



Generation gap, gender and shopping enjoyment of shopping mall visitors in western province Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Going shopping is a major source of relaxation as well as a daily household chore. However, shopping enjoyment is a burgeoning and rather novel concept, and thus, there is a lack of studies within the cohort, especially with regard to the comparison of the shopping experiences of different generations. This paper explores the nature of shopping enjoyment and measures the impact of the generation gap and gender on visitors' shopping enjoyment in shopping malls, which records a thriving interest.

Design/methodology/approach: In a qualitative survey deploying a convenience sample, 379 usable responses were collected through a self-administered questionnaire from shopping mall visitors in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Data were analyzed using SPSS (21.0).

Findings: Findings of the study indicated that all four generations considered the atmosphere and the environment to be the most important dimensions. Empirical evidence further suggested that Generation Z and Y have the highest enjoyment in their shopping journey within malls compared to other generations, confirming that youth shoppers are the emerging target group for such businesses. Interestingly, it evidenced that shopping is not remaining as a gendered activity anymore, since it is pleasurable for both females and males.

Originality: This paper makes a significant contribution to the field by studying shopping enjoyment as a multi-dimensional construct in relation to four generations while being the first such attempt at studying this phenomenon.

Implications: Findings are useful for retailers to identify target customers and lucrative markets. Further, shopping malls are required to design to provide more experiences and engagements to customers as a space for pleasure, enjoyment, and entertainment.

Keywords: Generation Gap, Shopping Enjoyment, Shopping Malls

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INTRODUCTION

Today, we are living in a world of fashion and shopping (Schrotenboer, 2013). Though Sri Lankan shopping culture was almost non-existent a few decades back, today, it is thriving and becoming ever more popular (Thalgaspitiya and Hettiarachchi, 2018). Despite the pandemic, the shopping culture of the country still thrives under such favorable macro-environment changes as economic development, improvement of infrastructural facilities and technological advancements, a growing middle class and changing consumer behaviour due to Western cultural influences (Arora, 2021; Ranaweera and Halwatura, 2014). Shopping malls are important retail centres that play a vital role within the retail distribution system. Shopping enjoyment has become an area for discussion in relation to all generations, especially with the growth of the fashion retail industry. Consequently, this paper investigates shopping enjoyment among several generations, namely, Baby boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z.

Despite advances in different at-home shopping options, still, for most purposes, 'shopping' remains a physical visit to the shopping site. In point of fact, going shopping can be viewed as an important household chore as well as a source of pleasure and relaxation (Sutha, 2018). Innovations and expansions of commercial shopping mall complexes in Sri Lanka, featuring social and recreational activities as well as traditional shopping venues, have occurred in recent years. A few decades back, when compared to women, Sri Lankan men were less concerned about fashion. However, currently, men are almost as interested in fashionable clothing and accessories as women are (Hart *et al.* 2007).

However, when people are going shopping, not all of them have the same enthusiasm, enjoyment, or positive feeling until the end (Hartney, 2020), which can be highly noticed in Sri Lanka. Though almost everyone shops to some degree, only 6% is thought to have a deep connection with shopping in US (Lejoyeux *et al.* 2011). Thus, the method of engaging in shopping differs from generation to generation, culture to culture and in terms of males and females (Bruzzi and Gibson, 2000; Cortazar and Vela, 2017; Hartney, 2020). Shopping has traditionally been studied from the perspective of consumer behaviour. The impact of different generational variations on shopping enjoyment has not been thoroughly conceptualized and empirically examined in the existing literature (Cortazar and Vela, 2017). Accordingly, shopping could be an exciting activity for some generations while for others it might not be in the Sri Lankan context. Different generations have diverse characteristics and traits, while cultural differences have a significant impact on consumption habits and behaviours (Hartney, 2020). Although a few researchers have studied the shopping scenario in developed countries (e.g., Hart *et al.*, 2007; Tabak *et al.*, 2006), there is a gap in the Sri Lankan context which has not been addressed yet. Hart *et al.* (2007) have also suggested that more studies on shopping enjoyment using different shopper profiles will add value to the context.

The theory of shopping is a great starting point for understanding shopping behaviours, but does not have sufficient provisions concerning how demographics (e.g., gender, age) influences shopping behaviours from different perspectives (Miller, 2013). Thus, this paper aims to address the above-mentioned gaps by concerning how gender and generation gaps influence on shopping enjoyment of shopping mall visitors in Sri Lanka.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Shopping Behavior

Consumer behaviour involves three behavioural activities: shopping, buying, and consuming (Ahmed *et al.*, 2006). Shopping behaviour is grounded on both personal and social motives, and people go shopping because they need attention, need to be among peers, need exercise, or need to be pleurably engaged in their leisure time (Perera and Sutha, 2018; Tauber, 1972). Meanwhile, two fundamental types of shopping have been proposed in the literature; the first category is purposeful shopping, which is described as task-related or rational shopping (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003; Backstrom, 2006), and the other category is shopping for leisure or relaxation purposes, which is generally defined as an activity that customers enjoy as a leisure-time endeavour (Perera and Sutha, 2018). Kang and Johnson (2010, p.71) found that shopping provides a “positive distraction, an escape, an indulgence, an elevation in self-esteem, activation, a sense of control, and a social connection”.

Despite the dichotomy between physical shopping and online shopping, the physical shopping experience is still more popular since hedonistic shoppers are motivated through feelings of happiness, through stress relief and the need to keep up with trends (Evangelista *et al.*, 2019). Robarts (1969) has suggested that shoppers are prejudiced due to educational, employment, religious, social and recreational factors. Furthermore, characteristics like age, gender, income level and location of residence have been identified to be critical in shopping (Theodoridis and Priporas, 2009). As per Otnes and McGrath (2001), women ‘shop to love’ whereas men ‘shop to win’. Specifically, female shoppers look for and expect to have more extraordinary particulars (e.g., fashion). Literature suggests that shopping behaviour is usually characterized by the amount of time spent on shopping, the pleasure derived from shopping, the amount of information searched prior to shopping and the exposure to promotional messages through the media or through in-store sources (Bergadaa and Faure 1995; Evans, 2021; Josiam *et al.*, 2005). Shopping addiction, shopping enjoyment, shoppertainment are some of the emerging discussions in 21st century.

Shopping Enjoyment (Enjoyment of Shopping Experience)

‘Shopping’ has been defined as a trip to purchase consumer needs, as well as a pleasurable and enjoyable activity that often leads to a sensation of ‘joy’ (Jin and Sternquist, 2004). This positive image creates a high level of pleasant feelings among customers and reflects their enjoyment of spending time within the shopping area (Bell, 1999). Moreover, Bell (1999) has argued that liking or interests are stable concepts for capturing consumers’ perceptions of shopping.

Shopping enjoyment is an emotional situation that stimulates a high level of pleasure, satisfaction, and excitement (Dennis et al., 2005). Further, the experience of shopping enjoyment refers to customers’ sense of entertainment, leisure, excitement, fun, and other sensory stimuli experienced while shopping (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003; Kang and Park-Poaps, 2010). In addition, shopping enjoyment has been identified as a consumer’s personality trait, whether that individual find shopping more enjoyable and pleasurable than other consumers do (Odekerken-Schroder et al., 2003; Reynolds and Beatty, 1999). Monsuwe et al. (2004) have signposted shopping enjoyment as appreciating a shopping experience for itself, regardless of any product selection or purchasing that may occur.

Some customers truly enjoy shopping while purchasing products and engaging in hedonic consumption (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003; Kim and Jin, 2001; Reynolds and Beatty, 1999). For these kinds of consumers, shopping is a form of recreation that is one of their favourite leisure activities. They are recreational shoppers who experience several psychological rewards through the shopping process, either in conjunction with or independent of the acquisition of goods and services (Guiry et al., 2006). As per Dennis et al. (2005), enjoyment itself has been reported as a motivation for ‘bricks and mortar shopping’ as opposed to online shopping. Accordingly, shopping enjoyment can be interpreted as customers’ personality trait that relates to shopping, where they identified it as a great source of enjoyable and pleasurable experience. Shopping enjoyment is considered a major driver influencing visits to a shopping mall, while excitement increases consumer satisfaction (Babin and Darden, 1996). Based on the reviewed literature, four traditional dimensions of shopping enjoyment have been identified as accessibility, environmental, atmosphere, and service personnel.

Accessibility

Accessibility comprises the practical and logistical fragments of store location, travel, parking, and pedestrian areas (Dennis *et al.*, 2005; Sit *et al.*, 2003). Generally, it refers to the ease of getting to the shopping centre and departing from it. Accessibility can be categorized as ‘macro accessibility’ and ‘micro accessibility’ (Sit *et al.*, 2003). Macro accessibility concerns the transport alliances from home to the mall, while micro accessibility refers to car parking facilities and the ease of navigation in the shopping mall (Bell, 1999; Frasquet *et al.*, 2001; Sit *et al.*, 2003). Despite generally making shopping centre choices based on the closest location, with the rise in vehicle ownership, customers are willing to travel long distances toward

shopping malls (Dennis *et al.*, 2002; Whyatt, 2004). This suggests that ease of travel to attractive locations plays a crucial role in site selection decisions (Ahmad, 2012; Dennis *et al.*, 2005; Singh and Prashar, 2013).

Environment

The environment is related to consumer responses to the most practical fragments of shopping centre management. The environment can be identified as the cleanliness of the shopping mall, and hours of operation and security, all of which influence customers' shopping decisions (Oppewal and Timmermans, 1999; Sit *et al.*, 2003; Cortazar and Vela, 2017). The physical retail environment induces perceptions, and impacts shopping enjoyment and the decision to return (Cortazar and Vela, 2017; Singh and Prashar, 2013). As per Park (2016), some people visit shopping centres since they like to enjoy their environment. Keeping public spaces clean and tidy through the proper maintenance of streets, corridors, and buildings are essential to customers' perceptions of the user-friendliness of the shopping experience (Oppewal and Timmermans, 1999). Most often, local authorities determine the business hours of a mall, much more so than they do individual retail stores (McGoldrick, 2002).

Atmosphere

One reason for people to visit a shopping mall is to enjoy its atmosphere (Park, 2016). The atmosphere can be either interior factors or layout (Tabak *et al.*, 2006). In the shopping mall context, the atmosphere refers to the visual appeal of the architecture of the mall and its shop windows, and the availability of a variety of shops, cafes and restaurants that have the probability of generating repatriation (Sit *et al.*, 2003; Warnaby and Medway, 2004). The image or the psychological experience a customer has when visiting a retailer is heavily influenced by the store's 'atmosphere' (Tabak *et al.*, 2006). In a shopping mall, the atmosphere should lie in the aesthetic appeal, such as the visual appearance of the architecture and the range of stores or the mix of tenants (Ahmad, 2012; Banerjee, 2012; Leo and Philippe, 2002).

Service Personnel

Service marketing and retail studies have identified that the attitudes of service personnel play a significant role in influencing the buying decisions of customers and their positive or negative feelings related to the store (Bitner 1992; McGoldrick, 2002). Employee attitudes and behaviours can have a favourable and persuasive effect on customers' emotions, satisfaction, quality perceptions, purchase decisions and finally, on the decision to return (Baker *et al.*, 2002; Sujo and Bharati, 2012). User-friendliness, knowledge of the goods sold, ability to give advice, respect

and responsiveness without being insistent are the qualities of excellent customer service (Darian *et al.*, 2001; Leo and Philippe, 2002).

Generation Gap

The ‘generation gap’ means the changes that can be seen between associates of distinct age groups. Though the classification of different generations according to a time span is inconsistent, most behavioural sociologists have suggested that each generation lasts for around two decades, and that it fades subsequently into another generation (Schaeffer, 2000). Several scholars have examined differences in inter-generational sets of values and behaviours (Table 1).

Table 1: Outline of the generations

Generation	Other Names	Birth Year	Age as at 2021	Characteristics
Baby Boomers	Leading-edge and Trailing-edge Boomers	1946 - 1964	57 - 75 years	Environmental concerns, freedom, optimism, personal gratification, collectivist ideology At a young age (1960-1985) fashion and music: cheery, colourful, sexy, lively
Generation X	Baby Bust Gen, The Thirteenth	1965 - 1980	41 - 56 years	Technophile, informality, diversity, reactionism, materialistic, competitive, individualistic At a young age (1980-2000) fashion and music: bold, anarchic, anti-establishment
Generation Y	Millennials, Nexters, Baby Boom Echo	1981 - 1996	25 - 40 years	Confidence, optimism, Social causes, achievement, self-oriented, interest in festivals and travel At a young age (1995 to date) fashion and music: driven by technology and social networking, and popularity
Generation Z	iGeneration, Gen Tech, Net Gen, Internet Gen, Digital Natives, Neo-Digital Natives, Gen Wii, Homeland	1997 - 2012	09 - 24 years	Digital natives, mobility and multiple realities, social networks, uniqueness, ethical

Generation,
Centennials

Source: Dwyer, (2009); Francis and Hoefel (2018); Priporas *et al.* (2017); Ting and Run, (2015); Verma (2017)

Baby boomers are the individuals who were born between 1946-1964 (Littrell *et al.*, 2005; Rahulan *et al.*, 2015; Reisenwitz and Iyer, 2009). Their life experiences, attitudes, and behaviours were entirely different from those of younger generations (Dwyer, 2009). Generation X individuals were born between 1965 and 1976 (Barber *et al.*, 2008). Like Baby Boomers, Generation X was born in a time of “great social, economic and environmental changes” (Barber *et al.*, 2008: p. 129), as well as emerging advancements in information communication technology (Olsen *et al.*, 2007). According to Barber *et al.* (2008), Generation X people have significant knowledge of different forms of media and advertising, and thus, Generation X’ers are unlikely to be persuaded by sensationalist tactics.

Generation Y individuals place a considerable value on education (Dunne and Lusch, 2008; Strauss, El-Ansary and Frost, 2006). Compared to the two earlier generations, these individuals are more likely to complete high school and are primarily driven by the demands of the modern knowledge-based economy (Rahulan, 2015). Generation Z’ers are the young adults born between 1997 and 2012 (Bassiouni and Hackley, 2014; Fister, 2015). They are highly educated, technologically savvy, innovative and creative (Priporas *et al.*, 2017). Generation Z’ers are the earliest people born in a digital world that lives online and integrates virtually (Bernstein, 2015). Generation Z is probably a challenge because they behave differently from former generations; thus, their consumer behaviour patterns also appear unique (Schlossberg, 2016).

Theoretical Background

The arguments of Stimulating Consumer Behaviour Theory and the Theory of Shopping have been used to form the concept of ‘shopping enjoyment.’ Each person has a unique level of stimulation that he/she requires. Pleasure/enjoyment is felt when stimulation is at its peak (Luomala, 1998). Conversely, boredom is experienced when stimulation is significantly below the optimal level (Boedecker, 1995). However, mood-altering shopping habits have received little academic attention (Luomala, 1998).

It is a common misconception that shopping is primarily individualistic and materialistic. The Theory of Shopping refutes this assumption, arguing that purchasing goods is closely linked to other social relations, especially those based on love and care (Miller, 2013). It is primarily a theory of how the vast majority of shopping, referred to as routine provisioning, was done mainly by housewives. According to this theory, shopping can be viewed as a devotional rite. However, there

are several aspects of shopping that have not been well-addressed. Though the theory suggests an essential aspect of gender that is foundational to this practice, it does not attempt to address how demographics (e.g., gender, age) influences shopping behaviours from different perspectives (Miller, 2013).

According to Gender Role Theory, males and females are expected to play distinctive social roles (e.g., working outside the home, caring for children) (Hicks, 2008). These roles are regarded as distinct and functional. Gender role theory argues that according to the social roles performed by males and females, their behaviours and attitudes are formed (Shimanoff, 2009). This theory also claims that men and women take different approaches when it comes to the concept of socialization (Severiens and Dam, 1998).

The generational cohort theory groups people born in specific years in order to predict how they are likely to behave based on shared values and experiences (Saeed and Azmi, 2018; Schewe and Meredith, 2004). Thus, a 'cohort' is a group of people born at roughly the same time, who go through life together and hence have similar experiences in their adolescence and early adult years (Rahulan *et al.*, 2014). Cole *et al.* (2008) argued that the long-term influence of events on people who were born at specific times would remain throughout their lives. These cohort experiences shape and reshape their values, attitudes, tastes, expectations, and purchasing habits, and these will be reflected throughout their lifetime, forming a generational identity (Jackson *et al.*, 2011; Schewe and Meredith, 2004). Therefore, understanding each generation's beliefs and motives has become critical in targeting specific consumers, since these consumers have their own beliefs on the lifestyles that they aspire to (Smith and Clurman, 2010; Rahulan *et al.*, 2014). Accordingly, based on the above underpinning theories, shopping enjoyment is in focus to examine generation gaps and gender.

Hypotheses development

Shopping Enjoyment

Sri Lankans usually go shopping not only to purchase goods and services but also for fun (Sutha, 2018). The shopping mall experience is the effect of gaining and processing stimulation gained through shopping mall visits (Tabak *et al.*, 2006). Young shoppers generally have a high level of enjoyment when shopping (Goldsmith *et al.*, 1993; Kang and Park-Poaps, 2010). Further, according to Hart *et al.* (2007), shopping experiences were reported to be at a significantly high level across five counties in the United Kingdom. Considering the Sri Lankan context, leisure shopping behaviour exists at a significant level, where the majority shop at shopping malls as a form of relaxation (Sutha, 2018). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is advanced:

H1: The level of enjoyment of the shopping mall experience in the Western Province of Sri Lanka is at a high level.

Generations and Shopping Enjoyment

Shopping enjoyment has become an exciting activity among all generations. However, different age groups have different motivations, practices and behaviours regarding shopping based on their generational characteristics (Tabak *et al.*, 2006). Young consumers have high levels of shopping enjoyment, and they form a prominent customer base by accounting for a considerable size of the shopping community, having a good standard of living combined with high spending power (Goldsmith *et al.*, 1993; Kang and Park-Poaps, 2010). Most of the time, youngsters are the trendsetters (Wolburg and Pokrywczynski, 2001). In fact, they show a tendency for lifetime loyalty, susceptibility to new products and a potential influencing power (Wolburg and Pokrywczynski, 2001). This group of shoppers resembles the rapid change in consumption patterns in terms of taste and spending styles prevalent in society (Wong *et al.*, 2012). Teens love spending time at shopping malls with their social and material attractions (Palan and Mallalieu, 2012), and they perceive their shopping practices at malls as a social experience (Tabak *et al.*, 2006; Taylor and Cosenza, 2002). On the other hand, Generation X has a reputation for being incredibly disloyal to brands and companies (Williams, 2005). Generation X likes to search while shopping online, and they read more reviews and visit more opinion sites than any other generation (Peralta, 2015).

It is noteworthy that Generation Y has developed a different shopping style than other generations (Bakewell and Vincent, 2003). Thus, the Generation Y community is showing more frequent and impulse purchasing patterns than previous generations. They usually need things that match with their personalities and lifestyles (Caplan, 2005). In contrast, according to Phillips (2007), Generation Y individuals consider themselves to be rational consumers to whom price and product features are more imperative than brand names. Further, some significant differences exist among the Baby Boomer generation regarding store selection (Evangelista *et al.*, 2019; Parment, 2013). Baby Boomers were shown to be more confident in their purchase decisions and spent significantly less time making them (Rahulan *et al.*, 2015). According to Jackson *et al.* (2011), generational differences in attitude toward mall hygiene factors, location convenience and entertainment features do exist. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is advanced:

H2: The enjoyment of the shopping mall experience varies among different generations

Gender and Shopping Enjoyment

Shopping has been identified as a gendered activity in the literature (Tabak *et al.*, 2006). Researchers have reported gender differences in shopping preferences and behaviour for years, emphasizing that men's and women's shopping behaviour differs on many levels, for example, the manner in which they process information (Peter *et al.*, 1999). Women go shopping to browse around and see what they can find, whereas

men go shopping to meet their needs, and many men consider shopping a chore (Mortimer and Clarke, 2011). According to available research on shopping behaviour, women are primarily the ones who go shopping, and shopping is classified as a “female typed” task (South and Spitze, 1994).

According to Matthews *et al.* (2005), shopping malls are places where boys and girls can come together and socialize in a secure environment. Haytko and Baker (2004) identified in their study that young girls’ shopping mall experiences revealed several new factors particularly relevant to female shoppers. Five image attributes of shopping centres were found to influence girls’ perceptions of their experiences, namely, comfort, safety, retail mix, accessibility, and atmosphere (Haytko and Baker, 2004). Erkip (2005) discovered a positive relationship between gender and liking shopping activities. Men and women were found to have different mall involvement behaviours (Khare, 2012). However, in contrast, Hart *et al.* (2007) found that men have a stronger enjoyment-to-re-patronage relationship than women. Considering the Sri Lankan context, women were found to visit shopping malls more often than men (Sutha, 2018). In this study, gender refers to biological gender rather than a particular gender role or gender identity. Thus, the following hypothesis is advanced:

H3: There is a significant difference between males and females with respect to the enjoyment of the shopping mall experience.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative methodology was employed to test the hypotheses under the deductive approach, whereas a cross-sectional survey was used to obtain primary data (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Data were collected in a non-contrived setting with minimal researcher interference (Sekaran, 2006). The target population was considered as all male and female shoppers with purchasing power living in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. By reviewing the respective literature, the sample size was considered as 420 (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970; Perera and Sutha, 2018; Hart *et al.*, 2007). Data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire, based on the convenience sampling method. Dimensions of shopping enjoyment were operationalized based on the studies of Hart *et al.* (2007), Wakefield and Baker (1998), and Oppewal and Timmermans, (1999). Altogether, 27 items for accessibility (05), atmosphere (11), environment (05), and service personnel (06) were measured using a Five point Likert scale anchored as ‘Strongly Disagree’ (1), ‘Disagree’ (2), ‘Neither agree nor disagree/Neutral’ (3), ‘Agree’ (4) and ‘Strongly Agree’ (5) was used for this study (Table 2).

After ensuring the initial reliability of the instrument through a pilot survey, the questionnaire was distributed among the respondents. A total of 420 questionnaires were distributed, and 385 were received, generating a 90% response rate. The response rate was considered adequate for further analysis since it was over 80% (Gall *et al.*, 1996). After the initial screening, 6 cases were omitted due to missing values

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and 379 usable questionnaires were proceeded for analysis, and it was carried out via the SPSS (21) statistical package.

Table 2: Operationalization

Construct	Dimension	Indicators	Measurements	
Shopping Enjoyment	Accessibility	The location of shopping mall is convenient (distance from home/work, public transportation, access roads etc)	Five-point Likert scale 1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree	
		There is adequate parking		
		It is easy to find the entrances and exits of the shop		
		Pedestrianized areas make it easy to get to move around		
			Travelling to shopping mall is easy and straight forward	
	Atmosphere		The building/architecture looks attractive	Five-point Likert scale 1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
			Lighting and temperature of the shopping mall are appropriate and comfortable	
			The shopping mall plays pleasant background music at an appropriate volume.	
			Interior wall, floor color and decorations are attractive and fashionable	
			The overall atmosphere makes shopping enjoyable	
There is a good selection of cafes and restaurants				
There is an excellent variety of products				
The window displays are attractive				
Layout of the shops makes it easy to get to the section you want and easy to get around				
The layout makes it easy to get to the food areas and to the restrooms				
Maintenance of the buildings and window displays are excellent				
Environment		The shopping area looks clean and tidy	Five-point Likert scale	

	Shopping hours are convenient	1-Strongly Disagree
	Safety of my vehicle, my belongings and me in car park, within the shop, fit-on rooms and restrooms are at high	2-Disagree
	It feels like a safe and secure place to shop	3-Neutral
	enjoy spending time at the shopping mall	4-Agree
Personal Service	The service of the shopping mall is good	5-Strongly Agree
	Staff in the shops are helpful and friendly	Five-point Likert scale
	Staff in the shops are having positive attitudes and responsive	1-Strongly Disagree
	Knowledge of staff regarding the selling products are high	2-Disagree
	Employees are wearing neat and clean uniforms	3-Neutral
	Assistance, courtesy and prompt service of staff are high	4-Agree
		5-Strongly Agree

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity measures are summarized in Table 3. “Internal consistency reliability is used to assess the reliability of a summated scale where several items are summed to form a total score” (Malhotra and Birks, 2006: p. 313). As Table 3 depicts, the Cronbach’s Alpha values of the independent variables were greater than 0.7. This assures the reliability of the measurement scales. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) value of four dimensions were greater than 0.5 and all the Sig values of the Bartlett’s test of Sphericity were less than 0.05 threshold level. Although the average variance extracted (AVE) for one variable was less than the criterion rule of 0.5, Fornell and Larcker (1981) argue that if the composite reliability (CR) statistic of a variable is more than 0.6, convergent validity of that respect can be confirmed. Discriminant validity was established through a comparison of the AVE of a certain latent variable with the squared correlation values of the other variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Values in bold colour through the diagonal represent the respective AVE values, where all were less than respective squared correlation values. Therefore, the reliability and validity of the scale were established.

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Table 3: Reliability and validity

	N	Reliability	Convergent validity				Discriminant validity			
			Cronbach's Alpha value	KMO	BTS (sig)	AVE	CR	Accessibility	Atmosphere	Environment
Accessibility	5	0.801	0.715	0.000	0.613	0.863	0.613			
Atmosphere	11	0.968	0.765	0.000	0.736	0.872	0.087	0.736		
Environment	5	0.891	0.676	0.000	0.565	0.876	0.093	0.031	0.565	
Service personnel	6	0.897	0.603	0.000	0.476	0.798	0.010	0.109	0.017	0.476

FINDINGS

Demographic Analysis

Respondents' demographic profiles are summarized in Table 4. Among the 379 respondents, 163 were male and 216 were female. The majority belonged to Gen Y (43.5%) and 20.3% were Generation Z. The number of unmarried respondents was larger than married respondents in the sample. The majority had studied up to the A/L (34.8%), and around 70% of respondents belonged to the Rs.60,000-100,000 and the above Rs.100,000 income categories, which underlined that most respondents have a considerable disposable income. However, some respondents have marked their own income level while full-time students and housewives have marked their parents'/ spouses' income level in response to this question.

Table 4: Summary of demographic statistics of respondents

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	163	43.0
	Female	216	57.0
Age	09 - 24 (Gen Z)	77	20.3
	25 - 40 (Gen Y)	165	43.5
	41 - 56 (Gen X)	76	20.1
	57 - 75 (baby boomers)	61	16.1
Marital Status	Married	179	47.2
	Unmarried	193	50.9
	Other	7	1.8

Education level	Up to O/L	4	1.1
	Up to A/L	132	34.8
	Degree	102	26.9
	Above Degree	111	29.3
	Other professional qualifications	30	7.9
Income level	Below 30,000	22	5.8
	30,000-60,000	99	26.1
	60,000-100,000	121	31.9
	Above 100,000	137	36.1

Common method bias and non-responsive bias

Some statistical techniques have been used to eradicate the common method bias and non-responsive bias of the data collection. Harman's Single Factor test was performed to check the common method bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012), where cumulative variance explained by all factors as 31.91%, which is less than 50%. According to Armstrong and Overton (1977), the non-responsive bias of the sample can be determined by statistically comparing early responses and late responses. Thus, One-Way ANOVA test was carried out to compare the responses of early (1 to 189) and late (190 to 378) responses. The corresponding p-value is 0.647, which is above the 0.05 and hence, it can be concluded that the data is free from common method and non-response biases.

Hypotheses testing

The Level of Enjoyment of the Shopping Mall Experience

One Sample t-Test analysis was used to identify the degree of enjoyment of the shopping mall experience. A common mean value was computed by representing all the dimensions of shopping enjoyment. A scale was developed by the authors in assessing the level of shopping enjoyment based on the mean value; 1.00 – 2.5: lower level, 2.6 – 3.5: moderate level, and 3.6 – 5.00: high level.

Table 5: Results of one-sample test

	T	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Interval	Confidence of the
				Difference	Difference
				Lower	Upper
Shopping enjoyment mean	159.714	.000	3.839	3.79	3.89

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It was hypothesized that the enjoyment of the shopping mall experience was at a high level, since it greater than the common mean of five-point likert scale. According to the results depicted in Table 5, H1 was supported ($P < 0.05$) at a 95% confidence level.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Shopping enjoyment	378	3.84	.468

Since shopping enjoyment was measured using a five-point Likert scale, a mean value above 3 is considered 'satisfactory'. Thus, according to Table 6, the enjoyment of the shopping mall experience of the respondents was at a high level, since the mean value is 3.84

Enjoyment of the Shopping Mall Experience and Generations

Table 7: Results of the one-way ANOVA test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.930	3	1.977	9.646	.000
Within Groups	76.840	375	.205		
Total	82.770	378			

The one-way ANOVA test was performed and accordingly, H2 was accepted ($P < 0.05$), concluding that the enjoyment of the shopping mall experience varies among different age groups in the Western province of Sri Lanka (Table 7). According to the multiple comparisons, shopping enjoyment varies when going from Generation Z to Generation Y, from Generation Y to Generation X and from Generation X to Baby boomers.

Further, descriptive analysis (Table 8) showed that the highest mean value of shopping enjoyment was shown by Generation Z (4.02), followed by Generation Y (3.99). Interestingly, Baby Boomers have a higher value (3.97) than does Generation X (3.90). All four generations have shopping enjoyment mean values greater than 3, emphasizing that all generations have recorded a high level of enjoyment when shopping.

Table 8: Shopping enjoyment as generations

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
SEmean (Generation Z)	77	4.0212	.09160
SEmean (Generation Y)	165	3.9910	.66208

SEmean (Generation X)	76	3.9055	.41236
SEmean (Baby Boomers)	61	3.9739	.09662

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Table 9: Results of independent sample test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.173	.678	.772	.014	.049	-.081	.110
Equal variances not assumed			.771	.014	.048	-.081	.109

Table 9 depicts the results of the independent sample t-test. Since Levene's test value is 0.678 ($P > 0.05$), based on the equal variance assumed value ($P > 0.05$), the hypothesized gender difference related to shopping enjoyment was not supported. Therefore, H3 was rejected due to the lack of a statistically significant difference between males and females related to the enjoyment of the shopping mall experience in the Western Province of Sri Lanka.

Salient Dimension of Shopping Enjoyment

Comparing mean values (Table 10), it can be seen that the mean for 'Atmosphere' is the highest and the mean for 'Environment' is the second highest. Service personnel took third place in the rankings. Accordingly, the salient dimension that influences shopping enjoyment is the atmosphere of the shopping mall. This finding was further confirmed by factor analysis results, where 23.99% variance was represented by the salient dimension. In the rotated component matrix, all eleven items of the atmosphere were loaded into the first column by representing it as the predominant dimension of shopping enjoyment.

Table 10: Mean summary

	Accessibilit y mean	Atmosph ere mean	Environmen t mean	Persona l mean	servic e
Generation Z	3.9091	4.1452	3.9532	3.9437	
Generation Y	3.6997	3.7200	3.7321	3.6616	
Generation X	3.7789	4.0156	3.8605	3.8465	
Baby Boomers	3.8262	3.9941	4.0000	4.0000	

According to another set of statistics (Table 11), atmosphere plays a prominent role in the shopping enjoyment of Generation Z, while in Generation Y, environment is followed by the atmosphere as the more prominent dimensions. For Generation X, atmosphere and environment are the first and the second on the list. In contrast, for Baby Boomers, environment and service personnel have both rated as the most influential dimensions, whereas accessibility is the least influential dimension. Therefore, considering the overall result, the dimensions of atmosphere and environment take the most prominent place in the four generations, and accessibility is the least influential. However, Generation X and Generation Z have similar ranking orders while the other generations are different from each other.

Table 11: Summary of mean values for dimensions on generation basis

	ACmean	ATmean	ENmean	PSmean
Mean	3.79	3.91	3.85	3.81
Rank	4	1	2	3

DISCUSSIONS

This study aimed to investigate the associations between the generation gap and gender and the enjoyment of the shopping mall experience. It was evidenced that global shopping practices, even in the Sri Lankan context, are proliferating. The method in which shopping is done differs from generation to generation and from culture to culture.

When compared to females, Sri Lankan males were not as enthusiastic about shopping a few decades ago. However, according to the study findings, currently, both males and females are interested in shopping and enjoy their shopping journey irrespective of gender. This is a contradiction with respect to the literature (e.g., Dholakia, 1999;

Khare, 2012; Tabak *et al.*, 2006) which has established that females are more interested and involved in shopping as a pleasurable activity than males are. The result further contrasts with those of previous Sri Lankan studies, which demonstrated that relaxation induced by shopping was associated with females rather than males, while female shoppers were supposed to visit shopping malls at a higher rate than male customers. (Perera and Sutha, 2018; Sutha 2018).

Despite the dichotomy between physical shopping and online shopping, the physical shopping experience is still more popular since hedonistic shoppers are motivated through the feeling of happiness, stress relief and the desire to keep up with trends (Evangelista *et al.*, 2019). Going shopping is considered a pleasurable activity by all four generations. This result is incompatible with the finding of Dholakia, (1999), which describes shopping as a pleasure-less activity.

Furthermore, the youth market is recognized for having distinctive characteristics. The highest shopping enjoyment is recorded for Generation Z, followed by Generation Y, which confirms that young consumers enjoy their shopping experience at malls highly (Goldsmith *et al.*, 1993, Kang and Park-Poaps, 2010). Marketers can identify young shoppers as the most profitable and attractive target market group for shopping malls. Thus, shopping malls can be built with a higher proximity to crowds (Zafar *et al.*, 2007). Generation Y's are likely to have developed a different shopping style compared with others (Bakewell and Vincent, 2003), and make more frequent and more impulsive purchases than Generation X. According to Rahulan *et al.* (2015), the Gen Y group takes a long time to make purchase decisions, which will result in more involvement and pleasure for them. When customers spend more time at shopping malls, the event tends to generate increased purchasing (Palan and Mallalieu, 2012), and this will be beneficial for retailers and mall operators.

However, it is interesting that Baby Boomers have a considerably higher level of shopping enjoyment during their shopping mall experience than Generation X does. This could be because most Baby Boomers are free from family responsibilities than Generation X individuals are, and so, more mentally relaxed to enjoy their shopping journey. Though there are some significant differences among dimensions, this confirms the findings of Evangelista *et al.* (2019). Williams (2005) argued that Generation X, is looking for customer convenience, and is incredibly disloyal to brands and companies. As the findings, it can be further considered that they are less enjoying their shopping experience. Moreover, since Gen X's are the ones with present family responsibilities, they would often choose value-oriented retailers and prefer to search while shopping online (Koufaris *et al.*, 2002; Peralta, 2015). This could be the primary reason for their relative lack of enjoyment of the physical shopping experience at malls.

Considering shopping enjoyment dimensions, the atmosphere of the shopping malls such as the architecture of the building, lighting and temperature, interior and exterior design, cafes and restaurants are the predominant concerns of shoppers. However, service personnel has been identified as the salient dimension in previous studies (Hart *et al.*, 2007). This could be due to cultural and behavioural differences among different nations. Environment plays the second most prominent role in shopping

enjoyment. This confirms the argument of Park (2016), that people visit shopping centers not merely to carry out household chores but also to enjoy the malls' atmosphere and environment. Shopping mall operators need to explore ways in which to be innovative, offer new experiences from time to time, and manage the atmosphere and environment of the mall so that they attract customers. Although the other three generations have found 'service personnel' least important, for Baby Boomers, it plays a prominent role. This might be because Baby Boomers have less technical experience and require others' assistance, which they highly appreciate. This finding contrasts with those of Ibrahim and Wee (2002) and Wakefield and Baker (1998). The current results show that the accessibility and location of the mall do not influence the mall selection of all four generations. Therefore, if shopping centres provide a source of pleasure for visitors, despite their accessibility, all generations will visit them.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This research contributes to the existing literature in different ways, primarily by providing a solid foundation for consumer purchasing behaviour. Although several studies have focused on shopping behaviours, only a handful have focused specifically on shopping enjoyment related to shopping malls. This paper provides an understanding of the shopping behaviour of different generations and the influence of gender on shopping enjoyment by filling the dearth in extant knowledge in this respect. The concept of shopping enjoyment originated through addressing certain lacunas in consumer behaviour theory and the theory of shopping, particularly demographic influences (e.g., gender, age). Thus, based on the arguments of the gender role theory and the generational cohort theory, shopping enjoyment was conceptualized in relation to generations and gender, providing a significant theoretical contribution to the literature.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This paper reveals that shopping enjoyment is applicable to all generations, albeit to different degrees. It is useful for retailers to identify target customers and lucrative markets. Due to fierce competition among businesses, shopping mall management and retailers should regularly redesign their strategies to satisfy each category of customers. Refurbishments or redevelopment can be carried out to entice more dedicated shoppers to ensure that their involvement rates are stable. Results evidenced that atmosphere and environment are significant elements that attract all four generations to shopping malls and offer them pleasure. Retailers and shopping mall managers should pay special attention to providing attractive buildings, suitable interior and exterior designs (e.g., wall and floor colour, lighting, and temperature, pleasant background music, attractive window displays, and layouts), cafes and restaurants, and a wide variety of products. Since there is a good level of shopping enjoyment among the majority of people, all the possible elements of shopping malls are required to design to provide more experiences and engagements to customers as a space for pleasure, enjoyment and entertainment.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study provides an important building block for future research. Further studies can focus on more retail formats such as department stores, discount stores and other nontraditional formats such as online shopping to understand the similarities and differences between generations. The findings of the current paper reveal that male shoppers enjoy the shopping experience as much as female shoppers do. This result can be further investigated with respect to different purchasing situations.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declared no competing interests.

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