CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IN SHOPPING MALLS: CASE STUDIES ON MYANMAR PLAZA(BAHAN), CAPITAL (DAWBON)AND GA MONE PWINT (MAYANGON)

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Abstract

A shopping mall is not just a place where people fulfill their basic shopping needs but recreational destination where people come to spend time, socialize and has a become a major leisure activity. In the last ten years, a few western style shopping malls have been created in Yangon at different locations. Consumer buying behaviour has become the most important factor for every sector, consumer has the dynamic change in their behaviour, taste, preference, motives, personality, attitudes when they are making a purchase in the shopping malls. Large malls offer many varieties of products and services, special offers and large car parks, accessible transport and various service points located in shopping malls successfully occupied customers. The aim of this paper is to examine the behaviour of customers and their preferences when selecting their shopping locations. The paper also presents profiles of customers who has a preference for shopping and spending their free time in malls. The purpose of this paper is to study the phenomenon of a modern shopping mall and shopping behaviour especially opinion of the young adults (in the study people from 20 to 30 years old) have been selected as the target group for the study. The main conclusion of this paper is that shopping environment is widely influenced by how people appreciate their shopping experience. The conclusions are based on (international) literatures on the subject and the findings of a survey conducted by the authors of the paper. A questionnaire was used as a research tool and also used expert interviews. The survey covered 300 respondents in total conducted in 2019.

Keywords: consumer, shopping mall, behaviours, Capital, Ga Mone Point, Myanmar Plaza, environment stimuli

Introduction

The term "shopping centre" is often used as a synonym for any type of retail centres all around the world (in USA they use the word "mall" instead of "shopping centre"). Encyclopaedia of Britannica (2010) describes shopping centre as "a collection of independent retailers and business operation in a joined location, maintained by a management firm as a unit". Shopping centre normally consists of retail stores and also a wide range of different services such as restaurants, banks, postal offices and types of entertainment-associated amenities like movie theatres and bowling areas. Shopping centres first came to Europe in the 1960s in the form of American-style enclosed malls. Sweden was actually the first country where an indoor shopping centre was purposely built in Luleå in 1955 (FCSC, 2012: 5).

Retail sector in Yangon has become the dynamic renovation and rapid growth. The specific research topic of the study was to analyze the characteristics of consumers, their activities and the reasons for visiting these shopping malls, the shopping location and their environmental influencing factors on malls. Three malls of the middle to small size, namely: Myanmar Plaza with about 150 shops and service facilities; Capital Hypermarket; Ga Mone

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Pwint were choosen as samples. Myanmar Plaza is located on the Kaba Aye Pagoda Road in Bahan township. Capital Hypermarket located on the Min Nandar Road in Dawbon township and Ga Mone Point with about 96 shops, is located on Kaba Aye Pagoda road near Kaba Aye pagoda, Mayangone Township, Yangon. This study was supposed to determine the effects of environmental characteristics on visitors of the shopping area, dividing groups according to age. All the malls have underground parking, which means that they are to some extent also orientated to customers, who are using the car.

In today's society consumers are experiencing more time pressures and have a need to escape from hectic and stressful days (Deccan Chronicle, 2011). It can therefore be inferred that it might be essential for retailers to realise this and make their physical instore environment as pleasant as possible in order to satisfy consumer needs and provide them with an enjoyable experience, not reminding them of their "busy and rushed" lifestyles (Gobé, 2009). Liaw (2007) states that retail stores that do improve on their in store environment create an effective consuming condition that might stimulate and satisfy the consumers' immediate purchasing behaviour. This paper conducted the three ***out-of-town shopping malls.***

Research Background

An atmospheric is defined as an important environmental influencing factor that provides consumers with an indication of the quality of a shopping mall and includes items such as ambience, colour, décor, music and layout (Howell & Roger, 1980, Sit, Merrilees & Birch, 2003; Howel, 2005). The consumer experience of a shopping area will depend, besides the quality of the environment, on the atmosphere, accessibility and parking. This experience is different for each of the consumers visiting a shopping area.

Shopping malls have to provide an ecological environment that inspires people to come and enjoy the environmental experience. The environment has to be complete, furnished and culturalzed where art and leisure mingle with everyday life (Baudrillard, 1998; 28). Baker et al(1992)have divided these environmental elements into three main categories: design, background and social factors. This study focuses on the behaviours of young adults aged between 20 and 30 years. Recreational shoppers aged 25 to 34 years spend 58 percent more time when shopping for fun than people aged 55 to 64 years and 22 percent more than 45-54year people (Danziger, 2006; 94). Environmental elements are widely researched in this paper together with consumer behaviours and young people attitudes towards shopping centers. These different shopping malls provided increasing environmental elements that could affect people behaviour in many ways. The literature review also revealed that shoppers differ in terms of shopping behaviour and appreciation of shopping environments. Shoppers may be segmented by their personal characteristics, their motivation, or other characteristics. Nowadays, most of the people change their shopping behaviour from traditional to western style shopping behaviour. Besides, the ***store environment*** has vital effect on shopping behaviour (Baker's et al. (2002). D*ifferent shopping malls* provide interesting environmental elements that can affect ***peoples' behaviour*** in many ways. In this study there are several reasons *why **young adults** have been selected as the target group: young people have many different **opportunities to choose the mall and** young adults also use **more time** for shopping.*

Research Questions

Against this background, this study illustrates the importance of consumer behaviour and their environmental influencing factors on shopping locations as young people preferences on malls. Shopping behaviour and shopping atmospherics (environment) in shopping centers were selected as focus point for the research. The aim of the study is to look deeper into the consumer's behavior and environmental influencing factors as an example of three malls. The consumers want, needs and expectation for the shopping centers were studied. Other key factors were related to the success and attractiveness of retail centers and its environmental stimuli. Therefore, the guiding research questions are:

(1) *What are general characteristics of the consumers in the mall?*

(2) *What are the young adults' opinions on shopping centers?*

(3) *What kind of environmental factors are affecting consumer behviour in shopping centers?*

Material and Methods

Field work was conducted in March, April and June 2019. The research design is based on a mixed-method approach which used systematic literature search, secondary data collection, informal talks, in-depth interviews, mapping methodologies and field observations in Yangon City in order to understand and evaluate consumer behaviour based on adult people and environmental influencing factors. Literature search included reviewed articles, published documents and unpublished studies as far as it could be retrieved from international libraries. Secondary data included statistical data from the local administration, Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC), General Administrative Department (GAD) and management offices from respective malls. During the empirical field work, mapping and field observation, 60 informal talks, 30 in- depth qualitative talks with visitors, qualitative analysis by **Laaksonen** model were conducted. A questionnaire was used as a research tool and also used expert interviews focused on about 20-30 young adults age. Likert scale and frequency table analysis were used. The survey covered 300 respondents in total conducted in 2019. A software for running the SPSS method and excel were used.

Result and Findings

General Characteristics of the Consumers

General characteristics of the consumers include mode of transport, travel time of the respondents from home to mall, age structure, highest level of education, professional, how often do young people come to the mall, length of stay and activities done by consumers in the mall. Altogether 300 customers are willing to respond to the questionnaires. Of these respondents in the three malls about 69% were females and only 29% males. One possible reason is that more women were in the specific shopping area at the time of surveying. In addition, it is a possibility that women tend to lead the conversation while shopping in couples because of the affinity that most women are more interested in shopping.

The location of the malls within the City of Yangon is shown in figure 1. All the three malls have a supermarket and also offer a departmental store and a cinema complex. The most

often used transport mode is the bus. More than 49% of the consumers take bus transport and respondents said that **"***they do not need to find a parking place and pay for that" (interviewed, 2019).*

        Twenty-three percent of young people reported that they came by taxi which implies that they came from a little far from their home or their university. More than 20% came by private car. A little more than 9% of the people came to the market on foot (See table.1).
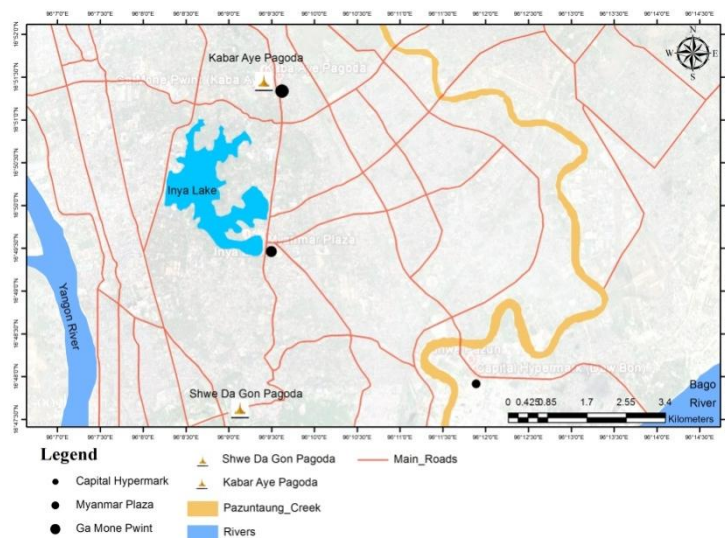
Source: Myanmar Information Management Unit

Figure 1 The location of three malls within the City of Yangon

Table 1 Transport mode for arriving at the mall

Transport means	Respondents (abs.)	Respondents (%)
by foot	27	9.3
by private car	57	19.6
by taxi	69	23.7
by bus	138	47.4
Total	291	100.0

Source: questionnaires, 2019

        The analysis of the travel time also shows strong evidence that many come from a little far place. As the targeted group was young adult people, most of the consumers want to go for shopping in a little far away from their homes or their Universities. The people who spend at travel time between 30 and 45 minutes by bus are accounted for over 41%. Also this study found that over 21% of the young people need up to 60 minutes to come to the mall. More than 18% of the respondents also said that they needed 15 minutes to 30 minutes to get to the mall. The result is that only a bit more than 3% really need much time or about an hour to get to the mall. (See - table 2.).

**Table 2 Travel time of the respondents from home to mall**

Travel time means	Respondent(abs.)	Respondents (%)
up to 15 min	45	15.5
15 min to 30 min	54	18.6
30 min to 45 min	120	41.2
45 min to 60 min	63	21.6
more than 1 hour	9	3.1
Total	291	100.0

Source: questionnaires, 2019

According to socio-economic status, the consumers of the malls can be characterized as follows. As can be seen in the frequency diagrams, the majority of consumers are fairly young and very highly educated (as this paper targeted group). More than 60% of the respondents are in the age 20-30 years old; 35% in the age 30-40 years. These adult people visit to malls by environmental influencing stimuli (interviewed, 2019). Very few young people (less than 20 years) do not visit the malls and also people in the age of 50-60 are not found often.

The education level of the consumers is high as almost all of the respondents have education level of at least the basic high school and the vast majority (more than 75%) have a university degree (graduated) as 20-30 age-group is the main focus. Survey includes no consumer with only primary school level, but they are of postgraduate and undergraduate levels.

Questionnaires results are in line with the expected result as more than 48% of the respondents stated, when asked for their profession, that they are engaged in services activities such as banking, money exchange service, online shopping, and shop keeping in malls. As mentioned in the figure, the majority of young people are graduates. Beside students, high proportions of respondents are teachers with nearly 18% and administrative staff with about 9%. Students represents nearly 20% in the result, as the target group is at the age of years 20-30 in this study (see figure 2 and 3).
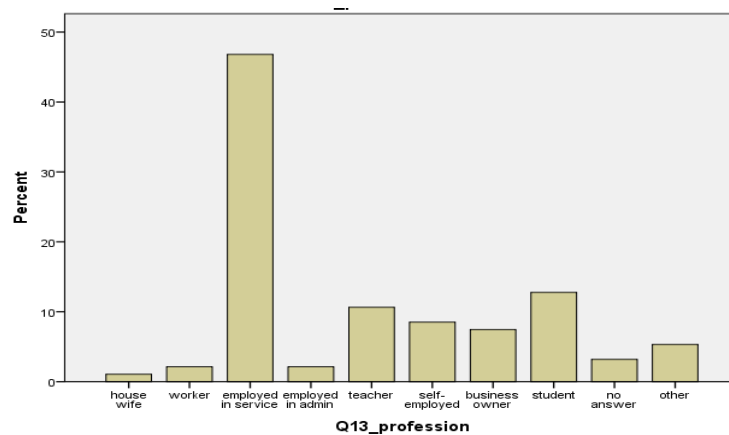
Source: questionnaires, 2019

Figure 2 Profession of the respondents

Source: Photo taken by researchers, 2019

Figure 3 Young adult people engage in services and shops

Looking at the monthly expense, of consumers, the result can be characterized as followed. The vast majority of the adult young people have spent between 50,000 and 100,000 Kyats monthly. The targeted group is young adult people with more than 58%. Therefore they can spend about 50,000- 100,000 per month. Compared to that, the other classes include only a small portion. The class with 100,000 to 200,000 Kyats of expense accounts for just 8% and those with more than 200,000 Kyats rarely visit a mall.

According to the survey, most youths go to malls for experiences to join entertainments or events. Young girls have special attention on things which attract and give more options in shopping items like brand, style, new fashion. They want to go there participate at sale promotion especially to taste different varieties of cosmetics (interviewed).

The time length visitors spent in a mall by most young people is just short stay. The majority of the people (more than 51%) stay just up to an hour in the malls. Their purposes of stay at the malls include two intentions: to meet with friends and to enjoy the comfortable atmosphere of the mall (interviewed). And only a little more than about 20% stay there just for half an hour, whereas only very few spend more than 2 hours in the shopping malls. The environmental condition affects people emotional and the consumers' decision to stay in or leave it. This depends on the environmental stimuli (See table 3 and figure 4).

Table 3 Length of stay in the mall

| Duration	respondents (abs.)	respondents (in %)
just for half an hour	60	20.6
about an hour	153	52.6
up to 2 hours	45	15.5
more than 2 hours	27	9.3
no answer	6	2.1
Total	291	100.0

Source: questionnaires, 2019

Source: Photo taken by researchers, 2019

Figure 4 Purpose of young people (to meet with friends)

According to the questionnaire survey more than 29% of the consumers visited to mall at least once a month.

Analysis of consumer's (young adult) opinion on shopping behaviour by Laaksonen model

Laaksonen (2010: 575) has divided shopping behaviour into three different sectors: shopping orientation, shopping behaviour and shopping environment (See figure 5).
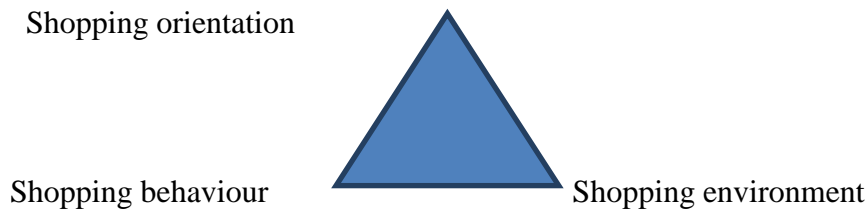
Source: Laaksonen, 2010:575

Figure 5 Model of elements in holistic shopping

Consumer's (young adult) opinion on shopping behaviour analyzed by Laaksonen model includes two main categories: consumer behaviour (attitude) and physical environment of shopping centres (atmosphere, design).

Consumer's opinion includes shopping orientation, shopping environment and consumer's behaviour. It can be identified in many different ways and there is certain evidence of the relationship between shopping orientations and *store attributes* in retail studies. Bellenger and Moschis (1982: 374) describe that shopping orientations are mental states that result in various general shopping patterns. Moschis (1992) also states that shopping orientations are used to categorize shoppers based on their shopping *experiences, activities, interests and opinions* about the process. According to Laaksonen (2010: 575), *shopping orientation indicates consumers to act in certain way in a certain environment.*

This paper analyzed on the opinion of adult people based on environmental stimuli factors. In this case two main environments are considered, in-side and out-side the shopping malls such as shopping environment and retailing atmospherics and environmental influencing factors on the mall.

Shopping environment and retailing atmospherics

To enable a thorough analysis on the behavioural factors that people generate toward shopping centres, it is crucial to identify the various elements of the store environment. The design of a shopping centre has become one of the most important factors to attract customers. According to Dylan (2007), atmospherics refer to "the ***design*** of an environment through visual ***transportations, lighting, colours, music and scent*** that stimulate customers' perceptual and emotional responses and ultimately affect their purchase behavior.

Design is the most important factor to attract consumers. Consumers have high expectations for design and people are more interested in design factors (See figure 6).

    (A) Capital   (B) Myanmar Plaza   (C) Ga Mone Point
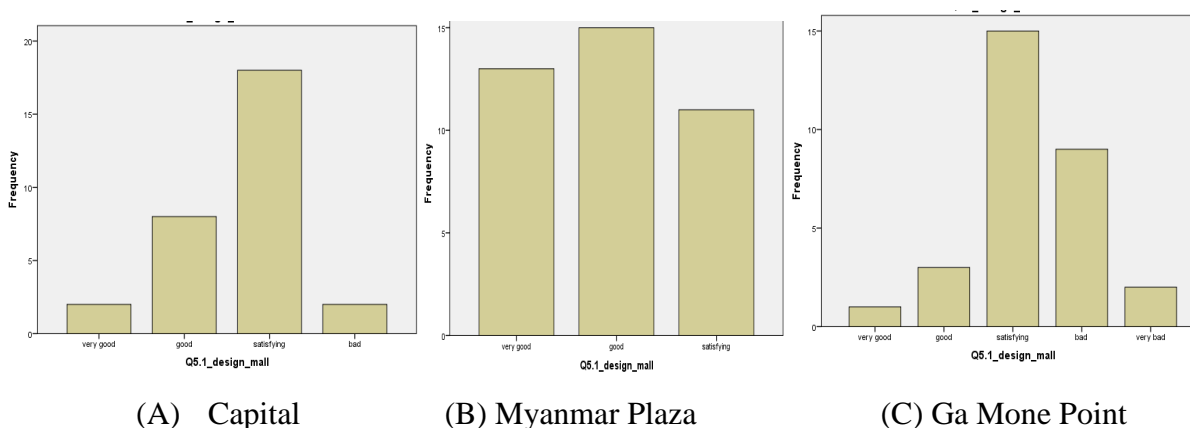
Source: questionnaires, 2019

Figure 6 Opinion of adult people on design factors

According to analysis on the opinion of adult people regarding the design factors in the three malls, 58 percent of the respondents are satisfied at Capital Hypermarket, 50 percent at Ga Mone Pwint and 27 percent at Myanmar Plaza. Although Myanmar Plaza is more wider than others and it is of a Vietnam style mall only 27 percent of respondents are satisfied, "*Myanmar Plaza is too large and therefore consumers have difficult to find out their necessary things and they must give more time within the mall"*. This is a strong opinion on design (in-side environment) of Myanmar Plaza (Figure 6).

Flexibility is important for the opinion of consumers of shopping malls because it helps retailers **to move** to a different area if necessary, Bellenger and Moschis (1982: 374). In that case, the respondents said that *"the lanes of some malls are very narrow and unsystematic display of store structure"* and *"the retailers need to move here or there if necessary"*. They pointed out that the store structure of Ga Mone Pwint is very unsystematic (interviewed, 2019). The store structure, in fact, is a very strong attraction to the customers.

Accessibility to all customers is also essential because malls usually attract a wide range of consumers, such as families with baby buggies and people with wheelchairs. That is the reason why elevators should be placed alongside the escalators.

Lighting is a part of the overall atmosphere but it can be a design factor too. Respondents said that *"people tend to purchase products remarkably more under bright lighting than under soft lighting"* and *"When they are sitting at café shop, young people like soft lighting"*

Music also plays an important role in forming the right retailing atmosphere in shopping mall

"Respondents said that "*shopping malls are playing the same music in all the corridors". They don't like this point.* All these factors are opinions of young adult people on the in-side of different malls.

Regarding the **services**, every shopping has many different services. Among them respondents pointed out on one special service. "*After buying something, consumers do not want to wait too long at the cash desk" and "they want to be back quickly".* This is a very strong opinion of the consumers.

Regarding the **out-side environment**, this paper analyzed on three out-of -town shopping malls. The opinion of respondents on out-of –town shopping malls are: "*out-of-town shopping is the most convenient alternative for the respondents. There are no traffic problems like inner-city malls. People are not travelling to city centre just for shopping, as interesting and attractive shops can be found outside the city"*(interviewed, 2019).

Besides, environmental influencing factors are attractions for young people. The opinions of young people on out-of town shopping malls are importance factor for consumer's behavior. Respondents on out-side environment said that" *When they go to Myanmar Plaza, they can get to Inya Lake at the same time". Sometimes they have no idea to go to mall, but while they are sitting and but taking coffee they got the idea to move to mall".* In that case they pointed out the Shwe Puzon tea-shop which is environmental influencing factor on Capital hypermarket (interviewed, 2019). This is a significant shopping behavior of young adult people. The culture of young people does not lead to go only pagoda. They have two purposes: when they go to the mall first then they also want to spend at the pagoda. In that case, the respondents pointed out about Kaba Aye pagoda and Ga Mone Pwint mall.

Time spent by female customers is high as compared to male. Females have special attention on things which attract and give more options in shopping items like brand, style, new fashion. Successful retail mall can be identified by a large flow of people. Retail environment, in fact, consists of various elements: design, lighting, music and services, that can be adjusted by the retailers in order to achieve desirable behavioural practices with the customers.

Respondents mainly have positive attitudes toward shopping centers and development of the environment solutions. Customers suggested to make more secure than current situations and to include others accessories (interviewed, 2019)

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper analyzed young consumers' attitudes and relationships with modern shopping malls.

Firstly, the paper mentions introducing the theoretical background of shopping behaviour, characteristics of consumers and retail atmosphere. Respondents in three malls include 69% of females and only 29% of males. More than 48% of the respondents stated, when asked for their profession, that they are employed in services activities. High proportions of respondents are teachers with nearly 18%, and administrative staff with 9%. Students are also included (nearly 20%), the target group being the young people. More than 58% of the targeted group are young adult people. Therefore they can spend about 50,000- 100,000 Kyats per month. The majority of the people (more than 51%) stay for an hour in the malls. Their stay at the malls have two purposes: to meet with friends and to enjoy environmental influencing factors.

The second question: *what are the young adults' opinions on shopping centers*? Most of the respondents described that shopping centers give a significant value to their lives. Shopping malls are places where they gather to meet people and have a good time. However, they would like to see more events, recreational opportunities and people around the shopping centers. Shopping centers should offer even more social stimuli by organizing special events and ever-creative solutions. Customers prefer all modernized malls than traditional markets because of the presence of air conditioning, lighting, music and sufficient space for car parking (interviewed, 2019). The study further recommends that the music plays in the stores attracts customers and retains them longer. This should be achieved by ensuring that the background music is in the right volumes and the songs played are selected purposively to make shoppers stay longer.

The opinions of interviewers on the research question 1II" *what kind of environmental factors are affecting consumer behviour in shopping malls*?" are that physical environments such as lighting, space, air condition music and sufficient car parking are quite good. Another environmental influencing factors are pagoda, playground and many varieties of bus line.

Respondents mainly had positive attitudes toward shopping centers and development of the environment solutions. Customers suggested to make more secure than current situations and to include others accessories (interviewed, 2019)

Understanding of the customer experience process is essential in creating a successful shopping mall. Specialized stores are definite key factors for a successful shopping environment (interviewed).

The main factor that young consumers appreciate in modern shopping mall environment is the feeling of space. Regarding the last question '*What kinds of environmental factors are affecting consumer behaviour in shopping mall*?, consumers enjoy shopping in an environment where they are not affected by the hot weather. The out-of-town shopping mall was not problematic for them even they came by bus.

Shopping malls are developing towards multifunctional centres offering not only shopping but also different services and recreational opportunities such as health centres, fitness centres, banks, kindergarten and even educational facilities. Shopping malls have seen as a threat to city centres since their ever-growing attractions. Today's shopping malls are also used as

meeting places and they offer resting areas, baby room etcetera, in a safe, secure environment. In smaller cities, shopping malls can represent a "second" town.

Acknowledgement

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