

Travelling shoppers' perceptions of servicescape of the bus and railway station retail environment

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Abstract

The travellers' perceptions of the servicescape of the bus and railway station retail environment in South Africa and its impact on the buyer behaviour of local and international travellers that use bus stations was examined. This study was prompted by observable behaviours of travellers who were impacted by the bus and railway station environment, which induces an interesting type of shopping behaviour amongst them. The results reveal that travellers perceived South African bus and railway stations' servicescape as unattractive. Travellers considered the two dimensions (store image and store ambience) of the stores' servicescape as one composite unit of the servicescape. Shoppers also revealed that the ambience at the bus stations were unpleasant, congested, of poor quality and unreliable merchandise, which complicated shopping from the stations' stores.

Key phrases

comprehensive servicescape, physical environment, Servicescape, social environment, social servicescape

1. INTRODUCTION

Bus and railway stations are becoming important service environments where travellers encounter a bundle of tangible and intangible services from various institutions that surround these spaces, which Bitner (1992:59) defines as the "elaborate servicescape". The level of service quality affects customer's judgment of satisfaction according to Walker and Baker (2000:413). Improved service quality within the bus and retail servicescape, could ensures travellers' satisfaction and retail competitiveness.

Bus and railway stations, where a significant number of travelling customers use a diverse supply of varying services, are an interesting target for service quality studies. Whereas airport travellers, can spend more than an hour within the airport servicescape (Fodness & Murray 2007:493), road and railway travellers spend even more time at stations. Within the rail and road station servicespace, retailers are the major source of services, goods and entertainment.

Due to huge numbers of internal and international road and railway travellers bus and railway stations retail shops play a very important role as shopping destinations and transit points for tourists travelling by road and rail. Attractive retail facilities within the station's servicescape can potentially make the waiting times for commuters at the station a pleasurable experience.

A large number of contemporary shoppers have become highly mobile due to the efficiency of public transport, quality road networks, improved customs systems, excellent atmospherics within retail shops and low cost products in South Africa. Road travellers are increasing their visits to South Africa, partly because bus stations seem to provide the first impression of the South African shopping environment.

In addition to the shops within the bus and railway stations, South African cities have attractive retail facilities that provide experiential shopping to travellers. Retail physical infrastructure causes three emotional states in shoppers: pleasure/displeasure, arousal/non-arousal and dominance/submission (Hoffman & Bateson 2006:229-231). This indicates that retail facilities at bus stations in South Africa play a significant role in moulding the perceptions of travellers since they provide the first impression of South Africa. The question that arises is 'what are the perceptions of travellers when experiencing various types of retail facilities within bus and railway station servicescapes?'

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Travelling shoppers have different perceptions and expectations of both the physical and social environment of the South African bus and railway stations retail servicescape. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to investigate the travelling shoppers' perceptions of the bus and railway station retail servicescape in order to determine their buyer behaviour.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Booms and Bitner (1981:36) formulate the servicescape concept as an environment in which a service is assembled where sellers and consumers interact in combination with tangible commodities that facilitate the performance or communication of the service. Bitner (1992:58) further develops the typology of service organisations which are based on variations in form and usage of the servicescape. Hightower (2010:77) suggests that the financial return of any business depends on how the consumers react to its servicescape.

Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2003:447-475) believe that buyer behaviour is determined by the socio-physical aspects of the environment, purchase occasions and store image that determine the social meanings attached to particular environments. Therefore, shopping

behaviour is influenced by some unique social and physical characteristics of the bus and railway stations' environment.

3.1 Environmental dimensions of shopping

3.1.1 Store image

Hoffman and Bateson (2006:234) suggest that a set of stimuli that creates conducive service environment include ambient conditions that play a significant role in the development of the store's image, spatial functions, signage and symbols that facilitate experiential shopping. These store dimensions play an important role in establishing customer perceptions, emotional well-being, attitudes and buyer behaviours. Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2008:254-255) suggest that the perceptions of store cues, irrespective of whether processed individually or holistically by a customer, result in the formation of particular attitudes by shoppers toward the overall store appearance and image.

3.1.2 Store ambience

The store's ambience concerns the general atmosphere of the store, which is both physical and intangible in nature. Store ambience plays an important role in customer satisfaction. According to Kumar and Purani (2011:12) keeping shoppers in a shop as long as possible is critical for leisure service providers, because customers are likely to spend additional time and money on concessions and souvenirs. The South African bus and railway stations are important business environments that have the ability to either attract or de-motivate travelling shoppers.

3.2 Social encounters

The interaction (passive or active) between people in a shopping environment is considered as social encounter in this study. Zeithaml and Bitner (2003:102) indicate that there are three general types of service encounters which are remote encounter, phone encounter and face to face encounter. These service encounters may or may not have employees present and consequently may depend upon the customer's capacity to interact with the facility for consumption experience. Bitner (1992:58) cited by Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:284) suggest three variables that are important in the development process of a shopper's relationship with a particular outlet, namely the interaction between the store environment, staff and shoppers.

Several researchers such as Miao, Mattila and Mount (2009:2) recognise the importance and influence of the other patrons present within the retail service environment and have

specifically addressed the impact of other customers on service experiences and satisfaction perceptions related to spaciousness or lack of it.

3.3 Typologies of shoppers

Various consumer typologies have been created and developed by retailers and marketers in an effort to have a full appreciation and understanding of the types of products customers shop for, their drive and motivation for shopping and their behaviours/experiences in relation to shopping and purchasing products (Kim, Timothy & Hwang 2010:2). Significantly different typologies of shoppers have different behaviours, which service providers should be aware of. Travellers are complex in terms of their needs and demands from the market and the environment they interact with when they seek memorable events or products.

3.4 Repurchase behaviour

Various researchers refer to repurchase behaviour as patronage behaviour or repeat purchase that is influenced by positive word-of-mouth communication and satisfaction with the service quality emanating from the stores servicescape (social and physical environment). The revisit intention is a repurchase intention behaviour that demonstrates a willingness to recommend and disseminate positive information for a service provider - positive word-of-mouth (Jang & Namkung 2009:454). Therefore, social exchange relationships in a retail environment develop when the retail staff members give rewarding and excellent services to the shopper. This action compels the consumer to reciprocate by continued patronage.

Crowding often occurs in various service environments, especially, in a bus and railway station setting, which can inhibit patronage or encourage repeat purchases. Crowding therefore, can restrict or interfere with the individuals' goals and might influence a shopper not to visit a crowded aisle and not to purchase a planned item.

3.5 Cognitive dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is a post purchase behaviour resulting from internal or external evaluations of the purchased product. Social environments can influence post purchase dissonance, which are feelings of guilt after purchasing a product. Du Plessis, Rousseau, Boshoff, Ehlers, Engelbrecht, Joubert and Sanders (2007:189) refer to cognitive dissonance as a buyer's remorse, or a discomfort that consumers experience as a result of conflicting information. According to Zeithaml et al. (2008:250) a servicescape can essentially influence the degree of success customers experience in executing their plans once inside the service environment.

3.6 Customer satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction is defined by Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boshoff and Terblanche, (2004:10) as “a positive reaction to a purchase decision or post-consumption evaluation of a product”. Similarly, Krivobokova (2009:565) suggest that customer satisfaction is generally understood as the sense of satisfaction that a consumer feels when comparing his preliminary expectations with the actual quality of the acquired product.

Jayawardhena, Souchon, Farrell and Glanville (2007:576) state that customers' perceptions of encounters and interaction with frontline staff have usually been considered as the most important determinants of customer satisfaction, service quality and firm loyalty, arguably the foundation of success in any business. Wakefield and Blodgett (1999:54) also suggest that customer satisfaction has a positive impact on the length of time customers desire to stay in the servicescape. Therefore, customer satisfaction is also a key element of time management in services (Noone, Wirtz & Kimes 2012:295).

Nguyen (2006: 240) suggests that familiarity of the environment and client orientation in the setting are important elements of the servicescape design that can ensure pleasant experience for clients during their shopping excursion. For example, spatial layout, décor, signs, symbols of the environment and the assistance of the contact employees, play a significant role in creating and maintaining customer satisfaction. At a bus and railway station the service encounters within the store environment and interactions between staff members (with different service cultures), travellers and their friends can create a satisfactory environment. The servicescape has also been found to affect both satisfaction and service quality in various service environments (Grace & O’Cass 2004:452). Considering the literature overview, the bus and railway station servicescape is influenced by environmental dimensions, typology of travellers, social encounters, and its impact on customer satisfaction, cognitive dissonance and repurchase behavioural intentions. Figure 1 depicts relationships involved.

From Figure 1 it can be seen that the servicescape can be influenced by three variables that influence buyer behaviour during the consumption process: namely, environmental dimensions (store image and store ambience); typology of travelling shoppers; and social encounters (interaction with others and frontline staff and the presence of other people).

The study focuses on three outcomes of consumer behaviour, namely, customer satisfaction, cognitive dissonance and repurchases behavioural intentions.

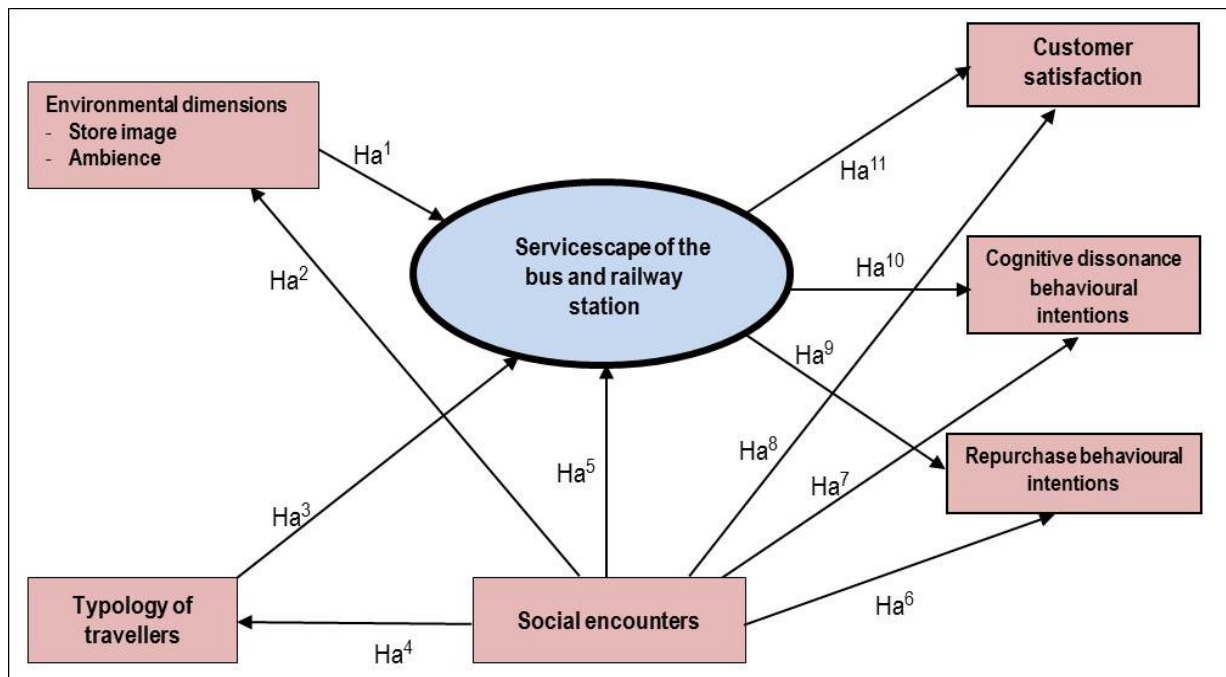


FIGURE 1: The modelled variables measuring influences and outcomes of a bus and railway station servicescape as perceived by travelling shoppers

Source: Researchers' own construct

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 The sample

The universe of the study is defined as all travellers, who use road and/or railway transport systems and use bus and railway station retail services in South Africa. The sample was limited to travelling shoppers and other passengers that frequent bus and rail facilities such as the Johannesburg Park Station, which is also the gateway to South Africa, and its shopping environment.

The number of travellers that pass through Beitbridge Border Post range between 2000 to 5000 per day, the majority of them (2000) to South Africa for various reasons. A completely random sample could not be obtained due to the time constraints of the respondents that visited the bus or railway station in South Africa. The convenience sampling method was used to choose the Johannesburg Park Station for this study and random sampling was used to draw 300 respondents from a large pool of travellers that use the station.

A total of 684 travellers were intercepted, 384 declined to take part in the interviews stating numerous reasons for not participating; others left the process midway, rushing to their buses that might have arrived. Eighty one questionnaires that were not filled in correctly had to be

discarded, which led to a 73 per cent response rate (300 respondents successfully completed the questionnaires of which 219 were usable).

All usable questionnaires were inspected, edited and coded. Fifty-six per cent (56%) of the respondents were female and 75% of the respondents fell within the age group of 20 to 39 years. Ninety per cent (90%) of the respondents shop at South African retail shops and also ninety-one percent (91%) of them visit South Africa mainly for shopping. Eighty-four per cent (84%) of the respondents earn between R1 000 to R49 999 per annum. One hundred per cent (100%) of the respondents visited South Africa more than once, primarily for shopping purposes.

4.2 The measuring instruments

Both self-developed measuring instruments and instruments with proven psychometric properties were used to measure the latent variables that are included in the model depicted in Figure 1. The 47 item questionnaire was designed, with 5 items relating to demographic profile of the respondents. The breakdown of items per variable is as follow: Environmental dimensions:7; typology of travelling shoppers:5; Servicescape:7; Social encounter:7 ; Customer satisfaction: 5; Cognitive dissonance: 5; and Repurchase behavioural intention:6.

All questionnaire items were linked to a five-point Likert-type scale. The questionnaire items comprised the following: servicescape; environmental dimension; typology of travellers; social encounters; repurchase behavioural intentions; cognitive dissonance behavioural intentions and customer satisfaction.

5. STATISTICAL METHODS

The data was collected in Microsoft Excel 2010. The data was cleaned and thereafter a STATISTICA (Version 10) database was developed and used for all descriptive and inferential assessments of the study. Graphical illustrations were provided using the Amos 19.0 software.

The data analysis consisted of four distinct phases and the empirical results are as follows:

- Convergent validity of the instruments was assessed by means of a quasi-exploratory factor analysis to measure the constructs under consideration. The dimensions under consideration were assessed individually and items above factor loading of 0.5 were considered to confirm convergent validity. According to Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham (2006:128-129) it is possible to use factor loadings of 0.35, but in this study factors above 0.6 are acceptable for practical significance. After item removals, the model was re-specified.

- Cronbach's alpha values of each instrument were used to assess the internal reliability of the measuring instruments.
- The influence of the independent variables on the dependent variables in the re-specified model was evaluated through multiple regressions.
- The significance of the hypothesised relationships was tested in a regression framework.

Table 1 provides the construct labels of the re-specified model and identifies items which were used to define the construct. The following constructs were identified: environmental dimension, typology of travelling shoppers, social encounter: customer interaction (SE1), social encounter: employee interaction (SE2), the intervening variable, servicescape and two endogenous variables, customer satisfaction and repurchase behaviour intention.

TABLE 1: Empirical factor structure - influences and outcomes

Label	Variables	Individual items
ED	Environmental dimension	ED1, ED2, ED3
TYP	Typology of travelling shoppers	TYP2, TYP3, TYP4, TYP5
CS	Servicescape	CS1,CS5,CS6,CS7
SE(1)	Social encounter: customer interaction (1)	SE1,SE2,SE7
SE(2)	Social Encounter: employee interaction (2)	SE4, SE5, SE6
SA	Customer satisfaction	SA1, SA2, SA5
RI	Repurchase behavioural intention	RI 1, RI 2, RI3, RI4, RI5

Source: Researcher's own construct

6. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The internal consistency of each of the factors was assessed by calculating Cronbach's alpha. The value > 0.5 was considered to represent a sufficient standard of reliability in this study. Bekiari, Lyrakos, Damigos, Mavreas, Chanopoulos and Dimoliatis (2011:58) support this research finding. Also, Ku and Shen (2009:831) research findings indicate that Cronbach's alpha value of > 0.5 for instruments of attitude and preference assessments, is an acceptable value for reliability tests. Table 2 shows that, all instruments returned Cronbach's alpha values of more than 0.5 except for Cognitive Dissonance (CD). Variable (CD) was regarded as inadequate for further analysis and was subsequently deleted from the empirical model.

Regression estimation was used to assess the influence of the selected variables on the servicescape. Several linear regression estimates were performed to assess whether the

identified independent variables exerted a significant influence on the servicescape. The results of the regression analysis fits are shown in Tables 3 (A – G).

TABLE 2: Internal consistency as measured by Cronbach's alpha regression analysis

Construct	Cronbach's alpha
ED	0.502
CS	0.653
SE(1)	0.717
SE(2)	0.740
TYP	0.706
SA	0.654
RI	0.834

TABLES 3 (A-G): Regression estimates and goodness of fit statistics

TABLE 3A

CS	B	Std Err.	t(214)	p-value
Intercept	0.992	0.2401	4.131	0.0001
Typ	0.359	0.0582	6.159	0.0000
SE(2)	0.137	0.0533	2.562	0.0111
SE(1)	0.129	0.0468	2.766	0.0062
ED	0.110	0.0446	2.459	0.0147
Multiple R ²	0.347			
P	6.19E-19			

TABLE 3B

ED	B	Std Err.	t(216)	p-value
Intercept	2.133	0.2700	7.903	0.0000
SE(1)	0.275	0.0678	4.060	0.0001
SE(2)	0.035	0.0774	0.458	0.6476
Multiple R ²	0.086			
P	5.91E-05			

TABLE 3C

Type	B	Std Err.	t(216)	p-value
Intercept	2.092	0.2066	10.126	0.0000
SE(1)	0.151	0.0519	2.909	0.0040
SE(2)	0.299	0.0593	5.041	0.0000
Multiple R ²	0.187			
P	1.83E-10			

TABLE 3D

RI	B	Std Err.	t(216)	p-value
Intercept	1.643	0.2235	7.354	0.0000
SE(1)	0.286	0.0561	5.097	0.0000
SE(2)	0.213	0.0641	3.316	0.0011
Multiple R ²	0.203			
P	2.19E-11			

TABLE 3E

SA	B	Std Err.	t(216)	p-value
Intercept	2.430	0.1932	12.579	0.0000
SE(1)	0.129	0.0485	2.669	0.0082
SE(2)	0.241	0.0554	4.341	0.0000
Multiple R ²	0.151			
P	2.04E-08			

TABLE 3F

RI	B	Std Err.	t(217)	p-value
Intercept	1.642	0.2522	6.510	0.0000
CS	0.447	0.0726	6.158	0.0000
Multiple R ²	0.149			
P	3.52E-09			

TABLE 3G

SA	B	Std Err.	t(217)	p-value
Intercept	2.109	0.2043	10.320	0.0000
CS	0.438	0.0589	7.439	0.0000
Multiple R ²	0.203			
P	2.33E-12			

Findings on the reformulated set of hypotheses:

Ha¹: There is a relationship between environmental dimensions and the servicescape within the bus and railway station.

Table 3A reported a statistically significant positive relationship between the environmental dimensions and servicescape ($p < 0.05$). Therefore Ha¹ is accepted.

Ha^{2.1}: There is a relationship between social encounters based on customer-to-customer interaction and the environmental dimensions within the bus and railway stations.

Table 3B reported a statistically significant positive relationship between the environmental dimensions and social encounter based on customer-to-customer interaction ($p < 0.001$). Ha^{2.1} is accepted.

Ha^{2.2}: There is a relationship between social encounter based on customer - employee interaction and the environmental dimensions within the bus and railway station.

Table 3B indicated that the environmental dimensions are not significantly related to social encounters based on customer to employee interaction ($p > 0.10$). Therefore, Ha^{2.2} was not accepted.

Ha³: There is a relationship between typology of travelling shoppers and the servicescape within bus and railway stations.

Table 3A reported a statistically significant positive relationship between the typology of travelling shoppers and servicescape ($p < 0.000$). Ha³ is accepted.

Ha^{4.1}: There is a relationship between typology of travelling shoppers and the social encounters based on customer-to-customer interaction within the bus and railway station.

Table 3C reported a statistically significant positive relationship between the typology of travelling shoppers and social encounters based on customer-to-customer interaction ($p < 0.01$). Ha^{4.1} is therefore accepted.

Ha^{4.2}: There is a relationship between typology of travelling shoppers and social encounters based on customer-employee interaction within the bus and railway stations.

There is, as shown in Table 3C, a statistically significant positive relationship between the typology of travelling shoppers and the social encounters based on customer-employee interaction ($p < 0.000$). Therefore, Ha^{4.2} is accepted.

Ha^{5.1}: There is a relationship between social encounters based on customer-to-customer interaction and the servicescape within the bus and railway stations.

Table 3A revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between the social encounters, based on customer-to-customer interaction and a servicescape ($p < 0.010$). Ha^{5.1} is accepted.

Ha^{5.2}: There is a relationship between social encounters based on customer-employee interaction and the servicescape within the bus and railway station.

Table 3A reported a statistically significant positive relationship between the social encounters based on the customer-employee interaction and a servicescape ($p < 0.05$). Ha^{5.2} is therefore accepted.

Ha^{6.1}: There is a relationship between social encounters based on customer to customer interaction and repurchase behavioural intention within the bus and railway stations.

Table 3D indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between the social encounters based on customer-to-customer interaction and repurchase behavioural intention ($p < 0.000$). Ha^{6.1} is accepted.

Ha^{6.2}: There is a relationship between social encounters based on customer-employee interaction and the repurchase behavioral intention within bus and railway stations.

Ha^{6.2} is accepted as Table 3D also reported a statistically significant positive relationship between the social encounters based on customer-to-employee interaction and repurchases behavioural intention ($p < 0.002$).

Ha^{8.1}: There is a relationship between social encounters based on customer-to-customer interaction and customer satisfaction within bus and railway stations.

Table 3E revealed that social encounters based on customer-to-customer interaction are significantly related to customer satisfaction within the bus and railway station ($p < 0.010$). Ha^{8.1} is accepted.

Ha^{8.2}: There is a relationship between social encounters based on customer-employee interaction and customer satisfaction within the bus and railway station.

Table 3E reported that social encounters based on customer-to-employee interaction are significantly related to customer satisfaction within the bus and railway station ($p < 0.000$). Ha^{8.2} is therefore accepted.

Ha⁹: There is a relationship between the servicescape and the repurchase behaviour within the bus and railway station.

Table 3F revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between the servicescape and repurchase behavioural intention ($p < 0.000$). Ha9 is accepted.

Ha¹¹: There is a relationship between the servicescape and customer satisfaction within the bus and railway station.

Ha¹¹ is accepted because of the statistically significant positive relationship between the servicescape and customer satisfaction ($p < 0.000$), as reported in Table 3G.

Given that Cognitive Dissonance (CD) did not load as factor, the hypotheses, Ha⁷ Ha¹⁰ were not tested as the modified model (Figure 2) did not include CD variables. The Hypothesized relationships are assessed in a modified theoretical model.

Figure 2 presents a summary of the empirical results of the research and the managerial implications and conclusions.

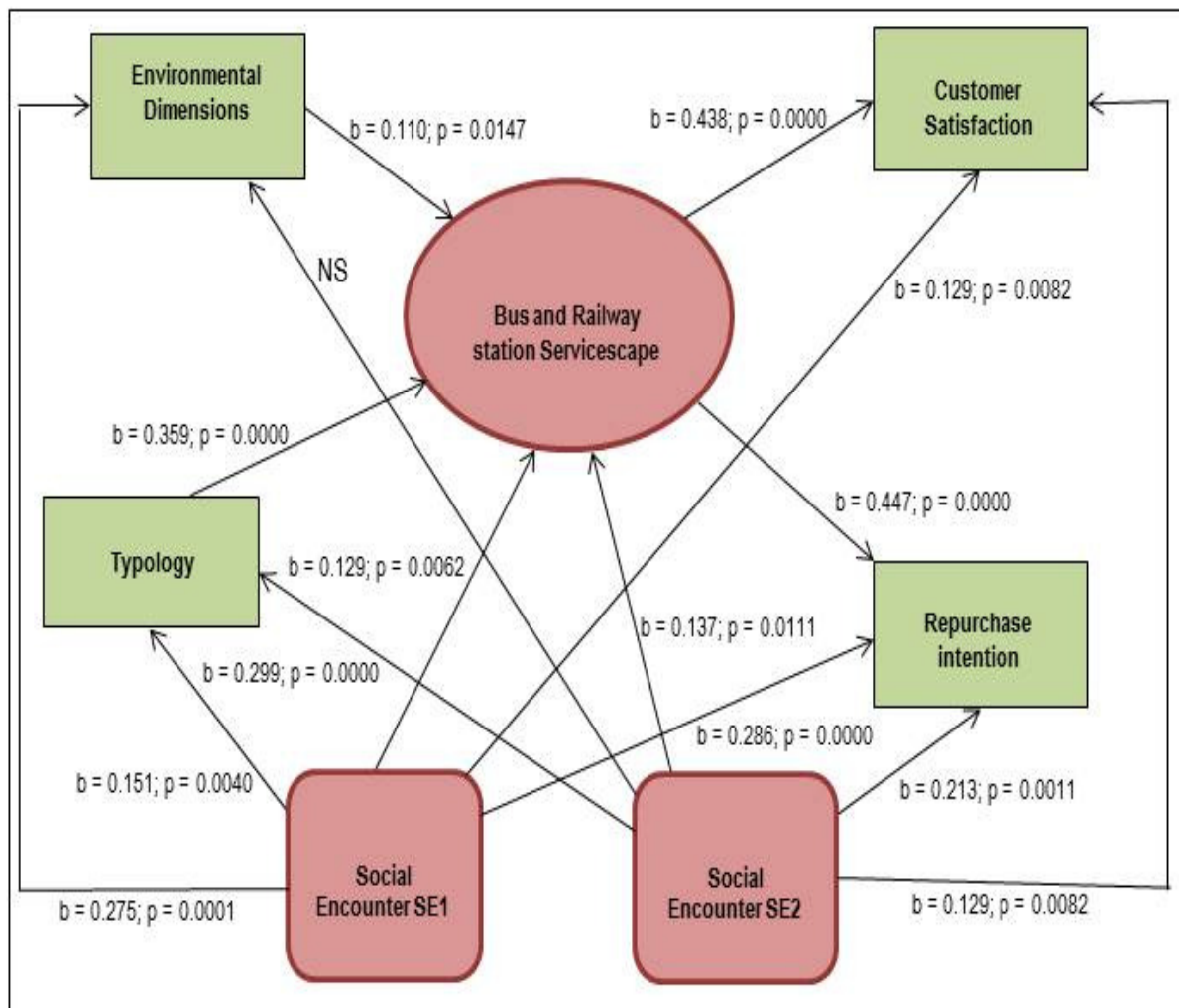


FIGURE 2: Empirical evaluation of the proposed influences and outcomes of perceptions of travellers on servicescape

Legend: NS = Not statistically significant; '+' = statistically significant.

Source: Researcher's own construct

6.1 Environmental dimensions

The empirical findings can be summarised as follows: The travellers did not see a difference between the store's image and the store's ambience. They considered the two dimensions (*image and ambience*) of the store's servicescape as one comprehensive unit. It can be concluded that the *image* of these retail stores did not have an influence on the shopping behaviour of travellers.

6.2 Servicescape

The travellers perceive the servicescape within the bus and railway station as unattractive and it lacks appropriate facilities. This means that, seats in the waiting room and rest rooms, hallways and walkaways, aisles, entrances and exits are poorly designed, and there are insufficient supply of wheel chairs to support old and sickly travellers as well as. The travelling shoppers found the stores at the bus and railway stations unattractive and painted in dull colours and they perceived the visual display of stock as unattractive and in need of a personal touch.

6.3 Social encounters

The servicescape positively influenced the perception and satisfaction of travellers due to the interaction with both the employees and other travellers at the station. Customer-to-customer, employee and traveller interaction and direct encounters have an influence on the service encounters and the level of satisfaction they derive from the servicescape.

It was found that travelling shoppers feel that the staff in bus and railway station stores', have specialist knowledge of the products they sell and are always available and helpful. The empirical findings reveal that travelling shoppers enjoy the presence and friendliness of other people, window-shopping as well as talking to frontline staff at the bus and railway station stores.

6.4 Travellers' typology

It was difficult to deduce a particular typology of shoppers in this environment, but, due to the stress related to travelling, passive shopping has been observed amongst travellers. Therefore, two types of bus and railway station shoppers can be distinguished, namely, mood shoppers, those that are driven by the bus and railway station atmosphere and the apathetic travelling shoppers, who are indifferent towards shopping but due to the travel related circumstances and poor infrastructure of the stations' environment, opt to spend their time shopping. This indicates that, the servicescape of the bus and railway station does not induce shopping typologies amongst travellers.

6.5 Customer satisfaction and repurchase intention

The findings show that travelling shoppers perceive that the merchandise found within the bus and railway station stores are of poor quality and unreliable. As a result, they would never recommend these retail stores to anyone.

The travelling shoppers feel strongly that the shopping environment in the bus and railway stations is not conducive to shopping. Thus it would be very difficult to establish re-patronage or repurchase actions within the shops located at the bus and railway stations.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A BUS AND RAILWAY STATION SERVICESCAPE

7.1 Environmental dimensions

Retailers should acknowledge the existence and the importance of the external and internal elements as well as store layout of the retail environment to qualify as a world-class retail environment. Attractive entrance and easy access to car parking areas that enhance the movement of shoppers from the external to the interior of the bus and railway stations' servicescape can be created.

Retailers at bus and railway station need to note that, generally, consumers expect a certain level of ambient environmental conditions within the servicescape of a retail environment. Therefore, the store image and the store ambience need to meet the challenges of the consumer behaviour of travellers like any other consumer. Creating an appealing store image that speaks to one's customer segment is important to attract and retain customers.

Retailers, who trade in the bus and station retail environment as well as town planners, need to improve the ambient conditions of this servicescape. The ambient elements are music, lighting, colour, scents or smells and temperature. To improve the servicescape of the bus and railway stations retailers need to focus on the following:

- The facility upkeep and cleanliness, use of clearly written banners and signs, and personnel appearance all influence the ambience of the bus and railway station servicescape.
- Playing background music in the (service) environment adds a favourable feature to a product, and the outcome is potentially a more positive evaluation of the store's environment.
- The type of lighting in an environment could directly influence an individual's perception of the definition and quality of the space, influencing his/her awareness of physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual aspects of the space.
- Colour has a strong influence on buying intentions and actual purchases.

7.2 Servicescape

Store servicescape is the most important construct that shapes the customer's feeling, thinking and actions. Therefore, the customers' first impression of the physical and social environment is likely to be generated by what they are exposed to, offered and can utilise in that environment.

Customer patronage of particular places is based on perceived safety, favourable climate, potential for social interaction, and a large selection of merchandise. The facilities and quality of service available will entice customers to engage in shopping activities. Increased time spent in the store, high levels of spending, unplanned purchasing and increased store patronage are enhanced by positive emotions that are evoked by attractive shopping stores within a retail environment.

Town planners should effectively plan and design all bus and railway stations with observable and familiar cues that will make travelling efficient and experiential since consumers choose shopping environments for the pleasantness and the atmosphere rather than the products they sell.

7.3 Social encounters

Service encounters are created and consumed concurrently and they involve interactions between a customer and an employee who have unique needs, emotions and expectations (Finsterwalder & Kuppelwieser 2011:610).

Various authors such as Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:343-345) mention certain criteria for creating and maintaining strong and sustainable relationships with customers. These criteria are the following:

- It is important for retailers to promote the social interaction between consumers and the retail staff that often provides special benefits to both parties by creating membership relationships and database of travellers.
- Opportunities for travellers' preference for environments that are secure, pleasing, interesting and socially comfortable as well as accessibility to service employees which provide reassurance must be created by retailers.

- Service staff members need to play an important role in influencing the nature of the service encounter relationship. The resultant social interaction provides social comfort and relaxation to consumers.
- Having a loyalty programme in place enables the retailers to know who their customers are and to capture their service transactions and preferences to promote repurchase behavioural intention within the servicescape.
- Retailers also need to pay attention to the physical attractiveness of frontline staff, which can be in the form of good looks, dress or any other natural traits of an individual person or group. This can also be used as elements of an organisation's marketing culture, which may be observed by customers from the appearance of staff.
- Travellers/tourists appreciate easy-to-understand instructions, provided by service providers when travelling.

The bus and station environment as well as the shopping environment induce the formation of a social unit (shopping teams) because of continual interaction between passengers as they wait for buses or as they continue to make collaborative shopping trips to South Africa.

7.4 Typology of travelling shoppers

The focus of this study was on two types of shoppers: serious shoppers and casual shoppers. As tourists, these shoppers are motivated by both utilitarian and affective needs but their levels of participation in the shopping processes differ significantly due to internal drive, and the type of needs and personality of the tourist.

The analysis of the behaviour of travellers provided a better understanding of their consumer needs. The multiplicity of travellers requires retailers to identify groups of travellers with homogeneous characteristics and behaviours so as to adjust their offerings to the needs and desires of this target market. These adjusted offerings may assist retailers and town planners to design facilities and services that would not only accommodate the needs of such groups but would also reveal other segments whose needs are not well served by existing services.

Retailers need to understand that some types of shoppers, shop because of the novelty that a new environment creates. Others shop in order to fulfil utilitarian needs, purchase gifts for

people at home, utilise excess time, socialise and spend time with friends, relax, or simply out of sheer love of shopping in general.

7.5 Customer satisfaction and repurchase behavioural intention

Retailers should be aware that the value of goods or services depends on its role in creating a consumption experience which would result in satisfaction or dissatisfaction. A pleasant atmosphere and service experience, as a result of a series of discrete sub-experiences in shopping centres, enhances positive emotions, increases unplanned shopping, and the attainment of consumer goals.

Crowding is found in various service environments and the stressful presence of others can influence performance in both positive and negative ways. It can either inhibit patronage or encourage repeat purchases and interfere with or restrict individual goals, causing shoppers to abandon shopping.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The respondents were intercepted for questioning while rushing to embark on their buses or trains at the station. Thus, many travellers failed to participate in the survey.

The second limitation was the lack of indiscriminate validity of some of the vital dimensions used in the study. Some of the items used to measure these dimensions did not measure what they were expected to measure. For practical reasons, the study was confined only to a major bus and train station in South Africa, the Johannesburg Park Station. However, this study can be replicated and used in facilitating retail amenities within all the bus and railway servicescape in future.

9. CONCLUSION

The study contributes to literature on the intentions of bus/railway stations' store patronage and on understanding perceptions of shopping travellers within South Africa. It also assists retailers to understand the shopping typology and the social servicescape of travellers as well as the influence of the station infrastructural design. The study further suggests and enables practical recommendations to retailers, town planners and infrastructural planning.

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