

Mall shopping preferences and patronage of mature shoppers

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Orientation: Retailers often consider other market segments ahead of mature consumers because they perceive that they have limited purchasing power. This study addressed this misperception by investigating the buying behaviour of mature consumers.

Research purpose: The purpose of this study was to investigate the buying behaviour of mature consumers (older than 55) in Port Elizabeth shopping malls.

Motivation for the study: The perception of mature shoppers as old people with limited financial resources is untrue. This study investigates the behaviours of mature shoppers.

Research design, approach and method: A model guided the investigation. The authors facilitated four focus groups to gain insight into mature consumers' buying behaviours. A field survey followed with a sample of mall shoppers ($n = 680$). The authors performed content analysis of the focus group material and used SPSS and AMOS programs to analyse the data quantitatively.

Main findings: Focus group interviews revealed specific buying behaviours of mature shoppers. The survey showed significant relationships between various determinants that influence respondents' buying behaviours with adequate model fit indices. These results confirmed the convergent and discriminant validity of the model that comprises mall shopping anticipation, experience and patronage.

Practical/managerial implications: Mature shoppers' expectations exceeded their experiences, suggesting dissatisfaction with some aspects of their experiences. Retailers and shopping mall managers need to redesign malls if they wish to cater for the segment of ageing shoppers and their spending power.

Contribution/value-add: The study contributes to the research available in South Africa on service at shopping malls that cater for mature consumers.

Introduction

Background to the study

The purpose of this research was to investigate the mall shopping preferences and patronage of mature shoppers in Port Elizabeth. Retailers often ignore the mature market (consumers older than 55) because many retailers target consumers in their teens and early adulthood (Lee, 1997). In South Africa, approximately 5.3 million residents are older than 55. An estimated 40% of this cohort are affluent and live in metropolitan areas (Benecke, Frey, Chapman & Mashaba, 2011). Although many mature couples may fall in the lower 1–4 Living Standard Measure (LSM) groups compared to the wealthier 8–10 LSM groups, most mature households have substantial discretionary income because of their accumulated savings and few dependents to care for (Benecke *et al.*, 2011).

A number of studies have noted the attractive financial status of the mature segment (Hu & Jaspers, 2007; Laukkanen, Sinkkonen, Kivijarvi & Laukkanen, 2007; Moschis, Bellenger & Cusari, 2003; Walker & Mesnard, 2012). Freeman (2008) estimated that there are over 78 million people older than 50 living in the United States of America (USA) with a combined disposable income of over three trillion dollars. According to the McKinsey Report (Roxburg *et al.*, 2009), asset classes in the mature market in South Africa are likely to grow more rapidly in the near future. McKinsey estimates that there are 2.8 billion adults, who are not part of formal financial systems, in emerging markets, of which South Africa is one, with discretionary income. Bank deposits and household incomes will increase as aging people open savings accounts. Walker and Mesnard (2012) estimated that the income share for the over-60s in South Africa will increase from 11.7% in 2005 to 16.5% in 2020.

The stereotyped perception of the mature market as a vulnerable group of people, much opposed to change and with limited financial resources, is untrue. Too often, marketers stereotype older consumers and ignore them in their marketing strategies. Birtwistle and Tsim (2005) reported, in a study of mature women's clothing, that retailers in the United Kingdom were more interested in targeting fashionable young consumers and do not understand the needs of the mature market. It is also incorrect to believe that mature consumers will not try new products. Leventhal (1997) argues that aging consumers will definitely try out products, but for different reasons to younger consumers. Younger consumers will consider new products because it is trendy. Mature consumers consider new products that fit their aging needs, such as reader-friendly labels, helpful sales staff and increased print size (Laukkanen *et al.*, 2007). Mattila, Karjaluoto and Pentto (2003), in a study on Internet banking adoption amongst mature customers in Finland, found that over 30% of wealthy and well-educated mature males made e-banking their primary mode of making payments. Moschis and Nguyen (2008) observed that affluent mature people depend more on themselves to decide which financial services they will use. They consider themselves knowledgeable enough and do not care much about advice from children or relatives.

Literature review

Previous research (Goodwin & McElwee, 1999; Moschis, 1996; Moschis, Bellenger & Cusari, 2003) has focused on segmenting the mature consumer market using chronological age and lifestyles. We usually refer to this approach as 'gerontographics'. Gerontographics, a term that Moschis (1996) first used, is a segmentation approach based on the premise that the factors that make older consumers more or less receptive to marketing offerings, relate directly to their needs and lifestyles, which changing life conditions in turn influence.

Gerontographics uses the theory that people change their outlooks on life when they experience major life events, such as retiring, losing a spouse or developing chronic health concerns, as its basis. Studies that the Centre for Mature Consumer Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the United States of America (USA) conducted revealed that these life changes occur as people age physically, psychologically, socially and spiritually. These life changes influence older consumers' restaurant selection preferences (Moschis, Bellenger & Cusari, 2011), housing preferences, (Moschis *et al.*, 2003), past and present preferences for food products and grocery stores (Moschis, 1996) as well as retail stores (Moschis, Sneath & Mathur, 1995).

Despite the growing importance of the mature consumer market, it is often the least understood market segment and marketers treat it as a homogeneous stereotypical group (Harris, 1993; Lazer, 1986). However, because of pioneering work at the Centre for Mature Consumer Studies, which George Moschis spearheaded in the 1990s, the mature market

in the USA was segmented into four life stages: healthy indulgers, healthy hermits, ailing outgoers and frail recluses. Authors such as Shufeldt, Oates and Vaught (1998), who investigated lifestyle as an important factor in the purchase of drugs by the elderly, and Leinweber (2001), who focused on the key values of older consumers, further recognised the heterogeneity between various sub segments of the mature market.

In South Africa, Benecke *et al.* (2011) identified three life style clusters with regard to the mature market's media selection: old optimists, young up-beats and younger opinionists. The researchers observed a negative attitude towards advertising amongst mature people. Respondents felt neglected in advertising messages because they thought that media experts preferred to target younger consumers.

It seems that, because of its size and potential spending power, the mature market in South Africa deserves closer attention from the retail industry and academia. Mall operators should view mature consumers in South Africa as important because of their average high discretionary income and time to patronise shopping malls. Harris (1993) alludes to the fact that today's senior citizens are living a more active and positive life. They are open to buying new products, planning and engaging in new activities, such as exploring different shopping malls. In contrast to their younger counterparts, mature consumers are more demanding in their expectations of shopping malls and less inclined to patronise malls if their service is poor.

Visser, Du Preez and Du Toit (1996) profiled mature female clothing shoppers in South Africa and identified three segments: clothing moderates, clothing enthusiasts and clothing unconcerned. They found no significant differences between the three groups with regard to evaluative criteria for clothing and clothing store attributes. A follow up study by Visser and Du Preez (1998) confirmed previous findings that segmenting mature apparel consumers is essential for sustained growth of this market. In another study, by Du Preez, Visser and Zietsman (2007), of South African male apparel consumers, the authors found that shopping mall behaviour differed with regard to their motivation for patronage, shopping companions and preferences for mall activities. Visser and Du Preez (2001) concluded that information about South African apparel shoppers is scant and that researchers should follow a multi-cultural approach that focuses on this market segment.

Research purpose and objectives

Purpose

Marketers need to recognise the market potential of mature consumers, especially with regard to shopping malls, because they patronise these outlets regularly. However, there is limited research in South Africa on this segment's shopping behaviour. Therefore, this study intended to fill this gap by exploring these research questions:

1. What are the expectations, experiences and patronage patterns of mature mall shoppers?
2. What are the relationships between the expectations, experiences and patronage mentioned above?
3. How should mall managers and store managers in malls attract mature shoppers to shop at malls?

Objectives

Because of the limited information about mature consumers' buying behaviours, the first objective of the study was to perform a qualitative study to capture these consumers' expectations, experiences of mall shopping and patronage of malls in Port Elizabeth.

The second objective of this study was to develop an instrument for measuring consumers' expectations, experiences and patronage of mall shopping.

The third objective was to use the instrument in a quantitative survey of mature consumers in Port Elizabeth shopping malls.

The fourth objective was to derive guidelines for mall managers and store managers in malls on how to attract mature shoppers to shop at malls.

The research model

In the proposed research model (see Figure 1), the authors categorised purchasing motives as personal, emotional, environmental and situational using the research of Walker and Mesnard (2012), Petermans and Van Cleempoel (2010), Meneely, Strugnell and Burns (2009), Liaw (2007) and Hu and Jaspers (2007). These authors found that mall shopping anticipation (MSA) derives from personal and emotional factors, whilst mall shopping experiences (MSE) derive from mall environment and situational factors. They also found that MSA and MSE influence mall shopping patronage (MSP).

Mall shopping anticipation

Expectations or anticipations are beliefs about how a product or service will perform. One can describe them as desired product or service outcomes. Expectations include pre-consumption beliefs about overall performance or the levels of attributes a product or service has (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2007; Yi, 2003). For example, one might expect a large and diversified shopping centre to cater for a wide spectrum of customer needs based on market research and customer experiences with similar shopping centres. However, the total shopping experience will determine the extent to which the customers realise their expectations in practice.

Personal factors, such as specific needs, life styles and values, could influence mall shopping expectations. Hu & Jaspers (2007) report that mature consumers look for healthy food

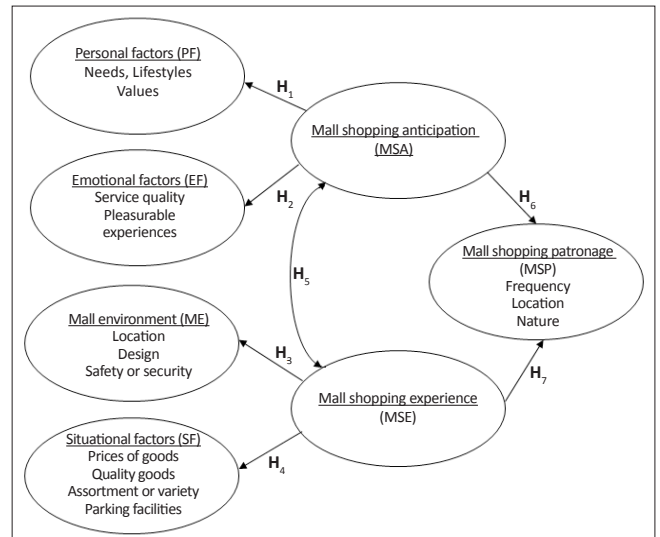


FIGURE 1: Theoretical model – Factors that influence mall shopping patronage.

options, value quality more than quantity, are more inclined to utilitarian shopping and buy apparel for pleasure or need rather than conformity. Joung and Miller (2002) found that older female consumers, who actively participated in leisure and formal social activities, were interested and involved in fashion and enjoyed apparel shopping. Lumpkin and Hite (1988) observed that retailers emphasise profit related factors whilst elderly consumers want convenience and product related aspects.

Older consumers, who see themselves as experienced and astute shoppers who look for quality and service, emphasise the importance of shopping as a way of socialising and a leisure pursuit. According to Myers and Lumbers (2008), 'perceived age' rather than chronological age should be the basis for determining marketing strategies that aim at the mature market.

With regard to emotional factors, previous studies (Donovan, Rossiter, Marcolyn & Nesdale, 1994; Sherman Mathur & Smith, 1997) showed that, when shoppers felt happy and enjoyed the environment, they tended to stay longer in a store, buy more items and spend more. Customers prefer others to see them as individuals. Therefore, friendly and helpful staff members, who are sympathetic and sensitive to the needs of elderly customers, will contribute to a pleasurable shopping experience (Hu *et al.*, 2007; Lumpkin, 1985). Unlike the generations that have followed, the mature market is not a product of an impersonal, mass-produced world (Huey, 2011). Goodwin and McElwee (1999) observed that senior citizens bought at outlets with a higher level of service quality than at other stores, even if the prices were marginally higher. Focus group discussions revealed that elderly respondents often found it difficult to find shopping mall staff members who are able and willing to help them.

Silvers (1997) found that the lives of people in their fifties are unsettled and have lots of variation. Essentially, consumers

are staying younger in their minds and shopping behaviours and many do not feel their ages because of their lifestyles and emotional outlooks on life. They see shopping trips as fun, social experiences and enjoy trips to leisure destinations such as cinemas or health clubs. Liaw (2007) investigated the influence of several store environment cues on shopping mood and patronage satisfaction. He found that visual elements, such as design and perceptions of store employees, had positive relationships with buying emotion, consumption behaviour and customer satisfaction. Myers and Lumbers (2008) state that retailers need to market the shopping behaviours of older consumers as 'experience driven'. This, according to the authors, is important if older consumers are going to choose shopping as a way of spending leisure time.

Based on these research findings, the authors formulated two hypotheses for testing the model in the South African context:

Hypothesis 1 (H₁): There is a positive relationship between personal factors and mall shopping anticipation.

Hypothesis 2 (H₂): There is a positive relationship between emotional factors and mall shopping anticipation.

Mall shopping experiences

Mall shopping experiences refer to knowledge of, or skills that relate to, mall shopping events one gains through involvement with those particular events. With regard to mall environments, Moschis *et al.* (1995) found that the convenience of a store's location in a shopping mall was an important component of mature shoppers' shopping experiences in the USA. They also found that store layout, design and ambiance, such as pleasing colours and attractive lighting, also attracted mature consumers to shopping malls. Lumpkin (1985) observed that, compared to other groups, older people use shopping malls as places for exercise and entertainment. Therefore, they prefer quieter malls with lots of rest and sitting areas to promote casual social interaction, carpeted floors for safer walking and reduced noise levels. Because of their age and health conditions, personal safety and security are also important issues for mature consumers when they choose where to shop. Senior citizens expressed high confidence in shopping malls that had visible security officers (Hu & Jaspers, 2007).

Petermans and Van Cleempoel (2010) emphasise that, when they design a retail store environment for the mature market, designers should not overlook the importance of creating an efficient, user friendly and aesthetically pleasing shopping environment that pays particular attention to intangible social aspects. Older consumers' consumption satisfaction does not come only from consuming tangible possessions but also from intangible experiences, such as feeling welcome in a retail store.

With regard to the situational factors that influence shopping experiences, Goodwin and McElwee (1999) investigated the store attributes that discriminated between various segments of mature consumers. The authors found that special

discounts and check out tills for senior citizens seemed to be more important to the older segment than to younger shoppers. Walker and Mesnard (2012) investigated mature shoppers' needs in a global maturing consumer study. They found that mature consumers sought quality products, are loyal to brands and are not particularly sensitive about prices. Kim, Kang and Kim (2005) investigated the relationship between loneliness and older consumers' mall patronage motives. They found that lonely elderly consumers patronise shopping malls where there is a variety of services, such as entertainment (cinemas and restaurants), hair salons and banks. Mature shoppers also regarded close, adequate and easy parking as important, according to Meneely *et al.* (2009). Hu and Jaspers (2007) observed that mature shoppers preferred surface parking to ramp parking for safety reasons and because of difficulties with negotiating stairs.

A study in the United Kingdom and Ireland (Meneely *et al.*, 2009) revealed that overcrowding was a concern for older people when shopping for food. They found that the size of supermarkets and queuing at checkouts had a negative effect on food shopping experiences. It also seemed that product relocation caused confusion and anxiety amongst older people. Sometimes, mature shoppers gave it as a reason for not shopping in particular supermarkets. Therefore, from a consumer perspective, it seemed that convenience, clarity and reliability are important situational variables that influence mall shopping experiences. Huey (2011) comments that seniors are the last people who enjoy personal relationships with the people who sell them goods and services.

It follows that environmental and situational factors can play important roles in mall shopping experiences. Consequently, the authors formulated two hypotheses for testing the model in a local context:

Hypothesis 3 (H₃): There is a positive relationship between mall shopping experiences and mall environment.

Hypothesis 4 (H₄): There is a positive relationship between mall shopping experiences and situational factors.

As the literature suggests (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2007), the total shopping experience will determine the extent to which malls meet or realise expectations in practice. This issue relates to the disconfirmation paradigm that states that, when a discrepancy, positive or negative, occurs between prior expectations and the actual performance of a product or service, it will result in either post-purchase satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product or service.

When performance outcomes exceed expectations, it usually leads to positive disconfirmation and satisfaction. However, if performance is lower than expectations it will lead to negative disconfirmation and dissatisfaction with products or services. A further consequence of negative disconfirmation may be post-decision regret, which is a strong feeling that a shopper has made a wrong purchase or choice of shopping mall. This can be a very severe emotional

experience, especially when consumers cannot reverse their purchase decisions or shopping mall selections (Hoyer & MacInnes, 2003).

Based on these research findings, the authors formulated a hypothesis to test in this study:

Hypothesis 5 (H₅): There is a positive relationship between mall shopping anticipation and mall shopping experiences.

Mall shopping patronage

One can view mall shopping patronage as repeat visits or mall loyalty and as a function of actual buying behaviour (purchase frequency or purchase absence). When customers are dissatisfied with features of a shopping mall or the quality and assortment of merchandise, they will buy fewer or no items, resulting in a waste of time. Therefore, one can view purchasing frequency as an indication of mall patronage.

Many authors (Patterson, 2007; Pettigrew, Mizerski & Donavon, 2005) have found that increased store loyalty amongst older consumers relates to the extent to which they receive personal attention, value brand names and the shopping mall's reputation. Dholakia (1999) suggests that satisfaction with an activity is a necessary precondition for repeat behaviours, especially when product or store choice exists. Wesley, Le Hew and Woodside (2006) support the view that mall visit satisfaction influences intention to visit the mall.

Huey (2011) states that seniors enjoy personal relationships with the people who sell them goods and services. The idea of exclusivity also works well with seniors. Weaver, Moschis and Davis (2011) suggest that life-event experiences and circumstances create physical, social and emotional demands to which everyone, young and old, must adapt during their lives. Members of the mature market are especially prone to buying products that are not necessarily suitable for, and available to, everyone. Moschis *et al.* (1995) observed that many older adults appear to be loyal to retail outlets, especially when they promote a variety of quality products and services primarily for older persons. These authors also report that store location and the nature of the layout are key motivating factors for attracting mature consumers. Handy and Clifton (2001) reported that shopping location improved the quality of life in that consumers did not have to travel long distances to shopping malls. Residents in a particular neighbourhood valued local shopping opportunities greatly. With regard to the nature of store layout, mature consumers often find it hard to navigate large shopping malls with too many hard-to-reach products on shelves that are either too low or too high (Walker & Mesnard, 2012).

Corlett (1999) and Kesner (1998) suggested that the discounts and award programmes that stores offer to senior citizens, as well as special personal services, relationship marketing and customer education, are good strategies for building store loyalty, increasing purchase frequency and promoting mall

patronage. Huey (2011) emphasises that the informational approach usually succeeds with seniors because they are often sceptical and distrustful of innovations. Because their buying habits are conservative, they want specific 'reasons why' they should buy. They also appreciate the presence of information centres in shopping malls and the mail that they read carefully. Goodwin and McElwee (1999) state that stores could promote the special features of 'traditional brands' with increased in-store assistance to attract mature consumers to a particular shopping mall.

Therefore, one can assume that mature consumers' anticipations and experiences in shopping malls will influence their mall patronage (frequency, location and nature).

Consequently, the authors formulated two hypotheses for testing the model in Port Elizabeth:

Hypothesis 6 (H₆): There is a positive relationship between mall shopping anticipation and mall shopping patronage.

Hypothesis 7 (H₇): There is a positive relationship between mall shopping experience and mall shopping patronage.

Methodology

Research approach

The study followed a qualitative and quantitative, non-experimental design that uses focus groups and a survey approach.

Research participants

Focus groups: The authors used four focus groups, which comprised ten respondents per group, in the first phase of the investigation. Malhotra (2010) states that focus groups can help one to understand consumers' perceptions of, preferences for, and behaviour concerning of, a product, service or shopping centre. Focus groups give an in-depth view of peoples' behaviour, especially in an exploratory study (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). The authors drew a non-probability convenience sample, which comprised friends and colleagues of the first author, using a snowballing approach for the focus group interviews.

Survey: To obtain participants for the quantitative phase of the study, the authors envisaged a field survey, consisting of a non-probability sample with respondents who patronise three major shopping malls in Port Elizabeth.

Instruments

Focus groups: The authors developed a list of interview questions to use in the focus groups. They based these questions on their review of the literature on shopping malls and mature shoppers. An opening question asked respondents to describe, briefly, what came to mind when they thought about 'shopping mall'. This question intended to capture an overall impression and perceived image they may have of a shopping mall. They followed the opening question with a set of specific questions such as:

- How often do you visit a shopping mall?
- Which shopping mall in Port Elizabeth do you prefer and why?
- How much time do you usually spend in a shopping mall?
- How much money on average do you spend when you visit a shopping mall?
- Which time of day and week do you usually go to the mall?
- What kind of stores do you visit most often in malls?
- What suggestions do you have for making shopping malls more attractive for mature shoppers?

Survey: The authors used a self-administered survey questionnaire, consisting of 45 items, in the quantitative study. They derived the items in the questionnaire from the literature and the focus group responses that Table 1 and Table 2 give. They used a five-point Likert-type rating scale to collect the data.

The questionnaire included items that relate to the variables in the conceptual model. The authors tested the 45 items in a pilot study. The pilot study involved ten respondents from a retirement village. They had to complete the questionnaire and comment on the clarity of the items. The respondents did not experience any problems with the clarity of the items. The first 15 items focused on *personal factors* (PF) and *emotional factors* (EF) as drivers of MSA, which the authors measured as the summated PF and EF scores. The next 21 items focused on *mall environment* (ME) and *situational factors* (SF) as drivers of MSE, which the authors measured as the summated ME and SF scores. The last nine items focused on *mall shopping patronage*.

The authors calculated the summated measures as the mean of the applicable item responses (see Annexure A). They ranged between a low score of 1 (*disagree completely*) and a high score of 5 (*agree completely*). The questionnaire ended with questions that related to demographic variables such as age category, gender, employment status (full, part time or retired) and marital status (married, divorced or widowed).

Research procedure

Focus groups: The first author acted as moderator in the focus group interviews because he fell within the mature age bracket. The authors believed that he would relate better to the responses the interviewees gave. They also assumed that the respondents would be more at ease sharing their shopping habits with someone of the same age.

The interviews the first author facilitated explained the purpose of the research. After that, the respondents completed an ethical information consent form. This form explained that respondents could leave the interview at any stage if they felt uncomfortable about any questions he asked requesting information or about the discussion in general. The respondents also gave permission for him to make audio recordings of the discussions.

A post-graduate student transcribed the focus group interviews, which took place on four successive Saturday mornings in the department of industrial psychology. A research assistant in the department verified the correctness of the information.

Survey: Seventy graduate students at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), South Africa, carried out the fieldwork in February 2012 as part of a practical assignment. All fieldworkers received a proper briefing on sample selection and interview procedures. The authors instructed the fieldworkers to interview shoppers whilst they were shopping inside shopping malls and who were aged 55 years or older. They could be either full-time or part-time workers or retired. The fieldworkers used convenience sampling (willingness to be interviewed) to select respondents and interviewed them during mornings and afternoons over a four-week period. Each fieldworker had to interview ten respondents. Fieldworkers then had to write a one-page report on their fieldwork experience. From these reports, it was clear that respondents did not have any difficulty with answering the questionnaire because the questions were simple, straightforward to answer and had undergone testing in a pilot survey.

Data analysis

Focus groups: Data analysis from the focus group interviews comprised content analysis of each focus group session. This yielded about 200 pages of transcripts. During the process, two independent reviewers identified themes for each question. They then categorised these themes into meaningful groups of concerns, ideas, attitudes and feelings. Once they had established the categories, they divided the content of the interviews into different categories for further comparison. A discussion of discrepancies between the reviewers' individual categories followed until they reached consensus (Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Survey: The authors used two statistical software applications to analyse the data. They used SPSS to calculate descriptive and inferential statistics and to perform exploratory factor analysis. They subsequently used AMOS to perform confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM) to test the hypotheses of the model.

Results

Focus groups

The respondents in the four focus groups had equal representation in terms of gender and their ages ranged from 55–65 years. The population distribution of the groups included black, mixed-race, Indians and white people. White and mixed-race people had the greatest representation.

Table 1 summarises the main themes from the analysis of the data the authors collected from the four focus groups about consumers' perceptions of shopping malls in Port Elizabeth. These results use the content analysis of the transcripts the authors recorded during the group interview sessions as their basis. The findings of the interviews, which Table 1 gives, support the notion that older respondents are critical in their perceptions of service delivery at shopping malls because they grew up in a different era (Goodwin & McElwee, 1999). This may also be because of their wider range of experiences and tendencies to compare shopping malls in different locations and cities. From the interviews, it

did not seem that the respondents were loyal to a particular shopping mall. They tended to search for items wherever it was most convenient at a particular time.

Table 2 summarises the focus group participants' most favourable and unfavourable perceptions of shopping malls in Port Elizabeth. Unfavourable perceptions exceeded the favourable ones. This illustrates the participants' critical mind-sets. Responses to the opening question on what comes to mind when participants hear or think about the word 'shopping mall', the words 'no parking', 'claustrophobic', 'stressful' and 'boring' featured prominently. Favourable responses included the words 'bargains' and 'retail therapy'. The latter refers to the enjoyment of the variety available in malls.

Table 2 shows that participants appreciated some of the attractions shopping malls offered. Their unfavourable responses focused strongly on poor service delivery and the special needs of mature shoppers, which respondents believed would attract more mature shoppers to shopping malls in Port Elizabeth. Respondents were looking for competent employees, quality products and reasonable prices.

During the interviews, the authors noted that participants were offended if others referred to them as old or elderly although they admitted to expecting special treatment as

TABLE 1: Consumers' perceptions of shopping malls in Port Elizabeth.

Theme	Explanation of theme	Illustrative comments
Assortment	Number of malls and variety of stores.	'Not enough shopping malls compared to other cities in South Africa'; 'Shopping malls in East London and Cape Town offers a large variety of stores to choose from'; 'Do not offer a large spread of stores in shopping malls'; 'Tend to find the same shops in every mall'.
Design	Size and layout preference.	'Shopping malls are too big and shops too widespread within malls'; 'I prefer an open layout that eases the access to different shops'; 'I prefer smaller malls that speeds up the buying process as there are fewer customers'.
Merchandise	Products most frequently purchased.	'I buy mostly food and clothing at the shopping mall'; 'Clothing and food'; 'I buy hardware and electronic goods at the mall'.
Accessibility	Distance from shopping malls. Parking and entrance ease.	'Shopping malls are too far from residential areas'; 'I visit the shopping mall three times a week because my work is close to the mall'; 'Parking facilities at Greenacres (mall) are poor due to lack of available parking closer to entrances'; 'I shop at stores that do not give me any hassles'.
Safety and security	Adequacy of safety and security measures	'I only see security guards standing at the entrances of malls but never inside'; 'Security measures in shopping malls are inadequate'; 'It is not safe to make withdrawals at ATMs'; 'Security staff are relaxed, appear to lack training and generally look defenceless'; 'Security guards only look for shoplifters and do not provide safety to customers'; 'I do not feel safe in the underground parking lot in the evening when going to the movies'.

TABLE 2: Focus group participants' favourable and unfavourable perceptions of shopping malls.

Theme	Explanation of theme	Illustrative comments
Favourable perceptions	Attractions	'There are coffee shops where you can eat and relax'; 'I often go to the movies in the shopping malls'.
	Affordability	'Most shops offer reasonable prices and quality goods'; 'Some shops allow pensioners' discounts'.
	Atmosphere and ambience	'Friendly and helpful employees create a pleasant atmosphere'; 'The atmosphere is usually good on Saturdays'; 'The quiet and pleasant atmosphere of Walmer Park'. 'I prefer smaller shops in most shopping malls'.
Unfavourable perceptions	Store traffic	'Greenacres are very noisy and too busy'; 'More tills are needed'; 'I do not like long queues at the pay points'; 'Some shops ignore long queues, allowing them to build up'.
	Service delivery	'There is no customer service in South Africa. Shop assistants will be chewing bubble gum whilst serving a customer, some assistants talk to others while serving you'; 'Shops should have competent employees that know their departments in order to help you quickly and efficiently'.
	Special needs	'There are not enough stores to attract mature shoppers'; 'More specialised stores for mature shoppers clothing needs are required'; 'Stores should cater for Muslim customers'; 'Book and music stores would attract mature shoppers'.

senior citizens. Many of the unfavourable comments, such as ‘high volumes of shoppers’ and ‘noise’, are beyond the control of managers. Most of the respondents indicated that they visited shopping malls on weekday mornings before noon to avoid ‘the rush caused by school children and normal hour workers’.

In summary, the focus groups evoked mixed signals and images of the term ‘shopping malls’ amongst mature consumers. These tentative results required further investigation in the quantitative phase of the study. The recorded protocols of the focus group interviews were the basis for generating items the authors used in the Likert-type rating scale questionnaire.

Survey: Respondents’ demographic profile

Table 3 presents a demographic profile of the sample ($n = 680$). Most of the respondents were female, married, fell into the age bracket 55–64 and were pensioners or worked full-time.

Validity and reliability

The authors achieved content validity of the items they used in the survey questionnaire by ensuring that, for each factor in the model, they included a set of appropriate items in the questionnaire. They assessed the face validity of the items by asking ten respondents from a retirement village to evaluate, subjectively and systematically, the clarity of the items in the questionnaire and their appropriateness in terms of their personal shopping mall experiences and patronage.

The reliability values Table 4 gives were disappointing, although acceptable in exploratory research, with the exception of MSP. These results suggest that the instrument needs revising to increase the reliability of the derived scores. An aspect that may have contributed to the low alphas is that a 45-item questionnaire may be too long for many elderly consumers to respond to and needs shortening in follow-up research.

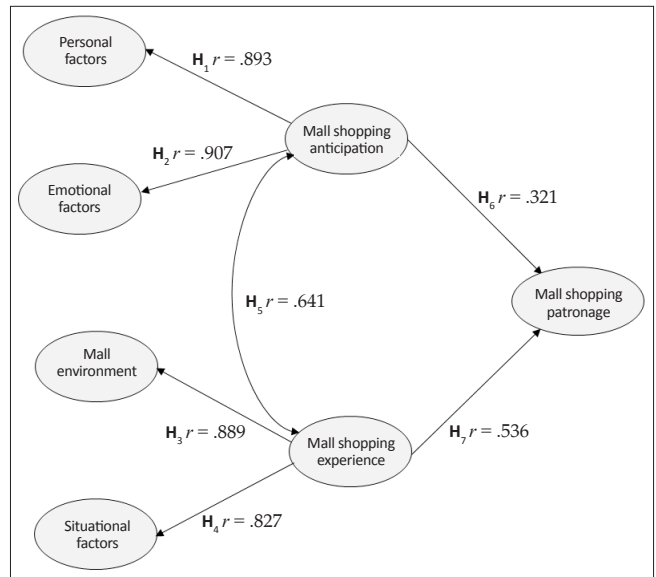
Hypothesis testing of the model

Figure 2 gives the SEM results for testing the research model on the factors that influence the mall shopping patronage of mature shoppers.

Figure 2 shows the relationships between the factors, according to Pearson product-moment correlations. The figure also shows the goodness-of-fit indices for the model and the requirements for acceptable model fit with regard to chi-square ($\chi^2 / df < 3.00$) and root-mean-squared-error ($0.05 < RMSEA < 0.08$), whilst the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) is just below the recommended threshold value of 0.90 (Browne & Cudeck, 1992). The correlations between the factors are all statistically ($r > 0.075$ at $\alpha = 0.05$ level) and practically ($r > 0.30$) significant. The SEM results (see Figure 2) confirm all the hypotheses. Therefore, one can conclude that the model that comprises *personal factors, emotional factors, mall environment, situational factors and mall shopping anticipation* shows adequate convergent and discriminatory validity.

environment, situational factors and mall shopping anticipation with mall shopping anticipation and mall shopping experience shows adequate convergent and discriminatory validity.

Figure 2 shows that the strongest path coefficients were between *mall shopping anticipation* and *emotional factors* and



Model Fit Indices: root mean squared error (RMSEA) = .052; goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.887; $\chi^2 = 1223.11$; $df = 426$; $p < .005$; $\chi^2 / df = 2.871$

FIGURE 2: Factors that influence the mall shopping patronage of mature consumers.

TABLE 3: Survey sample demographic profile.

Variable	n	%
Gender (n = 680)		
Male	278	41
Female	402	59
Age (n = 679)		
55–59	283	42
60–64	152	22
65–69	134	20
70–79	93	14
Older than 80	17	3
Employment status (n = 674)		
Pensioner	263	39
Unemployed	85	13
Part-time	90	13
Full-time	236	35
Marital status (n = 680)		
Married	406	60
Divorced or separated	76	11
Widow or widower	131	19
Single	67	10

TABLE 4: Item analysis results.

Factor	Description	Cronbach’s α
MSA	Mall shopping expectations	0.67
PF	Personal factors	0.56
EF	Emotional factors	0.55
MSE	Mall shopping experiences	0.67
ME	Mall environment	0.59
SF	Situational factors	0.64
MSP	Mall shopping behaviour (patronage)	0.45

α , alpha.

TABLE 5: Descriptive statistics for the factors ($n = 680$).

Factors	PF	EF	MSA	ME	SF	MSE	MSP
Statistics							
M	3.99	4.55	4.27	3.88	3.53	3.71	3.47
SD	0.57	0.57	0.50	0.58	0.57	0.50	0.70
Minimum	1.43	1.67	1.71	1.00	1.89	2.11	1.00
Quartile 1	3.57	4.33	3.98	3.57	3.11	3.40	3.00
Median	4.00	4.67	4.36	3.86	3.44	3.71	3.50
Quartile 3	4.43	5.00	4.64	4.29	3.89	4.05	4.00
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Frequency distribution							
Negative	10	4	5	17	31	13	73
%	1	1	1	3	5	2	11
Neutral	90	35	28	103	234	160	229
%	13	5	4	15	37	24	34
Positive	580	641	647	560	395	507	378
%	85	94	95	82	58	75	56

M, mean; SD, standard deviation; PF, personal factors; EF, emotional factors; MSA, mall shopping expectations; ME, mall environment; SF, situational factors; MSE, mall shopping experiences; MSP, mall shopping behaviour (patronage).

between *mall shopping experiences* and *mall environment*. Therefore, one can conclude, from the model, that feelings about service quality and past pleasurable experiences influence mall-shopping anticipations for mature shoppers strongly. These findings support those of Hu and Jaspers (2007). Furthermore, the high correlation between *mall shopping experience* and *mall environment* suggests that mature consumers value store location, design and security greatly. These findings support those of Walker and Mesnard (2012) and Liaw (2007).

Statistics for the factors

Table 5 gives the descriptive statistics for the seven factors that derive from the literature review and the results of the focus groups.

The frequency distribution in Table 5 shows that, for all the factors, most respondents gave positive ratings (3.4–5.0). The most positive factors were EF, MSA and PF. This suggests that shopping malls should be sensitive to the needs of elderly customers with friendly and helpful staff and a variety of services (such as banks and hair salons) in terms of emotional factors (EF). In terms of personal factors (PF), this suggests that shopping malls should consider mature shoppers' physical limitations, provide quality or luxury merchandise and stock ample health food products.

It is interesting to note from Table 5 that the respondents gave positive ratings for the mall shopping experience factors (MSE, ME and SF). This suggests that mature shoppers were generally satisfied with mall shopping in Port Elizabeth. However, one should note that the mean scores for these factors are at the bottom of the positive range of the response scale (3.4–4.2). This suggests that there is room for improvement and that shopping malls should prioritise aspects such as adequate parking facilities, special discounts for elderly consumers and a wider variety of goods. There were significantly large differences between the mean scores for MSA and MSE ($M_{MSA} = 4.27$, $M_{MSE} = 3.71$, $t = 27.41$, $df = 679$, $p < 0.0005$, $d = 1.05$). This suggests a discrepancy between mature consumers' anticipations and actual experiences in shopping malls. Their expectations exceeded

their experiences significantly, suggesting disconfirmation and post purchase dissatisfaction with some aspects of their shopping mall experiences. These discrepancies correspond to some of the critical comments the focus groups gave (see Table 2).

MSP, the factor that pertains to shoppers' mall shopping patronage, obtained the lowest mean score ($M_{MSP} = 3.47$), although it was still in the positive range of the scale. Given that higher scores for this factor suggest regular loyal patronage with a recreational element (such as window-shopping), it follows that the patronage of mature shoppers in the sampled population is not at the desired level.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate mature shoppers' mall shopping expectations, experiences and patronage and the relationships between these factors. A research model, which derived from theory, guided the investigation. It comprised qualitative and quantitative components. Results from the focus group interviews produced mixed signals and images about shopping malls amongst mature shoppers. Respondents were not loyal to a particular shopping mall and revealed a critical mind-set about shopping malls. These results showed that it is necessary to investigate further mall shopping expectations, experiences and patronage amongst mature shoppers in a quantitative study. Therefore, the authors derived a research model from theory and tested it using SEM.

The main conclusion from the empirical research supported the literature that mature mall shoppers have specific needs and preferences. The authors observed significant relationships between *mall shopping anticipation*, *mall shopping experiences* and *mall shopping patronage* amongst mature consumers. Furthermore, mature shoppers' *anticipations* were significantly higher than were their *experiences* in shopping malls. In addition, the authors found that mature shoppers' mall shopping patronage needs improvement. These findings suggest that mall managers must carefully consider and sustain the needs of mature shoppers if they are to sustain the continuous patronage of mature shoppers in a

highly competitive mall-shopping environment.

Practical implications for mall managers and store managers in malls

Retailers and shopping mall managers may require a paradigm shift when they design retail chains if they really want to cater for the growing segment of aging shoppers and their increasing spending power. They should provide efficient security, safe parking areas, in store benches for disabled shoppers and store layouts that ensure ease of entry and exit. Results suggest that senior citizens look for social interaction and leisure experiences in shopping malls as places where they can enjoy themselves. They want personal attention from friendly and talkative cashiers, not speed. They also need to train sales staff members to be patient, courteous and knowledgeable when they serve mature customers.

Furthermore, the results suggest that mature shoppers want high quality products at good prices in easy-to-open packages with easy-to-read labels, especially with regard to nutrition and health products. These findings have implications for shelf layout, packaging and clear labelling. Store managers must understand that, compared to younger working class shoppers, who are busy raising their families, have limited time for shopping and want to leave stores as soon as possible, mature shoppers are wiser, more experienced and have plenty of time for scrutinising products as well as for gathering information before they make decisions. Mature shoppers are also looking for social and leisure experiences.

Mature shoppers are an important market segment in South Africa. Store managers need to monitor them continuously because of their potential purchasing power. Shopping mall managers need their support and should focus on the personal preferences and emotional needs of elderly shoppers as well as on store environment and reasonably priced quality merchandise to increase mall shopping patronage.

Implications that relate to the model indicate that mall shopping patronage is the culmination of a variety of factors that shopping mall managers need to address. These factors are especially important when they cater for highly critical and experienced mature consumers.

Limitations and implications for further research

This study is no different to others in that researchers need to consider a range of limitations because they affect the generalisability and external validity of the findings. Firstly, based on feedback from fieldworkers, it seems that the survey questionnaire was too long for some elderly people, who found it difficult to evaluate 45 items. Another limitation is that senior citizens are a difficult group to research because of their diverse opinions about mall shopping patronage. This may be one reason why the SEM goodness-of-fit indices were less than optimal.

Conclusion

Follow-up research, which uses a refined measuring instrument and a modified model, should shed more light on mature consumers' anticipations, experiences and patronage of shopping malls in Port Elizabeth. In this regard, researchers should also consider investigating the extent to which younger and middle-aged consumers differ from mature shoppers with regard to mall shopping patronage.

One cannot generalise the findings of this study because of its exploratory nature and limited scope. One needs to extend research in the field to other regions in order to verify tentative shopping preferences and the patronage of mature shoppers.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them when they wrote this article.

Authors' contributions

G.G.R. (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University) devised the theory and model. G.G.R. also organised the fieldwork and wrote the manuscript. D.J.L.V. (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University) assisted with devising the model, chose the measuring instruments, analysed the data and proofread the article.

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Appendix A

APPENDIX A: Survey questionnaire items used for calculating summated factor scores.

Item	Text	Factor
Q07	Shopping malls should have stores selling a variety of luxury quality goods.	PF
Q13	I value quality more than quantity.	PF
Q15	I prefer shopping malls that open their doors early in the morning.	PF
Q23	My lifetime experiences assist me in choosing a suitable shopping mall.	PF
Q26	I consider my physical limitations when selecting a shopping mall.	PF
Q30	A shopping mall must cater for the special needs of mature shoppers.	PF
Q34	Shopping malls should stock ample health food options.	PF
Q12	Shopping mall staff should be sensitive to the needs of elderly customers.	EF
Q32	It is essential that shopping mall staff should be friendly and helpful.	EF
Q35	I prefer malls that provide a variety of services (banks, hair salons, etc.).	EF
Q09	I enjoy the openness of space and clear lighting in modern shopping malls.	ME
Q17	Car guards in parking lots make me feel safer when shopping.	ME
Q19	Local shopping malls provide ample security (sufficient lighting, security guards, etc.).	ME
Q37	There is a conveniently located shopping mall that meets my requirements.	ME

Appendix continues on next column →

APPENDIX A (Continues...): Survey questionnaire items used for calculating summated factor scores.

Item	Text	Factor
Q38	For safety reasons, I enjoy having people around whilst shopping.	ME
Q42	The shopping mall that I visit most often is located in a safe area.	ME
Q45	I find information centres in shopping malls helpful.	ME
Q01	Stores in the malls where I shop provide a wide range of goods.	SF
Q14	Local shopping malls have adequate parking facilities.	SF
Q16	Most shopping malls in our region offer a wide variety of stores.	SF
Q22	Local shopping malls offer adequate special discounts for elderly shoppers.	SF
Q24	Local shopping malls have adequate luxury quality items.	SF
Q28	I seldom have problems with the quality of items that I buy in local shopping malls.	SF
Q31	Prices of items in shopping malls are generally affordable.	SF
Q33	I usually find a parking bay close to shopping mall entrances.	SF
Q36	I seldom have problems in shopping malls finding a specific item.	SF
Q03	I do most of my shopping in the same mall.	MSP
Q21	Now that I am older, I tend to stick to one shopping mall.	MSP
Q25	Window shopping and browsing in shopping malls is a way of exercising for me.	MSP
Q27	I prefer a one-stop shopping destination.	MSP
Q29	I visit a shopping mall at least once a week.	MSP

Q, question; PF, personal factors; EF, emotional factors; ME, mall environment; SF, situational factors; MSP, mall shopping behaviour (patronage).