EXAMINING FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER CHOICE OF SHOPPING MALL: A CASE STUDY OF SHOPPING MALL IN KLANG VALLEY, MALAYSIA.

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ABSTRACT

With the continual addition of shopping malls in the Klang Valley area, shopping malls face tremendous competition in recent years. The purpose of conducting this research is to understand the factors that will influence consumer choice of shopping mall in Klang Valley, Malaysia. For this study, the factors, which include tenant mix, access convenience and ambience, have been used to examine their degree of influence toward consumer choice of shopping mall. Total numbers of 393 responses were collected and 384 responses are usable and applicable to analyse the result of this study. Convenience sampling method was implemented in this study and the questionnaire was distributed through online platform. Based on the findings of this study, it proved that the three independent variables, which include tenant mix, access convenience and ambience, have positive significant impact towards consumer choice of shopping mall. Additionally, ambience had proved as the highest degree of influence. From the result of this study, mall operators and retailers will be more aware of the mall attractiveness in Klang Valley as to make improvement on the supported factors in order to provide a brand new shopping experience to entice the customers to visit the mall.

Keywords: Consumer choice of shopping mall, tenant mix, access convenience, ambience.

INTRODUCTION

Competitive advantage, known as an important element that can place an organization in a superior or beneficial business position in today's retail world. The term "competitive advantage" used to describe a "set of capabilities that permanently enable the business to demonstrate better performance than its competitors" (Bobillo et al., 2010). Every organization needs to acquire or develops combination of attributes that allows it to outperform its competitors. It is crucial for every organization to measure their potential outcome in terms of implementing its own competitive advantage by understanding their strengths and weaknesses at the first stage.

A positive shopping experience provided to the customer can enhance customer satisfaction which it helps organization to drive their profitability. The connection between the shopping experience and customer satisfaction required the organization to understand who their customers are and what they want in order to exceed their expectations. However, customer expectations are difficult to meet due to nowadays customers are more knowledgeable and they know exactly what they want for the product and service. It can be a key factor that decides the fate of an organization in term of being successful or failure in this fierce marketplace. The purpose of this research will focus on how the factors will influence the consumer choice of shopping mall targeted in Klang Valley, Malaysia.

At the end of 2016, there were 255 malls in the Klang Valley (Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Putrajaya) with total retail supply of about 68.2 million square feet. According to Henry Butcher Retail managing director Tan Hai Hsin, shopping centres in all parts of Malaysia have been affected by the weak economy (Lee, 2016). There are 14 more shopping centres are prepared to open in 2017 despite weak market conditions.

Numerous retailers are prudent about business extension, yet it is considered superior if a mall can launch with 80% occupancy rate in the first month (Themalaysianinsight.com, 2017). According to Allan Soo, the managing director of Savills (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, it is unwise for property developers to create more shopping malls in Klang Valley this year when there is an excessive number of retail malls in that particular area (Themalaymailonline.com, 2017).

Shopping malls in Klang Valley have continually increased over the past few years which it leads to a fierce competition within this retail market. It will be a challenge for every retailer due to the new competitive entries as well as the changing behaviour of shoppers. According to Singh and Sahay (2012), concurrent with the increase in number of malls, issues such as similarity in tenant mix, resemblance in terms of size, amenities, facilities and aesthetics are diluting the individual malls' brand image, causing an identity crisis which risks boredom for shoppers. Shopping centres have the opportunity to perceive how their competitive advantages influence the expectations on customer satisfaction and shopping experience. It allows creation of strategic plans to enhance competitive advantage based on understanding of their capabilities to differentiate themselves from their competitors in the marketplace. By enhancing their competitive advantage, it would help shopping malls in grabbing strong customer attention, foster the positive emotion in customers' shopping experience, and induce the customer's buying intention in order to generate more revenue and profit on retaining its customers over a long period.

This research is focus on exploring the consumers' consideration of shopping and to observe the particular factor that will have significant influence on affecting the consumers' preference when they choose a shopping mall.

In today's world, it is crucial for the retailers to understand the patronage behaviours of a customer in term of knowing the customer needs effectively to build a successful business. Nowadays, customers are knowledgeable and smart, they have high expectation on shopping experience, and so the retailers will have to give their best shot to create a lasting impression on customers which it allow the retailers to differentiate themselves from other competitors.

Significant of study

In particular, there are some related research studies done by Ghosh, Tripathi and Kumar (2010), Ailawadi and Keller (2004), and Pan and Zinkhan (2006), that provided insights on store attributes are its positive relation to the consumer's preference of a store. In addition, prior research (Raajpoot et al., 2008) highlighted the relationship between the mall characteristics and consumer shopping mall patronage by focusing on the role of gender and work status. The study of Kushwaha, Ubeja and Chatterjee (2017) had identified total seven factors such as service experience, internal environment, convenience, utilitarian factors, acoustic factor, proximity, and demonstration in which affect the selection of shopping malls regards to Indian context. Besides, the most recent research article from Calvo-Porral and Lévy-Mangín (2018), they examined the main pull factors of shopping malls in North of Spain to analyse the behavioural outcome regarding to frequency of visiting to shopping malls. The related studies that mentioned above had been conducted in foreign countries, for that reason, this present research study conducted is to analyse the factors of the new launched mall in Klang Valley on how it influences the consumer choice of shopping mall by looking at the Malaysian context in Klang Valley. Since there is excessive number of retail malls in Klang Valley, it is a must to understand the consumers' perception towards the mall attributes such as tenant variety, accessibility and internal and external atmosphere in order to hold and maintain the high profitability relationship with the consumers.

Furthermore, the results of this study can provide valuable insights for mall managers to develop a new idea concept for new business opportunity. There is a need to observe the market trend as to find out what are the customer needs and wants in the society. To survive as an outstanding mall in this fierce market, the significant factors of this study can allow the mall managers to aware of the mall attractiveness in Klang Valley which to make improvement on the factors to establish a brand new shopping experience to entice the customers to the malls. This can assist the mall managers to satisfy and delight the customers in the long term in order to keep the consumers to stay patronize their businesses. Last but not least, this research can be beneficial to mall developer who plan to develop new shopping mall in future. The implication of this study can allow the mall developer to take these factors into consideration as to create their own unique competitive advantage where it can also act as a supportive reference before they try to launch their new shopping mall in this competitive market. This research would be useful in assisting the growth of Malaysia economy through the retail industry as well. Therefore, it is critical to understand consumer preference of mall in Klang Valley in order to find out on how the particular factor will enhance the customer satisfaction and being a first choice of mall in the market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tenant Mix (Presence Retail Brand)

Refer to Yim, Yiu and Xu (2012), they found that all parties such as consumers, retailers, and mall operators had put their focus on tenant mix as an important factor due to it acts as a synergy (the simultaneous action of separate agencies) built by the right grouping of tenants, which showed the combined effect was greater than the sum of their single effects. On top of that, Teller and Reutterer (2008), they had analysed empirically the ten variables of mall attractiveness and discovered that tenant mix was a standout amongst the most imperative determinants to the allure of a shopping mall.

Tenant mix, a term that covers a combination of elements, which consists of the proportion of space or number of units occupied by different retail or service types and the relative placement of tenants in the centre (Dawson, 1983). Based on Calvo-Porral and Lévy-Mangín (2018), the substantial trade area of shopping centres that combine numerous sorts of stores inside one single area can draw in all customers, who will seek for a wide assortment of merchandise available within these stores. Therefore, the inhabitant assortment or the retail tenant mix within the shopping mall is of incredible significance to the allure of the mall as it manages the core benefit regarding the shopping experience.

Based on Bruwer (1997), tenant mix related to a grouping of the combination of business formations occupying capacity in a shopping mall which it can generate an ideal sales, rents, service to the community and finance ability of the shopping mall venture. The performance of the entire mall can be strengthen when having a good tenant mix, which means the assortment of retail outlets perform well together. The objectives of the "ideal" tenant mix to be achieved which including offer a wide range of goods and services as a balanced diversification of stores in mall, an unique mall identity, increase sales potential in business, an alliance between the tenants, a well-organized layout of stores, an enjoyable shopping context, create the greatest attractiveness to the community of specific market area with sufficient variety and growth of return on investment (Bruwer, 1997).

According to Ibrahim, Sim and Chen (2003) and Teller and Reutterer (2008), tenant mix can allow a shopping mall to form the successful outcome due to an appropriate tenant mix can entice more patrons as to maximize the sales productivity of a mall. Traditionally, the tenant mix of shopping malls is being in control of the department stores, supermarkets as well as variety stores (Prendergast, Marr and Jarratt, 1998). Yet, the merchandise selection now has an impact on the evolvement of the consumers through shopping activity which known as one-stop shopping trend (Nicholls et al., 2002). For instance, Reimers and Clulow (2009) indicated that retail centre's patronage was built by one-stop shopping as the most critical determinant. However, the changing trends in the market have made it tough for the mall operator to fulfil the consumer needs by creating a proper tenant mix. If the allocation of the retail space did not meet the customer expectation, it can result in undesirable sale performance to the retailer and mall itself (Yim, Yiu and Xu, 2012).

Besides, there are some scholars have supported the studies on the relationship between the tenant mix factor and consumer choice of shopping mall. An ideal tenant mix is the main basis for a good mall identity proposed by Hunter (2006), who analysed the relationship between the image of a mall and the visitation of shopping mall. As cited in Kirkup and Rafiq (1994), tenant mix is the key factor that will affect the consumer choice of shopping mall in terms of getting customer attention and retaining the customers with the ideal tenant selection (McGoldrick and Thompson, 1992). Tenant mix helps the customer to differentiate the mall identity and it may attract the customer as to change their preference of shopping destination (Kirkup and Rafiq, 1994). This helps the mall to develop its market position in order to increase the market share. To enhance a successful shopping mall, the primary tenant selection has played an important role in delivering the first consumer shopping experience and the standard of first impression.

In fact, the tenant store image can affect the mall image by enhancing the desire of the consumer to visit the shopping mall. Miller (2008) said that tenant mix will form the overall image of the mall as a mall context where it will affect the mall experience given to

shoppers as in whether the mall provides wide range of rich texture brands. As well, Finn and Louvier (1996) proposed that the store image can result in maximizing the store visitation, inferring that the mall image can also be related to opportunity of maximizing the mall visitation from the consumer. This means that the tenant mix supports a connection between mall image and the regularity of mall visitation as to become the consumer preference.

In most cases, tenant mix that being interdependent will lead to the successful outcome of a shopping mall. This shows customer needs and desires have to fulfil by each store that complement to another. Bruwer (1997) noted this as "balanced tenancy", which means the stores in a planned shopping mall complement each other in the standard and variety of their product offerings, and the type and amount of stores are tie-up to the overall needs of the community. However, Ooi and Sim (2007) observed that the attractiveness of the mall could be strengthening by the physical size of a mall; the reason apparently is the huge size of a mall can afford to bring in variety of tenants and entertainment.

According to the study done by Ibrahim and Galven (2007), the name of anchor tenants can attract the consumers to visit the malls which means the foot traffic of a mall can be increased thus developing consumer preference. In addition, according to Ibrahim and Galven (2007), the anchor tenant supports a shopping mall as a back bone. They proved that a proper tenant mix, by having a variety of stores that collaborate well together can enhance the mall performance as to generate frequency of mall visitation (Ibrahim and Galven, 2007).

Chebat et al. (2010), El Hedhli, Chebat and Sirgy (2013), and Calvo-Porral and Lévy-Mangín (2018) found that there is an influence between tenant mix towards consumers choice of shopping mall. Consumers prefer to shop in the mall with a wide variety of tenant or store assortment as compared to the mall with limited tenant variety (Chebat et al., 2010; El Hedhli, Chebat, and Sirgy, 2013; Calvo-Porral and Lévy-Mangín, 2018). As cited in Pan and Zinkhan (2006), the perceived costs (e.g., travel time, effort) of each shopping trip can be minimized by a broad selection of merchandise, this will results to retail patronage as well as increasing the sales performance of a mall (Dellaert et al., 1998). A good tenant mix within a particular mall can enable the consumers to complete their shopping tasks in one-stop which known as shopping convenience. So, this study will try to examine the consumer choice of shopping mall that influence by tenant mix.

> *H_1: There is an influence of tenant mix towards consumer choice of shopping mall.*

Access Convenience

According to McGoldrick and Collins (2007) and Raajpoot et al. (2008), convenience is an important element that can lead to patronage but it can also unrecognized by the consumers. Based on the idea of convenience in Jiang, Yang and Jun (2013), they pointed out convenience goods are those that the consumer purchases frequently and immediately at easily accessible stores. Convenience has relevance to the costs caused by the consumer through the spending of time, physical and nervous energy, and money to deal with time and space constraints when purchasing products and services (Jiang, Yang and Jun, 2013).

According to Reimers (2014), convenience takes place at the time of engaging in an activity where the barriers, mostly mention as cost in retail, can be minimized or get rid of it.

On top of that, consumer convenience is mainly focused on two ideas which are time-saving and effort minimization, in delivering convenient service to the consumers (Seiders et al., 2000; 2005; 2007). According to Pan and Zinkhan (2006), a convenient shopping experience is defined as the reduction in time and effort spent in the buying process. Besides, malls have make easy to the consumers by having proper tenant mix, great design and layout, attractive visual displays and signage (Calvo-Porral and Lévy-Mangín, 2018). As a utility oriented consumer, who wants to settle their shopping tasks in very short time, service convenience is important to them (Rintamaki et al., 2006) as in it can guide the consumer on the mall direction (Collier and Sherrell, 2010). Based on El-Adly and Eid (2015), the mall convenience is identified as the value obtained from the mall's ability as to assist consumers with minimal time and effort in completing their shopping tasks.

According to the creation of Seiders et al. (2007), there are five key aspects such as decision, transaction, benefit, post-benefit and access to make up the convenience term. Decision convenience is formed when the service provider make possible the availability of information to the consumer before they decide on which service provider to patronize as to purchase goods and services (Seiders et al., 2007). Same goes to the mall context, if the consumers are able to find information about the mall where they can do research on whether it provides what they need, and so it will help the consumers to make up their decision on which mall that suits them the most. Benefit convenience is referring to the ease of looking for particular shops as well as the availability of assistance by the mall operator. Furthermore, transaction convenience is explained as how fast the consumers can complete their purchases with the one-stop shopping concept, which known as the ability of mall. However, the post-benefit convenience is least apply to the mall context which it only happens when the consumers request for maintenance or product returns and exchange after the sale (Lloyd et al., 2014). The purpose of the explanation of this creation is to show the access convenience is a critical factor that has connection to a mall which it can help on readers to grasp the better understanding on this study. Hence, with the support of Keh and Pang (2010), access convenience is important at the time when the consumers wish to connect with the service provider. Also, access convenience has involved the physical location of the service provider, operating hours and remote contact choices (Berry, Seiders and Grewal, 2002).

In summary, there are some scholars have examined on how the access convenience will affect the consumer preference of mall. According to Lloyd et al. (2014) and Yale and Venkatesh (1986), easy accessibility to location can provide a sense of efficiency to the consumer. They found that when a consumer recognizes a need, they will try to fulfil the need in the first place. The consumers will prefer to be given the choice that they can satisfy several needs in one place whereas the economic cost should not be incurred in unusual sense. Hence, this can result in assisting the mall to attract patronage as location is an attribute that every shopper will take in consideration. According to Kinley, Kim and Forney (2002), they report that the importance tourists assign to shopping centre attributes are fairly consistent across types of shopping centres. This shows location convenience can act as a travel motivation for the shoppers as it can enhance the exciting shopping experience that meet the customers' expectation.

Moreover, Alemán and Díaz (2006) had determined four features of consumer attraction to mall which are leisure and entertainment, convenience – referring the emphasis of the presence to their housing areas, safety, communication and a lack of crowds, the accessibility – operating hours and parking space, and attractive prices and promotions. According to El Hedhli, Chebat and Sirgy (2013), convenience has played an important role in enticing consumers to the mall. This shows the factor of convenience and accessibility to the mall location can affect the consumer intention to visit the mall again. As a result, nowadays the shopping mall has offered convenient store operating hours, adequate parking space and situated in prime location that provide variety of goods and services (Yan and Eckman, 2009).

According to Chebat et al. (2010), consumers are more likely to visit the shopping mall that located in high accessibility instead of low accessibility, which means that the mall has to be easy access by having the suitable location and the acceptable travel distance. There are two variable accesses which are internal and external access that found by Anselmsson (2016). For internal access, it refers to the approach such as elevators, signage, informative displays and broad aisles for customer to walk around easily within the shopping environment; for external access, it refers to the exterior elements of mall such as parking, public transportation, and business operating hours. This study proved the two variable accesses are the significant factors regarding to reinvestments in access of a mall as consideration, a positive relationship would associated with the consumer satisfaction and mall patronage. Raajpoot et al. (2008) proved that mall patronage is depend on the factor of easy access which it influences the consumer choice of shopping mall.

Chebat et al. (2010), Anselmsson (2016) and Calvo-Porral and Lévy-Mangín (2018), found that the access convenience will entice the consumers to shop in the mall. There is a positive influence on customer satisfaction and their willingness to continue visit the mall (Chebat et al., 2010; Anselmsson, 2016 and Calvo-Porral and Lévy-Mangín, 2018). Therefore, the following hypothesis to be tested is:

H₂: There is an influence of access convenience towards consumer choice of shopping mall.

Ambience

Ambience is correlated with the way in which a mall is perceived by consumers in connection with a set of functional elements (goods and services provided), and a set of psychological elements (El Hedhli, Chebat and Sirgy, 2013). Precisely, the internal mall environment is related to the internal decoration, atmosphere and ambience, as well as the environmental attributes that cover the use of colour, music or crowding (Chebat et al., 2010). According to Raajpoot et al. (2008), the exterior, general interior, layout, interior display and human variables, are the five main grouping of mall environment. These five variables can affect the result in terms of the amount of time that consumers want to spend within the mall, overall assessment and consumer intention to revisit the mall again. Moreover, the features of the outside appearance, the structure of the interior, the colour and lighting, decorations, aroma and other odours and the background music, are all direct captivate the human senses (Raajpoot et al., 2008).

Consumer perception towards the store can influence by several components of the internal atmosphere which are noise, music and colour (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). The ambience of the store can classify into three internal components which includes social attribute (for example, the existence of staff, type of shopper and familiarity), physical attribute (for example, design, lighting and floor plan), and ambient attribute (for example, smell and music) (Baker et al., 2002). According to Turley and Milliman (2000), they proposed that the critical atmospheric factors are included the ambient cues, which is the physical features of store environment like music, lighting, colour, display and the social cues, which is the perception of crowding and staff friendliness, that will influenced the consumers' shopping mood.

A recent article pointed out to review the evidence from a multisensory perspective (Spence et al., 2014); they argued that research was needed to understand how sensory cues enhance experience. For example, according to Turley and Chebat (2002), they identified the need to study strategic concerns related to retail atmospheric design and particularly urged more research to try to understand how "consumers process an environment" (Turley and Chebat, 2002). Shopping mall environment can provide a shopper a positive brand image if he or she feels safe and comfort to shop in our mall. It affects shoppers' mood that can influence their shopping behaviour in term of spending more time to shop.

The factor of ambience can affect consumer preference of mall have been tested in previous studies. In a mall intercept two-factor experiment, Chebat and Michon (2003) examined the effect of ambience scents. They found that "the environmental cue (ambience scents) directly affects shoppers' perceptions". Besides, in a crossover between atmospherics and culture, using a mall intercept study, Chebat and Morrin (2007) analysed the effects of mall décor (colour) on perceptions. They found that the differing subcultures (French Canadian and English Canadian) responded differently to the décor, with the implication that mall managers should consider within-country differences regarding consumer segments or subcultures.

Besides, ambience, known as positivism model, it emphasizes on the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) approach (Ayadi and Cao, 2016) in three conditions, which are arousal, dominance and pleasantness, that lead to consumer response to the environment (Singh and Dash, 2012). Based on Ayadi and Cao (2016), as for this approach, the behavioural response (R) will form after the consumer internal responses (O) react to the atmosphere as stimulus (S). Both studies are emphasizing on the ambience is the most important determinant to the shopping mall in terms of differentiating themselves from the competition.

Bitner (1992) as cited in Calvo-Porral and Lévy-Mangín (2018), they mentioned that consumers (O) may assess the store surroundings (S) in three aspects which are cognitive (for instance, impressions, categorization and characteristic implication), affective (for instance, emotion and approach), and physiological (for instance, injury, comfort, action and well-being). As well, there will have two different reactions may results in consumers' behavioural responses (R), the first one is approach, a positive reaction – having a desire to stay in the store and to explore it, and the second one is avoidance, a negative reaction – not willing to stay in the store or spend their time to explore it. The previous studies have shown the effects on patronage intentions as to become the consumer choice of shopping mall are influence by the mall environment.

According to Khare and Rakesh (2010), the attributes of atmospherics such as ambience, design, floor plan and leisure facilities can stimulate the consumer shopping mood. This study proved the key factors for a mall to success are entertainment and ambience in which it can attract the customers to visit a mall as well as to lead the retailers preferred to open their store in the particular mall.

Besides, consumer intention to revisit a mall can be created after the consumers have evaluated the sense of enjoyment (Lin and Chiang, 2010; Rajagopal, 2009). Based on Raajpoot et al. (2008) and El Hedhli, Chebat and Sirgy (2013), a mall that has outstanding atmospherics or internal environment can drive the consumer to hang around as to take their time in terms of experiencing their leisure activities within the mall. An enjoyable environment can form by the tidy and attractive mall atmosphere which result as the preferably place that consumers will choose to meet and hang out with their friends (El-Adly and Eid, 2015).

In contrast, consumers are unwilling to shop in a mall that are poor atmospherics as well as limiting their time to only purchase at the mall instead of providing a variety of leisure activities (El Hedhli, Chebat and Sirgy, 2013). According to Chebat et al. (2010), in order to increase the attractiveness of the shopping mall, the mall should be provided with a comfortable internal temperature as a resting area to allow the customers recognize the pleasant shopping atmosphere. The internal atmospherics of mall play an important part in increasing customer foot traffic (Dennis et al., 2010), enhancing level of customer satisfaction towards mall itself (Anselmsson, 2006) and the frequency of mall visitation (Chebat et al., 2014). Therefore, the following hypothesis is generated as:

H₃: There is an influence of ambience towards consumer choice of shopping mall.

Consumer Choice of Shopping Mall

According to Lee, Kim and Ahn (2000), consumer's choice towards shopping mall is based on these shopping malls can resolve the consumer difficulty linked with the needs for grocery, clothing, footwear, electronic and electrical items, gardening tools, linens, furniture entertainment, banks, salons, restaurants as well as it can spare an opportunity for social interaction. According to Calvo-Porral and Lévy-Mangín (2018), consumers are spurred by a scope of psychosocial needs that go beyond the obtainment of goods and services. Therefore, the pull factors of a shopping mall such as tenant mix, access convenience, and ambience can influences the consumers' intention to visit the mall again.

Besides that, customer experience is strictly personal and implies the customer's involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical and spiritual) (Gentile, Spiller and Noci, 2007). The choice of shopping malls depends on how captivating and appealing they are to consumers (Cai and Shannon, 2012; Teller and Reutterer, 2008). According to Adkins Lehew, Burgess and Wesley (2002), mall loyalty is a consumer's preference to buy from a specific mall, which it has the connection with consumer choice. On this account, consumer preference has become the priority of the shopping mall to attract consumers and shoppers from time to time as continuous needs (Cai and Shannon, 2012). A complimentary attitude towards the mall can show by the positive perception of consumer which means it can generate a positive image for the mall as well (Steyn et al., 2010).

Customers nowadays are more demanding than ever before as the unique shopping experience will only tend to draw the attention of the consumers to be pleasured when spending their time in the mall chosen. It can be a failure approach if the retailer still follows the traditional way to operate a mall. As cited in Kursunluoglu (2014), satisfaction is a degree of meeting the needs at the end of a purchase (Oliver, 1999). The satisfaction is an assessment about how much the retailer could meet or exceed customer expectations (Levy and Weitz, 2007). The role of customer satisfaction is determined by pre-sale expectations and post purchase perceived performance (Kursunluoglu, 2014). During the stage of post-purchase, customers will conduct some assessments to understand whether the retailer has met the standard of their expectations. Satisfied customers will definitely stay loyal and have the desire to revisit the shopping mall while dissatisfied customers are more likely to exit the transaction (Kursunluoglu, 2014). Nevertheless, satisfied customers are more likely to spread the positive word-of-mouth about the company, yet dissatisfied customers react differently, according to White House Office of Consumer Affairs, dissatisfied customers will tell between 9-15 people about their experience.

Previous studies referred to Keller (2001) and Morris et al. (2002), they found that there are two ways, which are cognitive and emotional, the consumers respond to brands during the decision making process; whereas Sweeney and Soutar (2001) have been referred to as the "thinking and feeling" aspects. Let's put it into question, in order to be the consumer choice, the retailers have to know on what customer will expected of the shopping mall and how often and easy that they will think of the shopping mall.

Within consumer research, patronage intention is described as the intention of consumers to behave in a certain way with regard to spending time in a shopping facility, dealing with sales associates and goods, and perhaps obtaining goods and services (Elizabeth et al., 2014). According to Pan and Zinkhan (2006), they determined that retail patronage consists of two key concepts which are store choice (i.e., a consumer's choice to patronize a particular store) and frequency of visit (i.e., how often a customer patronizes that store). As cited in Ghosh, Tripathi and Kumar (2010), by relying upon the individual preferences of consumers, they would patronize the best store with the evaluation of alternative stores in terms of a set of attributes (Tripathi and Sinha, 2006). Laaksonen (1993) as cited in Lee, Fairhurst and Lee (2009), patronage is take into consideration of customer experience which means the possible store attributes would affect the consumer choice behaviour regarding to store choice. Store choice leads to the formation of customer preference for a store which it includes the internal and external elements that would influence simultaneously the patronage process (De Juan, 2004). According to Anselmsson (2016), the visitation rate and the consumer spending rate are the main performance indicators that used to measure the mall patronage.

To improve the shopping mall's growth and performance, consumer choice is an important factor which it can help the mall to retain loyalty customers to revisit the mall. Just like when the mall identity is value to the consumer which they can recall it in their mind, then the particular shopping mall will be the choice of the consumer. Hence, the integration between the factors and consumer choice of shopping mall will show whether there is a relationship in contributing the shopping mall preference in this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Quantitative research method was used for data collection to investigate the influence of tenant mix, access convenience and ambience towards consumer choice of shopping mall. Meanwhile, it might look hard to quantify the influence of various factors on consumer choice of shopping mall, yet when a set option of answer is designated in a questionnaire, the researcher can compute the results with the quantitative measures. As the cause factor, independent variable can lead to something occur. The independent variables of this study are tenant mix, access convenience and ambience. As the effect factor, dependent variable is the outcome of the cause. The consumer' choice of shopping mall is the dependent variable of this study.

Sampling

This research would be using the convenient sampling which is one of the non-probability sampling techniques. In this research, the respondents are residents from Klang Valley, which involved both male and female who is 18 years old and above. The only criterion required is the respondents must have visited the shopping mall in Klang Valley to ensure the questionnaire can be answered accurately. The data collected from the target population was using the questionnaires with closed-ended questions. Moreover, the way of distributing the questionnaire of this study was through online. A total of 384 responds were collected and analysed.

Besides, the need of scale is a tool that can assist the researcher to classify the variables of interest to the study (Mukesh Kumar et al., 2013). According to Mukesh Kumar et al. (2013), the interval scale was used to implement certain arithmetical operations such as mean, median, mode and standard deviation on the data collected. This can indicate the values obtained between the variables which to allow the readers to have a quantifiable understanding on the exact differences of the variables to this study.

Instrumentation

Data for this study were obtained by distributing the set of questionnaires to the target sample group. Self-administered online questionnaire were used to conduct the study. A 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) were used to measure Section A, Section B, Section C and Section D of the questionnaire. **Section A** of the questionnaire consists of 5 items related to tenant mix. **Section B** of the questionnaire consists of 4 items used to measure access convenience. **Section C** of the questionnaire refers to the 6 items used to measure ambience. **Section D** of the questionnaire consists of 5 items used to measure consumer choice of shopping mall. **Section E** of the questionnaire refers to the 7 items used to obtain the demographic information and general information from the respondents.

The Cronbach's alpha value among the independent variables are Ambience (0.876), followed by Tenant Mix (0.868) and Access Convenience (0.812). Furthermore,

Consumer Choice of Shopping Mall, the dependant variable, has the Cronbach's alpha value of 0.904. Hence, all the variables are reliable and acceptable in this study.

Assumptions of Parametric

Before choosing a statistical test to apply to the data collected, the researcher addressed the issue of whether the data are parametric or not. Statistical tests were used to analyse some aspect of the sample. The assumptions of parametric were met when: sample data are continuous and measurements met the minimum sample size requirement (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016), the ratio of cases/samples (N) to variables (IV) exceeded 5:1 (Osborne and Costello, 2002), more than 70 percent of the questionnaire can be measured using scale, there was a linear relationship among the two variables and data collected were normally distributed based on the results obtained from the normality test conducted.

Statistical Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires were analysed through a series of statistical tests. The data collected were analysed using the SPSS statistical analysis software for Windows. The statistical procedures for quantitative research include reliability analysis, normality test, descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Relationship between tenant mix, access convenience, ambience and consumer choice of shopping mall.

Table 1: Correlation between the Three Variables

Variable	TM	AC	AB	CC
Tenant Mix (TM)	-			
Access Convenience (AC)	0.688**	-		
Ambience (AB)	0.717**	0.748**	-	
Consumer choice of shopping mall (CC)	0.698**	0.688**	0.795**	-

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

A Pearson correlation was run to determine the between tenant mix, access convenience, ambience and consumer choice of shopping mall. The data in Table 1 showed no violation of normality and linearity. There are significant relationship between customer satisfaction, price, brand innovativeness and brand loyalty.

Regression Analysis

Table 2: Regression Analysis: Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.820[a]	.673	.671	.345	1.625

a. Predictors: (Constant), Tenant Mix, Access Convenience, Ambience
b. Dependent Variable: Consumer Choice of Shopping Mall

The adjusted R² value as shown in Table 2 is 0.673. With this, it can be deduced that 67.3 percent of the variance in the dependent variable – consumer choice of shopping mall, can be explained by the variance of the independent variables, which are tenant mix, access convenience and ambience. The Durbin-Watson statistics is recorded at 1.625 indicates a positive autocorrelation (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016).

Table 3: Regression Analysis: ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	92.913	3	30.971	260.856	.000[b]
	Residual	45.117	380	.119		
	Total	138.030	383			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Choice of Shopping Mall
b. Predictors: (Constant), Tenant Mix, Access Convenience, Ambience

The F-ratio in Table 3 indicates a significant regression equation was formed [$F_{(3, 380)}$ = 260.856, $p < 0.05$]. Since the significance level is less than 0.05, this shows that the conceptual framework can be used and it was considered good-fit to the analysis.

Table 4: Regression Analysis: Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.068	.160		-.426	.670
Tenant Mix (TM)	.230	.046	.221	4.973	.000
Access Convenience (AC)	.149	.052	.135	2.895	.004
Ambience (AB)	.629	.057	.535	10.998	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Choice of Shopping Mall

As shown in Table 4, there is influence between the three independent variables to the dependent variable. Tenant Mix has a positive significant impact towards Consumer Choice of Shopping Mall (β=0.230, n=384, p<0.05). Thus, H_1 is not rejected. This result finding is similar to Ibrahim, Sim and Chen (2003), Teller and Reutterer (2008), and Yim Yiu and Xu (2012), they analysed that there is an influence of tenant mix towards the mall preference, for example, an appropriate tenant mix can entice more patrons as to maximize the sales

productivity of a mall (Ibrahim, Sim and Chen, 2003; Teller and Reutterer, 2008). On the other hand, if the allocation of the retail space did not meet the customer expectation, it can result in undesirable sale performance to the retailer and mall itself (Yim Yiu and Xu, 2012). The result has also supported the studies done by Chebat et al. (2010), El Hedhli, Chebat, and Sirgy (2013) and Calvo-Porral and Lévy-Mangín (2018), they found that consumers prefer to shop in the mall with a wide variety of tenant or store assortment as compared to the mall with limited tenant variety.

Besides, Access Convenience has a positive significant impact towards Consumer Choice of Shopping Mall (β=0.149, n=384, p<0.05). Thus, H_2 is not rejected. The result finding is consistent to the studies of Raajpoot et al. (2008), Chebat et al. (2010), El Hedhli, Chebat, and Sirgy (2013), Elizabeth Lloyd et al. (2014), Anselmsson (2016), and Calvo-Porral and Lévy-Mangín (2018), which they proved there is a positive influence of tenant mix towards mall patronage as in consumers are more likely to visit the mall that located in high accessibility as opposed to low accessibility.

Ambience has a positive significant impact towards Consumer Choice of Shopping Mall (β=0.629, n=384, p<0.05). Thus, H_3 is not rejected. The result finding is similar to the studies done by Turley and Milliman (2000), Turley and Chebat (2002), Ailawadi and Keller (2004), Raajpoot et al. (2008), and Khare and Rakesh (2010), they discovered that the ambience can influenced the consumers' shopping behaviour in term of spending more time to shop and having the intention to revisit the mall. Also, various researchers such as Anselmsson (2006), Raajpoot et al. (2008), Chebat et al. (2010), Dennis et al. (2010), El Hedhli, Chebat, and Sirgy (2013), Chebat et al. (2014), El-Adly and Eid (2015), and Calvo-Porral and Lévy-Mangín (2018), their studies have shown the attractiveness of the shopping mall are influence by the mall environment, for instance, consumer will choose to shop in a mall with enjoyable environment instead of mall with poor atmospherics.

As for the beta value of ambience is 0.629, it is the highest compared to the beta value of tenant mix (β=0.230) and access convenience (β=0.149). This indicated ambience has the highest influence among the three factors towards consumer choice of shopping mall. The studies of Khare and Rakesh (2010), Singh and Dash (2012), and Ayadi and Cao (2016) have proved that the ambience is the most important determinant to the shopping mall, which it is similar to the result finding as it indicated that ambience has the largest significant impact towards consumer choice of shopping mall as compared to tenant mix and access convenience.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays, customers are knowledgeable and smart, and so, there is a must for mall to enhance their competitive advantages to differentiate themselves from other malls in this fierce market. By understanding the mall attributes that will affect mall preference is important for retailers to develop a brand new shopping experience to attract the customers to the malls. This research is to identify the factors that would have significant influence on affecting the consumer choice of shopping mall in Klang Valley, Malaysia.

In this research, there were a total of three research objectives to be met. Through the data analysis and findings, all the three research objectives have been met. The first objective is to study the factors that will influence consumers' choice of shopping mall.

Findings of this research suggest that the factors such as tenant mix, access convenience, and ambience, have a positive influence toward the consumers' choice of shopping mall. The second objective is to identify the highest influence of the factor towards the consumers' choice of shopping mall. Findings of this research suggest that the factor of ambience has the highest influence among the three factors towards the consumers' choice of shopping mall. As a result, this study had met each of the research objectives stated. To sum up, this study highlights that the three main factors, including tenant mix, access convenience and ambience, can determine the consumers' shopping experience and choice of shopping mall. Overall, the factor of ambience has the greatest influence on attracting the consumers to visit a shopping mall.

Recommendations

The results of this study can provide valuable insights for mall operators or retailers to make improvement in order to hold and maintain the high profitability relationship with the consumers. There are several recommendations that the mall operators can take into consideration to satisfy the customer needs and wants based on the result findings.

Firstly, the findings suggest that the mall operators should take good care of their mall environment as a key factor. Consumers are concern about the mall attributes, such as the interior and exterior design, floor plan, and ambience, that will direct captivate the human senses. So, a mall should make sure there is clear signage that can assist the consumers to seek what they are looking for. This can ensure the consumers feel safe and comfortable to shop in the mall. Moreover, the mall atmosphere regarding to background music, temperature, and lighting can also affect the consumers to decide whether they want continue to spend their time and to revisit the mall again. Hence, the mall operators can put some efforts in term of decoration and design something special that can make their consumers feel exciting to shop in their malls as to differentiate themselves from other competitors.

Secondly, the factor of tenant mix and access convenience have also showed a significant influence on the consumer choice of shopping mall, the mall operators can create their own unique competitive advantage from these factors. For the factor of tenant mix, the mall operators can conduct a market research to understand the customer needs and wants, and therefore, they can bring in a wide range of rich texture brands that meet the customer expectation. For the factor of access convenience, the mall operators have to examine the location whether it is suitable to launch a mall. It is important to provide an easy accessibility for the consumers to travel from one location to another. This can results in assisting the mall to attract patronage due to the location convenience can act as a travel motivation in letting the consumers to have the intention to revisit the mall.

Lastly, despite of the three variables mentioned above, the mall operators have to look into other area that can exciting the consumers, for example, focus on customer interaction, like implementing some creative activities to make a lasting impression on customers, and therefore, it can establish a brand new shopping experience to attract the customers to stay patronize their businesses as well as to enhance the level of customer satisfaction towards the mall itself.

Based on this research, there are several recommendations for the future researchers to make improvement of the limitations of this study. First of all, one of the limitations in this research was focus on only the respondents that have been to a designated shopping mall in Klang Valley, which the future researchers could duplicate the findings based on conducted to other malls. This allows the data to be more accurate in which the audiences can use to compare the results as to get a deeper understanding on how it influences the consumer choice of shopping mall by looking at the Malaysian context.

Secondly, the questionnaire of this study was only distributed through online, and therefore, it could restrict to someone who might not be able to access the internet. In order to prevent the issue of not reaching the potential respondents, the future researchers can combine some survey methods such as paper-and-pencil, interviews and focus group that are suitable to collect the responses from the potential respondents. This could ensure the data collected can represents the entire population as to increase the data accuracy.

Lastly, the R Square value of this study is 0.673. This conceptual model can only explained the 67.3% of the dependent variable, consumer choice of shopping mall, by the three independent variables such as tenant mix, access convenience and ambience. There are definitely other areas, such as service experience, marketing communication, entertainment and mall essence, to be covered. Therefore, the future researchers have to look into it and to test the other variables in this research problem.

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