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Gender differences in mall shopping: a study of shopping behaviour of an emerging nation

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ABSTRACT

Fast developments in the food retailing industry have led to growth of shopping malls, particularly in the large cities of Saudi Arabia. The purpose of this study is to compare men and women for differences in mall shopping. Using empirical research, this paper examines differences between the genders associated with mall patronage. Based on a survey of 513 shoppers across Saudi Arabia, the study finds significant differences in shopping behaviour. The paper discusses the findings and makes recommendations to mall operators.

JEL classification: M300, M310, M390, M00

Keywords: gender differences, mall shopping, shopping behaviour, Saudi Arabia

1. INTRODUCTION

The retailing sector is rapidly transforming in Saudi Arabia and bears little resemblance to what it was even a decade ago. Retail sales are booming and are expected to grow from about \$27 billion in 2011 to more than \$37bn in 2015 (Business Monitor International, 2011). Of these sales, we estimate about 50 per cent share of shopping malls. Large retail operators in multiple formats are now dominating the sector, and competition in the retail marketplace has been steadily increasing (Sohail, 2008).

Saudi Arabia is the largest retail market in the Arabian Peninsula and continues to be an outperformer in the hypermarket segment. The larger size of population, the high percentage of youth population, and their high levels of disposable income, provide an attractive opportunity for retail sector growth. The recent trend in the Kingdom is characterized by an upsurge in shopping malls. A number of mega hypermarkets have appeared mainly in cities.

Rising incomes and busier lifestyles are creating the space for malls in the lives of the affluent masses. Further, given the nature of the society in Saudi Arabia, where opportunities for entertainment are limited, Saudis and the large expatriate population patronize malls not only

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for shopping but also see this as an opportunity to socialize. Malls are patronized by people who often come for socialization and window-shopping rather than actual shopping.

The importance of malls in retail research cannot be marginalized. The competition among malls to attract and retain customers is increasing. There is ample evidence in literature to show that there are differences between men and women in shopping behaviour. Shopping has been typically stereotyped as a female activity (Buttle, 1992). Women are more likely than men to shop for items like grocery and clothing, while men are shoppers of specialized items like cars (Chebat et al, 2005). However, these trends are getting phased out as the roles of men and women are beginning to overlap gradually (Darley and Smith, 1995).

While academic research has addressed mall patronage and gender effects, most of it has been in the context of the developed nations and there is a paucity of research on mall shopping and gender influences in Saudi Arabia. As a result, present understanding on this topic has remained context-specific limiting our knowledge of mall patronage to research conducted in developed countries. Researchers have highlighted that there are fundamental differences between developed nations and a developing nation on issues such as business environment, consumer behaviour and others (Sohail 2009; Kulviwat, et al, 2009; Zhou & Li, 2010). This evidence suggests that studying the contextual nuances in different national settings brings forth hitherto unexplored perspectives.

The objectives of this research are therefore to examine effects of gender influence on the shopper's characteristics and their influence on patronage.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Gender differences in mall shopping

Gender difference is an external influence of consumer behaviour, and this difference has been well researched (example, Pease and Pease, 2001). In the marketing literature, researchers have examined gender differences in different streams of research, for example, message processing (Meyers-Levy and Sternthal, 1991), price promotions (Mazumdar and Papatla, 1995), impulse purchases (Dittmar et al., 1995), attitudes toward shopping forms (Rajpoot et al 2008, Alreck and Settle, 2002, Dholakia and Uusitalo, 2002, Dittmar et al., 2004, Garbarino and Strahilevitz, 2004 and Chang and Samuel, 2004), and advertising (Martin, 2003). This stream of research has substantiated differences between men and women in terms of behaviour attitude towards shopping.

Marketing researchers and practitioners have been reporting gender differences and have observed some notable differences. For example, it was found that 67% of women enjoy shopping, compared to 37% of men (Klein, 1998). Another research found that women are more likely to buy in a store than men (Lucas, 1998), and women are more likely to buy gifts than men (Yin, 2003). Similarly, it was found that women go shopping to browse around and see shopping as an enjoyable activity while men go shopping just to meet their needs, seeing it as a duty. (Durakbaşa and Cindoğlu, 2002).

2.2. Value

Consumer value places emphasis on the principle of maximizing efficiency or optimising output for a particular level of input (Sproles, 1980). In the marketing literature, value has been discussed in the context of exchange or a return for something, a trade-off between benefits or satisfaction received and costs or sacrifices incurred (Downs, 1961, Murphy and Enis, 1986). With

a similar concept, Zeithaml's (1988) value definitions of "the quality I get for the price I pay" and "what I get for what I give" also signify a trade-off between the benefit and cost component of shopping value. Researchers have also identified other dimensions of value, such as pleasure from shopping (Downs, 1961 and O'Guinn and Faber, 1989), quality of service (Zeithaml, 1988), and convenience of shopping (Mazursky and Jacoby, 1986). The essence of all this research is that shoppers weigh costs beyond the monetary cost of goods.

Past research has also established the influence of personal values on consumer decision-making and consumption behaviour (example, Tai, 2008, Doran, 2009 and Durvasula et al., 2011). A number of past studies have identified the underlying values determining mall shopping behaviour (Shim and Eastlick, 1998, Swinyard, 1998, Thompson and Chen, 1998, Erdem et al., 1999 and Stoel et al., 2004). However, few have systematically examined how these values influence mall shopping behaviour (Cai and Shannon, 2012). Additionally, personal values are in part consequences of culture and ethnicity (Phinney et al, 2001) and as most studies are mainly conducted in a Western or different cultural context, the objective of the present study will be to identify the underlying influence of personal values on shopping attitude of shoppers in Saudi Arabia. It is of interest to study whether Indian shoppers' underlying personal values influence their mall patronage.

2.3. Lifestyle

The term Lifestyle has its roots in the field of psychology (Coreil et al. 1985). Lazer (1963) introduced the concept of lifestyle to marketing. The term embraces cultural affiliation, social status, family background, personality, motivation, cognition, and marketing stimulus (Horley 1992). Lifestyle can be identified by a wide range of activities, interests, and opinions (Plummer 1974). Lifestyle analysis may be defined as patterns of activities on which consumers spend their time and money (Engel et al., 1995). Since then, a number of studies have developed and refined methods and models to measure lifestyles (example, Green et al., 2006, Jih and Lee, 2004).

In the marketing discipline, numerous studies have shown that lifestyle is a predictor of consumer purchasing behaviour (Fullerton and Dodge, 1992 and Jih and Lee, 2004). In the context of mall shopping, an analysis of the lifestyle influence on consumer purchases can be helpful to identify the target markets and promote the malls offerings.

2.4. Shopping Orientation

A study on shopping orientation was first initiated by Stone (1954), who referred to shoppers' styles. Since then, the term has expanded to include personal, economic, social, and recreational characteristics of shoppers (Visser and Du Preez, 2001).

Though many studies have examined shopping orientation, very few studies have examined shopping orientation in a mall setting (Mejia and Benjamin, 2002). Studies have identified the influence of recreation or entertainment as a source of differentiation that could attract shoppers into malls (Haynes and Talpade, 1996; Maronick and Stiff, 1985). Other studies have identified an increasing tendency towards mall patronage for exclusive window shopping (for example, Nicholls et al, 2002). The utilitarian dimension of shopping attitude is also fairly supported in the marketing literature (example Allard et al, 2009). Despite that previous research, little insights are available regarding the influence of orientations on shopping attitude. This study is an attempt in this direction. Moreover, keeping the Saudi context, a multi-item shopping orientation scale based on past research is developed to measure orientation attributes.

2.5. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are postulated with assumed shoppers' evaluations of the relationship between the attitude toward shopping and the other influence variables:

- H1: There is a significant difference between men and women in their mall shopping value perceptions
- H2: There is a significant effect of lifestyle influences between men and women towards mall shopping
- H3: There are significant differences between men and women in terms of shopping orientation

3. METHODS

3.1. Questionnaire Development

The scales used in the study were drawn from review of relevant literature. The initial list of measures was developed from the list of Bellenger et al. (1977), and Sit et al. (2003), Homer and Kahle (1988) and Shim and Eastlick (1998). Initially, 18 items were identified. To identify questions, past research more germane to the purchase situation was reviewed (example, Kowinski, 1985, Feinberg et al., 1989, Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980, Westbrook and Black, 1985 and Lumpkin et al., 1986). Nineteen shopping orientation items were initially included. Finally, to measure lifestyle, items were borrowed from SRI value and lifestyles (VALS) program (Piiro, 1991) and from the works of Wu (2003). For this study, 22 items were identified.

A focus group discussion was conducted with ten randomly selected shoppers. The list of items relating to the model construct was revealed to the participants. They were then asked to select and assess the variables they felt were relevant to their context. Two rounds of discussions moderated by the author, each lasting about forty minutes, were undertaken. Findings from these discussions were used to develop the survey instrument design. The results generated 54 representative items of which sixteen items measure shopping orientation, fourteen items were included in the lifestyle construct and fifteen items were used to measure the value construct. All these items were measured on a five point scale. Finally, some statements were included to capture demographic information and mall patronage.

3.2. Data Collection

The target population of this study was all individual mall shoppers residing in Saudi Arabia. Because of difficulties in obtaining probabilistic samples in Saudi Arabia, a convenience sampling technique was used. In the first stage of data collection, initial recruits were randomly selected by the author from among university students in three major cities in Saudi Arabia. The chosen cities are spread across three different regions: Jeddah in the western province, Riyadh in the central province, and the tri-cities of Dhahran-Khobar-Dammam in the eastern province. All these efforts resulted in obtaining 513 usable responses.

4. FINDINGS

To test the relationship between men and women and demographic variables, Chi-square analyses were performed. Table 1 presents the results of these analyses. Out of the five variables examined three variables: age, education and nationality were found to be significant, while the remaining two were not.

In terms of age grouping, more women than men were shoppers in the age group of 18–25 years. This was in contrast to shoppers in the remaining three age groups where the percentage of men was higher than that of women ($p = 0.001$). As for nationality, more Saudi men were shoppers as compared to women. However, the number of non-Saudi women shoppers was higher than men ($p = 0.001$). It is relevant to point that Saudi Arabia employs an estimated six million expatriate workers, who form a major chunk of the overall population. Significant differences between men and women based on the region they reside in were also found as reported in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic comparison between men and women

		Total	Men		Women	
			(N = 261)	Percent	(N = 252)	Percent
Age	18–25 years	266	122	45.86	144	54.14
	26–35 years	114	61	53.51	53	46.49
	36–45 years	89	52	58.43	37	41.57
	Above 45 years	44	26	59.09	18	40.91
	$\chi^2 = 37.054^*$					
Education	High School	144	51	35.42	93	64.58
	Some College	114	35	30.70	79	69.30
	Bachelor	196	131	66.84	65	33.16
	Master Degree	47	35	74.47	12	25.53
	Ph.D.	12	9	75.00	3	25.00
$\chi^2 = 24.417^*$						
Region	Eastern	213	94	44.13	119	55.87
	Central	116	65	56.03	51	43.97
	Western	138	70	50.72	68	49.28
	Others	46	32	69.57	14	30.43
	$\chi^2 = 9.920$					
Nationality	Saudi	251	178	70.92	73	29.08
	Non-Saudi	262	83	31.68	179	68.32
	$\chi^2 = 24.132^*$					
Frequency of Shopping	At least once a week	314	146	46.50	168	53.50
	Once every two weeks	144	81	56.25	63	43.75
	Once a month	55	34	61.82	21	38.18
	$\chi^2 = 4.106$					

Significance level denoted by * < 0.001

4.1. Data Reduction

Principal components analysis with varimax rotation was used to reduce the three component items into related factors. Appropriate tests (Bartlett test of sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measures) were used to validate the use of the factor analysis. Statements with loading of 0.40 or above on a single factor were used for further analysis for each of the three components. For the value component, two items were omitted, as they loaded below the cut-off value. The remaining items were grouped into four factors. These were labelled as (1) price saving (2) time saving, (3) the product assortment and (4) service quality. These four factors accounted for 68 per cent of variance. Cronbach's alpha for all factors was all within acceptable limits. The results of the factor analysis are summarized in Table 2.

As for the component of lifestyle, four factors emerged, and they were labelled as (1) trendsetter (2) goal-oriented, (3) information seeker and (4) variety seeker. These four factors accounted for 57 per cent of variance. Cronbach's alpha for all factors was all within acceptable limits.

Finally, three factors emerged in the shopping orientation component. These were appropriately labelled as (1) utilitarian shopper (2) window shopper, and (3) recreational shopper. These three factors accounted for 48 per cent of variance. Cronbach's alpha for all factors was once again within acceptable limits.

Table 2

Factor analysis and reliability results for Value

	No of items	Eigenvalue	Percentage of variance	Cronbach's α
Value Component				
Price saving	4	4.131	37.431	0.765
Time saving	3	2.767	12.987	0.731
Product assortment	3	1.932	9.123	0.693
Service quality	3	1.451	8.453	0.676
Lifestyle Component				
Trendsetter	4	3.912	24.425	0.806
Goal-oriented	4	2.543	15.865	0.776
Information seeker	3	1.723	9.832	0.714
Variety seeker	3	1.317	7.812	0.687
Shopping Orientation Component				
Utilitarian shopper	5	3.914	21.674	0.712
Window shopper	4	2.654	15.978	0.681
Recreational shopper	3	1.659	10.348	0.643

4.2. Results of hypothesis tests

4.2.1. Hypothesis 1

This study used an analysis of variance to provide evidence that mall shopping revealed significant differences based on gender. All the hypotheses were tested. The first hypothesis was to see for differences between men and women in their mall shopping value perceptions. Three of the four factors under this component were found to have a significant effect on gender. The first test for price saving was significant ($p < 0.001$). Men are more inclined to look for price saving compared to women. The result of the second test, seeking to determine whether a significant gender difference existed in terms of time saving, was also significant. By examining mean scores, it is obvious that men look for time saving as compared to women. This may be due to the fact that most women in Saudi Arabia have more time for socializing with limited opportunities for employment. The result of the third test, aimed to determine whether a significant difference existed between men and women in terms quality of service, was also significant. Mean score indicates that men are more likely to perceive value benefit by gauging the quality of service.

Because of the significance of the ANOVA tests, *H1* was rejected.

4.2.2. Hypothesis 2

H2, which was postulated to determine gender differences related to the lifestyle components of shopping behaviour, was tested using separate ANOVA tests for each factor. The first two tests were insignificant. The result of the third test to determine whether a significant difference existed in terms of information seeking was significant. By examining mean scores, it appears that men (mean 3.49) were more likely to seek information when shopping compared with women (mean 2.35). This result related to the cognitive process components is somewhat in contrast to a finding of another study which found that women are generally more inquisitive than men when shopping (Underhill, 1999).

The result of the fourth test, intended to determine whether a significant difference existed between men and women in terms of variety-seeking, was significant, as well. Women (mean 4.07) are more likely than men (mean 2.92) to look for variety while shopping.

4.2.3. Hypothesis 3

It was hypothesized that significant differences existed between men and women with regard to shopping orientation. Of all three tests that were conducted, the first two tests were significant.

The first test was conducted to determine if any significant differences existed between men and women in terms of utilitarian shopping orientation. This was found to be significant. Men in general are high on the utilitarian shopping dimension and more price sensitive than women. The result of the second test, conducted to determine whether a significant gender difference existed in terms of window shopping orientation, was also significant. By examining mean scores, it is obvious that more women are window shoppers than men. This result finds support in another study, which concluded women see shopping as an enjoyable activity, while men end up making the purchases (Durakbaşı and Cindoğlu, 2002).

Table 3

ANOVA comparisons between men and women

	Men (N = 261)		Women (252)		F
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Value					
Price Saving	3.4484	0.88815	3.2692	0.95988	7.831***
Time Saving	3.2656	0.83698	2.4923	0.83772	6.711**
Product Assortment	3.2812	0.85975	3.4822	0.9628	2.284
Service Quality	3.3651	0.89981	3.2849	0.88077	6.452**
Lifestyle					
Trendsetter	3.0859	1.08698	3.0621	1.11331	2.043
Goal-oriented	3.0234	0.98384	2.9497	1.06488	2.464
Information seeker	3.4882	0.88071	2.3551	0.92026	5.978**
Variety seeker	2.9234	1.1045	4.0734	1.18442	7.872***
Shopping orientation					
Utilitarian shopper	3.7125	1.01756	3.2249	0.93864	6.772**
Window shopper	3.2734	0.95336	3.7521	0.9326	7.652***
Recreational shopper	3.2031	0.88165	3.7722	0.96981	2.494

Notes: Significance level denoted by * < 0.05; ** < 0.01; *** < 0.001.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of the present study have implications for shopping mall operators targeting specific gender and work status. The results suggest that factors such as value perceptions, lifestyles and shopping orientation differ across genders and have a significant impact on mall patronage. Mall operators must consider these factors in developing their strategy. This study is an attempt to understand the differences between genders and the dynamics of mall shopping in the emerging market of Saudi Arabia. The findings of this study support the hypothesis to a large extent. The findings show that there are gender differences in mall patronage. Three of the five demographic characteristics demonstrated significant differences between men and women.

The findings of the present study have several other implications for mall managers. Since demographic factors influence shoppers attitude, it is important to match the socio-economic status of shoppers. Lifestyle is also a significant predictor. Therefore, mall operators must carefully portray the image of the mall to match the shoppers' lifestyle. It is also essential to pursue right pricing policies in accordance with the needs of the shoppers. Finally, a careful analysis of the shopping orientation will be needed. Overall, to address all these issues, it is necessary to promote the mall as a brand. An effective marketing programme must increase patronage of shoppers. Shopping malls must also use carefully crafted positioning strategies to differentiate themselves from growing competition and encourage customers to create a preference, build loyalty and thus increase patronage.

While the objectives of the study were fully met, a few limitations need to be mentioned. Although mall-specific inventories of measurement items were developed, rather than a general inventory of items, these items were adapted mainly from studies conducted in the western world. Perhaps, a limitation is that they might not be adequately reflective of the Saudi society. Further, inclusion of additional variables that will improve our ability to understand actual behaviour more accurately is necessary. The convenience sampling method employed limits the generalizability of the findings. Further research with larger sample size is suggested to increase generalizability of findings.

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