

An investigation into how gender and age affect the perceived hedonic and utilitarian value of customers in shopping malls


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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to examine the effect of gender and age on shopping mall customers' perceived utilitarian and hedonic value. The quantitative study was followed, and data was collected through self-administered questionnaires. Only respondents who had shopped in shopping malls between November 2020 and January 2021 were recruited to complete the questionnaire. The final data analysis included 500 usable questionnaires. The study revealed a significant difference between the gender and utilitarian value of shoppers within the shopping malls. Similarly, significant differences were found amongst the ages of the respondents and in both hedonic and utilitarian value. Based on the empirical findings, it is recommended that shopping mall managers segment the activities of the shopping mall in terms of the gender of consumers to enhance effective targeting and satisfy consumer desires and needs. It is also suggested that managers of shopping malls strive to identify the pressing needs and desires of the various age groups who shop at the malls. This will assist shopping mall managers in their planning to fulfill customers' expected hedonic and utilitarian value.

Keywords: Age, gender, Ghana, hedonic value, shopping mall, utilitarian value.

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Shopping has become part of consumers' daily activities, and consumers can shop either online or in the traditional physical shopping environment (KPMG 2017). Irrespective of the choice of shopping mode, physical shopping malls have become attractive places for shoppers. A shopping mall is a well-planned building that provides different shopping outlets, sells a variety of products and services to shoppers, and provides a place for customers to park while at the shopping mall (Juhari, Ali, & Khair 2012). Kushwaha, Ubeja, and Chatterjee (2017) view a shopping mall as one that has its origins in the United States of America, has grown to be one of the most lucrative industries in the world, and has multiplied across the globe (Evans 2011; McKinsey 2014). During the COVID-19 pandemic, all shopping malls globally were closed as a result of the lockdown rules and the initiatives of the various governments concerning the stay-at-home policies, which affected the global retail business. However, the post-COVID report indicates that the market size of shopping malls globally was estimated at USD 5,231.63 billion in 2021 and is anticipated to increase annually at a growth rate of 5.9% between 2022 and 2028 (Grand View Research 2023). Shopping malls, which have their origins in the United States of America, have grown to be one of the most lucrative industries in the world and have multiplied across the globe (Evans 2011; McKinsey 2014).

Shopping malls are evolving into lifestyle destinations that provide shopping and offer entertainment to post-pandemic shoppers who want to shop and play as well (Shopify 2023). This indicates that shopping malls are gaining popularity even after the COVID-19 pandemic. In Africa, Deloitte (2015) indicates that the top 25 countries where retail activities have increased significantly include Ghana and Nigeria. The Oxford Business Group (2023) report indicated that the significant increase in the activities of the shopping malls continued into 2021, despite the slowdown in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic after social-distancing policies caused a reduction in the number of physical shoppers to the shopping malls. Ghana's retail industry, specifically the shopping malls, has expanded in recent years, strengthened by the rising standard of living and lower levels of unemployment and inflation in the country (Oxford Business Group, 2023). The OECD (2020) and BCG (2022) argue that the retail industry, including traditional retail (independent shops), contributes greatly to the GDPs of countries and the economic development of those countries. In order for shopping mall managers to meet the dynamic needs and desires of consumers, it is important to understand the value that shopping malls create and the various factors that affect consumers' perceptions of value (Kushwaha et al. 2017). The literature emphasizes hedonic and utilitarian value as motivators that drive consumers' decisions to buy (Chiu, Wang, Fang, & Huang 2014). However, the effect of shoppers' gender and age on hedonic and utilitarian value in shopping malls in Ghana has received little attention. The gender and age of the customer play an important role in their decision-making process. Currently, fewer consumers patronize products and services in the shopping malls in Ghana compared with a large proportion of customers who continuously shop from the informal market (Turkson, Amoah, & van Eyk 2022).

It is unclear whether the age and gender of consumers have any significant influence on the hedonic and utilitarian value offered to customers within shopping malls in Ghana. No study exists in Ghana that has investigated the effect of gender and age on shopping mall customers in relation to perceived utilitarian and hedonic value in shopping malls. Therefore, this study aims to close these gaps. Thus, the main objective of the study was to investigate how gender and age affect the perceived hedonic and utilitarian value of customers in shopping malls in Ghana. The research consequently adds to the body of knowledge on shopping malls, specifically on their hedonic and utilitarian value, taking into consideration the shoppers' demographic variables. The recommendations provide valuable information that can assist shopping mall managers in better serving customers based on their demographic variables and remaining competitive in the retail sector.

THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

UTILITARIAN AND HEDONIC VALUE

The utilitarian value comprises tangible, physical, functional, and task-related activities that impact the experiences of customers (Albayrak, Caber, & Çömen 2016; Picot-Coupey, Krey, Huré, & Ackermann 2021). Utilitarian value influences consumers' attitudes and intentions to purchase (Kesari & Atulkar 2016). The utilitarian value thus permits

monetary saving, selection, and convenience that consumers perceive as enablers in enhancing their shopping experience (Kesari & Atulkar 2016). Hedonic value, on the other hand, reflects the emotional and affective influences in relation to the shopping experience (Picot-Coupey et al., 2021). It is also the value attained by the consumer through emotional activities provided, such as indulgence and pleasure, that create enjoyable experiences for the shopper (Yang & Mattila 2016). Shoppers derive hedonic value when they engage themselves in activities that involve the use of their senses and emotions, which gives them satisfaction when shopping (Atulkar & Kesari 2017).

SHOPPERS' DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

To enhance the shopping experience, the key drivers that influence customers' purchase intentions, which include the shoppers' demographic variables, need to be investigated (Botschen & Wegerer 2017). Shoppers' demographic variables considered for this study are gender and age from the perspective of shopping malls in Ghana. These demographic variables have been utilized in numerous studies to investigate the influence of hedonic value (Han, Lee, Ariza-Montes, Al-Ansi, Tariq, Vega-Muñoz & Park 2021; Ponsignon, Lunardo & Michrafy 2021) in different contexts such as shopping malls and tourism. However, these variables have not been examined from the perspective of Ghanaian shopping malls.

Since consumers differ in taste and preferences (Ahmed, Senthilkumar, & Nallusamy 2018), gender is proposed to influence the shoppers' hedonic and utilitarian value at shopping malls. Lee (2020) conducted a study and tested the moderation of gender and its role in the aesthetics design on customer perceived value and found that gender is an essential characteristic of an individual that greatly affects the behavior of the customers. In the study of Lee (2020), it was established that there is a significant difference between gender based on design aesthetics and utilitarian value but no significant difference between design aesthetics and hedonic value. The positive effect of design aesthetics on perceived utilitarian value was greater among male shoppers than among female shoppers (Lee 2020). Amoah, Radder, and van Eyk (2018) did not find any significant differences when investigating whether the perception of guesthouse experience realms differs based on the gender groups of the customers when researching gender in Ghana.

The age of a customer is important because age has the propensity to influence their behavior (Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka 2019). A study conducted by Huaman-Ramirez and Merunka (2019) on the moderating role of the age of consumers indicated that there is a significant difference between young customers and older customers concerning the effect of brand experience on brand attachment. The study revealed that younger customers had a stronger positive effect of brand experience on brand attachment (Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka 2019). This study also offers an understanding of the effect of shoppers' gender and age on shoppers' hedonic value and utilitarian value in shopping malls. Similarly, according to Ünver and Alkan (2021), variables such as income level, age, and gender have associations with customers' shopping behavior. The findings will assist in understanding shoppers' hedonic and utilitarian value activities and contribute to the shopping mall literature.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative research method and a multi-item scale to measure the study constructs, which included two factors: utilitarian value (saving money, having choices, and being convenient) and hedonic value (exploration, place attachment, and social status) in the context of shopping malls. The questionnaire items used for data collection were developed based on previous research studies. Utilitarian items were adapted from studies conducted by Kesari and Atulkar (2016), Chandon, Wansink, and Laurent (2000), El-Adly and Eid (2016), Idoko, Ukenna, and Obeta (2019), and El Hedhli, Chebat, and Sirgy (2013). While hedonic value items were adapted from studies conducted by Idoko et al. (2019); Khare (2011); Kesari and Atulkar (2016); Melewar, Alwi, Karim, Kumar, and Rahman (2013); and Lewicka (2010), the target respondents were requested to rate their level of agreement or disagreement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree).

A convenient sampling technique was used to select the target population (Johnson & Christensen 2014; Neuman 2014; Wilson 2014). The inclusion criteria for the target population involved all consumers who had shopped or visited the selected shopping malls (West Hills Mall, Accra Mall, Achimota Mall, and Kumasi Mall) at the time of the data collection. This comprised shoppers who had purchased at the selected shopping malls or participated in any other associated activities, such as entertainment, including first-time visitors to the mall. Due to the large sample size of the population, the researchers engaged the services of trained field workers to assist in the administration of the questionnaires. The selection criteria for the completion of the questionnaires included only potential respondents who were 18 years of age or older when entering or exiting the shopping mall.

A self-administered questionnaire totalling five hundred (500) was taken from the four selected shopping malls in Ghana, where one-quarter of the sample size was collected from each of the selected malls. The study subjected the measuring instrument to four experts in the field of marketing to review the content of the measuring instrument to ensure the face and content validity of the study. The collected data were edited and subsequently analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 and IBM SPSS AMOS.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Table 1 below shows the respondents' gender distribution. The results indicate that 232, which represents 46.4%, were males, while 268, representing 53.6%, were females. The percentage was not wide between females and males, which indicates no gender bias in the report. The age group between 18 and 30 years is generally dominant in the research, constituting 223 of the total respondents, which represents 44.6% of the total sample size. The 31 and 40-year-old age group followed with a total of 140 respondents, representing 28% of the total valid respondents. A percentage of 15.6 of the total valid respondents were between the age groups of 41 and 50 years old. A total of 39 respondents, representing 7.8% of the valid respondents, were between the ages of 51 and 59. The 60-year-old and older age group was the least, with a total of 20 respondents, representing 4% of the total sample size.

TABLE 1: GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	232	46.4
	Female	268	53.6
	Total	500	100.0
Age group	18-30 years	223	44.6
	31-40 years	140	28.0
	41-50 years	78	15.6
	51-59 years	39	7.8
	60+ years	20	4.0
	Total	500	100.0

RELIABILITY OF THE MEASURING INSTRUMENT

In order to ensure the internal consistency of the measuring instrument, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were utilized. This study followed the rule that a Cronbach alpha of 0.6 to 0.7 means the level of reliability is good, and a Cronbach alpha of above 0.70 means it is very good. This rule was suggested by Hulin, Netemeyer, and Cudeck (2001) and Ursachi, Horodnic, and Zait (2015). Both variables (utilitarian and hedonic value) had Cronbach alpha

scores over 0.60. Hence, the items used to measure the individual constructs (Table 2 below) are considered to be acceptable and validate good internal consistency (Hulin et al., 2001; Ursachi et al., 2015). Table 2 (below) shows the internal consistency for all the scale items.

TABLE 2: INTERNAL CONSISTENCY FOR THE SCALE ITEMS

Factors	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Utilitarian value	9	0.701
Hedonic value	8	0.684

INDEPENDENT SAMPLE TESTS (T-TEST) FOR GENDER

The homogeneity of variances existing among genders and the two variables (utilitarian and hedonic value) of the research were conducted using the Levene test. Since Levene's test for equality of variances for gender and all the variables were insignificant (Table 3 below), it implies that the condition of homogeneity of variances was met. Therefore, to ascertain whether there is a significant difference between gender and the two variables of the study, an independent sample t-test was performed. The t-test results concerning the gender of the respondents are shown in Table 3 below. No significant difference was found for hedonic value. However, significant differences were established for utilitarian value ($t = 2.079$, $df = 498$, $sig = 0.038$) concerning the respondents' gender.

TABLE 3: INDEPENDENT SAMPLE TEST: GENDER

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
									Lower	Upper	
Utilitarian Value	Equal variances assumed	0.027	0.87	2.079	498	0.038*	0.08654	0.04162	0.00477	0.16831	
	Equal variances not assumed			2.08	487.986	0.038*	0.08654	0.04161	0.00478	0.16831	
Hedonic Value	Equal variances assumed	0.077	0.781	1.428	498	0.154	0.06124	0.04288	-0.023	0.14548	
	Equal variances not assumed			1.43	489.97	0.153	0.06124	0.04283	-0.02291	0.14538	

* $p < 0.05$

Based on the investigation of the group statistics for gender (Table 4 below), male respondents scored significantly higher ($M = 4.0455$, $SD = 0.46375$) than female respondents ($M = 3.959$, $SD = 0.46441$) for utilitarian value. Cohen's d (0.18639) among males and females for utilitarian value shows that there is a slight practical significance.

TABLE 4: GROUP STATISTICS FOR GENDER

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Cohen's d
Utilitarian Value	Male	232	4.0455	0.46375	0.03045	0.18639
	Female	268	3.959	0.46441	0.02837	

LEVENE TEST OF HOMOGENEITY OF VARIANCE FOR AGE AND VARIABLES IN THE STUDY

The Levene test was conducted to ascertain the homogeneity of variances among the respondents' ages and the research variables. Table 3 below depicts the Levene test results.

TABLE 5: RESULTS OF THE LEVENE TEST OF HOMOGENEITY OF VARIANCES FOR AGE ON VARIABLES

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Utilitarian value	Based on Mean	1.046	4	495	0.383
Hedonic value	Based on Mean	3.031	4	495	0.017*

There exists a significant difference between the age variances and hedonic value of the study, as indicated in the results shown in Table 5 above. However, the variances in age and hedonic value yielded no significant differences. The results therefore imply that the test of homogeneity of variances is violated for utilitarian value. The ANOVA test was performed on age and utilitarian value, building upon the results of the Levene test of homogeneity. The ANOVA results of the respondents' age and utilitarian value are reported in Table 6 (below).

TABLE 6: ANOVA RESULTS OF RESPONDENTS' AGE

Utilitarian Value	Sum of Squares		df	Mean Square	F	p-value
	Between Groups	Within Groups	Total			
	2.12	106.077	499	0.53	2.473	0.044*
	108.197			0.214		

*p<0.05

The ANOVA test results in Table 6 above, revealed a significant difference (F=2.473, p=0.044). The robust test of equality of the means was performed through the Welch test. This is to ascertain the overall difference as there were significant differences among the Levene test of homogeneity for hedonic value and the age of the respondents' results. Table 7 below displays the results.

TABLE 7: RESULTS OF ROBUST TEST FOR EQUALITY OF MEANS BETWEEN AGE AND VARIABLES

		Statistica	df1	df2	Sig.
Hedonic value	Welch	2.583	4	96.019	0.042*

*p<0.05

The study found significant differences between the respondents' age and hedonic value when the Welch test for equality of means was performed, as indicated in Table 7 above. In order to determine where significant differences existed, the Games-Howell test (multiple comparisons) was used based on the Welch test. The grouping and the data presentation and interpretation were only applicable where we found significant differences. Table 8 depicts the results of the Games-Howell test.

TABLE 8: GAMES-HOWELL TEST (MULTIPLE COMPARISONS) FOR THE AGE OF RESPONDENTS

(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
18-30 years	31-40 years	-0.09385	0.04051	0.142	-0.2049	0.0173
	41-50 years	-.12375	0.04409	0.043*	-0.2452	-0.0023
	51-59 years	-0.00641	0.06094	1	-0.1777	0.1649
	60+ years	-0.19387	0.08098	0.15	-0.432	0.0442
31-40 years	18-30 years	0.09385	0.04051	0.142	-0.0173	0.2049
	41-50 years	-0.0299	0.04442	0.962	-0.1523	0.0925
	51-59 years	0.08744	0.06118	0.611	-0.0845	0.2594
	60+ years	-0.10002	0.08117	0.733	-0.3385	0.1385
41-50 years	18-30 years	.12375*	0.04409	0.043*	0.0023	0.2452
	31-40 years	0.0299	0.04442	0.962	-0.0925	0.1523
	51-59 years	0.11734	0.0636	0.357	-0.0609	0.2956
	60+ years	-0.07012	0.08301	0.914	-0.3126	0.1723
51-59 years	18-30 years	0.00641	0.06094	1	-0.1649	0.1777
	31-40 years	-0.08744	0.06118	0.611	-0.2594	0.0845
	41-50 years	-0.11734	0.0636	0.357	-0.2956	0.0609
	60+ years	-0.18746	0.09306	0.279	-0.4538	0.0789
60+ years	18-30 years	0.19387	0.08098	0.15	-0.0442	0.432
	31-40 years	0.10002	0.08117	0.733	-0.1385	0.3385
	41-50 years	0.07012	0.08301	0.914	-0.1723	0.3126
	51-59 years	0.18746	0.09306	0.279	-0.0789	0.4538

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 8 (above) depicts a significant difference among the age groups 18–30 years and 41–50 years ($p = 0.043$). The results revealed that the respondents aged between 18 and 30 years and between 41 and 50 years differ significantly based on their attainment of hedonic value at the shopping malls.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of this research was to investigate the effect of gender and age on shopping mall customers in relation to perceived utilitarian and hedonic value. The instigation of the study revealed significant differences among the genders of the respondents and utilitarian values among shopping mall customers. This implies that the shoppers' attainment of utilitarian value is induced by the gender of the respondents within the shopping malls. Furthermore, the results suggest that the respondents' gender is an important component in inducing the shoppers' perceived utilitarian value when they visit the shopping malls. The findings of the research align with the research of Lee (2020), which concluded that the gender of consumers plays an essential role in fulfilling consumers' perceived value at a destination.

The ANOVA test similarly revealed that the age of the respondent in relation to utilitarian value had a significant difference. The results indicate that shoppers' wish for utilitarian value could also be induced by their age groups. The findings in this study further demonstrate a direct correlation with prior research findings that have documented that the age of consumers affects their behavior and purchase intentions (Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka 2019). The results of the Welch test also confirmed that significant differences occur among the ages of respondents and their hedonic values. This implies that overall, the age of consumers seems to exert a significant influence on their perceived utilitarian and hedonic value.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

As indicated previously, the purpose of this research was to investigate the effect of gender and age on shopping mall customers in relation to perceived utilitarian and hedonic value. Based on the findings that emerged from the study, the subsequent recommendations are offered to shopping mall managers: it appears from the results that both shoppers and customers differ in their perceived experience of the utilitarian value of shopping malls and that shopping mall managers should take note of that. It is therefore recommended that shopping mall managers segment their shopping mall activities based on gender. Segmenting the market will assist shopping mall managers in identifying the needs of specific gender groups and striving to meet their needs. For example, the managers of the shopping malls can engage the shoppers before engaging themselves in any of the shopping activities, such as entertainment, and ask them to indicate why they decided to engage in such activities and what their expected expectations are, as well as what they will learn from their experience. This will enable the shopping mall manager to have in-depth knowledge to tailor the activities of the mall to meet the expectations of specific genders, generate value for them, and increase their satisfaction when they visit the mall.

The age of consumers was identified as significantly influencing their perceived utilitarian and hedonic value. It is hence recommended that mall managers, based on the findings of the study, make an effort to identify the needs and desires of the respondents' various age groups who visit the mall. In order to fully make the most use of the limited resources and plan effective marketing strategies, it is to the advantage of the shopping mall managers to be mindful of the kinds of mall activities that appeal to each specific age group and determine how to position the utilitarian and hedonic value activities to fit the diverse age groups. For example, the youngest among the age groups for the study was the age group between 18 and 30 years old, which is more concerned with entertainment activities such as movies, games, and hanging out at the shopping mall. This group of customers would be attracted to a wide variety of products and services. Hence, the provision of a variety of entertaining activities will be vital in the shopping mall. Moreover, it is suggested that shopping mall managers segment the types of products and services that they offer to each age group to create experience value (utilitarian and hedonic) for the shopper and influence their satisfaction.

CONTRIBUTION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study has contributed to the literature and academic debate on hedonic and utilitarian value and shed light on the influence of gender and age within the retail industry. The recommendations offered will assist retail managers in having a focused approach and strategy on how to attract and retain consumers. Although this study adds to the body of knowledge on hedonic and utilitarian value, it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of the study, as this will pave new ways for future research. Though the shoppers' demographic variables investigated in this study might assist the shopping malls in Ghana to overcome some of the challenges facing the retail industry, it is recommended that other variables such as income and the educational background of shoppers may be equally important for future research. The research had a limitation by selecting only four shopping malls in the two largest cities of Ghana (Accra and Kumasi). It is hence recommended that future researchers select more shopping malls and also form the smallest cities and towns in Ghana, such as Takoradi, Koforidua, Temale, etc., to see the effect.

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