

ANTECEDENTS OF SHOPPING CENTRE SELECTION AND RE-PATRONAGE BEHAVIOUR: A SMART PLS STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING APPROACH

Roy Malon Shamhuyenzva¹⁾, Lehlohonolo Amos Masitenyane²⁾

¹⁾ Vaal University of Technology, Vanderbijlpark, South Africa

²⁾ University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

e-mail : roys@vut.ac.za

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to analyse factors influencing customer shopping centre selection and re-patronage behaviour and to evaluate the mediating power of customer experience and satisfaction towards their re-patronage intentions. An empirical examination of a proposed conceptual model represented by specific variables was offered. Data were collected from 349 respondents utilising an online structured self-administered questionnaire, applying a convenience non-probability sampling method. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach was executed to assess the model via two-step data analysis: measurement and structural model assessments. The study contributes to the literature by proposing a conceptual model and advocates valued information to shopping centre managers concerning marketing strategies to attract more customers. The study results reveal that customer shopping centre re-patronage intention is built on various attributes offering shopping centre managers prospects of enhancing customer hedonic consumption experiences, apart from securing their re-patronage intentions. Propositions for future research are also presented.

Keywords: Consumer behaviour, PLS Structural equation modelling, Re-patronage intentions, Satisfaction, Shopping centre

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi pemilihan pusat perbelanjaan oleh pelanggan serta perilaku kunjungan ulang mereka, serta mengevaluasi peran mediasi dari pengalaman dan kepuasan pelanggan terhadap niat kunjungan ulang tersebut. Sebuah pemeriksaan empiris terhadap model konseptual yang diusulkan—yang direpresentasikan oleh variabel-variabel tertentu—disajikan dalam studi ini. Data dikumpulkan dari 349 responden melalui kuesioner daring terstruktur yang diisi secara mandiri, dengan menggunakan metode pengambilan sampel non-probabilitas secara kebetulan (convenience sampling). Pendekatan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) digunakan untuk menguji model melalui dua tahap analisis data: penilaian model pengukuran dan penilaian model struktural. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap literatur dengan mengusulkan model konseptual serta memberikan informasi yang berharga bagi manajer pusat perbelanjaan dalam merancang strategi pemasaran guna menarik lebih banyak pelanggan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa niat pelanggan untuk mengunjungi kembali pusat perbelanjaan didasarkan pada berbagai atribut, yang memberikan peluang bagi manajer pusat perbelanjaan untuk meningkatkan pengalaman konsumsi hedonis pelanggan, selain memastikan kunjungan ulang mereka. Usulan untuk penelitian di masa depan juga turut disampaikan.

Kata kunci: Perilaku konsumen, PLS-SEM, Niat kunjungan ulang, Kepuasan, Pusat perbelanjaan

1. INTRODUCTION

Following the proliferation of technological advancements that redefined shopping centres from what they have been known for all along (Asmare & Zewdie, 2022), shopping centres are viewed as the embodiment of modern-day consumerism, purported as the arcade of consumption (Mentz, 2023). The importance of shopping centres has arisen from a simple place of just buying groceries to an environment that provides both recreational and delightful shopping experiences (Kushwaha et al., 2017).

Shopping centres are regarded as a social arena, wherein customers take part in various endeavours and experiences that include safe, leisure and satisfying shopping experiences (Hu & Jasper, 2018; Kushwaha et al., 2017; Kiriri, 2019; Wirtz, 2024). Sandler and Kim (2019) found two primary reasons for this growth: the change in consumption patterns and the state of financial affairs of retailers faced with the likelihood of bankruptcy that is sparked by a variety of factors. Beckers, Birkin, Clarke, Hood, Newing and Urquhart (2022) mention that shopping centres are susceptible to high levels of competition enthused by new online selling platforms (Alflayyeh et al., 2020; Asmare & Zewdie, 2022) and supplementary retail outlets (Anselmsson, 2016), especially in emerging markets, including South Africa's retail shopping environment (Makgopa, 2016; 2018; Ntlhe, 2023; Wirtz, 2024), to mention a few. Hence, in the wake of such developments, contemporary customer shopping tendencies are investigated in the form of extant literature reviews and data collection to explore various research themes like the one this study aimed to explore. The increasing number of out-of-town shopping centres represents the kind of shopping facilities that customers are increasingly looking for (Jones, 1991). Therefore, understanding customer

shopping centre selection and factors influencing their choices was very important because continuous assessment of consumer consumption patterns is key in the retail business space (Katrodia et al., 2018).

Regardless of the large body of research conducted previously, in this study, it is noted that some limitations in the literature regarding several critical aspects exist: firstly, extant literature on shopping centres and attraction factors largely concentrated on the likelihood of model conception to ascertain the need for customer enticement and intentions to visit shopping centres (Badar & Irfan, 2018; El-Adly & Eid, 2016; Maher & Ana, 2019).

Only limited empirical studies in recent times have examined customer shopping centre preferences and experiences in emerging markets (Grimmer, Ashley & Miles, 2016; Katrodia et al., 2018; Saber et al., 2017). Also, the role of customer satisfaction towards in-or-out-of-town shopping centre re-patronage intentions has been limitedly studied (El-Adly et al., 2024; Terblanche, 2018). Hence, this study was one of a few to present the subsequent viewpoints: (i) it integrates a set of factors (convenience, tenant variety, internal environment) as antecedents of in-or-out-of-town shopping centre attraction and the mediating power of customer experience and satisfaction) to predict the variance in shopper re-patronage behaviour. These factors have been infrequently tested from a shopping centre perspective, and forthcoming research can apply the same three-dimensional trait (antecedents → mediators → re-patronage intention); (ii) it assesses the role of customer preferences from an environmental psychology point of view towards shopping centre revisitation behaviour. Very limited studies, including those by Amoah et al. (2016), Atulkar and Kesari (2017), and

Terblanche (2018), added the same factor and approach to their investigations.

The objective of this enquiry was to offer a quantified and astute investigation from an emerging South African shopping centre context. Firstly, prior studies primarily focused on the immediate or short-term behavioural impact of customer experiences (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020) and, in so doing, overlooked the degree to which the effects thereof could expedite future shopping centre re-patronage intentions. Additionally, how shopping encounters evolve and induce continued revisitation behaviour remains underexplored (Li, Dahana, Ye et al., 2021). Transitorily, theoretical investigations hypothesise that customer shopping experiences and satisfaction can affect re-patronage behaviour, depending on numerous factors that require further investigation (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to give empirical proof of the probability of such outcomes. Secondly, although researchers intellectualised customer experience as an ever-changing construct (Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), limited enquiries empirically examined how shopping centre experiences develop over time (Verhoef et al., 2009).

Consumer behaviourists have indicated that customer satisfaction emanating from what they prefer can stimulate positive shopping intentions (Human et al., 2020; Talwar et al., 2021). However, it is uncertain if customer evaluations of their shopping experiences can be constant, irrespective of their past shopping encounters. Accordingly, empirical evidence on the ever-changing nature of customer experience and satisfaction is hugely significant in forecasting future patronage behaviour. Thirdly, investigating the impact of various stimuli, such as shopping centre convenience, tenant variety, and internal

environment based on purchasing encounters, is limited (Makhitha, 2023).

Accordingly, this study narrowed the aforementioned gap by drawing from social exchange theory (SET), which epitomises a vital theoretical model for examining consumer patronage patterns. Kronlid and Baraldi (2020) found that long-term re-patronage intentions can be formed in time-bound connections using SET and, from time to time, could reveal the initial point of cultivating a resilient ongoing bond. Given that re-patronage intention is a broad concept, this study focused on customer shopping centre experiences and satisfaction as key mediators towards customer re-patronage intentions (Atulkar & Kesari, 2017; Chatzoglou et al., 2022). In particular, this enquiry addressed the resulting research questions:

RQ1: To what extent does customer experience with shopping centre's stimuli of convenience, tenant variety and internal environment with a touch of customer experience influence their re-patronage intention?

RQ2: How do customer preferences impact their immediate satisfaction towards long-term re-patronage intentions (i.e., for in-or-out-of-town shopping centres)?

Through the study findings, we offered three novel contributions to the extant body of knowledge. Firstly, we shed new light on how customer experiences affect re-patronage behaviour among in-or-out-of-town shopping centres from South Africa's shopping centre context. The findings provided useful insights into how customer satisfaction progresses as they continue to visit either in-or-out-of-town shopping centres and not only deepens understanding of customer learning behaviour but also assists in better predicting future shopper behaviour.

Secondly, a deeper understanding of consumer shopping preferences borrowed as an environmental factor, together with other attraction factors adopted from Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) stimulus organism response model (S-O-R), are provided. Lastly, this study shed light on the underlying psychological processes that influence individuals' experience of shopping centre stimulus and their re-patronage intention. By revealing the cognitive and perceptual processes that affect shopper behaviour, the study provided an innate understanding of why consumers may feel motivated to favour a particular shopping centre.

The remainder of this paper was presented in 7 sections. Section 1.1 presents an overview of South Africa's shopping centre environment. Section 2 presents a literature review and theories underpinning the study. Section 3 provides the hypothesis and model development, along with the mapping of the proposed variables to the current context. Section 4 details the methodology followed, and a presentation of the study results followed a discussion of the findings in Sections 6 and Section 7, which provide concluding remarks, implications, limitations and future scope of research.

1.1 OVERVIEW OF SOUTH AFRICA'S SHOPPING CENTRE ENVIRONMENT

The conception of a contemporary shopping centre became popular in the early 1960s (Lemarchand, 2021) and became popular as a way of reshaping the retail environment across the globe and has since become a 20th century phenomenon (Kajalo & Lindblom, 2010). In South Africa, shopping centre developments sporadically grew over the past 30 years (Mentz, 2023) as an all-encompassing scheme of facility housing a variety of shops managed as one entity (Altkorn & Kramer, 1998). The

International Council of Shopping Centres (ICSC) testifies that South Africa is the 5th major supplier of shopping space in the world (SACSC, 2016), with Gauteng province having the highest proportion, with 10.8 million square metres, followed by the Western Cape, with 3.5 million square metres, then KwaZulu-Natal, with 3.3 million square metres and Free State, with 870,000 square metres (Business Tech, 2018).

Shopping centres that meet the ICSC classification are found in different forms, including neighbourhood, community, regional, and super-regional centres (Makgoba, 2018). All these centres differ from 1 000m² up to more than 170 000m² (SACSC 2016) and represent more than 23 million m² of an estimated 37 million m² of all retail facilities in the country (Business Tech, 2018). The status of all shopping centres does not merely lie in their central control or parking spaces, since they mainly differ in form, size, structure, location, and tenancy costs (Berman & Evans, 2013). Many of them offer customers diversity, entertainment, comfort, luxury, and convenience (Zuhri & Ghozali, 2020). Aspen Networks of Developing Entrepreneurs (2021) reports that the out-of-town areas (Townships) have been viewed as the prime location of shopping centre growth in recent years due to continual increases seen in household income, besides being a flooded retail market space.

Township market has emerged as a new heaven for national retailers pursuing potential business growth opportunities (Makhitha, 2023). The growth of shopping centres in these areas has conceived a broader selection of shopping points that can sustain consumer needs and requirements (Ntlhe, 2023). In the past, consumers from these areas had to travel long distances to reach a nearby, 'favoured' shopping centre. However, this is no longer the case as they can find

shopping centres not far from their place of abode. Hence, to build on current knowledge on what are the factors that affect the choice between in-or-out of-town-based shopping centres is very important, noting that centres differ and

provide diverse offerings (Tustin & Strydom, 2006). Table 1 provides a synopsis of the diverse types of retail centres in South Africa.

Table 1. Planned and unplanned retail types in the whole spectrum of retail facilities

Planned		Unplanned	Rural
Core classification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small free standing and convenience. • Neighbourhood • Community • Small regional/large community • Regional • • Super Regional 	Specialist <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big Box Retailers • Entertainment/casinos Lifestyle • Value • Hyper • Motor showrooms and related facilities • Filling station stores • Airport retail • Centres at railway/commuter stations • Organised flea markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBD/Town Centre • Taxi rank retail/commuter centre • Informal Traders • Spaza shops • Fresh produce markets • Morning/daily food markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural retail taxi orientated • Town centres • Informal trade • Spaza shops • Planned shopping centres

Source: SACSS (2016), Prinsloo (2010)

Against this background, shopping centres have turned out to be tantamount to the extension of retail space and due to the decentralisation of retail space that excluded other markets, including townships and a move away from the old Central Business District (CBD) way of serving customers (Wirtz, 2024). Owing to increases in shopping centre developments, especially in Gauteng province, the number of shopping centres doubled with out-of-town trading structures (Sale, 2017). This spiral growth placed both planned and unplanned in-and-out-of-town shopping centres as the largest segments of the retail market in the country (Ntlhe, 2023).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORIES GROUNDING THE STUDY

The study's theoretical model is founded on the examination of extant literature on consumer behaviour and relationship marketing. The study is premised on the social exchange theory (SET) propagated by Homans (1958) and the theoretic method of theory of reasoned action (TRA) bourgeoned by Ajzen and Fishbein (2000) to predict human behaviour. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) developed TRA, which is deeply rooted in social psychology appeal and is fundamentally concerned with intentionally well-organised behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Fishbein and

Ajzen (1975) state that the TRA principles validate the practicality of a model that could explicate and forecast consumer behaviour, along with the belief that they would have for a given conduct (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977).

Additionally, the S-O-R model proliferated by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) also forms a critical part of the study's theoretical lens, as it has been previously operationalised in shopping centre studies (Karim et al., 2021). As asserted by Mehrabian and Russel (1974), the internal environment stimuli (S) that shoppers are exposed to may ignite a variety of behavioural responses (R). The behaviour response arises following the shopper's internal evaluations (O) to the stimuli that set off a response based on internal impressions or behaviour of an organism (person) (Harappa, 2023). Thus, stimulations provided by the shopping centre environment are seen as an inducer of customers who display responses that comprise specific behavioural outcomes. Numerous variables can be applied to generate a model of shopping centre attraction factors. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) initially proposed five measures of S-O-R (convenience, tenant variety, internal environment, leisure mix and communication/promotions) as measures of consumer attraction to shopping centres. However, this study purports a different framework by retaining only three variables (convenience, tenant variety, internal environment) from the original model, while (leisure mix and communication/promotions) are discarded. An opportunity to frame a different measurement model is presented with the inclusion and removal of certain theoretically valid variables supported by literature.

Presenting a distinct research framework enhances literature and provides new perspectives that simulate the subject with fresh ideas (Behera et al.,

2023a; Delafrooz et al., 2009). Accordingly, enhanced knowledge of the usage of specific constructs for rational objectives is offered. An uncommon variable (preference) is added as a stimulus of customer internal evaluations together with the three retained S-O-R framework variables professed to act as an inducement to (customer experience) as one of the study's mediating variables. Additionally, another construct (satisfaction) is included in the model as the second mediating variable towards customer shopping centre re-patronage intention. The results from the literature informed this ploy with justification to further validate the significance of including preference variable as a stimulus factor to measure consumer behavioural patterns and to test customer experience and satisfaction's mediating power towards shopping centre re-patronage intentions. Each variable appears to different extents in the literature, although not in a constant manner and hence, we also examine their association in the context of in-or-out-of-town shopping centre selection and re-patronage intentions.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1.1 Convenience

Prior studies revealed that customers regard convenience shopping encounters as equivalent to reduced time spent and effort during their purchasing process (Yeo et al., 2019). El-Adly and Eid (2015) established that the convenience of shopping centres exhibits the competence of the centre to provide customers with a variety of opportunities to undertake a range of shopping activities. Hence, shopping centre convenience is regarded as an attraction factor affecting both hedonic and utilitarian shopping values (El-Adly & Eid, 2016). Customer sensual

and emotional fulfilment symbolise their hedonic values, while utilitarian shopper values are represented by an experiential-oriented undertaking that pursues convenience and lower prices (Kesari & Atulkar, 2016). Conveniences such as sufficient parking space positioned in strategic areas and extended operating hours play a critical part in customer shopping centre practices, which empirical research has consistently highlighted its significance to customer experiences (Idoko et al., 2019; Sharma et al., 2022). Utilitarian values and problem-solving means can satisfy patrons just as in non-hedonic situations (Parasuraman et al., 2021). Numerous researchers found that if customers perceive the convenience provided by shopping centres to be conducive, prospects of patronising the centre in the future will increase (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Li et al., 2021; Khurana & Dwivedi, 2017). Thus, this study hypothesised that:

H1: Shopping centre convenience positively impacts customers' service experience.

2.1.2 Tenant variety

Recent investigations reveal the cumulative significance of tenant variety towards the success of shopping centres as very important. Establishing the ideal tenant variety can be a challenging task with no guarantees of success. Kyriazis and Cloete (2018) mention that for shopping centres to preserve their worth, the centre management must continuously monitor and adjust the tenant variability because what persuades customers to patronise shopping centres these days is a mixture of shopping centre hosts, who cater for pleasant recreational undertakings and relaxation of shoppers (Calvo-Porrá & Lévy-Mangín, 2018). What is also recognised as shopping centre retail tenant mix is one key factor of

shopping centre attraction that connects to the primary benefit of customer experiences (Anselmsson, 2016). El-Adly and Eid (2015) mentioned that although the centre's attraction is partly interrelated to the configuration of the tenant mix, regrettably, no model for determining the degree of tenant mix at shopping centres is established. Researchers, including El-Adly and Eid (2015) and Yeo et al. (2019), also concur that tenant variety improves customer shopping centre service experience and revisitation behaviour. Therefore, this study hypothesised that:

H2: Shopping centre tenant variety positively impacts customers' service experience.

2.1.3 Internal environment

Sheth (1983) purported shopping patronage theory, which has underpinnings in psychological literature. It suggests that customer buying behaviour can be affected by functional and non-functional service experiences (Sheth, 1981, 1983). Functional experiences could be the need to look, touch, hear, smell and taste for basic reasons, while non-functionals could refer to the centre's atmosphere, image or the employees' appearance (Kumar & Kashyap, 2023; Roschk & Hosseinpour, 2020). Accordingly, shopping centre success depends on the superiority of its attributes, which differs from one centre to the next, as the S-O-R theoretical framework advocates that to appreciate how the environmental variables of shopping centres stimulate the emotional state and behaviour of consumers, it is important to understand their behavioural intentions to visit or not to visit a particular centre (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Accordingly, the centre atmosphere must be conducive enough for customers to stay, interact and enjoy a pleasant and ecofriendly image presented by the centre

to influence them to come back (Behera et al., 2023b). Therefore, the atmospheric and internal environment provided by the centre should resonate with the customers to influence them to return to the centre (Calvo-Porral & Lévy-Mangín, 2018). As numerous other studies pronounced the prominence of shopping centre's internal environment's touch points toward customer support behaviour (Behera et al., 2023b; Kushwaha et al., 2017; Siqueira et al., 2020), this study also hypothesised that:

H3: A harmonious internal environment positively impacts customer shopping centre experiences.

2.1.4 Preferences

Literature extensively applied preference to assess the impact of brand equity and confirmed it as the inclination to choose and visit a particular destination or place (Su & Huang, 2019). Ebrahim et al. (2016) affirmed that preference influences customers' attitudes and choices, thereby playing a significant role in forecasting an individual's behaviour (Shen & Shen, 2021). According to Line and Hanks (2019), place attachment enacts a key part of customer re-patronage behaviour, especially when an environment presents patrons with a sense of belonging (Laing & Royle, 2013) and feelings of dependence emanating from social engagements encountered in the centre (Wang et al., 2021). In this study, shopping preferences are expressed as customers' deliberate perceptions of the environment and what the shopping centre offers (Makhitha, 2023). In other words, it means the individuals' likes or dislikes of what they have felt or experienced during their shopping process (Lubis, 2018). Literature reveals that numerous shopping centre attributes impact customer preferences (Banks, 1950; Su & Huang, 2019) and behavioural intention (Shen &

Shen, 2021; Yeap et al., 2020). Accordingly, this study hypothesised that:

H4: Perceived shopping centre preferences positively impact customer satisfaction to revisit the centre in future.

2.1.5 Customer experiences

Schmitt (1999) recommended five diverse categories of customer experiences: "sense", "feel", "think", "act" and "relate". Since the objective of experiential marketing is to create unforgettable experiences while offering value to the customers (Nadiri & Gunay, 2013), their experiences can be viewed as hedonic consumption related to varied sensorial, emotional, and behavioural influences, including having fun, amusement and purchasing sensory stimulation (Ortegón-Cortázar & Gomez, 2017). Singh and Söderlund (2020) mention that, nevertheless, customers' shopping experiences affect the extent to which they reveal their expectations and are content with satisfying encounters. Other studies found that customer service experiences disclose positive associations with customer satisfaction (Shukla, Banerjee & Singh, 2016). Saidon et al. (2021) emphasise that positive experiences significantly influence customers' future behaviour. Specifically, it is argued that customers who had an enjoyable experience are more likely to revisit the centre, underscoring the importance of prioritising the internal environment as a key driver of customer re-patronage behaviour. Numerous researchers concur that the association between what customers experience with shopping centres progressively shape and create affective bonds and revisitation behaviour (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Keiningham et al., 2020; Saidon et al., 2021). Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H5: Pleasurable customer experiences with shopping centres positively impact their satisfaction and encourage them to revisit the centre in the future.

H6: Pleasurable customer experiences with shopping centres positively impact their re-patronage intentions.

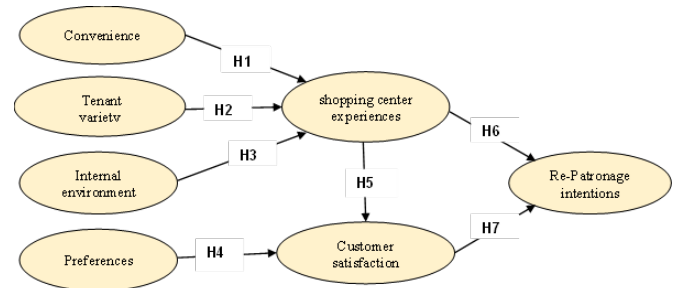
4.1.6 Customer satisfaction

Churchill and Surprenant (1982) posit that the expectation–disconfirmation paradigm advocates that satisfaction emanates from a cognitive valuation procedure, where customers assess their actual shopping experiences relative to their expectations. Customer shopping centre satisfaction is observed to fundamentally rely on cumulative affective experiences with the product or service, which are retained and updated over time (El-Adly et al., 2024; Oliver, 1980). Therefore, satisfaction ensues when customers perceive their shopping experiences as meeting or exceeding their expectations (Slack & Singh, 2020; Bloemer & Odekerken-Schröder, 2002).

In this study, service features such as good care and administration of centre facilities, including restrooms and hygienic conditions, safety and security, impact overall shopper satisfaction. Other studies found that satisfaction positively affects re-patronage intentions (Slack & Singh, 2020; Chiu et al., 2017). Many researchers agree that customer satisfaction is a key element that drives shopping centres' forthcoming buying intentions (Khurana & Dwivedi, 2017; Mahin & Adeinat, 2020). Therefore, this study hypothesised that:

H7: High levels of customer satisfaction with shopping centres positively impact their re-patronage intentions.

Figure 1 exhibits the research model proposed for this study.



3. RESEARCH AND METHODS

This research employed a quantitative and descriptive approach, gathering data over 10 months (from July 2023 to June 2024) through electronically administered questionnaires. The survey was disseminated via digital platforms (email, Facebook and WhatsApp) to shoppers within designated locations. A convenience sampling strategy was utilised to facilitate timely and cost-effective data collection. After data collection, a rigorous cleaning and validation process ensured the quality and reliability of the data. The research hypotheses were subsequently tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), which enabled the examination of complex relationships between variables.

3.1 Measurement instrument

All measures were adapted from previous studies. A five-point Likert-type scale was sourced to measure items. In Section A, nine questions pertaining to demographics and mall buying behaviour were asked. To assess shopping centre convenience, 3 items proposed by Calvo-Porrall and Lévy-Mangín (2018) were adapted, and 2 items from Olivier (2007), convenient trading hours and proximity to home/work were selected for inclusion in the scale. To measure tenant variety, 3 items from Calvo-Porrall and Lévy-Mangín (2018) were adopted.

Additionally, 7 items were espoused by Olivier (2007) to construct scales measuring internal environment with 4 items and service experience with 3 items. To evaluate customer shopping centre preferences, 6 semantic differential scale items were constructed based on previously reviewed literature. Finally, 3 items per scale were adopted from Makgopa (2016) to measure shopping centre satisfaction and re-patronage intentions.

3.2 Target population

In the quest to completely understand the antecedents influencing shopping centre selection and re-patronage intentions in Vanderbijlpark and Vereeniging towns and their nearby peripheries (Boipatong, Bophelong, Everton, Tshepiso, Tshirela, Sebokong and Sharpville townships), the study sampled from both in-and-out of town shopping centre customers. The population relevant to this research included shopping centre patrons who physically visited the centres at least once a month in the past ten months. The study respondents comprised both adult male and female shoppers from various racial groups aged 18 years and older who physically visited shopping centres. The sampling population was the southern region of Gauteng province of South Africa. At the time when the study was conducted, little to no empirical research was conducted to test customers' in-or-out-of-town physical shopping centre selection and re-patronage behaviour in the area, albeit the largest concentration of shopping centres is in South Africa.

3.3 Data analysis

The sample's demographic characteristics were summarised using descriptive statistics. Bootstrapping resampling methods were employed to establish the reliability of the findings. Following the structured approach for structural equation modelling outlined by Zhang et al. (2018), the analysis was divided into two distinct phases. Initially, the quality of the measurement model was scrutinised, with particular attention paid to its dimensionality, reliability, and validity (including convergent and discriminant validity assessments). Subsequently, the structural model was examined to test the theoretical framework's hypothesised causal relationships between latent variables, focusing on the significance of the paths involved.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Sample profile

Following data cleaning and validation, 349 questionnaires were deemed usable and, therefore, were used for further analysis. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 2, providing an overview of the sample's composition.

4.2 Measurement Model

4.2.1 Convergent Validity

An evaluation of the measurement model was undertaken to determine the validity and reliability of the constructs. Hair et al. (2019) state that factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) are crucial standards for assessing the measurement model's convergent reliability and validity.

Table 2. Sample Profile

Demographic Characteristic	Description	Value	Percentage
Age	18 – 30 years	147	42,1%
	31 – 40 years	107	30,7%
	41 – 50 years	70	20,1%
	51 – 60 years	21	6,0%
	61 years and above	4	1,1%
Gender	Male	197	56,4%
	Female	152	43,6%
	Non-Binary	0	0%
Monthly income	Less or equal to R5000 per month	120	34,4%
	R5001 to R10000 per month	61	17,5%
	R10001 to R15000 per month	24	6,9%
	R15001 to R20000 per month	66	18,9%
	More than R25000 per month	26	7,4%
How many times per month do you visit your preferred mall/shopping centre?	Once a month	13	3,7%
	2-3 times per month	102	29,2%
	Once every week	34	9,7%
	2 times per week	101	28,9%
	More than 3 times a week	99	28,4%

For factor loadings, a threshold over 0.5 is advised (Hair et al., 2019). According to the findings, CR values varied from 0.840 to 0.917, while factor loadings ranged from 0.722 to 0.898. Among the constructs, preference taste had the lowest AVE (0.637). However, it was still higher

than the minimum cut-off value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019). The findings exhibit good reliability, as shown in Table 3, demonstrating that the scales are good and reliable measures of the constructs.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity of Constructs using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	CON	EXP	IE	PC	PT	RI	S	TV
CON	0,817							
EXP	0,805	0,887						
IE	0,826	0,830	0,846					
PC	0,694	0,683	0,689	0,836				
PT	0,777	0,735	0,744	0,830	0,798			
RI	0,714	0,705	0,697	0,729	0,764	0,875		
S	0,573	0,601	0,575	0,693	0,701	0,655	0,867	
TV	0,811	0,793	0,805	0,676	0,750	0,652	0,641	0,830

Note: The square root of the AVE is on the diagonal.

Key: Con = Convenience, EXP = Experience, IE = Internal Environment, PC = Preference Comparative, PT = Preference Taste, RI = Re-Patronage Intention, S = Satisfaction and TV = Tenant Variety

4.2.2 Discriminant Validity

The study used the cross-loading criteria and the Fornell and Larcker test to assess discriminant validity. Tables 3 and

4 provide summaries of the findings, respectively. Except for convenience and preference taste, which show higher correlations with internal environment and

preference comparability, the results show that the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than most correlation values (Table 3). The cross-loading criteria were investigated to further demonstrate discriminant validity and the uniqueness of the latent variables in this study.

4.2.3 Cross Loadings Criterion

The cross-loadings criterion determines the extent to which scale items correlate with their corresponding construct (Knekta et al., 2019). As shown

in Table 4, each scale item exhibited a strong connection to its intended underlying construct. However, Jalil and Yeik (2019) advise reevaluating the entire model if a manifest variable correlates more strongly with a different latent variable. Therefore, it is essential to scrutinise the relationships between manifest variables and their corresponding latent variables to ensure they are logical. This study established discriminant validity after cross-loading analysis and confirmed that each manifest

Table 4. Discriminant Validity using Cross Loadings Criterion

	CON	EXP	IE	PC	PT	RI	S	TV
CON1	0,819	0,710	0,734	0,501	0,629	0,555	0,453	0,666
CON2	0,879	0,715	0,716	0,603	0,694	0,626	0,525	0,685
CON3	0,722	0,546	0,590	0,503	0,503	0,420	0,322	0,567
CON4	0,837	0,660	0,705	0,630	0,669	0,657	0,569	0,709
CON5	0,820	0,638	0,616	0,597	0,662	0,641	0,451	0,678
EXP1	0,674	0,890	0,733	0,611	0,651	0,611	0,560	0,719
EXP2	0,715	0,891	0,720	0,560	0,611	0,607	0,485	0,684
EXP3	0,750	0,879	0,752	0,644	0,689	0,657	0,552	0,704
IE1	0,729	0,719	0,847	0,663	0,678	0,647	0,525	0,678
IE2	0,670	0,625	0,805	0,551	0,613	0,550	0,486	0,647
IE3	0,715	0,725	0,878	0,588	0,609	0,586	0,475	0,694
IE4	0,680	0,730	0,851	0,529	0,618	0,574	0,462	0,702
PC1	0,518	0,528	0,496	0,840	0,713	0,578	0,624	0,524
PC2	0,576	0,562	0,613	0,825	0,662	0,613	0,517	0,566
PC3	0,650	0,626	0,630	0,843	0,702	0,641	0,588	0,610
PT1	0,722	0,702	0,706	0,606	0,758	0,602	0,455	0,715
PT2	0,638	0,565	0,589	0,595	0,791	0,585	0,498	0,579
PT3	0,548	0,535	0,531	0,759	0,843	0,643	0,683	0,546
RI1	0,580	0,577	0,565	0,627	0,678	0,885	0,567	0,519
RI2	0,642	0,612	0,603	0,660	0,707	0,898	0,621	0,583
RI3	0,648	0,660	0,660	0,627	0,621	0,843	0,530	0,607
S1	0,511	0,520	0,489	0,614	0,621	0,559	0,870	0,564
S2	0,499	0,515	0,493	0,615	0,628	0,586	0,878	0,553
S3	0,481	0,530	0,515	0,573	0,574	0,559	0,854	0,550
TV1	0,744	0,725	0,688	0,585	0,662	0,598	0,457	0,832
TV2	0,625	0,608	0,610	0,515	0,598	0,486	0,542	0,825
TV3	0,635	0,627	0,700	0,578	0,601	0,528	0,608	0,831

Key: Con = Convenience, EXP = Experience, IE = Internal Environment, PC = Preference Comparative, PT = Preference Taste, RI = Re-Patronage Intention, S = Satisfaction and TV = Tenant Variety

variable correlated more strongly with its intended latent variable. The findings illustrated in Table 4 indicate that the measurement model meets all the criteria for convergent and discriminant validity.

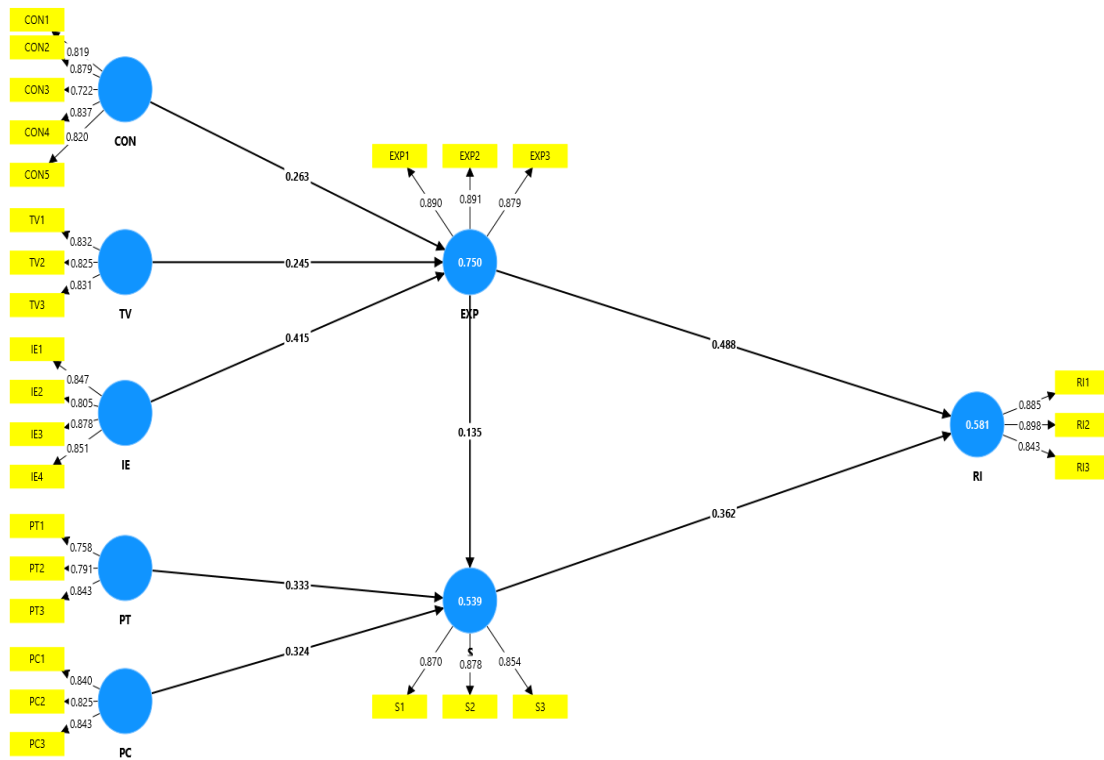
As per Hair et al.'s (2017) guidelines, the next phase involved the assessment of the collinearity issues in the structural model, examining the relationships between the latent variables and assessing the overall adequacy of the structural model.

4.3 Assessment of Collinearity Issues in the Structural Model

Potential collinearity concerns in the structural model were evaluated following the recommendations put forth by Hair et al. (2017). If any high levels of collinearity are observed among the predictor variables, there is a high possibility of skewed estimations, as Kock (2017) advised. Thus, the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) metrics were examined for collinearity concerns. The findings affirmed that collinearity was not an issue, with all Tolerance values surpassing 0.200 and VIF values remaining under 5.000, aligning with the criterion values proposed by Thompson et al. (2017) and Hair et al. (2017). These results signify that the independent constructs within the path model did not display concerning collinearity, thus bolstering the reliability of the ensuing path coefficient estimations.

4.4 Structural Model Assessment (Path Analysis) – Hypotheses Testing

After validating the measurement and structural models, the path analysis was performed to determine the causal relationships between latent variables, as recommended by Henseler et al. (2016). Results from the path analysis revealed both direct and indirect effects among the latent variables, which aligns with the fundamental principles of structural equation modelling (SEM) outlined by Lefcheck (2016) and Hair et al. (2017). The path analysis estimation results, presented in Figure 2, include the estimated path coefficients and factor loadings for each construct. The findings indicate the existence of strong relationships between the variables and a well-fitting model with robust explanatory power.



Key: Con = Convenience, EXP = Experience, IE = Internal Environment, PC = Preference Comparative, PT = Preference Taste, RI = Re-Patronage Intention, S = Satisfaction and TV = Tenant Variety

Table 5 presents a concise summary of the research findings derived from path analysis and hypothesis testing. This table outlines the proposed hypotheses, corresponding path coefficients, t-statistics, and the outcomes of hypothesis testing, confirming that all hypothesised relationships were statistically supported.

The estimated structural path model demonstrates substantial predictive accuracy for the dependent variables. Specifically, the model explains 75% of the variance in shopping mall experience (convenience, tenant variety, and internal environment; $R^2 = 0.750$); 53.9% of the variance in satisfaction (shopping centre experience, preference taste, and preference comparative; $R^2 = 0.539$) and 58.1% of the variance in re-patronage intentions (satisfaction and experience; $R^2 = 0.581$). These results indicate a strong predictive power of the model.

4.5 Assessment of the Model Fit

Following Nitzl et al.'s (2016) guidelines, this study used two metrics to evaluate the model's fit: the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) and the Normed Fit Index (NFI). The results showed that the SRMR value (0.076) met the recommended threshold of less than 0.08, while the NFI value (0.687) fell short of the acceptable level of 0.90. Nevertheless, the model demonstrated a relatively good fit. The global goodness-of-fit (GoF) statistic was calculated using Han and Johnson's (2019) formula to further assess the model's fit, providing additional insight into the model's overall fit.

$$GoF = \sqrt{AVE * R^2}$$

According to Kuo et al. (2020), the recommended threshold for the Global Goodness of Fit (GoF) value is 0.36. The calculated GoF of 0.51 surpassed the recommended threshold, signifying that

the relationships between the latent variables are robust and consistent, suggesting a reasonable overall fit of the study model. Thus, this finding further

validates the research model's validity by demonstrating its ability to accurately capture the underlying relationships between the latent variables.

Table 5. Summary of the Structural Model

Hypothesis		Path Coefficient	T statistics	f-square	R-square
H1	CON -> EXP	0,263	3,504	0,071	0,750
H2	TV -> EXP	0,245	3,879	0,069	
H3	IE -> EXP	0,415	5,798	0,183	
H5	EXP -> S	0,135	2,050	0,018	0,539
H4a	PC -> S	0,324	3,964	0,068	
H4b	PT -> S	0,333	3,744	0,062	
H6	EXP -> RI	0,488	9,498	0,362	0,581
H7	S -> RI	0,362	6,618	0,199	

Note: All hypotheses supported at $p < 0.05$

Key: Con = Convenience, EXP = Experience, IE = Internal Environment, PC = Preference Comparative, PT = Preference Taste, RI = Re-Patronage Intention, S = Satisfaction and TV = Tenant Variety

4.6 Discussions

This study examined the antecedents of shopping centre selection and re-patronage behaviour. The study offered three novel contributions to the existing body of knowledge. Firstly, it shared new insights into how shopping centre customer experiences influence their re-patronage behaviour and selection patterns of in-or-out-of-town shopping centres from South Africa's shopping centre context. The research provides new findings that counter and extend existing theories by investigating the relationship between customer experiences and re-patronage behaviour within the South African context. The study reveals that customer experiences mediate the relationships between convenience, internal environment and tenant variety with consumer satisfaction as well as repurchase intentions towards shopping centres. The study also indicates that customer satisfaction is a multifaceted construct affected by many factors,

including customers' learning behaviour, preferences, and environmental attributes (Shen & Shen, 2021; Laing & Royle, 2013). Customer preferences are a unique environmental factor in the study and a strong interaction between personal and situational factors affecting re-patronage behaviour. The discovery that customers' sense of being in the "right place" (Laing & Royle, 2013) has a high degree of predictability on re-patronage intention suggests that retailers and shopping centre managers have to create immersive, engaging experiences that resonate with the values and expectations of their target market. The findings provided helpful information on how customer satisfaction progresses as customers patronise their preferred shopping centres for various reasons. A better understanding of customer learning behaviour also aids practitioners and centre managers properly forecast customer future patronage behaviour. Being thoughtful of customers' shopping preferences is significant in

forecasting an individual's behaviour (Shen & Shen, 2021). Customer preference is applied as an environmental factor in conjunction with other attributes, especially when customers get a sense of being in the right place (Laing & Royle, 2013), which proved to be a significant examination in the context of this study. Lastly, the study shed light on the underlying psychological processes that influence individuals' experience of shopping centre stimulus and their repatronage intention. The study revealed that cognitive and perceptual processes affect shopping centre customer behaviour. The study explained why and how customers feel inclined to patronise a particular shopping centre.

5. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Firstly, using a convenience sample, the study assessed its hypothesis, concentrating only on physical shopping centre visitors from the southern region of Gauteng province in South Africa.

Consequently, the results of this study cannot be generalised to physical shopping centre customers across the country, and the location must be highlighted as the first limitation of the study. It is suggested that future studies use random sampling techniques and include other provinces of the country and test the model for generalisability of the results. Secondly, a quantitative research setting was employed. Perhaps future studies should consider conducting in-depth interviews with shopping centre customers to explore more specific insights into the antecedents of their centre selection and repatronage behaviour. Lastly, future investigations should concentrate on specific market segments, such as Generation Z or Millennial consumer cohorts, to determine if there are differences in their preferences and patronage behaviour towards in- or out-of-town shopping centres nationwide.

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