

Womens' mall patronage intentions : impacts of attitude, subjective norm and self-efficacy in an Internationalized Shopping Centre.

The study focuses on an Internationalized Shopping Centre in Malaysia. It is internationalized because it was originally owned and operated by a Malaysian conglomerate (Sunway Group) but was subsequently taken over by a Singaporean based group. The interesting phenomenon about this transformed shopping centre is the business of mergers and acquisitions by localized Singaporean MNCs. Hence, the study examines attributes of a shopping centre and is guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) model as well as literature on shopping centre patronage, seeking to investigate how the three constructs (attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control) would influence womens' intention to patronising a shopping centre. Data to be collected from a shopping centre (Sunway Pyramid) located in the Klang Valley, using the mall intercept method, will only be conducted on two weekends when the shopping centre is usually crowded. It was concluded that despite the constraints (internal and resources) in which women face, they would still have intention to patronise shopping centres and ultimately indulge in impulse purchasing.

Keywords : Shopping centre, patronage intention, Theory of Planned Behaviour.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Shopping is often seen recreational activity, and people usually shop for either personal motives or social motives (Tauber, 1972). Personal motives are usually for self-satisfaction or gratification whilst social motives are to engage with other members in society to achieve a sense of belonging in society. According to Guiry, Magi & Lutz (2006) who studied on the measurement of recreational shopper identity attempted to define recreational shopping as a true leisure activity for some consumers. Bellenger & Korgaonka (1980) as cited by Guiry et. al (2006) defined recreational shoppers as "*those who enjoy shopping as a leisure-time activity.*" This is different from "economic shoppers" who experience no pleasure from the shopping process. As such, some retailers started to adopt some attributes in order to attract shoppers based on their different motivations to shop. In a study of retail activity in Malaysia by Euromonitor (2014), the typical Malaysian especially the younger generation constitute to the majority of shoppers at large scale retailing establishments. Hence, the product as well as the marketing strategy to attract the younger generation should be executed accordingly. The main mode of transportation for this generation is mainly by car so efficient car park facilities is a crucial consideration. Other criteria would include a wide range of shops and products, spacious interior space as well as competitive prices. Malaysia, with a high per-capita income and young population (nearly half of Malaysians are younger than 25), makes it a strong and stable market for shopping. It continues to be a magnet for international players because of its favourable trade promoting government regulations since retail is recognized as an important segment for economic growth. With the many festivities being celebrated and long trading hours in a multi cultural country like Malaysia, retailers or shopping centres bid to attract as many shoppers as possible to capture the impulse buying behaviour of potential shoppers. Retailers and shopping centres do this by creating a conducive shopping environment (hedonic and utilitarian factors) to entice shoppers especially on weekends and public holidays. Shopping primarily is known as a leisure activity amongst consumers. Sex orientation which happens also happens as there exists gender inequalities in decision making and roles between husband and wife. These inequalities are carried on into marriages and reflect the family buying process. In the western world, the roles of men and women are clearly defined. In Malaysia, however, has seen women once married, slip into roles as "housewife and mother" (Sidin, Zawawi, Wong, Busu & Hamzah, 2004). Henceforth, the decision-makers for a family in Malaysia lie in women. Malaysian women exercise considerable spending power even though they did not earn much of the money spent. The education level of women does affect the role in decision making when it comes to important family purchases as well as the types of shopping centres to patronage. Kamaruddin & Mokhlis (2003) in their study of consumer socialization of adolescents in Malaysia found that both male and female demonstrated hedonistic decision-making. Male adolescents were more brand-conscious whereas female adolescents indicated that shopping was more of a recreational and pleasant activity that was fun. Between races, Chinese adolescents were more brand and fashioned conscious in making purchase decisions whereas Malays displayed more social and hedonistic decision-making. Indian adolescents were less impulsive and were more quality conscious. Adolescents who stay in the urban or sub-urban areas in Malaysia were more brand-conscious and novelty / fashion conscious as compared to those living in the rural areas. This means that retailers must ensure that items or products on sales must be displayed at the shelves and provide for appropriate music and light in order to match the right shoppers' age group. Apart from that, the typical Malaysian shopper likes to shop in large stores and for this retail owners can install mirrors as interior design to make it look that the shop space is increased. From this study, it would seem that hedonistic attributes are most beneficial in attracting young shoppers. Word of mouth which is a pre-interaction credence based cue plays a significant role in determining shopper's patronage (Kaul, Sahay & Koshy, 2010). In an attempt to segment the consumer / shoppers, retail stores should strive to offer a store image that matches the self-concept of the consumer (Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg, 2000). Sirgy et. al (2000) indicated that shoppers have diverse views on stores in terms of the store's usual patrons. According to Paridon (2008 ; 2006), shoppers may sometimes base their interpersonal communication about shopping on their store emotional and task focus experiences. This would mean that they may

discuss amongst themselves about the utilitarian as well as hedonic retail attributes of a shopping centre which help them form an opinion about the shopping centre. If a shopper experiences a positive hedonic experience, which acts through consumer social confidence will contribute to ones' willingness to engage in word-of-mouth communication. The purpose of this study is to define and understand the impact of the attitude towards retail attributes, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control on the women intention to patronage shopping centre. There are studies with regards to mall patronage in the western context but very little is known about the application of the TPB model on intention to patronage shopping centres as many previous studies usually focus on the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model to test on the affects of it on patronage intention.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, the research variables and hypotheses development are premised on the assumption that consumers' evaluations of retail attributes contribute to their perceptions and attitudes when it comes to patronising a shopping centre. Malaysia is a multi-cultural country, whereby people practise different religions and speak numerous languages and dialects. The diversified cultures and multi facet ethnicity have generated a spectrum of tastes, habits and preferences which have influenced the motivations of mall shopping behaviour differently and at different times including ethnic festivities and increasingly popular 'sales'. Indeed, this Malaysian consumer idiosyncrasy has differed markedly from their counterparts in other western countries. Most of the study on shopping malls have been extensively researched, most of them being conducted in the US, Europe (Shim & Eastlick, 1998; Stoel, Wickliffe, & Lee, 2003) with little done in Malaysia. Hence, my proposed principal hypothesis is as follow.

H1 : There is a significant relationship between Word of Mouth (peer influence) and media referents, Resource constraints and Attitudes towards Shopping centres in affecting intention to patronage shopping centres.

H2 : Attitudes towards shopping centres (Intention) tend to influence intention to patronage shopping centres

According to Paulins & Geistfeld (2003) in their study of store attributes affecting store preferences, it was found that the outside store appearance affects preference towards the store preference. The appearance of the store which are the attributes of the store plays a very important role in attracting shoppers. It was also found that the more educated a customer is, the more critical they are of store attributes. This seems to be the same conclusion as derived from Kim, Park & Pookulangara (2005). Consumers evaluate or perceive these and place certain emphasis on the store attributes with the overall perception (store image) in order to determine the acceptability of the store. Attitude can be defined as a manner, disposition, feeling, position and others with regard to a person or an object. We may either have a positive or negative disposition or feeling towards a person or an object. Retail attributes, like product attributes are used to differentiate a product or service offering. This is the point of differentiation which helps customers choose one offering over another. From here, the product or service features are highlighted and heavily promoted to attract the customers. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2010), a consumers' attitude toward an object, in this case a retail store, is the level of importance placed by the consumer towards a store attributes as well as the consumers' perception of the level to which a retail store possesses each attribute. Consumers evaluate these and place certain emphasis on the store attributes with the overall perception (store image) in order to determine the acceptability of the store. Prior researchers have suggested a link between retail attributes (hedonic and utilitarian), positive attitude and impulse buying behaviour (Morschett, Swoboda and Foscht, 2005; Chang et. al., 2011). Hence, using deductive logic, the first set of hypotheses of this study is stated as follows:

H1a: Retail attributes will positively impact attitude toward shopping malls.

H1b: Retail attributes will positively impact intention to patronage shopping centres

According to Ajzen et. al. (2009), normative beliefs refer to the perceived behavioural expectations such as referent individuals or groups (spouse, family, friends and in some instances, depending on the population and behaviour study the teacher, doctor, supervisor and co-workers). It is assumed that the normative beliefs together with a person's motivation to comply with the different referents would determine subjective norm. To a certain extent, the availability of peers and family or even the media could spread either positive or negative word-of-mouth communication (Paridon, 2006; Obermiller, Spangenberg & MacLachlan (2005). Hence, using deductive approach, the following hypothesis is stated as follows:

H2a : Word of mouth from family and friends will positively impact attitude towards shopping centres.

H2b : Media referents will positively impact the attitude towards shopping centres.

The construct of perceived behavioural control was added in to address the situations in which people may lack control over the behaviour of interest. The theory of reasoned action did not consider this construct. Because there was a realisation that we sometimes are unable to perform a task at a given situation, Ajzen (2002) added this concept into the theory of planned behaviour in order to accommodate for any obstacles that may hinder decision making or behaviour. Perceived behavioural control is the subject degree over performance of the behaviour itself. When a

consumer comes to know that others may disapprove their purchasing of a particular product, from a particular shopping centre, he or she may experience a mental barrier to patronizing that mall, which may result in a decreased of perceive behavioral control. Subjective norm may to a certain extent affect perceptions of consumers, and it may translate into the ease and difficulty of performing the behaviour in question. This is in line with the study presented by Lunardo & Mbengue (2009). The study of perceived time pressure was initially studied by Putrevu & Ratchford (1997) and the dimensions of perceived time pressure (PTP) consisted of search effort for price and promotional information. Hence, using deductive approach, the following hypothesis is stated as follows:

H3a: Internal and Resource constraints will positively impact the attitude towards shopping centres.

H3b: Internal and Resource constraints will positively affect intention to patronage shopping centres

The conceptual framework in this study draws on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) model proposed by Ajzen (2002) which is used to predict behaviours and explain human behaviour in specific contexts. The specific context for this study is to study the intention to patronage shopping centres by Malaysian women in specific focus, famous internationalized shopping mall in the Klang Valley in Selangor. Specifically, this theoretical framework (see Figure 1) is developed based on the adaptation of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) model by Ajzen (1985, 1987, 1989, 1991). Ajzen (1988) asserted that, for the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), intentions to perform a given behaviour is influenced by three different major factors. The first major factor is that beliefs about the likely outcomes of the behavior including the evaluations of these outcomes (behavioural beliefs).The second major factor is that beliefs are about normative expectations of others and motivation to comply with these expectations (normative beliefs). This would reveal if there is perceived social pressure to execute or not perform the behavior (Subjective norm – SN). Lastly, beliefs are about the presence of factors that may facilitate / impede the performance of the behavior (control beliefs). Behavioural beliefs can either produce a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward a behavior; normative beliefs would give rise to subjective norm and control beliefs give rise to perceived behavioural control. Perceived behavioural control means that the more resources and opportunities individuals think they possess, the greater their perceived behavioural control over the behaviour. Perceived behavioural control may have both direct and indirect effect on behaviour through intentions. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) has been widely researched in social psychology (e.g., Madden et al., 1992; Ajzen and Madden, 1986). It has also been applied in various settings (e.g., medicine - Beale and Manstead, 1991; leisure – Ajzen, Driver and Nichols, 1995). However, there are a few tests that have incorporated the full model of all of the belief structures (Ajzen, 1991) except for one recent study by Pookulangara and Knight (2013) that has used the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) in full to assess the mall patronage intentions of Indian consumers’ whereby the antecedent of attitude is measured by shopping motivation (hedonic and utilitarian). In this study, retail attributes, the attitude towards shopping centre, word of mouth (peer influence), media referent which would be subjective norm and internal and resource constraints which would be perceived behavioural control will be studied to better understand the intention to patronage shopping centres amongst women. As such, the theoretical framework for this study is as follows :-

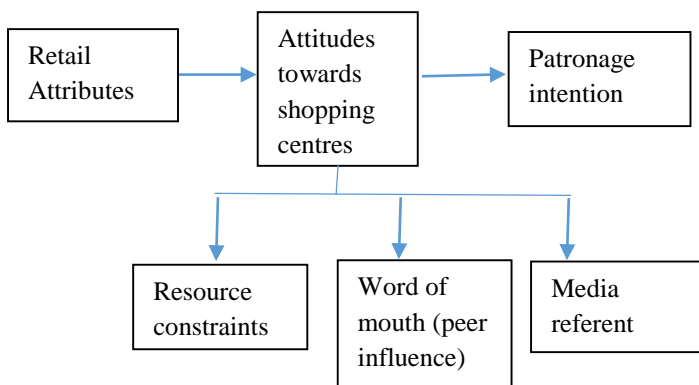


Figure 1 : My Research model (Adapted from Theory of Planned Behaviour, Ajzen (1988))

3.0 METHOD

The data will be collected using a mall-intercept survey in Sunway Pyramid only, on weekends when it is crowded. The sample size for this study is 100 samples. Although this method is heavily criticised as being demographically skewed and not representative, this technique of data collection may fit well as many older consumers may not be technologically savvy. It may be hard generate responses through online surveys as many may not have been able to access their emails or social network sites at that time. The type of sampling that was done was stratified sampling whereby the population is divided into subpopulations (strata) and random samples are taken of each stratum. In this case the samples were from university going students who were usual shoppers during the weekends. All the items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). The dimension

of retail attributes (Items 1 to 10) has been adopted and modified from Lee et. al (2006) which include statements for retail attributes such as “A comfortable store environment” which was modified to “I am satisfied with the comfortable physical environment of this shopping centre” and so on and so forth. The modifications are necessary to reflect the measurement of attitude toward psychological benefits as well as institutional image. For items 11 to 17 on attitude toward company image, the scale was adopted from Ou et. al (2006). In the study by Ou et. al (2006), the dimensions of company image reported Cronbach’s α as 0.86 which meant that the scale was reliable. The statements adopted from the scales developed by Ou et.al (2006) are changed from ‘The company...’ to ‘The shopping centre...’ to reflect the measurement of attitude toward company image. The dimension for attitude is derived from Jorgensen & Stedman (2001) for sense of place (SOP) as a measurement for attitude. The standardized reliability coefficients from their were 0.76, 0.84, 0.74, 0.89 for Identity, Attachment, Dependence and SOP respectively. For the dimensions of word of mouth, the items have been adopted from Paridon (2008) which would include statements such as “My friends and I enjoy talking about the styles and fashions we see on shopping trips” so on and so forth. All the loading for this dimension in the Paridon (2006) study are significant beyond $p = .05$. For the dimensions of media referents, the items have been adopted by Obermiller & Spangenberg (2000). All the loading for this dimension in the Obermiller et. al (2000) study are significant beyond $p = .05$. For the dimensions of internal and resource constraints, the items are adopted by Paridon (2008) as well as Putrevu & Ratchford (1997) which both recorded the Cronbach α of more than 0.70. For the dimensions of patronage intention, the items are adopted by Dodds, Monroe & Grewal (1991) whereby the composite reliability recorded by the study by was more than 0.7.

4.0 RESULTS

The data were entered into the computer for statistical analysis with the SPSS version 22 computer program. To test for the possible for the possible presence of intercorrelations among independent variables. The data collected was conducted by mall intercept survey. This was done over the two weekends as it was concluded that the number of shoppers was usually high as most shoppers preferred shopping during the weekends. The targeted sample size was 100 but only 85 samples were completed surveys. The shoppers comprised of ages of 15 to 24. The respondents were all students and single. The highest level of respondents had a Diploma (97.6%) and only 2.4% having a high school certificate. The larger proportion of the sample was chinese (85.9%). The other races consisted of Bumiputra (7.1%), Indian (4.7%) and others (2.4%). The household income per month was less than RM 5000 (64.7%) as they were students living away from their hometowns. The respondents indicated that they frequented Sunway Pyramid once a week (40%), once every 15 days (3.5%) and rarely 56.4%. The Cronbach α for this model is 0.70 which means that it is reliable. The results in Table 1 show that there is a positive and significant relationship between Attitude towards a shopping centre and word of mouth (peer influence) with $r = 0.562$, $p = 0.000$. This is partially true as there may be some respondents who felt that Attitude is derived or formed from the the effects of peer influence and the stronger or more significant this is would imply that respondents are more likely increase their intention to patronage a shopping centre which would ultimately affect their act of indulging in impulse purchases. There is a positive and significant relationship between attitude towards a shopping centre and media referents ($r = 0.298$, $p = 0.006$). There is a strong, positive and significant relationship between the Attitude towards a shopping centre and internal and resource constraints ($r = 0.596$, $p = 0.000$).

Correlations

		Attitude	PeerInfluence	Media	ResourceSE
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.562**	.298**	.596**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.006	.000
	N	85	85	85	85
Peer Influence	Pearson Correlation	.562**	1	.400**	.401**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	85	85	85	85
Media	Pearson Correlation	.298**	.400**	1	.100
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.000		.363
	N	85	85	85	85
Resource SE	Pearson Correlation	.596**	.401**	.100	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.363	
	N	85	85	85	85

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1: Correlations between Attitude of shopping centre, peer influence, media referents and internal and resource constraints

The correlation tables (Table 1) results indicate that the principle Hypothesis 1 whereby there is a relationship between Attitude towards a shopping centre, peer influence, media referents as well as internal and resource constraints

affecting patronage intention is supported. Also, supported is the other principle Hypothesis 2 whereby Attitude towards a shopping centre does indeed influence patronage intention to a shopping centre. Based on the Chi-square table below (Table 2), since the p-value is 0, this would mean that the Hypothesis 1a is supported whereby the retail attributes in which a shopping centre possesses does impact the attitude towards a shopping centre.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1243.429 ^a	408	.000
Likelihood Ratio	448.709	408	.080
Linear-by-Linear Association	.129	1	.719
N of Valid Cases	85		

a. 450 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

Table 2 : Chi square tests on Attitudes * Attributes

The Chi-square table below (Table 3) indicates that the p-value is also 0, which indicates that peer influence (word of mouth) impacts the attitude towards a shopping centre. The Chi square table (Table 4) with the p-value at 0 also indicates that media referents also affects attitude towards a shopping centre. Therefore, Hypothesis 2a and 2b is supported.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	698.266 ^a	204	.000
Likelihood Ratio	324.903	204	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	26.573	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	85		

a. 234 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

Table 3 : Chi square tests on Attitudes * Peer influence

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	814.847 ^a	255	.000
Likelihood Ratio	360.199	255	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.485	1	.006
N of Valid Cases	85		

a. 288 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

Table 4 : Chi square test on Attitude * Media referent

Table 5 indicates that the p value for all 3 constructs is more than 0.005, Attitude = 0.025, Peer influence = 0.039 and Media referents = 0.043 respectively with internal and resource constraints = 0.000 being less than 0.005. The strongest significance that would actually affect intention to patronage shopping centre is the effect of media referents.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.210	1.161		1.903	.061
	Attitude	-.083	.036	-.254	-2.293	.025
	PeerInfluence	.118	.056	.210	2.096	.039
	Media	-.081	.039	-.178	-2.057	.043
	ResourceSE	.216	.028	.757	7.617	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Intention

Table 5 : Coefficients

5.0 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results on media referents followed by peer influence is indeed important factors in the formation of the Attitude towards a shopping centre is in line with the findings by Paridon (2006; 2008) as well as Obermiller et. al (2005).

Media referents which included advertisements as well as promotions available in shopping centres served to attract women to patronage shopping centres. The respondents constituted to 85.9% who were Chinese who were in need of social interaction owing to its apparent relatedness to 'face' and this could be found by employees extending assistance, peer influence as well as in store promotions that were available in shopping centres. This is also in line with the findings by Paridon (2006) and Obermiller et. al. (2005) where the availability of peers to generate word of mouth as well as media referents in a service organisation such as shopping centre does generate positive word-of-mouth communication which may generate future patronage intentions. Also, the utilitarian and hedonic retail attributes made available in a shopping centre does play a role in the respondents' attitude towards a shopping centre. This study fills the gap proposed by Mattila and Wirtz (2008) who suggested that factors that are external to individuals (retail environment characteristics) has not been widely researched in the context of intention to patronage shopping centres which could ultimately affect the level of impulse buying especially in a non-western country setting such as Malaysia. Based on the results above, a positive attitude towards a shopping centre (in this case from utilitarian and hedonic retail attributes) could lead to intention to patronage shopping centres. This is in line with the findings by Morschett, Swoboda and Foscht (2005) as well as Chang et. al. (2011). Apart from that, the external influence such as peer influence and media have a role in providing a positive attitude towards a shopping centre. In conclusion, the Theory of Planned Behaviour by Ajzen (1998) can be used to significantly predict the patronage intentions amongst respondents in this study. Between the three constructs it can be concluded that the respondents attitude towards a shopping centre and employee assistance is the most significant variables to predict their in-store browsing intention. However, it should not be ruled out that the constraints (internal and resource) present do not play a role in affecting intentions. From the results above it is interesting to note that despite these constraints this has somewhat affected the respondents' intention to patronage a shopping centre. This is in line with the findings as studied in Euromonitor (2014) which indicated that shopping and patronising shopping centres is still a leisure activity and despite facing constraints, women still patronise shopping centres.

One of the limitation is that the data collected was only from one shopping centre in one location in the Klang Valley. Also, the participants to this study may already have positive attitudes towards malls or shopping centres like Sunway Pyramid given its positive reputation over the years. The participant tended to be more biased towards the female population who were between the age group of 15 to 24. Future studies could replicate this study in other areas or other shopping districts in Malaysia in order to capture the diversity that is unique to this country. It would also be interesting to establish if males held similar responses to female. Another limitation exists as the sample size studied may be too small as the samples were only derived from one shopping centre, Sunway Pyramid and the respondents were selected via mall intercept survey over two weekends from 11am to 9pm. Finally, it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study to follow the maturation of the mall phenomenon in Malaysia.

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