

# Consumer Decision-making in the Selection of Shopping Centres around Durban

**Kasthuri Poovalingam**  
**Suleman Docrat**

## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influence the consumers' decision-making process in the selection of shopping centres. The development and expansion of shopping centres means that consumers, in most cases, have an increasing choice of shopping destinations that meet their needs for goods, services and entertainment. It is the competitive retail environment that poses serious threats and opportunities for growth and profitability of shopping centres. The empirical research, which was conducted amongst shoppers at the various centres in the greater Durban area, confirms the significance of the various situational influences, namely, the physical surroundings, the social surroundings, time, task definition and antecedent states as they impact on the shopping centres.

The findings of this study reveal that stakeholders of shopping centres should go beyond the tactical aspects of shopping centre operations and adopt a strategic approach to business, in which customers' needs and competitors' actions are monitored in their quest to obtain preference vis a vis their competitors. The findings of this study are of value to stakeholders such as the tenants, property developers, investors, shopping centre managers and retailers who need to acknowledge the impact of the dynamic aspect of the factors that influence the consumers' decision-making process and their implications for shopping centre development and promotion.

**Keywords:** Factors that influence consumer decision-making, selection of shopping centres, development of shopping centres, shopping centre operations, situational influences on shopping centres, competitive retail

environment, physical surroundings, social surroundings, threats and opportunities for growth of shopping centres.

## **Introduction**

Situational influences are considered to be the predominant factors that affect consumer decision-making in respect of the choice of shopping centres. The key elements of the situational influences are the physical features of the shopping centre which include design and location, the social surroundings which include the ambience and the demographic make-up of the patrons, temporal perspective which includes the time taken to get to the shopping centre, task objectives which includes the purpose for visiting the shopping centre and antecedent states which includes the mood of the shoppers. These key elements of the shopping centre phenomenon have been considered to varying degrees among shopping centre developers, retailers and management, but the extent to which they are significant to the success of the shopping centres has not been adequately researched.

The expansion of shopping centres in the suburban areas of greater Durban suggest that consumers, in most cases, have an increasing choice of shopping destinations that can meet their needs for goods, services and entertainment. Hence, the success of individual shopping centres may depend on their ability to develop a distinctive competitive position that appeals to their target market. With the choices now available to consumers, the issue of the selection and marketing of shopping centres is vital to a variety of stakeholders, especially shopping centre managers, retailers and developers. The 17500 m<sup>2</sup> Protea Garden shopping centre in Soweto had a 700m<sup>2</sup> extension with more fashion and fast-food outlets (the South African Council of Shopping Centres 2009/2010). Gateway Shopping Centre, Chatsworth Shopping Centre, Pavilion, Musgrave, Workshop and La Lucia Mall in KwaZulu-Natal emphasize the competitive nature of shopping centres suggesting that the stakeholders should go beyond the tactical aspects of shopping centre operation and adopt a strategic approach to business, where customers' needs and competitors' actions are monitored in the process of achieving preference.

## **Motivation for the Study**

The competitive retail environment poses serious threats and opportunities for growth and profitability of shopping centres. In addition, suburban shopping centres have undergone a transition from competing with the Central Business District (CBD) to one in which they compete directly with shopping centres of the same type in different suburbs. Despite the dramatic impact that shopping centres have had on modern lifestyles and the physical landscape of cities, research on this phenomenon has been relatively limited (Bloch, Ridgeway & Dawson 1994). This study attempts to fill this gap, by suggesting that customer values should receive further attention from stakeholders, retailers, marketers and managers of shopping centres in an attempt to create a differential advantage for each shopping centre.

## **Problem Statement**

Shopping centres have been established at a rapid pace in South Africa with the prospect of more being established to cater for the needs of consumers in a rapidly growing economy (Cloete 2003). The extent to which these shopping centres cater to the needs of consumers needs to be investigated. Hence, an assessment needs to be made of the factors that influence the consumers' decision-making process in the selection of shopping centres.

## ***Sub-Problems***

To adequately assess the main problem statement, further sub problems need to be addressed as well, such as:

- the impact of the internal and external environment of shopping centres on consumer decision-making;
- the purpose for which consumers visit shopping centres;
- the extent to which consumers are satisfied with the various shopping centres;
- the extent to which consumers' choice and patronage behaviour impact on the shopping centres' marketing strategies to meet their needs and desires;

- the extent to which patronage of shopping centres is dependent on private transportation;
- the extent to which one-stop shopping centres with efficient services contribute to positive experiences for families; and.
- The extent to which males and females prefer the various facilities within the shopping centres.

Flowing from the main problems and the sub-problems the research objectives are stated hereunder.

### **Research Objectives**

The primary objective is to determine what factors influence the consumers' decision-making process in the selection of shopping centres.

Secondary objectives are to:

- investigate how the internal and external environment impacts on the consumers' choice of shopping centres;
- identify the purpose for which consumers visit the various shopping centres;
- determine the extent to which consumers are satisfied with the various shopping centres;
- assess the extent to which consumers' choice and patronage behaviour impacts on the shopping centres' marketing strategies to meet consumer's needs and desires;
- assess the extent to which private transportation impacts on patronage of shopping centres;
- assess the extent to which one-stop shopping centres with efficient service contribute to positive family experiences;
- and assess the extent to which males and females prefer various facilities within the shopping centre.

### **Key Research Questions**

What factors influence the consumer's decision-making ?

## **Subsidiary Research Questions**

- How does the internal and external environment of shopping centres impact on consumers' choice of shopping centres?
- For what purposes do consumers visit the various shopping centres?
- How satisfied are customers with the various shopping centres?
- What marketing strategies are employed to meet consumer's needs and desires?
- How does private transportation impact on patronage of shopping centres?
- How do one-stop shopping centres contribute to family experiences?
- Do males and females differ in their preferences for the various facilities within the shopping centres?

## **Literature Survey**

The shopping centre industry has experienced unprecedented growth over the last 40 years, and that growth is likely to continue, but with many changes in the size, amenities, and tenant mix of individual shopping centres. According to Alexander and Muhlebach (1999:1), over the years, the shopping centre industry has had to overcome recessions, overbuilding, and major shifts in anchor tenants' economic situations and the space requirements as well as the changes in the characteristics of shoppers. In spite of all these challenges, the industry has grown and prospered, as can be seen from a review of how shopping centres evolved to their current position of prominence. As noted by North and Kotze (2004:30), the advent and expansion of planned shopping centres or malls has been one of the major retail revolutions in South Africa over the past 15 – 20 years. From 1980 onwards, suburban shopping centres grew as populations shifted to the suburbs. Life in the suburbs has created a need for shopping facilities which are a short drive from home. Large shopping centres provide huge assortments for consumers. Combining many stores under one roof creates a synergy that attracts more customers than if the stores had separate locations.

Based on the definition by Levy and Weitz (2004:217), Etzel, Walker and Stanton (2003:425) and Markam (1998:81), a shopping centre consists of a planned grouping of retail stores that lease space in a structure

that is designed, developed, owned, marketed and managed as a single unit. Shopping centres are planned with two purposes in mind, namely, a retailing environment for its tenants and for the shopping and entertainment needs of consumers.

According to Cloete (2003:39,83), most of the large shopping centres in South Africa, including the four largest shopping centres, are in Gauteng. Of the shopping centres larger than 20 000 square metres, there are 62 shopping centres in Gauteng, followed by 19 in Western Cape, 17 in KwaZulu-Natal, 7 in Eastern Cape, 8 in Free State, 4 in North West, 2 in Limpopo and 2 in Mpumalanga. Greater Johannesburg has 9 of the fifteen biggest shopping centres in the country (the South African Council of Shopping Centres 2009/2010). South African shopping centres are in many respects similar to shopping centres in the world; there might be some differences especially with regard to the type of key tenants, types of shopping centres, tenant mix and the marketing mix.

Shopping centres have become a very significant phenomenon in the South African economy. The different sizes, areas and environments of shopping centres are presumed to be well-researched and carefully planned to meet the requirements of consumers to the extent that organized centres for shopping and entertainment are a twenty first century phenomenon. As Terblanche (1998: 4) states, since the early 1970s, there has been a remarkable growth in the development of shopping centres in South Africa. The shopping centre industry in South Africa has grown at a rate of  $\pm 8\%$  per annum over a decade, 1989-1999. It has been recorded, in the 2003 Shopping Centre Directory (SAPOA), that there are 850 centres larger than 10 000m<sup>2</sup> and 1 200 centres larger than 3 000 m<sup>2</sup> in South Africa. The location of the shopping centre benefits the communities in many ways. No other property development has a greater impact on a community than a shopping centre. In particular, the shopping centre provides substantial revenue, a variety of employment opportunities, the convenience of one-stop shopping and a testing ground for new businesses.

However, attitudes are changing and new centres are springing up in areas that were not even on the radar five years ago. Target areas are the former townships, and projects are under way in Soweto, Mamelodi, Atteridgeville and Umlazi. According to Dardagan (2006), turnovers are soaring for businesses at Durban's upmarket Umlazi Megacity Mall, as

changing shopping habits have set tills ringing in a buying bonanza. The mall opened earlier this year amid glowing predictions about the success, which have proven to be successful.

Skinner (2007), Executive Director of the South African Council of Shopping Centres, makes a cogent point by acknowledging that in a maturing shopping centre industry, fierce competition is beginning to emerge between major centres, especially in the Cape Peninsula, Northern Durban, Eastern Pretoria and Greater Northern Johannesburg. Skinner says that 'There are four major issues emerging for our industry'. Firstly, due to the oversupply of retail space in the above mentioned markets, shopping centres are facing real competition for the first time, and the primary trading areas of the Regional Shopping Centres are beginning to overlap, which requires a more dynamic approach to marketing. The second concern is that, traditionally, marketing budgets have been dictated by owners and managers and not mutually decided by the Shopping Centre team of management and retailers, resulting in general apathy from anchor, national, and small retailers alike. Marketing has been seen as a necessary evil, only aimed at counter-balancing the marketing efforts of their nearest competitor as opposed to growing the shopping centre business and its market penetration. Bearing in mind that shopping centres are multi-million to billion rand businesses, budgets of 3-5% of gross rental income for marketing is hopelessly out of line with comparably sized businesses in other sectors of the economy, as this only represents some 0,5% to 1% of centre sales (Skinner 2007).

The challenge is to create a new mind-set between management staff of shopping centres and their retailers towards marketing that increases the viability of all of their businesses. The third factor is that a sense of partnership is non-existent in the centres. Relationships are strained as the owners, managers and retailers seem to work against each other, with opposing agendas. Shopping centres such as the V&A Waterfront, Cavendish Square, Constantia Village, Sandton City and Hyde Park Corner that have successfully withstood the test of time have successful Merchant's Associations with a strong sense of this partnership ethos (Anon. 2004). The last concern is that customers are becoming more discerning. Whilst they may still be dependent on some shopping centres for their basic needs, the real challenge for the shopping centre industry is meeting customer wants and emotional desires when shopping. Success in meeting or exceeding these

requirements will result in loyalty to the centre (Anon. 2004:1/2). Understanding the underlying factors influencing consumers' choice and patronage behaviour in shopping centre environments can help marketers, managers and stakeholders of shopping centres define the character of shopping centres and create marketing strategies in ways that serve to enhance shopping centres by meeting basic consumers' needs, wants and desires. Research conducted in Mexico by Rajagopal (2008), revealed that the ambiance, assortment of stores, sales promotions and competitive economic gains within the malls attract higher customer traffic to shopping malls.

According to the Business Day (1998:12) the worldwide trend is to create 'shoppertainment'. This trend entails integrating the shopping experience with dining and entertainment – keeping the consumers happy. Customers want to escape from their daily high–pressured stressful lifestyles and enjoy valuable leisure time. The new shopping centres must include an atmosphere of discovery, novelty and excitement, as well as a wider range of stores and more flexible shopping hours. Some of the newest shopping centres that are moving in this direction are the R3 billion Zonk'lizwe shopping resort in Midrand (incorporating 300 000 m<sup>2</sup> of retail and entertainment space, two hotels and a 16 ha theme park), the R1 billion Gateway complex in Umhlanga on the KwaZulu – Natal and the R560 million redevelopment of Menlyn Park shopping centre in Pretoria.

Research on shopping centres, as situational influences on consumer behaviour and the marketing mix, can generally be described as examining the relationship amongst various shopper characteristics and the features of the retailing or point of purchase situation. Situational influences are studied in terms of flexible/adaptive responses to several situations or events encountered in shopping centres. Research may also indicate which consumer situations present opportunities for new products and services offerings. An inter-relationship among situational factors, behavioural and affective reactions are examined, as is the frequency of event occurrence in shopping centres. Researchers examining situational influences need to specify and develop suitable taxonomic structures for marketers, managers and stakeholders of shopping centres. (Anon. 2004) The answers to the questions are also simple. Does the shopper visit one shopping centre rather than another because of a more pleasant environment, with better garden-

landscapes, parking and better food courts, or because it has a more appropriate selection of shops and merchandise? Or is it merely because it is more convenient or cheaper? Do shoppers simply fall into a few categories? In other words, is it a matter of convenience and price, or price alone, or a leisure experience?

Hence, this study attempts to fill this gap, by suggesting that the consumer's requirements of shopping centres and their evaluation should receive increased attention from marketers, managers and stakeholders of shopping centres.

Consumer dynamics and responses to them by marketers have resulted in various types of shopping centres which are discussed below.

### ***Super Regional Centres***

A super regional shopping centre is a larger version of the regional shopping centre. Alexander and Muhlebach (1999:7) state that it encompasses more than 92 900 square metres, has more than 100 shop tenants and is anchored by at least four full-line department stores. A trade population in excess of 300 000 per year is required to support a super regional shopping centre.

Levy and Weitz (2004:223) state that a super regional centre is a shopping centre that is similar to a regional centre, but because of its larger size, it has more anchor tenants and a deeper selection of merchandise. As with super regional centres, the typical configuration is an enclosed mall, frequently with multi levels of stores. Table 1.1 lists the biggest shopping centres in the world. According to the Guinness Book of Records, the world's largest shopping, amusement, and recreation park is the West Edmonton Mall in Alberta, Canada. It has nearly 4.8308 million square metres of covered space, 3.5302 million square metres of selling space, more than 800 stores and services, and 110 restaurants. However, the mall has more than shopping to attract millions of people a year. The mall also provides the Galaxyland Amusement Park, a seven-acre water park, an NHL-size ice arena, submarines, an exact replica of the Santa Maria ship, a dolphin lagoon, aquarium facilities, Fantasyland Hotel, a miniature golf course, 26 movie theatres and IMAX, and a casino.

Some of the largest shopping centres in the world are indicated in Table 1.1

**Table 1.1 The World’s Largest Shopping Malls**

Name	Location	Gross leasable Space(sq.ft)
West Edmonton Mall	Alberta, Canada	5,200,000
Mall of Asia	Manila, Philippines	5,000,000
Mall of America	Bloomington, MN	4,200,000
SM Prime’s Megamall	Manila, Philippines	3,500,000
Del Amo Fashion Centre	Torrance, CA	3,000,000
South Coast Plaza	Costa Meso, CA	2,700,000
Seacon Square	Thailand	2,700,000
CrystalCourtWoodfield Mall	Schaumburg, IL	2,700,000
The Plaza and the Court at King of Prussia	King of Prussia, PA	2,500,000
Sawgrass Mills	Sunrise, FL	2,300,000

Source: Levy and Weitz (2004:226).

### ***Regional Shopping Centres***

Levy and Weitz (2004:223) define a regional shopping centre as a shopping mall that provides general merchandise (a large percentage of which is apparel) and services in full depth and variety. The regional shopping centre’s main attractions are anchor tenants, department and discount stores. According to Etzel *et al.* (2004:425) the largest kind of shopping centre, such as a regional centre, is anchored by one or more department stores and complemented by many smaller retail outlets. Typically, regional shopping centres are enclosed, climate-controlled and gigantic. The biggest regional shopping centre, in the USA the Mall of America in suburban Minneapolis, opened in 1992. Under one roof, this centre combines over 500 retail stores with an amusement park, two lakes, 50 restaurants and more than a dozen movie theatres-adjacent to 17,000 free parking spaces. This ‘mega mall’ draws over 40 million shoppers and tourists annually. Etzel *et al.* (2004:425) state that many shoppers became too time-conscious to spend much time shopping or socializing at a huge mall. Consequently from the early 1980s to late 1990s, the average amount of time consumers spent in malls on a monthly basis dropped from 12 hours to under 5 hours. The reduction in time

spent at shopping centres presents a challenge to stakeholders, marketers and managers of shopping centres they believe that the reduced period of time reduces the impact of sales in these shopping centres. In order to increase the time spent by consumers at shopping centres, consumer research needs to be conducted on an ongoing basis to determine consumer's needs and wants of products and services that are offered at the shopping centres. Hence, this study will focus on the main regional shopping centres in the Greater Durban Area with respect to consumer patronage and consumer behaviour.

Other centres that have been in existence to cater to the needs of consumers are discussed briefly below.

### ***Community Shopping Centers***

These shopping centres typically are 17 000 m<sup>2</sup>. According to Alexander and Muhlebach (1999:7), these centres usually have three or more anchor tenants from among the following: junior department store, discount department store, supermarket, super drug store, variety store and home improvement centre. The small shops are predominantly occupied by retail, service and speciality food tenants. Most community shopping centres are large open-air strips, although some are developed as enclosed malls. A population base of 100 000 - 150 000 people per year is required for their survival.

### ***Neighbourhood Shopping Centres***

The typical neighbourhood shopping centre ranges in size from 5500 - 16600. m<sup>2</sup>. The centre usually includes at least one anchor tenant but may have two or more. Alexander and Muhlebach (1999:7) note that a supermarket is the most common anchor; alternatives are drug or home improvement stores. The small shop spaces are occupied by a mix of services, speciality food stores, and business or professional (medical, dental, legal) offices. Beginning in the 1980s, retailers, selling soft goods, have been occupying less space in neighbourhood shopping centres than they did in the 1960s and 1970s. Shop space may be leased to fast food or full-service restaurants, banks and service providers. This type of centre can do well with a trade area population of 5 000 - 40 000 people.

### ***Speciality Shopping Centres***

According to Alexander and Muhlebach (1999:8), these centres are also known as theme or festival shopping centres, and they are usually greater than 56 000 m<sup>2</sup>. Often, they are created by the conversion of an existing old building to a new use (adaptive use) although some are new structures, an example being The Workshop in Durban. Many perpetuate an architectural theme suggested by the original use of the building or the location. Speciality centres require a population of more than 150 000 to survive. Such centres are located in tourist-orientated areas that already have a heavy flow of shoppers. Often their main attraction is food outlets, entertainment establishments; smaller shops that are usually one-of-a-kind boutique and speciality stores. Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston and Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco are classic examples of such speciality centres. Faneuil Hall was originally a row of three industrial and public market buildings near the waterfront while Ghirardelli Square had been a chocolate factory.

### ***Convenience (Strip) Shopping Centers***

Alexander and Muhlebach (1999:6) express the view that this type of shopping centre is usually between 500 and 5500 m<sup>2</sup> and is designed as one continuous row of shops (thus the term 'strip' centre). The ideal location is on a corner, since a convenience shopping centre can be located anywhere along the street. Most of the tenants are service or food operations. If there is an anchor tenant, it is usually a well-known convenience grocery store such as 7-Eleven. This type of shopping centre may well be developed throughout multiple business districts in a large city and can be successful with a small population base of 1 000-2 500 people.

### ***Outlet or Off-Price Shopping Centers***

Factory outlet stores sell manufacturers' surplus merchandise or goods, which may be seconds, irregulars or overruns. Off-price retailers sell first-quality brand name merchandise at low prices. They make special bulk purchases and pass the savings to the customer. Off-price and outlet stores are frequently found in the same shopping centre, which can be an open-air

strip or an enclosed mall. These centres are located away from national or traditional retailers; usually in smaller communities, adjacent to a major freeway but within one or two hours' drive from a major metropolitan area or urban area. A population in excess of 150 000 is generally required for their survival (Alexander & Muhlebach 1999:8).

### ***Power Centers***

First developed in 1984, these shopping centres were originally known as promotional centres. According to Alexander and Muhlebach (1999:8), power centres are large strip centres anchored by several large promotional warehouses or speciality stores that dominate their merchandising category. Generally, 75-80 percent of the power centre's area is occupied by anchor tenants. Successful power centres require a population of greater than 150,000 people per year for survival. The success of all of these shopping centres relies substantially on the combination of their marketing mix.

### **The Shopping Centre Marketing Mix**

Wilmshurst and Mackay (2002:109) and Lamb, *et al.* (2004:424) concur that the marketing mix is a unique blend of product, distribution, promotion and pricing strategies within the centre that is designed to produce mutually satisfying exchanges to a target market. Ziethaml and Bitner (2003:26 - 27) suggest an extended marketing mix which recognizes that the people who deliver these offerings are as important as the physical layout and atmosphere within the company.

This definition implies that tangible and intangible elements are inseparable when buying the shopping centre's offerings. The friendliness and dress code of employees of the shopping centre, together with the atmospherics are a vital factor which contributes to the success of the shopping centre and the fulfilment of atmospherics to consumer's satisfaction. These benefits must now be turned into product attributes (Ziethaml & Bitner 2003: 27). The product attributes can be placed into five main categories, namely: a quality level, features or physical characteristics, styling or design, a brand name and packaging. The following major benefits

desired by the consumer in the shopping centre are visibility, accessibility, product and service offerings, entertainment, size of stores, retail mix, critical mass, design and layout, functionality, anchorage, people traffic flows, competitiveness, market research, merchandise profile, tenant mix, packing areas, design and management of services within the shopping centre. Rajagopal (2006) also maintains that the consumer shopping behaviour during leisure is largely driven by the recreational infrastructure as a competitive strategy of retailers whereby individuals experience enjoyment from shopping.

Accessibility is also important at a micro-level-for example, easy walking access from existing shopping areas, public transport stations and car parks. Developers do not, however, always have free choice as to the location, size and form of new shopping centres. At the macro-level, government attitudes towards out-of-town development, the desire of planners to maintain the hierarchy of centres, and the creation of enterprise zones, for example, can have a significant impact on the location of centres. At a macro-level, developers can also be constrained by the availability of land, development control procedures, restrictions on land-use, and requirements to integrate with existing building structures (Guy 1994).

Brassington and Pettitt (2003:546) state that the choice of location is linked to social and demographic changes, such as increase in car ownership, one 'stop' shopping and the rising number of working women with too little time to shop for their families.

According to Barnes (2002:11), shopping centres in South Africa are increasingly utilising the marketing opportunities offered by various kinds of entertainment activities, not only to draw consumers to the centres, but also to build possible long-term relationships. These relationships will become imperative in determining future marketing strategies for shopping centres. Consequently, this empirical study attempts to address these aspects.

## **Research Methodology**

In addition to the literature survey above, an empirical study was undertaken to assess those questions that could not be adequately answered as a result of the secondary study. A structured questionnaire was designed, focussing on eight key variables namely: location, accessibility, visibility, management

and marketing of shopping centres, tenant mix, consumer profiles, shopping centre appearance and the retail mix. The shoppers at shopping centres in the Greater Durban Area represented the sample for a mall intercept survey. A non – probability, quota sample of 475 respondents were drawn from the population in the Greater Durban Area, with filter questions being utilized to ensure respondents complied with the sample frame. The quota sample was drawn from each centre depending on the area and the size of the shopping centre. A minimum of 50 respondents from the smaller shopping centres and a minimum of 75 respondents from the larger shopping centres were chosen.

- The completed questionnaires were then subjected to editing, coding and data capturing, rendering them easier to manage and interpret. The nature of the data, the number of variables and the relationship between the variables were the main considerations in the selection of the appropriate statistical tests, such as descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

## **Data Collection**

Meaningful results were contextualised within the study from 457 of the sample size of 475 respondents from seven shopping centres in the greater Durban Area. The analyses of respondents were aggregated in order to reflect the general position, attitudes and perceptions of shopping centres in the greater Durban Area

The research findings of the relationships are depicted in tables with interpretations thereof. Shoppers visited a combination of shopping centres for shopping and entertainment needs. Hence, the responses indicated in the tables reflect the combined results of visits to the various shopping centres by the same shoppers.

## **Data Analysis**

An overwhelming majority that is 343 (77.3%) of the respondents visited the shopping centres with family, while 101 (22.7%) of the respondents did not, indicating that shopping has increasingly become a family event, with the shopping centres being frequented mostly over week-ends by families.

Shoppers were accompanied by 3 to 4 members on average when they visited the shopping centre with families. Family shopping is more prevalent at the Pavilion and the Gateway Centres than at the other centres in KwaZulu-Natal. The great range of leisure and entertainment facilities leaves no doubt that these centres are designed for families and friends.

The results also reveal the age dispersion of the respondents from the sample: 146 (32.6%) are between 18 – 24 years, 128 (28.6%) are between 25 – 34 years, 125 (27.9%) are between 35 – 49 years, 40 (8.9%) are between 50 – 59 years and 9 (2%) are 60 plus. The majority (89.1%) of the shoppers are between 18 and 49 (young to middle aged). Senior citizens constitute a small proportion of shoppers at shopping centres.

An overwhelming majority of shoppers have at least matriculated with at least 67.9 % having a post matric qualification. Increasing educational levels which have a commensurate increase in income have a major impact on shoppers' lifestyles. The distribution of income shows that only 81 (19.3%) of the respondents earned an income in excess of R10000. The majority 340 (59.8%) of the respondents earned less than R10000.

The results illustrate that a significant proportion of respondents, that is, 166 (36.3 %) visit the shopping centres once a week. Furthermore, 148 respondents (32.4 %) visit the shopping centres as required. The results indicate that 66.5% of the respondents visit the centres at least fortnightly.

The results also suggest that 192 (42.5 %) of the respondents spend 1 – 2 hours at the shopping centres while a further 145 (32.1 %) of the respondents indicated that 3 – 4 hours were spent at the shopping centres, and 88 (19.5 %) of the respondents indicated that they spent more than 4 hours at shopping centres.

While 58 (13.1%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, that distance from home affects their choice of a shopping centre, the majority of the respondents (55.4%) are of the view that the distance from home influences their decision to shop at shopping centres.

According to the results, 329 (72.8 %) of the respondents use private vehicles to travel to shopping centres, while 90 (19.9 %) of the respondents use the taxis to travel to shopping centres suggesting that patronage at shopping centres is highly dependent upon private vehicle usage.

Furthermore, 60 (14%) of the respondents indicated that location is important while 19.9% of the respondents indicated that location was

moderately important, indicating that at least 88.1% consider the location of the shopping centre to be a significant factor in choosing where to shop.

According to the results, 224 (54.5 %) of the respondents stated that easy accessibility to shopping centres is very important, while 108 (26.3%) of the respondents stated that it is moderately important. Since most shopping centres are not on the designated bus routes, other modes of transport determine their accessibility. The results indicate that improved accessibility to shopping centres should be given careful consideration by owners and stakeholders of the shopping centres concerned.

With the increased importance accorded to persons with disabilities in the South African economy, it is acknowledged that various facilities, especially at shopping centres, need to be made accessible to those with disabilities, since they have the resources, the need and the propensity to visit these shopping centres. The results reveal that 154 (41.6%) of the respondents indicated that the facilities for disabled persons at shopping centres are very important when selecting a shopping centre, while 95 (25.7%) of the respondents indicated that these facilities are least important. The access to public places by disabled persons has become mandatory through legislation, but since some shopping centres were designed many years ago, access by disabled persons is still difficult. The frail and the aged who are becoming an increasingly significant population group would also benefit from better access to the facilities for the disabled and the frail who also prefer to visit the centres for leisure purposes since the security risk is perceived to be higher in other public places.

The results show that 182 (44.5 %) of the respondents indicated that the types and designs of shops within the shopping centres are very important, while 111 (27.1%) of the respondents indicated types and designs are moderately important. Patronage at shopping centres is highly dependent upon the types and designs of shops within the shopping centres, since they contribute to the ambience and these determine the convenience or ease with which shopping can be accomplished. Efficient design and layout present an image of the shopping centre which may suggest an upmarket or sophisticated environment and it also promotes free flow of shoppers without congestion at strategic nodes.

**Table 1.2: The Importance of the Types and Designs of Shops within the Shopping Centres**

Importance	Pavilion (%)	Musgrave (%)	Gateway (%)	Sanlam centre (%)	La Lucia (%)	Overport city (%)	Chatsworth centre (%)	Total frequency	Total percent
Least	2.7		1.2	1.2	.5		.2	24	5.9
Slightly	1.5		1.7	.5	.5	.7	2.2	29	7.1
Important	5.4	.7	3.4	.7	1.0	1.7	2.4	63	15.4
Moderately	8.8	1.7	5.4	1.0	3.4	1.2	5.6	111	27.1
Very	15.4	3.7	6.8	2.9	7.6	1.2	6.8	182	44.5
Total	33.7	6.1	18.6	6.4	13.0	4.9	17.4	457	100

The results also reveal that 178 (44.8%) of the respondents stated that the shopping centre image is very important. Prices within shopping centres affect the choice of shopping centres as well since 172 (43.8%) of the respondents indicated that price levels within the shopping centres are very important. Shopping centres with a tenant mix which is perceived as having lower prices are frequented more often by the majority who are price conscious. It emerged from the results that 213 (53.5%) of the respondents consider the merchandise/ product range offered by the different shopping centres as being a draw-card to the shopping centre.

The results show that the majority, 318 (77.8%), of the respondents indicated that security and safety is very important and affect their choice of shopping centres. Security within and around the shopping centres is paramount since it reduces the levels of anxiety of shoppers and it creates a safe environment within which to spend their money. Recently, South African consumers have increasingly witnessed armed robberies of major tenants or have been victims of theft within shopping centres, resulting in an increased sense of anxiety for their safety when visiting the shopping centres.

Although shopping centre management have attempted to implement various measures to increase security, consumers still need to be mindful of the generally high risk that exists in the country as a whole.

The results also reveal the influence of consumer traffic/crowding within shopping centres. Surprisingly, a majority, 214 (53.5%), of the respondents indicated that consumer traffic / crowding is very important to their shopping experiences, presumably because they feel safer in numbers and crowding affirms the image and attraction of the shopping centre.

The prevalence of food courts and restaurants at shopping centres is becoming a necessary feature in most shopping centres, since more consumers are regarding dining as a form of leisure or entertainment rather than just an appeasement of their hunger, especially when they are with friends and family. This is also consistent with the new orientation of the shopper who views the shopping centre as a place for leisure and entertainment in addition to shopping for goods and services.

Friendly staff within the shopping centres are important to 241 (60.1%) of the respondents. Since shopping is often perceived as a leisure activity as well, pleasant staff enhance the experience while unpleasant staff contribute to a frustrating shopping experience.

According to the results, the majority 239 (59.8%) of the respondents indicated that one- stop shopping within the shopping centre is very important while 24 (6%) of respondents stated that it is least important. Patronage at shopping centres is highly dependent upon the concept of one-stop shopping. An overwhelming majority of the respondents, that is, 330 (79.3%) stated that the cleanliness of shopping centres is very important.

The general decline within the CBDs as a result of dirty streets from vendor's offerings has prompted many shoppers to choose shopping centres which have a cleaner appearance and which are managed by the private shopping centre management rather than the municipality. Leisure and entertainment facilities within the shopping centres are important to 236 (58.0%) of the respondents. These facilities are often used by older teenage children and the youth in general whose main purpose for visiting the shopping centre is entertainment and dining rather than shopping, in which their parents engage while they are entertained. Increasingly, adults too are visiting the shopping centres primarily for entertainment at specific times of the day or weekends.

Child-care facilities within shopping centres are considered to be very important to 136 (37.3%) of the respondents. Parents find that they can shop better without having to mind their children throughout their shopping since children tend to be disruptive while parents carry out their purchases. Additional facilities such as information kiosks, and centre court promotions within the shopping centres are very important to 373 (40.5%) of the respondents.

In addition to the descriptive statistics above, inferential statistics produced further results worthy of note. Generally, correlation analysis examines the strength of the identified association between variables. Pearson’s Correlation Matrix indicates the direction, strength and significance of the bivariate relationship among the variables in the study.

The following table presents values of r that correlate (Question 3), that is , the distance from home to the shopping centre and (Question 10.1 – Question 10.12), that is the shopping centre factors considered to be important when selecting a shopping centre.

**Table 1.3: Correlations of Q3 the Distance from Home to the Shopping Centre and Q10 the Shopping Centre Factors Considered to be Important when Selecting a Shopping Centre**

	Q3
Q1 0.1: Location Pearson Correlation	.136*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.005
N	424
Q 10.2: Physical Surroundings Pearson Correlation	.070
Sig.(2-tailed)	.161
N	403
Q 10. Accessibility Pearson Correlation	.060
Sig.(2-tailed)	.225
N	407
Q10.4: Facilities for Disabled Persons Person Correlation	.121*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.021
N	366
Q 10.5: Parking facilities Pearson Correlation	.096
Sig.(2-tailed)	.051

N	411
Q10.6: Types and Designs of shops Pearson Correlation	.010
Sig.(2-tailed)	.847
N	404
Q10.7: Atmosphere / Ambience Pearson Correlation	-.015
Sig. (2-tailed)	.772
N	395
Q10.8: Design and Layout of the shopping centre Pearson Correlation	.040
Sig. (2-tailed)	.429
N	395
Q10.9: Shopping centre image Pearson Correlation	.026
Sig. (2-tailed)	.611
N	393
Q10.10: Promotional events Pearson Correlation	.054
Sig. (2-tailed)	.290
N	383
Q 10.11: Pricing Strategies among Retailers Pearson Correlation	-.009
Sig. (2-tailed)	.862
N	389
Q10.12: Merchandise/ Product range Pearson Correlation	.024
Sig. (2-tailed)	.628
N	394

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

- Since correlation is the measure of the extent to which 2 variables share variation between them, the results of table 1.2 will be explained in this context. Generally, if the correlation coefficient  $r$  is greater than 0.8, the relationship between variables is strong, if it is between 0.4 and 0.8 it is moderate and if it is less than 0.4 the relationship is weak.
- The statements described in detail in Table 1.2 (Q10.1, Q10.4) when correlated with statement Q3, have  $p$  values of 0.005 and 0.021,

respectively. These p values are less than 0.05; they indicate that Q10.1 and Q10.4 when correlated with Q3 are significant. The positive sign in front of Q10.1 and Q10.4 indicates a positive correlation. However, the Pearson product correlation coefficient r values of 0.136 and 0.121 indicate a weak correlation between Q10.1, Q10.4 and Q3.

- The statements Q10.2, Q10.3, Q10.5, Q10.6, Q10.7, Q10.8, Q10.9, Q10.10, Q10.11, and Q10.12 with Q3 have p values which are above 0.05, which indicates that these statements do not have statistically significant correlations with Q3, which is the distance away from the shopping centre.
- Table 1.4 explores the relationship with the rest of the factors as investigated in the study.

**Table 1.4: Correlations of Q3 the Distance from Home to the Shopping Centre and Q10 the Shopping Centre Factors Considered to be Important when Selecting a Shopping Centre**

		Q 3
Q 10.13: Security and safety	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.024 .625 405
Q 10.14: Consumer traffic / Crowding	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.052 .302 394
Q 10.15: Banking Facilities	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.052 .302 394
Q 10.16: Food Court	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.079 .114 400
Q 10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.080 .119 377
Q 10.18: Friendly staff	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.059 .243 396

Q 10.19: Good service	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.006 .902 400
Q 10.20 One stop shopping	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.006 .902 400
Q 10.21: Cleanliness	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.006 .902 400
Q 10.22: Leisure and Entertainment	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.007 .895 401
Q 10.23: Child care facilities	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.009 .059 361

The correlation results for Table 1.4 reveal that:

The statements described in detail in Table 1.3 Q10.13 to Q10.23 when correlated with Q3 have p values, which are above 0.05. Since these p values are greater than 0.05 they indicate that Q10.13, Q10.14, Q10.15, Q10.16, Q10.17, Q10.18, Q10.19, Q10.20, Q10.21, Q10.22, Q10.23 with Q3 do not have statistically significant correlations, that is, the existence of these facilities does not necessarily draw people from great distances away.

**Table 1.5: Q10 the Shopping Factors Considered to be Important when Selecting a Shopping Centre**

**Correlations**

	q10.15	q10.16	q10.17	q10.18	q10.19	q10.20	q10.21	q10.22	q10.23
q10.1 Pearson Correlation	.353*	.185*	.061	.349*	.411*	.260*	.291*	.137*	.126*
Sig. (2-tail)	.000	.000	.238	.000	.000	.000	.000	.006	.017
N	398	399	378	397	398	398	405	399	361
q10.2 Pearson Correlation	.314*	.206*	.119*	.329*	.389*	.256*	.336*	.202*	.185*
Sig. (2-tail)	.000	.000	.022	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	393	392	374	390	388	389	397	391	357
q10.3 Pearson Correlation	.279*	.166*	.023	.284*	.373*	.238*	.268*	.211*	.122*
Sig. (2-tail)	.000	.001	.657	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.022
N	391	390	373	389	389	391	396	392	356
q10.4 Pearson Correlation	.273*	.272*	.344*	.310*	.275*	.184*	.097	.217*	.535*
Sig. (2-tail)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001	.064	.000	.000
N	360	359	349	356	359	354	364	358	343
q10.5 Pearson Correlation	.359*	.231*	.058	.411*	.418*	.277*	.280*	.258*	.187*
Sig. (2-tail)	.000	.000	.265	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	393	395	375	392	393	392	401	397	358
q10.6 Pearson Correlation	.204*	.277*	.171*	.178*	.236*	.177*	.244*	.263*	.240*
Sig. (2-tail)	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	394	393	374	390	391	391	394	391	357
q10.7 Pearson Correlation	.199*	.278*	.165*	.318*	.369*	.259*	.271*	.319*	.226*
Sig. (2-tail)	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	389	387	371	383	384	387	390	384	352

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q10.8 Pearson Correlation	.259*	.285*	.144*	.300*	.356*	.275*	.300*	.321*	.273*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.006	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	383	383	365	379	382	382	386	382	347
q10.9 Pearson Correlation	.298*	.234*	.236*	.312*	.340*	.262*	.275*	.324*	.276*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	385	383	367	380	383	384	389	384	351
q10.1 Pearson Correlation	.205*	.343*	.427*	.297*	.259*	.211*	.200*	.352*	.458*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	379	377	364	373	375	376	381	376	348
q10.1 Pearson Correlation	.211*	.246*	.191*	.398*	.353*	.236*	.272*	.287*	.306*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	381	380	366	376	379	383	388	379	350
q10.1 Pearson Correlation	.319*	.278*	.108*	.352*	.415*	.306*	.315*	.254*	.197*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.039	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	385	384	369	383	385	388	386	383	351
q10.1 Pearson Correlation	.549*	.365*	.033	.505*	.616*	.326*	.639*	.354*	.157*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.521	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.003
N	391	391	373	388	391	388	397	390	355
q10.1 Pearson Correlation	.432*	.349*	.121*	.356*	.314*	.266*	.346*	.198*	.184*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.020	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001
N	386	387	371	383	386	389	391	387	353

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation results in Table 1.5 reveal the following:

- The statement Q10.1: Location when correlated with statements: Q10.15 Banking Facilities, Q10.16: Food Court, Q10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter, Q10.18: Friendly Staffs, Q10.19: Good Service, Q10.20: One Stop Shopping, Q10.21: Cleanliness and Q10.22: Leisure and Entertainment and Q10.23: Child Care Facilities have p values of 0.00. These p values are less than 0.05 which is significant and that Q10.1 is positively correlated with Q10.15, Q10.16, Q10.18, Q10.19, Q10.20, Q10.21, Q10.22, and Q10.23 since the Pearson product correlation coefficient r values are 0.353, 0.185, 0.349, 0.411, 0.260, 0.291, 0.137, 0.126 which indicate moderate and medium correlation between Q10.1 and Q10.15, Q10.16, Q10.18, Q10.19, Q10.20, Q10.21, Q10.22, and Q10.23;
- The statements Q10.17 and Q10.1 have a p value of 0.238. Since the p value is above 0.05, it indicates that Q10.1: Location of the centre is not positively correlated with the Food Court.
- The statement Q10.2: Physical Surroundings when correlated with statements Q10.15: Banking Facilities, Q10.16: Food Court, Q10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter, Q10.18: Friendly Staffs, Q10.19: Good Service, Q10.20: One Stop Shopping, Q10.21: Cleanliness and Q10.22: Leisure and Entertainment and Q10.23: Child Care Facilities have values of 0.000. The p values are less than 0.05. This finding indicates that these variables have a positive correlation. The Pearson product correlation coefficient r values of 0.314, 0.206, 0.119, 0.329, 0.398, 0.256, 0.336, 0.202, and 0.185 indicate moderate and medium correlations between these variables.
- The statement Q10.3 Accessibility when correlated with statements Q10.15: Banking Facilities (p = 0.0000, Q 10.16: Food Court (p = 0.001), Q10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter (p = 0.000), Q10.18: Friendly Staffs (p = 0.000), Q10.19: Good Service (p = 0.000), Q10.20: One Stop Shopping (p = 0.000), Q10.21: Cleanliness (p = 0.000), Q10.22: Leisure and Entertainment (p = 0.000) and Q10.23: Child Care Facilities (p = 0.022) have p values less than 0.05 which indicate that

these variables have a positive correlation. The Pearson product correlation coefficient  $r$  values are 0.279, 0.166, 0.284, 0.373, 0.238, 0.268, 0.211 and 0.122, respectively, which indicate moderate and medium correlation between these variables.

- The statement Q10.4: Facilities for Disabled Person with statements Q10.15: Banking Facilities, Q10.16: Food Court, Q10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter, Q10.18: Friendly Staffs, Q10.19: Good Service, Q10.20: One Stop Shopping, Q10.21: Cleanliness, Q10.22: Leisure and Entertainment and Q10.23; Child Care Facilities have  $p$  values of 0.000. These  $p$  values are less than 0.05; they indicate that these variables have positive correlation. The Pearson product correlation coefficient  $r$  values are 0.273, 0.272, 0.344, 0.310, 0.275, 0.184, 0.217, and 0.535 which indicate moderate and medium correlation between these variables.
- The statement Q10.5: Parking Facilities with statements Q10.15: Banking Facilities, Q10.16: Food Court, Q10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter, Q10.18: Friendly Staffs, Q10.19: Good Service, Q10.20: One Stop Shopping, Q10.21: Cleanliness, Q10.22: Leisure and Entertainment and Q10.23: Child Care Facilities have  $p$  values of 0.000. The  $p$  values are less than 0.05; they indicate that these variables have a positive correlation. The Pearson product correlation coefficient  $r$  values are 0.359, 0.231, 0.411, 0.418, 0.277, 0.280, 0.258, and 0.187 which indicate moderate and medium correlation between these variables.
- The statement Q10.6: Types and Designs of Shops with statements Q10.15; Banking Facilities, Q10.16: Food Court, Q10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter, Q10.18: Friendly Staffs, Q10.19: Good Service, Q10.20; One Stop Shopping, Q10.21: Cleanliness, Q10.22: Leisure and Entertainment and Q10.23 Child Care Facilities has  $p$  value 0.000. The  $p$  value is less than 0.05; it indicates these variables have a positive correlation. The Pearson product correlation coefficient  $r$  values are 0.204, 0.207, 0.171, 0.178, 0.236, 0.171, 0.244, 0.263, 0.240, which indicate moderate and medium correlation between these variables.

- The statement Q 10.7: Atmosphere/Ambience with statements have Q1 0.15; Banking Facilities, Q 10.16: Food Court, Q 10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter, Q10.18: Friendly Staffs, Q 10.19: Good Service, Q 10.20: One Stop Shopping, Q10.21: Cleanliness, Q 10.22: Leisure and Entertainment and Q10.23 Child Care Facilities p have values of 0.000. The p values are less than 0.05, they indicate that these variables have a positive correlation. The Pearson product correlation coefficient r values are 0.199, 0.278, 0.165, 0.318, 0.369, 0.259, 0.271, 0.319, and 0.226 which indicate moderate and medium correlation between variables.
- The statement Q10.8: Design and Layout of the shopping Centre with statements Q10.15: Banking Facilities, Q10.16: Food Court, Q10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter, Q10.18: Friendly Staffs, Q10.19: Good Service, Q10.20: One Stop Shopping, Q10.21: Cleanliness, Q10.22: Leisure and Entertainment and Q10.23; Child Care Facilities have p values of 0.000. The p values are less than 0.05; they indicate that these variables have a positive correlation. The Pearson product correlation coefficient r values are 0.259, 0.285, 0.144, 0.300, 0.356, 0.275, 0.3000.321, 0.273 that indicate moderate and medium correlation between these variables.
- The statement Q10.9: Shopping Centre Image with statements Q10.15: Banking Facilities, Q10.16: Food Court, Q10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter, Q10.18: Friendly Staffs, Q10.19: Good Service, Q10.20: One Stop Shopping, Q10.21: Cleanliness, Q10.22: Leisure and Entertainment and Q10.23 Child Care Facilities p values of 0.000. The p values are less than 0.05; they indicate these variables have a positive correlation. The Pearson product correlation coefficient r values are 0.298, 0.234, 0.236, 0.312, 0.340, 0.262, 0.275, 0.324, and 0.276 which indicate moderate and medium correlation between these variables.
- The statement Q10.10: Promotional Events with statements Q10.15: Banking Facilities, Q10.16: Food Court, Q10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter, Q10.18: Friendly Staffs, Q10.19: Good Service, Q10.20; One Stop Shopping, Q10.21: Cleanliness, Q10.22: Leisure and Entertainment

and Q10.23: Child Care Facilities p values of 0.000. The p values are less than 0.05; they indicate these variables have a positive correlation. The Pearson product correlation coefficient r values are 0.205, 0.343, 0.427, 0.297, 0.259, 0.211, 0.200, 0.352, and 0.458 which indicate moderate and medium correlation between these variables.

- The statement Q10.11: Pricing Strategies among Retailers with statements Q10.15: Banking Facilities, Q10.16: Food Court, Q10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter, Q10.18: Friendly Staffs, Q10.19: Good Service, Q10.20: One Stop Shopping, Q10.21: Cleanliness, Q10.22: Leisure and Entertainment and Q10.23: Child Care Facilities have p values of 0.000. The p values are less than 0.05; indicating that these variables have a positive correlation. The Pearson product correlation coefficient r values are 0.211, 0.246, 0.191, 0.398, 0.353, 0.236, 0.272, 0.287 and 0.306 which indicate moderate and medium correlation between these variables.
- The statement Q10.12: Merchandise/Product Range with statements Q10.15: Banking Facilities, Q10.16: Food Court, Q10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter, Q10.18: Friendly Staffs, Q10.19: Good Service, Q10.20: One Stop Shopping, Q10.21: Cleanliness, Q10.22: Leisure and Entertainment and Q10.23 Child Care Facilities have p values of 0.000. The p values are less than 0.05; it indicates these variables have a positive correlation. The Pearson product correlation coefficient r values are 0.319, 0.278, 0.108, 0.352, 0.415, 0.306, 0.315, 0.254, and 0.197 which indicate moderate and medium correlation between variables.
- The statement Q10.13: Security and Safety with statements Q10.15: Banking Facilities, Q10.16: Food Court, Q10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter, Q10.18: Friendly Staffs, Q10.19: Good Service, Q10.20: One Stop Shopping, Q10.21: Cleanliness, Q10.22: Leisure and Entertainment and Q10.23: Child Care Facilities have p values of 0.000. The p value is less than 0.05; it indicates these variables have a positive correlation. The Pearson product correlation coefficient r values are 0.549, 0.365, 0.505, 0.616, 0.326, 0.639, 0.354, and 0.257 which indicate moderate and medium correlation between variables.

- The statement Q 10.14: Consumer traffic/Crowding with statements Q10.15: Banking Facilities, Q 10.16: Food Court, Q 10.17: Shopping Centre Newsletter, Q 10.18: Friendly Staffs, Q 10.19: Good Service, Q 10.20: One Stop Shopping, Q 10.21: Cleanliness, Q 10.22: Leisure and Entertainment and Q 10.23: Child Care Facilities have p values of 0.000. The p values are less than 0.05; they indicate these variables have a positive correlation. The Pearson product correlation coefficient r values are 0.432, 0.349, 0.121, 0.356, 0.314, 0.266, 0.346, 0.198 and 0.184 which indicate moderate and medium correlation between variables.

The purpose of this study was to advance the understanding of consumer behaviour in shopping centres through an identification of how consumers reacted to several situations, particularly physical surroundings, and the impact of these antecedents on consumer behaviour. A fundamental observation is that shopping centres operate in a competitive environment, and are constantly adapting to the dynamics of the marketing environment in order to ensure competitive sustainable advantages.

A detailed study of the consumer decision-making process is reflected in the identification of the five steps which consumers encounter in the decision-making of the selection of shopping centres. These steps, adapted from Hawkins *et al.* (2004:506), are:

1. Problem recognition where situational influences, namely, physical surroundings and their antecedents, affect the consumers' current situation regarding shopping centres;
2. Information search, where consumers search for and acquire information about the facilities, services and product offerings of different shopping centres, with a view to fulfilling the consumption and purchase situations that exist;
3. Evaluation of alternatives where the information collected by consumers is carefully analysed before a final selection of the shopping centre is made for a shopping and entertainment experience;

4. The Purchase Experience where consumers experience the actual shopping centres' facilities, their tenant mix and product offerings and services together with the promotional activities within the shopping centres; and
5. The Post-purchase evaluation where it is believed that after visiting the shopping centre, the consumer might experience some level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction that requires further action. Marketers, managers and stakeholders of shopping centres must be cognizant of the post - purchase behaviour and consider it as an opportunity to reinforce preference for the shopping centre by dealing with it in a favourable manner in order to generate shopping centre loyalty.

The post- purchase evaluation step can be regarded as the beginning of a new decision – making process. Will the consumer consider re-visiting the shopping centre? This consideration is fundamental in ensuring that consumer loyalty is developed by routine visits to a particular shopping centre. According to Arnould *et al.* (2004:660), consumers are adaptive decision- makers. Consumers use many different strategies for making decisions: some simple, some complex, some based primarily on cognitions and others based more on feelings and emotions. Most consumers, rather than making optimal choices, gain some level of satisfaction by making acceptable choices.

## **Discussion on Critical Questions and Key Findings Based on the Study**

The critical question that was addressed in this study was, what factors influence the consumers' decision-making process in the selection of shopping centres. This is substantially answered in the literature survey as well as the empirical study as follows:

- The essential features considered by shoppers when selecting a shopping centre were one-stop shopping (cited by 59.8%), promotional events (30.8%), pricing strategies among retailers (43.8%), product range (53.5%),

consumer traffic (53.5%), cleanliness (79.3%), types and designs of shops (44.5%).

- The finding reveals that location, accessibility, facilities for the disabled and frail, parking, types and designs of shops, shopping centre image, promotional events, price levels, product range, security and safety, consumer traffic, banking facilities, food courts, staff, service level, one-stop shopping, cleanliness, leisure and entertainment and child care facilities are important factors in the consumers' decision-making process in the selection of shopping centres. Clearly, the 7 p's, that is price, promotion product, place, people, processes and physical layout, or the extended marketing mix, has an impact on the patronage of the various shopping centres.

The subsidiary questions restated here were also answered in the empirical study as follows:

- How does the internal and external environment of shopping centres impact on consumers' choice of shopping centres?  
A consumer's purchase decision and choice of shopping centres are influenced by numerous individuals as well as environmental factors. Some of the individual predispositions which influence the purchase decisions and choice of shopping centres are personal motivation, perception, levels of education, attitudes and personality. Each of these factors is interdependent and each plays a vital role in the ultimate choice of shopping centres. An understanding of these factors as well as the demographic, cultural, technological, economic and security factors are, therefore, required to predict consumer behaviour more accurately, and to then respond to environmental factors to optimally serve the consumer.
- For what purposes do consumers visit the various shopping centres?  
A significant proportion of consumers (42.9%) visit the various shopping centres mainly for shopping, while some consumers (15.9%) visit the various shopping centres for both shopping and entertainment, such as going to the cinema and dining. Therefore, the various shopping centres serve as multiple- purpose- centres for consumers' needs, wants and desires.

- How satisfied are customers with the various shopping centres?

The majority of shoppers are satisfied with the various shopping centres' facilities and product offerings. The provision of fast and efficient service and friendly staff within the shopping centre together with an effective marketing mix or extended marketing mix have resulted in shopping or leisure and entertainment becoming a personally rewarding activity rather than a chore.

- What marketing strategies are employed to meet consumer's needs and desires?

A combination of an optimal marketing mix, shopping centre image and safety and security focussing on the types and designs of shops within the centres, are seemingly the strategies that are used by marketers to meet consumers' needs and desires. It emerged that shopping centres with a tenant mix which is perceived as having lower prices are frequented more often by the majority who are price conscious. It also emerged from the results that 213 (53.5%) of the respondents consider the merchandise/ product range offered by the different shopping centres as being a draw-card to the shopping centre

In addition the shopping centre image contributes to the ambiance and the layout determines the convenience or ease with which shopping can be accomplished. Efficient design and layout present an image of the shopping centre which may suggest an upmarket or sophisticated environment and it may also promote the free flow of shoppers without congestion at strategic nodes.

The results showed that the majority, 318 (77.8%), of the respondents indicated that the security and safety is very important and affects their choice of shopping centres.

- How does private transportation impact on patronage of shopping centres?

The results revealed that patronage of shopping centres was highly dependent on private vehicle usage where consumers predominantly use their own vehicles or use taxis to get to the centres. In South Africa, the absence of a safe and reliable public transport system within the suburban areas makes the dependence on private transport inevitable.

- How do one-stop shopping centres contribute to family experiences? An overwhelming majority of shoppers (77.3%) visited the shopping centres with family predominantly over the weekends. They are accompanied on average by 3-4 family members. The Pavilion Shopping Centre (19.6%) and Gateway (14.3%) were the most popular amongst shoppers in the greater Durban area and were more popular meeting places for family, for recreation and entertainment, than other shopping centres.

- Do males and females differ in their preferences for the various facilities within the shopping centres?

This study showed that males and females do not have different expectations of shopping centres suggesting that marketers can target their efforts at them as a single group rather than as two separate groups of shoppers.

### **Limitations of the Study**

- The research is restricted to suburban regional shopping centres in the greater Durban area and, therefore, the results of the study cannot be generalized to all South African consumers who shop predominantly at other types of shopping centres in different provinces in South Africa.

- The sample represented English-speaking consumers only, since the questionnaire was designed in English and could not elicit the views of those who cannot converse in English.

The following are recommendations based on the findings:

- Shopping centre developers and managers must strive towards an optimum tenant mix, desirable product offerings and services which are key factors for the viability of shopping centres in the competitive shopping centre industry;

- Due to the lack of interest in shopping centre newsletters, creative promotional configurations could add to the attractions of shopping centres as well as other elements of promotion such as public relations, advertising, sponsorships and sales promotion;

- The tenant mix of shopping centres must be reviewed and adapted regularly in order to meet the ever changing needs and wants of modern consumers;
- Shopping centre research must be an on-going process to improve the shopping centre marketing mix and meet the requirements of shopping centre management, stakeholders and consumers; and
- Since consumers expect knowledgeable and professional staff, on-going training for shopping centre staff is vital to establish strong relationships and build customer loyalty.

## **Conclusion**

The success or failure of the shopping centre depends on consumers, the satisfaction of their wants and desires and their willingness to patronize these shopping centres. Hence, it was important to investigate the factors that influence the consumers' decision-making process in the selection of shopping centres. It is the consumer who weighs the advantages and disadvantages of shopping centres as to what they can obtain in terms of the product offering, price and convenience.

Modern 'one stop' shopping centres or lifestyle centres should be planned with the aim of providing for the convenience, needs and wants of shoppers, such that it is possible for patrons to do their shopping in comfort and in a secure environment. Marketers can make shopping and family outings a pleasure by utilizing the shopping centre marketing mix and the entertainment options creatively.

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K. Poovalingam  
School of Management Science  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
South Africa  
[Poovalingam@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Poovalingam@ukzn.ac.za)

S. Docrat  
School of Management Science  
Durban University of Technology  
South Africa