

Shopping Experience Enjoyment: Impact on Customers' Repatronage Intentions, and Gender Influence

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In this paper the authors investigate enjoyment of the shopping experience, its influence on consumers' intention to repatronise a regional shopping centre and the effect of gender differences for shopping enjoyment. Four dimensions of shopping enjoyment are proposed and a 16-item measure is developed to measure 536 consumer perceptions of the shopping experience across five counties in the United Kingdom. Findings indicate that shopping experience enjoyment has a significant positive influence upon customers' repatronage intentions. Furthermore, men are found to have a stronger relationship of enjoyment with repatronage than women. The implications of these results are discussed, together with managerial implications, study limitations, and future research directions.

KEY WORDS: Regional Shopping Centres, Enjoyment, Repatronage Intentions, Gender Influences

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INTRODUCTION

One of the key decisions faced by customers is where to shop in terms of shopping location and store choice [Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003]. As a result, retailer concern with patronage and repatronage is now an important topic of marketing research [Machleit, Meyer and Eroglu, 2005]. While considerable research has focused on patronage of retail stores, less is known about consumer intentions towards patronage of a specific shopping centre and factors that may influence repatronage. Prior research has demonstrated that store image has a significant role to play in consumers' patronage decisions [Oppewal and Timmermans, 1997]; thus it may be assumed that the image of a shopping centre may also impact on consumers' decisions of where to shop. However, while considerable work has been done on the role of store and even shopping mall image on consumer patronage [Finn and Louviere, 1996; Wakefield and Baker, 1998; Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003] there is, to date, very little research examining the image of the regional shopping centre, as a more holistic entity, in determining consumers' patronage decisions. This is important because understanding more about what attracts consumers to a specific shopping centre, followed by effective management of consumer evaluation, should lead to increased repatronage intentions.

Consumers have many different choices of shopping locations, however. Regional shopping centres in particular play a key role in the future of the modern economy [Finn and Louviere,

1996; Phillips and Swaffin-Smith, 2004]. Since shopping has been identified as the primary purpose for the majority of visits to town and city centres [Warnaby and Davies, 1997] having the correct retail offer and facilities to entice visitors into a regional centre results in increased spending, greater employment opportunities and hence local economic regeneration.

Furthermore, regional centres have been struggling to attract and keep local customers that may otherwise ‘outshop’ or patronise competing shopping areas [Kirkup and Rafiq, 1999; Whyatt, 2004; Williams, Hubbard, Clark and Berkeley, 2001].

Regional shopping centres represent more than a shopping mall in this instance. For the purposes of this paper, they include shopping areas with a wide range of shopping facilities within larger geographical regions, such as town or city centres. They contain a mixture of traditional high streets, commercial shopping malls and smaller shopping precincts, and incorporate features which are either privately owned (merchandise, buildings, signs) or publicly owned (roads, car parks and amenities) [Bell, 1999]. Perhaps a major difference is that whilst specific retailers and shopping malls have a long history of co-ordinating their advertising and promotion efforts, regional shopping centres have only recently begun to market themselves in terms of image creation and maintenance [Kirkup and Rafiq, 1999; Kupke, 2004; Warnaby and Medway, 2004]. The majority of research in this field has concentrated on shoppers’ responses at the individual store or, at most, the shopping mall level; this study focuses on a relatively untouched area of research, in terms of exploring the impression or holistic image of a shopping centre as a whole and the influence it can have upon customers’ future shopping decisions [Bell, 1999; Warnaby and Medway, 2004]. With this in mind, this article examines how the enjoyment of the shopping experience, as well as the attractiveness of the shopping centre itself, can influence customers’

behavioural responses and whether or not they intend to repatronise that shopping centre. Furthermore, the literature also implies that shopping enjoyment may be a function of gender. For example Otnes and McGrath [2001] recognise gender differences in shopping behaviour, involvement in the shopping process and attitudes towards shopping as a social activity. This is consistent with the view that women behave differently to men [Stern, 1999] and often display differing approaches to socialisation [Severiens and Ten Dam, 1998]. Thus there are theoretical reasons to expect that women may experience shopping enjoyment differently to men. However, empirical research into the role that gender may play in determining shopping enjoyment is sparse, and efforts on this front are warranted.

Therefore, the objectives of this research are threefold. Firstly, the research seeks to generate an understanding of the broad factors that contribute to consumer image perceptions of shopping centres and their associated enjoyment of the shopping experience. Secondly, the research aims to discover the impact that enjoyment of shopping in a specific shopping centre has upon customers' repatronage intentions. Thirdly, the research seeks to examine whether there are differences in the relationship between enjoyment of shopping and repatronage intentions based upon whether respondents are male or female.

The paper is organised as follows. Firstly, the existing literature is discussed in order to develop the theoretical background and the conceptual framework to the study. Then, based on factors involved in the creation of shopping location image, enjoyment and repatronage, hypotheses are generated and proposed. The section following this explains how gender could impact upon enjoyment of the shopping experience and its relationship to repatronage intentions. The

following section describes the methodology used in the study, including the sample, measures and scales generated. The following section contains the subsequent analysis and results, while the final section discusses the findings, puts forward implications for managers of regional shopping centres and suggests some directions for future researchers to consider.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section discusses the background literature relating to image, enjoyment, repatronage and gender. It is established that the concept of image is intrinsically linked to retail patronage [e.g. Darden and Babin, 1994] and store loyalty [Mazursky and Jacoby, 1986]. The literature on image therefore provides an important starting point to understanding the potential linkages with behavioural concepts of enjoyment and repatronage of shopping centres.

Image

The literature pertaining to image is mainly focused on the retail store and its ability to project a distinctive identity or ‘personality’ in comparison with its competitors [Martineau, 1958]. In adapting the store image literature, the image of a regional shopping centre is similarly hypothesised to create a distinct identity, which distinguishes it from other, competing centres. The image of a shopping location has been described as a multidimensional concept consisting of features which are broadly summarised into two categories: firstly tangible or functional attributes which relate to its physical features; and secondly the more intangible attributes which represent its atmospheric qualities [McGoldrick, 2002]. The image of a regional shopping centre

is thus considered to be an holistic entity created from elements such as retail mix, infrastructure and atmosphere [Leo and Philippe, 2002] which can be managed to create a shopping destination which is attractive to potential customers [Warnaby and Medway, 2004]. A strong image of a shopping location creates competitive advantage [Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003], being associated with greater willingness to purchase, longer time spent shopping and higher sales turnover; in effect more positive patronage behaviour [Bitner, 1992; Dennis, Newman and Marsland, 2005; Oppewal and Timmermans, 1997]. Specific image dimensions can influence emotional responses and patronage decisions in particular shopping situations [Finn and Louviere, 1996; Tai and Fung, 1997]. This study aims to identify the dimensions of regional shopping centre image which are believed to affect customer behaviour by evoking a range of emotional responses and to examine how these dimensions influence purchasing behaviour and patronage decisions.

Enjoyment

Shopping has been referred to as a fun, pleasurable activity that leads to feelings of ‘joy’ [Jin and Sternquist, 2004]. Positive image has been shown to create higher levels of pleasurable feelings in customers, and reflects their enjoyment of spending time in the area [Bell, 1999]. Some attention in the retail literature has focussed on the notion of excitement [Wakefield and Baker, 1998]. However, whilst excitement corresponds to an emotional state that elicits high levels of pleasure and arousal, enjoyment tends to represent a less emotionally intensive evaluation, which is similar to liking. Of the two emotional states, logic would dictate that customers would find themselves in a state of enjoyment more often than a state of excitement, especially if they are regular shoppers. Bell [1999] supports the notion that affect, or liking, is a more stable concept

capturing consumers' perceptions of a shopping centre. Enjoyment itself has been reported as a motivation for 'bricks' shopping, as opposed to shopping on the Internet [Dennis, Newman and Marsland, 2005] so the importance of the construct to modern shopping centres is clear. Therefore, research examining the notion of enjoyment appears to be more theoretically valid than excitement for research into general shopping areas where customers are likely to shop more frequently.

Repatronage

Whilst the work examining retail patronage at the store level or shopping mall level has long attracted the attention of researchers [e.g. Burns and Warren, 1995; Spies, Hesse and Loesch, 1997; Grewal, Baker, Levy and Voss, 2003], work investigating these effects at the geographical shopping centre level remains sporadic. The quality of the shopping experience is generally thought to have a positive effect on customers' behavioural intentions [Tai and Fung, 1997; Wakefield and Baker, 1998], with enjoyment of shopping as a pleasurable experience associated with raised patronage [Mano, 1999]. Further, it has been hypothesised that higher levels of excitement lead to greater repatronage intentions [Wakefield and Baker, 1998]. For the purposes of this study, enjoyment is thought to be a more relevant construct to delineate than that of excitement; nevertheless a similar relationship is hypothesised in the current study between the notion of enjoyment of the shopping experience and repatronage intentions.

Gender

The role that gender plays in consumer behaviour research is certainly worthy of researchers' attention [Palan, 2002; Stern, 1988]. Indeed, marketers have been particularly interested in the roles that gender plays as it can have a significant impact upon consumers' behaviour [Stern, 1988; 1999]. Much of the research in consumer behaviour has focussed upon constructs such as biological gender (i.e., male or female) [Palan, 2002], gender roles [Lavin, 1993], or gender identity [Fischer and Arnold, 1994]. Previous work has identified differences in shopping-related attitudes based upon biological gender [Palan, 2002] and gender roles [Lavin, 1993], although distinct gender roles appear to have become somewhat blurred as evidenced by more recent work [Otnes and McGrath, 2001]. For the purposes of this paper, gender is used to refer to biological gender and, to a lesser extent, gender roles rather than other gender-related concepts such as gender identity [Fischer and Arnold, 1994; Palan, 2002].

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Since the early conceptualisation of store image by Martineau [1958], various researchers have sought to decompose image into a set of dimensions that are most valued by consumers and thus may be controlled and measured. In summarising the store image literature, Lindquist [1974] concluded that nine different dimensions contributed to consumers' perceptions of store image; namely merchandise, service, clientele, physical facilities, convenience, promotion, store atmosphere, institutional factors and post-transactional satisfaction. While many of these aspects of store image are also applicable to the broader regional shopping centre, the regional centre as a

whole also contains public spaces which are beyond the scope of individual retailers to directly manage or influence, such as architectural design, street layouts, tenant mix, parking, refreshment and toilet facilities [Bell, 1999; Oppewal and Timmermans, 1999]. These studies (*ibid*) have shown that such aspects of the holistic retail area will also influence customer perceptions and hence patronage intentions.

Consequently, for the purposes of this study, we focus on those factors that are specific to the shopping centre as a whole, rather than the micro-management level issue pertinent to individual stores. Specifically, building on attributes of shopping centre image commonly discussed in the literature, we identify four dimensions, which we believe are central to the notion of the shopping enjoyment experience. These attributes are selected for their relevance in defining a particular shopping centre as an holistic entity, rather than relating to individual stores.

First *accessibility* refers to the convenience and logistic aspects of store location, travel, parking and pedestrian areas. This functional dimension of shopping centre image has received attention in the literature, and is considered important on a number of fronts [Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003; Dennis, Newman and Marsland, 2005]. However, while some early research has considered travel distances in relation to shopping centre patronage, Bell [1999] in particular notes that these considerations have until now failed to capture emotional responses which lead to consumers' image perceptions.

Second, *environment* refers to consumers' responses to the more practical aspects of shopping centre management. Previous research has identified these aspects to include cleanliness of the

shopping centre [Oppenwal and Timmermans, 1999], opening hours and security [Lehtonen and Maenpaa, 1997], which, when combined have been shown to influence patronage decisions [Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003].

Third, *atmosphere* has received considerable attention in the marketing, retailing and organisational behaviour literature in the context of consumer response to the physical environment. In the special case of a shopping centre, atmosphere relates to perceptions of the visual appeal of the architecture and window displays, appreciation of store variety, and the comfort elements provided by cafes and restaurants, all of which are associated with positive evaluations of a shopping centre and hence likelihood to repatronise [Wakefield and Baker, 1998].

Finally, research into services marketing and retail has determined that attitudes of *service personnel* have an important part to play in influencing customers' shopping experience and the positive or negative impression formed by the customer [Bitner, Booms and Tetreault, 1990; McGoldrick, 2002; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988]. Indeed, according to Mittal and Lassar [1996, p. 105] personnel displaying enthusiasm and warmth can lead to a 'personally rewarding shopping and service experience'.

Therefore, in this study we sought to generate items to measure each of the four dimensions mentioned above. It is hypothesised that these four dimensions will reflect a higher order latent construct, namely enjoyment of the shopping experience. Next, we will discuss in more detail the

reasoning behind the formation of the enjoyment of the shopping experience construct, based upon a brief review of the retail and shopping literature.

Dimensions of Enjoyment of the Shopping Experience: Accessibility

With increased car ownership, customers are prepared to travel longer distances to patronise shopping centres where the retail mix is sufficiently attractive, rather than making shopping centre choices based on the nearest convenient location [Dennis, Marsland and Cockett, 2002; Whyatt, 2004]. This suggests that ease of travel to and within attractive locations has an important role in shopping decision making, particularly in regard to the growth of competition from Internet shopping [Dennis, Newman and Marsland, 2005].

Sit, Merrilees and Birch [2003] separate accessibility in a shopping centre into ‘macro-accessibility’ which refers to transport links from the home location to the shopping centre, and ‘micro-accessibility’ which refers to parking facilities and ease of navigation between stores and other facilities within the centre, arguing that paying attention to both aspects will make the shopping experience more enjoyable. This is supported by Leo and Philippe [2002] who indicate that poor directional indicators for travellers to a shopping location result in dissatisfaction and disappointment with the shopping expedition. Oppewal and Timmermans [1999] found that one of the aspects of the micro-accessibility of public space, which were favoured by customers, was compactness of layout, in terms of accessing stores and space reserved for pedestrian access.

It seems likely, therefore, that factors that contribute towards a customer's perceptions of shopping accessibility, such as transport links and car parking facilities, as well as store location and ease of movement for pedestrians, should influence their enjoyment of the shopping experience. Based upon this, we propose that customers' enjoyment of the shopping experience will reflect the accessibility of the shopping region.

Dimensions of Enjoyment of the Shopping Experience: Atmosphere

The effects of atmospherics, or physical design elements, on consumers is recognised by managers and mentioned in virtually all marketing, retailing, and organisational behaviour texts [Bitner, 1992; Mazursky and Jacoby, 1986; McGoldrick and Pieros, 1998; Spies, Hesse and Loesch, 1997], and has been argued to provide an extremely effective point of competitive differentiation [Bell, 1999; Tai and Fung, 1997]. However, despite this attention, little empirical work has been completed to address the effects of physical surroundings on customers' behavioural responses in regional shopping centres [Dennis, Murphy, Marsland, Cockett and Patel, 2002; Kirkup and Rafiq, 1999].

Atmosphere is created by the interaction between the location's physical attributes and customers' subjective perceptions [Hackett, Foxall and Van Raaij, 1993]. Therefore atmosphere is reflected in customers' reactions to the physical environment and is related to purchasing behaviour [Spies, Hesse and Loesch, 1997; Smith and Burns, 1996; Tai and Fung, 1997]. Within the store environment, customers are stimulated by atmospheric aspects such as music, lighting, space, colours and aromas [McGoldrick and Pieros, 1998; Wakefield and Baker, 1998]. In a

regional shopping centre, atmosphere is created by customers' responses to the broader aesthetic appeal of the centre, such as the visual appearance of the architecture and the variety of the store range or tenant mix [Bell, 1999; Leo and Philippe, 2002; Wakefield and Baker, 1998]. The attractiveness of storefronts and window displays, and the availability of cafes and restaurants, also contribute to atmospherics in a shopping location [Oppewal and Timmermans, 1999; Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003; Warnaby and Medway, 2004].

According to environmental psychologists, individuals respond to places with two general reactions: approach and avoid [Mehrabian and Russell, 1974]. Approach behaviours include all positive behaviours that might be directed towards a place, such as desire to stay or explore [Bitner, 1992]. A study by Donovan and Rossiter [1982] found that in retail settings perceptions of the shopping environment influenced positive approach behaviours, namely shopping enjoyment, returning, and time spent browsing. The better the atmosphere, the more positive the perceptions of the shopping centre are likely to be [Bitner, 1992]. Therefore, we expect that attitudes towards shopping centre atmosphere, resulting in a positive influence upon shopping enjoyment, will have a positive impact upon repatronage intentions. This leads us to propose that customers' enjoyment of the shopping experience will be reflected by their perceptions of the atmosphere of the shopping region.

Dimensions of Enjoyment of the Shopping Experience: Environment

Characteristics of the physical shopping environment also influence perceptions of that environment [Bitner, 1992], and the retail environment also influences shopping enjoyment and

returning behaviour [Donovan and Rossiter, 1982]. This study argues that factors in the physical environment which are specific to the centre as a whole will influence customers' enjoyment of shopping. These factors are within the responsibility of managers of regional shopping centres, and include security, cleanliness of the shopping centre, and opening hours which are convenient to customers [Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003; Whyatt, 2004].

These factors have received limited attention in the literature [Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003], yet are important considerations in customers' image perceptions of the shopping centre, as distinct from individual stores or even shopping malls. For example, even where stores and shopping malls create a feeling of safety, this does not easily transfer to the broader shopping centre area [Lehtonen and Maenpaa, 1997]. Perceptions of high levels of crime associated with the regional area in general create negative image connotations for the shopping centre within that area, which are unrelated to individual stores [Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003]. Keeping the public space areas clean and tidy through maintenance of the streets, hallways and buildings is an important factor in customers' perceptions of the pleasantness of the shopping experience [Oppewal and Timmermans, 1999]. Again, opening hours are determined in many cases by local authorities rather than by individual stores [McGoldrick, 2002]. As customers become increasingly time-pressed, and with the availability of extended shopping hours, store opening hours, which are convenient for those who cannot shop during 'normal' shopping times, are a factor in encouraging many more customers to patronise the shopping centre [McGoldrick, 2002; Wakefield and Baker, 1998]. This study argues that these three management aspects of the environment of the shopping centre, namely safety, cleanliness and opening hours, will be reflected in customers' attitudes towards enjoyment of the shopping experience.

Dimensions of Enjoyment of the Shopping Experience: Service Personnel

Previous work examining service encounters in retail settings has found that the attitudes and behaviours of employees can have a positive influence upon customers' emotions, satisfaction, perceptions of quality and hence purchase intentions [Babin, Babin and Boles, 1999; Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal and Voss, 2002; Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz, 1996; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988]. Similarly, it has been found that delays in service, or poor service overall, can lead to negative impressions being formed of the service received [Bitner, Booms and Tetreault, 1990]. It can be assumed, therefore, that if employees display positive attitudes or sufficiently impress the customer, then the customer will leave with a more favourable impression of the retail encounter, at least with the individual service encounter or individual store.

At the level of the individual retail store, evaluations of service quality are known to be linked with repatronage intentions, with more favourable perceptions of service quality resulting in more favourable behavioural intentions such as recommendation, preference and greater repatronage [Darian, Tucci and Wiman, 2001; Sivadas and Baker-Prewitt, 2000]. These authors indicate that interaction between the customer and service personnel is a deciding factor in the patronage decision. Customer service quality is variously described as consisting of friendliness, knowledge of goods sold, ability to give advice, respect and responsiveness without being 'pushy' [Darian, Tucci and Wiman, 2001; Leo and Philippe, 2002]. For the purposes of this study, these last four components are summarised as 'helpfulness'.

It should of course be noted that much of the prior work investigating service encounters has been conducted at the individual store level, rather than attempting to unravel the mystery of shopping centre impressions, as the current study seeks to do. Unlike the factors representing shopping environment which are related to the public aspects of the shopping centre, customer service quality may be more relevant to individual stores than to the overall regional centre, since individual retailers may have specific staff training programmes which differ from one another. Nevertheless, Leo and Philippe [2002] show that knowledgeable staff that gave good advice contributed to perceptions of the entire shopping centre, rather than an individual store. Sivadas and Baker-Prewitt [2000] consider that, unlike customer satisfaction, which represents an evaluation of an individual service encounter, ‘service quality’ refers to a global measure of service performance, which can be extended to the shopping centre level. Furthermore, Darian, Tucci and Wiman [2001] have shown that service quality needs only to meet a basic minimum threshold level to be seen as acceptable to customers; reaching this threshold level, rather than delivering outstanding service, is more likely to occur in more stores across the shopping centre as a whole.

Customer service quality can therefore be considered a dimension of the holistic shopping centre image in that it represents the ‘augmented product’ that supports the basic merchandising function of the shopping centre and also adds value to the total enjoyment of the shopping experience [Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003]. Therefore, we propose that customers’ enjoyment of the shopping experience will be reflected in the extent to which customers perceive that they have received good service in terms of friendliness and helpfulness of staff. It seems logical that if a customer has a favourable impression of a service encounter, it indicates that they have enjoyed

the encounter and this will lead to a more favourable impression of the shopping centre.

Furthermore, they are more likely to return to the shopping centre.

Outcomes of Enjoyment

In inferring that enjoyment should have an important role in determining repatronage intentions for a particular location, it should also be noted that individual consumers place different importance on the various image attributes of a shopping centre [Luomala, 2003]. Therefore, one of the objectives of this research was to attempt to generate a generic measure of shopping enjoyment and shopping centre attractiveness rather than to provide a limited-scope measure. In doing so, the current study builds upon the earlier work of Oppewal and Timmermans [1999], Sit, Merrilees and Birch [2003], and Wakefield and Baker [1998]. The longer a consumer spends in a retail environment, the more they are likely to spend [Donovan, Rossiter, Maroolyn and Nesdale, 1994; Wakefield and Baker, 1998]. Work by Donovan and Rossiter [1982] found that enjoyment of a retail experience results in more time being spent shopping and return patronage. In retailing studies, satisfaction with the retailing experience has been hypothesised to increase intentions to revisit the shopping area [Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz, 1996; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988]. Therefore, we hypothesise the following:

H1: The greater the customer's enjoyment of the shopping experience, the greater the likelihood of his or her returning to the shopping centre in future.

The Influence of Gender

Evolutionary psychology contains a theory known as the ‘Savannah Hypothesis.’ This hypothesis argues that human psychology has been shaped by the need to evolve and adapt to the savannah environment [Dennis and McCall, 2005]. More specifically: “selection has favoured preferences, motivations and cognitions to explore and settle in environments abundant with the resources needed to sustain life” [Buss, 1998, p. 83]. While it is outside of the scope of this paper to initiate detailed discussion of the Savannah Hypothesis, authors have recently begun to posit that this evolutionary adaptability may influence the way that we shop [Dennis, Newman and Marsland, 2005]. It is thought that explanations of our shopping behaviour may actually date back to the earliest known roles of women and men, namely gatherer and hunter respectively. Earlier research seems to confirm the existence of well-defined gender shopping roles [Fischer and Arnold, 1994] although more recently relaxed gender roles seem to have surfaced [Otnes and McGrath, 2001]. This relaxation of gender roles is perhaps not that surprising, given that most early conceptualisations of gender roles are biased [Stern, 1999]. In this paper, however, we adopt the Savannah Hypothesis view that gender differences in shopping are apparent, as discussed next.

It has been argued that men and women differ in relation to how they process information, their attitudes towards shopping motivations and responsibility, how they process environmental cues, and their needs in the selling encounter [Minahan and Beverland, 2005]. Indeed, recent research has begun to present typologies of the respective shopping styles of men and women [Allegra, 2002; Bakewell and Mitchell, 2004; Campbell, 1997; Dholakia and Chiang, 2003; Miller, 1998;

Otnes and McGrath, 2001; Underhill, 1999]. However, despite this work, there remains a need for further research examining differences in shopping behaviour across gender [Otnes and McGrath, 2001]. What authors have found thus far is that for most shopping experiences females are generally characterised by: imagining and envisioning the merchandise in use [Campbell, 1997]; weighing up of the pros and cons of the purchase [Laroche, Saad, Cleveland and Browne, 2000]; taking pride in their ability to shop [Underhill, 1999]; viewing the shopping process as a leisure activity [Bakewell and Mitchell, 2004]; spending longer shopping than men [Campbell, 1997]; visiting more shops than men [Allegra, 2002]; shopping more often than men [Dholakia, 1999]; including social interaction as an important part of the shopping experience [Otnes and McGrath, 2001]; including entertainment in the shopping experience [Haytko and Baker, 2004]; and shopping to express love for families and social networks [Miller, 1998]. Generally, women view the process of shopping as a very social experience [Campbell, 1997]. These findings imply that women who enjoy shopping are likely to intend to repatronise a shopping centre based upon this level of enjoyment.

Men, on the other hand, generally have their shopping style characterised by the following: incisiveness, decisiveness, determination, and excitement at the ‘moment of the kill’ or purchase [Dennis Newman and Marsland, 2005]; instrumentality and product specificity [Campbell, 1997]; lack of patience and trying to complete the shopping activity in the shortest possible time [Bakewell and Mitchell, 2004]; preference for top brands as both symbols of economic power [Underhill, 1999] and time savers [Bakewell and Mitchell, 2004]; and shopping for power and achievement, so called ‘shopping to win’ [Otnes and McGrath, 2001]. Here, we notice that men are characterised by a lack of patience and a desire to finish the shop as soon as possible.

Notably, the differences between genders most appropriate to this study are the lack of patience on the part of men, and the desire to shop more often on the part of women. While there is indication that enjoyment of the shopping experience will result in heightened repatronage intentions for both men and women, we expect a stronger relationship between these two major constructs for women due to their more ‘involved’ approach to shopping. For a woman enjoying shopping, the intention to repatronise a shopping region should be appreciated as an opportunity to spend more time shopping, visit more shops, and to shop more often. Men, seeing shopping as a fast, practical solution to a problem, are unlikely to want to draw out their shopping experience, even if they are enjoying it. This is consistent with gender role theory that argues women and men adopt different approaches when the notion of socialisation is considered [Severiens and Ten Dam, 1998]. Hence, while there may be a relationship between enjoyment of the shopping experience and intentions to repatronise for men, we expect this relationship to be weaker than that for women. This is simply because the involvement of women in the shopping process appears to be greater [Otnes and McGrath, 2001], so the existence of a stronger relationship between shopping and outcomes seems more logical. This leads to the formulation of the following hypothesis, building upon H1 earlier:

H2: The strength of the relationship between the customer’s enjoyment of the shopping experience and the likelihood of his or her returning to the shopping centre in future will be greater for women than for men.

METHODOLOGY

The specific aim of the research was to investigate the construct of enjoyment of the shopping experience and its relationship towards repatronage of United Kingdom shopping districts. To this end, a quantitative approach was adopted, employing questionnaires submitted to respondents during face-to-face interviews. Such methods allow for the controlled collection of large amounts of specific information from respondents [Churchill and Iacobucci, 2004].

Sample

The survey was conducted during daytime shopping hours in December 2004, as part of a wider study commissioned by the Sector Skills Council for the retail sector¹. As the primary area of interest was the East Midlands region of the United Kingdom, customers in 17 regional towns and cities were targeted. Interviewers were asked only to target those customers who were resident in the area of interest. The study targeted 550 customers, 50 each in the cities of Derby, Leicester, Lincoln, Northampton and Nottingham, and 25 each in the towns of Boston, Buxton, Chesterfield, Corby, Grantham, Hinckley, Kettering, Loughborough, Mansfield, Newark, Oakham and Wellingborough. Once interviews were completed, responses from those who lived outside of the East Midlands were removed, resulting in a total of 536 usable responses.

¹ www.skillsmartretail.com

A stratified random sample was used. Overall, the sample was 61% female, 39% male. Females between the ages of 16-25 and 36-45 years of age made up the largest proportion of the total sample (21.1% and 21.5% respectively). Most males were between 26-35 and 46-55 (14.7% and 16.4% of the total sample respectively). 36% of respondents had children, and 62.3% were employed. The sample was predominantly Caucasian (89.7%).

Measurement

Respondents were asked to name the location where they shopped most and to give their perceptions of their current location as a shopping destination. In order to generate the scale to measure shopping enjoyment and location attractiveness, questionnaire items were adapted from previous work by Wakefield and Baker [1998], Oppewal and Timmermans [1999] and Sit, Merrilees and Birch [2003].

Items were selected for relevance to the shopping region as a whole as opposed to describing characteristics of individual stores; these items are within the remit of managers of the shopping region rather than being the responsibility of individual store owners or managers. For example, Sit, Merrilees and Birchs' [2003] dimensions of macro-accessibility, micro-accessibility, personal service, food stops, and security were utilised for the scale, while items more relevant to individual stores, such as music, product range and colour scheme, were omitted. Items employed by Oppewal and Timmermans [1999] to assess customer perceptions of public spaces, window displays, pedestrianised areas, and maintenance (or cleanliness) were also used. Finally, items appearing in the work on shopping malls of Wakefield and Baker [1998] were adapted to

measure architecture and design factors, store variety, desire to stay and repatronage intentions, again omitting items such as aroma and temperature, which refer to individual stores. In total, 16 items were generated from the literature to measure the four dimensions of enjoyment of the shopping experience proposed here.

Once items had been generated, they were subjected to peer review from six academics with backgrounds in retail and/or methodology. At the conclusion of the peer review process, four protocols were carried out on the questionnaire, in order to assess potential difficulties in questionnaire completion or understanding. Neither the peer reviews nor the protocols highlighted any significant concerns.

Overall, the measure was designed to reflect the amount of enjoyment derived from a shopping centre experience, with the latter comprising the following four dimensions: accessibility of the shopping centre, atmosphere of the shopping centre, attitudes towards shopping centre environment, and attitudes towards shopping centre personnel [c.f., Oppewal and Timmermans, 1999; Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003; Wakefield and Baker, 1998].

The endogenous variable was intentions to repatronise the shopping centre. This outcome was measured by a single item: "It is likely that I will shop in (location) in the future." Respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed with each questionnaire item using a 10-item scale ranging from 1 (very low agreement) to 10 (very high agreement). In addition to the scale questions, respondents also supplied demographic data, including age, gender, and ethnicity.

Scale Properties

Initially, the 16 items comprising the shopping enjoyment and location attractiveness scale had their variability assessed. All 16 items displayed acceptable means and standard deviations given the scale range from one to ten (means of individual items ranged from 5.24 to 8.15; standard deviations ranged from 1.649 to 2.634). Following the recommendations of Gerbing and Hamilton [1996], the 16 items were then subjected to an exploratory factor analysis (to identify poorly performing items) and subsequent confirmatory factor analysis (for additional scale purification). All structural equation models were assessed using LISREL 8 [Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1993] utilising the maximum likelihood procedure and the covariance matrix as input. Two items were removed during this analysis due to poor factor loadings and/or cross-loadings on more than one factor. The items that were removed pertained to crowdedness of the shopping centre (“it is too crowded”) and the range of fashionable goods sold in stores (“the stores sell a good range of fashionable items”). The results of the confirmatory factor analysis for the remaining 14-item measurement model are shown in Table 1.

(Please take in Table 1 about here)

As indicated in Table 1, the measurement model has adequate fit statistics with regards to all of the fit indices presented. A full list of the items retained following factor analysis, and the dimensions of enjoyment of the shopping experience to which they were assigned, can be found in Appendix A. The properties of the scale for enjoyment of the shopping experience are shown in Table 2 below.

(Please take in Table 2 about here)

ANALYSIS

Once the properties of the scale had been assessed, a model was run depicting the influence of enjoyment of the shopping experience upon customers' repatronage intentions. A conceptual diagram of the structural model is shown in Figure 1 below.

(Please take in Figure 1 about here)

In order to assess gender differences in the γ parameter between men and women, two competing models were run via multi-group analysis. Firstly, a restricted model was run in which the γ value was fixed to be identical between men and women. The fit statistics for this restricted model are shown in Table 1. Following this, a second model was run in which the γ parameter was estimated freely. The fit statistics for this unrestricted model are also shown in Table 1. As can be seen, the fit statistics for the unrestricted model show a substantial improvement over the restricted model. This confirms that there is a difference in the strength of the relationship between enjoyment of the shopping experience and intentions to repatronise the shopping centre across gender. More specifically, in the unrestricted model, χ^2 decreases by 18.06 with an associated decrease of one degree of freedom, which is significant at $p < .05$ (to be significant at the 5% level, the critical value for a Chi-Square change with one degree of freedom is 3.84). Similarly, we see an increase in the Non-Normed Fit Index, the Comparative Fit Index, and the Goodness-of-Fit Index of the unrestricted model over the restricted model. Therefore, based upon these results we used the unrestricted model to inform our hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The original hypothesis of this study was that the enjoyment of the shopping experience at a regional shopping centre is positively related to customers' repatronage intentions. It was hypothesised that enjoyment of the shopping experience is reflected by four dimensions: accessibility, atmosphere, environment and service. Factor analysis using LISREL 8 confirmed the presence of a four-dimensional, reflective enjoyment of the shopping experience construct as evidenced by the fit indices presented in Table 1 being above the recommended statistical thresholds [Hu and Bentler, 1999].

The results from the analysis show that the relationship (γ parameter) between enjoyment of the shopping experience and intentions to repatronise the shopping centre is positive and significant for both males and females in our study, lending support to H1. This indicates that there is a significant, positive relationship between enjoyment of the shopping experience (as measured by the scale developed here) and intentions to repatronise a shopping region.

However, contrary to our expectations, the relationship between the two focal constructs appears to be stronger for males than for females. More specifically, when considering the results of the multi-group analysis, the results show that there is a stronger relationship (γ parameter) between enjoyment of the shopping experience and intentions to repatronise the shopping centre for males than for females. For males, $\gamma = .77$ (t-value = 7.81) and for females $\gamma = .31$ (t-value = 4.46). Hence, the findings here do not provide support for H2. Indeed, the standardised parameter

estimate for males is almost two-and-a-half times the magnitude of the standardised parameter estimate for females.

While this may at first appear counterintuitive given the arguments put forward in support of H2, there may in fact be perfectly logical reasons for this finding. We assumed in our arguments that men, due to impatience when shopping, are unlikely to have as strong a relationship between enjoyment of shopping and repurchase intentions. Predominantly, we hypothesised that this was as a result of women's predisposition towards enjoyment in and pride towards shopping, as well as increased involvement in shopping. We extrapolated out this superior involvement in the shopping experience to conclude that women should have a stronger disposition towards repatronage if they enjoyed the shopping experience.

However, given that men are shrewd and incisive when shopping [Dennis, Newman and Marsland, 2005] their enjoyment of a shopping experience may be driven by their desire to fulfil certain of their shopping experience expectations. Perhaps shopping is a functional activity for men, and enjoyment of shopping for men is actually driven by their shopping experience allowing them to be decisive, and to complete their shopping quickly and efficiently. Another reason could be that the gender role associated with men when shopping could be outdated, or incorrect [c.f., Stern, 1999].

On the other hand, for women, enjoyment is related to shopping as a leisure activity. Shopping for pleasure for women includes elements of browsing and investing time in comparison of available alternatives before making purchase decisions. To do this, women are more likely to

‘shop around’ [Campbell, 1997]. Dennis, Newman and Marsland [2005] have shown that, for women, enjoyment of shopping is driven less by location than for men, and this could explain why, if shopping is to be an enjoyable experience, women like to have a variety of location options available to them. Hence a weaker relationship of enjoyment with repatronage may be explained by the fact that for women to enjoy shopping they prefer a range of locations to consider when selecting a shopping destination.

If women see the availability of choice as adding to their pleasure in shopping, this would reduce their loyalty to a specific shopping location, without directly diminishing their enjoyment of the location. This concurs with Sivadas and Baker-Prewitt [2000] and Miranda, Konya and Havrila [2005], among others, who have shown that favourable evaluations of the shopping experience do not necessarily result in loyalty and repatronage, suggesting that other factors are involved in patronage choices. Due to their propensity to be decisive and saving time in shopping, men appear to show more loyalty in their shopping choices. Loyalty to a shopping location can be a mechanism to simplify the shopping process for men by reducing the confusion caused by too much choice [Bakewell and Mitchell, 2004]. This could explain the stronger relationship between enjoyment of the shopping experience and repatronage intentions for men than women.

CONCLUSIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of the analysis give clear theoretical and managerial implications. From a theoretical perspective, the research relates to prior work both regarding gender differences in shopping and

influences on repatronage intentions. From a gender-related perspective, our results appear to refute the notion of the Savannah Hypothesis. Based upon this hypothesis, we expected the relationship between enjoyment and repatronage intentions to be stronger for women than men, as women enjoying shopping should see repatronage as an opportunity to extend their shopping experience, whereas men generally seek to keep shopping time to a minimum. This difference was based upon our expectation that there are clearly defined gender differences when it comes to shopping [c.f. Fischer and Arnold, 1994]. However, our results appear to support the notion that for men enjoying shopping, they indicate a stronger intention to return than do women.

This could raise potential issues for shopping centre management. Based on previous research, marketing management may be predisposed to ensuring that women enjoy their shopping experience and may target advertising and promotional activities more towards women than men. In fact, they may find that the same level of activity directed towards men could pay greater dividends in terms of repatronage. Perhaps we are seeing a change in the definition of shopping roles, and this could account for the unexpected results of our gender-based repatronage intentions hypothesis. Perhaps the approaches of men and women to shopping are changing due to the socialisation aspect of the activity [Severiens and Ten Dam, 1998]. The generation gap between young and mature male shoppers may be challenging traditional shopping motivations; 'Younger males today are more accustomed to shopping and seem to gain more enjoyment out of it' [Minahan and Beverland, 2005, p. 174]. Indeed, whilst earlier work confirmed the existence of well-defined gender shopping roles [Fischer and Arnold, 1994; Lavin, 1993] more recent work appears to refute these roles and appears more in favour of relaxed gender roles [Otnes and McGrath, 2001].

A major managerial outcome is the understanding that customers who enjoy their shopping intend to return to the shopping area in future. This raises a number of issues relating to repatronage intentions. Our results give indication that customers derive enjoyment from regional shopping experiences from their assessment of accessibility, atmosphere, environment, and shopping centre personnel. This result is similar to that provided by Wakefield and Baker [1998] who found that excitement has a positive influence upon repatronage intentions. It stands to reason then that if a shopping centre facilitates fast, efficient shopping, this would appeal to men, who would enjoy shopping in that region, and may therefore be more likely to return to the location in the future.

This research also has implications for managers of retail stores in regional shopping centres. There is a clear need for bodies such as local authorities and town centre managers to coordinate the shopping experience in these regional centres so that customers' enjoyment is maximised, in a similar way to how more discrete shopping centres, such as shopping malls or plazas, are managed [Kirkup and Rafiq, 1999]. This research provides a useful benchmark that retailers can use to manage the shopping experience. With increasing participation in shopping by male consumers who prefer to shop in a fast and efficient way, attention needs to be paid to making shopping centres easily accessible and attractive to this segment of shoppers. For example, mature male consumers prefer to shop by product type rather than brand [Minahan and Beverland, 2005]; therefore town centre managers could in the future seek to group stores by type in functional focused 'hotspots'; also providing clear directions, signage and customer information / advice points within the shopping centre [Laroche, Saad, Cleveland and Browne,

2000]. At the same time, since women comprise a higher proportion of the shopping population, there is a need to promote aspects of the shopping centre as a relaxing and fun leisure activity to increase female enjoyment of the shopping location, to retain these customers and increase the likelihood of repatronage.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The nature of the scale in this paper indicates specific areas that customers use to judge their enjoyment of a shopping experience in regional shopping centres. However, in considering any research, it is important to evaluate the limitations of the work. First, this study is cross-sectional, measuring respondents' enjoyment of the shopping experience and intentions to repatronise at only one point in time. As such, conclusions regarding causal order amongst the variables of interest cannot be made, and care should be exercised when interpreting the findings.

Second, although this study has confirmed a number of variables relating to enjoyment of shopping locations, it may be likely that certain of these variables will be more influential than others in affecting levels of enjoyment and repatronage decisions. Further research could examine specific factors that customers use to judge their enjoyment of a shopping experience in regional centres. Further research would also be valuable in identifying other consumer segments than the ones identified by gender in this study, and to segment for example according to respondents' age or travel distance. Third, it should be noted that there are differences between intentions to repatronise and actual repatronage behaviours on the part of shoppers. Future work in the area

could seek to examine whether intentions to repatronise a shopping centre translate into actual repatronage behaviours.

Fourth, we measured a limited number of variables in our work. There may be additional factors that could contribute towards shopping enjoyment. One possibility is that the quality and quantity of entertainment offered may influence enjoyment of the shopping experience. For instance, some shops or shopping centres provide additional entertainment during festive seasons (such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, or Easter). In this respect, seasonality aspects could also affect enjoyment of the shopping experience, and this issue warrants empirical study.

It is also the case that enjoyment of the shopping experience may impact upon more than just intentions to repatronise the centre. For instance, it could be argued that shopping enjoyment may influence the discretionary amount that shoppers are prepared to spend in a shopping trip; it is established that increased time spent in the retail environment results in higher spending [Donovan, Rossiter, Marcolyn and Nesdale. 1994; Wakefield and Baker, 1998] thus enjoyment may increase duration of time spent on the shopping visit and spending potential. Willingness to spend more money or willingness to recommend the shopping centre to others are other potential outcome variables.

It is also important to consider the relationship between service quality and enjoyment and future work could seek to explain how these constructs specifically relate to one another. For example it is likely that certain aspects of shopping enjoyment may also impact on service quality perceptions. As such, the role that shopping enjoyment may play in shaping service quality

needs to be investigated. For instance, perceptions of the shopping centre environment could have an impact on customers' feelings of assurance regarding the shopping centre as a whole.

Consequently, it could be that effective management of the shopping environment itself could influence perceptions of service quality (e.g., at the store-level and more broadly in terms of the centre itself). Furthermore, it could be interesting to see how the concept of entertainment, as discussed by Sit, Merrilees and Birch [2003], relates to excitement, enjoyment and quality perceptions of customers, and how in turn it may influence repatronage.

Therefore, while our study provides important results for managers in shopping centres, we are encouraged that there is sufficient scope for further research into this area. Additionally, the research concentrated on aspects of regional shopping centres, which predominantly relate to the retail provision in these areas. Regional town and city centres are beginning to focus their marketing on a whole package of customer attraction which includes retail but also aspects such as entertainment, leisure facilities, hospitality and tourism. Future research into customer enjoyment and patronage could investigate how these aspects can also influence patronage decisions.

Finally, since the study was conducted in a specific region of the United Kingdom, it would be interesting to examine the stability of the results first nationally, and then cross-nationally. It may be that customers' enjoyment of the shopping experience could vary across geographic regions or international borders. Indeed, it is for this reason that there is a healthy stream of international consumer behaviour research. However, taking these limitations into account, we feel that the

current study makes a significant contribution to the retail consumer behaviour literature and has identified a number of potential areas for future research into this important area of the literature.

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FIGURE 1
CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF SHOPPING ENJOYMENT

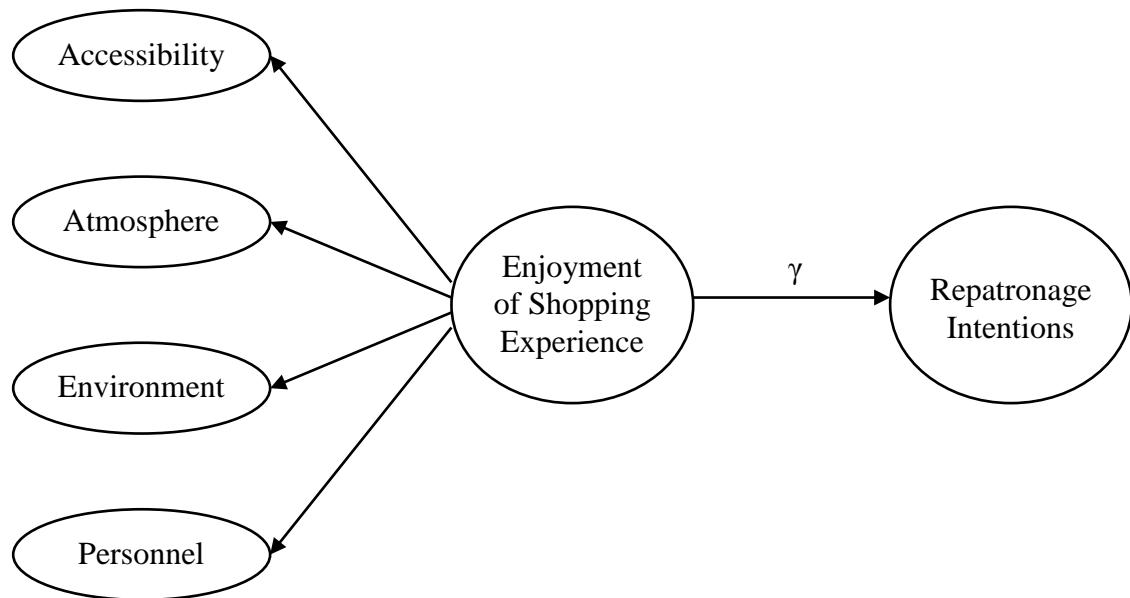


TABLE 1
MODEL FIT MEASURES

Model	χ^2 (df)	p	RMSEA	NNFI	CFI	GFI
Measurement	306.80 (86)	.000	.073	.937	.949	.922
Restricted	477.36 (206)	.000	.074	.933	.924	.884
Unrestricted	459.30 (205)	.000	.096	.937	.938	.888

Note: RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; NNFI = Non-Normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; GFI = Goodness-of-Fit Index.

TABLE 2
CORRELATIONS AND MEASUREMENT PROPERTIES

	Mean	S.D.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Accessibility	7.75	1.43	.70				
2. Atmosphere	7.19	1.94	.56	.89			
3. Environment	7.54	1.81	.69	.81	.83		
4. Personnel	7.75	1.81	.55	.65	.79	.95	
5. Repatronage	8.89	1.37	.32	.37	.45	.37	.70 ^a

Note: item inter-correlations are shown; composite reliability of each dimension is shown on the diagonal; a: reliability of the single indicant set at .70.

APPENDIX A
ITEMS MEASURING DIMENSIONS OF LOCATION ATTRACTIVENESS

Directions: *On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest score you can give, please rate the shopping area on the following statements*

ITEM(S)	DIMENSION
Accessibility	
The location of stores is convenient*	<i>Location</i>
There is adequate parking ***	<i>Parking</i>
Pedestrianised areas make it easy to get to move around **	<i>Pedestrianisation</i>
Travelling to shop here is easy and straightforward ***	<i>Travel</i>
Atmosphere	
The buildings in this place look attractive *	<i>Appearance</i>
The overall atmosphere makes shopping enjoyable **	<i>Atmosphere</i>
There is a good selection of cafés and restaurants * / **	<i>Food Stops</i>
There is an excellent variety of stores *	<i>Variety</i>
The window displays are attractive **	<i>Fashion / Style</i>
Environment	
The shopping area looks clean and tidy ***	<i>Cleanliness</i>
Shopping hours are convenient ***	<i>Opening Hours</i>
It feels like a safe place to shop ***	<i>Safety</i>
Personnel	
The service in the shops is good ***	<i>Customer Service</i>
The attitude of staff in the shops is helpful and friendly ***	<i>Staff Attitudes</i>

* Item adapted from Wakefield and Baker [1998]

** Item adapted from Oppewal and Timmermans [1999]

*** Item adapted from Sit, Merrilees and Birch [2003]