



Research Paper

Research on Factors Affecting Consumer Behaviour at Takoradi Shopping Mall, Ghana

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ABSTRACT: *Consciously or unconsciously, consumers influence the choice of products and services on the market anytime they decide to buy one product or service instead of another. Hence, consumers create demand on the market, and producers produce goods and services accordingly. The act of consumers considering these determinants which lead them to purchase or patronize a good or service is called consumer behavior. These include a psychological cycle the consumer goes through to identify his or her needs, and make solutions to these needs.*

This study deals with the factors that affect consumers' behavior at Takoradi shopping mall, Ghana and the effects of the shopping mall environment on the decisions of these consumers. The study used factor analysis (Regression) to test the identified variables and their impact on consumer decision making and behavior in and around the shopping mall environment. The study revealed that product, service experience, and convenience as factors identified in the conceptualized framework have a significant impact on consumer decisions at the mall. The research made some recommendations for the management of the Takoradi shopping mall and other stakeholders in the shopping mall industry which includes a conscious effort for product development, intensify customer care services and emergency awareness at the shopping mall.

Key words: *Consumer; Consumer Behavior; Consumer Decision Making; shopping mall.*

Received 25 Jan., 2024; Revised 05 Feb., 2024; Accepted 07 Feb., 2024 © The author(s) 2024.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. INTRODUCTION

Consumers do not only perceive practical benefits from the consumption of products or services; however, they look out to other emotional benefits like enjoyment and refreshment. To meet the demands and feelings of these consumers, both psychological and emotional, businesses must understand the role of consumer behavior since the behavior of the consumer gets influenced as before long as he or she moves in an exceedingly searching business area (Albrecht et al, 2017). Consumers have been identified to play a major role in the survival and growth of businesses since they provide the revenue needed to achieve profitability (Jaganthan, 2018). We must consider the role of consumer behavior in the marketing process because the consumer has been the dominant point of discussion in marketing for over 50 years (Jones, 2016). According to Kotler & Keller (2016), the basic marketing concept states that a company exists on satisfying consumer needs better than its competitors, which means it provides the prior values to the people who will buy and use its products or services. Research into modern consumer behavior is becoming significant for businesses because the average consumer is powerful, possesses knowledge, and understanding about the particular product or service even before the consumer steps in the market to make a purchase. (Menaka, 2014).

Consumer behavior is a rapidly growing discipline of study and so understanding consumer behavior and knowing consumers is not that simple since it is almost impossible to predict with one hundred percent accuracy, how the consumer will behave in a given situation (Ramesh & Sethuraman, 2016). Consumers exhibit very significant differences in their buying behavior and play an important role in different conditions being it

local, national, and international economic condition (Solomon 2015). Jones (2016), defined consumer behavior as the study of how consumers identify what they need, how to purchase what has been identified, and why they have to finally make that purchase with other behavioral characteristics of psychology, sociology, economics, and anthropology. Hence, the present study is focusing on the factors affecting consumers' behavior at the shopping mall, specifically, the Takoradi shopping mall, Ghana.

Shopping malls originated in the United States and have been growing rapidly in China with an increasing number of Chinese citizens likely to spend their leisure time there (Chan et al., 2001). As Rapoza (2013) reported, "There is more mall space under construction in one single city in China than in 86 cities throughout Europe (not counting Russia and Turkey)". Surveys indicate that 75% of Americans visit the shopping mall once or twice a week and 63% consider themselves regulars who spend one to five hours at a time in the mall (Kok, 2017). In China, the idea and perception of shopping mall is slightly not as the same as the western traditional shopping center habits. In spite of all these, the Chinese have welcomed the convenience and economic benefits that surrounds the shopping mall, both the consumer and the mall operators. (Chen, 2007).

In the World Bank Report (2014), Ghana, one of the fastest-growing economies in West Africa has over recent years seen the development of shopping mall business which hitherto was non-existent to agree to the growth of the economy. (Anining-Dorson, Kastner & Mahmoud, 2013). The impact of mall activities on Ghana's economy, specifically the capital city (Accra) may be very extensive, as the management of Accra Mall (Ghana's first shopping mall center) estimates that approximately 18,900 people visit daily, but the number reaches 23,000 on weekend (Oteng-Ababio & Arthur, 2015). The mall is analyzed as a type of third place for most Ghanaian teenagers in the cities on most weekends as behavioral observation reveals that most adolescents travel in groups of two or three usually male-females through the mall, stopping around the central court to spend little time on edges of the mall. A case could be made from this data and projected that most Ghanaians (especially the teenagers) living around the mall area are likely to turn the mall area as an escape route away from their everyday hectic routines for pleasure and other activities of fun and relaxation (Hobden, 2015).

According to Millan & Howard (2007) shopping malls have emerged as places for social gatherings, weekend family outings and tailored to become not only a center for shopping but also a community center for social and recreational activities, as shopping itself is no longer confined to purchasing of goods but has evolved into a form of recreation. Shoppers are looking for a variety of merchandise, exciting promotions, food and even entertainment as visiting a shopping mall has become a family leisure activity rather than a purely economic activity. As a result, shopping malls have usurped squarely the function of olden-day community halls, coffee shops, or shady trees (Baharun, 2017). Piece, (2012) suggests that organizations should seek constantly to find out what the consumer wants presently, and in the future, and work hard to produce the products and services that are requested by the assembly. The need for a study in this area is justified by the fact that to be successful in modern markets, mall managers need to understand their target consumers as the shopping mall in recent times is becoming the transformation of urban marketing lifestyle (Zhan, 2011). This research aims to understand the factors that influenced the consumer in taking decisions towards the shopping mall, with specifics to shopping mall products, service experiences, the mall environment, and other convenient factors including entertainment and recreation. A more empirical study and research around the consumer's environment and physical world cannot be looked down if businesses and individual marketing operators want to identify the factors responsible for the behavior of consumers at a particular time.

Secondi-Takoradi, the capital of the Western Region of Ghana, in recent years have attracted the interest and attention of investors, both local and foreign because of the discovery of Ghana's oil. An example is the Takoradi Mall, a shopping mall development that was sponsored by RMB Westport and engineered by Shoprite. The initial phase of the project delivered 11,000m² of retail space in 2018. However, the last phase which was meant to take the center to 20,000m² is currently on hold. The location of the mall is on the Heritage/Cape Coast Sekondi Road, opposite the Takoradi Airport, with close prime neighborhoods such as Beach Road, Chapel Hill, and the famous Takoradi Market Circle, which is the third-largest city market of Ghana. The circle is the commercial and economic hub of Ghana's Western Region. The market circle by engineers planned to build a nucleus of a major trading area as the city became bustling after the building of the Takoradi Harbor, which is the prime export center for the Region. The Takoradi Mall in 2018 became an icing on the cake for this plan. The location of the mall makes it probably the most accessible area in the whole city as major roads like the John Mensah Sarbah road links the market from South West and North East. The Liberation road also links the mall from the market on the North West. All kinds of economic activities go on in and around the mall with the notable ones being banking, outlet centers for the trading of goods, national and local specialty stores and restaurants, tourism and entertainment-based retail development, and telecommunication businesses. Also, there are hawkers around the mall area since not all visitors who come to the mall go through it for their groceries. These hawkers take over all pedestrian walkways and parking spaces, moving in sheds and

warehouses to serve their consumers, even though it is generally prohibited because it makes the regulation of movement around the mall very difficult and increases vehicular and human traffic.

Though the Takoradi Mall opened in December 2018, it appears as though it had just been opened a few weeks ago. This is hard to determine whether it is a result of bad facility management by the operators or a result of little interaction or usage from the local community. Generally, there is low patronage of the facility, ranging from occupancy by retail shops to customer purchase intentions. Approximately, only 40% of the available retail shops across the facility have been occupied with line shop tenants like Stanbic IBTC, Essenza, Wodin, Teccno, PZ, and a few other telecommunications network companies. In contrast, the Takoradi Mall is tipped to have been one of Takoradi's major sites for economic activities, tourist attractions, and a hotbed for less formal retail activity. This and among many other reasons to be raised later account for this study to look out to the findings affecting the behavior of consumers in and around the mall. This will be used by management and other stakeholders of the facility to shape the behavior of visitors to maintain and increase the consumer patronage for the visions and missions of the mall to be attained.

According to Nelson (2017), the shopping mall is a well-planned, owned, controlled, and managed business on the principle of cumulative attraction in which a group of similar, substitutes and complementary retail shops have a greater drawing power over a geographically dispersed area. Previous studies have presented the shopping mall as a place of primary economic activities and entities which deal with a wider array of retail stores and merchandise to customers and other visitors (Block et al, 2015). However, as the consumer undergoes a lot of desirable changes and kinds of wants to satisfy demands of lifestyle and values, shopping malls have emerged through series of continuous adaptations and responses to the satisfaction of these consumers (Martin & Turley, 2014). Bucklin (2014), in his studies, stated that shopping mall behavior of visitors was related and centered on retail gravitation by throwing further explanations to consumer choice and preference, patronage, and age decisions at the shop regarding mall size and location with specific to distance. Moreover, other features were outlined, which influenced the mall and shopper patronage models. Downs (2017), measured shoppers' behavior and perception on a variety of domains including product, price, brand, layout, accessibility to locate the mall, and parking services, visual appearance, mall reputation, and hours of operation. Bellenger & Robertson (2016), concluded that entertainment, variety of product quality, satisfaction, and value keeping were all attributing features for a shopping center image. In their view, the mall could attract a greater customer base through ambiance, store assortment, sales promotions, and competitive economic advantage. Findings on matured and experienced consumer shopping behavior at the mall by Hu and Jasper (2011), came out with some five basic characteristics that are very vital for visitors at the shopping mall. The results of their study were; ambiance, packing, convenience, choice, and other hedonic shopping behaviors. The activities of a shopping mall give it a holistic image constituting figures and elements like the retail mix, infrastructure, and atmospheric conditions of safety and security (Leo & Philipp, 2012). As the image of shopping mall becomes a multidimensional purpose and a concept consisting of tangible and functional attributes including a list of atmospheric qualities, price and quality of product, cleanliness, courtesy, assortment, security, hours of operations, and accessibility, the mall needs to shape these dimensions to the satisfaction of its consumers (Yavas, 2013). Also, Heldhli & Lhebat (2019), identified shopping mall behavior on access, price, and promotion discounts, cross-category assortment, and within category assortment. Zhuang et al (2013), studied the implications of thirteen conditional factors on the choices and decisions of shoppers at the mall including convenience, quality atmosphere, and assortment. In the United Arab Emirates, the perspective of shopping mall attendance was found around six mall attractive features like comfort, diversity and variety, luxury and prestigious lifestyle, and convenience (El-Ahdy, 2017). The references of teenagers from the ages of 12-17 at the mall are most importantly on how friendly and welcoming the mall is to the teens, whether or not the mall assist on recreational facilities for good hangout with pals and other attractive designs (Wendy & Sandra, 2015).

In their research in Southern Africa, Dubihlela and Dubihlela (2014), found out the attractive factors directly related to the satisfaction of consumers at the shopping mall. These factors include merchandizers, accessibility, service, amenities, ambiance, entertainment, security, and many more. On the other side of shopping mall culture and values, their research suggested the promotional channels and procedures to marketers for better consumer behavior satisfaction strategies. Over the years and across studies, very few pieces of literature were reported on constituent features of shopping behavior of consumers at the mall in Africa and Ghana specifically. Consumers prefer shopping malls as they offer easy access to all products under one roof (Bailey, 2013). Patel and Sharma (2019), performed their survey to observe the shopping motivation of Ghanaian consumers and found out some factors which they divided into two domains of hedonic and utilitarian. All the factors took into account different fields like economic, enjoyment gratification, and idea shopping, affecting the motivation of Ghanaian consumers to do shopping at the mall. Abraham (2010), discussed the economic and social benefits of the mall in areas of growth and development of the urban centers and communities.

Moreover, the behavior of the consumer pervades various aspects of their life and varies according to the sociological relevant variables. Such variables like income, sex, age, beliefs, and values are seeing a jump in recent times resulting in the consumer spending more and a shift in the market, making it interest to society at large, manufacturing and consumer companies, advertisers, economists, and researchers (Yaaminidevi, 2013). Most literature across the world on the shopping mall environment and other features are focused on the western side, giving only a few attentions to Africa and other less-developed countries unattended to. (Ahmed et al., 2017). Ghana which is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world (World Bank Report, 2016) has in recent times seen the development of malls and shopping centers which hitherto was non-existent to confirm the growth of the economy. Changing lifestyles and shopping behavior, which is emerging from this economic and infrastructural development allows the researchers to update the literature on shopping behavior with empirical perspectives from Africa. In recent times scholars such as Hunter Rajamma (2015), have dealt well with the subject mostly centered in the developed context while Sub-Saharan Africa has had less consideration.

According to Kok (2017), shopping malls were built to be the destination for shopping only, but now, malls have changed to be multi-functional centers. Shoppers take a couple of activities such as hang out with friends and families, eating, business meetings, movies, and even a place for fitness (gym). Research has not adequately addressed shopping benefits in the context of large-scale retail institutions such as shopping malls (Joshi, 2013). With the significant progress of shopping malls in the Ghanaian economy over the last decade, much remains to be explored and further research is needed to gain a greater understanding of this rapidly changing market. For example, how the personality of the shopping mall and fashion orientation might impact Ghanaian shoppers' intent and behavior remains unaddressed (Arthur, 2013). The popularity of the shopping mall experience is evident in Ghana. For example, the recent redevelopment of Westhill mall (Accra, Ghana) now offers authentic food court services with a wide variety of eateries, ranging from an oyster bar to a seafood restaurant to a patisserie (Hobden, 2015). While entertainment consumption is commonly found in the shopping mall environment, very limited academic research has examined shoppers' satisfaction with this activity. Several researchers have argued that the goal of the consumer with increased purchasing power looks for comfort, easiness, and pleasure at the shopping mall and not necessarily to obtain goods per se (Ali & Juliana, 2018). Thus, in the context of consumer behavior at the shopping mall, scholars have not looked at persons seeking social benefits and more interpersonal activities at the mall other than economic, because malls have increasingly become more than assemblages of stores. The examination of mall-related shopping benefits appeared to be a potentially valuable avenue of study. A study with the shopping behavior of consumers will help to understand factors responsible for the behavior of shopping mall visitors and also help the marketers to frame marketing strategies that can be additionally capable of meeting their wants and needs. In a better exercise, some shopping mall visitors use climate-controlled mall spaces as their locations for engaging in a good practice of body and health check-up exercise and examination during bad weather conditions. This research makes a step to look at a wide category of consumer-shopping behavior happening in and around the mall space. These consumers who visit the mall for different purposes are equally expected to have different behaviors. It is a herald in a new urbanization concept where consumers who are recreationally oriented should display different patterns of shopping behavior than those who have a functional or economic orientation (Sharma, 2012).

The principal objective of the research involves studies to investigate the factors affecting consumer behavior at the Takoradi shopping mall, Ghana. The methods to be employed in the study will help specifically to arrive at findings on variables that affect the consumer's decision making with regards to products, (brands, price, packaging, etc) and other services like customer services, restaurants and food services, and emergency services offered at the Takoradi shopping mall. Moreover, the study will identify the effect of convenience, entertainment and recreation, and the mall environment on the consumer's behavior. To address and achieve these problems, the research shall focus on these objectives;

1. To examine the factors affecting consumer decision-making at the Takoradi shopping mall.
2. To identify the effects of mall environment on consumer decision-making at the Takoradi shopping mall.

The research aims at finding answers to the following questions;

1. What are the factors consumers consider in their decision-making at the Takoradi shopping mall?
2. To what significant impact does the mall environment have on the decisions of consumers?

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

(a) *Theoretical Review*

The Consumer and Concept of Consumer Behavior

It is important to note that consumers play a vital role in the economic system of every nation since they form part of the marketing distribution chain and so without their effective demand for products and services, producers would lack a key motivation to produce and sell. (Lehew & Wesley, 2016). Both producers and marketers are now starting to work on individualizing the 'Concept of Consumer' by engaging in personalized marketing, permission marketing, and mass customization since any product, good, or service that is developed must have a target market in mind to be effectively marketed and sold. (Esbjerg, 2010). According to Woodside, (2016), the consumer is a person or group of persons that purchase products or services for use, other than resell. Consumers are seen as the end-users of the distribution chain of goods and services. (Skytte, 2014). The consumer may not necessarily be the one buying the product but the one benefiting from the product as the user. For example, mothers purchase baby products for use by their children.

Consumer behavior is defined widely and variedly by many scholars as Kanuk & Schiffman (2018) suggested that the concept of consumer behavior is all those activities involving the decisions and choices of the consumer to allocate and apportion available resources like time, money, effort, and energy to solve a problem to satisfy a need. The diversity of the concept makes it very interesting and important of a study because it projects how consumers of various ages, cultural background and education, socioeconomic disparities, and status behave and the factors that are responsible for these behaviors. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), to understand and identify what the consumer wants is very challenging, since the consumer has the dynamic change in their behavior, taste, preference, motives, personality, attitudes, belief and values as at why they are purchasing at a particular time. Consumers may say one thing but do another (Jaganthan, 2018). Consumers may be influenced and change their minds at the last second of purchasing, they may even not realize that they are in touch with the deep motivation, etc. (Zhao, 2012). Most research works stated in their findings that, the behavior of the consumer is not just the encounter that exist between the seller and the buyer at the point of sale (Solomon, 2011). Today, most marketers and product distributors have recognized that consumer behavior is a continuous interaction, which involves the selection of goods and services by individual and groups and other experiences to fulfill needs and desires. Consumer behavior covers "what and why people buy goods and patronize services", "why and how people use these goods and services to their benefits". To sum it up, consumer behavior is the totality of peoples' attitudes, intentions, decisions, and preferences in and around the market area. The ability of consumers to make a final decision on a service or product depends on the willingness to buy as well as all other psychological factors that move their decisions before buying, after buying, using the product or service, and evaluating the satisfaction of the product. Being able to understand the decisions of consumers is an important concept to the producer or the seller since it is the primary task for companies to take decisions by a series of individual and group characteristics which are associated with their consumers' needs (Kotler & Armstrong 2018). The basic marketing concept states that a company exists on satisfying consumer needs better than its competitors (Kotler & Keller 2016; Solomon 2011), which means it provides the prior values to the people who will buy and use its products or services. Similarly, the consumer's reaction to the products is an ultimate test for a company to know if the marketing strategy is complete or not (Solomon 2011). Before introducing a particular product or service on the market, companies and producers need to consider the buying decisions of their prospective customers because the decisions of these customers serve as a very powerful marketing tool to develop strategies and policies for the successful sale of products to achieve organizational goals and objectives. Companies are expected to collect information from consumers and identify the taste and preference of these consumers to incorporate into their marketing strategy. The information of customers helps the company to identify its position and capture the business opportunities in the market, as the consumers' role in marketing is distinct in three different categories; as a buyer, a payer, and as a user. Greater attention should be placed on the consumer to provide their needs and retain them for a possible future purchase. Various consumer-related marketing strategies like customer retention, customer relationship management, personalization, and customization strategies should be deployed by producers and marketers to cover different consumer market segments for an effective and productive marketing cycle. Businesses can never be successful if they ignore the needs of consumers in the marketing distribution channel.

Consumer Decision making

Consumer behavior patterns are mostly conceptualized and centered on the decision-making processes and styles (Jacoby, & Durvasula, 2013). The consumers' decision-making patterns and styles are highly characterized and predicted with a lot of outcomes (Dewberry, & Narendran, 2013). A compelling understanding of information on consumers' decision-making style concerning goods and services is provided by most studies which enhance the activities of producers and marketing individuals to be able to reach out to the needs of their target market. (Yu and Zhou, 2010). All these studies have given more significance to the

understanding and information surrounding consumer decision-making styles for the successful running of businesses like the shopping mall. Since customer purchase intention and satisfaction are associated with customers' decision-making processes, customers' purchasing decisions styles should be investigated (Jeong, & Nayeem 2014). Eventually, decision-making styles are becoming increasingly difficult for the consumer to decide on which goods or services, retail or shopping mall, and then subsequently getting satisfaction from the decisions, intentions, and purchase. A very few research works have considered the structural relationship among decision-making styles that consumers exhibit during their visit to the shopping mall. This study will add to the contributions of existing literature by examining the impact of factors influencing consumer decision-making style on satisfaction and purchase intention in shopping malls.

According to Gardner, & Hill (2014), the consumer's decision-making as a thought at choices of products and services is defined as a mental orientation characterizing the consumer's approach to making choices. This reflects the decision-making styles of the consumers when purchasing goods or services. Dewberry, (2013), sees the construct of consumer decision making as "basic consumer personality and the psychology", which he defined as the consumer's habitual pattern of response exhibited when confronted by a decision situation. Taylor (2015), categorized the study of consumer decision-making styles into three main approaches: the consumer typology approach; the psychographics or lifestyle approach; and lastly, the consumer characteristics approach. The relationship among these three approaches is the idea that every consumer engages in shopping with certain basic decision-making modes and styles including rational shopping, consciousness regarding brand, price, and quality among others. However, among the three approaches, the consumer characteristics approach is considered the most primarily since it focuses on the mental orientation of consumers in making decisions. Moreover, the approach covers the cognitive and affective orientations of consumers in their process of decision-making. It assumes that decision-making styles can be determined by identifying general orientations towards shopping and buying. Such knowledge is also useful in terms of identifying segments or clusters of consumers sharing similar orientations to shopping. It is important to note that the consumer in his decisions, goes through several processes including becoming aware of and identifying their needs; collect information on how to best solve these needs; evaluate available alternatives and options; make a purchasing decision; evaluate their purchase. Kotler, (2018) describes the consumer decision-making process as the activities that evaluate consumer behavior that proceed a purchase and puts these activities into five stages which consumers usually follow through before making their deliberate purchase. These five stages are:

- **Need Recognition (Awareness):** The initial step of the purchasing decision-making process is for the consumer or individual buyer to become aware of his or her need. This takes into account the consumer recognizing what the actual problem or need is, thus comparing his desired state to his actual condition. Need recognition is achieved through both internal and external stimuli, which could be the core factors in motivating the consumer to purchase (Kotler, 2018). The internal stimuli take the form of physiological and emotional needs like hunger and thirst, sickness, and jealousy. On the other hand, the external stimuli involve advertisement, the smell, and the aroma of yummy food products, etc. The effect of these stimuli can be social or functional, that is, for the consumer wanting to look good or better than a competitor.
- **Search for Information (Research):** After the consumer recognizing the need for a product or service, the next thing to do is to take up some research to broaden and gain in-depth information about his need recognition. There must be a source to help the consumer to arrive at his need which is dependent on the amount of information the consumer has already from previous knowledge of the product or brand by either personal experiences or external information from friends, family, and the press. In our modern world of technology, information is easily searched on various platforms like the internet and other online media for persons to have a fair idea or information about a particular product of service they want to buy. According to Mintel (2014), over half (55%) of all internet users research products online before making a purchase.
- **Evaluation of Alternatives (Consideration):** Now that research for information about the product and other related substitutes has been done by the consumer, it is time to evaluate and assess the knowledge found. At this stage, the consumer is aware of the existing product and in most cases brought into contact with the product to consider whether to buy or not. Shoppers make purchase decisions based on which available substitutes and compliments best match their needs and preferences. This is done to minimize the risk of wrong investments, as consumers make sure there are no better options left behind. Evaluations are mostly influenced by objective and subjective variables like prices, ease of use, functionality, and feelings about brands.
- **Purchasing decision (Conversion):** This is the time to make the purchase. Here, the consumer has already made or decided on where and what he wants to purchase and ready to pull out money to effect payment. Shoppers have to decide on purchasing or not purchasing the product. This particular stage could either go both two ways, the first being that the consumer purchases the product which means the decision-making process has been successful, or the second being that the consumer has a change of mind in terms of his suitability and his willingness to make sure his decision process was unsuccessful.

- **Post-purchase Evaluation (Re-purchase):** This is the last stage of the consumer decision-making process. At this stage, the actual purchase has been made, which is depending on the level of customer satisfaction being met. The consumer reflects on the product purchased, thinks if it was a good investment or not, and most importantly if he will return to patronize the same product or recommend it for purchase by another person.

The Shopping Mall

The International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC, 2004), defined the shopping mall as the collection of different apartments of independent retail shops, and services, with a parking area which is owned and managed by a single management or semi-cohesive shopping area. The design of the shopping mall has improved from open-air to a fully enclosed building with air conditioners and containing recreational fields, restaurants, banks, cinemas, professional offices, service stations, etc. (Nicholls et al., 2016). The shopping malls compete from the product offerings which include excellent services, competitive prices, and attractive promotions to exciting mall atmospheres. In the last first decades, shopping malls have mushroomed all over the world with the world's first-ever fully enclosed shopping mall dating back to the 1950s in the United States (Ahmed et al., 2017). The mall serves as several benefits and development, particularly to consumers, including convenient location, a large variety of goods offered at a particular location, lower prices than retailers, and improved quality of products (Mitchell & Kirkup, 2013; Valodia 2016). Various consumers are found at the mall for various reasons. For example, the citizens of Malaysia visit the shopping mall as a community center for economic and social activities (Zafar et al., 2017). In the United State, people go to the mall mostly for entertainment purposes and in Chile, a consumer will only visit the shopping mall when he or she needs something to buy (Iksuk et al., 2015).

However, the taste and preference of the Chinese for visiting the shopping mall are different from their western counterparts because the Chinese consumers' choice is affected by many factors like social, economic, and geographic differences. (Li et al. 2014). Higher-income consumers at Chinese shopping malls tend to be more concerned with location, layout, and mall design, style of merchandise, and service quality when choosing to visit the shopping mall (Wong & Yu, 2012). In most Chinese cities like Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Wuhan, the format of the shopping mall has been widely accepted by Chinese shoppers, as consumers select their shopping centers in order of importance from shopping atmosphere, merchandise assortment, and variety for convenience, location, and security (Tai 2015). The personality of the mall and fashion orientation might impact Chinese shoppers' intent and behavior, as research found that consumers in Shanghai preferred foreign operated malls whereas in Chendu, (a second-tier city), consumers of lower socio-economic groups and the aged preferred locally operated malls.

Shopping malls may not seem like the most appropriate entry points for understanding the development of 21st-century African cities, but Brenner (2014) argues that shopping malls have become the preeminent symbols of globalization across the African continent. Shopping malls in African have become a veritable trend throughout urban Africa, providing new quasi-public spaces where none existed before, new opportunities for leisure, and access to a range of consumer products that were previously available only to those who can travel abroad. (Obeng-Odoom, 2013). Unfortunately, while the shopping mall represents a welcome move toward modernization and development, for some other parts of the African continent, the malls are a sign of greed, moral degeneration, and the imposition of style consumerism, creating insecurity and social vices for visitors in and around locations, which has led to scenes of contestation and controversy, as evidenced by the violent siege conducted by Al Shabaab on the Israeli-owned Westgate Mall in Nairobi, (Kenya) in 2013, in which an unknown number of assailants killed 67 shoppers and wounded 125, purportedly in retribution for the Kenyan military intervention in Somalia (Erkip, 2012).

History and Concept of Shopping Mall

According to Hobden (2015), the history of a shopping mall in Ghana could be dated back to the late 1960s, when Joseph Owusu-Akyaw, a Ghanaian banker who returned home from the United Kingdom as a university graduate, purchased a large piece of land on the north-eastern outskirts of Accra around the Tetteh Quarshie Circle, a major intersection near Kotoka International Airport. Knowing that the land near the airport would gain value over the coming decades, he began to consider building a high-end hotel on the site but a series of military coups and decades of political instability put his plans on hold. By the late 1980s, following the imposition of particularly aggressive IMF and World Bank-led structural adjustment programs, Owusu-Akyaw once again turned his attention to the piece of land at Tetteh Quarshie, imagining other possibilities for the property as trade liberalization began to open up the country to new investment from abroad, after successive government policies and promises of political stability which brought a renewed interest in Ghana for both international and local investors. These policies enacted in the mid-1980s relaxed regulations on international investment and paved the way for private developers to make their mark on Accra's urban

landscape. In the face of the inability of national and local governments to deliver solutions to some of urban Africa's biggest problems, particularly, in the case of Ghana, housing, infrastructure, and sanitation, malls have become evidence of effective development; with their private generators, roads, air conditioning, and constantly running water, malls impress on the population and the possibility of better living conditions. Yet this model of urban development is a private sector-led, consumption-driven model, rather than a model of urban development that attempts to mitigate inequalities across space (Brenner 2014). The construction of malls resembles efforts worldwide to promote entrepreneurially, "trickle-down" forms of economic development in the absence of a more redistributive approach to tackling poverty in Europe and North America as a hyper-segregation along with class and racial lines, gentrification, displacement, and the slow chipping away of the slow social safety net, but in Africa and Ghana, in particular, the results are less clear, and the consequences in terms of inequalities potentially more severe (Harvey 2017). As national governments focus their efforts on promoting malls, new luxury housing developments, and business parks, conditions in Accra's poorest and least serviced neighborhoods come ever closer to approaching "bare life" (Agamben 2018). Obeng-Odoom (2013), eloquently sums it up in his statement as a representation of a larger urban development strategy focused on "regeneration for some" and "degeneration for others". Shopping malls are visible illustrations of the power of a private-sector-led development and foreign capital to transform urban space with foreign brands and exotic amenities like food courts and movie theaters, becoming symbols of cosmopolitanism, and connecting Ghana's urbanites to global consumption chains (Oteng-Ababio & Arthur, 2016).

The country's first fully-enclosed shopping mall is "The Accra Mall", which doors were opened to the public for the first time in 2007 and drew momentous occasion for the city as it represented a revival of modern commerce not seen in the capital city since Accra's large department stores, such as Kingsway, closed their doors during the long decades of political instability and economic stagnation following the forced removal of Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president in 1966. (Hobden, 2015). According to the mall's Accra-based architect, on the first day the mall opened, the city "just froze," with visitors cramming into the mall's spacious high-ways, admiring the clean tile floors, gleaming store windows, and air conditioning, causing traffic jams along the George W. Bush Memorial highway, an already congested motorway connecting Accra to its eastern neighbor, Tema, were the worst that residents had ever seen (Owusu, 2013).

Shopping in whatever form it takes offers shoppers to create new acquaintances by meeting both old and new friends of opposite sex and opportunity to leisure and pleasure which otherwise cannot be offered at home (Ahmed et al., 2017). (Oteng-Ababio, 2016), recommended in his study that one significant feature of the shopping mall is the opportunity for visitors and other users to have a social interaction and pleasure during their stay around the mall. Torkildsen, 2012, a sociologist, also suggested that the modern-day shopping center should be able to serve as a community center to provide social and entertainment services like music, games, movies, and dining out for the purpose of pleasure during leisure hours and not necessarily providing only economic benefits to visitors. For instance, Howard (2007) sees leisure as a deep sense of appreciation that envelopes and lifts us to a higher plane, where we discover that there is peace and beauty and joy in the world. Many researchers have asserted different views about shopping at the mall because of the specificities of the environment, economic and social dynamics, and the significant role to the consumer and the communities at large (Daniel et al., 2013).

The Shopping Mall Environment and its Impact on Consumer Decisions

In the accomplishment of any business outlet like the shopping mall, the role of the environment in which the operations and management of activities take place cannot be ignored. The social interaction of the consumers, in and around the environment is very important and may be created through providing good and enjoyable atmospheric scenes in a shopping mall. The store environments can contribute to improving the buying behavior of consumers through the marketers and the retail managers. Food court, malls position, mall security, and parking area are the key attributes of any mall to increase and keep their consumer. These factors can help handlers of the shopping mall for promotion of their products and also for the progress of the mall (Ahmed, 2017). It is anticipated that Chinese consumers at various shopping malls are attracted by the modern, fresh and appealing atmospheric environment for various reasons of comfort and convenience (Uncles, 2010). In Dubai, consumers look out to these five factors to influence their decisions at the shopping mall: marketing focus, physical infra-structure, ambiance, safety, and security (Harvinder, 2013). Consumers know the importance of a store environment. According to Gopal (2015), different factors and characteristics of store environment affect various consumer-based decisions to either visit the shopping mall or not. Factors like quality, accessibility, suitability of the product, facility to entertain, food facility, and overall service affect the customer's buying attitude towards the shopping mall. Davaries (2013), said one of the most important factors which consumers consider is the location of the mall. Consumers take into account the distance from their residence, the transportation expenses, proximity to complimentary outlets, and store visibility during their visit to the shopping mall. Additional facilities in the shopping area attract the consumer and they love to go

shopping at specific malls, as consumers on high-income employees are fascinated by shopping centers with better parking space that creates no traffic jam problem for consumers and other citizens (Patience, 2013). People want to enjoy all the fascinating attributes in and around the shopping environment. Khalaf (2012), highlighted that convenience, entertainment, aesthetics, and service quality have a positive impact on shoppers in Saudi shopping malls. Consumer purchase intention is not only influenced by quality products. As the access to washrooms, proper lighting and color fragrance, and other atmospheric variables like hygiene, aroma, and presentation or layout of the product at the entrance of the mall inform the consumer of what to expect at the mall. Sinha (2014), emphasizes the store design and atmosphere as the key drivers besides quality and variety of products. The exterior atmosphere of the mall plays a major role in building the first impression of a good shopping center and attracting customers whereas advertising has only a minor and insignificant effect on experienced consumers. Sellers can extend the consumer behavior towards shopping mall by making their outside atmosphere more charming to visitors and to stimulate their walks into the store and enable their purchase desire (Shareef Ishar Ali Mohamed, 2015). The infrastructure of the mall and unique features like entertainment for visitors, most especially for kids have a significant impression on the minds of its customers. A study in Bhubaneswar, (2015) indicates that most consumers (teenagers) found around shopping malls are as a result of games and movies, access to the internet, and other technology at the mall.

Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior at the Shopping Mall

Many factors influence the buying behavior of shoppers and other visitors globally at the mall as various researchers have developed consumer behavior models with hundreds of factors that influence decision making. Kotler & Armstrong (2018), developed several factors influencing consumer decisions and classified these factors into; psychological (motivation, learning, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions), personal, (age, lifestyle, occupation, and economic conditions), social, (reference groups, family, roles and status), and lastly, cultural, (societal background, and subculture). Thus, for a consumer to arrive at a final decision to purchase or go shopping, at least, one of the above mention factors is considered to have an impact on the consumer's decision. According to Manish (2016), most marketing and sales teams view consumer behavior as a difficult puzzle that can never be completely solved because consumers are becoming much smarter than ever these days and they have a huge number of options as commence and shopping in general, expands globally. Marketers are more focused on developing various factors in reaching different segments of consumers as these consumers are not so quick to fall for gimmicky marketing ploys. Burhan (2020), identified product, price, time-saving, payment schemes, security and safety, administration, and psychological as common consumer factors that influence buying decisions online, throughout the covid'19 season in India. Asamoah (2012), also outlined in his research that customer services and other satisfactory programs like customer convenience, customer loyalty services, good customer treatment, and retention services, and store image plus other related services also influence the behavior of customers and consumers in and around the shop premises. In the research "factors influencing the selection of a shopping mall", Kushwaha (2015) concluded on the following as the main factors that consumers consider in their choice of a particular shopping mall; service experience, internal environment, acoustic factors, utilitarian, and demonstration factors. For this study, the factors affecting consumer decisions at the Takoradi shopping mall shall be narrowed down to product factors, service experience, convenience, and entertainment and recreational factors.

Product as a factor on consumer decisions and behavior at the mall

The product can be anything like a good, service, people, place, idea, information, or an organization that seeks the attention of clients, consumers, and other interest groups with the purpose to satisfy the needs and desires of these interest groups (Tjiptono, 2018). For a particular product to be classified as "good" to satisfy the needs of a targeted group, the product must be defect-and-fault-free in these eight identifiable characteristics; performance, reliability, features, durability, confirmation, serviceability, aesthetics, and last but not least, the perception of quality by consumers. Only when a product meets the demands and preferences of its consumers or their clients can the said product be called a good product (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). Most consumers' decision-making on a product is influenced mostly by the brand of the product, price of the particular product and price of other related products (substitutes or complementary), packaging and other content make-up, and lastly, the product quality. All these features of the product form or brings up a reputation that impacts the consumer's buying decisions and has a significant impact on their satisfaction (Mashao & Sukdeo, 2018).

Product Brand as an effect on consumer decisions and behavior at the mall

A product brand is a name, design, symbol, or other features that distinguish one product from another. A brand is not just the features of the tangible product or service but a package of consumers' perceptions and feelings towards the product. It is a promise or agreement to the consumer (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). Mallik, (2019) also added that a brand could be anything the consumer trust and hangs on with, even when others or the

world changes. It reflects the consumer as a distinct person and expresses what he or she desires and wants to be. The brand provides beliefs, values, personalities, benefits, and slogans to its consumers. Consumers do express themselves through various brand decisions and give an ideal of self-image since a product with a strong brand image can correspond with the consumer's personality. When consumers are buying a product, they are also buying a brand image and this brand image is the consumer's perception towards the product and the set of individual beliefs with regards to the brand which is mostly positive and unique. According to Wright (2016), decisions with a good brand for a product need a lot of time and resources from marketers and these can be strengthened through the service of advertising, promotions, and good packaging content. These marketers need to position their brands such that they will be able to reach consumers' minds to succeed in the market. Kotler & Armstrong (2012), developed a three-standard level of positioning a brand by marketers. In their development, at the lowest level, a brand should be positioned by the product attributes. For example, a car brand can have attributes like environmentally friendly. Though universally by positioning a brand by its attributes is good, there is a disadvantage that competitors can easily copy those attributes and gain benefits when the attributes are lost. A much better way of positioning a brand is to join the name with desirable benefits and expectations from consumers since the consumer is not only interested in looking out for attributes but what these attributes can do or offer them. An example of these is the Volvo car brand which represents safety and security. The highest level of brand positioning has something to do with more than just attributes and benefits. Here, consumers look at beliefs and values that are associated with the brand name and its benefits to their personality or status without even having seen the tangible product. Consumers can involve in a switch from one brand to another and this could be as a result of lack of interest in a current product or service, the desire to try new brands or products, better prices and other features, and selection of treatment received. These consumers are involved in variety seeking and it happens mostly when the stimulation with people and the environment is no more in good shape (Solomon, 2014). Nonetheless, some consumers will keep or stick to purchasing one particular brand over and over, no matter what happens because of certain adapted habits and behaviors (Perreau, 2014). In this situation, consumers struggle to buy other brands when their favorite brands are out of stock because of no better incentive to make them switch off brands to change their loyalty to the old brand. Over time, the consumer's buying decision that has been centered around brand loyalty will by all means chance on habitual buying.

Product Price as an effect on consumer decisions and behavior at the mall

Price is the most important feature of the marketing mix elements. The marketing mix elements are, price, promotion, product, and place. Many consumers use price as an indicator for quality as the study by Kotler (2018), found out that most respondents perceived that higher price is an indicator of good products. The chartered institute of marketing (2017), mentions further that price performs a role as a substitute indicator of quality. This makes some producers and marketers deliberately price certain products at high to position them as "premium" and "good", even though consumers may be suspicious of these products. Prices do very easily as compared to the other three elements of the marketing mix, as producers can decide to either increase or decrease prices. As the prices of products change over time, both the product in question or other substitutes or complimentary products, consumers often become less familiar with the product to purchase which leads to a risk of indecisiveness to the assessment of price (Olson, 2017). Rao & Monree (2014), argued strongly that when buyers perceive a positive relationship among price of a particular product against another price, and the real price is assumed as significantly different from the referenced price, the price options or alternatives are likely to be taken as being higher quality since strongly manipulations in prices are likely to result from a larger effect thereby enhancing the chance of statistically significant effect. Thus, consumers put the price of products in two perspectives; as a monetary cost in terms of the amount paid and lastly as the opportunity cost valued by the forgone option in terms of what the amount spent could have been used on. Consumers are very rational about price and to what benefit comes their way in purchasing a particular product at a specific price (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014). Marketers put their prices in three different dimensions; fair price, fixed, and relative price. A fair price is the adjustment of price to offer a combination of quality and appropriate services at a reasonable price. Fixed price requires no changes and adjustments and is set for every buyer in the marketer. Relative price is the price set by the marketer concerning the quality of service rendered to the seller (Solomon, 2014).

Product Packaging as an effect on the consumer decisions and behavior at the mall

Packaging as a tool of sales promotion and stimulator of impulsive buying behavior of consumers is increasingly growing due to increasing of consumer self-services, changing consumer lifestyles, and the increasing demands and trends of the internet. Packaging plays an important role in marketing as it can encourage or discourage the consumer from purchasing the product, most especially at the time when the consumer is selecting or making decisions among different brands since it is often the first impression the consumer will have of the product before the final purchase decision is made. This could be seen as one of the

most vital factors influencing consumers' buying decisions. According to Arens (2017), the packaging is the container or vessel for a product involving the physical appearance of the container, the design, color, shape, labeling, and other materials used to protect, preserve, and enhance the convenience of the product. The primary function of packaging is to protect the product against damage through transportation, selling, and exploitation of the package (Gonzalez, 2016). Gonzalez further explains that the role of packaging in marketing communications has increased therefore packaging must attract the attention and convey adequate value information about the product to consumers. Marketers should look at few developments to make packaging to support the brands of their products and build competitive merit to maintain innovations to increase their price premium (Hill, 2015). The packaging development should provide several business benefits including; tangible representation of brand and company values, important enhancement of product delivery experiences, increased impact at the point of sale, and lastly, creates a new development in distribution channels and opportunities. Marketers are very much aware of the fact that over 70% of most purchasing decisions are made at the shelf and since the packaging is the first thing that draws the attention of shoppers, it performs an important function in differentiating brands from competitors. The change in consumer decisions shows that marketers need to adjust their spending and to view the changes placed at the right time, to give these marketers the information and support they need to make the right decisions. This makes packaging become the major means of product branding and provides a more permanent impression of the brand to the consumer because individual preferences have become more complex and diverse (Hill, 2015). According to Locskin (2018), there is little time spent in researching the connection between packaging and the direct experience of the product, even though packaging helps to direct the way consumers experience a product by reinforcing consumer perceptions. Mann (2017), also stated that the information found on the product label or the package plays three functions; government regulation, independent labeling institutions, and business policies. Consumers need much information and time to evaluate the choices available to them. For example, the consumer who is much concerned with health and nutrition is more likely to pay attention to detailed label information of food products approved by the government, independent and business regulations, and policies. Smith (2016), identified five (5) variables that must be taken into account by producers and product designers when creating an effective and efficient packaging material for a product; form, size, color, graphics, and flavor.

Product Quality as an effect on the consumer decisions and behavior at the mall

Product quality can be said to be the consumer's judgment about the superiority and degree of excellence of the product. That is how the recipient of the product or service sees the product or service before purchasing, after delivery, and after use (Zeithaml, 2019). Quality is reaching out to the expectations of the consumer to the extent that users believe that the product or service surpasses their needs and expectations. According to Kotler & Armstrong (2012), a product is said to be quality if it satisfies these eight dimensions of consumers' expectations;

- **Performance:** the product's basic operating characteristics.
- **Conformance:** the product's design and operating characteristics is in line with established standards.
- **Durability:** the lifespan of the product before it deteriorates physically or until a replacement is required.
- **Reliability:** the possibility of the product to function and use over a specific period under specified conditions.
- **Features:** some additional features and content expectations of the product from consumers.
- **Aesthetics:** the ability of the product to appeal to the five senses of consumers.
- **Serviceability:** competence, speed, and the degree of repair.
- **Customer perceived quality:** this is mostly based on the reputation of the product or the firm in question.

Product quality plays a significant role in the performance and satisfaction of the product in the consumer market since consumers are increasingly demanding a higher quality of goods that saves time, energy, and calories. In the United States, consumers rank quality as the following; reliability, durability, easy maintenance and use, and trusted brands (McDaniel, 2017). These consumers lookout for reliable products that match the purpose and capable of withstanding their intended functions. Product quality could also be derived from the disparities among actual product options from the same, similar, or different industries (Hardie, 2014). It can also be determined by the way consumers perceive quality in the market and this could sometimes be very difficult to meet the consumers' expectations on quality because of varied understanding and inconsistencies in the market. Wankhade & Dabade (2016), put out that, for a better understanding and a perspective of product quality, marketers and producers should study the disparities in products of economic, technology, social, and cultural achievements; this is necessary to understand the quality gaps between 'how things ought to be' and 'how things are' from the consumers' point of view. The outcome can be used subsequently as a base for actual or real performance against perceived expectations and requirements. The gap will ensure immediate

improvements and developments. According to Iwarere (2019), product quality has a considerable influence and a role in the determination of a company's revenue and income. The relationship between product quality and the revenue of the firm is such that;

A better or improved product quality leads to an increase in both productivity and product reliability.

All things being equal, with an increase in productivity, product cost decreases while the increase in product reliability also brings to a good achievement of placing higher prices for sale.

The result of the relationship between higher prices and lower product costs yields a higher or greater profit since a large difference between a higher price change to the consumers and the lower cost incurred in producing the product.

Although quality is relatively perceived by various classes of consumers and people, and only a few kinds of literature have addressed issues in these areas, it will be important for operations managers of firms to base quality of production on various specifications that look out to meet specific market segments since a less in quality of a product could affect the performance and revenue of the firm in areas like profit, repair cost, replacement and warranty cost (Iwarere, 2019). Business organizations must endeavor to satisfy and fulfill the expectations and desires of consumers since their existence and continuous productivity and survival rely on customer reaction to their product quality. Akpeiyi (2016), confirms that business firms are interested in product quality due to its potential to increase market share, lower-cost production, and increase profit. Garvin (2014), puts out that, firms do not necessarily have to perform well on all dimensions of quality before being successful; pursuing quality niche can lead to better firm performance especially if the dimension singled out is which other firms have not identified.

Service Experience as a factor on consumer decisions and behavior at the mall

With the increase in the development of shopping malls, both online and traditional physical retail shops structure, the service experience is taking over as one of the main avenues for stores or malls to maintain a competitive advantage over competitors through differentiation (Hult, 2014). These shops have to continuously maintain a good service experience in different situations to keep long-term sustainable customer relations and satisfaction to achieve sustainability. Several researchers have tried to give their definition of what service experience is based on different perspectives. Hult (2014), stated that service experience is an internal and subjective reaction in the process of direct and indirect contact that happens between consumers and the firm or enterprise, taking into considerations the aspects of service quality provided by the firm such as customer services, discounts and sales promotions, advertisements, user-friendliness, and reliability of the product and service. Service experience could also be the consumers' different levels of reactions and feelings from rational, emotional, psychology, and mentality (Sealed & Jacob, 2017). Otterbring (2016), also hold the view that service experience is everything from the contact point of the consumer and the firm on the product or service rendered to the ensuring of product or service consumption. In this research, service experience from the shopping mall is classified into five categories; customer service, restaurant, and food services, emergency services, sales promotion or voucher and coupon services, and multiple and self-service payment systems.

Customer services as an effect on consumer decisions and behavior at the mall

Customers after identifying a solution to their needs in the market, the next step of action is to find out where they can visit to receive optimum treatment of services to solve their problems. Service providers and shop attendants are expected to present and welcome customers with good measures and establish a strong relationship that will motivate consumers to keep visiting their shops such that they will keep on purchasing regularly from their shops and not from competitors. Retailers and shop attendants should be much concerned about customer retention to reduce defections (Jobber, 2011). When a consumer finally decides to purchase or visit a retail shop, it is expected that the consumer will choose one retailer over another, even though all the alternative shops or service providers available to the consumer will be ready to offer solutions to the consumers' needs. Therefore, what brings the consumer to one particular shop or retailer? This is quite difficult to understand as most consumers are of the view that they visit a particular shop or make a final decision on a particular shop because the products or services are better, but in actual sense, it is because they trust the source which gave them information and assistance to aid their buying. Many factors determine why a customer will buy goods or patronize the services from a particular retailer (Abrams, 2018). Customers expect to receive fair treatment regardless of their age, gender, race, appearance, and size of purchase. Shop attendants should endeavor to demonstrate competence and a high sense of respect when interacting with visitors in and around the shopping center (Berry, 2011). Shop attendants should connect emotionally with customers and make them feel at ease during shopping, telling them the truth about products and services, impressing them, and showing love and appreciating consumers after purchase. Consumers feel much related to retailers and shop attendants who exhibit the following qualities; friendly and caring, coaching skills and expertise in areas of the business, have the same goal as consumers, and an approachable marketing relationship (David Garvin of Harvard

Business School, 2018). It will be a flop on the side of any firm which does not identify and retain its customers since every firm survives immensely on its current and potential customers. A critical look at various studies on services received by customers from firms at the point of sales shows a weaker relationship between the customer and the firm in the sense that customers fail and refuse to praise their corporate partners rather they express sentiments about the stress, confusion, unfair treatments, and manipulative transactions for which they find themselves trapped and victimized. Even though some marketers and firms are doing everything possible to build a strong relationship with consumers, however, most of the things that they do end up destroying these relationships (Berry, 2012).

Restaurant and food services as an effect on consumer decisions and behavior at the mall

In the last few years, food courts have emerged as one of the major and consistent sources of income for shopping malls (Adebenyo, 2017). Gone were the days when the malls were considered as places for shopping, by offering basic and simple multitudes of retail outlets. The mall has metamorphosed into a community hub that provides exceptional experiences like restaurant services, fast-food services, and other dining services to visitors. Food courts in India have become a win-win experience for both mall operators, restaurant owners, food court operators, and most importantly the consumer because of the significance of dining out with family, friends, and other relatives (Yanminidevi, 2013). This has become necessary for the entertainment and various satisfactions that consumers embrace from the gathering of dining together. Consumers sometimes spend hours shopping and become exhausted. They turn to locate themselves at quick-service restaurants and food courts in and around the shopping mall premises to deliver them quick-made meals, without necessarily returning home. Consumers lookout for coffee shops and other beverage operators to offer them coffee, tea, ice creams, and other related soft and hard drinks with some bakeries and small bites. There are other fine-sine restaurants with a full-time service with separate and special meal courses operating on a higher quality décor with specially trained staff for special occasions and functions in and around the mall premises which is mostly run upon request from visitors. The better the food courts and restaurants services, the longer shoppers choose to spend more time and the greater their spending to generate revenue to the mall.

Emergency services as effect on consumer decisions and behavior at the mall

Consumers will always prefer shopping at places where their safety and security are assured. Mall management needs to understand that they are personally liable for providing the safety and security of both staffs and visiting customers in and around the shopping environment. OSHA (2014), proposed that management should endeavor to prevent and control various workplace violence and crimes like robbery, theft, and trespassing. Modern technological devices like the Hybrid Targeted Violence Detected (HTVD), and CCTV cameras are installed in the modern-day shopping mall to help detect crimes and other actions of violence for immediate responses to control. Communication of various notices of emergency response activities should be rapidly and openly served for visitors. Exit doors and other directives as to where and how visitors should act and to whom to respond to for immediate rescue during injuries, fire outbreaks, and other minor accidents. Clinics for first aid services, lost and found services for shoppers to report missing items for identification. All these services enhance consumers' choice and decision to shop or visit the mall.

Sales promotion or voucher and special coupon services as effect on consumer decisions and behavior at the mall

Coupons, sales vouchers, and regular customer cards are certain reward schemes given to loyal customers to allow them with some kind of bonuses, discounts, and promotions on some goods and services at the shopping mall. The basic motivation is for the card, voucher, or sales coupon to function as a tool for customer relationship marketing to promote customer loyalty (Boedeker, 2017). Boedeker explains that most firms and shops use these special cards system to attract and keep their customers in the sense that customers will only concentrate on visiting that particular retailer anytime they want to purchase something. Generally, these discounts on the vouchers and coupons are in the form of slashing the product price directly, 'buy one get one free, etc. They are mostly time-bound and have expiry dates which compel the customer to return or rush to buy as soon as possible in order not to miss the offer. Producers and vendors manipulate product pricing through these special services to increase or adjust their profit margin without letting the customer become aware in most instances.

Multiple and self-service payment system as an effect on consumer decisions and behavior at the mall

For security and other reasons of conveniences, most consumers do not walk or travel on shopping trips with physical cash. The consumer prefers a cashless payment system which allows payment and other transactions through electronic means, anywhere and anytime in the world (Pulley, 2016). Various E-payment systems such as the master-card, visa-card, and money-gram services around the shopping mall permit shoppers

to perform various transactions either within a planned or an unplanned budget (Dahlberg, 2016). Also, a common type of electronic payment system is the Electronic Point of Sales (E-POS), that is popular for containing many features such as user-friendly, multi-operational, and other self-service payment functions. This permits customers to perform a self-payment transaction at the counters without necessarily waiting in long customer queues at traditional cash-payment shop counters. According to Adekeye (2017), the E-payment systems at the modern-day shopping mall ensures a greater role in the buying behavior of visitors as it enhances the customer satisfaction through a global trade and commence transactions.

Convenience as a factor on consumer decisions and behavior at the mall

For consumers to be more attracted to a particular retail shop, retailers must provide them with convenient services in four different domains; firstly, retailers must ensure that good measures are put in place to allow consumers and visitors to have a much better means to the location and a reliable long working-hours. Consumers need not travel a long distance with difficulties in reaching or locating the premises of retailers and their preferred shops. Consumers like visiting shopping centers which they will spend less money to locate, and could easily be seen by passing vehicles for ease of transportation from their residence to the shopping mall center. Secondly, there must be enough stock of products at any point in time, in order for consumers to get what they want to avoid disappointments anytime they visit the shop. Moreover, shopping malls need to ensure space, in and outside the mall premises for shoppers to carry their selected and assorted commodities without any waste of time. Items like shopping baskets and shopping trolleys are to be positioned at vantage places of the shopping corridors for shoppers to drag their goods through to the counters for payments and packaging (Berry, 2011). For some visitors at the mall, the basic motivation for going to the mall is because the mall provides a variety of services under one common roof. As consumers perceive their time to be increasingly limited and valuable, they become concerned with having accomplished various activities on a one-shop trip.

Entertainment and Recreation as a factor on consumer decisions and behavior at the mall

According to Jin & Sternquist (2014), shopping today has moved from being economic to fun and pleasurable activities that bring a feeling of joy to the shopper. Shopping malls should give attention to creating excitement by ensuring a positive image of higher pleasurable feelings in visitors which reflects their enjoyment of spending time in the shopping environment (Bell, 2017). Whilst the state of being excited represents a less emotional intensive evaluation, enjoyment corresponds to the emotional condition which elicits a higher level of pleasure and arousal. Bell supports that, among the two, logic would demand that consumers would find themselves in a condition of enjoyment much more than a condition of excitement, most especially when the consumer is a regular shopper and this in itself has been reported as a motivation for 'bricks' and shopping, as opposed to shopping on the internet so that the importance of the construct to modern centers is clear. Indeed Richardson (2016), puts forward that, a modern-day shopping mall is a place of social experience where visitors meet and interact with family and friends. Most teenagers arrange to meet at the mall for recreational and entertainment purposes other than buying.

Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis

From the above discussions, four hypotheses (from H1 to H4) are formulated as shown in the figure below.

H0: Product factors do not have a significant positive impact on consumers' buying behavior at the Takoradi shopping mall.

H1: Product factors have a significant positive impact on consumers' buying behavior at the Takoradi shopping mall.

H0: Service experience factors do not have a significant positive impact on consumers' buying behavior at the Takoradi shopping mall.

H2: Service experience factors have a significant positive impact on consumers' buying behavior at the Takoradi shopping mall.

H0: Convenient factors have no significant positive impact on consumers' buying behavior at the Takoradi shopping mall.

H3: Convenient factors have a significant positive impact on consumers' buying behavior at the Takoradi shopping mall.

H0: Entertainment and Recreational factors have no significant positive impact on consumers' buying behavior at the Takoradi shopping mall.

H4: Entertainment and Recreational factors have a significant positive impact on consumers' buying behavior at the Takoradi shopping mall.

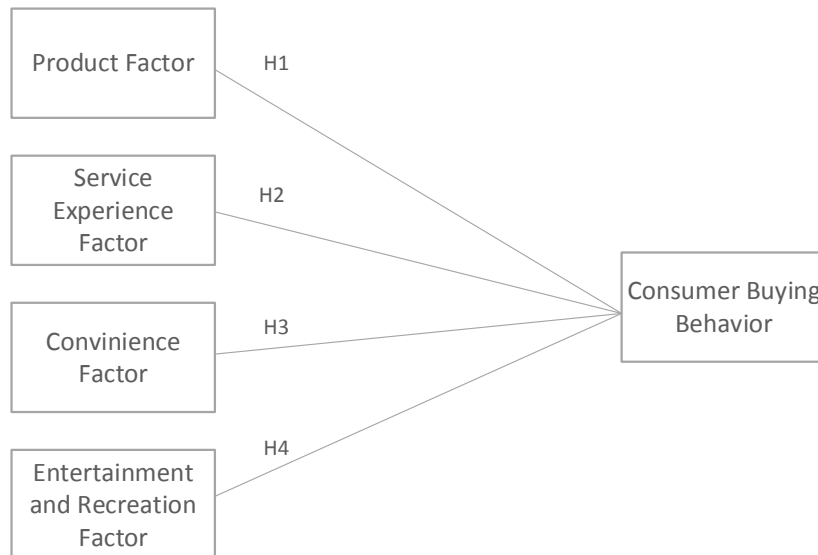


Figure 1-1 Hypotheses for factors affecting consumer behavior

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative Research

The quantitative research approach is the collection and analysis of numerical data that is mostly obtained from tests, questionnaires, checklists, and surveys. It throws more light on statistical, mathematical, and numerical analysis and manipulating of pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. Quantitative research is objective-based research that provides participants with measurable statistics that work to quantify their opinions and attitudes. An important feature of quantitative research is that it assumes the environment in which the research is carried out is stable and uniform and so it defines the problems and questions of the findings and formulates the hypothesis that predicts the results of the research before the findings even begin. However, there is often no or limited reason for respondents to explain the truth behind their responses.

In this study, data are analyzed and presented in statistical tools of percentages and others, which the researcher hopes that the data will not yield any unbiased result in the generalization of a population. Therefore, the researcher used questionnaires to collect empirical views and fresh data from consumers of Takoradi shopping mall in areas such as products, service experience, convenience, entertainment and recreation, and the mall environment.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research, on the other hand, is more of a subjective research approach that presents respondents with meaningful concepts and characters mostly in metaphors, symbols, and the description of things associated with the social constructivist paradigm to make constructed nature of reality. This approach attempts to cover a deeper meaning and rich understanding which makes researchers interest in human behavior and experiences like beliefs and emotions. The approach does not involve pre-determined hypotheses but they clearly could identify problems and topics that they want to explore and maybe guided by theoretical evidence to prove their findings and investigations.

Research Design

The research design includes various strategies, steps, and procedures identified by the researcher to combine different styles or components of the study in a logical and coherent manner in order to ensure that the research problems are addressed. Hence, this research employs the descriptive research design to agree on the factors affecting consumer behavior at the Takoradi shopping mall. The descriptive research design, described by Mugenda (2013) as a systematic empirical inquiring into which the researcher does not have direct control over the independent variable as their manifestation has already occurred, therefore they inherently cannot be manipulated. Miller (2013), also put forward that descriptive research portrays an accurate profile of persons, events, and situations making the researcher obtain a phenomenon of interests, preferences, attitudes, and concerns of individuals or a group. Therefore, this research design enables the study to gather data from a wide range of respondents on factors affecting consumer behavior at the Takoradi shopping mall. Moreover, the study contributes to analyses of the response obtained on how the consumer variables affect the shopping mall industry since descriptive research provides answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and how,

associated with a particular research problem. One major advantage of descriptive research is that it is being observed in a completely natural and unchanged environment, giving a true picture to an experiment with a data forecast, often adversely influenced by the normal behavior of the subject. It often uses a precursor to more quantitative research designs and a general overview of some valuable pointers to what variables are worth testing to yield rich data that lead to important recommendations. A limitation of this research design is that, because it often utilizes observational methods, the results cannot be replicated. Moreover, the results of descriptive research design cannot be used to discover a definitive answer or disprove the hypothesis.

Data Collection Method and Tool

According to Creswell (2013), for a good data collection method to be chosen for a study, the researcher should be able to determine the kind of information required for the study and the corresponding respondents depending on the field of study. Data collection is the method of gathering, measuring, and evaluating data for a study through formulated research hypothesis based on the data collected. It is the most important step for the research, regardless of the field of study. This study used a structured questionnaire as the data collection instrument. A questionnaire as a data collection instrument consists of a list of questions, along with the choice of answers, printed or typed in a sequence on a form for acquiring specific information from respondents. Questionnaires appear in two different formats; the opened-ended format and the closed-ended format. This research administered only the closed-ended format. A questionnaire was chosen because it presents uniformity in the response and it is inexpensive, regardless of the number of respondents, as many respondents could be reached at the same time. However, there could be inaccurate and incomplete information as it may appear that not all respondents could interpret and understand the questions. Also, the rate of some respondents not answering the questions is very high. The questionnaire was administered through an online platform called "Google form", and the link to the platform was distributed through email and social media platform (Whatsapp) to reach out to the respondents from Takoradi, Ghana. About two hundred and fifty (250) people were reached but only two hundred and seven (207) filled the questionnaire. Each questionnaire filled can be seen in the Google form platform and results collated. The questionnaire was structured in three different sections with the first section taking the demographic variables of respondents like age, sex, educational level, marital status, and income. The second section required respondents to respond to the factors affecting their decisions at the Takoradi shopping mall with references to variables like products, (brand, price, packaging, and quality), service experiences, (customer services, emergency services, restaurants and food services, multiple and self-payment services, and special sales promotions and coupon services), convenience, and entertainment and recreational services. The third and last section of the questionnaire contained questions on the influence of the mall environment on consumer decisions.

A message of consent was sent with a corresponding reply received from the management of the Takoradi shopping mall to allow their consumers to respond to the study. The various stakeholders, (management and the respondents) were briefed on the purpose of the study, hence encouraged to make themselves available for their candid opinion and information on the questions. A period of about three weeks was used for this particular exercise.

The responses to the questionnaire served as the primary source of data and information for the study. Other secondary sources of data included articles, online journals and publications, books, and other reading materials from the internet. All these data and information from different sources and platforms were added to give concrete and valid findings for the study.

Study Area

Sekondi-Takoradi is the administrative capital of the Western Region, located in the southwestern part of Ghana along with the coastal areas. The city is popularly known as the twin city of Ghana with a current population of about 559,548 and is the third-largest city in Ghana after Accra and Kumasi (Ghana Statistical Service, 2020). Takoradi has a historical experience as a port city since the colonial days of the British Government and its present status as an oil city with the discovery of offshore crude oil in its deep waters (Obeng-Odoom, 2012), which has resulted in several physical and demographic changes in the city. The city has residential neighborhoods differentiated based on socio-economic status. While this may be contingent on historical factors, recent social and economic transformations have deepened such residential differentiations.

Takoradi has a rich culture of language, beliefs, and other social and economic values. The most outspoken language in the metropolis is Fante, from the Ahanta side of the Akans, which is used as a medium of instruction and as an examinable subject at the basic school level. There are also non-indigenous settlers whose ancestors had migrated several years back from different parts of the world into the Metropolis, primarily for economic reasons. The distribution of makeup of ethnic groups in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis is as follows Fantes 46.5%, Ahantas 12.2%, Asantes 12.2%, Nzemas 3.8%, and Wassas 3.1%. The proportion of the rest of the ethnic groups is below 3 percent. The indigenous people exhibit a high degree of cultural

homogeneity in areas of lineage organization, inheritance, and succession. The matrilineal inheritance system is what is conformed with. Sekondi, Takoradi, and Essikadu are the three paramount seats for the traditional area with the Kundum festival as the major festival annually celebrated in September and October. The festival fetches a lot of economic and social gatherings with notable ones being the famous street carnival, football games, and tourist visitation by members from the diaspora citizens. Economically, the city's potential lies in the existing infrastructure and human capacity. With the discovery of crude oil in the city, Takoradi has become a hub for investors in the oil and petroleum industry with public and private multinational companies like Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC), Tullow Oil, etc. Other industries in the city include mining and quarrying, manufacturing (mostly cocoa and forest products processing), and electric power generation thermal, metal fabrication, wood treatment plant, and small-scale businesses like sachet water production. Fishing is another key economic activity that is actively undertaken along with coastal towns in the Metropolis namely New Takoradi, Sekondi, Essaman, Ngyiresia, and Nkotompo. About 60% of all industries in the Western Region are located in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis.

The Metropolis is the main hub of the railway network in Ghana. The Railway system has been the main mode of transportation of bulk items like minerals (e.g., bauxite, manganese), cocoa, timber for export. Also, bulk food and other domestic items are transported from the villages to nearby cities like Accra, Kumasi, and Dunkwa on Offin, Tema, Tarkwa, and Takoradi. Aside from that, it was the main means of passenger transport within the southern half of Ghana until recent times when the rail transport infrastructure began to face serious challenges. The central maintenance workshop of the railways is located in Sekondi where industrial fabrications are undertaken.

The Takoradi Harbor was established in 1928 by the British colonial administration under Governor Sir Gordon Guggisberg's administration as the first port of Ghana, handling both imports and exports. The harbor is managed by Ghana Ports and Harbors Authority (GPHA). For several decades, Takoradi harbor has served as an important port for passenger vessels plying the West coast of Africa - Europe route. The harbor takes a huge quantity of national exports such as minerals, forest products, semi-processed foods, and some exports and imports from land-locked countries in West Africa are channeled through Takoradi harbor. The public road transport system is operated by the Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU) which carries a larger number of passengers in the Metropolis. The Metropolis can boast of a considerable number of FM radio stations. It is the only city aside from Accra to have British Broadcast Corporation (BBC).

There is an Airstrip located in the Metropolis which serves as the base for the Ghana Air Force Flying School and also, as a commercial airport for domestic flights. Local airline companies that use the airport are Starbow, Antrak, and fly 540 amongst others. There are big hotels that boost the tourism and hospitality industry of the city and among these hostels are Raybow, Akroma Plaza, Planter Lodge, and Atlantic. Tourism contributes significantly to the economy of the Metropolis.

The Takoradi city has several educational institutions of all levels from tertiary, secondary schools, and special schools, ranging from single-sex to co-educational institutions. Among the tertiary institutions are Takoradi Technical University (a public institution), Nurses and Midwifery Training College, Holy Child Teachers Training College (now a College of Education). The secondary schools include;

St. John's school
Ghana Senior High Technical School (GSTS)
Takoradi Secondary School (Tadisco)
Bompeh Senior High Technical School (BSTS)
Ahantaman Senior High School
Fijia Secondary School
Adiembra Secondary School
Archbishop Porter Girls' Secondary School

Population

Fraeckel & Warren (2015), in their studies, defined population as the complete set of individuals (subjects or events) having common characteristics in which the researcher is interested. All persons living far and near the Takoradi shopping mall formed the population of this study. However, close attention was given to persons who were found in and around the shopping area.

Sampling Technic and Procedure

A sample technique or procedure refers to the plan which the researcher used in obtaining a sample from the given population. In this study, the simple random probability sampling technique was used. This is because the researcher wanted to give equal chance to every member of the population (the consumers of the Takoradi shopping mall) to be selected or chosen to participate in the study. This technique also helps to produce results that represent a whole population and is mostly preferred for quantitative research.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of drawing conclusions and explanations from the findings of the study (Creswell, 2003). The study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze the primary data gathered from the questionnaire distributed to the consumers at the Takoradi shopping mall. A descriptive statistical technique of data analysis was used by the help of the statistical software called Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS, version 26), the Google Form platform for the online questionnaire and Microsoft Excel software. Firstly, as and when each respondent responds to the questionnaire through the shared link, the Google form software sorts out the responds into common codes and interpret the results in statistical tools including graphs, pie-charts, and tables of frequencies. The data was then transferred onto the SPSS software where both reliability and validity test of the data was run and the hypothesis of the study was tested through factor analysis, specifically, regression tools. Since the research is mainly descriptive purposes, the results were finally presented in logical inferences and interpretations in percentages and frequencies.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of respondents by Gender

Here, the respondents were put into two different groups, male and female. This was done to find out which of these groups forms up the majority of respondents to the study and subsequently make a projection on the consumer majority at the Takoradi shopping mall.

The results below from table 4-1 and figure 4-1 show that out of the two hundred and seven (207) respondents, one hundred and thirteen (113) representing fifty-four percent (54.6%) were males (men), while ninety-four (94) representing forty-five percent (45.4%) were females (women). This means that, a greater proportion or number of the respondents who had time to provide information to the success of this study were males. All other things being equal, this means that a greater percentage of consumers at the Takoradi shopping mall are males. This is in contrary to the findings of by Khalaf (2012), that a greater number of females dominate their male counterpart at the shopping malls in Saudi Arabia.

Table 4-1 Sex Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Number of Responses	Percentage
Male	113	54.6
Female	94	45.4
Total	207	100

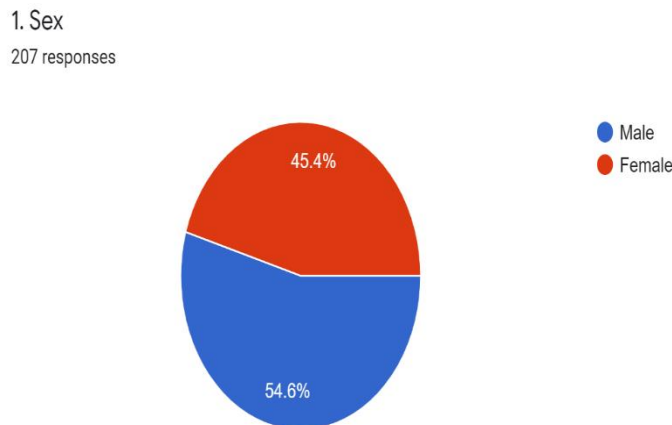


Figure 4-1 Sex Distribution of Respondents

Distribution of respondents by Age

The age distribution of respondents is; below 20 (teenagers), 20-29 (youthful age), and 30-39 (adulthood). This will identify the age group that forms the majority of respondents to the study and at the same

time consumers at the Takoradi shopping mall. Management of the mall can use this information to either increase or decrease the services and products of the particular age group as each of these groups come with their own special demands and preferences at the shopping mall.

Table 4-2 and figure 4-2 show results of a hundred and seventy-seven (177) respondents representing eighty-five percent (85.5%) fell between the ages of 20-29 (the youthful age), eighteen (18) respondents representing eight percent (8.7%) were teenagers (below 20), and a number of 12 respondents representing five percent (5.8%) fell between the ages of 30-39 (the adulthood). This could be interpreted that a greater percentage of respondents to the study were of a youthful age, thus 20-29years. Moreover, it could also be interpreted that majority of the consumers at the Takoradi shopping mall fall within the youthful age.

Table 4-2 Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Number of Responses	Percentage
Below 20	18	8.7
20-29	177	85.5
30-39	12	5.8
Total	207	100

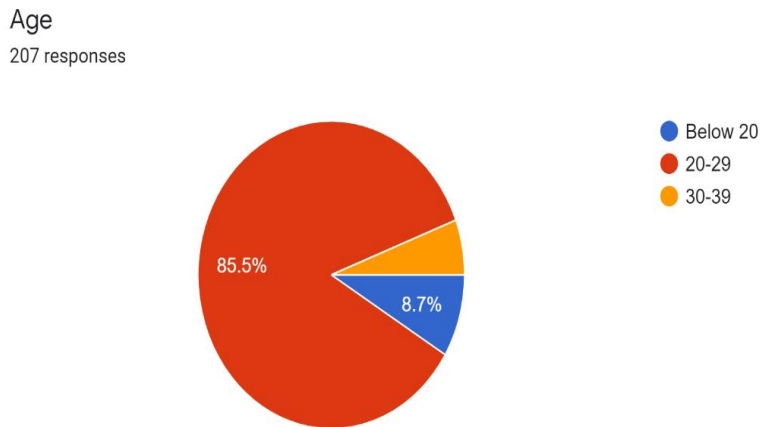


Figure 4-2 Age Distribution of Respondents

Distribution of respondents by Marital status

According to Obeng-Odoom (2013), most consumers who fall within the category of the married couple usually spend more income during shopping. These particular group of people normally spend a lot of income on shopping for their families and other love ones. The distribution of respondents under this section was to ascertain which among these three groups, single, married, and divorced forms a greater percentage of respondents of this study.

Table 4-3 and figure 4-3 show that a greater percentage of the respondents were single (190 respondents, representing 91.8%), and the rest of the respondents were married (17 respondents, representing 8.2%). The results show that none of the respondents fell within the category of divorce.

Table 4-3 Distribution of Respondents by Marital status

Marital status	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Single	190	91.8
Married	17	8.2
Divorced	-	-
Total	207	100

Marital status
207 responses

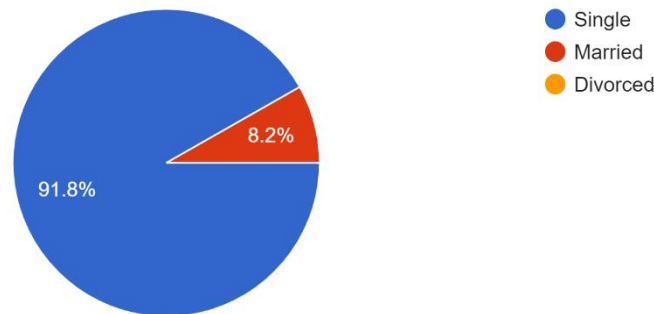


Figure 4-3 Marital status of Respondents

Distribution of respondents by level of Education

The distribution was done under four different categories. The no formal education group, basic education group, the secondary education group, and the tertiary education group. The level of education of respondents is one key factor to ensure that respondents could read, understand, and interpret the questionnaires of the study to provide the necessary information to the study.

From table 4-4 and figure 4-4, the results show that one hundred and eighty-two (182) respondents, representing 87.9% were people of tertiary education level, twenty-one respondents, representing 10.1% were people of secondary education status, three (3) respondents, representing 1.5% of the total respondents fell under the basic education level, and lastly, one (1) respondent, representing only 0.5% had no formal education. The results of this distribution explain that a greater number of respondents who contributed to this study could read and write. Furthermore, this shows a clear picture that most consumers at the Takoradi shopping mall could read notices, directives, and other information in and around the shopping mall area. These consumers will as well as be able to read and interpret user instructions and precautions on products and services provided at the mall.

Table 4-4 Distribution of Respondents by level of Education

Level of Education	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Basic	3	1.5
Secondary	21	10.1
Tertiary	182	87.9
No Formal Education	1	0.5
Total	207	100

Educational level
207 responses

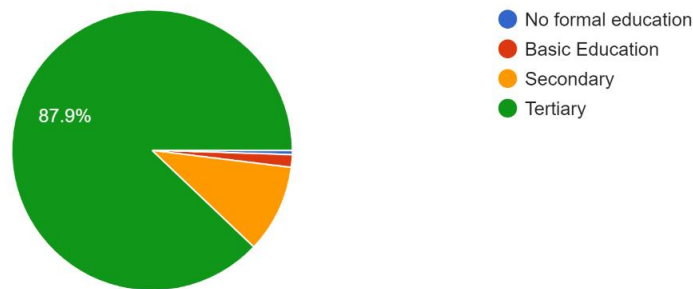


Figure 4-4 Educational level of Respondents

Distribution of respondents according to the number of visits

The distribution was done in five groups; respondents who visit the mall daily (everyday), those who visit the mall once every week, respondents who visit the mall once every month, those who visit the mall occasionally, and lastly, visitors on only festive moments. This distribution will present information to mall management to know how often do their consumers visit the mall and which particular days or moments in the mall premises likely to be more or less populated with visitors.

Table 4-5 and figure 4-5 show that out of the total respondents of two hundred and seven (207), one hundred and twenty-nine (129) representing a percentage of 62.3% visit the mall occasionally, thirty-three (33) respondents, representing a percentage of 15.9% visit the mall on seasons of festivity, twenty-one (21) respondents, representing a percentage of 10.1% also visit the mall once a month, nineteen (19) respondents representing a percentage of 9.2% are those who visit the mall once a week, and lastly, five (5) respondents, representing a percentage of 2.4% visit the mall daily. The findings show that the majority of respondents to the study who also forms up as consumers at the Takoradi shopping mall visit the mall only on special occasions. This could be interpreted that the Takoradi mall is not a very busy shopping mall daily, as results show that only five (5) respondents representing 2.4% visit the mall daily.

Table 4-5 Distribution of Respondents by their Visit

Day	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Everyday	5	2.4
Once a Week	19	9.2
Month	21	10.1
Occasionally	129	62.3
Festive Moments	33	15.9
Total	207	100

How often do you visit the mall?

207 responses

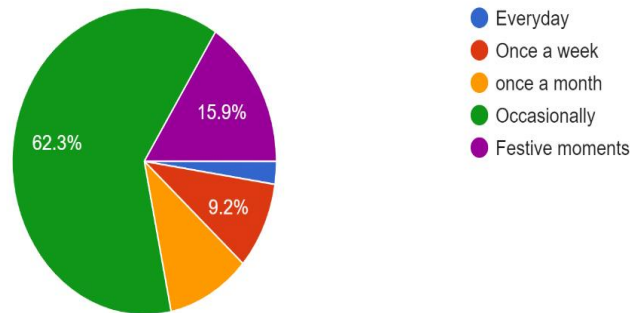


Figure 4-5 Number of times Respondents visit the mall

Distribution of respondents according to duration spent at the mall

In his study, Yanminidevi (2013) stated that the longer visitors stay at the shopping area, the greater they spend money on consumable goods and services provided at the mall. Results presented by this distribution will determine whether or not if consumers who visit the Takoradi shopping mall spend a longer duration or not. The distribution is consumers who stay for 30minutes at the mall, consumers who stay between 1hour -2hours, consumers who stay for 3hours, and those who stay beyond 4hours.

The results presented in table 4-6 and figure 4-6 below show that ninety-eight (98), representing 47.3% of the respondents stays between 1hour-2hours, sixty-two (62) representing 30% of the respondents stay for only 30minutes, forty-one (41) representing 19.8% of the respondents stay at the mall for 3hours during shopping, and lastly, six (6), representing a percentage of 3% of the total respondents stay for 4hours and beyond. The results show that the majority of respondents to the study spend the 1hour-2hours duration at the shopping mall. Not a greater number of the respondents stay for long during their visit to the mall.

Table 4-6 Distribution of Respondents by duration spent at the mall

Duration	Number of Responses	Percentage
30minutes	62	30
1hr-2hrs	98	47.3
3hours	41	19.8
4hours and beyond	6	3
	100	Total
		207

How long do you stay at the mall?

207 responses

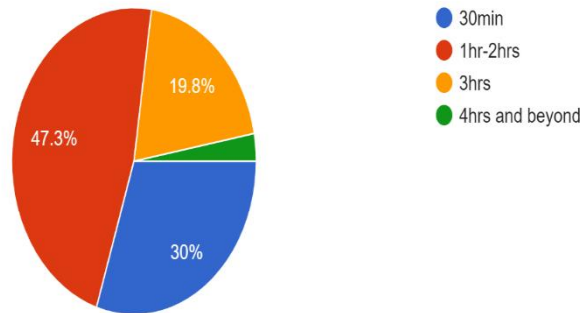


Figure 4-6 Duration spent at the mall by Respondents

Distribution of respondents by average Income spent

Respondents were categorized into four different groups. The first group comprises of those who spend an average income of below GHS100, the second group is those who fall within an average income of GHS100-GHS200, the third income group falls between GHS200-GHS300, and the last group is GHS500 and above.

Table 4-7 and figure 4-7 show that the majority of the respondents spend an average income of GHS100-GHS200 at the mall, represented by a figure of ninety-seven (97), with a percentage of 46.9%, followed by fifty-nine (59), representing 28.5% of the respondents spend an average income below GHS100, also, a figure of forty-six (46), representing 22.2% of the respondents spend an average income between GHS200-GHS300. The last group of respondents forming the less minority of this distribution were those who spend GHS500 and above, represented by the figure of five (5) and a percentage of 2.4%.

Table 4-7 Distribution of Respondents by Average Income

Income	Number of Responses	Percentage
Below GHS100	59	28.5
GHS100-GHS200	97	46.9
GHS200-GHS300	46	22.2
Above GHS500	5	2.4
Total	207	100

How much do you spend at the mall?
207 responses

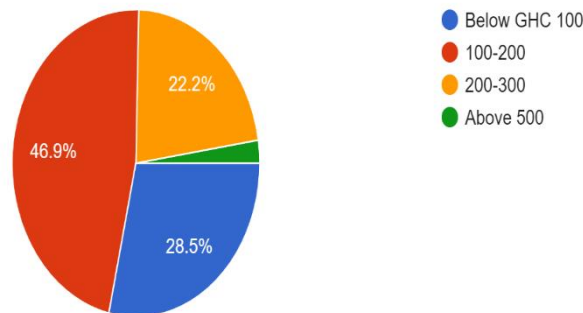


Figure 4-7 Average Income spent at the mall

Descriptive Statistics

The researcher used descriptive statistics to test the reliability and validity of the data in order to observe the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The descriptive statistics used for the observations were the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values.

Descriptive Statistics for Product Variables

The study identified five (5) different independent variables under product as an effect on consumers' buying behavior. These were to examine the relationship that exists among the independent variables and the dependent variable, consumers' buying behavior. The independent variables were; Consumers' Satisfaction for Mall Products (IF YES), Consumers' Dissatisfaction for Mall Products (IF NO), Consumers' Perception of a Good Product, Consumer Brand Preference, and lastly, Prices of Product at the Mall.

The results from Table 4-8 indicate that the independent variable identified as Consumers' Perception of a Good Product scored the highest mean and standard deviation values of 2.29 and 1.44 respectively. Also, the independent variable, Consumers' Dissatisfaction for Mall Products (IF NO), scored the least values of 1.27 and 0.676 for both mean and standard deviation respectively.

The results could be interpreted that, averagely Consumers' Perception of a Good Product at the Takoradi Shopping Mall has a stronger relationship with their buying behavior while Consumers' Dissatisfaction for Mall Products has a less or weaker relationship with their buying behavior. However, though averagely there is a stronger relationship between Consumers' Perceptions of a Good Product at the Mall and their buying behavior, this relationship cannot be relied upon consistently for future predictions because of the high score in standard deviation. There is a better likelihood to predict the relationship of Consumers' Dissatisfaction for Mall Products and their buying behavior since it has a lesser standard deviation of 0.67.

Table 4-8 Descriptive Statistics for Product Variables (Independent Variables)

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std deviation
If yes	184	1	5	2.42	1.01
If No	48	1	4	1.27	0.67
Perception of a Good Product	207	1.00	5.00	2.29	1.44
Brand Preference	206	1	3	2.18	0.68
Product Price	207	1.00	4.00	2.18	0.82
Valid N	28				

Descriptive Statistics for Service Experience Variables

The researcher identified three (3) independent variables under Service Experience as a factor influencing consumers' buying behavior at the Takoradi Shopping Mall. These independent variables were; Consumers' Satisfaction for Services at the Mall (IF YES), Consumers' Dissatisfaction for Services at the Mall (IF NO), and lastly, Consumers' Patronage for Emergency Services at the Mall.

The results from Table 4-9 show that the independent variable, Consumers' Patronage for Emergency Services at the Mall scored the highest values of 4.24 and 1.34 for both the mean and standard deviation respectively. Also, Consumers' Satisfaction for Service at the Mall (IF YES), scored the least values of 1.48 and 0.88 for both the mean and standard deviation respectively.

The results could be interpreted that, averagely, Consumers' Patronage for Emergency Services at the Takoradi Shopping Mall has a greater or stronger relationship to their buying behavior. On the other hand, Consumers' Satisfaction for Services at the Mall is averagely weaker in terms of relationship with consumers' buying behavior.

However, the relationship between Consumers' Patronage for Emergency Services at the Mall and Consumers' Buying Behavior cannot be constantly predicted because of the greater score in standard deviation, whereas the relationship between Consumers' Satisfaction for Services at the Mall can be predicted with a higher probability because of the smaller value in standard deviation.

Table 4-9 Descriptive Statistics for Service Experience Variables (Independent Variables)

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std deviation
If Yes	186	1.00	5.00	1.48	0.88
If No	47	1.00	4.00	2.42	1.31
Emergency Services	207	1.00	5.00	4.24	1.
Valid N	28				

Descriptive Statistics for Convenient Variables

Here, the study examined the relationship between five (5) different convenient variables at the Takoradi Shopping Mall with the buying behavior of consumers. The variables were; Assistance from Shop Attendance, Spacious Corridors, Sign Post and Indicators of Direction, Shopping Trolley, and Availability of Close Shops.

From Table 4-10, the results presented show that Availability of Close Shops scored the highest values of 2.29 and 0.87 for the mean and standard deviation respectively. Also, Shopping Trolley as a convenient variable scored the least values of 1.74 and 0.78 for the mean and standard deviation respectively.

Statistically, the results could be interpreted that, averagely, there exist a much stronger relationship between the Availability of Close Shops and the buying behavior of consumers at the Takoradi Shopping Mall. However, this relationship cannot be relied upon constantly because of a greater value in standard deviation. Whereas, the relationship between Shopping Trolley and Consumers' Buying Behavior can be relied upon for a greater probability because of the less standard deviation, even though there exist a weaker relationship averagely.

Table 4-10 Descriptive Statistics for Convenient Variables (Independent Variables)

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std deviation
Assistance from Shop Attendance	207	1.00	4.00	2.22	0.84
Spacious corridors	207	1.00	3.00	1.91	0.78
Sign Post and Indicators	207	1.00	4.00	1.91	0.86
Shopping Trolley	207	1.00	4.00	1.74	0.78
Availability of Close Shops	207	1.00	4.00	2.29	0.87
Valid N	207				

Descriptive Statistics for Entertainment and Recreational Variables

The analysis run by the researcher under this section was to identify which among the two independent variables identified under Entertainment and Recreation has a good relationship with Consumers' Buying Behavior at the Takoradi Shopping Mall. The two independent variables were; Consumers' Patronage for Entertainment Facilities at the Mall (Facility Patronage) and Consumers' Purpose for Visiting the Mall (Pleasure and Fun Purposes).

Table 4-11 shows that Consumers' Purpose for Visiting the Mall (Pleasure and Fun Purpose) scored the highest values of 2.41 and 1.52 for the mean and standard deviation respectively. On the other hand, Consumers' Patronage for Entertainment Facilities (Facility Patronage) scored the least values of 1.89 and 0.70 for the mean and standard deviation respectively.

Statistically, the results could be said that, averagely, there exists a stronger relationship between Consumers' Purpose for Visiting the Shopping Mall and their behavior, while there is a less or weaker relationship between Consumers' Patronage for Entertainment Facilities and their buying behavior.

However, even though there is a weaker relationship between Consumers' Patronage for Entertainment Facilities at the Mall and their buying behavior, this relationship can be predicted with a higher probability because of the less in value of standard deviation.

Tables 4-11 Descriptive Statistics for Entertainment Variables (Independent Variables)

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std deviation
Facility	207	1	3	1.89	0.70
Patronage					
Pleasure	207	1	5	2.41	1.52
Valid N	207				

Hypothesis Testing

The study formulated four (4) hypotheses which were tested by data collected with responses from the "Section B" of the questionnaire (factors affecting consumer behavior). The hypothesis tested included the following:

- H₀₁: Product factor does not have a significant positive impact on consumers' buying behavior at the shopping mall.
- H₀₂: The service experience factor does not have a significant positive impact on consumers' buying behavior at the shopping mall.
- H₀₃: Convenience factor has no significant positive impact on consumers' buying behavior at the shopping mall.
- H₀₄: Entertainment and Recreational factor have no significant positive impact on consumers' buying behavior at the shopping mall.

The Impact of Product Factors on Consumers' Buying Behavior

For the first hypothesis (H01), the relationship between product factors and consumers' buying behavior is tested as presented in Table 4-12 below;

Considering the results presented in Table 4-12 below, only one of the many items under product factors, which is Prices of Mall products, established a statistically significant ($0.038 < 0.05$) relationship with the dependent variable, consumers' buying behavior.

A further test with the help of stepwise regression analysis revealed co-efficient presented in Table 4-12 at an adjusted R square of 0.103.

Table 4-12 Relationship between Product Factors and Consumers' Buying Behaviour

	B	Std. Error	Std. Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.100	0.364	--	3.021	0.006
If Yes	0.018	0.066		0.271	0.789
If No	-0.002	0.079	0.062	-0.026	0.980
Perception of a good product	0.22	0.039	0.116	0.572	0.573
Brand Preference	0.110	0.108	0.294	1.023	0.317
Product price	-0.177	0.080	-0.583	-2.205	0.038
Dependent Variable: CONSUMERS' BUYING BEHAVIOR					
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std.Error of the Estimate	
	0.327	0.107	0.103	0.293	

Considering the item of consumers' perception of prices of mall products which established a statistically significant association or impact on the dependent variable, consumers' buying behavior, the hypothesis that product factors have a significant impact on consumers' buying behavior may be accepted on the following grounds;

$$Y = 0.123X + 1.375$$

Where: Y= Dependent variable (Consumers' buying behavior)

X= Independent variable (General prices of mall products)

Table 4-13 Coefficients for Regression Model (Independent Variable)

	B	Std. Error	Std. beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	1.375	0.058	-	23.753	0.000
Product Price	0.123	0.025	-0.327	-	0.000

The Impact of Service Experience as a factor on Consumers' Buying Behavior

The second hypothesis (H02), the relationship between Service Experience factors and consumers' buying behavior is tested as presented in Table 4-14 below;

Considering the results presented in Table 4-14 below, the option of "IF NO", indicating consumers who are dissatisfied with the service experiences received at the Takoradi shopping mall have a statistically significant (0.02<0.05) relationship with the dependent variable, consumers' buying behavior.

Stepwise regression with the statistically significant factor of service experience (consumers with dissatisfaction with services received) realized an adjusted R square figure of 0.039 as shown also in Table 4-14 below.

Table 4-14 Relationship between Service Experience and Consumers' Buying Behaviour

	B	Std. Error	Std. Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.628	2.191		0.743	0.465
If Yes	-0.215	0.816		-0.264	0.794
If No			-0.045		
	1.819	0.533	0.580	3.413	0.002
Emergency Services	-0.633	0.465	-0.225	-1.360	0.186

a. Dependent Variable: CONSUMERS' BUYING BEHAVIOR

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std.Error of the Estimate
1	0.244	0.059	0.039	4.07341

Considering the only independent variable (consumers' dissatisfaction) which has a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable of consumers' buying behavior, the hypothesis that service experience factor has a significant impact on consumers' buying behavior may be accepted on the following grounds;

$$Y = 0.771X + 2.918$$

Where: Y= Dependent variable (Consumers' buying behavior)

X= Independent variable (Consumers' dissatisfaction with service experience).

Table 4-15 Coefficients for Regression Model (Independent Variable)

	B	Std. Error	Std. beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	2.918	1.257	-	2.321	0.025
If No	0.771	0.457	0.244	1.687	0.099

Source: Field data, from IMB SPSS, 26.

The Impact of Convenience as a factor on Consumers’ Buying Behavior

The third hypothesis (H03), the relationship between Convenient factors and Consumers’ Buying Behavior is tested as presented in Table 4-16 below;

Considering the results in Table 4-16 below, out of the many items under convenient factors, only one item, availability of close shops has a statistically significant (0.048<0.05) with the dependent variable, consumers’ buying behavior.

Stepwise regression with the independent variable showing a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable revealed an adjusted R square of 0.022 as presented in Table 4-16, also below.

Table 4-16 Relationship between Convenience and Consumers’ Buying Behavior

	B	Std. Error	Std. Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	6.560	1.044		6.282	0.000
Assistance from Shop Attendance	0.756	0.404	0.150	1.869	0.63
Spacious Corridors	-0.838	0.487	-0.153	-1.719	0.087
Sign Post	0.171	0.474	0.035	0.361	0.087
Shopping Trolley	0.170	0.476	0.031	0.357	0.721
Availability of Close Shops	-0.779	0.388	-0.160	-2.008	0.046

a. Dependent Variable: CONSUMERS’ BUYING BEHAVIOR

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std.Error of the Estimate
1	0.214	0.046	0.022	4.23890

Considering the independent variable (availability of close shops) which has a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable, consumers’ buying behavior, the hypothesis of convenient factors have a significant impact on consumers’ buying behavior may be accepted on the following grounds;

$$Y = -0.673X + 7.022$$

Where: Y= Dependent variable (Consumers’ Buying Behavior)

X= Independent variable (Availability of close shops)

Table 4-17 Coefficients for Regression Model (Independent Variable)

	B	Std. Error	Std. beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	7.022	0.830	-	8.464	0.000
Availability of Close Shops	-0.673	0.337	-0.138	-1.998	0.047

Source: Field data from IBM SPSS, 26.

The Impact of Entertainment and Recreational factors on Consumers’ Buying Behavior

The last hypothesis (H04), the relationship between Entertainment and Recreational factors and Consumers’ Buying Behavior is tested as presented in Table 4-18 below.

From the results presented in Table 4-18 below, all the items under Entertainment/ Recreation did not show any relationship of statistically significant (>0.05) with the dependent variable, consumers’ buying behavior.

Ultimately, the hypothesis that entertainment and recreational factors having a significant impact on consumers’ buying behavior may be rejected on the grounds of no statistical significance.

Table 4-18 Relationship between Entertainment Factors and Consumers' Buying Behaviour

	B	Std. Error	Std. Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	5.589	0.917	-	6.092	0.000
Facility Patronage	0.224	0.200	0.080	1.123	0.263
Pleasure and Fun Purposes	-0.347	0.434	-0.057	-0.799	0.425

a. Dependent Variable: CONSUMERS' BUYING BEHAVIOR

Model	R	Rsquare	Adjusted Rsquare	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.089	0.008	-0.002	4.29085

Effects of Mall Environment on consumers' decisions at the mall

The last part of the questionnaire was to assess the effect of the mall environment on the decisions of consumers. Respondents were to rank these features of the mall environment in the order of very high, high, normal, and not at all. The features of the environment included; location of the mall, security and safety, clean environment, means of transport, comfortable temperatures, and last but not least, availability of places of convenience like washrooms.

From Table 4-19 and figure 4-8 below, the results indicate that clean environment as a feature of the mall environment contributes a greater effect on the decisions of respondents (consumers) at the Takoradi mall. This is justified by the statistical figures of 97 respondents, representing 46.9% who selected very high, followed by availability of places of convenience like washroom, which is also represented statistically by 69 respondents with 33.3%.

Table 4-19 Effects of Mall Environment on consumer decision

Features	Very High	High	Normal	Not at all
Location of mall	54	74	67	12
Security and Safety	67	77	57	6
Clean Environment	97	72	34	4
Mean of Transport	45	76	76	10
Comfort Temperatures	65	77	60	5
Places of Convenience	69	67	64	7

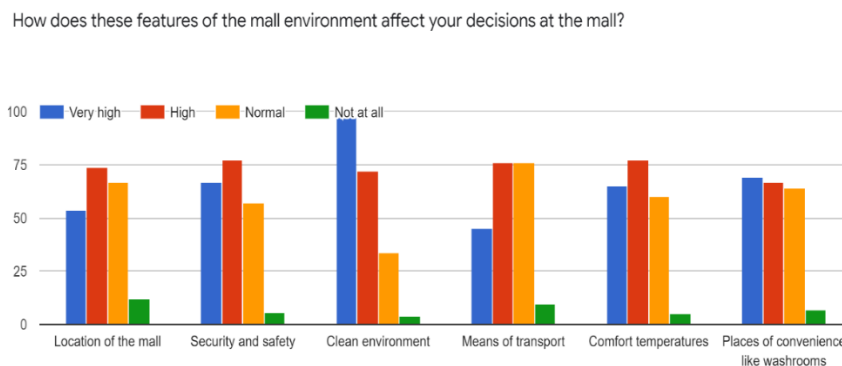


Figure 4-8 Effects of Mall Environment on Consumer decisions at the mall.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study was to examine some key factors which influence the behavior of consumers at the Takoradi shopping mall, Ghana. These key factors formulated in the conceptualized framework with their hypothesis were; products, service experience, convenience, and entertainment and recreational services. Moreover, the study also examined the effect of the mall environment on decisions of consumers at the mall.

The study used a descriptive design of both quantitative and qualitative method which targeted only consumers at the Takoradi shopping mall. A total of two hundred and seven (207) respondents participated in the research through a simple probability sampling technique. Questionnaire was the main data collection tool, administered online through a google platform. The data was processed and analyzed with the help of the statistical software called Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS) and the Google Form platform and further pulled through the Microsoft Office Excel output. The results are presented in frequency distribution tables, percentages, and other statistical charts.

From the analysis, the following were the key findings of the study;

- Out of a total number of two hundred and seven (207) respondents who participated in the study, 54.6% were males while 45.4 were females. Thus, majority of the participants of the study were males.
- Majority of the respondents, represented by a percentage of 85.5% were between the ages of 20-29. They fall within the adult age with most of them, (87.9%), having a tertiary education background.
- Lastly on the background of the respondents, the study arrived that, 62.3%, constituting majority of the respondents visit the shopping mall on special occasions and these respondents spend an average duration of 1hr-2hrs during shopping. Moreover, 46.9% of these respondents spend an average income of GHS100-GHS200 on items at the mall.
- Results from Table 4-12 from the first hypothesis test indicate that product factors have a statistically significant impact on the buying behavior of consumers at the Takoradi shopping mall. Specifically, the results revealed that among the items or features identified under product factors such as branding, product pricing, and packaging, pricing had the most significant relationship or impact on the buying decisions of the consumers.
- Table 4-14, representing results from the second hypothesis test also show a statistically significant relationship between service experiences offered at the Takoradi shopping mall and consumers' buying behavior. The findings from consumers who registered their displeasure or dissatisfaction for the service experiences received at the mall was the most among the independent variable that showed a statistically significant relation with the dependent variable which is consumers' buying behavior at the shopping mall.
- Moreover, the results from the third hypothesis, as presented in Table 4-16 indicate that availability of close shops for substitutes and complementary products among the convenient factors identified in this research has the most statistically significant relationship or impact on consumers' buying behavior at the Takoradi shopping mall.
- The fourth hypothesis, entertainment and recreational factors have no significant impact on consumers' buying behavior was accepted base on the statistical findings presented in Table 4-18. All factors identified under entertainment and recreation had no statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable, consumers' buying behavior.
- Last but not least, the study found out that, clean environment as a feature of the mall environment contributes a greater effect on the decisions of consumers at the shopping mall. A percentage of 46.9% agreed to this fact, followed by 33.3% who also suggested that availability of places of convenience like washroom also have an influence on their decision making.

• **5.2 Recommendations**

Key recommendations are offered to two main categories of stakeholders of the present investigation. These stakeholders include industry players in the shopping mall business, most specifically the management of the Takoradi shopping mall. The other category of stakeholders to which the recommendations are made to are individuals and groups in academic research and other related scholarly writings for the purposes of future research and academic materials related to the current findings of this study.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for the industry players in the shopping mall business, most especially, the management and other stakeholders of the Takoradi shopping mall.

- **Focus on product development:** The study found out that product factors (brand, price, packaging and quality) have a significant impact on the behavior of consumers at the Takoradi shopping mall. Therefore, management should outline various strategies and other developments in order to develop the products provided at the mall. Product branding, packaging, and most especially, good product pricing methods should be a major concern to management in order to retain current consumers and attract potential ones. Management should stock the mall with products that are affordable and considerable in price. Management can use various pricing methods like demand pricing, penetration pricing, skimming and discount pricing for consumers to patronize their products. Also, management should focus on stocking the mall with products that belong to the adult age, as the background of the respondents revealed that majority of the participants of the study fall within the adult age.
- **Focus on maintaining a good consumer service experiences:** Management should focus on how to intensify these services in order to continue to be satisfactory to consumers. Communication, assistance, customer education and other customers services should be intensified for consumers to feel ease at visiting the

mall. Feedback should be taken from consumers on the usage of products and patronage of other services provided at the mall in order to receive a regular consumer assessment for immediate responds and assistances where necessary.

- **Intensify Awareness of Emergency Services:** The findings of the study revealed that majority of the respondents had not benefited from any of the emergency services provided at the mall. The assumption could be that these respondents are not aware of any emergency services provided at the mall. Moreover, they could also be aware but the services might be inferior to them. The mall management should aim at making the available emergency services known to visitors and encourage their patronage as and when they need them. Provision of various notices and other means of communication could be made in and around the mall premises for the attention of visitors.
- **Enhance consumer convenience:** Consumer convenience at the mall was revealed by the findings of the study as one major factor contributing to the decisions of consumers at the Takoradi shopping mall. Management should ensure that there is always the availability of substitutes and complementary products in close shops to ensure the mall does not run out of supply to consumers. Other conveniences like shopping trolleys and baskets should be provided in the shopping area for consumers to use as carriage for their goods. Majority of the respondents agreed that their convenience at the mall is enhanced most by these trolleys and baskets. Also, much attention should be given to consumer directions and guidance with the help of sign post and other indicators of direction.
- **Maintain a Clean Environment:** The findings on the effect of the mall environment on decision of consumers revealed that, clean environment as a feature of the mall environment has a greater effect on the decision of these consumers. Therefore, it is recommended to management and other stakeholders of the Takoradi shopping mall to maintain a clean and tidy environment in order to attract visitors at the mall. Other environmental features like availability of places of convenience like washroom should also be made available and accessible to visitors.
- **Intensify more Entertainment Services:** According to Yanminidevi (2013), the longer visitors stay at the premises of the mall, the greater their pay for the services of the facility. Visitors pay for more as they stay for longer duration enjoying the services provided in and around the shopping area and this help generate much income to the facility. Results from Table 4-6 and Figure 4-6 reveal that only a smaller percentage (3%) of consumers at the Takoradi Shopping Mall stays longer than four (4) hours during their visit to the mall. This will not help in the generation of income for the facility as visitors will only pay less for less duration spent. Managers of the shopping mall are encouraged to put in place very entertaining and attractive atmosphere to keep visitors a longer period to hang in and around the facility.
- **Stock the Facility with Less Expensive Products and Services:** The findings from Table 4-7 and Figure 4-7 also revealed that a greater number of consumers (46.9%) at the Takoradi Shopping Mall, averagely, spend an income of GHS100-GHS200. Only a few of these consumers (2.4%) spend more than GHS500 averagely on their visit to the mall. It is therefore recommended to the management of the mall facility to stock or make available more products and services that have their prices and value between GHS100-GHS200. This will enhance sales because most consumers can afford. Moreover, this will prevent goods from remaining in stock for longer period of time which might go bad at the long run to incur loss to management.

5.3 Innovation Service in Future for Takoradi Shopping Mall

The future of the shopping mall industry is as robust as the industry's imagination. For operators and managers to continue to enjoy success in the future, they must break away from the traditional market to today's pattern and practices and fully embrace a consumer-driven market. For this reason, this study puts forward to managers of the Takoradi shopping mall to make the shopping mall a Consumer Engagement Center (CEC) with special innovations such as;

Creation of mobile shopping centers in and around communities. The findings of this study revealed that most consumers visit the mall on special occasions. The days of static stores are gone, as the new age of consumers want to enjoy shopping at their comfort homes or spend only few distance for shopping. Managers of the mall can arrange a mixture of some core selection of products and create inspiring themes to move around for consumer not to necessarily come to the main centers. Through this, management can inculcate the habit of shopping in consumers even at their comfort homes and cease the habit of shopping only on special occasions and functions.

Another innovative service this study proposes for managers to consider is the creation of social commence for shoppers to interact online for their favorite brands and services which they would have enjoyed only at the physical presence of the shop. Social commence in the form of online business has come to stay, most especially in the era of COVID'19 pandemic where other researchers found out that about 44% of customers worldwide said they were currently shopping online for things they would have normally buy in-store.

As the act of shopping is becoming more of a fun in which transaction is now a secondary to most shopping mall visitors, the study further makes suggestion to management and mall administrators to look into providing of a more attractive and incentive environments to mall attendants. Administrators will have to look at what will bring today's visitor back tomorrow? Customers who step into the mall must be ensured to spend more time through experience with recreational sites at the mall, enhanced product presentation and a personalized customer care.

VI. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the present investigations of this study, the following conclusions are established. Concerning the dynamics of the information gathered from the background of respondents to the study, it is concluded that the male gender dominates their female counterparts as consumers at the Takoradi shopping mall. Moreover, these consumers often visit the mall on special occasions. On the factors affecting the behavior of consumers at the Takoradi shopping mall, the study can be concluded that product factors, service experiences, and convenient factors have a greater impact on the buying behavior of consumers at the Takoradi shopping mall. Also, the study found out that, the condition of the mall environment, specifically, a clean environment has an effect on whether or not, the consumer will visit the mall.

Limitations of the study

In the course of the exercise from the proposal writing, administering of the questionnaire, results discussions to the final research work, the study went through several limitations and challenges. Among these limitations were;

Time Constraint: Time was one major challenge to the completion of this research. The expected duration for this whole exercise, from the review of relevant literature, proposal writing, drafting and administration of questionnaire, data analysis, mid-check review of first draft by supervisor, and finally correction of suggested submissions by supervisor from mid-check review for the final work should have been done within a duration of one (1) year but due to unexpected challenges brought by covid'19, there was a structural adjustment for the completion of the MBA program which made this study to rather take shorter duration of six (6) months. The researcher together with supervisors have to put in much extra efforts in making sure that this thesis is completed within the stipulated deadline. The researcher strongly believes that the initial duration of one year could have been much better for this study to be done. Notwithstanding all these challenges of a shorter duration, the study presented good findings for both current and future researchers who might be interested in conducting similar research.

Limited Access to Relevant Literature and Information: As identified in previous chapters, both the concept of consumer behavior and the shopping mall require a broader consultation and review of many relevant literature for much information and understanding to be acquired by researchers. Though this study laid references to reading of some relevant materials but time as identified in the previous limitation, could not permit access to more relevant papers of similar field to the study. The researcher holds the view that more and more literature is available on various platforms which could have been reviewed to provided or expand the findings of this study but time will not permit. This study was expected to be completed within a specific duration and so the researcher would not spend much time in reviewing more literatures since there are equally other important exercises of this study which needed to be completed to ensure a successful work done.

Insufficient Sample Size: The study reached out to a total of two hundred and seven (207) respondents through the administration of the questionnaire at the Takoradi Shopping Mall. The researcher strongly believes that on average, consumers at the Takoradi Shopping Mall are greater than this figure. Though the results and findings of this study could be used as a representation of a population of consumers at the Takoradi Shopping Mall, it cannot be said to be the behavior for a larger or the whole population. The larger the sample size, the more likely it could be used to represent the views of the larger or the entire population of consumers at the Takoradi Shopping Mall.

Choice of Data Collection Tool and Method: This study used questionnaire as the data collection tool and this was administered through an online platform called the "Google Form". The type or format of the questionnaire administered was a closed ended format. This could not permit the respondents to provide other relevant views and information except to select from the alternatives provided by the researcher. The views of respondents were limited to only what were provided. An opened ended questionnaire would have provided a platform for these respondents to also make other views aside what were made known by the researcher.

Respondents' Behavior: Respondents found it very difficult availing themselves to the study. Some could not make a little time out of their busy schedules to respond to the questionnaire, as they could not find any good reason for them to leave behind their priorities to attend to this study. Others also held the view that previous involvement in research studies have not fetch them any improvements and solutions to problems identified before and so there was no need to continue to involve in subsequent research discussions.

Cost Implications: The financial burden of this whole work was solely on the personal income of the researcher. Printing of material, purchasing of internet data to download relevant literatures for review, and the payment of software developer for the data collection tool since the researcher had to reach out to his respondents in Takoradi, Ghana, through electronic means.

Lack of Interaction and Trust between the researcher and the respondents: The difference in location of the researcher in Shijiazhuang, China and his respondents in Takoradi, Ghana made it very difficult for a good interaction between the two. The researcher could only reach respondents through telephone calls and other means like the social media which were not enough for proper communication. Respondents could not get the understanding of some aspects of the questionnaire and this required the researcher to have created much time to communicate the clarifications to these respondents but the means was not enough. This led to mistrust and misinformation among respondents which couldn't allow them to provide all relevant data and information for the accuracy of this study.

Unstable Internet Connectivity: Both the research and respondents experienced unstable internet connectivity in the exercise of the study. This brought about difficulty in the area of communication between researcher and respondents

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