



Exploring the Influence of Mall Image Dimensions, Logistics, and Distribution on Customer Experience: The Role of Employee Interaction, Atmosphere, and Design in Malaysian Retail Malls

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Abstract

Purpose: This study explores how mall image dimensions of atmosphere, design, and employee interaction affect customer experience in Malaysian retail malls. It also examines the role of shopping motivation as a mediator in these relationships, framed within Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT). **Research Design, Data, and Methodology:** A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 269 shoppers in Klang Valley, Malaysia, using a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) via SPSS and SmartPLS to assess the relationships between mall image dimensions, shopping motivation, and customer experience. **Results:** The study found that mall atmosphere and design did not significantly affect customer experience. However, employee interaction had a significant and positive impact, particularly for shoppers with higher intrinsic motivation. Shopping motivation also mediated the relationship between employee interaction and customer experience. **Conclusions:** The findings emphasize that employee interaction plays a crucial role in shaping customer experience, outweighing the influence of physical mall attributes. Retail managers should prioritize staff training and engagement strategies, especially for motivated shoppers, to enhance customer satisfaction. This research contributes to the literature by integrating emotional and motivational factors into the understanding of customer experience, offering valuable insights for retail strategies in an increasingly competitive online market.

Keywords : Mall Image, Logistics, Distribution, Retail Trade, Shopping Motivation, Customer Experience, Employees, Retail Management

JEL Classification: M31, L81, C38, D91

1. Introduction

The logistics and distribution sectors play a significant role in ensuring efficient product supply and customer satisfaction in retail malls. Effective inventory management,

timely product deliveries, and smooth distribution channels enhance the overall mall image and contribute to a positive customer experience. As malls evolve into hubs for retail trade, integrating robust logistics strategies becomes vital in catering to the needs of both customers and retailers. The

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retail industry has been continuously evolving, and the landscape of retail in Malaysia has seen significant and ongoing transformations over the years. From 1987 to 2018, Malaysia's wholesale and retail trade sector grew at an impressive annual rate of 11.8%, with its contribution to GDP rising from RM 7.5 billion to RM 237 billion. Malls today are no longer just shopping destinations; they are evolving into spaces that cater to the changing expectations of customers, especially with the growing middle class in Asia and the rapid advancement of digital technologies. These shifts have pushed malls to focus on creating a more cohesive and immersive customer experience. As competition from online retailers intensifies, it is crucial for mall management to excel in offering a superior in-store experience, using this as a key advantage for physical shopping centers (Wessels, 2024).

Customer experience has become a key factor in delivering a unique, satisfying, and memorable interaction. Scholars and marketers view it as a strategic approach for creating differentiation and securing a long-term competitive edge (Dagnino et al., 2021). Researchers suggest that customer experience is shaped by the cumulative interactions encountered throughout the customer journey (Siebert et al., 2020). A mall's image plays a significant role in customer decision-making, impacting both patronage and the overall value of the shopping center (Mahmud et al., 2023). Shopping malls not only cater to the transactional needs of customers by providing a place to buy goods and services, but they also fulfil social and emotional functions, offering a space for experiential enjoyment (Breugelmans et al., 2023).

Customers are deeply influenced by the mall's physical environment elements like design, atmosphere, and ambiance shape their expectations about the shopping experience and the types of stores they will find (Pal & Srivastava, 2024). However, each customer views the mall's image differently and places varying levels of importance on their shopping experience. Therefore, understanding the mall's image is crucial for enhancing customer experience. When customers are deeply engaged with a mall's image, they tend to pick up on key environmental elements like design, atmosphere, and ambiance, which help shape their expectations about the shopping experience and the type of stores the mall offers. According to Mayhoub and Rabboh (2022), identified three key components that make up the mall image: mall design & appearance, mall atmosphere, and mall employees. These dimensions are grounded in earlier works and represent the mall's core ambient elements.

On the other hand, Asih et al. (2022) suggested that differences in customer experiences can be explained by varying shopping motivations, such as utilitarian (task-focused) and hedonic (pleasure-driven) motivations. Task-oriented customers prioritize efficiency and hence, aiming

to complete their shopping with minimal effort. In contrast, customers driven by hedonic motivation find satisfaction in shopping within an inviting environment and enjoying the overall experience. In the meanwhile, Cardoso and Pinto, (2010) explained that customers with utilitarian shopping motivations evaluate their experience based on how well it aligns with their specific goals. Utilitarian shoppers are logical, intentional, and focused on efficiency, where the significance lies in the outcome of the purchase rather than the shopping experience itself.

Although the mall's image is known to affect customer purchasing decisions and overall mall patronage (Thanasi-Boçe et al., 2021), there is limited understanding of how specific attributes of mall image influence consumer behavior and contribute to the overall customer experience. Further research is necessary to explore the relationship between mall image characteristics and consumer purchasing behavior. This includes examining how unique experiences provided by malls enhance or detract from the perceived value of goods and services and contribute to effective marketing strategies (Alzoubi et al., 2022).

Shopping motivations significantly influence customer behavior and purchasing decisions in malls. However, there is a gap in understanding the diverse motivators that drive shoppers to engage in retail transactions and how these motivations affect their evaluation of the retail experience (An & Han, 2020). The objective of this study is to explore how various elements of a mall's image influence customer experience, while also examining the role of shopping motivations between mall image and customers' overall mall experience.

While previous research has examined the impact of mall image on customer experience, this study extends the literature by investigating the moderating role of shopping motivation. Specifically, it explores how different types of shopping motivations (hedonic and utilitarian) influence the strength of the relationship between mall image dimensions (atmosphere, design, and employee interaction) and customer experience.

While Self-Determination Theory (SDT) focuses on intrinsic motivation (engaging in behavior for its inherent satisfaction) and extrinsic motivation (engaging in behavior for external rewards), hedonic and utilitarian motivations describe the broader reasons for shopping. Hedonic motivation relates to seeking pleasure and enjoyment from the shopping experience itself, while utilitarian motivation refers to task-oriented shopping aimed at fulfilling specific needs. This study explores how these motivational types interact with mall image dimensions to influence customer experience. Customer experience has become a key factor in creating differentiation and securing long-term competitive advantages in the retail industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Customer Experience

Customer experience, however, encompasses the aggregate, subjective reaction customer's form through their positive and negative experiences with a retail environment. It has cognitive, emotional, social and physical dimensions (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). Malls are more and more focusing on providing differentiated, engaging environments that create customer experience and develop customer satisfaction (Ameen et al., 2021). According to scholars, customer experience is constructed not only through transactions, but rather through holistic engagements along the shopping journey (An & Han, 2020).

2.2. Mall Image

Mall image has a substantial impact on consumer behavior, influencing patronage decisions and the perceived value offered by the mall (Mahmud et al., 2023). Some of these major dimensions of mall image consists of the atmosphere, its design and appearance, and interactions with employees (Adeola et al., 2023). The first three of the five dimensions contribute uniquely to customer expectations and overall satisfaction. A clean and stylistically harmonious ambiance can stimulate guests' emotions positively and good relationships with employees can make them feel more connected and satisfied (Afaq et al., 2020).

2.3. Shopping Motivation

Hedonic and utilitarian shopping motivation are two main types of shopping motivation. Hedonic motivation refers to a tendency to seek pleasure, where shopping is considered to be an enjoyable and emotionally fulfilling process (Chang et al., 2023). On the other hand, utilitarian motivation mainly relates to task-based features that help satisfy consumers' intended goals in a more time-efficient manner (Santo & Marques, 2022). Evidence suggests that hedonic shoppers are more susceptible to the shopping environment than utilitarian shoppers, whose focus is on the outcome rather than the process (Widagdo & Roz, (2021). These motivations are key for mall strategy and customer targeting.

Hedonic shopping motivation refers to the intrinsic enjoyment derived from shopping, aligning with intrinsic motivation in SDT, where individuals engage in an activity for its own sake. In contrast, utilitarian motivation is more aligned with extrinsic motivation, where the goal is to complete a task efficiently and achieve specific outcomes. Understanding these motivations is essential to exploring how they influence customer behavior in mall environments.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

This paper proposes a foundation for future emotion- and motivation-based customer experience research by integration of Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT) and Self Determination Theory (SDT). For the CAT, emotions are subscriptions of automatic evaluation of situational parameters that determine behavior images and decision-makings of individuals (Travnik et al., 2020). Based on the importance of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation in directing behavioral response, SDT states that intrinsically motivated individuals love to perform activities that are intrinsically meaningful (Zhang et al., 2021). Combined, these theories provide such a comprehensive understanding of how hedonic and utilitarian values and motivations drive mall customers to create positive experiences.

2.5. Gaps in Existing Research

In relation to mall image and customer experience there are volumes of literature, yet there are still gaps when it comes to how various dimensions within mall image such as atmosphere, design, and employee; reading, aim to examine the impacts on diver's customer motivations (Kaur et al., 2024). Prior research has predominantly conceptualized mall image as a unidimensional but has not investigated the differential effects of its elements. Moreover, the moderating role of shopping motivation in the mall image–customer experience relationship has not been adequately studied. Filling these voids is prerequisite for formulating targeted strategies to improve such key retail market performance imperatives as consumer engagement and satisfaction.

This literature survey emphasizes the crucial impact that both mall image and shopping motivation have on customer experiences. This study seeks to fill such existing gaps in the literature by integrating the different emotional and motivation theories to understand how specific attributes of the mall can create specific customer behavior. This deep knowledge will then allow mall managers to create more engaging and tailored shopping experiences.

2.6. Materials and Methods

This study presents a new research framework that highlights the connections between shopping motivation, mall image, and customer experience. It contributes to the theoretical understanding of customer experience by applying Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) within the Malaysian context. According to CAT, emotions triggered by how customers evaluate their shopping situations influence their behavior, meaning that emotional bond with mall's image that shape

the overall customer experience. SDT, which examines motivation, personality growth, and well-being, describes how customers weave new experiences into their identity. This study extends the boundaries of motivation and emotional appraisal theories and adds new understanding on the process of customer experience, and provides directions for future research in related fields.

2.6.1. Customer Experience

Customer experience refers to the internal, subjective response of customers towards their interaction with a company (Godovykh & Tasci, 2020). Customers' overall and cumulative perceptions of a product or service after learning about it, buying it, using it, maintaining it, and discarding it are now referred to as their customer experience (Pei et al., 2020).

2.6.2. Mall Image

It is defined as the shoppers' perception of a shopping mall (Li et al., 2023). The value of a mall's good and distinctive impression in a shopper's mind is reflected in the mall image (Atulkar, 2020). Malls and the shops within them put effort into creating a visually appealing and cohesive environment. Customers are fully engaged with the physical space of the mall and often rely on key visual cues like design, atmosphere, and ambiance to shape their expectations about the shopping experience and the types of stores available (Amin et al., 2021).

2.6.3. Shopping Motivation

The motivation for customers to shop is what propels their actions towards achieving their internal needs (Talwar et al., 2021). Hedonic shopping motivation: it refers to customers who shop for self-pleasure, joy and entertainment (Faisal et al., 2020). It is characterized as a pleasurable activity in which shoppers may feel emotionally satisfied regardless of whether a purchase is made. Utilitarian shopping motivation refers to task-oriented, effective, deliberate, and logical behavior in which the significance of the purchase is derived from the final product rather than the actual shopping experience (Dahana et al., 2022).

3. Research Methods and Materials

3.1. Research Design

The research design for this study focuses on exploring the impact of customer image on customer experience through shopping motivation. A cross-sectional survey approach will be employed to gather data at a specific point in time from a sample of customers in a retail environment

(Pallant et al., 2022). The study will investigate the relationships between customer perceptions of store image, their shopping motivation, and the resulting customer experience. Responses will be collected through utilizing a structured questionnaire, and quantitative methods will be used to analyze the data. Ethical issues will include ensuring the privacy and confidentiality for all respondents, as well as informed consent at each stage of the process.

Hedonic shopping motivation was measured through five dimensions that capture the pleasure and enjoyment shoppers derive from the shopping experience, while utilitarian motivation was assessed through two dimensions focusing on the task-oriented aspects of shopping. These two constructs were examined in relation to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which were measured using items adapted from Self-Determination Theory (SDT), focusing on intrinsic enjoyment and extrinsic rewards.

3.2. Population and Sampling

Hence, the respondents in this study are mall customers in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The selection criteria for respondents include being Malaysian citizens aged 18 and above and having visited a shopping mall in Klang Valley, regardless of whether they made a purchase. The decision to set a minimum age of 18 is to ensure the reliability of responses and to avoid requiring parental consent for participation. Klang Valley was chosen as the study area because it is the most cosmopolitan region in Malaysia. Klang Valley is experiencing population growth, rising spending power, and increased customer expectations, which has led to the expansion of retail malls in the area.

The study used a convenience sampling method, where participants were selected based on accessibility, as described by (Emerson, 2021). This technique was chosen for its cost-effectiveness, efficiency, and ease of implementation. The study focused on customers from various shopping malls in Selangor and the Federal Territory, both of which are part of Klang Valley. Major and popular malls frequented by these customers were targeted for sampling. In this research, individuals served as the unit of analysis. This study chose to target a total of 400 respondents from the mall patrons in the Klang Valley, Malaysia the study's final sample included 269 respondents. The power analysis indicated that a minimum of 107 observations is needed for 95% statistical power with a medium effect size. With 269 respondents, the sample size is more than sufficient to ensure reliable and valid results.

3.3. Data Collection and Instruments

A key part of the study design is the method used to collect data. In survey-based research, the primary tool for

this is the questionnaire. For this study, data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire, a method commonly used by social scientists. Developing the questionnaire was a crucial step, ensuring each item aligned with the research questions and objectives. The questions were organized in a way that made it easy for respondents to understand and respond. The questionnaire was structured into two main parts: the first focused on the respondents' demographics, while the second covered the study's key variables exogenous, moderating, and endogenous factors to address the research questions. This study uses a five-point Likert scale to minimize measurement errors and avoid potential violations of normality in the collected data.

Customer experience is measured across four dimensions: cognitive, affective, social, and physical, each represented by one item, adapted from (Godovykh & Tasci, 2020). Hedonic shopping motivation is assessed through five dimensions, while utilitarian shopping motivation is evaluated by two dimensions, both adapted from (Chang et al., 2023). Additionally, the mall image is examined using three components: employees, atmosphere, and mall design and appearance, adapted from (Amin et al., 2021). The data analysis was conducted using two software programs: SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 21.0) and Smart-PLS 3.2.7, which was employed for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

3.4. Theoretical Framework

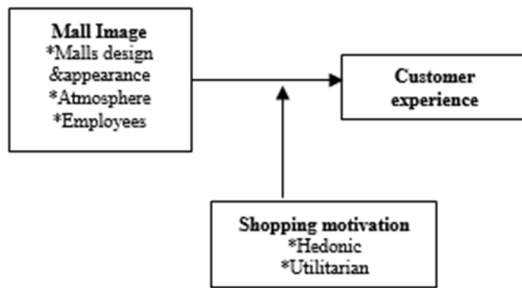


Figure 1: Model of Mall Image Enhance Customer Experience in Retail Shopping

The image of a shopping mall plays a significant role in shaping customer decisions, driving both patronage and shopping center equity (Dokcen et al., 2021). Although previous research has explored customer behavior in malls, how a mall's image specifically affects buying behavior remains unclear. Thus, this study presents the following hypothesis

H1: Mall image significantly impacts customer experience.

Today's customers are increasingly drawn to shopping malls that provide a unique experience and offer value-added products. Mall retailers can enhance the shopping

experience by catering to shoppers' motivations. Therefore, it is essential for mall retailers to identify the key motivators that influence purchasing decisions (Li et al., 2023).

H2: Shopping motivations moderate the relationship between mall image and customer experience.

4. Result

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

This study collected 269 valid responses via self-administered questionnaires. Women made up 61.3% of respondents, while men accounted for 38.7%. Most respondents were Malaysian shoppers aged 25 to 44, with 31.6% aged 25-34 and 26.7% aged 35-44. A smaller percentage (5.2%) were aged 55-64, and only 1.12% were over 65.

4.2. Reliability and Validity Analysis

As shown in Table 1, all loadings for the t-test are significant at $p < 0.001$ and exceed this minimum. Composite reliability, ranging from 0.80 to 0.90, confirmed consistency across constructs. Convergent validity was evaluated using the average variance extracted (AVE), with (Sujati & Akhyar, 2020). threshold of 0.50, indicating that at least 50% of the variance is explained by the predictor. All constructs met or exceeded this AVE threshold, and the findings showed that loadings, AVE, and composite reliability surpassed the benchmark values. Customer experience, mall image (atmosphere, design, and employees), and shopping motivation all have positive mean scores, indicating favorable perceptions. The standard deviations suggest moderate variability across most variables, with slightly higher variability in shopping motivation. Overall, the constructs are consistent and reliable, reflecting a generally positive customer response.

Table 1: Reliability and Validity Analysis

Variable	Composite Reliability > 0.7	Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.5	Mean	Std
Customer experience	0.951	0.828	3.799	0.762
Mall image				
Mall atmosphere	0.912	0.723	3.978	0.754
Mall design&Appearance	0.874	0.539	3.982	0.844
Mall employees	0.947	0.898	3.816	0.755
Shopping Motivation	0.941	0.888	3.679	0.869

4.3. Path Analysis

The data from table 2 shows that there are no significant

relationships between mall atmosphere, design, or employees and customer experience. All beta values are weak, and the p-values exceed 0.05, indicating that these factors do not have a statistically significant impact on customer experience in this study.

Table 2: Direct Effect

Relationship	Beta	S-Mean	SD Error	T values	P Values	Decision
MA -> CE	-0.027	-0.04	0.045	0.603	0.273	Not Supported
MD -> CE	0.010	0.028	0.052	0.189	0.425	Not Supported
ME -> CE	-0.008	0.008	0.044	0.175	0.431	Not Supported

Notes: Mall Atmosphere (MA); Mall Design (MD); Mall Employee (ME); Customer Experience (CE)

The data from the table 3 shows that the interaction between mall employees and shopping motivation has a significant negative impact on customer experience. However, the interactions between mall atmosphere, mall design, and shopping motivation do not significantly affect customer experience.

The results show that, contrary to the initial hypothesis (H1), the three dimensions of mall image atmosphere, design, and employee interaction did not exhibit significant direct effects on customer experience. The beta values for these relationships were weak, and the p-values exceeded 0.05, suggesting that these factors do not have a statistically significant direct impact on customer experience in this study.

Table 3: Indirect Effect

Relationship	Beta	SD Error	T values	P Values	Decision
MA*MOT -> CE	0.005	0.05	0.098	0.461	Not Supported
MD*MOT -> CE	0.018	0.059	0.3	0.382	Not Supported
ME*MOT -> CE	-0.116	0.054	2.14	0.016	Supported

Note: Mall Atmosphere (MA); Mall Design (MD); Mall Employee (ME); Customer Experience (CE); Motivation (MOT)

While mall atmosphere and design did not directly influence customer experience, employee interaction emerged as a key factor in enhancing customer experience, especially among shoppers with high intrinsic motivation. The moderation analysis revealed that for motivated shoppers, positive employee interactions significantly contributed to a better customer experience.

5. Discussion

This study explored how mall image dimensions (atmosphere, design, and employee interactions) relate to customer experience, and how shopping motivation moderates that relationship. The results showed subtle

dynamics that defy some widespread beliefs regarding the impact of physical environments on customer satisfaction.

To our surprise, neither mall atmosphere nor design and appearance contributed to the customer experience. As a result, Malaysian shoppers appeared to care about different aspects of their shopping experiences as opposed to focusing on aesthetic or ambient influences as highlighted in other studies (Kandampully et al., 2023). One possible reason is that consumers are more exposed to the appearance of certain stores housed in a mall than the ambience of the mall itself. For instance, brand loyalty might bring shoppers to their favorite outlets, irrespective of the mall’s physical features. In contrast, in some markets like India, customers’ dissatisfaction with mall services can greatly affect customer loyalty (Slack et al., 2020).

On the other hand, employee interactions stood out as a driver providing a positive customer experience, especially for motivated shoppers. This is consistent with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) that intrinsic motivation and social bonds are associated with a satisfactory experience for customers. Positive experiences with employees when shoppers are motivated provide a sense of person ability and fulfillment. As a result, this finding shows how crucial training the employees of malls to deliver quality service is since these interactions can help build those emotional ties and make a person move from just being satisfied to realizing the magic of the retail experience.

Shopping motivation also moderated this relationship. If employees interacted positively with motivated shoppers, other dimensions of the mall such as the design and atmosphere did not differ depending on the level of motivation to shop. It implies that what motivates the actions of high-motivation consumers is emotional and social, rather than physical. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of employee–customer relationship management for malls to enhance overall customer experience in the face of decreasing customer visits. Through this understanding of motivation, mall management can design their approach to cater to different kinds of shoppers that will be instrumental in their success in a rapidly changing retail environment.

While this study focuses on traditional mall image dimensions, such as design, atmosphere, and employee interaction, future research could explore how the integration of visual technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) and digital signage, might further enhance customer experiences and influence perceptions of mall image. These technologies have the potential to engage customers in new and dynamic ways, fostering deeper emotional connections with the mall environment.

Although the hypothesis (H1) suggested that mall image dimensions atmosphere, design, and employee interaction would significantly influence customer experience, the

analysis revealed that none of these dimensions had a significant direct effect. This finding is somewhat unexpected, as previous studies have shown that mall atmosphere and design typically play a key role in shaping customer experiences. One possible explanation for this outcome is that Malaysian shoppers in this study may place greater emphasis on other factors, such as product offerings or social interactions, rather than the physical environment. Furthermore, the influence of mall design and atmosphere might be more subtle or context-dependent, potentially requiring further exploration in different settings or using more diverse sample populations.

The finding that employee interaction significantly influences customer experience under moderated conditions of shopping motivation underscores the importance of personal engagement in retail settings. This study suggests that, for motivated shoppers, emotional connections fostered through positive employee-customer interactions are more influential than physical mall attributes such as atmosphere or design. This finding contributes to the literature by highlighting the differential role of employee interaction in the customer experience, suggesting that mall managers should prioritize employee training and engagement strategies to enhance the shopping experience, particularly for motivated customers.

This study's findings suggest that intrinsic motivation (e.g., the enjoyment derived from shopping) is more strongly associated with positive customer experiences when coupled with employee interactions. Hedonic motivation, which reflects intrinsic enjoyment of the shopping process, amplifies the importance of emotional and social connections during the shopping journey. Mall management should prioritize their efforts on staff training and customer engagement strategies to enhance satisfaction.

6. Contribution of the Study

6.1. Practical Contributions

This research has several practical implications for mall managers and retail personnel interested in improving customer experience. For one, the results highlight the vital function of employee-customer exchanges in creating positive shopping experiences, especially for motivated shoppers. The mall management should train their staff on customer handling, effective communication and personalized service. The familiarity and relatability of human interactions is an irreplaceable aspect of offering customer service as well. Employees who are able to connect with their customers on an emotional level as well as offer personalized support can make a drastic difference in their customers' overall satisfaction and loyalty.

Next, although mall atmosphere and design were not shown to be directly impactful with regard to customer experience, they do play an important role as subsidiaries. Retailers should still maintain attractive environments, however they should prioritize interactive and engaging experiences. One alternative could be to hold events in the mall or provide specific services to take the emotional contact beyond the space.

Moreover, the understanding of the quest-involving contrasts in attributive motives through hedonic and utilitarian means offers targeted marketing perceived in elucidation. For example, hedonic shoppers (those looking for enjoyment and leisure) may be responsive to experiential promotions and in-store entertainment. On the other hand, utilitarian shoppers appreciate efficiency and convenience, so they may benefit from streamlined processes or signage and mobile navigation apps that make it easy to find their way around.

6.2. Theoretical Contributions

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the customer experience literature by applying Consumer Appraisal Theory (CAT) with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) in retail environments. The study challenges traditional models focused on physical attributes by showing the importance of intrinsic motivations for undertaking and successfully completing long distance challenges over environmental factors.

Additionally, this study offers empirical support for the moderating effect of shopping motivation, contributing to a broader understanding of the ways in which varied motivation types impact the link between mall image and customer experience. It is assumed that information providing process is related to the recognition of emotion and cognitive concept, which deducts more demonstrative effect that will have a better understanding of the shopping mall to describe this enrich with reasoning perception experience. In addition to that, the results of the study contribute to the literature on emerging markets like Malaysia. By generating context-relevant findings, it fills in a gap in the shopping behavior literature by elucidating cultural and regional differences and serving as a basis for future studies in similar comparisons.

7. Limitations and Future Research

7.1. Limitations

This study has a number of strengths but also limitations that should be recognized. Although this work provides important insights to deepen an understanding of

domiciliary care, there are some limitations to consider. The results may not be generalizable outside of other regions or countries with differing cultural, economic or retail landscapes. Further research should explore cross-regional or cross-cultural studies to validate and add to the initial findings.

Second, it was a cross-sectional study, which involved data collection at one point. This makes it difficult to map changes in customer experience and behavior over time. A longitudinal study would allow for much richer insight into how shopping motives and experiences change. A further limitation is that data was self-reported, and therefore this may be prone to social desirability bias or inaccuracies in respondents' recall. Future research may use observational methods or customer behavior tracking data to enhance surveys or give a more holistic view of shopper experiences.

Moreover, the primary focus of the study was on three dimensions of mall image which includes atmosphere, design & appearance and employee interactions. As the authors noted, they failed to investigate other drivers, such as technology, showmanship or social/community dynamics of malls. Investigating these additional dimensions could provide for a deeper perspective into customer experience.

Although this study provides valuable insights into the retail sector, it is important to recognize its limitations, such as its focus on shopping malls rather than other types of retail environments.

7.2. Future Research

Future work could study the effect of digital technologies and Omni channel experiences on customer satisfaction in the context of the mall. With the rise of online shopping, understanding what role digital (virtual try-ons, loyalty programs, etc.) incorporates into the in-person experience could offer valuable insights. Moreover, a look into customer segmentation would also provide insight into how different groups perceive mall image elements and shopping motivations based on either demographic or psychographic segmentation. Future research, for example, could examine whether employee interactions or mall atmosphere matter more or less depending on generational differences.

Finally, a qualitative research methods approach (for example, in-depth interviews or focus groups) could have yielded deeper insights into customer experiences and motivations. Such a response would serve to capture the emotional and psychological states by which shopping was experienced but that were not easily translatable to quantitative data. Future work has the potential to expand upon these findings and further develop the understanding of customer behavior through exploring these acknowledged limitations.

8. Conclusion

The study explored the link between individual dimensions of mall image sources (atmosphere, design & appearance, and employee interactions, respectively) and customer experience outcomes and presented the pattern wherein shopping motivation moderated this relationship. The results showed, against traditional assumptions that mall atmosphere and design have little to no impact on customer experience. Instead, whether mall employees sought to establish relationships with shoppers was the most important factor for shoppers who were more goal-oriented. Truly supports the need for human-centric strategies to engage consumers in the retail space to increase satisfaction.

Rooted in Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the research highlights the significance of emotions and intrinsic motivations in influencing consumer behavior. Engaging with employees brings even higher satisfaction to motivated shoppers, stressing the importance of emotional bonds and personal relationships in a positive shopping experience. This highlights a need for mall management to prioritize their reflows on staff training and the customer experience rather than just relying on physical form or atmosphere.

From a practical point of view, the study offers actionable insights for retail managers and mall operators. They can create more engaging and satisfying experiences by prioritizing employee-customer interactions, and by tailoring strategies to distinct and diverse shopping motivations. Not only does this improve customer loyalty, but it also increases the advantage against competition in the changing world of online retail.

This study broadens the scope of customer experience in the Malaysian setting, which has scarcely received any scholarly attention and where existing literature has not sufficiently encompass the differential relationships of mall image dimensions to customer experience. But the results are context-specific, and more work should be done to examine these associations in other cultures and regions to confirm their wider applicability.

Ultimately, this work reinforces that the future of brick goods is in creating valuable, human-centered interactions. It is, therefore, imperative that mall operators make use of consumer motivation analysis to develop the right strategy to increase foot traffic and consumer sales in the malls.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of how mall image dimensions impact customer experience, with shopping motivation acting as a moderating factor. The findings underscore the importance of tailoring customer experiences based on shoppers' motivations to enhance satisfaction and engagement.

The study underscores the significance of both intrinsic motivation (associated with hedonic motivations) and

extrinsic motivation (aligned with utilitarian motivations) in influencing customer behavior. The findings highlight that intrinsic motivations are more strongly associated with emotional and social experiences, particularly in the context of employee interactions, while extrinsic motivations are more task-oriented and result in less emphasis on emotional engagement. This research contributes valuable insights into the role of employee-customer interactions and shopping motivations in shaping customer experiences in retail malls.

Effective logistics and distribution strategies are crucial for maintaining the operational efficiency of retail malls, ensuring that products are readily available and that customers experience minimal delays. The integration of these aspects, alongside employee-customer interactions, can significantly enhance customer satisfaction and contribute to the long-term success of retail establishments.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known financial or non-financial competing interests in any material discussed in this paper.

Author Contributions

Cheng Heng Loon: Writing of original draft; Literature Review; Methodology, Software, Conclusion.

Nasreen Khan: Conceptualization; Supervision; Discussion; Review.

Osman Mohamad: Conceptualization; Supervision; Discussion; Review.

H M Mahfuzur Rahman: Conceptualization; Writing; Literature Review; Methodology, Conclusion of the study; Discussion; Review and formatting.

All authors participated in writing the original draft, reviewing, editing, and approving the final version of the manuscript.

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