Evaluation of shopping mall interior settings and its psychological effects on customers in urban areas

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Abstract: *The number of shopping malls in cities and urban areas have increased significantly over the years. Though the rate of expansion of these malls is great, in the design of some of these malls, enough attention has not been paid to the features and attributes that are really eye catching or draw people's attention. The aim of this study is to examine and evaluate the interior setting of the modern shopping mall and also identify special mall interior features that appeal to customers. The psychological impact of these shopping mall features on customers are also paid attention to. Also, attention is drawn to interior features like tenant mix, background music, customer perception and preference. In this study, public interior space is analysed and attention is also paid to roles public spaces like the shopping mall play in a city or urban design. Design criteria of a public shopping mall are obtained and also defined. Questionnaires are used to collect data from the people of Ghana that usually visit shopping malls to either shop or just hang out. This study examines the effect of rising number of shopping centres in urban areas on shopping behaviour and convenience. Based on the examination of urban shoppers, the research evaluates the cognitive and perceptive traits of the customers towards the appeal of shopping malls and shopping intensity. As a result, it is revealed that shopping mall ambience, variety of stores, entertainment and other factors draw high customer traffic to the shopping malls.*

Key Words: *Shopping malls, urban space, mall interior setting, preference, interior space, ambience.*

1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY:

A shopping mall is a modern term used to refer to a shopping centre that consists of multiple number of shops with walkways that interconnect with each other and is usually indoors. Cities considered to be the most attractive and eye catching across the world today are the ones that weave activities and viable patterns of uses together. The extent to which these activities and uses interconnect signifies how successful public life is going to be. When it comes to city analysis, many people like architects, social thinkers, planners and politicians are contributors. In this modern era, the dynamic patterns of public spaces influence many architects to work in the urban settings. Public space evaluation came out as one of the most important subjects concerning city design. Urban public spaces like parks, streets, squares, shopping malls, restaurants, cinemas just to mention a few have always been the basic components or features of city design. According to (Zeidler 1983), public spaces give the city its form, stability, continuity and most importantly image. The atmosphere, layout, furniture or even the background music is unique to every shopping mall. The interior setting of a public space provides stores or shops with a visual context in which they portray themselves to the general public. Public areas of shopping malls should be designed in such a way that people are encouraged to feel relaxed, comfortable and at home to either shop or just hang out. Studies show that people are usually drawn to a shopping mall environment with the right spacing, atmosphere and a welcoming environment. A mall is not only a place people go to shop or buy things. A mall is also a place people go to relax, eat, walk round and have fun. Considering these factors, the interior setting of a shopping mall contributes greatly to the success and smooth running of the mall. The general interior setting of a mall is important because it influences people to want to stay longer. It determines if a large number of people will patronize a particular mall or not. The purpose of this study is to discuss how the interior features of shopping malls influence its success, the patronage of customers and how it also aims to fulfil the needs of urban design and urban life. In Ghana, the concept of shopping malls came about when three malls were opened in succession: A&C Shopping Centre developed in 2006, Accra Mall built in 2007 and West Hills Mall developed in 2014. In those days shopping mall merchandizes were advertised with the popular saying 'yede aburokyire aba Ghana' in the Ghanaian Twi local dialect meaning "European-American modernity has been introduced in Ghana". A Ghanaian private businessman known as Joseph Owusu-Akyaw developed 15 percent of the Accra mall and the rest of the 85 percent by a UK equity firm. The same way, the other two malls were built by Ghanaian business men and other foreign companies. With a floor space with about 27,000 m^2 , the West Hills Mall is

reported to be the biggest mall in West Africa. By 2015, other malls like the Osu Oxford Street, Marina mall, Junction mall and the Achimota Retail Centre were opened as well.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT: Often, people have distinct feelings about likes and dislikes of what they see. Therefore, people have different and unique preferences when it comes to the many aspects of interior design. The main question asked in this study is what shopping mall interior attributes and features are mostly attractive and preferable. This question is answered in this research. Furthermore, the reason why certain design components that influence people's preferences of interiors need to be determined and understood. When we talk about preference, it has a frivolous implication. To some, preference may seem a bit shallow rather than being essential or basic. Sometimes, preference is only considered after basic needs are met. However, it is not the case when it comes to environmental or interior preference. As shown by researches, environmental preference is closely associated with the most basic social concerns. Designing an interior of a shopping mall requires a thorough understanding of environmental preference. Understanding environmental preference provides a basis to plan, process and manage visual resources in other to deliver or create an environment that is visually pleasing. In today's world, customers are very busy and tend to shop in haste. The main aim of many shopping malls is to slow down customers and have them stay much longer than intended. This paper finds the answer to how exactly this can be achieved.

2.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:
- Examine shopping mall interior features that draw customers to a particular mall and make the customer want to pay a repeat visit to that mall.
- To analyse and discuss consumer behaviour, psychological needs of customers and also identify effects of ambience in the shopping mall.
- Discuss the concepts and constituent factors involved in the design of a shopping mall interior space.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
- Generally, what type of shopping mall setting or features draw the attention of customers to a particular shopping mall?
- What are some consumer behaviour, phycological needs of customers and what are some effects of shopping mall ambience?
- What are some interior design features that make people prefer a certain shopping mall to others and what are their psychological impacts?

4. METHODOLOGY:
4.1 STUDY AREA: The case study country of this paper is the Republic of Ghana. Ghana is a fast-developing country in Africa with a population of nearly fourteen million people. Ghana is considered to be among the leading countries in West Africa though its population and area are relatively very small. Ghana is very rich in natural minerals and it is also the first black African country to gain its independence. Ghana shares borders with other neighbouring African countries with Côte d'Ivoire on the West, Burkina Faso on the North and Togo on the east. Sixteen administrative regions make up Ghana with Accra as the capital city. When it comes to urbanization, Ghana's urban population growth has developed faster in the smaller cities compared to the bigger cities. Specifically, the data was collected in the Accra Metropolis which is the capital city of Ghana. The city of Accra is widely known in Ghana as a business hub. As such, there are relatively higher mall shopping activities in Accra than in other cities in Ghana.

4.2 RESEARCH TECHNIQUE: Research method as per Creswell and Creswell (2018) is categorized into three main types such as qualitative research method, quantitative research method and mixed research method. The quantitative research method examines objective concepts by measuring the relationship among variables with instrument(s) so that numerical or numbered data can be investigated by means of statistical tools or procedures. The qualitative research approach focuses at exploring and understanding an individual or a group of people's psychological behaviour and thoughts by collecting data from the participant setting, grouping the data into themes and making interpretations of the data after analysis. The mixed-method approach involves collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. The research method used in this study is the qualitative research method because for the success of this research, people's thoughts, opinions, responses and ideas need to be collected.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN: The process that a researcher follows or uses to gather, solicit and analyze data is known as research design (Creswell, 2014). The descriptive research design (cross-sectional research design) is adopted in this study. Cross-sectional research design according to Creswell (2018) is where a researcher solicits information or

data from a characteristic cross-section of the interested population which help the researcher understand the condition under which the research is conducted. The cross-sectional research design is appropriate for descriptive, exploratory and explanatory studies and it is usually employed in studies that uses people as a unit of measurement or analysis (Creswell, 2014). In spite of the design being appropriate for the study, it has some limitations. It can produce an unreliable result because the design digs into people privacy and personal issues that the participant may not want to disclose.

4.4 POPULATION: The group of people or characteristics to which a researcher is undertaking a study appropriate to generalized their research findings is known as population. Yount (2006) defined population as all the objects, events and considered by a researcher for a research. The population members share at least one common characteristic. That is to say, the members of the population conform to a set of conditions (Polit & Hungler, 1999). To Gravetter and Forzano (2018), such group of people share comparable characteristic of what a researcher is examining and henceforth be eligible to be contained within the study. They are those drawn from the general population who share comparable characteristics that best fit a study. For this study's purpose, the population includes all individuals who share the same characteristic of buying goods and services from shopping malls in Ghana.

4.5 SAMPLE: Bryman and Bell (2015) defined a sample as a portion of the population that a researcher selects for research. It arises because of a researcher's inability to use an entire population for a study (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Bryman and Bell (2015) also argue that a researcher can select a portion of a population for a study and make a generalization to the entire population of interest, however, it should be large enough so that the findings can be generalized to the entire population. A total of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents were sampled for the research.

4.6 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE: The procedure that a researcher employs to select a study sample is called a sampling technique (Bryman and Bell, 2015). In a general term, a sampling technique may be probabilistic or non-probabilistic sampling technique. In this study, the researcher employs a non-probabilistic sampling technique known as convenience sampling to select one hundred and fifty (150) participants for the study. The convenience sampling technique is a technique that allows a researcher to select elements or participants available at the time of data collection and is also willing and ready to take part in the study (Patten and Newhart, 2017). There is some element of flexibility in the selection of the participants via convenience sampling technique. Shopping mall consumers for the study were chosen based on their convenience and will to partake in the study.

4.7 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT: In the conduction of this research, primary data was used. The questionnaire method was adopted as the maid research instrument in collecting the data for this study. A questionnaire is a document containing formulated questions organized logically to gather data for a study. The researcher used a multi-technique approach to data gathering in order to obtain a complete or total view of the research element. The questionnaire choice is in line with Nardi (2018) who proposed that using questionnaires as a data collection technique or instrument when conducting a research is practical for the fact that data can be solicited in large amounts from large sample size within a short period and at a lower cost comparatively. The questionnaire used for the study were adapted from past literature and then modified to suit the context of the research. Moreover, the participants respond to items spontaneously without the influence from others which therefore inspire anonymity, honesty and truthfulness. This is the reason why this study used the questionnaires as its major instrument to collect data.

5. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES:
5.1 QUESTIONNAIRE: The data collection process started after supervisor's approval and authorization to the researcher to collect the data. Due to distance limitation, the researcher employed a Google Form by generating a web-link to access and administered the questionnaire and the study purpose to the participants. The use of Google Form was suitable for the study because it is a popular survey tool within the research context. Hence, the study employed a web-based survey to solicit data and information from the participants in Ghana. Wright (2006) argued that, the use of web-based survey technique allows the researcher to acquire sample responses from a large population through carefully designed questions.

5.2 DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS: The data collected for the study through Google Forms was downloaded and first processed using Microsoft Office 2019. The responses from the collected data were converted into a numeric form by removing any form of potential extra texts and labels from the data. In order to see if any pattern or relationship exists among the variables under study, the researcher explored the data using descriptive

measures such as mean, mode, percentages, skewness and so on to describe the location and spread of the data. The participants' responses were analysed using statistical techniques such as percentages and frequencies embedded in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.

6. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

The main purpose of this part of the study is to discuss and make an analysis of the data collected through questionnaires and surveys in order to arrive at a conclusion that is meaningful. It also covers the presentation and interpretation of the data collected from all individuals who buy goods and services from shopping malls in Accra, Ghana. The responses from the respondents were coordinated and analysed using frequencies and percentages. The results are then presented according to the objectives of this research.

Table 1 Measurement of Demographic Variables

Variables	Items	Frequency	%
Sex (Gender)	Male	102	68.0
	Female	48	32.0
Age	20 years and below	27	18.0
	21-30 years	85	56.7
	31-40 years	26	17.3
	41-50 years	12	8.0
Educational Level	PhD	7	4.7
	Master's degree	73	48.7
	Bachelor's degree	66	44.0
	Others	4	2.7
Marital Status	Married	13	8.7
	Single	128	85.3
	Separated	9	6.0
How often do you visit the shopping mall	Very often	45	30.0
	Often	55	36.7
	Not often	36	24.0
	Not very often	14	9.3

Note: % = Percentage, Sample (N) = 150.

The measurement of the demographic variables is presented in Table 1. According to the result, out of the total number of 150 respondents, 102 (68%) of them were males while 48 (32%) of them were females. As per the respondents' age, most (56%) of them were between the age of 21-30 years, 27 (18%) and 26 (17.3%) of them were between the ages of 20 years and below and 31-40 years respectively while 12 (8.0%) of them fall between the age of 41-50 years. With regards to the respondents' level of education, 73 (48.7%) of them had master's degree, 66 (44.0%) of them had bachelor's degree, 7 (4.7%) of them had PhD and 4 (2.7%) of them had other level of education. Again, majority (85.3%) of the respondents were single, 13 (8.7%) of them were married, and 9 (6.0%) of them were separated. Furthermore, the respondents were asked how often they visit the shopping mall of which 55 (36.7%) of them said they visit the shopping mall often, 45 (30.0%) said they visit the shopping mall very often, 36 (24.0%) said they visit the shopping mall not often and 14 (9.3%) said they visit the shopping mall not very often.

Table 2 Customer Mall Interior Preferences and Psychological Needs

Measurement Items	SA		A		N		SD		D	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
The atmosphere in a shopping mall and the varieties of shops can make you spend longer time than intended when you visit the mall	46	30.7	86	57.3	14	9.3	2	1.3	2	1.3
You would describe your experience or how you feel when you visit the shopping mall as relaxed, satisfied, aroused or happy	27	18.0	101	67.3	20	13.3	2	1.3	0	0

Based on your preferred mall interior attributes, you would recommend your choice mall to a friend or a relative to visit too	37	24.7	98	65.3	15	10.0	0	0	0	0
You would choose to visit your choice mall when you are stressed and looking to relax	13	8.7	101	67.3	20	13.3	5	3.3	11	7.3
Attractive physical attributes in a shopping mall interior help increase your satisfaction as a customer	43	28.7	93	62.0	5	3.3	0	0	9	6.0

Note: % = Percentage, F = Frequency, SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree.

From Table 2, it was observed that, a total of 132 (88.0%) of the respondent agreed that the atmosphere in the shopping mall and the varieties of shops can make one spend longer time than intended when one visit the mall, while a total of 4 (2.6%) of them disagreed that the atmosphere in the shopping mall and the varieties of shops can make one spend longer time than intended when one visit the mall. Again, we infer that, a total of 128 (85.3%) respondents agreed that they experience or feel relaxed, satisfied, aroused or happy when they visit the shopping mall while 2 (1.3%) of them strongly disagree to that. In addition, it was revealed that, a total of 135 (90.0%) of the respondents agreed that based on their preferred mall interior attributes, they would recommend their choice mall to their friend or their relative to visit too while 15 (10.0%) of them were uncertain about that. Also, we regard to whether a respondent would choose to visit the choice mall when stressed and looking to relax, a total of 114 (76.0%) agreed strongly while 16 (10.6%) strongly disagreed. Finally, the respondents were asked whether the attractive physical attributes in a shopping mall interior help increase their satisfaction as a customer, a total of 136 (90.7%) agreed strongly while 9 (6.0%) disagreed to that.

Table 3. Considering your entire experience when visiting a mall, what makes you want to pay a repeat visit to a particular shopping mall

Factors	**Yes**		**No**	
	Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Good customer service	30	20	120	80
Atmosphere is great/interior is appealing	130	86.7	20	13.3
A lot of entertainment options	125	83.3	25	16.7
Discount sales	30	20.0	120	80.0
Advertised goods are in stock	49	32.7	101	67.3
Store scent is pleasant/soothing	32	21.3	118	78.7
All of the above	28	18.7	122	81.2
None of the above	5	3.3	145	96.7

Note: % = Percentage, Freq = Frequency

Table 3 displays the result for what makes a respondent want to pay a repeat visit to a particular shopping mall. It was revealed that 30 (20%) said good customer service makes them want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall while 120 (80%) said good customer service does not make them want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall. 130 (86.7%) said they would want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall when the atmosphere is great or the interior is appealing whiles 20(13.3%) opposed this. Again, 25 (16.7%) of them said a lot of entertainment options does not make them want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall while 125 (83.3%) said a lot of entertainment options would make them want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall. Conversely, 120 (80.0%) of them said discount sales would not make them want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall while 30 (20.0%) of them said discount sales would make them want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall. 101 (67.3%) of them said advertised goods being in stock would not make them want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall while 49(32.7%) of them said advertised goods being in stock would make them want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall. 118 (78.7%) of them said store scent being pleasant or smoothing would not make them want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall while 32

(21.3%) of them said they would want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall when the store scent is pleasant or smoothing. However, 145 (96.%) of them said all of the above would not make them want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall while 28 (18.7%) of them said all of the above would make them want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall.

Table 4. In your opinion, what top 3 physical attributes should be a must in a shopping mall setting

Factors	Yes		No		Mean	Rank
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%		
Nice mall scent	60	40	90	60	1.726	4th
Variety of shops to visit	120	80	30	20	1.840	3rd
Background music	24	16	126	84	1.655	7th
Easy circulation/clear path in order not to get lost	128	85	22	15	1.860	2nd
A mall with enough parking space outside	53	35	97	65	1.523	5th
High quality merchandise	38	25	112	75	1.430	6th
Ambience/pleasant atmosphere	135	90	15	10	1.877	1st

Note: % = Percentage, Freq = Frequency

Per the study, respondents were asked to express their opinion about the top three (3) physical attributes that should be a must in a shopping mall setting (Table 4). With regards to the physical attributes, 90 (60%) disagreed that nice mall scent should not be a must in a shopping mall setting while 60 (40%) agreed that nice mall scent should be a must in a shopping mall setting. 120 (80%) of them said variety of shops to visit should be a must in shopping mall setting while 30 (20%) of them disagreed that variety of shops to visit should not be a must in shopping mall setting. Again, 126 (84.0%) of them said background music must not form the physical attributes in a shopping mall setting while 24 (16.0%) said background music must form the physical attributes in a shopping mall setting. 128 (85%) said easy circulation or clear path in order not to get lost must form the physical attributes in a shopping mall setting whilst 22 (15%) said easy circulation or clear path in order not to get lost must not form the physical attributes in a shopping mall setting. Besides, 97 (65%) said a mall with enough parking space outside must not form the physical attributes in a shopping mall setting whilst 53 (23.3%) said a mall with enough parking space outside must form the physical attributes in a shopping mall setting. Similarly, 112 (75%) said high quality merchandise must not form the physical attributes in a shopping mall setting whilst 38 (25%) said high quality merchandise must form the physical attributes in a shopping mall setting. Nonetheless, 135 (90%) said ambience or pleasant atmosphere must form the physical attributes in a shopping mall setting whilst 15 (10%) said ambience or pleasant atmosphere must not form the physical attributes in a shopping mall setting.

7. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS:
Consumer behaviour, psychological needs of customers and effects of ambience in the shopping mall.
Table 2 shows that the majority (88.0%) of the respondents agreed strongly that the atmosphere in the shopping mall and the varieties of shops can make one spend longer time than intended when one visit the mall with only 4 (2.6%) of them disagreeing. This is supported by other researches. According to (Lih-Weh Chen 1991), sight or vision is probably the one sense that greatly affect how people respond to their environment directly and with a greater prominence compared to other senses. In this study, the concentration is on the visual features or atmosphere in shopping malls that affect customers' preference. A lot of people over the years have come to the realization that, the aesthetic and visual attributes of a setting or an environment has the power to affect a person's wellbeing both psychologically and physically. Therefore, managers and builders of public or private spaces have taken issue of visual preference seriously (Lih-Weh Chen 1991). Additionally, the same (88.0%) also agree that varieties of shops can make one spend longer time than intended when one visits the mall. This is also supported by (Wakefield and Baker, 1998) who proposed that varieties or the assortment of stores in a shopping malls, the involvement in shopping, environment of the mall have a significant effect on customer excitement and the desire to spend more time or stay longer in malls which are observed to have an influence on shopping desire and patronage intentions.

Mall interior features that draw customers to a particular mall and make the customer want to pay a repeat visit to that mall.
Table 3 suggests that 130 (86.7%) said they would want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall when the atmosphere is great or the interior setting is appealing whiles 20(13.3%) opposed this. Wakefield & Baker (1998)

while investigating shoppers' desire and excitement to stay longer in a malls and even pay repeat visits stated 4 features: layout, variety, ambience and design factors. Each of these factors was made up of several attributes that were represented by varying statements. Variety of stores, lighting, ease in locating stores, music, temperature control, overall design and architecture are some of the features listed in their research. These are features that influence customers to want to pay repeat visits. Studies done by Xu (2007) have observed ambience to have a substantial positive impact on shopping pleasure of customers. Again, **table 3** shows that 125 (83.3%) agreed a lot of entertainment options would make them want to pay a repeated visit to a particular shopping mall. This is also supported by other studies. El-Adly (2007) during his research with Dubai shopping malls as case study identified six constituent's elements of a shopping mall from a customer's perspective. He listed diversity, comfort, entertainment, luxury, mall essence and convenience as the features.

Concepts and constituent factors involved in the design of a shopping mall interior space.
Table 4 shows that 120 (80%) of the respondents when asked what should be a necessity with regards to interior mall setting said variety of shops to visit should be a must and this is ranked 3rd. In other words they agreed that tenant-mix should be a constituent factor in a mall setting. This is supported by other researches. Another important constituent element of a shopping mall is tenant-mix or availability of varieties of stores. This adds to the excitement and thrill of vising a shopping mall because there are so many shops and merchandize for customers to browse through. Wakefield and Baker (1998) in their defined tenant-mix as variety. Rafiq and Kirkup (1994) also conducted a research about tenant-mix in shopping malls and stated that tenant-mix was closely related to excitement. The case study for this research were new shopping malls in the United Kingdom and it was concluded in their study that a shopping mall that had a distinctive, strong and constituent tenant-mix is bound to be successful. It was also pointed out in other researches that customers or shoppers have preference for malls with varying and rich tenant-mix because of the excitement and shopping experience. (Brito, 2009) supported this fact by stating that the key features the shape the image of a shopping centre and influence customer patronage decisions are tenant-mix and store selection. Also, ranked 2nd, 128 (85%) said easy circulation or clear path in order not to get lost must form the physical attributes in a shopping mall setting. When it comes to the layout of shopping malls, easy consumer or customer circulation is one of the most important aspect of mall planning and development to be put in serious consideration. The feeling of getting lost in a shopping mall and disorientation is often accompanied by a certain level of frustration and fear (Brösamle & Hölscher, 2007; Vilar et al, 2012). And this usually does not make the customer want to visit the mall again. Another serious consequence of being lost as a result of poor layout could lead to delay in medical treatment or loss of life according to (Raubal,2001).
Ranked 1st, 135 (90%) said ambience or pleasant atmosphere must form the physical attributes in a shopping mall.

8. CONCLUSION:
According to the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:
- The most important success factors or features of large shopping malls that are planned and centrally managed in the retail sector revolves around the satisfaction of customers based on atmosphere, design attributes, convenience, location, refreshments and even the customer service, advertisement and promotional policies.
- In order for managers and developers to achieve success in running shopping malls, the most important thing is understanding the factors that improve customer shopping experience.
- Store atmosphere relates to elements that are not physically visual in a store or a shopping mall for example smell/scent, lighting, music and noise, temperature. It has also been observed that same factors influence customers' behaviour.
- Due to the rise of urbanization, the global demand for community, city and town development has increased drastically thus the agglomeration of shopping malls in Ghana.

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