lived during a shopping trip and the consumer behavior—desire to extend the stay in the mall, willingness to return in the future, willingness to drive longer distances to get there and the expenditure increase due to the enjoyment of the experience.

Conceptual Framework

Satisfaction, joy and excitement, on one hand, or annoyance, frustration or sadness, on the other, are some of the emotions which an individual may experience through his/her purchase actions (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; Kwortnik & Ross, 2000).

Traditional decision research assumes that consumer goals conform to a utility construct, what Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) contented as inappropriate for products whose selection and use are based upon satisfying emotional wants, rather than fulfilling utilitarian function. Adding to the above Verhoef et al. (2009) submitted that the customer experience construct is holistic in nature and involves the customer's cognitive, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer and that the experience is created nor only by the elements the retailer can control but also by elements that are outside of the retailer's control as the involvement in shopping. Additionally, customer experience encompasses the total experience, including the search for products, nice environments, delivery of excitement and sensorial stimuli.

The importance of living a positive experience in a commercial environment mainly lies in the influence that this experiences is capable to exert on consumer purchase response and therefore in retailers profitability.

Literature states that consumers who live a positive and full experience at a shopping mall show a clear desire to extend the stay in it and tend to spend more time than that initially planned (Donovan, Rossiter, Marcoolyn, & Nesdale, 1994; Sherman, Mathur, & Belk, 1997; Wakefield & Baker, 1998; Ruiz et al., 2004; Bigné, Andreu, Chumpitaz, & Swaen, 2006). The foregoing results in increased time devoted to buy or browse in shops, independently from the need to purchase any particular item (Wakefield & Baker, 1998; Bigné et al., 2006). Therefore, we raise that:

H1: Experience lived in a mall during the shopping trip exerts a positive effect on the consumer's desire to extend the stay.

A number of studies suggest that it is critical to recognize that a customer holistic experience is not limited to the customer's interaction in the store alone. It is rather influenced by a combination of experiences which

evolve over time, including search of products, new experiences, consumption and after sales phases of the experience (Neslin et al., 2006; Verhoef et al., 2009). Thus, it is important to consider the dynamics of the total experience when studying the customer behavior. Therefore, it is crucial to understand that a customer satisfaction affects future expectations. Current satisfaction scores are strong predictors of future satisfaction scores. This seems to suggest that a pleasurable experience has strong carry over effects.

Excitement, a positive emotional state that consists of high levels of pleasure and arousal (Russell & Prat, 1980), is a key ingredient of the shopping experience for consumers (Dawson, Bloch, & Ridgway, 1990; Sherman et al., 1997; Wakefield & Baker, 1998; Ruiz et al., 2004; Arnold & Reynolds, 2009). Specifically, Yeung and Wyer (2005) showed that consumer appraisals of product images produced emotions-based impression and influenced later evaluation. Thus, the pleasure of consumption can begin before the act of consuming; that is, the consumer has fun anticipating consumption and during decision making takes fun out of it and even influences future intentions or actions (Kwortnik & Ross, 2007; Puccinelly et al., 2009).

Following the rationale: consumers would tend to repeat in the future those experiences which have been pleasurable, we hypothesize that:

H2: Experience lived in a mall during the shopping trip exerts a positive influence on consumer's intention to return in the future.

The choice of a particular shopping mall, among all available possibilities, also requires making a decision regarding the distance one is willing to cover. It is known that moving bears a cost which can be expressed in time, money and/or effort (Dellaert, Arentze, & Timmermans, 2008). As shopping trip decisions are complex in nature (Dellaert, 2008) consumers do not always act driven by functionality and may opt for covering long distances to reach a mall which offers him/her a more complete shopping experience (Bellenger & Korgaonkar, 1980; Kwortnik & Ross, 2007). Based on the previous premises, we raise that:

H3: Experience lived in a mall during a shopping trip exerts a positive influence on the consumer's tendency to cover longer distances, among different available possibilities.

Despite the importance of consumer expenditure during a shopping trip, experiential marketing or even retail academic literature investigating this topic has been limited. Scarce research has concluded that a pleasurable experience during a shopping trip influence directly the amount of money spent and all of them were conducted based on the purchase of a single product (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Sherman et al., 1997).

Recently, some authors (Gavilán, Blasco, & Avello, 2010) have found through a segmentation study that the "total recreational" shopper-those who find the shopping mall and the shopping experience as being very attractive and stimulating-not only reports the experience of shopping as being pleasurable and exciting but also expends a 25% more than other customers. Reasons for this are unplanned purchases due to the pleasurable experience. Therefore we raise that:

H4: Experience lived in a mall during a shopping trip exerts a positive effect on expenditure increase.

Once the previous hypotheses have been raised, the proposed model is put forward.

Method

Sample Description

We selected a quota sample of 350 subjects older than 18 years residents of the metropolitan area of Madrid, based on data from the National Institute of Statistics. The gender composition of the sample was adjusted based on the proportion of customers in malls (AECC). 70% were women and the remainder 30%

were men.

Age was adjusted to population data of individuals over 18. Regarding the day of the week, 60% of interviews were undertaken from Monday through Friday and 40% were undertaken on weekends, according to data provided by AECC.

Surveys were carried out in 8 shopping malls, which were selected as representative of the geographic area under study. The number of surveys performed in each mall was determined according to proportionate allocation in order to take into account the size of the population in each mall's zone of influence. The surveys were conducted in person at the mall exits by professional interviewers.

Variables Measurement

Variables were measured as follows: Excitement was measured with four reflective items adapted from Russell and Pratt (1980). Desire to extend the stay at the mall was measured with two reflective items adapted from Wakefield and Blodget (1994). Intention to return to the mall was adapted from Oliver and Swan (1989). Distance was assessed through indicators which measure the importance of distance when deciding upon the mall the consumer is going to visit adapted from Wakefield and Baker (1998). In order to measure "expenditure increase", the consumers were asked whether they had undertaken higher-than-expected expenditures. This last scale was developed by authors due to the lack of references in the literature.

Table 1

Items Measuring the Constructs—Shopping Mall

Epererience	E1: unexciting/exciting.
	E2: boring/stimulating.
	E3: monotonous/sensational.
	E4: unappealing/appealing.
Stay	S1: I like to stay at this mall as long as possible.
	S2: I will stay longer than planned.
Return	R1: I will return as frequently as possible.
	R2: I will return to this mall soon.
Distance	D1: The distance to the shopping mall is not relevant for me.
	D2: There are malls closer to my house but I prefer to drive to get to my favourite one.
Expenditure	EX1: Today I have spent more money than planned.
	EX2: I often spend more than planned in this shopping mall.

Seven-point Likert and semantic differential scales were used to assess the items contained in measurement scales. Table 1 shows all items.

Results and Discussion

Data analyses were conducted in two phases. First, the factor structure, reliability and validity of the latent constructs in the model were assessed. Subsequently, the parameters of the structural model shown in Figure 1 were estimated.

Confirmatory factor analysis, reliability, and validity: The measurement model with all 5 factors and 12 indicators were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis. A Maximum Likelihood method was used for estimations. Inspection of the model revealed a respectable fit. All fit indexes: Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI) and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) are above recommended

threshold of 0.9. Also the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is low (<0.05).
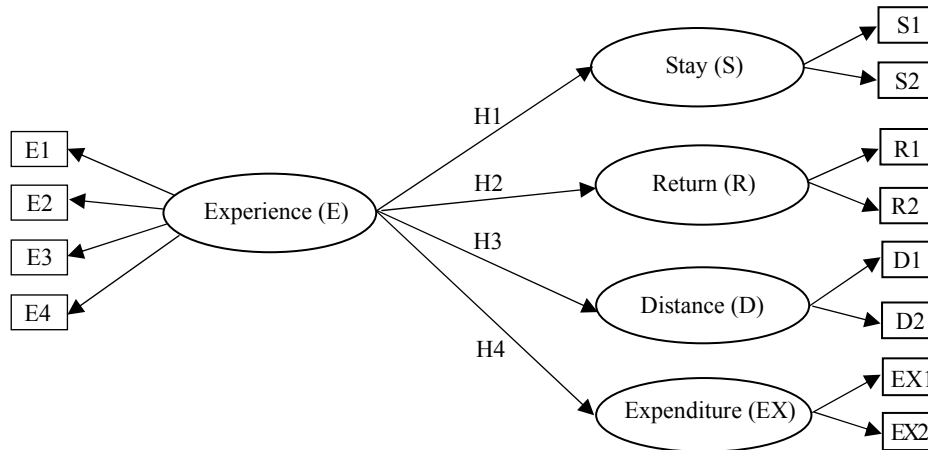

Figure 1. Hypothesized model.

Reliability of constructs: The results obtained suggest that the measurements of the constructs through the chosen items are reliable. Reliability can be assessed from the measurement model by the composite reliability estimates, exceeding the recommended 0.70 threshold for all constructs, extracted variance estimates exceeding the recommended 0.50 threshold, and coefficient alpha estimates ranging from 0.78 and 0.90 (Nunnally, 1978; Fornell & Lacker, 1981; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Therefore, we have evidence of construct reliability. The results obtained are given in Table 2.

Table 2
Results of the Confirmatory Analysis

Construct	Item	Standardized factor loading (standard error)	t	Cronbach alpha	Construct reliability	Extracted variance
Experience	E1	0.805	-	0.90	0.88	0.65
	E2	0.844 (0.059)	17.676			
	E3	0.772 (0.056)	15.647			
	E4	0.798 (0.068)				
Stay	S1	0.845	-	0.83	0.84	0.73
	S2	0.856 (0.072)	13.917			
Return	R1	0.838	-	0.83	0.83	0.71
	R2	0.849 (0.077)	12.750			
Distance	D1	0.774 (0.117)	-	0.78	0.76	0.62
	D2	0.786 (0.116)	7.895			
Expenditure	EX1	0.776	-	0.83	0.77	0.62
	EX2	0.796 (0.0115)	7.407			

Convergent validity: Convergent validity can be assessed from the measurement model by determining whether each indicator's estimated maximum likelihood (λ) loading on the underlying construct is high and significant (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Levy & Varela, 2006). In our study all factor loadings exceed 0.60 and

were highly significant ($p<0.001$).

Discriminant validity: Discriminant validity refers to the fact that each factor or latent variable should represent a different dimension to the rest (Levy & Varela, 2006). Fornell and Larcker (1981) proposed that discriminatory validity exists between two latent variables since the extracted variance (pvc) estimates of the latent dimensions exceed all *phi* correlations between pairs of constructs (see Table 3). The results obtained indicate that the average extracted variance of the latent dimensions, which oscillates between 0.62 and 0.73 is, in all cases, higher than the values taken by the correlations between factors.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations Between Constructs

Construct	Mean	Stand. Dev.	Exper.	Stay	Return	Distan.	Expen.
Experience	5.1	1.1	1				
Stay	3.6	1.4	0.508	1			
Return	4.7	1.1	0.509	0.440	1		
Distance	4.1	1.4	0.494	0.334	0.320	1	
Expenditure	4.7	1.3	0.466	0.315	0.302	0.230	1

Structural model and hypothesis tests: Since the measurement model was found to be satisfactory, the hypothesized structural model proposed in Figure 1 was then estimated. The structural model also reveals a very good fit: Chi square: 125.45 ($p<0.05$). The Chi-square of the model was significant, however, since the chi-square statistic is sensitive to sample size, additional fit measures are recommended (Kaplan, 1990). Other fit measures were calculated: GFI: 0.944, AGFI: 0.912, NFI: 0.940, TLI: 0.950, IFI: 0.963, CFI: 0.962, RMSEA: 0.06 (Levy & Varela, 2006). The standardized path coefficients and *p*-values are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Structural Model: Standardized Path Coefficients

			Coefficient	*p*-value	Hypothesis
H1: Stay	←	Experience	0.678	0.001	Supported
H2: Return	←	Experience	0.466	0.001	Supported
H3: Distances	←	Experience	0.494	0.001	Supported
H4: Expenditure	←	Experience	0.649	0.001	Supported

Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

Results show that shopping malls constitute strong generators of experience for the consumer and in turn, influence their purchase behavior.

These results show the importance of delivering a great experience to visitors of shopping malls. They indicate that the creation of a customer experience seem to be an important flagships of the retail management strategy for shopping malls. These findings become more important as shopping malls continue its growth both in number and in size throughout Europe.

Results suggest that from a strategic perspective an experience-based business can create growth.

We confirm that creating a desirable shopping experience will make consumers extend their stay at the mall. This conclusion clearly suggests that an individual who extends its stays in a shopping mall longer than planned has more possibilities of undertaking a higher number of purchases and therefore spend more during his/her visit. This result also suggests that there are an important number of consumers named "recreational"

that enjoy the shopping experience and take fun out of browsing, strolling or window shopping.

A nice shopping experience will also influence the consumer's intention to return to the mall in the future. This conclusion could be considered as a consequence of the former. Individuals who live a good experience will tend to repeat it in the future. This is also consistent with the literature in the sense that a customer experience involves customers from the very first moment of the search for alternatives to shop to the after-sale phase in which a subject takes a decision to return or not in the future (Kwortnik & Ross, 2007).

A pleasurable experience also has a positive influence on the customer's intention to cover longer distances to arrive to a certain chosen mall. This conclusion allows us affirming that a consumer will be willing to drive or walk to the mall which provides him/her exciting shopping experiences, in spite of disposing of nearer options. This result suggests that the consumer is not motivated by rational or functional reasons, which should lead him/her to minimize trip costs in both time and money, but makes his/her decisions according to emotional aspects, pleasant sensations and looking for memorable experiences.

Of notable interest is the effect of an experience on expenditure. Previous researches (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Sherman et al., 1997) found that excitement and satisfaction exerted a positive influence on expenditure increase but in both cases such intention was referred to the purchase of a particular product (clothes and perfumes). The results obtained by Gavilán et al. (2010) through a cluster analysis is now reinforced ($p<0.05$).

We also gather a series of managerial implications derived from these empirical findings. The explanatory model proposed in the present research is suggested as a useful tool for shopping-mall managers, helping them to better understand consumer behavior and make decisions aimed at generating purchase experiences in keeping with their customers' expectations.

First, it seems clear that creating and exciting atmosphere is vital to achieve desired consumer outcomes. As a first recommendation to generate such atmosphere offering consumers a large supply of different types of shops with a wide range of merchandise could be useful. Cool and trendy brands are a clear attraction for teenagers (Baker & Hayto, 2000). An exciting experience also requires to provide consumers with options of catering and leisure alternatives as exhibitions, cinemas and playgrounds for children, or even thematic areas showing novelties in mobile telephony or automobiles aimed at men who are less prone to go shopping but who visit malls as companion.

Lighting, temperature, background music and attractive scents are easily controllable variables and clearly contribute to create a warm atmosphere where one wishes to stay (Wakefield & Baker, 1998). This recommendation leads us to a future investigation based in the multi-sensory brand experience. Smell, sound, color or touch can reinforce satisfaction and loyalty over time and contribute to offer an emotional, cognitive, sensorial or symbolic values that reinforces the experience (Lindstrom, 2005a; Hultén et al., 2009).

Regarding the location of new openings, it seems that being located in an urban center is not essential, since consumers are willing to move to visit outlets generating the purchase experience they look for. However, it is important to dispose of good and fluent accesses, given that consumers tend to measure the distance covered by their subjective driving time (Kang et al., 2003).

This study is not exempt of limitations. The first limitation of the present work comes from the sample chosen, which corresponds to consumers in the Madrid metropolitan area. Although the Community of Madrid is the one with the highest number of shopping malls per inhabitant in Spain, it would be interesting to compare the results obtained with those of other less populated contexts with less choice options.

Another limitation comes from the fact that we have not contrasted behavior results differentiating

between men and women. In an intuitive manner we believe that they would turn out to be very different and this would provide the model wider perspective.

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